

# Structures of government in Almohad Iberia

Submitted by Farag I M Omar to the University of Exeter as a  
thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History,

September 2015

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# Abstract

This thesis seeks to examine the political and administrative organisations of al-Andalus during the period of the Almohads. It employs close analysis of the sources in order to explore how the Almohad government system worked and to identify the extent of the development and the efficiency of its structures during the period. Each chapter focuses on a specific part of this system. Chapter I examines the founding of the political organs established by the founder of the Almohad movement, Ibn Tūmart, and the reforms made by his successor, the founder of the empire, ‘Abd al-Mu’min. Chapter II discusses the administrative political system of al-Andalus, especially the administrative divisions of the provinces, and the political structure of the government, represented by the governors and the *kuṭṭāb*. Chapter III examines the financial institutions and its structures, such as the *‘āmil*, the *mushrif*, and the *ṣāhib al-a‘māl*, in addition to the Almohad *sikka* and its development. Chapter IV, the final chapter, studies the judicial system and highlights its religious functions.

# Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Simon Barton for his continuous support, patience, motivation, and immense knowledge. His guidance helped me throughout the research and writing of this thesis. I could not have imagined having a better supervisor and mentor for my Ph.D study.

I would like also to thank all my friends and colleagues for their support and for providing me with copies of several sources that have helped me to complete this thesis.

I greatly value their friendship and I deeply appreciate their belief in me.

My deepest thanks, however, must go to my family. None of this would have been possible without their love and patience. My immediate family, to whom this dissertation is dedicated, has been a constant source of love, concern, support and strength all these years. I would like to express my heart-felt gratitude to them.

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# Introduction

## *The Almohad Movement*

The Almohad dynasty, a Muslim Berber confederation, began in the Atlas Mountains in the 12th century, spreading to include all of the Almoravids' lands.<sup>1</sup> The Almohads ruled most of North Africa, as far as Libya, and al-Andalus. Their name is taken from the Arabic, *al-Muwahhidūn*, 'The Unitarians', those who profess the absolute unity of God.

Muhammad b. Tūmart, a member of the Maṣmūda, an Atlas Mountain Berber tribe, was the Almohads' founder. Born between 1078 and 1081 in Ijilliz, a village in Sūs, a region separating the western High Atlas from the Anti-Atlas to the south. We know nothing of his early life until 1106, when he travelled to al-Andalus to pursue his education. He then went to the Muslim East to further his studies, staying for up to ten years.<sup>2</sup> According to pious legend, Ibn Tūmart met the scholar al-Ghazālī (1058-1111) in Baghdad and was with him when news arrived that the Almoravids had openly burned al-Ghazālī's books as heresy, including his recent work *Iḥyā' ʿUlūm al-Dīn* (*The Revival of the Religious Sciences*). Hearing this, al-Ghazālī is said to have turned to Ibn Tūmart, charging him to overthrow the Almoravids and establish a new government. Yet, even if we cannot prove such a meeting took place, it is clear that Ibn Tūmart was greatly influenced by al-Ghazālī's doctrinal views which, almost uniquely among contemporary jurists' thought, authorised the Islamic community to take arms against wrongful governments.

Ibn Tūmart returned from his voyage to the East at the end of 1117, considering himself a religious reformer. Acting as a censor of public morality as commanding right

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<sup>1</sup> The Almoravids, a Berber dynasty, formed an empire in the 11<sup>th</sup> century that conquered north-western Africa and Muslim Spain. See V. Lagardere, *Les Almoravides jusqu'au règne de Yūsuf b. Tashfin (1039-1106)* (Paris, 1989); J. Bosch Vilá, *Les Almorávides*, ed. E. Molina López (Madrid, 1990); F. Codera y Zaidín, *Decadencia y desaparición de los Almorávides en España* (Zaragoza, 1899); R. A. Messier, *Almoravids and the Meanings of Jihad* (Praeger, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> For Ibn Tūmart's early life and journey, see E. Lévi-Provençal (ed), *Documents inédits d'histoire almohade* (Paris, 1928), pp.31-36; A. Huici Miranda, *Historia Política del Imperio Almohade*, (Marroquí, 1956), vol. 1, pp. 23-65. Arabic trans. A. 'Akmīr (Casablanca, 2004), pp. 29-41; W. al-Sharif, *The Dearest Quest: A Biography of Ibn Tumart* (Tranent, 2010); A. J. Fromherz, *The Almohads, the rise of an Islamic Empire*, (London, 2011), pp. 19-85.

and forbidding wrong<sup>3</sup>, Ibn Tūmart preached in every town he visited, condemning gaudy clothing, drinking, singing, street contact between the sexes and general moral decadence. In Marrakesh, tensions finally came to a head when he began rebuking the Almoravids and accusing them of corruption, heresy and anthropomorphism. Faced with the problems provoked by Ibn Tūmart, the Emir ‘Alī b. Yūsuf b. Tāshfīn (1106-1143) and the jurists called him for a debate. After the debate, the jurists came to the conclusion that Ibn Tūmart’s views were too radical and thus he should be put to death, but the Emir was satisfied with him being expelled from the city. His intransigence made him a number of enemies and he therefore sought refuge in his native village, Ijllīz. The Mountains became a centre for his doctrine and he soon managed to attract some neighbouring tribes, including the region’s most important and powerful one, the Hintāta.<sup>4</sup>

In 1121, Ibn Tūmart, after a long sermon, declared himself Mahdī (the Islamic belief was that God would send the Mahdī to fill the earth with justice and equity as it is with tyranny and oppression).<sup>5</sup> In his sermon, he proclaimed an armed rebellion against the Almoravids, whom he considered guilty of leaving the true religion.<sup>6</sup> After several battles with Almoravid troops, probably in 1124, Tūmart moved his operations centre to Tīnmal, a small village at the High Atlas’ heart.<sup>7</sup> The Almohads’ fight against the Almoravids was generally successful, as their military tactics were often defensive. They used the mountains as a shield, waiting for the right moment to pounce on Almoravid troops. In May 1130, at the first attempt to attack them in the open plain of al-Buḥāira, they suffered serious defeat, resulting in the deaths of many Almohads, which had a negative impact on Ibn Tūmart, who shortly died.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The expression ‘commanding right and forbidding wrong’ is a Koranic obligation that fell to everyone. It is considered a positive role in helping others to take the straight path and to abstain from reprehensible acts. Prophetic tradition summarised the idea behind this obligation: ‘Whoever sees a wrong, says the Prophet, and is able to put it right with his hand (by action), let him do so; if he can’t, then with his tongue (by speaking out); if he can’t then with his heart (by feeling that it is wrong), and that is the weakest of faith’. Sūra, 3: 104; M. Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 33.

<sup>4</sup> It is clear that Ibn Tūmart took advantage of the lack of political harmony between the Atlas tribes and the Almoravids to increase the number of his followers. Al-Najjār thus shows that increased taxes and levies imposed on the tribes provided fertile material for Ibn Tūmart to expand the circle of rebellion against Almoravid authority and to attract more support for his movement. He always emphasised that it arose for the elimination of injustice and poverty: ‘I ‘U Mūsā, *al-Nashāṭ al-iqtiṣādī fī al-Maghrib al-Islāmī* (Cairo, 1983), p. 154; ‘A. al-Najjār, *al-Mahdī b. Tūmart* (Cairo, 1983), pp. 119-121.

<sup>5</sup> *Al-Ḥulal al-Bi-l*, ed. A. Zamāma, S. Zakkār (Casablanca, 1979), pp. 107-109.

<sup>6</sup> Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Nuḏm al-Jumān li-tartīb mā-salafa min akhbār al-zamān*, ed. M. A. Makkī (Beirut, 1990), pp. 81-83.

<sup>7</sup> H. Kennedy, *Muslim Spain and Portugal: A Political History of al-Andalus* (London, 1996), p. 200.

<sup>8</sup> *Al-Ḥulal al-Bi-l*, pp. 114-117.

After Ibn Tūmart's death, the Almohads' leadership went to his faithful man 'Abd al-Mu'min b. 'Alī, whom Ibn Tūmart met at Melilla when he returned from the East.<sup>9</sup> The new leader spent ten years or so in the mountains, where he could rally his men again and restore Almohad dominion over the mountain tribes, who left the Almohad doctrine after the al-Buḥāira defeat.<sup>10</sup> In spring, 1141, 'Abd al-Mu'min decided to leave Tīnmal and to launch campaigns against the Almoravids, which lasted seven years, ending with the fall of Marrakech. The Almohads' victory near Oran gave them more confidence and the motivation to invade Almoravid cities, particularly after the death of Tāshfīn b. 'Alī, the Almoravids' ruler (1143-1145), and of his great soldier, Reverter.<sup>11</sup> The Almohads invaded Oran, Tlemcen, and Fez in 1145, and then Marrakech in 1147, after long, hard sieges.<sup>12</sup>

The Almohads' success was not only a result of the enthusiasm generated by Ibn Tūmart among his followers, but was also due to the Almoravids themselves. They were preoccupied with the situation in al-Andalus, which was engulfed in turmoil, partly due to the Christian armies' movements and their assault on Almoravid lands.

After Marrakech's fall and the end of Almoravid rule, the Almohads could expand their authority to Al-Andalus and Ifriqiya. In al-Andalus, the Almoravid rule's weakness gave the Christian forces a chance to march on Islamic territories.<sup>13</sup> Concern about the increasing risk of Christian power, with widespread chaos, drove a number of Andalusī rulers to abandon their loyalty to Almoravid rule and look for a new leader. One survived by entering into a relationship with the Christians; Muḥammad b. Sa'd b. Mardanīsh (the leader of Valencia and Murcia) declared himself independent, putting his trust in alliance with Castile.<sup>14</sup> The others thus declared their loyalty to the

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<sup>9</sup> R. le Tourneau, *The Almohad Movement in North Africa in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (Princeton, 1969), pp. 15-20.

<sup>10</sup> Huici Miranda, *Historia Política*, pp. 97-113.

<sup>11</sup> Reverter was Gelabert Udalar of the Viscomital house of Barcelona's son. This became a leading family in late 10<sup>th</sup> century Catalan aristocracy, and suffered a precipitous decline in fortunes in the 12<sup>th</sup>: see S. B. Bensch, *Barcelona and its Rulers 1096-1291* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 128-35. See further I. Frank, 'Reverter, vicomte de Barcelone (vers 1130-1145)', *Boletín de la Real Academia de Buenas Letras de Barcelona*, 26 (1954-56), pp. 195-204; S. Sobrequés Vidal, *Els Barons de Catalunya* (Barcelona, 1957), pp. 31-2; Huici Miranda, *Historia política*, vol. 1, pp. 117-20, 123-6, 128-9, 131-2; F. Clément, 'Reverter et son fils, deux officiers: Catalans au service des sultans de Marrakech', *Medieval Encounters*, 9 (2003), pp. 79-106.

<sup>12</sup> Huici, Miranda, *Historia Política*, pp. 123-136; Tourneau, *the Almohad Movement*, pp. 52-53.

<sup>13</sup> In 1147, Alfonso VII (King of Leon and Castile) seized Almería, Ubeda and Baeza. Lisbon was taken by Alfonso Henriques of Portugal. Tortosa, Fraga, Lleida and Mequinenza by Ramon Berenguer IV [Count of Barcelona] in 1149: Kennedy, *Muslim Spain*, p. 202.

<sup>14</sup> See Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fī'l-Ta'rīkh*, ed. K. M. Shīḥā (Beirut, 2002), pp. 347-348, 357; Pierre Guichard, *Les Musulmans de Valence (XI-XIII siècles)* (Damascus, 1990-91), vol. 1, pp. 116-124; J. M. Lacarra, 'El rey Lobo de Murcia y el señorío de Albarracín', *Estudios dedicados a Menéndez Pidal*, 3 (Madrid, 1952), 271-284; J. J. Rodríguez Lorente, *Numismática de la Murcia musulmana* (Madrid,

Almohads, inviting them to al-Andalus to oppose Christian advances. The Almohads responded to their request and, between 1146 and 1150, the various al-Andalus principalities, except Valencia and Murcia, were gradually brought under Almohad control.<sup>15</sup>

For a few years after 1152, the Almohads turned their attention to Ifriqiya, where they did not hold sway. Caliph 'Abd al-Mu'min probably thought his occupation of al-Andalus depended on his position in al-Maghrib, and he could not enter a long struggle in al-Andalus before ensuring he was completely safe in Morocco. The Almohads launched a campaign against the Ḥammādid kingdom of Bougie and Constantine (modern Algiers), which were subdued without difficulty. Arab tribes, notably the Banū Hilāl and the Banū Riyāh, were then subjugated and brought west, in order to settle in the Moroccan plains and to participate in the *jihād* against Christians in al-Andalus.<sup>16</sup>

Three years later, the Almohads took their next move, to conquer the eastern Maghrib, where Normans from Sicily had established garrisons in most major coastal cities. They went first to Tunis, which surrendered with little resistance. Then they lay siege to Mahdia. The Norman garrison held for almost six months until submitting in January 1160.<sup>17</sup> Gabes, Gafsa, Sfax and Tripoli soon fell in turn and then recognised the Almohads' authority.<sup>18</sup> When the Caliph's campaigns succeeded, spreading Almohad power as far as Tripoli, he returned to al-Maghrib to reconsider al-Andalus. From 1162 he made preparations for major campaigns there. In May 1163, before the plans could

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1984); M. De Epalza y M. J. Rubiera, 'La sofra (*sujra*) en el Sharq al-Andalus antes de la conquista catalano-aragonesa', *ShA*, 3 (1986), pp. 33-38; Hanna E. Kassis, 'The coinage of Muhammad Ibn Sa'd (ibn Mardānīsh) of Mursiya: an attempt at Iberian Islamic autonomy', in *Problems of Medieval Coinage in the Iberian area*, eds. M. Gomes Marques and D. M. Metcalf (Santarem, 1988), pp. 209-229; M. A. Abū al-Faḍil, *Sharq al-Andalus fī al-'Aṣar al-Islāmī* (Alexandria, 1996), pp. 99-102.

<sup>15</sup> Kennedy, *Muslim Spain*, pp. 202-203.

<sup>16</sup> *Documents ineditis*, pp. 57-59, 62-66; Kennedy, *Muslim Spain*, p. 205. On the role of the Arabs in the Almohad army, see V. Aguilar Sebastián, 'Instituciones militares. El ejército', in *El retroceso territorial de al-Andalus. Almoravides y Almohades. Siglos XI al XIII*, *Historia de España Menéndez Pidal*, ed. M. J. Viguera Molíns (Madrid, 1997), pp. 192-208; V. V. Aguilar, 'Política de 'Abd al-Mu'min con los árabes de Ifriqiya', *actas del II Coloquio Hispano-Marroquí de Ciencias Históricas 'Historia, Ciencia y Sociedad'*, Granada, 6-10 noviembre de 1989 (Madrid, 1992), 17-30. However, there may be another reason. The chronicler, Ibn al-Athīr says 'Abd al-Mu'min gained great benefit from Arab tribes, using them to give his family absolute power among the Almohads. Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 9, p. 551; Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-irab fī funūn al-adab*, ed. A. Tarhīnī (Beirut, 2004), vol. 24, p. 169.

<sup>17</sup> Tourneau, *The Almohad Movement*, pp.56-57; H. E. J. Cowdrey, 'The Mahdia Campaign of 1087', *English Historical Review*, 92 (1977), pp. 1-29.

<sup>18</sup> J.Ki-Zerbo, D.T. Niane (eds), *General History of Africa (IV Africa from the Twelfth to the Sixteenth Century)* (Paris, 1997), p. 17.

come to fruition, Caliph ‘Abd al-Mu’min died. His body was taken to Tīnmal and buried beside the Mahdī’s tomb, a tradition that Almohad Caliphs continued.<sup>19</sup>

Serious political unrest in the Almohad Empire followed Caliph ‘Abd al-Mu’min’s death. Muḥammad, who was chosen to succeed his father, was deposed by two of his brothers, Abū Ḥafṣ ‘Umar, who seems to have been Vizier under ‘Abd al-Mu’min, and Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf of Seville. A decision was taken with the Almohad elders’ consensus, to appoint Yūsuf as the new Caliph. Whatever the reason for this, three other brothers objected: Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd Allāh of Bougie, Abū’l-Ḥasan ‘Alī of Fez, who died in summer, 1163, and Abū Sa‘īd ‘Uthmān of Córdoba. It seems this argument had also spread to tribal combatants, assembled by ‘Abd al-Mu’min for his al-Andalus campaign. Abū ‘Umar Hintātī, a powerful man in the empire, was thus obliged to write an official letter asking the Almohads to accept the new Caliph. The new Caliph dealt with this by sending letters and deputations to his brothers in order to end the disagreement, which lasted nearly two years and ended in 1165.<sup>20</sup>

Despite such difficult times, the Almohads continued military operations in al-Andalus. Their first project was to eliminate Ibn Mardanīsh and take control of eastern Andalus. In 1165, an Almohad and Arab force, led by two of the Caliph’s brothers, was sent to Córdoba, which was suffering from repeated raids. The Almohads captured Andújar, a constant threat to Córdoba. They then went east, where they defeated Ibn Mardanīsh at the battle of Faḥṣ al-Jullāb near Murcia.<sup>21</sup> Though Ibn Mardanīsh was determined to resist the Almohads, many of his men abandoned him and accepted the Almohads’ authority. In July, 1169, his right-hand man, Ibn Hamushk, went to the Almohads in Córdoba, declaring his loyalty to them.<sup>22</sup> This alliance encouraged the Almohads to increase the pressure on Ibn Mardanīsh and the attacks on his territories. Pressure continued, and cities fell one after the other, but Ibn Mardanīsh resisted until he died in March, 1172, leaving his successors with little choice but to surrender Murcia to the Almohads.<sup>23</sup>

Ibn Mardanīsh was the first serious challenge to the Almohads in al-Andalus, but he was not alone. While the Almohads dealt with the recalcitrant Ibn Mardanīsh, Portuguese guerrilla leader, Giraldo Sempavor, challenged their power in the west. From 1165-1186 he made a series of successful raids, resulting in Trujillo’s, Évora’s,

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 189.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., pp. 209-213.

<sup>21</sup> Kennedy, *Muslim Spain*, pp. 218-219.

<sup>22</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *Al-Mann bi-l-Imāma*, ed. A. al-Tāzī (Beirut, 1964), pp. 302-308.

<sup>23</sup> M. A. Abū al-Faḍil, *Sharq al-Andalus*, pp. 130-138.

Cáceres', Montanchez, Serpa's, and Jurumena's capture, but his most audacious attack was against Badajoz, which probably fell after a long siege, in May, 1169. Fortunately for the Almohads, Fernando II of Leon, who had recently made an alliance with Caliph Yūsuf, helped the Almohad garrison enter the city. The Portuguese were defeated and Badajoz returned to Almohad control.<sup>24</sup> In these circumstances, Caliph Yūsuf had to launch two major campaigns in al-Andalus: The first, in 1171, lasted almost five years, during which he constructed a series of great buildings in Seville, where he established himself. He also launched an expedition against the Christians, but with little success, and his attempts to capture Huete ended in abject failure.<sup>25</sup>

Not until 1184 did the Caliph finally arrive in Seville for his second campaign. He went northwards to besiege Santarém, which was being defended by Afonso I of Portugal. On hearing of Abū Yūsuf's attack, Ferdinand II of León marched his troops to Santarém, supporting his father in law, Afonso I. This caused confusion in the Almohads' camp with disastrous results. The Almohads were defeated and the Caliph wounded, dying a few days later.<sup>26</sup> In considering the Almohads' military operations, led by Caliph Yūsuf, we see that the Caliph did not have his father's military talents to qualify him to lead a large army. Despite mobilising massive military preparations for both his first and second expeditions, the Caliph showed a lack of confidence and an inability to make good decisions at critical moments. This does not mean that the fault lay with him alone; it also seems the army lacked military skills, particularly in siege operations, which was evident during the Huete siege.

The Almohads' leadership passed to Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb and his first move was to return to Marrakesh, securing his authority there. After that, at the first serious challenge he faced fierce opposition from the Banū Ghānīya, a branch of the Almoravid dynasty, who had taken refuge in the Balearics after Almoravid rule declined. It seems they were on good terms with the Almohads when Caliph Yūsuf became master of western al-Andalus; and they gave him some of their spoils, taken in Mediterranean warfare. On the Caliph's death, their new chief, 'Alī, thought he could restore North African Almoravid rule. He mounted a large expedition against Bougie in November,

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<sup>24</sup> D. Lopes, 'O Cid português: Geraldo Sempavor', *Revista Portuguesa de Historia*, 1 (1940), pp. 93-109; E. Lapiedra, 'Giraldo Sem Pavor, Alfonso Enríquez y los Almohades', in *Bataliús: El Reino Taifa de Badajoz. Estudios*, ed. Fernando Diaz Esteban (Madrid, 1996), pp. 147-158.

<sup>25</sup> See Ibn Šāhib al-Šalāt, *Al-Mann*, pp. 349-438; H. Terrasse, *History of Morocco* (Casablanca, 1952), p. 88.

<sup>26</sup> Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib, qism al-Muwahhidīn*, eds. M. El Kattānī, M. Tāwīt, M. Znībir and A. Zmāmāh (Beirut, 1985), pp.162-164; Joseph F O'Callaghan, *A History of Medieval Spain*, (New York, 1975), p. 241

1184, capturing it without difficulty. He soon occupied Algiers, Miliana, Ashīr, and the Qal‘a of Banū Ḥammād, and then besieged Constantine. In 1185, the Caliph’s reaction was rapid. An army, helped by a naval squadron, recovered the cities and the Almoravid leader had to flee eastwards.<sup>27</sup> The risk from Ibn Ghānīya continued as he soon made an alliance with the Lamtūna and Massūfa Berbers, launching a guerrilla war, enabling him to control all of Ifriqiya except Tunisia and Mahdia. The Caliph thus decided to lead a great eastward expedition. This was the new Caliph’s first campaign and gave him a good opportunity to show his strength and his ability to lead the Almohads. With an army of 20,000 horsemen, there was no chance for Ibn Ghānīya and his allies to stand for long. In September 1187, the Banū Ghānīya were defeated and all of south Ifriqiya soon returned to Almohad domination.<sup>28</sup>

When the Caliph succeeded and suppressed the rebellion, he returned to Marrakesh, reaching it in March 1188. He could now turn to the Iberian Peninsula. The Caliph’s more than five-year absence, during his campaign against North African rebels, gave Christians a great opportunity for more expansion in al-Andalus. In 1189, King Sancho I of Portugal, with Northern European crusaders’ aid, conquered Silves after three months’ resistance. King Alfonso VIII simultaneously plundered the Seville region and attacked Reina, Alcala de Guadaira and Castillo de Salir. The al-Andalus governors asked for help.<sup>29</sup> Not until April 1190, did the Caliph finally cross to al-Andalus with the objective of attacking the Portuguese. His campaign was almost successful and ended in retaking Silves in July 1191, and then concluding an armistice with the Christian kingdoms.<sup>30</sup> The Caliph still had to return to al-Andalus in 1195 to attack Alfonso VIII of Castile, who had resumed his military operations in Seville’s territory after the truce expired. The battle was on 18<sup>th</sup> July on open plains near Alarcos Castle, and Alfonso VIII was badly defeated. The rest of his army fled to Toledo. Alarcos Castle, and all nearby castles, surrendered with no serious resistance. After this victory, the Almohads retreated to Seville, where they celebrated, and the Caliph was given the title of Al-Manṣūr billāh (Victor through God’s will).

For two years from spring, 1196, the Almohads waged a devastating campaign in Castile as far as Madrid. However, these raids did not lead to any Almohad territorial

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<sup>27</sup> Terrasse, *History of Morocco*, p.72; Zerbo and Niane, *General History*, p. 19.

<sup>28</sup> Zerbo and Niane, *General History*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>29</sup> Huici Miranda, *Historia Politica*, pp. 330-333.

<sup>30</sup> For information on this campaign, see Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, pp.203-212; Huici Miranda, *Historia Politica*, pp. 333-347.

gains, even though they obtained a 10 year long truce with Castile.<sup>31</sup> After almost three years in al-Andalus, the Caliph finally decided to return to Marrakesh in April, 1198. In poor health, his last year was devoted to pious works, such as building a magnificent hospital, the distribution of alms, and actions against Jews.<sup>32</sup> He died in January 1199. His son, Muḥammad al-Nāṣir succeeded him without opposition from the Almohad elders. The new Caliph enjoyed relative stability in al-Andalus, and this was due to his father's successful campaign against Christians and the truce he had signed with them. In Ifriqiya the situation was quite different. The Banū Ghānīya's new rebellion enabled Yaḥyā b. Ghānīya, to control almost the whole of Ifriqiya, including Tunis, by 1202. The Banū Ghānīya were always a source of concern to the Almohads as they took control of Africa, and it was time for the new Caliph to face them with a new strategy. Three major steps were taken so as to regain North Africa. He sent an expedition in September, 1203, to take Majorca to deprive the Banū Ghānīya of their Balearics' refuge, which was used as a military base against the Almohads. When the Almohads succeeded in their mission, the Caliph then gathered his troops and, in February, 1205, he marched towards the east to fight Ibn Ghānīya and regain control of Ifriqiya and Tunisia. Mahdia surrendered and Yaḥyā Ibn Ghānīya was defeated in October, 1205, then fleeing to the desert. Finally, before the Caliph returned to Marrakesh in 1207, he introduced a major administrative distribution in the empire by which Ifriqiya became a semi-independent province under Hafsid 'Abd al-Wāḥid's chairmanship, giving him extended powers to protect the region from any dangers.<sup>33</sup>

When the Caliph succeeded in his campaign against Ibn Ghānīya, a new threat arose in the west. The Christians were strong enough to break the truce with the Almohads and resumed their attack on Muslim territory. The Jaén and Baeza areas were attacked by Alfonso VIII of Castile in 1209, while, Peter II, King of Aragon, raided the Valencia region.<sup>34</sup> Caliph al-Nāṣir was thus obliged to gather his army and cross to al-Andalus, reaching Seville in June, 1211. The Almohads attacked, taking the fortress of Salvatierra, used as a base for raids on Islamic regions. The next year, a large number of Christians from all the Iberian kingdoms gathered under Alfonso VIII's leadership to

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<sup>31</sup> On the Alarcos campaign and its aftermath in detail, see Huici Miranda, *Historia Política*, pp. 354-372; Huici Miranda, *Las grandes batallas de la Reconquista durante las invasiones africanas (almoravides, almohades y benimerines)*, eds. Emilio Molina López and Vicente Navarro Oltra (Granada, 2000); R. Izquierdo Benito, F. Ruiz Gómez (eds.), *Alarcos, 1195: Actas del Congreso Internacional Conmemorativo del VII Centenario de la Batalla de Alarcos* (Cuenca, 1996).

<sup>32</sup> Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, pp. 228-229.

<sup>33</sup> J. M. Abun-Nasr, *A history of the Maghrib in the Islamic period* (New York, 1999), pp.100-101.

<sup>34</sup> Kennedy, *Muslim Spain*, pp.253-254.

wage an aggressive campaign against the Almohads. At the battle of *Las Navas de Tolosa*, on 16<sup>th</sup> July, 1212, the Almohads suffered a heavy defeat and many were said to have been killed during the battle or while escaping when the Caliph fled to Jaén.<sup>35</sup>

This was the first major victory for the Christians over Spanish and African Muslims, but the Christians were unable to derive much advantage from this success. Lack of supplies and the spread of plague forced Alfonso VIII to withdraw, satisfied with what he had obtained in booty and prisoners. For the Almohads, however, the defeat was sufficiently strong that they would launch no other campaigns to seek revenge, and even attempts by the governors of Jaén, Granada and Córdoba to raid Christian fortresses, including Baños de la Encina, failed. However, although the defeat may have affected the Almohads' morales and given the Christians more confidence in their own strength, this should not be deemed the main cause for the collapse of their power, it simply showed the Almohad government's vulnerability and Caliph al-Nāṣir and his successor's inability to restore the empire's authority.

Soon after the defeat, Caliph al-Nāṣir returned to Marrakesh, remaining for more than a year until his death on 25<sup>th</sup> December, 1213. He was succeeded by his son, Yūsuf al-Mustanṣir, who was no more than sixteen, and who probably knew nothing about the responsibility that was entrusted to him. He thus fell immediately under the Almohad elders' influence. Some chroniclers agree that his reign was peaceful<sup>36</sup>; probably a peace born of weakness.

In Spain, the Christian kingdoms were engaged in their own internal affairs. Pedro II of Aragon, who had joined forces with the Christians at Las Navas, was killed in 1213 and was succeeded by his son James I (1213-76), who engaged in establishing his own authority. In Castile, King Alfonso VIII died in 1214, to be succeeded by his eleven-year-old son, Enrique I (1214-1217), under his older sister Berenguela's guardianship. Enrique I died suddenly three years later and his nephew, Fernando III, proclaimed King of Castile. This persuaded the Aragonese and Castilians to agree a truce with the Almohads. There were military operations, without any serious problems, only on the Portuguese front. The only military success came when Alcacer de Sal was

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<sup>35</sup> For details on the Las Navas campaign and its results, see Huici Miranda, *Grandes Batallas*, 217-327; C. Vara Thorbeck, *El lunes de las Navas* (Jaén, 1999); Manuel Gabriel López Payer and María Dolores Rosado Llamas, *La batalla de las Navas de Tolosa: historia y mito* (Madrid, 2002); F. García Fitz, *Las Navas de Tolosa* (Barcelona, 2005); M. Alvira Cabrer, *Las Navas de Tolosa, 1212: idea, liturgia y memoria de la batalla* (Madrid, 2012).

<sup>36</sup> See: Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p.265; Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn, Diwān al-mubtadā' wa-l-khabar*, ed. K. Shihātah (Beirut, 1988), vol.6, p. 337.

captured in 1217, with external assistance from a fleet of German crusaders *en route* to the Holy Land.<sup>37</sup>

In the Maghrib, the Almohad Empire's weaknesses began to show. The Berber pastoral tribe, the Banū Marīn, living in the Sijilamāsa region, left their territory to settle in the plains between Taza and Fez.<sup>38</sup> They seem never to have been under Almohad authority and only cooperated with the Almohads when Caliph al-Manṣūr brought a campaign against the Christians. However, the Banū Marīn's incursion into Moroccan territory did not face serious reactions from the Almohads, whose authority was gradually limited to the cities.<sup>39</sup>

Caliph al-Mustanṣir died suddenly in January 1224, and evident cracks in the empire quickly appeared. Seven successors had ruled the Almohads up to the empire's end in 1270, each devoting attention to establishing his authority in Marrakesh, and they had engaged in plots against rebels or rivals in the ruling family. Unfortunately for the Almohads, no Caliph could restore the empire's power and the country was soon divided into independent cities. Tunisian governors refused to acknowledge Marrakesh's authority and founded the Hafsid dynasty. In Tlemcen, a Zanata leader declared independence, giving allegiance to the Banū Hafsi. The Banū Marīn wrested control of all of north Morocco and were able to capture Marrakesh in 1269. In 1270, they killed the last Almohad survivors at Tīnmal.<sup>40</sup>

In al-Andalus, the situation was worse. The Caliphs' absence and their preoccupation with internal conflicts caused political unrest throughout al-Andalus, opening the door to aspirants who wanted to achieve their own power. One such was Muḥammad b. Hūd, who rebelled against the Almohads in 1228. Gradually, his authority was accepted in all of al-Andalus, except Valencia, but his attempt to confront

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<sup>37</sup> Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 266; J. Goñi Gaztambide, *Historia de la bula de Cruzada en España* (Vitoria, 1958), p. 132; S. Barton, 'Traitors to the Faith? Christian Mercenaries in al-Andalus and the Maghrib, c. 1100-1300', in *Medieval Spain; Culture, Conflict and Coexistence*, ed. R. Collins and A. Goodman (New York, 2002), p. 24; Kennedy, *Muslim Spain*, pp. 256-259.

<sup>38</sup> The Banū Marīn was a North African Berber dynasty emerging from the Almohad Empire's collapse and destruction, ruling much of North Africa from 1268. Its origin was in Ifriqiya. They later settled further north and took Fez, which became their capital, in 1248. In 1269, they overthrew the Almohads by taking Marrakech and, until 1465, formed an empire in Morocco, temporarily imposing their power on the Maghrib and a small part of the Andalusian coast. See Ibn Khaldūn, *Histoire des Berbères*, vol. IV, French trans. M.G. de Slane (Algeirs, 1856), pp. 25-488; Maya Shatzmiller, *L'historiographie mérinide* (Leiden, 1982); Maya Shatzmiller, *The Berbers and the Islamic state: the Marīnid experience in pre-protectorate Morocco* (Princeton, 2000).

<sup>39</sup> Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, pp. 266, 269; Le Tourneau, *The Almohad Movement*, pp. 90-91.

<sup>40</sup> For details of the events in the Almohad collapse see Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, pp. 274- 453; Ibn Abī Zar', *al-Anīs al-muṭrib bi-rawḍ al-qirtās fī akhbār mulūk al-Maghrib wa-tārīkh madīnat Fās* (Rabat, 1972), pp. 243-262; Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, vol.6, pp. 340-353. For an introduction to the last Almohad rulers, see Huici Miranda, *Historia Política*, pp. 471-555; Le Tourneau, *the Almohad Movement*, pp. 98-99.

the dangers from the Christians resulted in a severe defeat in 1230 and his authority was undermined, since the Christians were able to take Badajoz and the rest of Extremadura.<sup>41</sup>

The country's segmentation and the weakness of the governors of al-Andalus' offered a good opportunity for the Christian kingdoms to start invading on all fronts. The first victim was Majorca, occupied by James I of Aragon in December, 1230, and by 1282 the other Balearic Islands had been captured and the entire Muslim population sold as slaves.<sup>42</sup> In 1238, Valencia surrendered after a long siege.

The same pattern was repeated elsewhere, and cities fell one by one. Alfonso IX of Leon conquered Cáceres (1227), Mérida (1230), and Badajoz (1230), while Córdoba (1236), Jaén (1246), and Seville (1248) were taken by Fernando III of Castile. Soon, the rest of Spanish Islam was reduced to the Kingdom of Granada, whose rulers had to pay tribute to Castile.<sup>43</sup>

It is surprising that the Almohad Empire fell so rapidly. This question has interested many historians and researchers who have tried to find the reasons behind this collapse. Some historians e.g., W. Montgomery Watt<sup>44</sup> and Derek Lomax<sup>45</sup>, believe that the religious factor, was the main element in the Almohad movement's success, and also the main reason for the empire's fall. Le Tourneau<sup>46</sup> argues that the main reason for the Almohads' decline was the system of the Caliphate, established by the first Caliph, 'Abd al-Mu'min, when he formally put his family in control of the empire. Of course, many other reasons are suggested for this collapse, e.g., the economic crises which the population of al-Andalus and al-Maghrib suffered due to a lack of supplies and high living costs, the result of many wars and repeated raids on Islamic territories. There was also the split between the Almohads and the loss of the empire's power, the result of the conflict between the governors. The Christians, were, however, in a better position. Their states were becoming well organised and had great leaders, such as James I of

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<sup>41</sup> J. F. O'Callaghan, *A History of Medieval Spain* (New York, 1983), pp. 339-340; Kennedy, *Muslim Spain*, p. 268.

<sup>42</sup> Al-Maqqarī, *Nafh al-Ṭīb min ghuṣn al-Andalus al-raṭīb*, ed. I. 'Abbās, 8 vols (Beirut, 1988), vol. 4, pp. 469-472; M. Carr, *Blood and Faith: The Purging of Muslim Spain* (New York, 2009), p. 7; D. J. Smith and H. Buffery, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon; A Translation of the Medieval Catalan* (Surrey, 2010), pp. 69-135.

<sup>43</sup> On the Almohad empire's fall in al-Andalus, see D. W. Lomax, *The Reconquest of Spain* (London, 1978), pp. 134-154; Kennedy, *Muslim Spain*, pp. 271-272; O'Callaghan, *A History of Medieval Spain*, pp. 333-356.

<sup>44</sup> W. Montgomery Watt, 'The Decline of the Almohads: Reflections on the Viability of Religious Movements', *History of Religions*, 4 (Chicago, 1964), pp. 23-29.

<sup>45</sup> D. W. Lomax, 'Heresy and orthodoxy in the fall of Almohad Spain', in D.W. Lomax and D. Mackenzie (eds.), *God and man in medieval Spain* (Warminster, 1989), pp. 37-48.

<sup>46</sup> Le Tourneau, *The Almohad Movement*, pp. 105-107.

Aragon and Fernando III of Castile. There was also the Papacy's encouragement for the Christian forces to regain control of the Spanish peninsula. Although all these reasons seem logical, they do not explain how this collapse happened so quickly, or why the Almohad government was unable to resolve these problems as they had on other occasions. The Almohads had experienced military and economic setbacks after the empire's creation, but they overcame them successfully with time. The Caliphate's system, in contrast, cannot be considered to be the major cause of what happened. In fact, the most successful states in the Islamic world were those that used the Caliphate's system as their form of government. These included the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates, and even when these states were weak and less effective, their collapses happened gradually and for obvious reasons. The Almohad political system and its administrative structures seem to have worked well over the first four Caliphs' reigns. Even when the Almohads' power went to a young man, less than eighteen years old, there were no signs of weakness or any serious problems in the empire's framework. Division among the royal family, after Caliph Yūsuf II's death in 1224, helped to destroy the Almohads' unity, though it was not a cause of weakness as much as a result of it. The various rivals took advantage of existing circumstances to try to establish their own power, yet we cannot ignore or deny the impact of any of the factors mentioned above on the Almohads, and they may all have helped in the empire's collapse and the Almohad dynasty's end.

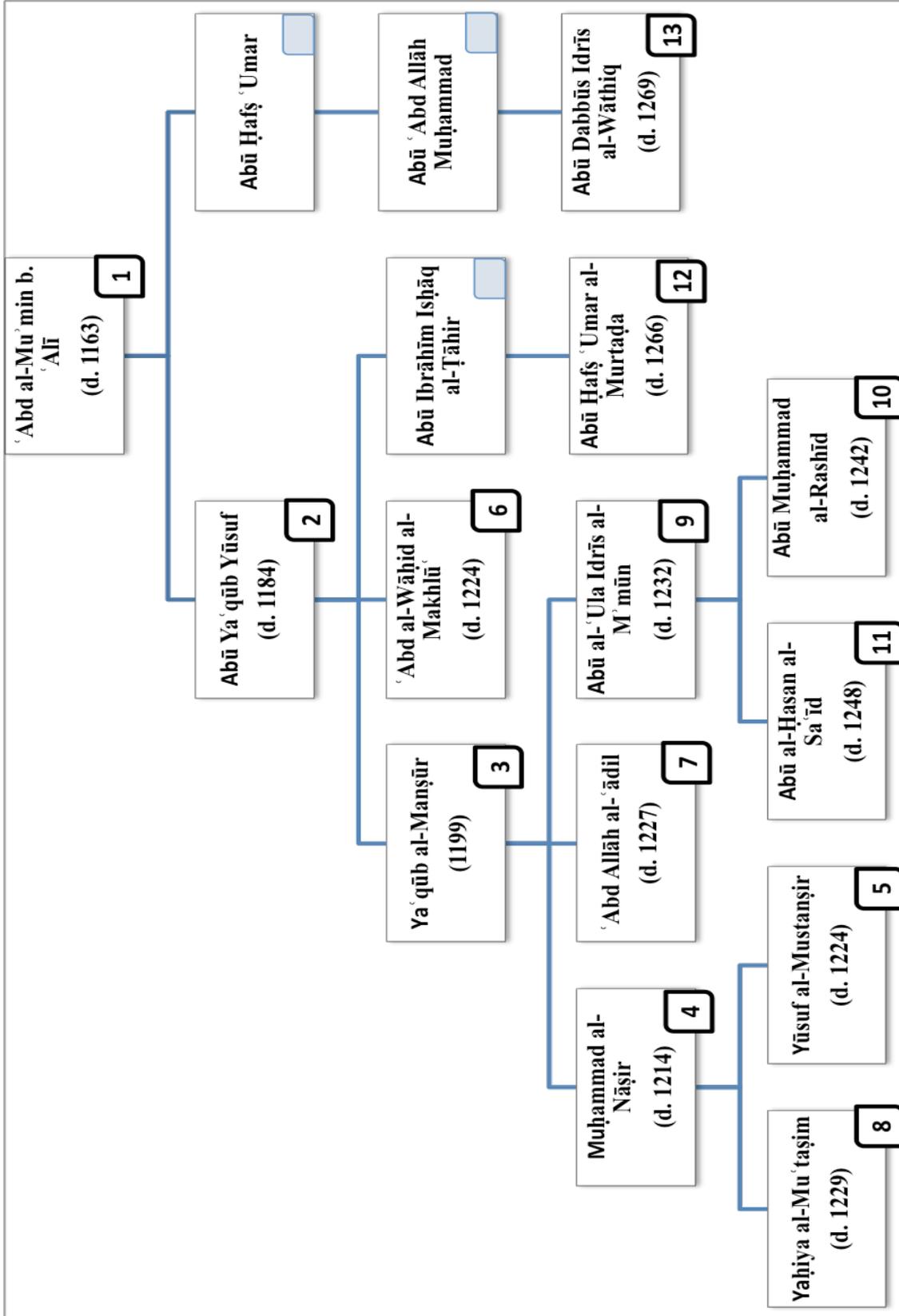


Figure 1: The Almohad Ruling Dynasty

## *Literature review*

The Almohads have been the subject of a wide range of studies in recent years, yet the present state of knowledge about their political system is far from complete. Most studies related to the Almohad Empire concern its political history or the doctrine of its founder, Ibn Tūmart. Our knowledge of the development and growth of government in al-Andalus and al-Maghrib during this period is thus quite limited. The reason for the lack of research is mainly because most of our documents and accounts have been lost or damaged, and the rest of the information is scattered among a wide range of sources.

The first modern study of the history of the Almohads came from the German scholar Joseph Aschbach in 1883-87.<sup>47</sup> This study was written as a sequel to his first book, which dealt with the history of the Umayyads in Spain. It consists of two volumes: the first on the history of the Taifa era, the Almoravids and the Christian kingdoms, while the second is devoted to the history of the Almohads, with a chapter on the political systems of the Almoravids and the Almohads, in addition to a biography of prominent figures in science, literature and theology. However, the book has some historical errors, which are mostly due to the lack of sources that were available when the author was alive. Additionally, Aschbach's accounts of the political system of the Almohads is very brief. Another brief study, although not of the same value, was published by René Millet in 1923.<sup>48</sup> A few years later, in 1928, the well-known scholar Evariste Lévi-Provençal presented an article on the founder of the Almohads, Ibn Tūmart, and his successor 'Abd al-Mu'min.<sup>49</sup> Then, in 1932, came a study by Henri Basset and Henri Terrasse, *Sanctuaires et forteresses almohades*.<sup>50</sup> This work belongs more to the field of archaeology than to history, since it focuses on a description of mosques and forts in Morocco, such as the Almohad fortress of Tīnmal, which the authors studied in great detail.

No major study appeared until the middle of the twentieth century. In 1946, the Arabic scholar, Muḥammad Rashīd Muḥīn, published a new study in Arabic about the

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<sup>47</sup> J. Aschbach, *Geschichte Spaniens und Portugals zur Zeit der Herrschaft der Almorawiden und Almohaden*, 2 vols (Frankfurt 1833-37); Arabic edition in *Tarīkh al-Andalus wa 'l-Maghrib fī 'Ahd al-Murabiṭīn wa 'l-Muwaḥḥidīn*, ed. M. A. 'Anan, 3 vols (Tetuan, 1939-40).

<sup>48</sup> R. Millet, *Les Almohades, histoire d'une dynastie berbère* (Paris, 1923).

<sup>49</sup> E. Lévi-Provençal, 'Ibn Tūmart et Abd al-Mūmin; le fakih du Sus et le 'flambeau des Almohades', in *Mémorial Henri Basset*, (Paris, 1928), vol. 2, pp. 21-37.

<sup>50</sup> H. Basset, H. Terrasse, *Sanctuaires et forteresses almohades* (Paris, 1932).

era of the Almohad Caliph, Ya‘qūb al-Manṣūr.<sup>51</sup> This was followed by another study on science and culture during the Almohad period by Muḥammad al-Manūnī in 1950.<sup>52</sup> Both are superficial studies and free of critical analysis. They also did not exploit new information that has been revealed by recently discovered sources, such as *Al-Mann bi-l-Imāma* of Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt. Another study on the era of Ya‘qūb al-Manṣūr, this time in French, was published in 1952 by the Egyptian researcher Sa‘d Zaghlūl ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd.<sup>53</sup> The author showed good research skills in his analysis of historical texts and presents a clear picture of political events during the period. Nevertheless, he did not benefit from the more recent discovery of historical sources, such as a new version of the manuscript of *al-Bayān al-Maghrib*, which deals specifically with the Almohad period.

In 1955, Leopoldo Torres Balbás published a study on the art of the Almoravid and Almohad period.<sup>54</sup> This was followed three years later by *Medieval Muslim Governments in Barbary until the Sixth Century of the Hijra* which was published by the scholar J. F. P. Hopkins in 1958.<sup>55</sup> His book describes institutional organisations and administrative practices in North Africa from the beginning of Islamic rule until the time of the Almohads. However, Hopkins tried to cover the political organisation of an area that had successively been ruled by a number of dynasties for over four centuries, and his study was therefore brief and sometimes gave generalised results. The author combed a wide range of published and manuscript sources relating to the history of North Africa. Nonetheless, it is almost impossible during this long period to trace in detail the organisation used under each dynasty, and Hopkins confines himself to giving scattered indications about a subject that requires careful and more specialised study.

At around the same time, the great Spanish scholar Ambrosio Huici Miranda presented one of the greatest works ever written on the history of the Almohads. His book *Historia política del imperio almohade*<sup>56</sup>, was not designed to deal with economic or cultural issues (unless incidentally), or with philosophy or religion, except with regard to essential information about Ibn Tūmart’s religious ideas. The author’s main

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<sup>51</sup> M. R. Mulīn, *‘Aṣr al-Manṣūr al-muwaḥḥidī* (Rabat, 1946).

<sup>52</sup> M. al-Manūnī, *al-‘Ulūm wa-l-ādāb wa-l-funūn ‘alā ‘ahad al-Muwaḥḥidīn* (Tetuán, 1950); New edition with a different title *Ḥaḍārt al-Muwaḥḥidīn* (Casablanca, 1989).

<sup>53</sup> S. Z. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd, *Abū Yūsuf al-Manṣūr l’Almohade (1184-1199)*. PhD dissertation, Pantheon-Sorbonne University (1952).

<sup>54</sup> L. Torres Balbás, *Artes Almoravide y Almohade* (Madrid, 1955); A new Arabic addition under the title *al-Fann al-Murābiṭī wa-l-Muwaḥḥidī*, ed. S. Ghāzī (Alexandria, 1971).

<sup>55</sup> J. F. P Hopkins, *Medieval Muslim government in Barbary until the sixth century of the, Hijra* (London, 1958).

<sup>56</sup> Huici Miranda, *Historia Política*.

objective was to establish a strict chronology of political and military events during the Almohads' rule by collecting and sifting the contradictory reports furnished by historians.

Huici Miranda published two other books dealing with the political history of al-Andalus during the same period. The first, *Las grandes batallas de la Reconquista durante las invasiones africanas*<sup>57</sup>, was published in 1956 and describes six major battles in detail: Zalaca (1086), Aledo (1088), Uclés (1108), Alarcos (1195), Las Navas de Tolosa (1212), and El Salado (1340). The second book, *Historia musulmana de Valencia y su region : novedades y rectificaciones*<sup>58</sup>, published in 1969, contains three volumes on the history of Eastern al-Andalus, particularly the Valencia region, from the Muslim conquest until the end of Islamic rule and the fall of Valencia into the hand of James I of Aragon in 1238. The section dealing with the Almohad period is in the third volume, in which specific themes are studied in great detail, e.g., the reign of Muḥammad b. Sa'd b. Mardanīsh, of Valencia and Murcia, and his conflict with the Almohads; Valencia's entry into the rule of the Almohads; the last Almohad governor Ibū Zayd; the rebellion of Ibn Hūd at Levante, and the end of Almohad domination.

Huici Miranda's writing was followed by the work of the Egyptian author Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh 'Inān, entitled *The Era of the Almoravids and Almohads in the Maghrib and al-Andalus*.<sup>59</sup> This book was written to complete the author's encyclopaedia of the history of Muslims in al-Andalus, which was begun in 1942. The encyclopaedia has six volumes and the history of the Almohads covers part of volume IV and all of volume V. His work is truly one of the greatest works on the history of Islamic rule in al-Andalus, and the part on the Almohad era demonstrates a deep knowledge and the ability to draw a clear picture of the history of this period. However, the potentially negative side of this study is that the author relied heavily, if not entirely, on Arabic primary sources, without mentioning the earlier studies which were familiar to him, such as the work of Huici Miranda, or the study by Joseph Aschbach, which was translated into Arabic by 'Inān himself some time previously. He also gives more attention to political events, while the cultural aspects are confined to one chapter at the end of the book.

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<sup>57</sup> Huici Miranda, *Las grandes batallas*.

<sup>58</sup> A. Huici Miranda, *Historia musulmana de Valencia y su region*, 3 vols (Valencia, 1969-70).

<sup>59</sup> M. A. 'Inān, *Dawlat al-Islām fī al-Andalus: al-'aṣr al-thālith, 'Aṣr al-Murābiṭīn wa-l-Muwaḥḥidīn fī al-Maghrib wa-l-Andalus, al-qism al-awal, 'Aṣr al-Murābiṭīn wa-bidāyat al-dawla al-Muwaḥḥidiyya* (Cairo, 1990); *al-qism al-thānī, 'Aṣr al-Muwaḥḥidīn wa-inhiyār al-Andalus al-Kubra* (Cairo, 1990).

The fall of the Almohads was William Montgomery Watt's subject in his article *The Decline of the Almohads: Reflections on the Viability of Religious Movements*, published in 1964.<sup>60</sup> Watt argued that the failure of the Almohads to keep their empire together was mainly due to the failure of the politico-social system, established by Ibn Tūmart to create a cohesive community in which people had the same interests and goals. Watt tried to understand the reason for the Almohads' collapse by comparing the movement of the Prophet Muḥammad and the movement of Ibn Tūmart. However, he was not very successful, because these movements have very different natures in terms of their factors, causes and objectives.

Another study, published by the Moroccan author 'Abd Allāh 'Alī 'Allām in 1968<sup>61</sup>, was about the era of Caliph 'Abd al-Mu'min and the progress of the Almohad conquest of North Africa and al-Andalus. It was called *al-Dawlah al-Muwaḥḥidiyya fī al-Maghrib fī 'Aḥad 'Abd al-Mu'min b. 'Alī*. The author describes the first phases of the Almohad movement and his characterisation of the political situation of al-Andalus during the late Almoravid period is the book's most successful section. However, his analysis is superficial and occasionally misleading. For example, his view of the factors that led to the fall of the Almoravids is, in fact, a reflection of the Almohad view, which can be found in the works of al-Baydhaq or Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, who were both basically sympathetic to the Almohad idea. Furthermore, his bibliography is limited and does not contain some of the major studies, such as the work of Huici Miranda. In the following year, an excellent study was presented by 'Izz al-Dīn Mūsā, *Tanzīmāt al-Muwaḥḥidīn wa-nuḥmum fī al-Maghrib*.<sup>62</sup> It examines the Almohad imperial administrative system using the entirety of the sources that are available in the time. The author's summary and organisation is superior to those of his predecessors, adopting a thematic outline and building tables that are based on referenced data. However, the problem of discrimination between the centre and the periphery, which is essential to understand this medieval empire, is not his principal focus. The author is, in some cases, confused about the administrative systems of the provinces and the centre, and, in other cases, he jumps to conclusions that are based on non-analysed individual data – for example, on the status of individuals and their offices.

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<sup>60</sup> W. M. Watt, 'The Decline of the Almohads: Reflections on the Viability of Religious Movements', *History of Religions*, 4 (1964), pp. 23-29.

<sup>61</sup> A. 'Allām, *al-Dawla al-Muwaḥḥidiyya fī al-Maghrib fī 'aḥad 'Abd al-Mu'min b. 'Alī* (Cairo, 1968).

<sup>62</sup> 'I. U. Mūsā, *Tanzīmāt al-Muwaḥḥidīn wa-nuḥmum fī al-Maghrib* (Beirut, 1969)

In the same year, 1969, the first full account of the Almohads in English was written by Professor Roger Le Tourneau.<sup>63</sup> His book, *The Almohad Movement in North Africa and the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, contains revised versions of three lectures delivered at Princeton University in 1959. The first, ‘The Birth of a Movement’, deals primarily with the biography of Ibn Tūmart, the Almohads’ founding figure. The second, entitled ‘Building an Empire’, is concerned with the Almohad Empire’s rise from the time of ‘Abd al-Mu’min until the death of Caliph al-Nāṣir, in 1213. The last chapter, ‘Decay and Collapse’, briefly describes the fall of the empire, and ends with a discussion and analysis of the causes of the empire's rapid disintegration. As Le Tourneau has pointed out, the book, which he called “a series of reflections on the Almohads”, was written to deal with two questions: How did the Almohads succeed in uniting North Africa and al-Andalus? And: Why did they fail to maintain this unity? Apart from what he regarded to be less important factors, such as the vastness of the empire, attacks by Spanish Christians, and resistance to assimilation by the Arab tribes, Le Tourneau considered ‘Abd al-Mu’min to be primarily responsible for the decline, since he ‘destroyed the essential nature of the Almohad movement’, as the rulers were chosen by blood ties, rather than by religious qualifications. The same issue was of interest to the Libyan scholar, Marāji‘ al-Ghannāy, who published two books on the subject: the first, in 1970, under the title *Qiyām dawlat al-Muwaḥḥidīn*<sup>64</sup>, and the second, a less useful work, is entitled, *Suqūṭ dawlat al-Muwaḥḥidīn*<sup>65</sup>, and was published in 1982. In his works, al-Ghannāy argues that the rise and fall of the Almohads was mainly due to the competitive nature of the Berber tribes, who were trying to gain their own authority, and their inability to accept the concept of a one-state system. He also points out the racial prejudice among the populations of al-Andalus and al-Maghrib, and its impact on the strength of the empire.

Few studies were published during the 1970s and the larger body of studies has dealt either the thought and the doctrine of Ibn Tūmart (for example, the works of S‘ad Zaghlūl ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd<sup>66</sup>, Rachid Bourouiba<sup>67</sup>, and Dominique Urvoy<sup>68</sup>), or they dealt with topics of art and culture (for instance, Ḥikmat Awsī’s work “*al-Adab al-Andalusī fi*

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<sup>63</sup> Le Tourneau, *The Almohad Movement*.

<sup>64</sup> M. A. Ghannāy, *Qiyām dawlat al-Muwaḥḥidīn*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Banghazi, 1988).

<sup>65</sup> Ghannāy, *Suqūṭ dawlat al-Muwaḥḥidīn*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Banghazi, 1988).

<sup>66</sup> S. Z. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd, *Muḥammad b. Tūmart wa-ḥarakat al-tajdīd fī al-Maghrib wa-l-Andalus* (Beirut, 1973).

<sup>67</sup> R. Bourouiba, *Ibn Tūmart* (Alger, 1974).

<sup>68</sup> D. Urvoy, ‘La Pensée d’Ibn Tūmart’, *Bulletin d’Études Orientales*, 2 (1974), pp. 19-44.

‘*Asr al-Muwahhidin*’<sup>69</sup>, and Juan Vernet’s study *La cultura hispanoarabe en oriente y occidente*).<sup>70</sup> However, since the early eighties, there has been an increase in the number of studies dealing with various topics that are related to the Almohad period. Among them is a work by Ḥasan ‘Alī Ḥasan, *Al-Ḥaḍara al-Islāmiyya fī al-Maghrib wa-l-Andalus*, which first appeared in 1980. This book presents itself as the first serious attempt to study the civilisation of the Almoravids and the Almohads. However, the treatment is mostly superficial and involves only the most obvious events.

A number of researchers have attempted to write biographies of the early Almohad caliphs; examples include Ṭālib Hāshimī, whose book, *Abū Yūsuf Ya‘qūb al-Manṣūr*, was published in 1982<sup>71</sup>; and Ibrāhīm ‘Alī Ḥasan, who devoted the third book of his series, which was about important figures in the history of Morocco, to writing a biography of the first Caliph, ‘*Abd al-Mu‘min b. ‘Alī al-Kūmī*.<sup>72</sup> Some researchers have also chosen to address particular aspects of the Almohad period. Hanna Kassis published an article entitled *Qāḍī ‘Iyād’s Rebellion against the Almohads in Sabtah*.<sup>73</sup> Through the examination of newly discovered rare Dinār, struck in 1147, Kassis provided new information about the nature of the relationship between Qāḍī ‘Iyād (the qāḍī and leader of Ceuta) and the Almohads. José Marinho, for his part, examined the financial situation of Ibn Qaṣī, who was leader of Silves, during the early Almohad period.<sup>74</sup> Another article, published by F. Montequin, refers to the art and architecture in al-Andalus and al-Maghrib during the era of the Almoravids and Almohads.<sup>75</sup>

Ibn Tūmart and the doctrine of the Almohads have always been a topic of discussion. In 1983 and 1984, Tunisian scholar ‘Abd al-Majīd al-Najjār published two important books on this subject. The first was his doctoral thesis *Al-Mahdī b. Tūmart: ḥayātuhu wa-ārā‘uhu wa-thawratuhu al-fikriyya wa-l-ijtimā‘iyya wa-atharuhu fī al-Maghrib*<sup>76</sup>, while the second, *Tajribat al-Iṣlāḥ fī Ḥarakat al-Mahdī b. Tūmart*<sup>77</sup>, was

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<sup>69</sup> H. Al-Awsī, *al-Adab al-Andalusī fī ‘asr al-Muwahhidin* (Cairo, 1977).

<sup>70</sup> J. Vernet, *La cultura hispanoarabe en oriente y occidente* (Barcelona, 1978).

<sup>71</sup> Ṭ. Hāshimī, *Abū Yūsuf Ya‘qūb al-Manṣūr Billāh* (Lāhaur, 1982).

<sup>72</sup> I. A. Ḥasan, ‘Abd al-Mu‘min b. ‘Alī al-Kūmī al-Muwahhidī’, *Khālidūn fī tārikh al-Maghrib*, 3 (Casablanca, 1986).

<sup>73</sup> Hanna E. Kassis, ‘Qāḍī ‘Iyād’s Rebellion against the Almohads in Sabtah (A.H. 542-543/A.D. 1147-1148) New Numismatic Evidence’, *The American Oriental Society*, 103 (1983), pp. 505-514.

<sup>74</sup> J. R. Marinho, ‘The monetary issues of Ahmad Ibn Qasi in Silves and the beginning of the characteristic Almohad coinage’, in *Actas do II Simpósio sobre Problemas of Medieval Coinage in the Iberian Area* (Avilés, 1986), pp. 43-58.

<sup>75</sup> F.-A. de Montequin, ‘Muslim Spain and the Maghrib: The Artistic Relationship in the Almoravid and Almohad Periods’, *Bulletin (British Society for Middle Eastern Studies)*, 14 (1987), pp. 162-171.

<sup>76</sup> ‘A. al-Najjār, *al-Mahdī b. Tūmart, ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Maghribī al-Sūsī: ḥayātuhu wa-ārā‘uhu wa-thawratuhu al-fikriyya wa-l-ijtimā‘iyya wa-atharuhu fī al-Maghrib* (Beirut, 1983).

more specialised. Al-Najjār was a scholar who was interested in Islamic religious movements, which gave him the confidence to present a detailed biography of Ibn Tūmart, his political-religious doctrine and how it influenced the Berber community in al-Maghrib. Other useful studies include those by Ismail, *A consideration of Muslim texts concerning the Mahdī Ibn Tūmart in light of discourse theory*,<sup>78</sup> and Ben-Ḥammadi's *La Rencontre entre le 'Faḳīh du Sus' et le 'Flambeau des Almohades': Note a propos de la relation d'al-Baydaq*.<sup>79</sup> Ismail's work describes the life of Ibn Tūmart and the term 'the Mahdī' through examination of contemporary texts, while Amor discusses the meeting between Ibn Tūmart and his successor, 'Abd al-Mu'min b. 'Alī, through al-Baydhaq's book. There are also articles by Cornell<sup>80</sup> and Lomax<sup>81</sup> that discuss the religious and moral reform of Ibn Tūmart as being one of the main factors in the success of the Almohad movement, as well as a factor in its weakness and collapse.

Al-Andalus in the era of the Almohads is a theme that has attracted many historians. Among them is 'Aṣmat Dandash, whose book, *al-Andalus fī nihāyat al-Murābiṭīn wa-mustahal al-Muwaḥḥidīn*<sup>82</sup>, was published in 1988. The book has four chapters dealing with themes relating to the culture of al-Andalus during the period from 1116 to 1151 (the second *Taiḳa* period). Based on extensive study of primary sources, Dandash has provided a clear description of different political, economic and social activities. However, as the title of her book suggests, she was much more concerned with the history of the Almoravids, and therefore the information given about the Almohads is brief and only covers a short period in their rule.

In 1992, Salma Jayyusi edited a major work dealing with various aspects of the culture and society of Muslim Spain. The book was produced by 42 international scholars, who are considered specialists in the fields on which they have written. The book, which was entitled *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*<sup>83</sup>, includes 49 articles, and it is divided into nine major themes and deals with history, language and literature, music,

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<sup>77</sup> 'A. al-Najjār, *Tajribat al-İslāḥ fī ḥarakat al-Mahdī b. Tūmart: al-Ḥaḳāra al-Muwaḥḥidiyya bi-l-Maghrib awā'il al-qarn 6H* (Herndon, 1995).

<sup>78</sup> M. D. Ismail, *A consideration of Muslim texts concerning the Mahdī Ibn Tūmart in light of discourse theory*. PhD dissertation, Ohio State University (1989).

<sup>79</sup> A. Ben-Ḥammadi, 'La Rencontre entre le 'Faḳīh du Sus' et le 'Flambeau des Almohades': Note a propos de la relation d'al-Baydaq', *L'Institut des Belles Lettres Arabes*, 54 (1991), pp. 3-13.

<sup>80</sup> V. J. Cornell, 'Understanding is the Mother of Ability: Responsibility and Action in the Doctrine of Ibn Tūmart', *Studia Islamica*, 66 (1987), pp. 71-103.

<sup>81</sup> Lomax, 'Heresy and orthodoxy in the fall of Almohad Spain', pp. 37-48.

<sup>82</sup> 'I Dandash, *al-Andalus fī nihāyat al-Murābiṭīn wa-mustahal al-Muwaḥḥidīn: 'aṣr al-Ṭawā'if al-thānī, 510-546 H/1116-1151 M: tāriḳh siyāsī wa-ḥaḳāra* (Cairo, 1988).

<sup>83</sup> S. K. Jayyusi, ed., *The Legacy of Muslim Spain* (Leiden, 1992).

art and architecture, social history and lifestyle, economic history, philosophy, religious studies, science, technology and agriculture. With a wide range of articles and extensive bibliography, this book is an excellent reference work for those interested in Muslim Spain's great legacy and its influence on medieval Christendom. However, other than an article written by Madeleine Fletcher under the title 'Al-Andalus and North Africa in the Almohad Ideology'<sup>84</sup>, there is little information about the Almohad era, and what there is often relates to areas of art, culture and lifestyle. Furthermore, Fletcher's article focuses on the work of Ibn Tūmart, *A'azzu mā-yuṭlab*, and the doctrine of the Almohads, in order to understand their influence on the communities of al-Maghrib and al-Andalus. It does not, therefore, provide any useful information with regard to Almohad political and administrative structures.

A further study on the history of al-Andalus is that of Moḥammad Aḥmad Abū al-Faḍl, *Sharq al-Andalus fī al-ʿAṣr al-Islāmī (1121-1287)*, published in 1996.<sup>85</sup> This study deals with the political and cultural history of Eastern al-Andalus from the late Almoravid era until the fall of the Almohads and the end of the last Muslim ruler in the East of al-Andalus. In general, the author presents a rich study of the history of Western al-Andalus and gives a clear picture of a period of volatile and complex political events. He also addresses topics related to society, economy and cultural life, as well as art and architecture.

Another valuable study is the work of Hugh Kennedy, *Muslim Spain and Portugal: A political history of al-Andalus*, published in 1996.<sup>86</sup> It is the first English book to provide an outline of the whole history of Islamic rule in the Iberian Peninsula. As is clear from the title, this is a book on the political history of al-Andalus from the arrival of the Muslims in 711 until the fall of Granada, the last Muslim kingdom, in 1492. There is, therefore, nothing much here about social and economic life, or about art and architecture. It is much concerned with how the rulers controlled, or failed to control, their communities. With regard to the Almohads, Kennedy presents two chapters that provide useful insights into the military organisation and gives an excellent overview of the rise and the fall of the empire.

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<sup>84</sup> M. Fletcher, 'al-Andalus and North Africa in the Almohad ideology', in S. Jayyusi (ed.), *Legacy of Muslim Spain* (Leiden, 1992), pp. 235-258.

<sup>85</sup> M. A. Abū al-Faḍl, *Sharq al-Andalus fī al-ʿaṣr al-Islāmī (515-686H/1121-1287): dirāsah fī al-tārīkh al-siyāsī wa-al-ḥaqāirī* (Alexandria, 1996).

<sup>86</sup> Kennedy, *Muslim Spain and Portugal*.

In a 1997 study, concerning the period of Berber rule in al-Andalus, which formed part VIII of the magnificent Spanish *Historia de España (El retroceso territorial de al-Andalus: Almoravides y Almohades)*<sup>87</sup>, was presented by a group of Spanish researchers. The study is a rich collection of articles divided into eight chapters, which deal with political history, governmental institutions, economy, society, religion, intellectual life, and artistic developments. In relation to the Almohad political system, the study includes four articles, presented together under the title 'Las instituciones'. The first of these articles, 'Instituciones Políticas', is by Rafaela Castrillo Marquez, and she describes the changes that occurred in the form of the Almohad political regime by the caliph 'Abd al-Mu'min, through which the authority was entirely transferred to his family. Luis Molina Martínez provides valuable information about political figures and the prominent families whose members enjoyed a leading position in the Almohad government as viziers or secretaries, with particular reference to the reign of 'Abd al-Mu'min. Finally, a study on the judiciary during the Almoravid and Almohad periods is given by Fernando Rodríguez titled 'Instituciones judiciales: cadíes y otras magistraturas'. Although the part on the Almohads is relatively brief, the article provides valuable information about the judge and his political and social status in al-Andalus during the reign of the Berber Dynasties.<sup>88</sup>

A new collection of biographies was published in Spanish by Maria Luisa Avila and Maribel Fierro in 2000, and it was entitled *Biografías Almohades*.<sup>89</sup> The work formed volumes nine and ten of the series '*Estudios onomásticos-biográficos de al-Andalus*', which first appeared in 1988. With 16 articles written by members of various research teams, the book contains biographical dictionaries of numerous Andalusian figures and families during the Almohad era. Two years later, 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Sāmarrā'ī published a study on the civilisation of al-Andalus and al-Maghrib. The book has three chapters, the first gives a brief discussion of the concept of Islamic civilisation in contemporary literature; the second presents a historical outline of al-Andalus and

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<sup>87</sup> Marfa Jesús Viguera Molins (ed), *El retroceso territorial de al-andalus: Almoravides y Almohades, siglos XI al XIII, Historia de España* (Madrid, 1997), vol. 8.

<sup>88</sup> F. Rodríguez Mediano, 'Instituciones judiciales: cadíes y otras magistraturas', in *El retroceso territorial de al-andalus: Almoravides y Almohades, siglos XI al XIII, Historia de España*, ed. Marfa Jesús Viguera Molins (Madrid, 1997), vol. 8, pp. 171-186.

<sup>89</sup> M. Fierro, M. L. Ávila (eds), *Estudios onomástico-biográficos de Al-Andalus : Biografías Almohades*, vols. 9-10 (Madrid - Granada, 1999).

North Africa during the Almoravid and Almohad eras; and the final chapter deals with themes of social and economic life, literature, science and architecture.<sup>90</sup>

There are also some studies that have dealt with more defined topics, and among these is the work of Robert Ignatius Burns: *‘Almohad Prince and Mudejar Convert: New Documentation on Abū Zayd’*, which was published in 1997.<sup>91</sup> Through the study of new documents selected from the Archivo de la Corona de Aragón, Burns highlights the life and works of Abū Zayd, who was the last ruler of Almohad Valencia in Spain, and who later converted to Christianity before dying in 1269. Another article is that of Maribel Fierro, *‘Alfonso X "The Wise": The Last Almohad Caliph?’*<sup>92</sup> In this article, the author discusses the intellectual influences of Islam on Christian culture through studying the Almohad political and cultural project to find parallels with Alfonso X of Castile’s political and cultural project. The same author has also published two further articles; the first of which is called: *‘Spiritual Alienation and political Activism: The ḡurabā’ in al-Andalus during the Sixth/Twelfth Century’*.<sup>93</sup> This study discusses the extent to which Almohad ideology was a new concept in the Muslim West and whether it was part of a deeper and more extended belief among different groups and individuals. Fierro’s other article, *‘Algunas reflexiones sobre el poder itinerante Almohade’*<sup>94</sup>, deals with the military regimes of the Almohads. This subject also interested Fāyiza Kallās, in his article *‘al-Jaysh ‘inda al-Muwahhidīn’*, published in 1988.<sup>95</sup> Both articles describe the organisation of the army and the techniques of their movement, in addition to their weapons, military spending and supply routes.

Between 2000 and 2002, three conferences were held, at the Casa de Velázquez in Madrid, under the title *Los Almohades: Problemas y Perspectivas*, and the 38 articles that resulted were edited by Maribel Fierro, Patrice Cressier, and Luis Molina in 2005.<sup>96</sup> This book is divided into three chapters that deal with (1) archaeology, epigraphy,

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<sup>90</sup> ‘A. al-Sāmarrā’ī, *Tārīkh ḥaḍārat al-Maghrib wa-l-Andalus fī ‘ahday al-Murābiṭīn wa-l-Muwahhidīn* (Tripoli, 2002).

<sup>91</sup> R. I. Burns, ‘Almohad Prince and Mudejar Convert: New Documentation on Abū Zayd’, in *Medieval Iberia: Essays on the History & Literature of Medieval Spain*, eds, Donald J. Kagay & Joseph I. Snow (New York, 1997), pp. 171-188.

<sup>92</sup> M. Fierro, ‘Alfonso X "The Wise": The Last Almohad Caliph?’, *Medieval Encounters*, 15 (2009), pp. 175-198.

<sup>93</sup> M. Fierro, ‘Spiritual Alienation and Political Activism: The ḡurabā’ in al-Andalus during the Sixth/Twelfth Century’, *Arabica*, 47 (2000), pp. 230-260.

<sup>94</sup> M. Fierro, ‘Algunas reflexiones sobre el poder itinerante Almohade’, Ed. Georges Martin et Françoise Lainé. *e-Spania*, 8. *Itinérance des cours* (September 2, 2015). <http://e-spania.revues.org/index18653.html#article-18653>.

<sup>95</sup> F. Kallās, *al-Jaysh ‘inda al-Muwahhidīn*, *Majallat al-dirāsāt al-tārīkhiyya*, 31(1988), pp. 191- 225.

<sup>96</sup> P. Cressier, M. Fierro and L. Molina (eds), *Los Almohades: Problemas y Perspectivas*, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2 vols (Madrid, 2005).

architecture etc., (2) political and military organisation, and (3) doctrine, intellectual activity and religious practices. Among a wide range of articles that are of relevance to this thesis, mention should be made of Manuela Marín's 'El califa almohade: una presencia activa y benéfica' (pp. 451-476), in which the author describes the strong reactions of the caliphs to the bad behaviour of management towards the citizens. Another contribution, 'La chancellerie Almohade' (pp. 477-503), comes from Hicham Al-'Allaoui, and Pascal Buresi. In this article, the authors argue that although advisory boards had been introduced into the Almohad government from the beginning of the movement, important decisions, particularly those regarding declarations of war or peace, were still mostly issued by the caliph himself. The authors believe that autonomy in a country that was spread over such a large area created obvious problems. The judicial system is the subject of El-Mostafa Benouis's article, 'L'organisation du gadá sous les Almohades' (pp. 505-524). Here, he discusses the authority of *Qāḍī* and how it was influenced by Almohad domestic policy and by the other ranks of the Almohad hierarchy, the *ṭalaba* and the *ḥuffāz*. The *ṭalaba* are studied by Émile Fricaud in 'La place des talaba dans la société almohade Mu'minide' (pp. 525-545), in which he seeks to analyse the function of the *ṭalaba* in the Almohad government in order to understand how this institution has played a major role in the political events of the region, particularly during the establishment of the empire.

Among other articles, Jean-Pierre Molénat contributes 'L'organisation militaire des Almohades' (pp. 547-565), in which he describes the dimensions of the Almohad army and their movement strategy. In a similar vein, Christophe Picard in 'La politique navale des premiers califes almohades un système de gouvernement et de souveraineté' (pp. 567-584), analyses naval policy during the Almohad golden ages.

Almohad tax and currency are discussed by Rejae Mesmoudi and Pierre Guichard in '*Biens sultaniens, fiscalité et monnaie à l'époque almohade*' (pp. 585-615). Vincent Lagardère, in '*Le gihād almohade: théorie et pratique*' (pp. 617-631), comes to the conclusion that the concept of *gihād* underwent a modification with the Almohads; from being a religious duty against non-Muslims, it was extended to include Muslims who refused to accept the Almohad doctrine. Another valuable study is that of Halima Ferhat, '*Lignages et individus dans le système de pouvoir almohade*' (pp. 685-704). Ferhat analyses the variable policies used by the Almohad caliphs to maintain their power, or to undermine the ability of their opponents. Finally, María Jesús Viguera, in '*Las reacciones de los andalusíes ante los almohades*' (pp. 705-735), attempts to solve

the mystery of the rapid collapse of Almohad authority through the study of the nature of relations between Berbers and Andalusians. She believes that one of the main reasons for this collapse was the resurgence of Andalusian nationalism, which rejected the hegemony of the Berbers, alongside the growing dissatisfaction of the Mālikī 'ulamā' at the Almohad rituals and orthodoxies which were imposed upon them.

Amongst the most significant work of recent years is a study by Allen J. Fromherz, *The Almohads: the Rise of an Islamic Empire*, which was a Ph.D. thesis that was presented at the University of St. Andrews in 2006, and, more recently, published as a book.<sup>97</sup> It has four chapters: the first describes the rise of the Almohads in the life of Ibn Tūmart, the second explains the process that was used by Ibn Tūmart and the Almohads to create a hierarchy of Berber Atlas tribes and, the third deals with Ibn Tūmart's doctrine and his book 'Azzu mā-Yuṭlab. The final chapter analyses the methodology and the theory of Ibn Tūmart. The author's object was to understand how a group of tribes succeeded in ruling North Africa and al-Andalus, but his main concern was Ibn Tūmart, and the way in which he succeeded in establishing his reform movement and attracting supporters.

Finally, another excellent study was published very recently by Buresi: *Governing the Empire: Provincial Administration in the Almohad Caliphate*.<sup>98</sup> The book offers a translation and comprehensive study of an Arabic manuscript from the Ḥasaniyya Library, Rabat, and it contains 77 letters about the *taqādīm* (appointment) of provincial officials that were previously published by Aḥmad 'Azzawī. The letters of appointment are from the period of weakening caliphal power and reduced imperial territory. As the author states, the aim of his study is "to articulate the technical approach of the texts and the political language structures that were in use at the time". The importance of the study is that it deals with the period from the late Almohad era, from which extant sources and documents are few. However, there are many aspects that have not been spotlighted, because the manuscript deals with narrow and very specific political structures that cannot provide a complete reflection of the politically complex period. In fact, only 25% of the 77 letters in the *taqādīm* can be dated. More than 85% have no names, including the names of the sender, recipient, places, and destinations. In these circumstances, the manuscript and the information that could be derived from it has lost

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<sup>97</sup> Fromherz, *The Almohads*.

<sup>98</sup> P. Buresi, *Governing the Empire: Provincial Administration in the Almohad Caliphate (1224-1269)* (Leiden, 2013).

much of its value, and thus analyses and conclusions were either overly general or significantly limited.

Collectively, these works represent an important contribution to knowledge. However, many aspects of the Almohad government and its administrative practices remain insufficiently studied, particularly regarding al-Andalus. This thesis seeks to fill that gap.

## ***Research Project***

The principal aim of this thesis is to provide a comprehensive study of the political and administrative institutions of al-Andalus under the Almohads (1147-1228), with the intention of understanding how a group of different tribes, with no experience of political activity, was able to constitute an effective government which came to lead a vast, sprawling empire. The progress started when Ibn Tūmart instituted a strict hierarchy, or a political-social system, through which he succeeded in transforming the tribes of the Atlas Mountains from being a series of conflicting communities into being a strong confederation. This system formed the basis for the caliph 'Abd al-Mu'min in the formation of political, administrative and military frameworks which soon took their way to all regions of al-Andalus and were superimposed over the structures of pre-existing governmental institutions of the provinces. The shape of this system is relatively clear. However, our information about the changes and the developments that occurred in relation to these institutions is obscure. The way in which they worked, their effectiveness, activities and roles are often complex and unclear.

These are the main research questions that are addressed by the present study:

- What political and administrative structures did the Almohads establish in al-Andalus?
- Did the administrative systems differ greatly from earlier peninsular practice?
- Who were the administrators? What can we discover about the careers of such functionaries?
- To what extent were administrative functions carried out by North African appointees, or by peninsular supporters of the Almohads?
- How were the systems of government structured and operated? How effective were they?

- How were they affected by the erosion of Almohad power?
- Can the Almohad documents shed new light on the collapse of the empire?
- What was the impact of Almohad ideology on the status of the *Mālikī* School? Did the *fuqahā* maintain the same status they enjoyed during the Almoravid era?

## ***Thesis structure and Methodology***

This thesis presents a study of the political and administrative structures of the Almohad government in al-Andalus during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It will do this by examining the information which can be collected from a variety of materials, including historical and geographical sources, biographical dictionaries, and Almohad documents. The value of these materials is very uneven, depending on the sources from which they were drawn and the subject being considered. Some of the information relating to specific issues is very limited, which means that answers are not easily forthcoming and a certain amount of speculation and discussion is necessary. In rare cases, in order to fill a gap or clarify a procedure, the study will resort to parallel examples from regional governments outside of al-Andalus, such as the province of Tunis or Fez, taking into account the similarity of their administrative and political organisations. Also, by virtue of the centralisation of Almohad caliphate, the political and administrative relationship between the governments of al-Andalus and central authority of Marrakesh will be highlighted where appropriate. It is hoped that the present study will leave the historian with a far greater understanding of the governments of al-Andalus and their development under the rule of the Almohads. With this aim in mind, the thesis will be divided into four chapters, each tackling a major aspect of the Almohad government's administrative system.

The first chapter will address the foundation of Almohad political organisation. In order to provide a complete understanding of this field, this chapter is divided into two sections: the first examines the the Almohad hierarchy and the primitive political organisation of Ibn Tūmart. Although the establishment of this organisation took place in al-Maghrib, outside the scope of the study, the political structures which emanated from it have found their place in the future state and formed a key element in its political, administrative institutions. Therefore, study of this hierarchical structure is necessary in order to understand the nature of its formation, its development and its functions within the Almohad government, especially in al-Andalus. I will try to

ascertain the causes that led to the establishment of the Almohad pyramid, thereby indicating the political objectives which Ibn Tūmart wished to gain by its use. Then I will examine its ranks, in an attempt to eliminate the confusion among the primary sources about their order and the identity of those belonging to them. I will also analyse the objectives of each rank, including the function of the advisory councils, which were held regularly to discuss matters that required urgent action. The second part of this chapter will scrutinise the reform introduced by ‘Abd al-Mu’min to the Tūmart hierarchy during the transition process of the Almohads, from being a simple movement to becoming a great empire.

Chapter Two focuses on the political administrative apparatus of the empire, with particular reference to al-Andalus. The aim is to examine its structures, the ways in which the system worked, and the extent to which this system was influenced by the Almohad organisation, or by earlier peninsular practice.

The financial organisation of al-Andalus will be the subject under study in the third chapter. Here we will examine the mechanisms of that organisation by shedding light on its administrative structures, their activities and the duties of officials and then we will look at the nature of the relationship of this institution with local authorities on the one hand and with the central sovereignty of Marrakesh on the other. The second part of the chapter will address the revenue of state treasury and its expenditure in order to identify the extent of their development, and the effectiveness of state policy in dealing with financial challenges, particularly with regard to tax matters. To complement the picture, the last part of the chapter will be devoted to the study of coinage and the stages of its development.

Chapter Four will address the judicial organisation and its offices, such as *Qādī*, the *ḥisba*, and the *shurṭa*. It will also highlight religious functions, namely the Imāma, *Khaṭīb* and *mu’dhdhin* and finally analyse the attempts of the sovereign to reform judicial law by adopting a regenerative project against the *Mālikī* School. In this thesis I have not undertaken an analysis of military organisation under the Almohads, because this has already been studied in depth by a number of authors.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> V. Aguilar Sebastián, ‘Instituciones militares. El ejército’, pp. 192-208; another article by the same author ‘Política de ‘Abd al-Mu’min con los árabes de Ifriqiya’, pp. 17-30; Klās, ‘Al-Jaysh ‘inda al-Muwaḥḥidīn’, *Dirāsāt Tārīkhiyya*, 31-32 (1989), pp. 197-218; J. Molénat, ‘L’Organisation militaire des Almohades’, in *Los Almohades: Problemas y Perspectivas* (Madrid, 2005), vol. 2, pp. 547-565; F. Kallās, ‘al-Jaysh ‘inda al-Muwaḥḥidīn’, *Majallat al-dirāsāt al-tārīkhiyya*, 31(1988), pp.191- 225; S A. Sālim and A M. ‘Abbāsī, *Tārīkh al-baḥriyya al-Islāmiyya fī al-Maghrib wa-l-Andalus* (Beirut, 1969).

## **Sources**

This research is based on a range of primary sources that can be divided into five main types: official documents, the work of Ibn Tūmart, chronicles, dictionaries of biographies, and geographical sources. It should be noted that this study does not deal with Christian sources of the period, such as the anonymous *Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris*, Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada's *De rebus Hispaniae* or the *Chronica latina regum Castellae* attributed to Bishop Juan of Osma, because they refer only to Almohad military operations and have nothing significant to tell us about the Andalusian Government and its administrative and political institutions.<sup>100</sup>

### **1- Official Documents**

Two sets of documents belonging to the Almohad government have been discovered and published. Both are collections of official letters sent from the Almohad caliphs to governments in the states of the empire, and from the administrators to the caliphs. It also includes some correspondence between the Almohad government and neighbouring countries. These letters were written on different occasions and for a variety of reasons, but they were also used as a propaganda tool for the Almohad doctrine. Nevertheless, they reveal numerous details about the administrative and financial systems of the Almohad government, as well as their military progress. They also give us an overview of the nature of the work in these institutions, and the stages in their change.

So far, some 241 Almohad letters have been recovered. They were written by a range of *qāḍī*-s and caliphs. Perhaps the reason behind the large number of letters was due to different factors, such as the vast size of the empire, the massive increase in the revenue gathered, and the multiplicity of their military operations and the Caliphs' attempts to spread their ideology and to protect their status. On the other hand, by examining the dates on which the letters were issued, we can clearly identify a significant gap between the number of letters issued during the reigns of the first five caliphs and the number of those issued in the empire's second period. This could be a

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<sup>100</sup> *Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris*, ed. A. Maya Sánchez, in *Chronica Hispana saeculi XII. Part I*, CCCM 71 (Turnhout, 1990), pp. 109-248; Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada, *Historia de rebus Hispanie sive Historia Gothica*, ed. J. Fernández Valverde, CCCM 72 (Turnhout, 1987); *Chronica latina regum Castellae*, ed. L. Charlo Brea, in *Chronica Hispana saeculi XIII*, CCCM 73 (Turnhout, 1997), pp. 7-118.

sign of collapse within the organs of the government as a result of poor communication between them, which could ultimately have led to the fall of the empire.

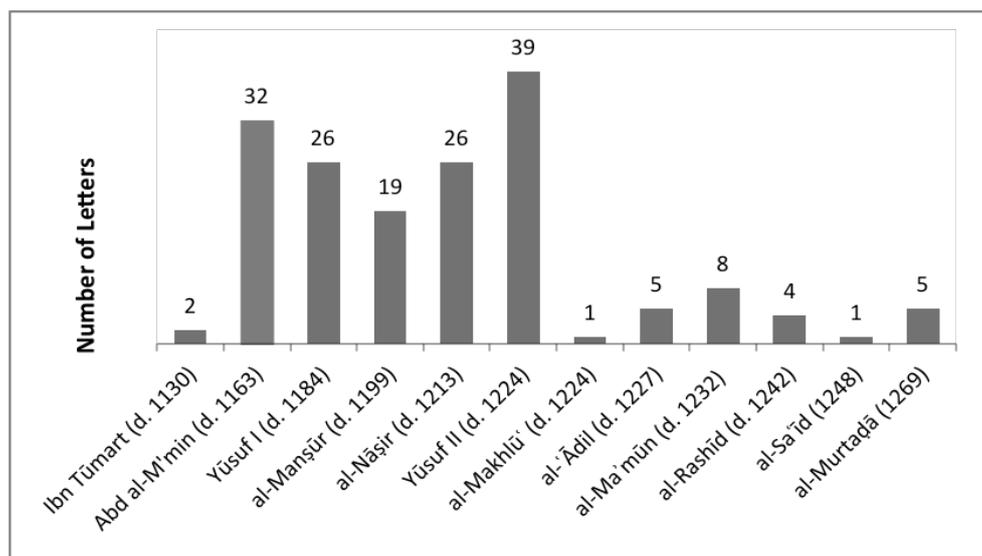


Figure 2: The Almohad official Letters

The first set of these documents is contained in a manuscript found in the library of El Escorial and published by the French scholar, Lévi Provençal, in 1941<sup>101</sup>. These documents consist of 37 official letters, including a letter added from the encyclopaedia of Aḥmad al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-A'sha*. These letters were issued by the first four Caliphs: 23 of them by Caliph 'Abd al-mu'min, three by Caliph Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf, nine by Caliph al-Manṣūr, and two letters by Caliph al-Nāṣir.

Figure 3: The Almohad letters, Lévi-Provençal's Collection

NO	Date of issue	From	To
1	-	The Caliph 'Abd al-Mu'min	The government and citizens of Ceuta.
2	-		The judge Abū al-Gāssim Muḥammad b. al-Ḥāj.
3	18/08/1148		Residents of a town called Tāsghrit in Morocco.
4	27/08/1148		The Almoravid governor Yaḥyā b. Ghania.
5	-		The government of Ceuta.
6	11/06/1149		The <i>Sheikh</i> -s of Córdoba.
7	27/08/1152		Residents of Constantine.
8	10/11/1152		The government of Tlemcen.
9	26/06/1153		<i>Sheikh</i> Abū Muḥammad Wasnār and the residents of Marrakesh.

<sup>101</sup> E. Lévi-Provençal (ed), *Majmū' Rasā'il muwahḥidiyya min inshā' kuttāb al-dawla al-mu'miniyya* (Rabat, 1941).

10	08/09/1153		Ibn Mardanīsh of Valencia and Murcia.
11	-		Anonymous
12	-		The government of Tlemcen.
13	-		The government of Ceuta and Tangier.
14	05/05/1156		The government of Ceuta.
15	26/07/1156		The government of Ceuta.
16	09/1157		The government of Béjaïa.
17	13/11/1157		Anonymous
18	11/08/1158		The government of al-Andalus.
19	03/12/1159		The government of Córdoba.
20	-		The government and the residents of Córdoba.
21	03/05/1160		The government and the residents of Fez.
22	-		Anonymous
23	01/04/1161		The government of Béjaïa.
24	-	<b>The Caliph Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf</b>	<i>Sayyid</i> Abū Sa‘īd ‘Uthmān and <i>Sheikh</i> Abū Sa‘īd Yakhluḥ b. al-Ḥassan.
25	29/05/1169		Ibn Mardanīsh of Valencia and Murcia.
26	04/03/1181		The government and residents of Córdoba.
27	16/08/1184	<b>The Caliph Ya‘qūb al-Manṣūr</b>	The government and residents of Granada.
28	01/1185		The government and residents of Seville.
29	06/07/1185		The government and residents of Seville.
30	23/10/1187		The government and residents of Marrakesh.
31	05/11/1187		The government and residents of Tunis.
32	14/01/1188		The government and residents of Marrakesh.
33	09/05/1188		The government and residents of Marrakesh.
34	31/07/1190		The government and residents of Ceuta.
35	05/11/1195	The government and residents of Fez.	
36	-	<b>The Caliph al-Nāṣir</b>	Anonymous
37	-		Anonymous

The second collection of documents is Aḥmad ‘Azzāwī’s study, which was presented as a thesis at the University of Rabat in 1985. His thesis was published in two volumes: the first published in 1995<sup>102</sup> contains a collection of Almohad documents, while the second volume was published in 2001<sup>103</sup>, and it includes a study of the corpus. The letters are presented in five chapters that cover political issues derived from the Almohad letters, such as: domestic events in Morocco during the twelfth century; the relations between the Almohads and the North African states; the political conflict between the Almohads and the Christian kingdoms in al-Andalus; and, finally, the last chapter deals with some of the cultural aspects that are selected from these letters.

<sup>102</sup> *Rasā’il Muwahḥidiyya, majmū‘ah jadīdah*, ed. A. ‘Azzāwī (Rabat, 1995), vol. 1.

<sup>103</sup> ‘Azzāwī, *Rasā’il Muwahḥidiyya* (Rabat, 2001), vol. 2.

No		Period of issue
1-2	2	Ibn Tūmart (1121-1130)
3-11	9	The Caliph ‘Abd al-Mu’min (1130-1163)
12-34	23	The Caliph Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf (1163-1184)
35-44	10	The Caliph Ya‘qūb al-Manşūr (1184-1199)
45-68	24	The Caliph Muḥammad al-Nāşir (1199-1213)
69-107	39	The Caliph Yūsuf II (al-Mustaşir) (1213-1224)
108	1	The Caliph ‘Abd al-Wāḥid b. Yūsuf (al-Makhlū‘) (1224- 8 months)
109-113	5	The Caliph ‘Abd Allāh al-‘Ādil (1224-1227)
114-121	8	The Caliph Abū’l-‘Ulā Idrīs al-Ma’mūn (1227-1232)
122-125	4	The Caliph ‘Abd al-Wāḥid al-Raşīd (1232-1242)
126	1	The Caliph Abū’l-Ḥasan ‘Alī al-Sa’īd (1242-1248)
127-131	5	The Caliphs ‘Umar al-Murtaḍā (1284-1266) & Abū Dabbūs Idrīs al-Wāthiq (1266-1269)
132-204	73	Letters considered to have been written between 1224 and 1266

**Figure 4: The Almohad letters, ‘Azzāwī’s Collection**

‘Azzāwī’s documents have been gathered from both published and manuscript sources. The corpus is comprised of 131 letters, presented in chronological order, plus an additional 73 letters concerning the announcement of the appointment of certain judges (*qāḍī*) and governors (*wālī*) that are added at the end of his volume. However, the value of these documents is that they deal with a historical period that was not covered by Lévi Provençal’s documents. These letters were mostly issued after the rule of Caliph al-Nāşir, and they continue until the end of the Almohads’ rule in al-Andalus.

## **2- The work of Ibn Tūmart (d. 1130)**

The Almohad state began as a religious movement, led by Muḥammad b. Tūmart who laid the religious and political foundations of the empire that was later formed. It is thus necessary, firstly, to consider the work of Ibn Tūmart in order to understand his religious and political views, and to assess the extent to which they influenced the political system of the Almohads.

The work of Ibn Tūmart, which is called *a‘Azzu mā-yuḥlab*<sup>104</sup>, is a collection of articles and commentaries that were written on different religious subjects and

<sup>104</sup> Ibn Tūmart, *A‘azzu mā-Yuḥlab*, ed. A. Abū al-‘Azim (Rabat, 1997).

transmitted orally by his followers. Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, a writer from the thirteenth century, mentioned this book and provided a list of the topics dealt with in it:

‘It is a book written on parchment, which contains the knowledge of God, the High, and the science of the truth of fate, destiny, faith, Islam, the divine attributes, which is necessary, what is impossible and what is contingent with regard to God, the High, and faith in what the Prophet told, in the things that he recounted by virtue of God's teaching to him of His unseen. The book also contains perceptions of the principles of the religion and the recognition of the Mahdī; that he is the Imam, and the necessity of the imamate and what is owed to him (the Mahdī) of discipline and honour, and that emigration [hegira] to him is a duty. Neither family nor children nor property is to prevent anyone among the Muslims from it, and anyone who hears of him is obligated to emigrate to him. There is no kind of valid excuse for not emigrating. The man who doesn't say "may God pray for him", and who doesn't obey him, is an unbeliever’<sup>105</sup>.

The first copy of the manuscript was found at the National Library in Paris and the Arabic text was edited by J. D. Luciani in 1903, with the title *Le Livre de Mohammed Ibn Toumert*. More recently, another copy was discovered at *al-Khizānah al-‘Āmah* in Rabat, and this was published by ‘Abd al-Ghanī Abū al-‘Azzim in 1997. However, it should be noted that these manuscripts are dated (579/1183) and (595/1199), respectively. This indicates the possibility that some of the text could have been modified to support either the reign of ‘Abd al-Mu’min (1130-1163), or that of Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf (1163-1184).

### **3- Historical Narratives**

The history of the Almohads was recorded in a number of chronicles that are of varying importance. Some were written by people who were close to the regime, and they provide a window onto the history of the Almohads, for instance, al-Baydhaq, Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, al-Marrākushī and Ibn al-Qaṭṭān. Others were written by chroniclers who were interested in the history of al-Maghrib and al-Andalus, and that provided more than a passing reference to the Almohad movement. They also contain valuable information, collected from Almohad accounts that have not survived.

#### **Al-Baydhaq, *Akhbār al-Mahdī b. Tūmart***<sup>106</sup>

The Memoirs of al-Baydhaq form possibly the most important source in relation to the life of Ibn Tūmart and the birth of the Almohad Movement. We know nothing about the

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<sup>105</sup> Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Nuẓm al-Jumān*, p. 80.

<sup>106</sup> Al-Baydhaq, *Akhbār al-Mahdī b. Tūmar wa-bidāyat dawlat al-Muaḥḥidīn* (Rabat, 1971); ‘Histoire des Almohades’, in *Documents Inédits d’Histoire Almohade*, trans. and ed. E. Lévi-Provençal (Paris, 1928), pp. 75-224 in French, pp. 50-133 in Arabic text.

life of al-Baydhaq and the available information about him comes from his work. Unfortunately, the only surviving manuscript of the work, found at the Escorial Library in Spain, is incomplete<sup>107</sup>. However, it seems clear that he was living in Tunis when he first met Ibn Tūmart, immediately after his return from the East. Al-Baydhaq was one of Ibn Tūmart's first followers and served him from the beginning. He also held a prominent position among 'Abd al-Mu'min's companions, during his reign. His work thus gives a first-hand account of the initial events in the Almohad Empire. Most of the historical writing of the Almohads, with the exception of Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt's account, was written a long time after the event took place. By contrast, Al-Baydhaq was involved in the events that he describes, and he offered an insider's view of the rise of the Almohad Empire. The French historian Lévi-Provençal remarked, on the value of Al-Baydhaq's work:

'One need not have much exposure to the works of Maghribi historians to perceive at first glance that the work of al-Baydhaq is something completely different. It is not a chronicle in the ordinary sense, a relating of events that follows the classic Arab, historical model, but it is a veritable "memoire": the account of a man who played an active role in the events that he described, and who appeared, in every sense, to be one of the Almohads "of the first hour", who passed their lives under the reign of the Mahdī and 'Abd al-Mu'min'.<sup>108</sup>

Al-Baydhaq's manuscript provides a wealth of unique information about the early stages of the movement, and of the political development of the Almohad Empire until the end of 'Abd al-Mu'min's reign. Yet, since Al-Baydhaq was a loyal and steadfast follower of the Almohads, his work constitutes a great challenge and must be carefully considered.

### **Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt (c. 1198), *Al-Mann bi-l-Imāma*<sup>109</sup>**

Little is known about the Andalusī historian, secretary (*kātib*) and poet Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt and most of the information about his life comes from his own work, *al-Mann bi-l-Imāma*. He was born in Beja in the Portuguese province of Algarve. It may be deduced from his work that he was a resident in Seville during the time of the Almohads and accepted their rule from the moment of their conquest of al-Andalus, specifically from the fall of Carmona in 1161. A few months later, he was among the *kuttāb*, *mushrifūn*

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<sup>107</sup> Lévi-Provençal noted that the manuscript had lost its beginning and that no title was mentioned. The manuscript starts from the return of Ibn Tūmart to his home from Tunisia in 1117, and ends at the beginning of Caliph Yūsuf's regime in 1163, although he was alive during the regime of Caliph Ya'qūb al-Manṣūr.

<sup>108</sup>E. Lévi-Provençal, *Documents Inédits*, p. IX.

<sup>109</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann bi-l-Imāma*, ed. A. al-Tāzī (Beirut, 1964); Spanish trans, A. Huici Miranda (Valencia, 1969).

(financial officers) and leading citizens of Seville who were recruited to work in Córdoba, which had been chosen as the new capital of the Almohads in al-Andalus. Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt probably remained in Córdoba until 1165, when he accompanied the *sayyid* Abū Sa‘īd, governor of Córdoba, to Gibraltar and then to Marrakesh to meet his brother the Caliph Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf. In Marrakech, Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt was instructed in the Almohad forms of Islam, including Ibn Tūmart's *‘Azzu mā yuṭlab*, from the Seville *faqīh* Abū al-Ḥassan ‘Alī b. al-Ishbīlī and Abū ‘Abd al-Allāh b. ‘Amīra. In 1166, Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt worked for the shiekh Abī ‘Abd al-Allāh Muḥammad, who had been appointed *wālī* of Seville and Granada respectively. Over time, Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt seems to have gained a good reputation among the Almohads, and thus during his visit to Marrakech in November 1170 he was honored by the caliph Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf and was the only one among the *ṭalaba* who was granted an *iqṭā‘* (tax farming rights), along with fixed salary. Since then, he became a prominent figure, close to the caliph's retinue and accompanied him on his travels throughout al-Andalus and al-Maghreb. This special status enabled Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt to offer an insider's view of the Almohad government and the movement between the cities of al-Maghreb and al-Andalus made him an eyewitness to many of the historical events and provided him with valuable material on the Almohads and their political and social traditions.

The sources do not provide us with the date of the Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt's death. Some researchers, such as Michele Amari, Carl Brockelmann and É. Lévi Provençal claimed that he died in 1182.<sup>110</sup> However, in his biography of Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, Muḥammad‘Inān argued against this claim, indicating that he died sometimes after 1208,<sup>111</sup> taking into account that the last event recorded by Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt was the completion of the minaret of the great mosque of Seville (the 'Giralda') which took place in 1198, during the era of Ya‘qūb al-Manṣūr.

Like the work of Al-Baydhaq, most of Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt's chronicle has been lost. The book consists of three parts, only the second of which is survived. The first deals with the events of the beginning of the Almohad movement to the caliphate of ‘Abd al-Mu‘min (d. 1163); the second, which is preserved in the Bodleian Library in Oxford, deals with the period from 1155 and 1182; and the third probably went up to the caliphate of Abū Ya‘qūb al-Manṣūr (1184-99). Although the surviving fragment

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<sup>110</sup> See, M. Mari, *Biblioteca Arabo-Sicula* (Turin-Roma, 1880), vol. 1, p. XLIV; F. Pons Boigues, *Ensayo bio - bibliográfico sobre los historiadores y geógrafos árabe-españoles* (Madrid, 1898), p. 246; Lévi Provençal, *Documents Inédits*, p. 693; Al-Tāzī (ed), *al-Mann bi-l-Imāma*, p. 18.

<sup>111</sup> ‘Inān, *‘Aṣr al-Murābiṭīn wa-l-Muwaḥḥidīn, al-qism al-awal*, p. 10.

covers a relatively short historical period, it is considered one of the most important sources for the history of the Almohads and even if the rest of the book did not reach us, it was partly preserved by later historians, such as Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, Ibn ‘Idhārī al-Marrākushī, Ibn al-Khaṭīb and Ibn al-Abbār, who used it as a principal source for many of the events they record. Overall, the work contains valuable details about the political development of the Almohads, especially with regard to issues such as the administrative system, military operations, and the financial systems of government. Moreover, Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt was an eyewitness to many historical events, and this helped him to draw a clear picture of the political situation in al-Andalus during the mid-twelfth century. He also provided valuable and unique information with regard to the social and cultural life of al-Andalus, as well as a description of some of the architectural works undertaken by the Almohads.

**Ibn al-Qaṭṭān (13<sup>th</sup> century), *Nuẓm al-jumān li-tartīb mā-salafa min akhbār al-zamān***

Only a small fragment has survived from Ibn al-Qaṭṭān’s book, which he planned as a history of al-Maghrib and al-Andalus. It deals with a short historical period, no more than thirty-three years (from 1106 to 1138). The editor, Muḥammad al-Makki, claimed that the book contains seven parts, and what has been found is merely a fragment from part six, in which the author began to write the history of the Almohads.<sup>112</sup>

Ibn al-Qaṭṭān seems to have been a distinguished figure within the Almohad government during the era of Caliph al-Murtaḍā (1284-1266). By the end of his life, he was qāḍī of Sijilmasa, but there is no indication about when he died.

However, his book, *Nuẓm al-Jumān* (String of Pearls), is one of the main sources of information about the rise of the Almohads until 1138, that is, during the era of Ibn Tūmart and his successor ‘Abd al-Mu’min. Even though the section in which Ibn al-Qaṭṭān dealt with the history of his time - which would certainly have been particularly useful - has been lost, the value of the part that has been discovered is that its events are drawn from eyewitness accounts that are no longer available. A great amount of detail about the birth of the Almohads, and the stages in their struggle against the Almoravids provided. The book also affords a remarkable, unique description of the Almohad hierarchy, as well as useful documents, such as an official letter that was sent by ‘Abd

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<sup>112</sup> The editor’s introduction, p. 46.

al-Mu'min to the provinces of the Empire in 1147, which explains the main rules of the empire that the regional governments had to follow.

**‘Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī (c. 1270), *al-Mu‘jib fī talkhīṣ akhbār al-Maghrib*<sup>113</sup>**

Another chronicler of the Almohads was ‘Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī. He was born in Morocco in 1185, at the beginning of the reign of the third Almohad Caliph, Ya‘qūb al-Manṣūr. From his early life, he was interested in learning from various branches of science, including literature, at great schools in both Fez and Marrakech. At twenty-three years of age, he travelled to al-Andalus, where he stayed almost nine years studying under well-known learned men, before he returned to Marrakech. In 1217, al-Marrākushī left for Egypt, and then, in 1221, he made his journey to Mecca, where he probably began to write his chronicle, *al-Mu‘jib*, which he completed in 1224.

The book intended to highlight the history of al-Maghrib and al-Andalus from the Muslim conquest to the author’s time, 1224, yet it became a detailed history of the Almohads, from the age of Ibn Tūmart until the reign of Yūsuf II, the fifth Almohad Caliph. The book is therefore considered one of the most important sources in regard to the dynasty.<sup>114</sup> Despite the fact that al-Marrākushī wrote his narrative in the Islamic East, far from the events he described, and with no material except his memory, his account of the events is generally clear and appears to be accurate. In fact, this absence might have been the key factor that helped him to write his account objectively, without fear of resentment on the part of his compatriots, or of any influence that might be imposed upon him. Despite some mistakes, relating mostly to the dates of historical events, al-Marrākushī was very keen not to record anything in his book except what he believed to be the truth:

‘I have put down nothing but what I have found true, borrowing it from books or having heard it from trust-worthy persons, or having seen it myself: with the firm purpose of telling the truth and of being just, as it has been my utmost care not to conceal a single good quality, -which the persons I have spoken of possessed, nor to bestow upon them the slightest encomium they did not deserve’.<sup>115</sup>

During his study, travelling between the al-Maghrib and al-Andalus, al-Marrākushī was in close contact with the highest officers of the state. He also developed a good

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<sup>113</sup> Al-Marrākushī, *The history of the Almohades*, Arabic Text, ed. R. B. A. Dozy (Leyden, 1947); another edition is: *al-Mu‘jib fī talkhīṣ Akhbār al-Maghrib*, ed. M. ‘Zzab (Cairo, 1994).

<sup>114</sup> See Huici Miranda, *Historia Política*, p. 11; Dozy, *The history of the Almohades*, p. XII.

<sup>115</sup> Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu‘jib*, p. 273.

relationship with Prince Yaḥyā, the son of Caliph Yūsuf I.<sup>116</sup> It is therefore not surprising that most of his information describes political events or deals with subjects that are related to the political system and the Almohads' government. For example, he frequently mentioned political institutions and their structures in the era of each Caliph, such as *Wazīr* (vizier), *Kātib* (Secretary), *Qāḍī* (Judge) and *Wālī* (Province Governor). He also gave details about the Almohad hierarchy, including a description of the Almohad tribes.

**Anonymous, *Al-Ḥulal al-Mūshiyya fī dhikr al-Akḥbār al-Marrakishiyya*<sup>117</sup>**

There is no reference to the name of the author in the text, and we know almost nothing about him, but the author says that he completed his writing in 1381. However, we may deduce from his work that he was living in the emirate of Granada in the reign of Muḥammad V (1354-1359, 1362-1391), the eighth sultan of the Nasrids (Banū'l-Aḥmar).

The book covers the history of the Maghrib and al-Andalus from the construction of Marrakech until the author's time (1070-1381). Although the title of the book gives the impression that it deals specifically with the history of Marrakech, the greater part of its information is concerned, in some detail, with the military conflicts and political changes in Morocco and al-Andalus. The information relating to Marrakech itself is less valuable if compared to what was written in geographical sources. Even though the information in this book was often brief, the author was more specific when he described the age of the Caliph 'Abd al-Mu'min. He also provided us with valuable information about the political and administrative systems of the Almohads, and his book is the only source that refers to the Almohad army's military strategies.

**Ibn 'Idhārī al-Marrākushī (c. 1312), *Al-Bayān al-Mughrib fī akḥbār al-Andalus wa-l-Maghrib***

As regards the general sources of the history of the al-Maghrib and al-Andalus, the work of Ibn 'Idhārī is by far the most important. The author, who was alive in the late 13<sup>th</sup> and early 14<sup>th</sup> Century, wrote his book to highlight the history of al-Maghrib and al-Andalus from the Muslim conquest until the fall of Marrakesh to the Marinid dynasty in

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p. 205.

<sup>117</sup> Anonymous, *Al-Ḥulal al-Bi-l fī dhikr al-Akḥbār al-Marrakishiyya*, eds. S. Zakkār and A. Zamāma (Casablanca, 1979).

1269. Ibn 'Idhārī can be considered a compiler, rather than a researcher, as he writes in the introduction to his chronicle that:

'I have collected in this book notices and anecdotes taken from the histories and accounts, which I have reunited and have chosen points of interest, uniting what is old with what is new'.<sup>118</sup>

He also names some of his sources, most of which are no longer extant. A few examples are: *al-Muqtabis*, *al-Dhakhīra* of Ibn Bassām, *Akhbār al-Dawla al-'Āmiriyya* of Ibn Hayyān, *Al-Mann bi-l-Imāma* of Ibn Šāhib al-Šalāt, *Nuẓm al-Jumān* of Ibn al-Qaṭṭān.

Ibn 'Idhārī divided his book into three parts: the final part, in which the history of the Almoravids and the Almohads are related, has been published as fragments by a number of scholars. This part, covering the whole Almohad period, was published by Huici Miranda in 1960, and later reissued by Iḥsān 'Abbās.<sup>119</sup> In 1985, another version of the manuscript, which contained some important additions, was discovered and published by a number of Moroccan scholars with emendations and an extended index.<sup>120</sup>

In spite of a few contradictions and some obvious exaggerations, the work of Ibn 'Idhārī provides a wealth of unique information, and is the first full account of the history of the Almohads. The book contains valuable detail about the early stage of the Almohads' development in al-Andalus in terms of its political and economic aspects. The complex political atmosphere, which coincided with the entry of the Almohads into al-Andalus, as well as the military conflicts between the Almohads and their opponents, such as Ibn Mardānīsh or the Christians, are reported in detail. The times during which the Almohads suffered as a result of political and economic crises, and conflict with the rivals of the ruling family to gain power over the Almohads, are also described, and the author, who was alive during this period, was likely to have been an eyewitness to some of these events, since he died a long time afterwards. As regards the political system of the Almohad government, the book contains documents and valuable information on topics such as the nature of the work in political institutions, political and administrative reforms, the judicial system, and diplomatic and economic relations.

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<sup>118</sup> Ibn 'Idhārī al-Marrākushī, *Al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, ed. Lévi-Provençal and Colin (Beirut, 1983), vol. 1, p. 2.

<sup>119</sup> Ibn 'Idhārī, *Al-Bayān al-Mughrib fī akhbār al-Andalus wa-l-Maghrib*, ed. I. 'Abbās, vol. 4, (Beirut, 1983).

<sup>120</sup> *Qism al-Muwaḥḥidīn*, ed. M. El Kattānī, M. Tāwīt, M. Znībir and A. Zmāmāh (Beirut, 1985).

**Ibn Abī Zar‘ (14<sup>th</sup> century), *al-Anīs al-muṭrib bi-rawḍ al-qirṭās fī akhbār mulūk al-Maghrib wa-tārīkh madīnat Fās*<sup>121</sup>**

This work is usually known by its short title: ‘*Rawḍ al-qirṭās*’, meaning *the Garden of Pages*. There is uncertainty about the author’s name. This is given in some manuscripts as Abī Zar‘ of Fez, and in other versions as Ṣalīḥ Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm of Granada. However, the consensus among modern scholars is that the original author is Abī Zar‘, but the manuscripts that we have are merely of a summary of his book, which was made by ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm.<sup>122</sup>

The *Rawḍ al-qirṭās* covered the history of al-Maghrib from 788 until 1326 - more than five centuries during which Morocco saw a succession of five dynasties: the Idrisids (987-1070), the Maghrawa (986-1070), the Almoravids (1040–1147), the Almohads, and the Marinids (1215–1465). Unlike Ibn ‘Idhārī, the work of Abī Zar‘ has been described by modern historians as being one of the least trustworthy sources, especially in regard to the history of the Almoravids and the Almohads.<sup>123</sup> It is replete with inconsistencies, legends and unlikely accounts. For example, Abī Zar‘, whose book was written in the first part of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, a long time after the events took place, gave information about Ibn Tūmart and the early Almohad movement that is slightly different from that in other sources, which deal with the same period. He also made numerous mistakes in relation to dates and geographical information. Even allowing for all of these faults, the *rawḍ al-qirṭās* still holds some valuable and unique information relating to particular themes, such as the social and economic life during the period of the Almohads; the economic system and the Almohads’ reforms, the sources of revenue and the government’s expenses.

**Al-Zarkashī (d. 1482), *Tārīkh al-dawlatayn al-Muwahḥidiyya wa-al-Ḥafṣiyya*<sup>124</sup>**

The only information available about the author is what may be drawn from his work, and this information is also insufficient to provide the elements of his biography. Al-Zarkashī was a Tunisian writer of the late fifteenth century whose interest was in writing down the history of his region during the Middle Ages. He seems to have worked within the government of Tunis, or to have had a good relationship with its

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<sup>121</sup> Ibn Abī Zar‘, *al-Anīs al-muṭrib* (Rabat, 1972). Another edition by A. Huici Miranda (Valencia, 1964).

<sup>122</sup> See e.g. M. al-Fāsī, Ibn Abī Zar‘ wa-Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm, *Ṭiṭwān: Majala lil-Abḥāth al-maghribiyya al-Andalusiyya*, 5(1960), pp. 159-164.

<sup>123</sup> See e.g. Huici Miranda, *Historia Política*, p. 11.

<sup>124</sup> Al-Zarkashī, *Tārīkh al-dawlatayn al-Muwahḥidiyya wa-l-Ḥafṣiyya*, ed. A. Mādūr (Tunis, 1966).

members, and this notion is based on the valuable information recorded. His chronicle, found and published in Tunis in 1872, deals specifically with the history of the Almohads and the Hafsids (1229-1574) from the early 12<sup>th</sup> Century to 1477. However, the fact that the author was one of the Hafsids' followers, and was an eyewitness to many of their events, makes the section which deals with the Almohads less useful if compared to that of the Hafsids, which he describes in full detail. Nevertheless, the valuable information relating to the Hafsid state, particularly with regard to its political system, the authority of governors and administrative functions, may be a good reflection of that of the Almohads, as a logical result of the close historical and political connections between the two states. At first, the Hafsids were deputy governors of the Almohads in their province of Tunis, and when the collapse took place, they split with the Almohads and proclaimed themselves independent. The Almohad legacy thus impinged strongly on Hafsid society, and their political regime was formed principally from prominent figures from the Almohad tribes, who also provided the great military leaders.

**Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406), *Kitāb al-‘Ibār*<sup>125</sup>**

Ibn Khaldūn is universally well known, and needs no more than a brief reference. He is considered to be the founder of Sociology and the Sciences of History. His masterpiece, which is known by its short title “*al-‘Ibār*”, is one of the greatest works in the field of the philosophy of history and sociology. *Al-‘Ibār* can be divided into three parts: the first is the introduction - “*al-Muqaddima*”<sup>126</sup>, which is considered the most significant part and was presented as a separate book during the lifetime of Ibn Khaldūn. The second is the universal history, and the third part is the history of al-Maghrib. The part dealing with al-Maghrib has special value due to the author's personal experience in the area. However, the contribution of Ibn Khaldūn's book is surprisingly limited. Ibn Khaldūn's main attention focused on the factors that contribute to the development and fall of human civilisation. His preoccupation was therefore always with mainstream historical events, and he pays little attention to the small details which the present study requires. The part that deals with the history of al-Maghrib is disappointing. With the exception of the information provided about the Almohad tribes, there is little to distinguish it from other Almohad sources. The *Muqaddima* is more useful as it pays

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<sup>125</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn* (Beirut, 1988).

<sup>126</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn, al-Muqaddima*, ed. K. Shiḥātah (Beirut, 1988), vol. 1; English trans, F. Rosenthal, 3 vols (London, 1967).

particular attention to the Almohad political structure, but even here, some of the information and the results put forward by Ibn Khaldūn are misleading, and they are different from what has been recorded by other sources that were closer to the Almohads' time.

**Ibn al-Athīr (d. 1233), *Al-Kāmil fī'l-Ta'rīkh*<sup>127</sup>**

Ibn al-Athīr's main work, *Al-Kāmil fī'l-Ta'rīkh* (The perfection in history), is indispensable to any researcher interested in Islamic history. Regarding the Almohads, it is the first work written in the East that recorded the history of the Almohads by making careful and proficient use of a wide range of Western sources. The author is remarkable for the clarity of his style, the explanations he makes, and the extent of his documentation. Nonetheless, being a general history, from the creation of the world until 1231, it focuses on essential information and does not go into detail.

Some chronicles, to a greater or lesser degree, deal with the Almohads, but, nonetheless, they do not contain as much valuable information as has been mentioned above. Among these works are: *A'māl al-A'lām*<sup>128</sup> and *Raqm al-Hulal*<sup>129</sup> by Ibn al-Khaṭīb (d. 1374); *al-Mu'nīs fī akhbār Ifrīqiya wa-Tunis*<sup>130</sup> by Ibn Abī Dinār (d. 1698), and *al-Dhakhīra al-Sunniyya* by Ibn Abī Zar' .<sup>131</sup>

#### **4- Biographical dictionaries**

Bio-bibliographic dictionaries, which particularly flourished in al-Andalus, reintroduce Islamic literature and provide biographies of the best-known characters in the fields of literature, science and religion. Writing biographies of these leading lights was, for those writers, the best way to save their cultural heritage and to pass it on to future generations. There are a number of works about the Almohad period that provide us with useful details about prominent figures in society, or about members of the Almohad government. They also contain valuable information regarding political, economic and social development in al-Andalus and al-Maghrib.

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<sup>127</sup> Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī'l-Ta'rīkh*, ed. Khalīl M. Shīhā (Beirut, 2002).

<sup>128</sup> Ibn al-Khaṭīb, *A'māl al-A'lām fī man būyi'a qabla al-Iḥtilām min mulūk al-Islām*, ed. Lévi-Provençal (Beirut, 1950); Volume III was published by A. Al-'Abbādī and M. Al-Kattānī under the title "*al-Maghrib al-'Arabī fī al-'aṣr al-Wasī'*" (Casablanca, 1964).

<sup>129</sup> Ibn al-Khaṭīb, *Raqm al-Ḥulal fī naẓm al-Duwal* (Tunis, 1899).

<sup>130</sup> Ibn Abī Dinār, *al-Mu'nīs fī akhbār Ifrīqiya wa-Tunis* (Tunis, 1923).

<sup>131</sup> Ibn Abī Zar' , *al-Dhakhīra al-Sunniyya fī tā'rīkh al-dawla al-Marīniyya*, ed. Dār al-Manṣūr li-lḥibā'a wa-l-wirāqa (Rabat, 1972).

### **Ibn al-Abbār (d. 1260)**

Ibn al-Abbār was a well-known poet, diplomat, and scholar, and was perhaps the most famous man of letters produced by the city of Valencia during Muslim rule. He was born in the province of Valencia in 1189, and he completed his education under well-known teachers. He began his official career as a writer for the governors of Valencia, until the end of Almohad rule in al-Andalus. After the fall of Valencia to the Christians, he travelled through Morocco to Tunisia, where he probably completed his excellent work. In 1260, Ibn al-Abbār was executed by the Hafsid ruler as a result of his writings. His body and his books were burnt.

His books deal with the arts, literature and history. There are two particularly well-known works, the *al-Ḥalla al-Siyarā*<sup>132</sup>, which contains biographies of *Sayyid-s* (title given to the sons and descendants of the caliph ‘Abd al-Mu’min) and governors who had skills in writing poetry and who wrote down some of their works. It also included some of the historical events that took place in al-Andalus. A new set of biographies was presented in the author's second book, *al-Takmila li-Kitāb Al-Ṣila*.<sup>133</sup> These related to scholars and writers who were not included in the work of Ibn Faraḡi and Ibn Bashkuwāl. *Al-Takmila* remains a valuable source for understanding the culture of al-Andalus, and it provides a brief but clear description of some of the political and social events that took place during the author’s lifetime.

### **Ibn ‘Abd al-Malik (d. 1303), *Ṣilat al-Ṣila***<sup>134</sup>

The Moroccan author Ibn ‘Abd al-Malik was born in Marrakesh in 1245. He received his general education from different schools in al-Andalus and al-Maghrib before returning to Marrakesh, where he spent most of his life. We do not know much about the author’s job, nor whether he held an official position in the government, although there are signs that he was engaged in the judiciary. His book is one of the largest, and perhaps the most reliable, collections of biographies, and was written in the Muslim West. The author not only presented a huge biography that covered the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Centuries, but he also corrected the mistakes found in the work of Ibn al-Faraḡi and of subsequent authors, and he added information that was not included in their works. The

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<sup>132</sup> Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Ḥulla al-Siyarā*, ed. H. Mu’nis, 2 vols (Cairo, 1963).

<sup>133</sup> Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Takmila li-Kitāb al-Ṣila*, (Cairo, 1956); also ed. F. Codera (Madrid, 1887).

<sup>134</sup> Ibn ‘Abd al-Malik, *al-Dhayl wa-l-Takmila li-Kitābay al-Mūṣūl wa-l-Ṣila*, ed. M. b. Sharīfa, vols. I (Beirut, n.d), and VIII (Rabat, 1984); ed. E. ‘Abbās, Vols IV, V and VI (Beirut, 1973).

book also contains valuable historical information that highlights various aspects of the scientific and social life in the period indicated.

### **Ibn Sa'īd al-Maghribī (d. 1286), *al-Mughrib fī ḥulā al-Maghrib***

The Andalusian, Ibn Sa'īd al-Maghribī, was a geographer, a historian, and the most important collector of poetry from al-Andalus in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Centuries. He was born near Granada, in 1213, into a well-to-do family, and he lived his early life studying in Granada and Seville. During his twenties, he crossed to the Maghrib and made a journey to the East, where he lived in Egypt. He also travelled to Syria and Iraq, before returning to the West and spending his final years in Tunis, where he died in 1286.

Some great works were written by Ibn Sa'īd al-Maghribī, and they are mostly related to poetic literature. However, he is perhaps best known for completing the *Kitāb al-Mughrib fī ḥulā al-Maghrib*, the largest part of whose material was compiled by members of his family over several generations. The book is a wealth of biographical details, as well as being an anthology of letters from the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Century Islamic West. It contains fifteen chapters, but, unfortunately, part of the manuscript has been lost. The fragments relating to al-Andalus were published as a separate book in two volumes, by Shawqī Dayf, in 1953-55. In each volume, the biographies and letters are divided up according to city and status.<sup>135</sup>

### **Al-Maqqarī (d. 1631), *Nafḥ al-Ṭīb*<sup>136</sup>**

The 17<sup>th</sup> century Maghribi scholar and writer, al-Maqqarī, was an historian who was interested in the glorious past of Islamic culture in al-Andalus, and his book, *Nafḥ al-Ṭīb*, was a great reflection of his main sphere of interest.<sup>137</sup> In this book, al-Maqqarī introduces the reader to many aspects of Andalusian history and culture. He presented many details about geography, politics, and the scholarly achievements of the Andalusians, in addition to an extensive compilation of biographies, poems, epistles and citations, based mostly on many earlier sources that are now lost. The book consists of two parts: the first concerns the history of al-Andalus from the Muslim conquest until

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<sup>135</sup> Ibn Sa'īd al-Maghribī, *al-Mughrib fī ḥulā al-Maghrib*, ed. S. Dayf, 2 vols (Cairo, 1953-55).

<sup>136</sup> Al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-Ṭīb*; English trans. *The history of the Mohammedan dynasties in Spain*: extracted from *the Nafḥu-t-tīb min Ghosni-l-Andalusi-r-Rattib wa tārīkh Lisānu-d-Dīn Ibn-l-Khattib*, translated by P. de Gayangos (London 1840-43; repr. New York, 1964).

<sup>137</sup> For a good biography see G. Dugat 'Introduction', in *Analectes sur l'histoire et la littérature des Arabes d'Espagne par al-Makkari*, Publiés par R. Dozy, G. Dugat, L. Krehl, W. Wright (Leiden 1855-60); also the introduction of P. De Gayangos, in *The history of the Mohammedan dynasties in Spain*, pp. XXXI-XXXIV; M. Fierro and L. Molina, 'al-Maqqarī', in *Essays in Arabic literary biography, 1350-1850*, Ed. Joseph E. Lowry and Devin J. Stewart (Wiesbaden, 2009), pp. 273-283.

the fall of Granada in 1492. The second contains a biography of al-Maqqarī's great politician and scholar, Ibn al-Khaṭīb, and is an anthology of his poetry and other works.

## 5- Geographical Sources

Geographical works are a different kind of research tool and they cannot be disregarded. Besides dealing with geographical sources, they contain specific details and information concerning society, politics and economics, which are often hard to find in other works.

### **Muḥammad al-Idrīsī (c. 1164), *Nuzhat al-mushtāq*<sup>138</sup>**

Al-Idrīsī is, by common consent, the major geographical writer in Arabic of the Middle Ages. He was born in Muslim Spain at the beginning of the twelfth century, and he eventually settled at the court of the Norman King of Sicily, Roger II. Al-Idrīsī's best-known work is entitled *Kitāb Nuzhat al-Mushtāq fī'khtirāq al-Āfāq*, but it is better known as the *Book of Roger*, on whose orders the work was produced, and to whom it was dedicated. The book was soon translated into Latin and remained popular both in the East and the West, for several centuries. The section that addresses al-Andalus is a rich source of geographical data, as well as of social and economic information, observed by the author himself during his travels to many cities, or quoted from other geographical references. However, as a book written in 1154, at the beginning of the Almohad dynasty, it does not contain much information that is of relevance to the present study, and if we exclude the information about the Arab tribes and their giving of allegiance to the Almohads, there is little to which we can refer that remains.

### **Al-Ḥimyarī (d. 1402), *al-Rawḍ al-Mi'ṭār*<sup>139</sup>**

The fifteenth-Century writer, Al-Ḥimyarī, is well-known for his work *al-Mi'ṭār*, which is regarded as being the most informative geographical work during the era of the Almohads. It contains an impressive collection of information, in which the author has succeeded in providing geographical material with regard to cities and towns, together with their important historical events, based on a wide range of sources now lost. With regard to the Almohad system, the book gives a great deal of information about *the Sheikh-s* and their positions at the time of the Almohad decline. Furthermore, it is the

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<sup>138</sup> Al-Idrīsī, *Nuzhat al-Mushtāq fī'khtirāq al-Āfāq*, 2 vols (Beirut, 1989).

<sup>139</sup> Al-Ḥimyarī, *Ṣifat Jazīrat al-Andalus*, muntakhibah min Kitāb *Al-Rawḍ al-Mi'ṭār fī Khabar al-Aqtār*, ed. E. Lévi-Provençal (Beirut, 1988).

only source that describes the Almohads' fleets, especially in regard to the numbers of ships and their equipment.

**Anonymous, *al-Istibṣār fī 'ajāib al-amṣār*<sup>140</sup>**

In 1852, an incomplete manuscript of *al-Istibṣār*, about North Africa, was published by Alfred Von Kremer, with the title '*Description de l'Afrique par un géographe arabe anonyme du sixième siècle de l'hégire*'. After a half century, in 1900, the French scholar, E. Fagnan, published a French translation of the same sections, based on three manuscripts. Later, the complete Arabic text was published for the first time by Sa'd Zagh'lūl in 1958. The author's name is not given in the text. However, it has been indicated that he held an official position in the Almohad government during the reign of the Caliph Ya'qūb al-Manṣūr, and this is based on internal documents that are provided in his account. The book offers valuable geographical and historical details about Moroccan cities, such as Marrakech, Fez and Meknes. He also describes some of the public works undertaken by the Almohad caliphs.

Through careful analysis of these documentary and narrative source materials, it is possible for the researcher to build up a relatively detailed knowledge of the Almohad government and institutions. Before examining the mechanics of the Almohad government in detail, however, it is important to survey the foundations of that system, which were laid in the Maghrib at the beginning of the period that is being studied.

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<sup>140</sup> Anonymous, *al-Istibṣār fī 'ajāib al-amṣār*, ed. S. Zagh'lūl (Casablanca, 1984).

# 1

## The Foundations of the Almohad Political Organisation

### 1. *The hierarchy of Ibn Tūmart*

The Almohads began their movement by establishing a strict hierarchy (known as the *ṭabaqāt*) into which they were divided. It was an elaborate organisation that covered all the tribal communities that joined their movement; it established the basis of the empire and set up the political and military institutions of the government. The rough outlines of the hierarchy are fairly clear. The levels of the Almohad pyramidal structure were arranged according to importance and loyalty. The most loyal members of the Almohads were placed in the upper echelons of power, the Ten, the Fifty and the Seventy, forming the advisors and political councils of the empire. The rest, including the *Ṭalaba*, the tribes, and the *Ghuzāt* “Champions”, were divided in descending order and according to specific military and social functions.

The first serious study of this subject was by J. Hopkins in *Medieval Muslim Government in Barbary*.<sup>1</sup> Yet other than providing a comprehensive description of the Almohad hierarchy, Hopkins did not define the reasons for the establishment of the *Ṭabaqāt*. Nor does he refer to the fact that the Almohads used a pyramidal hierarchy, rather than a simple confederation. Another study was published by ‘Izz al-Dīn Mūsā, and he focused on the political and intellectual branches, which were adopted by the Almohads in the creation of their organisations.<sup>2</sup> Mūsā believes that knowledge of the political and religious culture acquired by Ibn Tūmart during his trip to Egypt and the Islamic East was the main factor that influenced him in the establishment of the hierarchy. However, some statements from Mūsā are controversial, since they have no historical or documentary evidence to support them. For example, he states that Ibn Tūmart consciously copied from the Fatimid political organisations in forming the

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<sup>1</sup> J. Hopkins, *Medieval Muslim Government in Barbary* (London, 1958).

<sup>2</sup> ‘I. Mūsā, ‘al-Tanzīmāt al-ḥizbiyya ‘Inda al-Muwahḥidīn fī al-Maghrib’, *Majalat al-Abḥāth*, 23 (1970), pp. 53-89; another article in the same pattern was published by M. Kisaichi, ‘The Almohad social-political system or hierarchy in the reign of Ibn Tūmart’, *memoire of the Research Department of the Tokyo Bunko*, 48 (1990), pp. 81-101.

hierarchy, although there are no signs of any similarities between the two systems that are referred to in this statement. Even the notion of the Mahdīsm that was adopted by Ibn Tūmart cannot be considered a Fatimid invention as it was a common Islamic concept that was used by several individuals at different times and in various regions of the Islamic world. Recent studies have shed some light on the Almohad hierarchy.<sup>3</sup> The most recent study is that of Allen Fromherz: *The Almohads, the rise of an Islamic Empire*.<sup>4</sup> Rather than describing the main elements of the hierarchy in detail, Fromherz was the first to describe the Almohad tribes, who were themselves ranked and integrated into the hierarchy. He also tried to identify the reasons for the successful creation of the hierarchy and viewed the economic situation of the Almohad tribes as one of the main factors that Ibn Tūmart was able to exploit in order to encourage the tribes to join his movement, and this accelerated their involvement in the organisation. However, there are still many questions that remain unanswered. Amongst these is the question of the process by which Ibn Tūmart was able to transform a fragmented tribal society into a structured hierarchical system that played an important role in history. The first part of this chapter will discuss these issues in detail and will seek answers in the light of information gleaned from our documents. This is important for our broader understanding of the administrative structure that the Almohads implemented in al-Andalus.

### **1.1 *The Hierarchy and the Almohad Chronicles***

Information about the basic materials of the Almohad pyramid are contained in two main sources. The most valuable details are those in the *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, written by an anonymous author.<sup>5</sup> This work contains a long, and perhaps the most complete, list of the Almohad structural hierarchy, as well as a complete list of the members of the Ten and the Fifty, and detail about their relationship with Ibn Tūmart, the Mahdī of the Almohads, who was the founder of the hierarchy. The tribes and clans were mentioned in detail and they are ranked according to their order. It should be noted that the original version of the *Kitāb al-Ansāb* has been lost and what we have is an outline that was

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<sup>3</sup> See: María Jesús Viguera Molíns, 'Historia Política' in R. Menéndez Pidal, *Historia de España*, vol. 7, p. 79; A. Dhina, *Les états de l'Occident musulman au XIII, XIV et XV, institutions gouvernementales et administratives* (Algiers, 1989).

<sup>4</sup> Fromherz, *The Almohads*.

<sup>5</sup> 'Kitāb al-Ansāb fī ma'rifat al-Aṣḥāb', in *Documents Inédits d'histoire almohade*, edited by E. Levi-Provençal (Paris, 1928); new edition edited by 'Abd al-Wahhāb b. Maṣṣūr (Rabat, 1971).

produced by the author himself.<sup>6</sup> The author did not refer to the purpose behind this project, but it may have been used as a guide to the higher echelons of the Almohads and their relationship to Ibn Tūmart. However, based on the internal information and precise details that are not mentioned by other sources, the author seems to have been familiar with the Almohad regime and, indeed, he may have been part of it. Perhaps this was what prompted the Moroccan editor, ‘Abd al-Wahhāb b. Maṣṣūr, to state that the author of the *Kitāb al-Ansāb* is al-Baydhaq, who wrote a biography of Ibn Tūmart and was one of his close companions and advisers.<sup>7</sup> His account was a window onto the life of Ibn Tūmart and the development of the Almohad state, yet it is almost devoid of references to the Almohad hierarchy, of which he was himself a member, or its categories. The book is full of lists of names and the genealogies of those who engaged in the hierarchy, to the point where it is difficult to analyse the style of the author and to identify the similarities between the *Kitāb al-Ansāb* and al-Baydhaq’s account.<sup>8</sup> However, there is one reference in the text to indicate that the author’s name is Abū Bakr,<sup>9</sup> though it does not mention the name of the family, and this is the first name of our author, al-Baydhaq. Perhaps al-Baydhaq wrote his first book on the biography of Ibn Tūmart and decided to follow this with another that describes the Almohad pyramid and political institutions, and this is the one which we have here.

The *Kitāb Nuẓm al-Jumān*, by Ibn al-Qaṭṭān (d.1231), is another important source for information about the Almohad hierarchy and the development of the Almohad state. It provides a list of fourteen levels of Almohad society, which were ranked in a different order from those in the list in the *Kitāb al-Ansāb*. It also contains an incomplete list of the high-ranking members of the Almohad hierarchy. One should not forget, however, that the book was written a long time after the hierarchy was established, and most of the data that related to this subject were quoted from lost sources, such as *Al-Mughrib fī akhbār wa-mahāsīn ahl al-Maghrib* of al-Yassa‘ b. ‘Isā,<sup>10</sup> and the first part of *Al-Mann bi-l-Imāma* by Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt. It is therefore

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<sup>6</sup> *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, pp. 23, 36, 40, 43, 60.

<sup>7</sup> See the introduction of the editor, pp. 5-7.

<sup>8</sup> For more on *the Kitāb al-Ansāb* as a primary source, see Lévi-Provençal’s introduction to the *Documents Inédits*.

<sup>9</sup> As written in the text, after the author listed the companions of Maḥdī in Egypt ‘*Abū Bakr’s side: I have listed the group who had accompanied the Maḥdī in this region, although I have not included all of them, to show how he was well known in the East and the West, and that who had not obtained his company would have lost the success, and his misery drives him to be loser and disbeliever*’. *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, pp. 29-30.

<sup>10</sup> Al-Yassa‘ was one of the Andalusian twelfth-century writers. He was born in Jaén and began his career as a *Kātib* (Secretary) to some princes in the eastern cities of al-Andalus. In 1164, he moved to Egypt, where he stayed until his death in 1180. Al-Yassa‘ wrote a book on the history of al-Maghrib, called *al-*

possible that the text could have been corrupted. Ibn al-Qaṭṭān was a loyal follower of the Maḥdī's doctrine, as well as being a member of the Almohad government during the reign of Caliph al-Murtaḍā. His father was also a distinguished head of the Almohad School at Marrakech, the first of the *tullāb*, the scholarly class.<sup>11</sup> Hence, there is the possibility that he might have modified the contents of the book for his own benefit.

There are other accounts that have provided more than passing references to the Almohad hierarchy and its categories. Al-Marrākushī, the author of the *Muʿjib fī Talkhīṣ Akhbār al-Maghrib*, had been in the Islamic East since 1217, and he wrote his account there, nearly 100 years after the system had been inaugurated. He, nevertheless, had first-hand knowledge of the Almohad regime, and his book contains some valuable details about the Councils of Ten and Fifty and their relationships to Ibn Tūmart. Like al-Marrākushī, the *Al-Ḥulal al-Mūshiyya*, which was written in 1381, describes the form of the hierarchy and lists the members of the Council of the Ten, which is significantly different from the lists in the sources mentioned above.<sup>12</sup>

These are the most important sources that cover several aspects of the rise of the Almohads and the socio-political organisation of the embryonic government. However, much information is still missing, thus making a definitive conclusion elusive. In addition, the accounts of the mediaeval historians who dealt with the Almohad hierarchy omitted valuable details concerning some of its elements, their objectives and how they worked, while other details were either brief or confusing. It could be argued that this confusion is a result of three main factors:

- 1- The acute shortage of historical material regarding the political institutions of Islamic countries, including a lack of documentary sources. This is partly due to the predilections of medieval writers, who were interested in military and political events, rather than wanting to contribute to the study of the management and executive formations of governments. In these circumstances, modern researchers may resort to providing a general statement, and sometimes even to speculating, in order to remedy these matters and fill the gaps.
- 2- Given the nature of the sources that are available to us in studying the hierarchy, we can be sure that the information on the early Almohad organisations comes from a

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*Muʿrib fī akhbār wa-maḥāsini ahl al-Maghrib*, and this was presented to the Sultan of Egypt, Saladin. Unfortunately, his work has not reached us, and what we know about it is what was later quoted by historians, such as al-Maqqarī (*Nafḥ al-Ṭīb*), Ibn al-Qaṭṭān (*Nuẓm al-Jumān*), and the anonymous writer of (*al-Ḥulal al-Bi-l*). See: Á. González Palencia, *Historia de la literatura árabe-española*, Arabic trans, ed. H. Muʿnis (Cairo, 1955), p. 242.

<sup>11</sup> See introduction to Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Nuẓm al-Jumān* by Dr. A. al-Makkī, pp. 7-56.

<sup>12</sup> *Al-Ḥulal al-Mūshiyya*, p. 109.

varied authorship. Some accounts were written from memory by persons who were far from the events they were describing. Al-Yassa‘ was one such. Other accounts were written many years after the hierarchy was established. This points to these specific sources: *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, *Nuẓm al-Jumān* and *al-Ḥulal al-Mūshiyya*. In other cases, combining the two kinds of chroniclers, the writer was far from the related facts in both time and space, had no, or very few, documents, and his memories are largely disordered. This situation can be attached directly to Al-Marrākushī, in his book ‘*al-Mu‘jib*’.

- 3- The Almohad dynasty passed, during its development, through two main stages, during which it moved from being a movement of religious reform to becoming a vast empire. This rapid evolution has led the historians, who wanted to write about the beginning of the dynasty so as to integrate the Almohad hierarchy of Ibn Tūmart with the political reforms that had taken place in the system since ‘Abd al-Mu‘min came to power.

The following list provides an idea of the confusion and disorder of the mediaeval historians *vis-à-vis* the Almohad hierarchy.

According to al-Yassa‘ <sup>13</sup>	According to <i>Kitāb al-Ansāb</i> <sup>14</sup>	According to <i>al-Ḥulal al-Mūshiyya</i> <sup>15</sup>
1. <i>Al-‘ashra, Ahl al-Jamā‘a</i> (Council of Ten).	1. <i>Ahl al-Jamā‘a</i>	1. <i>Al-‘ashra, Ahl al-Jamā‘a</i>
2. <i>Ahl Khamsīn</i> (Council of Fifty)	2. <i>Al-Khamsīn</i>	2. <i>Ahl Khamsīn</i>
3. <i>Ahl Sab‘īn</i> (Council of seventy)	3. <i>Hargha</i>	3. <i>Ahl Sab‘īn</i>
4. <i>Al-Ṭalaba</i>	4. <i>Ahl Tīnmal</i>	4. <i>Al-Ṭalaba</i>
5. <i>Al-Ḥuffāz</i> (Young <i>Ṭalaba</i> )	5. <i>Hintāta</i>	5. <i>Al-Ḥuffāz</i>
6. <i>Ahl al-Dār</i>	6. <i>Jadmīwa</i>	6. <i>Ahl al-Dār</i>
7. <i>Hargha</i>	7. <i>Janfīsa</i>	7. <i>Hargha</i>
8. <i>Ahl Tīnmal</i>	8. <i>Ahl al-Qabā‘il</i>	8. <i>Ahl Tīnmal</i>
9. <i>Jadmīwa</i>	9. <i>Kūmiyya</i>	9. <i>Jadmīwa</i>
10. <i>Janfīsa</i>	10. <i>Haskūra</i>	10. <i>Ahl Janfīsa</i>
11. <i>Hintāta</i>	11. <i>Ṣanhāja</i>	11. <i>Ahl Hintāta</i>
12. <i>Ahl al-Qabā‘il</i>	12. <i>‘abīd al-Makhzan</i>	12. <i>Al-Jund</i>
13. <i>Al-Ghurāt</i> (illiterate young people)	13. <i>Al-Rumāt</i>	13. <i>Al-Ghurāt</i>
	14. <i>Al-Muḥtasibūn</i>	
	15. <i>Al-Sakkākūn</i>	
	16. <i>Al-Mū‘dhdhinūn</i>	
	17. <i>Al-ghuzāt</i>	
	18. <i>Al-Ḥuffāz</i>	
	19. <i>Ahl al-Dār</i>	

**Figure 5: The lists of the Almohad hierarchy** (Adapted from ‘Izz al-Dīn Mūsā, p. 201)

<sup>13</sup> Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Nuẓm al-Jumān*, p. 82.

<sup>14</sup> *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, p. 59.

<sup>15</sup> *Al-Ḥulal al-Mūshiyya*, p. 109.

From the lists above, it can be observed that there are apparent discrepancies in the number and order of the structures, between the list given by al-Yassa' and that mentioned in the *Kitāb al-Ansāb*. Confusion is also apparent in the contrast between the order of structures and the chronology of historical events. For example, the *Kitāb al-Ansāb* mentions the category of *Huffāz*, while ignoring the *Talaba* category, although the *Huffāz* was introduced to the Almohad hierarchy subsequently. Likewise, *Kitāb al-Ansāb* mentions the *Kūmiyya* category, although the *Kūmiyya* tribe joined the Almohad dynasty after the state and the hierarchy were established. For Mūsā, this lack of concordance between the list of al-Yassa' and that of the *Kitāb al-Ansāb* is 'due to the confusion between the partisan organisation, administrative and military structures, and religious functions'. Mūsā also suggests that the two lists in fact represented two different phases of the Almohad development. The only categories that would shed light on the partisan organisation are: the Ten, the Fifty, the Seventy and the Seven, the *talaba*, the *huffāz*, and the rest of the population (*al-kāffa*).<sup>16</sup>

## **1.2 The Almohad Pyramid and the Beginning of the Movement**

There is no doubt about the existence of the Almohad hierarchy. Most of the sources, if not all, which chronicled the events of the Almohads point out that Ibn Tūmart established a strict construction that brought together the tribes and the categories that supported the Almohad ideology. However, the purpose behind the construction of this ideology is vague, and the question about why Ibn Tūmart created such a system remains unanswered. J. Hopkins, among other researchers, believes that the system was originally established for military purposes.<sup>17</sup> Ibn Tūmart was involved in a long and protracted struggle with the Almoravids, and therefore he needed to organise those who believed in him and his principles into a military system. This would enable him to define their tasks and distribute their roles. However, one might ask why Ibn Tūmart used such a complex institutional network, rather than a simple arrangement. The answer is simply that far from solely creating a military organisation, Ibn Tūmart was seeking to lay the foundations of a new state.

It is almost certain that the Almohads began their movement when Ibn Tūmart failed in his attempt, according to his own account, to eliminate the manifestations of

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<sup>16</sup> Mūsā, 'al-Tanzīmāt al-ḥizbiyya', p. 55.

<sup>17</sup> See Hopkins, *Medieval Muslim Government*, p. 93. M. Ghannāy, *Qiyām dawlat al-muwahḥidīn*, p. 43. A. Najjār, *Tajribat al-Iṣlāḥ fī ḥarakat al-Mahdī b. Tūmart*, p. 125.

moral decay and to return people to the true teachings of Islam.<sup>18</sup> He believed that the Almoravid rulers had not sought to drive out corruption, nor did they allow anyone else to do so. In his eyes, the Almoravids were not real Muslims, and therefore the act of changing this government in order to eliminate corruption and to establish the foundations of religious reform, had become a sacred duty.<sup>19</sup> Once Ibn Tūmart returned to his homeland in the Atlas Mountains and thus placed himself under the protection of his native people, he began to implement his project. The purpose was clear: a united society adheres to the Sharia, or Islamic law, and the Sunna of the Prophet Muḥammad; it also requires a strong government in order to achieve these goals. To ensure this, Ibn Tūmart followed three main steps: first, he sought to obtain supporters by spreading his ideology of religious reform among his native barbarian tribes of Maṣmūda. The Almoravid rulers had no effective power over the Atlantic tribes, which gave Ibn Tūmart a good opportunity to move freely and easily between the villages and to spread his message among their people. He built mosques and schools where he taught his followers and preached against moral corruption and its elimination. This was possible by using an accent and language familiar to the Maṣmūda tribes, as well as using the great knowledge that he had gained during his long journey to the Orient.<sup>20</sup> Having succeeded in winning over supporters who believed in his cause, the next step was to impart a cover of religious legitimacy to his character by adopting the concept of Mahdism. The belief that God would one day send the Maḥdī, who would fill the earth with justice and put right the wrongdoing and tyranny that had long existed among Muslims.

The use of a religious gloss to achieve political ambitions was not unheard of in the history of the Maghrib, as it has been used by the founder of the Fatimid dynasty, ‘Abd Allāh al-Maḥdī bi-Allāh (909–934).<sup>21</sup> Perhaps Ibn Tūmart realised that Mahdism was the best way to achieve his goals, as well as to gain more supporters and ensure their permanent loyalty. He therefore began to convince his people about the Maḥdī and he explained the political and social implications which would be gained by following

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<sup>18</sup> *Al-Ḥulal al-Mūshiyya*, p. 111 ; ‘Azzāwī, *Rasā’il*, vol. 1, p. 43.

<sup>19</sup> Ibn Tūmart called the Almoravids "worse than the Christians", and more deserving of *jihād*, in an address to the assembled Almohad tribes. ‘Apply yourselves in *jihād* against the veiled infidels, for this is more important than combating the Christians and all the infidels twice, or even more. In effect, they have attributed a corporal aspect to the Creator - May he be glorified! In rejecting *tawḥīd*, they have rebelled against truth itself!’, Lévi-Provençal, *Documents Inédits*, p. 15.

<sup>20</sup> On Ibn Tūmart’s journey to the Orient and his movements between the villages of the Atlas Mountains, see: Al-Baydhaq, *Akhbār al-Maḥdī*, pp. 11-33. Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Nuẓm al-Jumān*, pp. 61-79.

<sup>21</sup> On the concept of Mahdism and its presence in the Berber regions, see Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn, The Muqaddima*, vol. 1, pp. 246-252, vol. 2, pp. 142-176; H. Basset, *Essai sur la littérature des berbères* (Alger, 1920), pp. 268-272.

him. By the time Ibn Tūmart felt that the idea of Mahdism had penetrated the hearts of his followers, in a speech near Iglī, his place of birth, he revealed himself to be God's Mahdī.<sup>22</sup> Immediately after the speech, a pledge of allegiance was given by the followers of the Mahdī. The first to give the *bay'a* (an oath of allegiance) were the Mahdī's advisers, close companions and tribal chiefs.<sup>23</sup> Next were the rest of audience, including the Mahdī's students and members of the mountain Berber tribes. Ibn Tūmart's bold announcement greatly helped him to increase his popularity and raise his status among his followers. Al-Marrākushī described the dominant position of Ibn Tūmart among the Berber tribes of Maṣmūda:

‘The submission of the Maṣmūda to Ibn Tūmart kept increasing, their fascination to his character multiplied, and their glorification to his position assured to the extent that if he commanded any of them to kill his father, brother or son, he would immediately commit the murder without delay’.<sup>24</sup>

The increase in the number of recruits who formally took the name of the Almohads, allowed the Mahdī to complete his final step: that of establishing a political and military entity in his nascent state and of declaring an armed conflict against the Almoravids. The biggest challenges that the Almohads had to face were the disjointed society and the conflicts between independent tribes. Armed conflicts between the tribes in order to gain more control over neighbouring areas, or for revenge, were common. The endless blood feuds between the tribe of Hintāta and Orīkā, prior to the arrival of the Almohads, was an example of the divisive nature of the Atlas Berber community.<sup>25</sup>

The Almohad Mahdī realised that he needed to resolve these ancient conflicts and re-build the web of relations and blood loyalties between the tribes to create a unified and disciplined organisation as a first step. This does not mean that Ibn Tūmart wanted to completely abolish the tribal system that existed in the Atlas Mountains, nor did he want to destroy the value of lineage and blood relations. He was simply rearranging lineage and loyalty to create a more efficient and obedient society of tribes.

Moreover, an argument that was used by Ibn Tūmart in his public speech propaganda campaign against the Almoravids, thus gaining greater loyalty from the mountain tribes, was the policy of the Almoravid government, which limited the power

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<sup>22</sup> Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Nuzm al-Jumān*, pp. 75-76 ; al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu'jib*, pp. 254-255. On the doctrine of Ibn Tūmart, see Huici Miranda, *Historia política*, pp. 37-41. Robert Brunschvig, ‘Sur la doctrine du Mahdī Ibn Tūmart’, *Arabica* 2 (1955), pp. 173-149. Fromherz, *The Almohads*, pp. 135-198 ; Fromherz, ‘the Almohad Mecca: Locating IGLI and the Cave of Ibn Tūmart’, *Al-Qantara*, 26 (2005), pp. 179-80.

<sup>23</sup> Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu'jib*, pp. 254-255. Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, vol. 6, p. 469.

<sup>24</sup> Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu'jib*, p. 137.

<sup>25</sup> On the genealogy of Berber tribes and their relationships, see Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh*, vol. 6, pp. 116-135.

of the ruling family, plus an autocratic and exploited group of *fuqaha* (Jurists). The Mahdī refers to the tyranny of those *fuqahā'* in a number of sermons.<sup>26</sup> They were the Amir's right-hand men, which gave them the opportunity to use their positions to achieve their personal ambitions, without care for the people's demands. When the opportunity came for the Mahdī to build his state, he therefore wanted to create an inclusive political system in which the power was distributed over multiple categories to cover all segments of society.

The *Shūrā* (an Arabic word for "consultation") is one of the most important principles that is encouraged by the Islamic religion as a means of making decisions on various community issues, and this is in line with Islamic law. Islamic history mentions many events which embody the principle of consultation. Even the Prophet Muḥammad was ordered by God to consult with believers, although Muslims believe him to be infallible.<sup>27</sup> The prophet made all his decisions in consultation with the Muslims, except for matters which were clearly dealt with by God. The adherence of Ibn Tūmart to Islamic teachings, and his determination to follow and imitate the prophet in his behaviour and decision-making, encouraged him to represent the principle of *Shūrā* in his political system and to make it central to solving any problems that the Almohads might face.

As will be discussed in more depth later, Ibn Tūmart arranged his followers into a multi-tiered structure, or hierarchy. The status of each level depended on the social status of its members, or on the role assigned to them. However, these categories can be seen as a political system, as propaganda, and as a military apparatus. The political system was represented in the Almohad advisory councils, that is, the Ten, the Fifty and the Seventy, whose members were chosen carefully from all of the known tribes and clans. The propaganda machine was made up of the categories of the *ṭalaba* and *ḥuffāz* and its mission was to disseminate the Mahdī's message and to mobilise large numbers of supporters to the Almohad cause. The military apparatus was composed of all the Almohad tribes, and its mission was to defend the state against any threat and to provide military elements whenever required to do so.

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<sup>26</sup> See Ibn Tūmart, *Kitāb A'azzu mā-Yuṭlab*, ed. 'Abd al-Ganī Abū al-'Azam (Rabat, 1997), pp. 404-410; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān wa-anbā' abnā' al-zamān*, ed. A. 'Abbās, 7 vols (Beirut, 1968), vol. 5, p. 49; Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu'jib*, p. 138, 241.

<sup>27</sup> In the Koran, God said to Muḥammad "Thus it is due to mercy from Allāh that you deal with them gently, and had you been rough, hard hearted, they would certainly have dispersed from around you; pardon them therefore, and ask pardon for them, and take counsel with them in the affair; so when you have decided, then place your trust in Allāh; surely Allāh loves those who trust", Sūra 3: 159.

### 1.3 *The Almohad Advisory Councils*

#### 1.3.1 *Council of Ten*

The identity of the Ten is well established from all the sources, which place them on the top of the Almohad pyramid. However, there are still doubts about the real name of this category. Al-Baydhaq, followed by Ibn 'Idhārī, called them the *Ahl al-Jamā'a*, without any trace of the name *al-'ashra*<sup>28</sup>; the author of the *Kitāb al-Ansāb* called them the *Ahl al-Jamā'a*, but in other places he named them *Ahl al-Jamā'a al-'ashra*<sup>29</sup>; al-Marrākushī, more explicitly, gives the name *al-Jamā'a* and he affirms that these were the first who believed in Ibn Tūmart and his cause. He adds that from then onwards their name was *al-Jamā'a*.<sup>30</sup> Ibn al-Qaṭṭān referred to them as the *al-'ashra al-Jamā'a*, and occasionally as the *al-'ashra*<sup>31</sup>; the name given by the author of *al-Ḥulal al-Mūshiyya* is simply the *al-'ashra*.<sup>32</sup> In these contexts, one might ask whether the *al-'ashra* means the name of the category, or whether it refers to the number of its members.

The *Kitāb al-Ansāb* is the only source which states that there were 12 members of the Council of *Ten*. Al-Yassa' in Ibn al-Qaṭṭān's account, although he stated that the members of this layer were ten, gave only seven names. Most of the Almohad accounts provide ten names, but these are by no means always the same names, nor are they in a similar order.<sup>33</sup> This consensus gives an impression that the layer could have been called, at least in the early days, the *Ten*, referring to the number of its members, and also as an analogy to the companions of the Prophet, whom Ibn Tūmart was keen to follow. Later, as a result of the fluctuating number of members, the layer was renamed the *Ahl al-Jamā'a*.

There is no doubt that the composition of the Ten varied from time to time, either because of expulsion, as happened with al-Faqīh al-Ifrīqī, who denied the infallibility of Ibn Tūmart and disapproved of the massacre at Hzimīrah<sup>34</sup>, or because of death, as happened at the famous battle of Al-Buḥāira in April, 1130, when half of the members of the Council were killed.<sup>35</sup> There is no clear evidence that Ibn Tūmart replaced the

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<sup>28</sup> Al-Baydhaq, *Akhbār al-Mahdī*, p. 32, 42, 43; Ibn 'Idhārī al-Marrākushī, *al-Bayān al-mughrib*, qsm al-Muwahhidīn, p. 80.

<sup>29</sup> *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, pp. 23, 30.

<sup>30</sup> al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu'jib*, p. 135.

<sup>31</sup> Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Nuzm al-Jumān*, pp. 82, 84, 88, 124.

<sup>32</sup> *Al-Ḥulal al-Mūshiyya*, p. 108.

<sup>33</sup> See the table of the Council of Ten.

<sup>34</sup> Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Nuzm al-Jumān*, p. 97.

<sup>35</sup> *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, p. 30. Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Nuzm al-Jumān*, p. 160.

members of the Ten with others, but the variations in the names given in the sources provides us with a hypothesis that necessary changes did occur.

Another case is the names of the members who were attached to the Ten. Generally, more than twenty names were given by the Almohad chroniclers for this layer, of which only ten are fairly common to all the lists. Among those members are: ‘Abd al-Mu’min b. ‘Alī (the future caliph), Abū Ḥafṣ ‘Umar b. ‘Alī al-Ṣanhājī, Abū Ḥafṣ ‘Umar b. Yaḥyā al-Hintātī, Abū Yaḥyā Abū Bakr b. Yīgīt, and Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd Allāh b. Muḥsin al-Wānshūrī, who is also known as al-Bashīr. The other names were mentioned by some sources and omitted by others. This discrepancy raises the possibility that these accounts may represent various stages in the development of the system and that chroniclers may have recorded the list of the Ten at different periods, during which new members were in charge. It could also be a sign of the flexibility of the system, which allowed Ibn Tūmart, for some reason, to replace or transfer members from one layer to another, either permanently or temporarily. As a result, it is not surprising to see some names that were reported as members of the Council of Ten are also mentioned in a different layer. For example, the *Kitāb al-Ansāb* mentions Abū Mūsā ‘Isā b. Mūsā al-Ṣūdī and Abī Muḥammad ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Ghīghā’ī as being members of the *Ten*, and also of the *Ahl al-Dar*.<sup>36</sup> Al-Marrākushī cited Mūsā b. ‘Alī al-Ḍarīr in the list of the Ten, while other accounts placed him in the Council of Fifty.<sup>37</sup>

The disarray in the ordering of the members of the Ten is another confusion which makes it difficult for us to ascertain the importance of each member. Most of the Almohad accounts cite ‘Abd al-Mu’min b. ‘Alī, the future caliph, at the top of the list. Some sources make a clear separation between ‘Abd al-Mu’min and all the members of the Ten.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, only al-Yassa‘ and al-Marrākushī are presented in a different order. Both were in the Muslim East, far from the Almohad court, which gave them the scope to write their accounts without any fear of possible retribution. However, al-Marrākushī’s account cannot always be trusted. The exclusion of ‘Abd al-Mu’min from the top of al-Marrākushī’s list is not surprising when one considers that he also excluded the famous al-Bashīr from the Council of Ten. In contrast, although al-Yassa‘ did the same by dropping ‘Abd al-Mu’min from the summit of the Ten, his order is more logical. According to al-Yassa‘, and supporting events, al-Bashīr was at the forefront of

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<sup>36</sup> *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, pp. 26, 32.

<sup>37</sup> Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu’jib*, p. 245.

<sup>38</sup> Ibn al-Aḥmar, *Mustawda‘ al-‘alāma wa-mustabda‘ al-‘allāma*, edited by M. b. Tawīt (Tetouan, 1964), p. 32; Ibn Abī Dinār, *al-Mu’nis fī akhbār Ifrīqiya*, p. 110.

the Almohads. He was the commander during all the battles fought by the Almohads. He was the man who was assigned by Ibn Tūmart to carry out the operation of the *tamyīz*; the author of *Kitāb al-Ansāb* had gone even further, by giving him supernatural qualities, when he said that al-Bashir could have disappeared, but he did not die during the Battle of al-Buḥāira in 1129.<sup>39</sup> These examples of favouring, and many others, lead us to believe that al-Bashīr would have been Caliph after the Maḥdī, had he not died so suddenly. The remaining members were arranged in different places in each source, with the exception of Abū Ḥafṣ ‘Umar al-Ṣanhājī, who was always in third or fourth place in almost every list.

The members of this assembly were, somehow, ministers for the Maḥdī.<sup>40</sup> They were his trusted men, whom he consulted about important issues, and who were assigned to execute his major decisions. In fact, they were, if one believes Ibn Khaldūn, the representatives of the five Maṣmūda tribes which formed the essential core of the Almohad administration.<sup>41</sup> In addition, the *Kitāb al-Ansāb* more precisely indicates the functions of the most influential members of the board. According to this source, ‘Abd al-Mu’min, who the Maḥdī called *ṣāhib al-Waqt* (the man of the moment), was the only follower who had the privilege of riding a black horse; the Abū Ḥafṣ ‘Umar al-Hintāī was assigned to carry Ibn Tūmart’s shield; Abū Ibrāhīm al-Khazrajī worked as a high judge of the people on behalf of the Maḥdī.<sup>42</sup>

As for Abū al-Rabī‘ Ḥaḍramī, he was the Secretary, the official letter writer (*Kātib al-Rasā’il*) of the Maḥdī; ‘Abd Allāh b. Sulaymān led, as an Imam, the obligatory prayers on behalf of the Maḥdī. It was his death at the battle of Al-Buḥāira that forced the Maḥdī to replace him with ‘Abd al-Mu’min. We know from various sources that during the fateful year, 1129, Ibn Tūmart charged his future successor to deal with the prayers, along with the leadership of the troops.<sup>43</sup> Ibn Abī Zar‘ and other authors claim that ‘Abd al-Mu’min exercised this mission until the Maḥdī disappeared.<sup>44</sup> Finally, the *Kitāb al-Ansāb* ignores the function of al-Bashīr al-Wānshrīsī, but we are quite sure that ‘Abd al-Mu’min was able to acquire these new privileges due to al-Bashir’s death at *al-Buḥāira*.

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<sup>39</sup> Al-Baydhaq, *Akhbār al-Maḥdī*, p. 33. *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, p. 23.

<sup>40</sup> Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Nuẓm al-Jumān*, p. 124.

<sup>41</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, vol. 6, p. 288.

<sup>42</sup> *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, pp. 30-31.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, p. 48.

<sup>44</sup> Ibn Abī Zar‘, *Rawḍ al-Qirṭās*, p. 179.

Evidence for further information on the Council of Ten is sketchy. At this stage, the Almohads did not yet have their own state. The ongoing war with the Almoravids had limited the functions of the nascent government in two respects: to gain more supporters to their cause, and to win the fight against their sole enemy. Let us not forget the death of most of the Ten's members at the Battle of *al-Buḥāira*, and the reforms introduced by the 'Abd al-Mu'min on the hierarchy subsequently, which will be considered in the second part of the chapter.

### 1.3.2 Council of Fifty

There is no doubt among historians about the existence of the *Khamsīn* (The Fifty) as it was recorded in almost every source. Nevertheless, these sources do not provide us with sufficient detail to enable us to understand the formation of this council and the tasks that were entrusted to its members. Only the author of the *Kitāb al-Ansāb* and Ibn al-Qaṭṭān have provided us with an almost complete list of the members of this council, yet they are not in agreement on the number of its members. Ibn al-Qaṭṭān tried to count the fifty but he listed thirty-nine names only. At this point, he realised the deficit in his calculations and says: 'Thus Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt enumerates them in his book. According to this they are about forty or forty-one men; where are the rest of the "Fifty"?' Ibn al-Qaṭṭān therefore mentions another seven members whom Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt says are the advisers of Ibn Tūmart (*Ahl mashwaratihī*), and Ibn al-Qaṭṭān hypothesises that they belonged to the *Ahl Khamsīn*.<sup>45</sup> In contrast, the *Kitāb al-Ansāb* lists forty-five names; then he adds another nine members who were associated with the assembly after the *tamyīz*.<sup>46</sup>

The confusion in determining the actual number of the *Ahl al-Khamsīn* has led modern researchers to try to address the problem and find a way to explain the contradictions between the two versions. J. F. P. Hopkins believes that the Fifty is merely a name that was given to this council and that it does not necessarily refer to the number of members.<sup>47</sup> Hopkins supported his opinion through the French anthropologist Robert Montagne's study of the organisations of Berber tribes.<sup>48</sup> According to Montagne, the Council of Fifty was a model similar to a pre-existing Berber tribal

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<sup>45</sup> Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Nuẓm al-Jumān*, pp. 84-86.

<sup>46</sup> *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, pp. 32-37. The *tamyīz* means a Berber traditional process that was used for organising a confederation for war, or to kill disloyal tribal members who did not submit to the Mahdī's ideology: see al-Baydhaq, *Akhbār al-Mahdī*, pp. 39, 41, 61, 69-72. Fromherz, *The Almohads*, pp. 96-100.

<sup>47</sup> J. F. P. Hopkins, "The Hierarchy of the Almohads", in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, University of London, Vol. 16, No. 1 (1954), p. 97.

<sup>48</sup> Robert Montagne, *Berbères et le Makhzin dans le sud du Maroc* (Paris, 1930), p. 221.

council called the *Ait Rb ʿīn* (Forty), even though its members did not exceed ten or fifteen. This study was also adopted by Fromherz, who argues that the Council of Fifty was based on a pre-existing tribal system. The Council of Fifty, according to him, “*was actually made up of forty members, but these became fifty when the Council of Ten was added*”.<sup>49</sup>

However, the existence of *Ait Rb ʿīn* in Berber society does not necessarily mean that Ibn Tūmart used it in his organisations. In fact, we do not find any references in the Almohad accounts that lead to such a conclusion. Perhaps the only evidence that supports this idea is that the list of Ibn al-Qaṭṭān includes only thirty-nine names. However, even this does not prove this hypothesis, as Ibn al-Qaṭṭān mentioned elsewhere that the number of the members was actually fifty.<sup>50</sup> On the contrary, there are many sources which confirm that the number of its members was fifty, and that the body of the *Ahl Khamsīn* was completely separate from the Council of Ten. For example, the anonymous author of *al-Ḥulal al-Mūshiyya* says that, after he listed the membership of the Ten, there “followed behind them [the Ten], in this fashion, fifty men called *Ahl Khamsīn*”.<sup>51</sup> Ibn Abī Zarʿ described the *bayʿa* of the ‘Abd al-Muʿmin to be caliph and says “The first to swear allegiance to him were the “*Ten*”, the Companions of the *Mahdī*; then the “*Fifty*”, the *Sheikh-s* of the *Muwaḥḥidīn*”.<sup>52</sup> Other evidence suggesting that the Ten and the Fifty were completely separate is given by the *Kitāb al-Ansāb*. It is the only source that provides the lists of the ten and the fifty, and these two lists have no names in common.<sup>53</sup> The sources of disagreement can be explained by several factors, such as the failure of memory, the lack of information, confusion, mistakes by copyists (especially the integration of new elements into the early assembly). However, it would be a mistake to conclude that there is no relationship between the Almohad state institution and existing tribal systems. It is most likely that Ibn Tūmart would benefit from pre-existing Berber tribal councils, but first he would need to make necessary changes and modifications in order to suit the structures of his new organisations.

The creation of this council presented new problems. Al-Yassaʿ indicates that the *Mahdī* was proclaimed by the Ten, followed by fifty people who once received the

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<sup>49</sup> Fromherz, *The Almohads*, p. 124.

<sup>50</sup> Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Nuẓm al-Jumān*, p. 84, 86, 128.

<sup>51</sup> *Al-Ḥulal al-Mūshiyya*, p. 108.

<sup>52</sup> Ibn Abī Zarʿ, *Rawḍ al-Qirṭās*, p. 131.

<sup>53</sup> *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, pp. 30-37.

name of Ahl al-Khamsīn.<sup>54</sup> Ibn Abī Zar‘ enables us to choose between two versions: in the first, it was not until the day after the *bay‘a* of the Maḥdī that the *Ahl Khamsīn* were selected; in the second, the *Ten* and the *Fifty* were simultaneously created after the *bay‘a*.<sup>55</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, who rarely spoke about the Almohad hierarchy, states that when the number of his companions had reached fifty, Ibn Tūmart called them the *Ahl Khamsīn*.<sup>56</sup> The story of *Kitāb al-Ansāb* is as original as it is exciting. For him:

‘When Allāh had intended the constitution of the Ahl Khamsīn to be made, the Imam Maḥdī, may Allāh be pleased with him, began to look at the Almohads, and selected from them the members of this assembly’.<sup>57</sup>

The members of this assembly, according to the two sources, were presented in groups, each belonging to the same tribes that had joined the Almohads, namely the Hintāta, Tīnmal, Jadmīwa, Janfīsa, Ṣanhāja, Qabā’il, Haskūra.

On the role of this Council of Fifty, information is lacking, and we are still in the realms of speculation. As already noted, its members were chosen from the tribes and most of them were *Sheikh*-s, not just normal citizens. They would therefore be allowed a representative aspect in Ibn Tūmart’s institutions.

According to our sources, the *Khamsīn* were identified as those whom the Maḥdī consulted, and from whom he was taking advice “*Aṣḥāb mashūratihī*”.<sup>58</sup> Ibn Khaṭīb suggests another role: “*Ahl al-Sab‘īn, al-Khamsīn, al-Ṭalaba and al-Huffāz for acquiring knowledge*”.<sup>59</sup> It is almost certain that the author did not distinguish between Almohad categories (*Aṣnāf*) and their respective roles. I am sceptical about the role of *Shūra* (Consultation) which was attributed to this Council. It would be more than “*a kind of conduit between the supreme head of the state and the Almohad tribes scattered in the folds of the Atlas*”.<sup>60</sup> By integrating the tribal *Sheikh*-s into his hierarchy, Ibn Tūmart thus ensured his domination, and their commitment to contribute to the Almohad movement.

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<sup>54</sup> Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Nuẓm al-Jumān*, p. 128.

<sup>55</sup> Ibn Abī Zar‘, *Rawḍ al-Qirṭās*, pp. 113, 114.

<sup>56</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *Tarikh Ibn Khaldūn*, vol. 6, p. 304.

<sup>57</sup> *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, p. 36.

<sup>58</sup> Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Nuẓm al-Jumān*, p. 124.

<sup>59</sup> Ibn al-Khaṭīb, *Raḥm al-Hulal*, p. 57.

<sup>60</sup> Ghannāy, *Qiyām dawlat al-muwahḥidīn*, p. 132.

### 1.3.3 *The Sab 'a and the Sab 'īn*

If we believe some of the Almohad chroniclers, the aristocratic elements of Ibn Tūmart's hierarchy were not limited only to the Fifty, but they were distributed in two other councils: The *Sab 'a* (Seven) and the *Sab 'īn* (Seventy).

With regard to the *Sab 'a*, Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, always acting on the authority of Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, is the only chronicler to mention this council, and he provided us with the names of its members, although without including any information about them.<sup>61</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt says that the Seven were the advisors of Ibn Tūmart, though he did not tell us the differences between them and the Councils of Ten and Fifty, whose members also have the same role. This similarity between their roles suggests that either this entity had a separate body, or that its members belonged to another council. According to Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, these seven people were probably selected from the *Khamsīn*. Yet, according to the list of the *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, we find only two members who actually belong to the Council of Fifty.<sup>62</sup>

In Al-Yassa's list concerning the Council of Ten, the author provided the names of only seven members. Is this a simple coincidence, or was the chronicler confused about the identities of the members of both councils, the Ten and the Seventy, that actually existed?

In the information reported by al-'Umarī, on the authority of Abū al-Rūḥ 'Isa al-Zawāwī, about Ḥafsid institutions, we encounter seven characters from the Council of Ten. Their role is less significant, compared to the other three, who were close advisers of the Sultan.<sup>63</sup> This fact does not seem to be a Ḥafsid innovation but is a relic of the old Almohad organisation, because we know from the information of al-Baydhaq and al-Marrākushī that at the death of Ibn Tūmart, three Almohad *Sheikh*-s played a leading role and they governed with 'Abd al-Mu'min.<sup>64</sup>

However, despite the lack of evidence, it is difficult to exclude the testimony of Ibn Ṣāhib Ṣalāt, who is known to be a reliable chronicler, in regard to the Council of Seven. As always in the history of the Almohads, many questions remain, beginning with a process called *I'tirāf*, reported only by al-Baydhaq.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, at present,

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<sup>61</sup> Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Nuẓm al-Jumān*, p. 86.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, p. 86; *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, pp. 32, 33.

<sup>63</sup> Al-'Umarī, *Masālik al-'Absār wa Mamālik al-'Amṣār*, eds. M. Khrīsat, A. Hzāīma, Y. Yāsīn (Al Ain, 2001), p. 91.

<sup>64</sup> Al-Baydhaq, *Akhbār al-Mahdī*, p. 42. Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu'jib*, p. 139.

<sup>65</sup> This was a process very similar to that of the *tamyīz*. It is the biggest recorded killing process, carried out through a formal decision issued by the Caliph Abd al-Mu'min, during which, according to al-Baydhaq, a total of 32,730 were executed. The process took place in 1148 and happened in most of the

giving a conclusive opinion on the existence of the Seven is very difficult, simply because all the remaining information about the categories of the Almohad hierarchy has come from just four fragmented sources that should be examined at their face value. Finally, the attitude of Ibn al-Qaṭṭān in regard to the Council of Seven is very significant and it acknowledges the reality of its existence. Just before displaying the list of the fifty, the author thus says: “*I know al-Jamā‘a al-‘ashra, the Ahl al-Khamsīn and the Sab‘ā councillors of Ibn Tūmart*”.<sup>66</sup>

The Council of Seventy is another mystery that has been provided by Ibn al-Qaṭṭān. After stating, according to al-Yassa‘, that the third assembly is that of the Seventy, the author of *Nuẓm al-Jumān* leaves us perplexed. He finds the existence of the Seventy altogether unlikely. Yet, a few pages later, he resumes his plagiarism from al-Yassa‘ regarding this council, and gives no acknowledgement of his source.<sup>67</sup>

This is a typical example of the compilation processes that are common in Arab historiography.<sup>68</sup> The author cites his sources and uses them frequently throughout the text for the same series of events, regardless of repetitions or contradictions. However, by incorporating the information from the same al-Yassa‘, other chroniclers, such as Ibn al-Athīr, al-Nuwayirī, al-*al-Ḥulal al-Mūshiyya* and Ibn al-Khaṭīb have summarised the status of this council.<sup>69</sup>

Finally, the statement of Huici Miranda, in which he denied the existence of this council, seems excessive.<sup>70</sup> We might simply say that the convocation of such an assembly was called in circumstances that remain cloudy, and its components still remain to be determined.

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areas that were under the authority of the Almohads. Its objective was to purify the country of the elements who were disloyal to the Almohads. See al-Baydhaq, *Akhbār al-Mahdī*, pp. 70-72. Huici Miranda, *Historia política*, pp. 143-145.

<sup>66</sup> Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Nuẓm al-Jumān*, p. 84.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, pp. 83, 128.

<sup>68</sup> In *the Muqaddima*, Ibn Khaldūn often criticised “*idle superstition and uncritical acceptance of historical data*” which was, as he said, the reason that encouraged him to introduce a scientific method to the study of history. See the introduction of the author, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, Vol. 1, pp. 5-12. On Arab historiography see: Chase F. Robinson, *Islamic Historiography* (Cambridge, 2003).

<sup>69</sup> Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 9, p. 200. Al-Nuwayirī, *Nihāyat al-Irab fī funūn al-Adab*, edited by I. Shams al-Dīn vol. 24 (Beirut, 2004), p. 158. *al-Ḥulal al-Mūshiyya*, p. 108. Ibn al-Khaṭīb, *Raḡm al-Ḥulal*, p. 57.

<sup>70</sup> Huici Miranda, *Historia Política*, p. 95.

## 1.4 *The Propagandists of the Almohads*

### 1.4.1 *The Ṭalaba: The ‘Learned’*

Propaganda was a critical element in the system that was created by Ibn Tūmart. A famous propagandist, the Maḥdī awarded this task of disseminating propaganda to a special team. Through these hierarchical channels, all Almohad groups, and all the rallied tribes, were constantly kept under his control, both politically and ideologically. The disciples who surrounded the Maḥdī were thus continuously involved in this project of propaganda. Who were these pioneer propagandists, and what training did they follow?

Even before forming a special team for this laborious task, Ibn Tūmart, for his own campaign, benefitted from the invaluable help of al-Bashir al-Wānshrīsī. Following his recruitment, al-Wānshrīsī was not mentioned in the retinue of the Maḥdī. As a trusted man, he preceded the Maḥdī to prepare the ground for him.<sup>71</sup> Was it the premature death of al-Wānshrīsī and his important role of propaganda that led Ibn Tūmart to shape a new team in his image?

From our sources, Ibn Tūmart’s new recruits were called the *Ṭalaba* (the name is almost always in the plural). The researcher O. Saidi represents the *Ṭalaba* as an Almohad invention.<sup>72</sup> Yet they were known by the Almoravids before the Almohad movement took place. Ibn Abī Zar’ informs us that ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Yāsīn, the founder of the Almoravid dynasty, before beginning his conquests, would have sent money to the “*Ṭalaba* of Maṣmūda and to their *qādī*-s”.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, a letter issued by the Maḥdī presents a severe indictment of them, and accuses them of all evil, showing their prominence in Almoravid society.<sup>74</sup>

With the Almohads, the word *ṭalaba*, which generally refers to those who seek knowledge, took on a special meaning from the moment it was reserved for an entire category in Ibn Tūmart’s hierarchy. Despite its age, this institution is very poorly documented in primary sources, and perhaps it is for this reason that only Hopkins has given it recent attention. It seems certain that *Nuẓm al-Jumān*, plagiarised by *al-Ḥulal Mūshiyya*, is the only source that effectively speaks of *ṭalaba* the time of the Maḥdī.

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<sup>71</sup> Abdellatif Sabbane, *Ibn Tūmart : Projet politique*, Mémoire DEA (Paris 1, 1992, Panthéon Sorbonne), p. 33.

<sup>72</sup> O. Saidi, ‘Le Maghrib: l’unification sous les Almohades’, *Histoire générale de l’Afrique*, 4 (1990), p. 63

<sup>73</sup> Ibn Abī Zar’, *Rawḍ al-Qirṭās*, p. 124.

<sup>74</sup> ‘Azzāwī, *Rasā’il*, vol. 1, pp. 44-49.

Conversely, other chronicles seemed to pay attention to this body during the reigns of the later caliphs.

The *Nuẓm al-Jumān*, always in al-Yassa‘’s version, set the *ṭalaba* on the fourth rung of the hierarchy, just after the three previous councils. However, as Ibn al-Qaṭṭān denied the existence of the Seventy, the position of *ṭalaba* has risen and has ended up in third place.<sup>75</sup> Let us not forget that the father of our chronicler was one of the dignitaries of the *ṭalaba*. By being assigned such a high rank, the author thus praised and exalted his father, who had suffered injustice at the time of Caliph Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd Allāh al-‘Adil (1224-1227) and his brother, the Caliph Abū al-‘Ala Idrīs al-Ma‘mūn (1227-1232). Consequently, the *al-Ḥulal* version becomes essential. The account of the anonymous author of the *Kitāb al-Ansāb* regarding this category seems strange to me. Indeed, his account does not usually miss such information, even for political organs that are less important. The enthusiasm he has for everything related to Ibn Tūmart sometimes causes duplication and even contradictions. However, the *ṭalaba* have no place in his hierarchical system, and only a simple, brief note is given about them at the end of his account.<sup>76</sup>

Another point worth considering is presented only by the *Kitāb al-Ansāb* in a passing reference when speaking of Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Ubayd Allāh al-Ḥaskūrī, member of the Council of Fifty, the anonymous author claimed that he was one of the *mubashir*-s (propagandists) of the Almohad movement.<sup>77</sup> Could it be that the old name refers to the *Ṭalaba*, or at least to their former position? One is tempted to believe this, especially when one considers that Ibn Tūmart was imitating the Prophet in his every move.

The *ṭalaba* were not ordinary students, as has been implied by some recent research.<sup>78</sup> They comprised the experienced *Sheikh*-s on whom the Maḥdī lavished his knowledge for many years. Ibn Khaldūn said that the Almohad Maḥdī called his companions and intimates that they are "*the ṭalaba*", and those who rallied to the movement "*the Almohads*".<sup>79</sup> This statement generates a further mystery. In fact, only two members of the Council of Ten, Sulaymān b. Makhlūf al-Ḥaḍarī and Ismā‘īl al-Hazrajī, who took the nickname *Ṭālib*.<sup>80</sup> On the other hand, sources attribute the quality

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<sup>75</sup> Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Nuẓm al-Jumān*, p. 82.

<sup>76</sup> *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, pp. 58, 59.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, p. 36.

<sup>78</sup> A. Najjār, *Tajribat al-Iṣlāḥ*, p. 120 ; Fromherz, *the Almohads*, p. 126.

<sup>79</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, vol. 6, p. 304.

<sup>80</sup> Al-Baydhaq, *Akhbār al-Maḥdī*, p. 30.

of *ṭālib* to people who had no relationship to either the *‘Ashara* or the *Khamsīn*. We therefore believe that the category of the *Ṭalaba* had its own existence, and its members were not part of the other councils.

Based on our sources, the number of the *Ṭalaba*, at the time of the Mahdī, was much higher than of other assemblies. It is surprising when one considers that, in 1121, at the beginning of the movement, the Mahdī sent a significant number of the *Ṭalaba*, under the direction of a Namīr b. Tajalud b. Yamīlūk, to spread their propaganda in the Sus and the *Jabal Daran*.<sup>81</sup> According to Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, the “fishing was successful” because a large number of tribes had rallied to the cause of Ibn Tūmart, such as the Jadmīwa, Hazmira, Janfīsa, and other mountain tribes. It should also be mentioned that the entry of the powerful tribe, the Hintāta, into the Almohad movement is due to the efforts of a *Ṭālib* called Sukātū. The importance of this category in the system of the Mahdī is demonstrated by the fact that he awarded its members who were killed in the performance of their duties, the term *Shahīd*<sup>82</sup> (martyr). Moreover, the Ahl Tifnūt and Ghujdāma, who murdered two-*ṭālib*-s who were sent by the Mahdī, received an exemplary punishment, as the Mahdī ordered their killing.<sup>83</sup>

Before discussing the role of the *ṭalaba* in the primary government of the Almohads, we need to refer to the words of Al-Baydhaq. Speaking of the events of the year 1125, he writes: “*wa fi ‘ām 520 ba ‘atha ṭalabat al-Muwaḥḥidīn*”<sup>84</sup> (in the year 520 [Ibn Tūmart] sent the Almohad *Ṭalaba*). This text raises a very sensitive issue, to which researchers have paid no attention. We are dealing with the primary document, and there is a clear distinction between the *ṭalaba* and the Almohad *ṭalaba*, and this was evident during the lifetime of Ibn Tūmart.<sup>85</sup> However, we should be aware that this story is almost at the end of al-Baydhaq’s book and has been attributed to him only because, according to researchers, the last section on *Akhbār al-Mahdī b. Tūmart* cannot have been written by al-Baydhaq.<sup>86</sup> Pending a definitive answer, the story is more or less proof that the category of the *ṭalaba* was split into two groups from the time of the Mahdī, and would remain in this form until the end of the Almohad dynasty.

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<sup>81</sup> Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Nuẓm al-Jumān*, p. 133.

<sup>82</sup> Al-Baydhaq, *Akhbār al-Mahdī*, p. 94.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>85</sup> It is interesting to see that al-Baydhaq, whenever he speaks of *ṭalaba*, designates them according to their membership of a tribe or a city: *ṭalabat* Ganfīsa, *ṭalabat* Maknassa, etc. *Ibid.*, pp. 25, 30, 31.

<sup>86</sup> See: ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Ḥājjīyāt, ‘Mabda’ al-Shūrā fī nizām al-Ḥukm bi-l-Maghrib al-‘Arabī Khilāl al-‘aṣr al-Wasīd’, *Majallat al-Tārīkh, al-Markaz al-waṭanī lil-drāsāt al-tarīkhiyya*, 12 (1989), pp. 89-97; A. Ben-Hammadi, “La rencontre entre le ‘faḥīh du Sus’ et le flambeau des Almohades”, *IBLA*, 45 (1991), p. 11.

Regarding the role played by the *ṭalaba*, we know that, at the beginning of the movement, while Almohads had an obligation to fight the enemy of their cause, the Maḥdī himself participated in battles and was wounded more than once. Several clues found in our sources tell us the presence of the *ṭalaba* on the battlefield alongside other members of the Almohad community. If one believes the author of *al-Ansāb*, combat roles were removed from the function of the *ṭalaba*, because the Caliph al-Nāṣir (1199-1213) would provide for the carrying of weapons, as well as the muezzins, for this duty.<sup>87</sup> However, the primary role of the *ṭalaba* remains in the field of propaganda, and, thus, fighting by the word. It was the poets of the early Islamic era who defended the new religion with the pen. On this point, the success of the *ṭalaba* was total, and Ibn Abī Zar‘ has even left a passage describing how they acted.<sup>88</sup> Finally, all of the sources having been consulted, it appears that the *ṭalaba* of Ibn Tūmart’s time never held administrative positions. However, with the evolution which the Almohad dynasty would experience, the status of the *ṭalaba* would undergo radical changes, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

#### 1.4.2 *The Ḥuffāz: The “Guardians”*

Among the mechanics of the Almohad primary institutions, which remain obscure, and which we still cannot determine, is an organisation called *Ḥuffāz* (sgl. *ḥāfiẓ*). The title *ḥāfiẓ*, which has traditionally been reserved for those who memorise the Qur’an, had begun to be used to designate those who memorise the texts of Imam al-Maḥdī.<sup>89</sup> The term *ḥāfiẓ* literally also means ‘the guardian’, the one who memorises and protects, traditionally the Qur’an, but in the Almohad case is the *A‘azzu mā-Yuṭlab* of Ibn Tūmart.

To my knowledge, no study has yet been published dealing with the category known as *ḥuffāz*. Nevertheless, in Hopkins’ magisterial study, the *Ḥuffāz* hold an insignificant position, and they are present also in the work of Allen Fromherz. As for the study of Mūsā, it ignores them completely during the time of Ibn Tūmart. This attitude seems significant and it poses a question: did this group really exist at the time of the Maḥdī, or was it an invention of ‘Abd al-Mu‘min?

Al-Baydhaq, in his memoirs about the Maḥdī, has made almost no references to the *Ḥuffāz* of his time while, during the reign of ‘Abd al-Mu‘min, he mentions their

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<sup>87</sup> *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, p. 72.

<sup>88</sup> Ibn Abī Zar‘, *Rawḍ al-Qirṭās*, pp. 113, 114.

<sup>89</sup> *al-Hulal al-Mūshiyya*, p. 150.

names, but no real details are provided. For example, in his memoirs, speaking of Ceuta, he wrote: “‘*Abd Allāh b. Sulaymān and his Ḥuffāz came down to Ceuta*’”.<sup>90</sup> Only a few lines later, he made a new and surprising statement: “‘*Abd Allāh b. Dāwūd led Jrawah [the tribe], in the company of their ḥāfiẓ, ‘Umar b. Mīmūn*’”. At first sight, these two stories are contradictory, because one wonders how a man like ‘Abd Allāh might have seen around him a group of *ḥuffāz*, while a tribe, the Jrawah, had only one *ḥāfiẓ*. We need to try to analyse the two versions in an attempt to reconcile them.

‘Abd Allāh b. Sulaymān, who was appointed to the Council of Fifty, had several features to his credit.<sup>91</sup> Could it be his new job as governor of Ceuta, which allowed him to have a group of *ḥuffāz*? It would be impossible to accept the two stories, unless to agree that the *ḥuffāz* had two distinct and widely different roles. In contrast, the period recorded by our historian, al-Baydhaq, at least for our two examples, shows that the *ḥuffāz* were charged with urgent, though short-lived, missions, whether in- or outside the capital, Marrakech. For H. Farhat, their competence lies, above all, in the field of taxation.<sup>92</sup>

Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, along with the anonymous author of *al-Ḥulal Mūshiyya*, put the *ḥuffāz* fifth in the Almohad hierarchy, just below the *ṭalaba*. These two sources add small explanatory notes stating that the *ḥuffāz* are “small *ṭalaba*”.<sup>93</sup> These notes may highlight important indicators: First, the clarity that the two authors cast on this category eliminates any confusion that would have been noticed. Yet it is obvious that the confusion between the *ṭalaba*, the *ḥuffāz* and the *Ahl al-Ḥizb* is common in some chronicles, to the point that Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt called Abū Yahya Zakariyya b. Wasnan both *ḥāfiẓ* and *ṭālib*.<sup>94</sup>

Secondly, *Nuẓm al-Jumān* is the oldest document that gives all young men a place in the hierarchy of Ibn Tūmart, and I am inclined to believe that the *ḥuffāz* are themselves the *Ṣibyān*, (young boys) in some of the texts provided in al-Baydhaq’s account, but without any convincing evidence.<sup>95</sup> Ultimately, it is possible that the Maḥdī, in order to improve the institutions of government, put the children of the main Almohads in a special category. This timid attempt, which cannot have been at the

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<sup>90</sup> al-Baydhaq, *Akhbār al-Maḥdī*, p. 69.

<sup>91</sup> Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Nuẓm al-Jumān*, p. 186. See also the footnote of the editor A. Makkī. No. 5.

<sup>92</sup> H. Farhat, *Sabta des origines au XIII siècle* (Rabat, 1993), p. 85.

<sup>93</sup> Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, p. 82. *Al-Ḥulal al-Mūshiyya*, p. 109.

<sup>94</sup> Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt, *Al-Mann bi-l-Imāma*, p. 310.

<sup>95</sup> al-Baydhaq, pp. 17, 23, 41.

experimental stage at the time of the Maḥdī, would be institutionalised by the Caliph ‘Abd al-Mu’min and for the same layer of the *ḥuffāz*.

With the version of the *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, our vision changes, as the *ḥuffāz* drop to sixth place in the pyramid, the *ṭalaba* disappear altogether and the *Ahl al-ḥizb* make their first appearance in the official hierarchy. Moreover, the anonymous author, faithful to his image as the best informed historian, surprises us with his statements on the *ḥuffāz*. In one highly condensed paragraph, the content very ambiguous:

‘The *ḥuffāz*, may God help them, come from thirteen tribes, and an order of succession. There are among them the *ḥuffāz* of *Ahl ad-Dar* (people of the house), at the head of which come *Hargha*, which are divided into three groups: *Awkdān*, *Ait Waghfkammī*, which means *Ahl bāb al-Dār*, the *Ghuzāt*; then those of *Ahl Tīnmal*, *Hintāta*, *Kidmīwa*, *Kanfīsa*, the *Qabā’il* [the tribes], *Haskūra* of *al-Qiblah*, *Ṣanhāja* of *al-Qiblah*, *Ṣanhāja* of the shadow [al-*Zil*]. There were among them neither *Kūmiyya* nor *Haskūra* of the shadow’.<sup>96</sup>

Hopkins has used this paragraph in his work on the Almohad hierarchy.<sup>97</sup> However, without wishing to criticise his thesis, we believe that in light of documents that have emerged since then, we are able to add further information to the details that are provided.

Sometimes, the original information from *Kitāb al-Ansāb* can also be a weakness. In fact, it is almost impossible to decipher this paragraph without the contribution of other sources. We can thus say with some certainty, and without being controversial, that our text really describes the state of the *ḥuffāz* at the time of Ibn Tūmart because, fortunately, other sources have given us evidence of the changes that occurred in this category under the Mu’minid dynasty.

According to the *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, the recruitment of the *ḥuffāz* at the time of the Almohad Maḥdī took place from thirteen specific tribes, but it refers only to eleven. At the apex of this hierarchical pyramid, we have *ḥuffāz Ahl al-Dār*, chosen from the members of the *Hargha* tribe and arranged in three groups. In the first place, it is questionable whether there were links between the *ḥuffāz* of *Ahl al-Dār* and the council of the same name, which represented the private entourage of the Maḥdī. In the light of our sources, only one member of that council was called *ḥāfiẓ*<sup>98</sup>, and, in an isolated case, it is difficult to conclude that there was a probable relationship between the two Almohad organs. The mention of *al-Ghuzāt* among the *ḥuffāz* seems rather curious,

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<sup>96</sup> *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, p. 59.

<sup>97</sup> Hopkins, *The Almohad hierarchy*, pp. 108-109.

<sup>98</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, p. 416.

especially when one considers that the anonymous author, a few lines before, discusses this category of *al-Ghuzāt* without mentioning any connection to the *ḥuffāz*.

The other two components of the Hargha *ḥuffāz* are a matter of debate. If it is possible to determine the first, namely Awkdān, or Kudāna, one of innumerable fractions of Hargha<sup>99</sup>, the task is, however, tough for Ait Waghfkammi. This name appears in the sources under different aspects: Immi-n-Takimī<sup>100</sup>; Mintīqimmī<sup>101</sup>, and Iḥitigimmī.<sup>102</sup> The *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, suspecting perhaps the discomfort that may be caused by this inconvenient Berber name, tried to clarify it in Arabic, saying that these are the *Ahl Bāb al-Dār*. Lévi-Provençal, who published the book, has translated it as “the attached people to (the) vestibule of (the) palace”, Hopkins makes the same point.<sup>103</sup> Yet, al-Mann bi'l-Imam, one of the most reliable sources on Almohad history, whose work was not yet published at the time of the two Orientalists, informs us that Mintīqimmī refers to none other than the famous *saqīfa* (the caliph's palace), of which Ibn Sa'īd has given a large and meticulous description in his *Jeghرافیya*<sup>104</sup>.

One more point that is made by Hopkins, but which for us has a new dimension, is the exclusion of the Kūmiyya tribe and the Haskūra of the Shadow from the category of the *ḥuffāz*. For Hopkins, the absence of the Kūmiyya tribe, which was widely favoured by the Almohad chroniclers is mostly inexplicable score, given the links with the future caliph. Hopkins has probably forgotten that we are during the period of Ibn Tūmart, and the Kūmiyya tribe had not yet rallied to the cause of the Maḥdī. On the other hand, the reason for the revocation of the Haskūra of the Shadow cannot be explained because, as mentioned before, these details are unavailable in other sources.

At this point in our research, and in this pivotal period in Almohad history, it seems absurd to try to determine the true function of the *ḥuffāz*, which remains unclear and is still being confused with the function of the *ṭalaba* and that of the *Ahl al-Ḥizb*. However, if we take into account Ibn al-Qaṭṭān's note regarding the age of the *ḥuffāz*, as well as to their nature at this basic stage of the Almohad movement, we can say with confidence that their role was simply to memorise and protect the Koran and the works of the Maḥdī.

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<sup>99</sup> *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, p. 56.

<sup>100</sup> Al-Baydhaq, *Akḥbār al-Maḥdī b. Tūmart*, p. 79.

<sup>101</sup> Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 200, 333.

<sup>102</sup> Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Nuẓm al-Jumān*, p. 240. The editor, A. al-Makkī, was mistaken in his reading of the Arabic text by failing to write the preposition (*fī*).

<sup>103</sup> *Medieval Muslim Government*, p. 108.

<sup>104</sup> See: Al-'Umarī, *Masālik al-'Abṣār*, p. 83; Ibn Ṣāḥib Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, p. 333.

### **1.5 The Mass of the Population or Al-Kāffah**

The majority of the Almohads did not remain without organisation, as Ibn Tūmart welded the tribe into a single political and religious unit. He placed at the head of every ten people a *Naqīb* (commander), often preceding reviews (*‘ard, Mayz*). Each Almohad category had a rank (*Rutba*) and the Almohads had to commit themselves to them, whether during travel (*Safar*), or while they were in town (*Ḥaḍar*)<sup>105</sup>. This form of organisation was based on rigorous discipline, and anyone who broke it was punished by death. This operation seems to have been carried out regularly and for different reasons, such as joining a new group to the movement, or when preparing for battle. There is also an operation, referred to as *tamyīz*, which the Maḥdī ordered against certain tribes. Perhaps Ibn Tūmart needed to use violence to lead the tribes to forgetting their quarrels and to assemble around him, as a great socio-political change took place within the tribes, who had been used to living in dispersion and conflict.<sup>106</sup>

The councils mentioned above played a positive and functional role in the strengthening of the Almohad cause. They contributed to the solidarity between the supporters of the Maḥdī and the different tribes of the Atlas. Moreover, these supporters are among the heavyweights and important figures who crystallised as the organisational base of the Almohad cause.

In reviewing the features of Almohad socio-political organisation, it seems that it has two classes: on one side, Almohad tribes with authority; and, on the other, the people who were from other tribes. This distinction was clearly highlighted by the future Caliph ‘Abd al-Mu’min. The mobility in the scale of these *ṭabaqāt* was very low. After the Maḥdī, their rise within a tribe or category defined the individual’s rank. Only the Kūmiyya, the caliph’s tribe, came to occupy a place in the hierarchy by the reign of ‘Abd al-Mu’min. Other individuals could only change their rank if they were joining the category of the *ṭalaba*, which was open to all known intellectuals, if not through inheriting a position from a relative, who was a member of a council. Apart from these narrow possibilities, mobility was not usually possible.

### ***Borrowed Model or Original Innovation?***

All those who are interested in studying the primary system of the Almohad government have noted the resemblance between the State of Tīnmal and that of Medina. In his

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<sup>105</sup> Al-Baydhaq, *Akhbār al-Maḥdī*, p. 79; Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Nuẓm al-Jumān*, p. 89.

<sup>106</sup> Huici Miranda, *Historia política*, p. 92; Saidi, ‘Le Maghreb’, p. 49.

article about Ibn Tūmart in the Encyclopaedia of Islam, Hopkins rightly pointed out that the Maḥdī had the Prophet himself as a model.<sup>107</sup> Is it a real historiography of facts or of compliance to models, both religious and literary, which encourage its repetition, and it always starts with the history of the Prophet and the beginning of Islam? In fact, by following the steps of Ibn Tūmart '*Faqīh al-Sūs*', one might have the impression that he was imitating the facts and actions of the Prophet, as he claimed. For example, both had the same name: Muḥammad Ibn 'Abd Allāh, despite the scepticism of certain researchers, who claim that the Maḥdī forged an Arab genealogy. Indeed, the obsession about being given an Arabic genealogy had not completely removed the possibility that one could be a Muslim without being of full Arabic race.

In the early days, the Prophet had in his service Zayd b. Ḥāritha, known as Zayd b. Muḥammad. Ibn Tūmart also had his servant, who was none other than our chronicler, al-Baydhaq. Most surprising in this assimilation is that, as long as Zayd b. Ḥāritha did not hold an important position in the Muslim society along the lines of Abū Bakr and 'Umar, al-Baydhaq was on the same level of responsibility as his predecessor in the Almohad dynasty. Compared with 'Abd al-Mu'min and al-Bashīr al-Wānshrīsī. Ibn Tūmart, like the Prophet, who isolated himself in the cave of Ḥirā, had taken refuge in a cave: Ijillīz. His proclamation under a carob tree is there only to remind us of the *bay'at al-Riḍwān* or *al-shajara* (the Pledge of the Tree) of the Prophet. We should also refer to the parallels between the *Ahl al-Dār* of Ibn Tūmart, and the *Ahl al-Bayt* of the Prophet.

Despite the many gaps in the history of the Almohad Maḥdī, one is sometimes struck by his conduct in the assimilation of the Prophet's life, which sometimes exceeds natural human emotion. For example, the Council of Ten of the Almohad hierarchy is actually a reflection of the ten companions of the Prophet who had the promise of access to heaven. In this case, the parallels are at their height when one considers that the Almohad Maḥdī, the moment he had no Garden of Eden to promise to his ten disciples, would have at least promised that all who were on earth were their slaves.<sup>108</sup> From the same perspective, we see that Ibn Tūmart, in the image of the Prophet, changed the Berber names of his close companions, thus Yarzījin b. 'Umar became 'Abd al-Wāhid al-Sharqī, Yaṣlatan b. Yalāzghigh became Ṣāliḥ b. 'Abd al-Ḥalīm,

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<sup>107</sup> Hopkins, 'Ibn Tūmart', *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (New edition), III, 958-60. See also A. Fromherz, *The Almohads*, p. 54, 55.

<sup>108</sup> Al-Baydhaq, *Akhbār al-Maḥdī*, p. 55.

Faskāt b. Yaḥīya became ‘Umar Intī.<sup>109</sup> If we follow this argument, we are tempted to believe, with other researchers, that the Almohad Maḥdī would have also changed his name, although no sources, even those most hostile to the Almohads, have made such a claim.

Beyond these simple layers, the Maḥdī adopted the scheme of the organisation of the Prophet in every detail. He emigrated from Ijillīz of Hargha to settle permanently in Tīnmal, where he established his home, his mosque, and where he died. After installing his headquarters, he sent *mubashir*-s (propagandists) among the tribes and in the places of Almoravid authority. The letters he sent to them evoke the missives of the Prophet. At this stage, several symbolic acts can be counted to his credit, thus, in order to strengthen the tribal structure of the Almohads, the creative genius of Ibn Tūmart, once again, drew its sources from the history of the Prophet. The Maḥdī was adopted with the Hargha, members of his own tribe, those of his followers who were strangers to the Almohad tribes. This is how ‘Abd al-Mu’min and al-Wānshrīsī were united by the ties of brotherhood to the tribe of the Maḥdī. The incisive words of the Maḥdī have been taken as true statements, just like the hadiths of the Prophet; the sources attributed to him, even the prophecies. Finally, the military expeditions of the Almohad Maḥdī were considered to be *ghazawāt* [sing. *ghazwa*] (a name given to the battle that is associated with the expansion of Muslim territory) and their dead were also considered martyrs. Even in his death, the Maḥdī was compared to the model of the Prophet. He thus also has a *Ḥajjat al-Wadā’*<sup>110</sup> and draws attention to his succession, without designating a successor directly.

It is obvious that the sequence of all these imitations does not always agree with the true story of the Prophet. However, one feels that the Maḥdī was probably sincere in his actions, even if his zeal sometimes led him to act violently, to the point that is far from the behaviour of his Model, the Prophet. Several researchers accuse the Almohad Maḥdī of having inflicted capital punishment for minor crimes, and that it is better not to mention his claim to absolute impeccability.<sup>111</sup> However, if this second point seems justified, the first is a far cry from reality. I believe that the information from some accounts, which has largely been echoed, cannot always be trusted, as there is no supporting evidence. For example, Ibn Abī Zar’s claim concerning the alleged meeting

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<sup>109</sup> Ibn al-Zīyāt, *Al-Tashawwuf ilā rījāl al-taṣawwuf*, ed. A. Tawfīq (Rabat, 1997), p. 11.

<sup>110</sup> Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Nuẓm al-Jumān*, p. 167.

<sup>111</sup> S. Z. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd, *Tārīkh al-Maghrib al-‘Arabī: al-Muwaḥḥidūn, ta’sīs al-dawlah wa qīyāmuḥā* (Alexandria, 2000), vol. 5, p. 241; ‘Alī Muḥammad Ṣallābī, *Dawlat al-Muwaḥḥidīn* (Amman, 1988), pp. 66-70; Fromherz, *the Almohads*, pp. 152-54.

between the well-known al-Ghazālī and the Maḥdī, which was echoed by a large audience, has been widely challenged by researchers.<sup>112</sup>

The obsession to build a state according to the prophetic model, or what can be considered to be a return to sources, did not prevent Ibn Tūmart from appropriating Berber socio-political traditions. For R. Montagne, the Almohad councils of the Ten and the Fifty were wisely similar to the tribal assemblies commonly referred to as *Ait Rabin* and *al-Jamā'a*. They were selected, as the two Almohad institutions, from the images of *mezwār-s* (a sort of official or notable) from which it is often difficult to define their political and social roles. It would also be very interesting to see how far the Almohad Maḥdī succeeded in making some of the Berber customs into the real political processes. The failure to invite somebody to communal meals, called *asmās*, means the rejection of an undesirable member from the tribe.<sup>113</sup>

Having scrutinised the administrative and hierarchical system that was designed by Ibn Tūmart, our next task is to analyse the reforms in government practice that were implemented by his successor, Caliph 'Abd al-Mu'min. These reforms were to have considerable impact on the structures of government that were introduced to al-Andalus.

## **2. 'Abd al-Mu'min's Political Reform**

We must distinguish between the two phases in the Almohads' political trajectory following the death of al-Maḥdī. The first involved the founding of the State, which may be considered a continuation of the political legacy of Ibn Tūmart, as 'Abd al-Mu'min, his successor, continued the war with the Almoravids, and succeeded in bringing down their state. The second phase involved building the Empire and its organisations, when, at the beginning of this phase, 'Abd al-Mu'min transferred power to his family. The two phases are quite distinct and, hence, the organisational forms that were suitable for the first were not necessarily so for the second. It is therefore quite natural that the hierarchy developed by Ibn Tūmart would change in both its structure and function.

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<sup>112</sup> See: Huici Miranda, *Historia Política*, pp. 35-37; Tourneau, *The Almohad Movement*, pp. 6-9; Madeleine Fletcher, 'Ibn Tūmart's Teachers: The Relationship with al-Ghazālī', *Al-Qantara*, XVIII (1997), 305-330.

<sup>113</sup> *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, p. 38.

## 2.1 The Almohad Council of Sheikh-s

After the death of al-Mahdī, there was hardly any mention of *Ahl al-Jamā'a* or *Ahl al-Khamsīn* in practice, only the matter of their pledge of loyalty to 'Abd al-Mu'min.<sup>114</sup> Did 'Abd al-Mu'min therefore dissolve these institutional bodies after taking power?

Essentially, 'Abd al-Mu'min faced extremely difficult and challenging conditions. After al-Mahdī's death, the Almohads experienced great turmoil as they disputed over his successor.<sup>115</sup> In addition, they faced fierce campaigns by Almoravids. Hence, 'Abd al-Mu'min had to confront both the internal weakness and the external threat. He chose to focus his attention on fighting the Almoravids, until he succeeded in destroying them. He was then confronted by the rebellion of the Berber tribes, who had been impressed by the Almohads' victory and attempted to emulate it. In addition, he had to contend with the influence and power that was wielded through the sayings of Ibn Tūmart by the remaining *Ahl al-Jamā'a*. For instance, Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr b. Yakīt had killed 'Abd al-Mu'min's brother, Ibrāhīm, and 'Abd al-Mu'min wished to kill him for that. However, the *Sheikh* 'Umar al-Hantātī, and Abū al-Ḥasan Yūkūt b. Wākāk prevented him from doing so, as Muḥammad was the son of one of the *Ahl al-Jamā'a*, arguing that the Mahdī had said: "*Ahl al-Jamā'a and their children have everyone in the world as their slaves*".<sup>116</sup> In this context, until 1148 the circumstances faced by 'Abd al-Mu'min required all of the Almohads' efforts in order to remain unified. It is therefore unlikely that 'Abd al-Mu'min would seek to disband both *Ahl al-Jamā'a* and *Ahl al-Khamsīn* at this critical stage, especially since he did not belong to the *Maṣmūda* tribe, who were the backbone of the revolution that had not yet achieved its aims.

In this period, the remaining members of both bodies were assigned to the high posts in the movement. There were military leaders, like 'Umar al-Ṣanhājī, 'Umar al-Hantātī, Yūsuf b. Sulaymān, Yūsuf b. Wānūdīn, Ibn Zījū, Ibn Yūmūr, and Yakhluḥ.<sup>117</sup> There were also governors, who administered conquered territory, such as Sulaymān b. Wānūdīn of Tlemcen, Yūsuf b. Makhlūf of Ceuta, 'Abd al-Wahīd al-Sharqī of Salé and, finally, Mūsā b. Sulaymān, who was appointed as the governor of Tīnmal.<sup>118</sup> However, we cannot say that 'Abd al-Mu'min maintained these two bodies in the form that had been established by al-Mahdī. Indeed, had he not changed them, then all the sources

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<sup>114</sup> *al-Ḥulal al-Mūshiyya*, p. 118.

<sup>115</sup> Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 10, p. 578; Ibn Abī Zar', *Rwaḍ al-qirtās*, pp. 116-117, 119.

<sup>116</sup> Al-Baydhaq, *Akhhbār al-Mahdī*, p. 93.

<sup>117</sup> Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 10, p. 579; vol. 11, p. 159; *al-Ḥulal al-Mūshiyya*, p. 121; Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, pp. 17-19, 35, 95.

<sup>118</sup> Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, pp. 16, 23, 25, 35.

would not have been devoid of their mention. Perhaps, he may have selected a consultative group from the members of both bodies while gathering the remaining members for general consultation, such as the Almohad *Sheikh*-s. However, he excluded all those who had opposed him, or who had plotted to seize power. His status as an outsider among the Maṣmūda tribe required devious diplomacy to achieve his aims. This required him to approach matters using gradual steps, in order to pave the way for his family to inherit power after him. It is most likely, therefore, that ‘Abd al-Mu’min was striving to strip both bodies of their power so as to prevent them from challenging his leadership or disputing his authority, following a gradual course towards that. Hence, while he did not support the continuation of these bodies, he protected the status of their members. His approach was to neglect the organisational form, while taking good care of individual members, thus dissuading them from uniting against him. This change in ‘Abd al-Mu’min’s policy in relation to the bodies created by the Maḥdī, perhaps sheds light on the 1133 rebellion by Ibn Malwiyya, one of the *Ahl al-Jamā‘a*.<sup>119</sup>

In this way, one can understand the silence of sources about these two bodies, on the one hand, while on the other, one can find an explanation for the prominence of the body that appeared immediately after the conquest of Marrakesh, as mentioned repeatedly by the sources, namely the Almohad *Sheikh* Assembly. These *Sheikh*-s carried many of the burdens that were previously the responsibility of *Ahl al-Jamā‘a* and *Ahl al-Khamsīn*, which reinforces the notion that it replaced them. The role of the *Sheikh*-s was consultative in the first instance, and the Caliphs would not declare, or prepare for, war, nor would they engage in battles except after consulting them. In the majority of cases, the Caliphs would adhere to their advice.<sup>120</sup>

When, in 1156, ‘Abd al-Mu’min appointed his sons as governors, or to sensitive posts, he chose some *Sheikh*-s to act as their advisers.<sup>121</sup> In this context, some *sheikh*-s occupied higher executive posts that were close to the *Sayyid*-s, like the sons of ‘Umar al-Hantātī, and of Ibn Jāma<sup>122</sup>, and some worked as governors, such as ‘Umar al-Hantātī and Yūsuf b. Sulaymān<sup>123</sup>, and others as military commanders.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Huici Miranda, *Historia política*, Arabic trans, p. 102.

<sup>120</sup> See Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 218 - 220, 494, 497, 502; Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, pp.113, 130, 146, 147, 151.

<sup>121</sup> Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Naẓm al-Jumān*, p.132.

<sup>122</sup> Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu‘jib*, p. 262; Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, p. 420; Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 88, 141; Ibn Abī Zar‘, *Rawḍ al-qirtās*, p. 157.

<sup>123</sup> Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>124</sup> Refer to: Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 182, 191-194; Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p.49, 125. It is sufficient to review the tasks of ‘Umar al-Hantātī; see Lévi-Provençal, *Rasail*, pp. 123 – 125; Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu‘jib*, p. 213; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 11, pp. 156-7.

Since the days of ‘Abd al-Mu’min, the status of Almohad *Sheikh*-s was quite eminent. Indeed, they were at the highest level in Almohad society, supreme over all others.<sup>125</sup> ‘Abd al-Mu’min’s sons, who were in charge of the provinces, would send them regular reports about their regions.<sup>126</sup> In the context of the State’s prosperity, and the strength of the Caliph’s personality, the *Sheikh*-s found the opportunity to impose authority, yet not to the point of having a monopoly on power. It seems that approval by the *Sheikh*-s was a factor in the choice of who assumed power as Caliph in that phase in the State’s evolution. Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, commenting on the victories of Yūsuf b. ‘Abd al-Mu’min over Ibn Hamushk, stated: “*This was the reason he became Caliph, as he had won the favour of Almohad Sheikh-s*”.<sup>127</sup>

The tribes of these *Sheikh*-s were the first to adopt and promulgate the Maḥdī’s cause. In their loyalty to the early Caliphs, the sons of ‘Abd al-Mu’min were unquestionable, and so they attained great standing and were able to control State assets. Such was their power that al-Nāṣir feared that they would overthrow him at first chance, and he had many of them massacred before the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa.<sup>128</sup> For ‘Izz al-Dīn Mūsā, this was one of the causes of defeat in that battle.<sup>129</sup> However, this tragic event did not affect their power and, following al-Nāṣir’s death, with the weakness of his successors, the *Sheikh*-s once more resumed their controlling influence and soon all the Empire major matters were dealt with through their decisions<sup>130</sup>, Perhaps these circumstances were the main reason that prompted the Caliph al-Ma’mūn to cancel all of the Empire’s taxes, as well as the concept of the Maḥdī, in an attempt to destroy their power base and to contain their far-reaching authority.

In conclusion, by going through all the information available in the sources relating to this category, the following points are worth mentioning:

First, not all the *Sheikh*-s were at the same level of prestige. The sons of *Ahl al-Jamā’a* and *Ahl al-Khamsīn* were more distinguished than all the other Almohads’ children.<sup>131</sup> This corroborates our earlier conclusion that the *Sheikh* category was a continuation of the early Almohad councils.

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<sup>125</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, p. 410, 457-8.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 390-2.

<sup>127</sup> Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 53.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 263; Ibn Abī Zar’, *Rawḍ al-qirtās*, p. 169.

<sup>129</sup> Mūsā, *Tanzīmāt al-Muwahḥidīn*, p. 176.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163.

<sup>131</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, p. 148, 324, 399 - 400; Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 85; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol.11, p. 186.

Second, the majority of the names of the Almohad *Sheikh*-s indicated that they were from Hantāta and the people of Tīnmal. Their strong representation in *Ahl al-Khamsīn* seems to have led ‘Abd al-Mu’min to align himself with them, and so, when he came to power, he mainly depended on them.

Third, there were no names from the Hargha tribe among the Almohad *Sheikh*-s, and it is clear that the attempt by the Mahdī’s two brothers to rise against ‘Abd al-Mu’min forced him to expel the Hargha *Sheikh*-s from prominent positions in the Empire. However, the Hargha tribe remained at the forefront of all of the Almohad tribes in the ceremonies and official events, as they were the Mahdī’s tribe.

Fourth, among the Almohad *Sheikh*-s, men from other than the six tribes on which the movement had been based were included. In particular, the Kūmīya tribe, from which ‘Abd al-Mu’min was descended.

From these facts, it becomes clear that the idea of inheritance in the matter of the Caliphate was paralleled by the inheritance of select posts within the Empire, which is best depicted in the distinction of the children of *ahl al-Jamā‘a* and *ahl al-Khamsīn*. However, political events affected the positions of the tribes; those who were allied to the Banū ‘Abd al-Mu’min, steadily rose, while the position of those who opposed him declined. However, the new body that included representatives of the tribes for the purpose of consultation was much more inclusive of those tribes that had embraced the movement later, and had shown loyalty to Banū ‘Abd al-Mu’min. It seems that the composition of the new body aimed to include other than the Maṣmūda in consultations. Hence, ‘Abd al-Mu’min turned his back on the first Council, because it was linked through its representatives to the Maṣmūda in the majority. Mūsā and Buresi agreed that the transition from the old to the new body took place extremely slowly and gradually, which most likely led to the chroniclers failing to note this<sup>132</sup>. It is highly likely that this slow gradual process was due to the strange situation in which ‘Abd al-Mu’min found himself. Indeed, ‘Abd al-Mu’min was an outsider to the society that he ruled and this subsequently led him to bring his tribe to al-Maghreb. Due to this situation, he was not hasty in taking and executing decisions, which he would do following clever diplomacy, but without displaying weakness. This diplomacy and his graded approach prevented the occurrence of a violent reaction to these changes.

The *Khamsīn* Council was appropriate for the circumstances of the Almohads in the early stages of the movement. At that time, the tribes were few; they were blood

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<sup>132</sup> Mūsā, *Tanzīmāt al-Muwahhidīn*, p. 109; Buresi, *Governing the Empire*, p. 54.

relations, and lived in a small geographical territory. However, following their victory, and the establishment of their Empire, the Almohads annexed a vast territory, on which diverse tribes lived. It was therefore necessary for those in power to undertake appropriate change in these new circumstances, and so creating the category of the Almohad *Sheikh-s* was the most appropriate action for the time; indeed, it was neither limited by number nor restricted by type. The existence of this body encouraged the formation of other similar consultative bodies, such as the Arab *Sheikh-s* and the Andalusī *Sheikh-s*. These two bodies were mentioned during war operations and will be treated in detail in the discussion of the political system.

While the *Khamsīn* council evolved into the new body, the *Ahl al-Jamā'a* was an executive body, which became redundant after the State was established and was organised around the Caliphs. The different administrative units (*Dīwān-s*) supervised the execution of instructions emanating from the political authority, i.e., the Caliph. From here, the differences between the formations of the Almohads, as a cause, and the organisation of the State, became quite clear. However, these formations continued to assure the supply of qualified men to carry the burdens of State office.

## 2.2 The *Ṭalaba* (the Students)

We have discussed how the conditions that followed al-Mahdī's death impacted on the executive and consultative bodies of the Almohads. However, did these conditions affect the body that was tasked with propagating the Almohad cause, namely the *Ṭalaba*?

Initially, 'Abd al-Mu'min continued the Mahdī's policy, and sent the *ṭalaba* to invite the tribes to join the cause.<sup>133</sup> Otherwise, sources do not mention them from the first part of 'Abd al-Mu'min's rule until the conquest of Marrakech. After this date, primary information is available on the role of the *ṭalaba*, especially in official dispatches. Among the most important messages in this regard is the letter sent by 'Abd al-Mu'min to the *ṭalaba* in Andalus in 1148, which seems to be a circular letter sent to every part of the Almohad Empire.<sup>134</sup> 'Abd al-Mu'min's letter explained the role of the *ṭalaba* in undertaking the educational, administrative and military duties, as well as

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<sup>133</sup> Ibn Qaṭṭān mentions that 'Abd al-Mu'min personally led a campaign against Banū Yiyqiz in 1135, because they killed one of the *ṭalaba*: *Naẓm al-Jumān*, p. 212.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid, pp. 150-167; Lévi-Provençal, *Rasā'il*, p. 6. P. Buresi mentions another letter addressed by the Caliph to the *talaba* of Tasghirt students, but, in fact, it does not contain any information about the role or responsibilities of the *talaba*, except for a short passage in which the Caliph mentioned the release of another message that was attached to this message, which is believed to be our letter, mentioned above: Buresi, *Governing the Empire*, p. 58.

judicial responsibilities, in terms of commanding good and forbidding evil (*al-Amr bi-l-Ma'rūf wa-l-nahiy 'an al-Munkar*). There is no doubt that this represented a substantial change in the role of the *ṭalaba* following the establishment of the State, if compared to the time of al-Mahdī. This expansion in the responsibilities of the *ṭalaba* is basically a natural progression in the transition from a state of revolution to becoming a wide empire with a huge network of political, administrative and judicial institutions. However, one must not exaggerate when describing these responsibilities, many of which were quite minor, where many of the *Ahl al-Jamā'a* and *Ahl al-khamsīn*, had taken prime leadership responsibilities, administrative and military ones, as was previously mentioned. These were reduced after 'Abd al-Mu'min made rule hereditary within his family line. The available information describes the role of the *ṭalaba*, mainly in the military sphere, as evidenced by the names of the *ṭalaba* who appear in the military lists for the deceased.<sup>135</sup>

In addition, corroborating accounts describe their responsibilities in the army and navy. The *ṭalaba* would participate in leading troops in their area,<sup>136</sup> furthermore, if the Caliphs wished to mount a military campaign in any region, they would consult the *ṭalaba* of that area. Indeed, whenever they sent a commander/leader from the capital, they would ask the *ṭalaba* of the area to cooperate with him;<sup>137</sup> sometimes, they would consult with them regarding installations of a military nature. In this regard, 'Abd al-Mu'min involved the *ṭalaba* of Granada and Seville in the committee that he tasked with supervising the construction of *Jabal al-Fataḥ* as a base for military operations in Andalus.<sup>138</sup> However, being asked to participate in leading the army did not necessarily mean that the *ṭalaba* formed the high command. In each province, the top commander was the governor, but he would, at times, delegate the command of some campaigns to them.<sup>139</sup> The commander of a military campaign was typically appointed by the capital (*al-Haḍrah*), while command of a secondary campaign might be delegated to some *ṭalaba*.<sup>140</sup> Furthermore, the *ṭalaba* played a greater role in the supervision of naval forces, when compared to the army. The *ṭalaba* were in charge of preparing and leading naval forces, and were known as the fleet *ṭalaba*.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, p. 208.

<sup>136</sup> Lévi-Provençal, *Rasā'il*, p. 74, 80, 102, 174, pp. 221-222.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid, pp. 174, 379.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid, pp. 97-98; Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, pp.138-139; Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, pp. 43-44.

<sup>139</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 147-148.

<sup>140</sup> Lévi-Provençal, *Rasā'il*, p. 102.

<sup>141</sup> Ibad, pp. 173-174, 177.

The only indication that we find regarding administrative duties by the *ṭalaba*, after ‘Abd al-Mu’min appointed his son as heir, was al-Manṣūr’s appointment of the *ṭalaba* to administer Gafsa after it was retaken<sup>142</sup> (583H/1187), which might be considered a general indication, even though such matters may have been of a military nature. There is an important objection to the conclusion that the *ṭalaba* were given wider authority following the announcement of hereditary rule. It may be said that the letters sent by the Caliphs during the period of renaissance and prosperity were directed to the *ṭalaba*, and these letters included state policy in diverse areas, including military matters. So, how can the former conclusion be correct, in light of these letters?

In order to respond to this point, two matters need to be clarified:

First, a greater number of letters relating to administrative matters was sent in the period prior to hereditary rule. In the subsequent period, the majority of letters revolved around announcing a military victory, ending a revolt, issuing a general directive, or encouraging the commanding of good (*amr bi-l-ma’rūf*) and the prohibition of evil (*nahy ‘an al-munkar*). Second, the letters were not exclusively directed to the *ṭalaba*, but also to the *Sheikh*-s, local notables, and the public. The *ṭalaba* were key recipients, perhaps, due to the knowledge gained from the time of al-Mahdī.

From this, we can conclude that the majority of letters was aimed at advertising specific affairs of state, focusing on *amr bi-l-ma’rūf* or *nahy ‘an al-munkar*. The *ṭalaba* were the key recipients, indicating that it is highly probable that, alongside their military tasks, they publicised the State’s works, and performed the duties of *amr bi-l-ma’rūf* or *nahy ‘an al-munkar*. Our conclusion is supported by the fact that the *ḥuffāz* were not mentioned – as far as we know – among those who were sent such letters. Accounts have indicated that the *ṭalaba* and *ḥuffāz* co-existed, which means that the existence of the *ṭalaba* did not stop the establishment of the *ḥuffāz*, who assumed the prime administrative role, and higher military leadership, while the *ṭalaba* performed the secondary responsibilities. After hereditary rule was announced, many top responsibilities were taken on by a new breed of the *ṭalaba*, formed of the *ḥuffāz* and the *Ḥaḍar ṭalaba*.

### **2.3 The Ḥuffāz**

Accounts do not mention the date on which this body was established, but we are able to determine this with some certainty. It was reported that the sons of ‘Abd al-Mu’min

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid, p. 215.

were among these *ḥuffāz*, and when they completed their studies their father granted them executive posts.<sup>143</sup> This was in May 1156,<sup>144</sup> and the length of time dedicated to studies was six months,<sup>145</sup> therefore, the date on which this body was launched was 1155, at the latest estimates.

Along with ‘Abd al-Mu’min’s sons, the children of *Ahl al-Jamā’a*, *Ahl al-Khamsīn*, and *Ahl al-Dār* were also represented in the body of *ḥuffāz*, as indicated by later accounts.<sup>146</sup> Furthermore, ‘Abd al-Mu’min selected intelligent children from cities like Seville, Córdoba, Fez, and Tlemecen.<sup>147</sup> He managed to gather around three thousand boys;<sup>148</sup> indeed, there were 50 boys from Seville alone.<sup>149</sup>

The author of the *Kitāb al-Ansāb* restricted the *ḥuffāz* to the early Almohad tribes;<sup>150</sup> however, the author of *al-Ḥulal al-Mūshiyya*, whose account is more extensive than others on this topic, mentions that these boys were from the Maṣmūda and other tribes.<sup>151</sup> This is corroborated by the names of a number of *ḥuffāz* from the other tribes. They took up the duties given to the *ḥuffāz*, such as ruling over parts of some provinces, with particular mention of the Kumīyah (‘Abd al-Mu’min’s tribe).<sup>152</sup>

‘Abd al-Mu’min ensured that these boys were of the same young age, enabling them to quickly memorise the texts, and also to easily build their character. As such, it was as though they had all been born on the same night.<sup>153</sup> Furthermore, as educators, he chose from the best scholars in the land, *qāḍī*-s, *ṭalaba*, *kuttāb*, and poets.<sup>154</sup> He personally supervised the boys’ education, and sat with them every Friday.<sup>155</sup>

A balanced syllabus that combined theory and practice was designed for them. They studied publications by al-Mahdī in the areas of the creed (*Tawḥīd*), jurisprudence (*Fiqh*), the Koran, and the Ḥadīth.<sup>156</sup> Aschbach’s study reveals that they also read from several books on provincial administration.<sup>157</sup> In terms of physical training, there was a day for riding, another for archery, and another for swimming in the lake prepared for

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<sup>143</sup> *al-Ḥulal al-Mūshiyya*, pp. 125-126.

<sup>144</sup> Lévi-Provençal, *Rasā’il*, p. 66; Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 34.

<sup>145</sup> Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Naẓm al-Jumān*, p. 140.

<sup>146</sup> For example, see: Al-Baydhaq, *Akhbār al-Mahdī*, p. 48; Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, p. 400.

<sup>147</sup> Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Naẓm al-Jumān*, p. 140.

<sup>148</sup> *al-Ḥulal al-Mūshiyya*, p. 125.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid*, p. 139.

<sup>150</sup> Al-Baydhaq, *Akhbār al-Mahdī*, p. 48; F. Bawwiz, *Dirāsa fī fikr al-Mahdī Muḥammad b. Tūmart : al-za’im al-rūḥī wa-l-sīyāsī li-ḥarakat al-Muwahḥidīn* (Dimashq, 2001), pp. 32-33.

<sup>151</sup> *al-Ḥulal al-Mūshiyya*, p. 125.

<sup>152</sup> Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 119.

<sup>153</sup> *al-Ḥulal al-Mūshiyya*, p. 125.

<sup>154</sup> Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Naẓm al-Jumān*, p. 133.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid*, p. 125.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid*, p. 133, 140; *al-Ḥulal al-Mūshiyya*, p. 125.

<sup>157</sup> Aschbach, *Tārīkh al-Andalus*, p. 302.

‘Abd al-Mu’min, outside his farm estate.<sup>158</sup> Indeed, they also learned to handle purpose-built rowing boats on that lake. All the cost incurred was directly paid by ‘Abd al-Mu’min.<sup>159</sup>

It is clear from this educational syllabus that ‘Abd al-Mu’min wanted to build men with a good grasp of the fundamental concepts underpinning the Almohad cause, and who were qualified to take up the higher positions in the civil administration, the army and navy. Subsequently, he retired Maṣmūda *Sheikh*-s from leadership positions, but retained them as advisers and consultants, and appointed these *ḥuffāz* in their place. The *ḥuffāz* are therefore mentioned as forming the military leadership,<sup>160</sup> being in charge of the provinces<sup>161</sup> or of smaller areas,<sup>162</sup> in the different phases of the Almohad state. We may then safely ignore Ibn al-Qaṭṭān’s account, which stated that the *ṭalaba* from Seville returned to their parents,<sup>163</sup> unless this was a temporary event, or perhaps the initial number was greater than could be absorbed by the State’s needs, and they were perhaps employed at a later date.

From the responsibilities assigned to these *ḥuffāz*, it is clear that those who designated them as the ‘young’ *ṭalaba*<sup>164</sup> were perhaps alluding to their beginnings, rather than to their positions in the State hierarchy. Regardless of the name, ‘young’ *ṭalaba* does somehow convey the sense that these *ḥuffāz* were lower in rank than the *ṭalaba*, while the reality was quite the opposite. It is likely that the word, ‘*Ḥāfiẓ*’, was used to designate those who had memorised both Ibn Tūmart’s *Mūwaṭṭa*’ and his doctrine.<sup>165</sup>

By establishing the body of *ḥuffāz*, ‘Abd al-Mu’min aimed to pave the way for his sons to inherit his power, and for placing those he trusted in positions of authority. This is a radical change in policy, and a large change that affects posts within the Almohad formations. So, what were his motives?

It is clear from the history of the establishment of the body of *ḥuffāz* that this came after announcement of hereditary rule, and the rebellion by al-Mahdī’s brothers. The event indicates that ‘Abd al-Mu’min aimed to bring fundamental change to the State administration. As such, he first addressed the Almohad formations, and created a

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<sup>158</sup> Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Naẓm al-Jumān*, p. 132; *al-Ḥulal al-Mūshiyya*, p. 125.

<sup>159</sup> Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Naẓm al-Jumān*, p. 140; *al-Ḥulal al-Mūshiyya*, p. 125.

<sup>160</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 182, 370-371, 397-398; Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p.84.

<sup>161</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 126-127, 390.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 336, 377, 392; Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, pp. 119, 153, 235.

<sup>163</sup> Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Naẓm al-Jumān*, p. 140.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid*, p. 28; *al-Ḥulal al-Mūshiyya*, p. 89.

<sup>165</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 294, 299.

generation with exclusive loyalty to him. However, so as not to rouse the anger of leading Almohads, he chose to include their sons in the body of the *ḥuffāz*. It seems that the corruption of some Almohad elements provided ‘Abd al-Mu’min with the opportunity to justify his actions. Indeed, he pointed to this corruption in the previously mentioned message to the *ṭalaba* of Andalus, where he says: “*and we have been informed... that those who fear not Allāh... inflict their base desires on wealth and souls... and trespass on the sanctities of Muslims without justified right, and rush to subvert the Sharīah...*”<sup>166</sup>

Hence, given the change in political conditions, the Almohad formations changed accordingly. While the Almohad *Sheikh* Council was based on inheritance, such that the children of the prime *Sheikh*-s would take their place, we do not know the state of the *ṭalaba*, who occupy the lower ranking positions after the appearance of the *ḥuffāz*. Regarding the *ḥuffāz*, it is clear from their constituent groups that ‘Abd al-Mu’min took account of two factors: inheritance and qualifications. Inheritance, in the case of his own children, and the children of *Ahl al-Jamā‘a*, *Ahl al-Khamsīn*, and *Ahl al-Dār*; and qualifications, in the case of the intelligent children selected from the different provinces. Indeed, we do not know if new generations of the *ḥuffāz* were raised, and hence, it is highly likely that the children of the *ḥuffāz* inherited the positions that were occupied by their fathers, who had passed away.

#### **2.4 The Ḥaḍar Ṭalaba**

Not only were the scope of the tasks of the *ṭalaba* curtailed by the establishment of the body of the *ḥuffāz*, but it seems that the role of knowledge carriers was passed to a new element shortly after the conquest of Marrakesh.

Once matters were firmly in the hands of ‘Abd al-Mu’min, he went about inviting scholars in every realm of knowledge, and they travelled to his court: scholars, jurists, poets, philosophers, and orators, and settled there. In order to distinguish them from the Almohad *ṭalaba*, they were called *ḥaḍar ṭalaba*. His successors followed his example<sup>167</sup>, and were keen to develop this new body, which seems to be one of the features of the ruler’s court. The beginning of the *ḥaḍar ṭalaba* was humble, and their

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<sup>166</sup> Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Naẓm al-Jumān*, pp. 153-154.

<sup>167</sup> Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu’jib*, pp. 200-201, 342; and relating to those personalities who were distinguished by knowledge that was included in the council of *al-Ḥaḍar Ṭalaba*, see: Ibn Sa‘īd, *Ikhtisār al-Qidh al-mu‘allā fī al-tārīkh al-muḥallā*, ed. I. Ibyārī (Cairo, 1959), p. 138; Ibn al-Khaṭīb, *Al-Iḥāṭa fī akhbār Gharnāṭa*, ed. *Dār al-kutub al-‘ilmiyya*, 4 vols (Beirut, 2003), vol. 1, p. 190.

status low, although they were neither integrated into the State systems, nor into the party ranks; Ibn Qaṭṭān mentions in the noble attributes of ‘Abd al-Mu’min that:

‘... he sensed the weakness of the ṭalaba in his august council in the ḥaḍar ṭalaba, like Abū Muḥammad al-Māliqī, and others, and so said to the Almohad Sheikh-s, may Allāh venerate them, that these Ṭalaba are strangers and weak, and their limited means apparent, and so I see that we give them money, as a loan, with which they may engage in trade, and repay the loan to us. They said yes; and so he gave them money from the treasury; 1000 Dinar each, from which they profited, and this was the foundation of their wealth’.<sup>168</sup>

However, this situation began to change over time, and the work of these *ṭalaba* expanded, once they had adopted the *tawḥīd* as their path, and they became part of the Caliph’s circle, in their study encounters and supervised teaching and dissemination of knowledge, especially in relation to *tawḥīd*, according to Ibn Tūmart.<sup>169</sup> They were given the task of defending Ibn Tūmart’s *tawḥīd* creed, and, indeed, the *ḥaḍar ṭalaba* were the ones who levelled accusations at Ibn Rushd, the grandson, in the Córdoba Mosque, and who declared publicly that he was an apostate.<sup>170</sup> In addition, they gave speeches on special occasions, like visits, or making or renewing the pledge of loyalty.<sup>171</sup>

These *ṭalaba* were highly organised, and at the top of their hierarchy was their *Sheikh*, or *Muzwār*, who was the link between them and the Caliph.<sup>172</sup> It is likely that the *ḥaḍar ṭalaba* were divided into levels of *Sheikh*-s and commoners. Ibn Šāḥib al-Šalāt perhaps indicated this, speaking of the caliph Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf: “*he brought the Sheikh-s of the ḥaḍar ṭalaba closer to him*”.<sup>173</sup> Indeed, they may have had a private meeting place in which to examine newly arrived scholars.<sup>174</sup>

The *ḥaḍar ṭalaba* gained high standing in the State, and the Caliphs lavished abundant money and gifts on them,<sup>175</sup> which roused the envy of the Almohads, until al-Manšūr said:

‘O’ Muwahḥidūn, you are tribes, and if one of you is afflicted by any problem, then he turns to his tribe; but these – meaning the Ṭalaba – have no tribe, but me;

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<sup>168</sup> Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Naẓm al-Jumān*, pp. 137-138.

<sup>169</sup> Ibn Šāḥib al-Šalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 228-230.

<sup>170</sup> Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p.202; Anan: 2, pp. 224-225, quoting the manuscript: *al-Dhayl wa-l-takmila* by Ibn ‘Abd al-Malik al-Marrākushī.

<sup>171</sup> Ibn Šāḥib al-Šalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 150, 352; Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 121.

<sup>172</sup> See: Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 370; Al- Ghibrīnī, ‘*Unwān al-dirāyah fī-man ‘urifa min al-‘ulamā’ fī al-mi‘ah al-sābi‘ah bi-Bijāyah*’, ed. R. Bū Nār (Algeria, 1970), p. 21.

<sup>173</sup> Ibn Šāḥib al-Šalāt, *al-Mann*, p. 234.

<sup>174</sup> Al- Ghibrīnī, in passing, mentions the *Ṭalaba* house in Marrakesh, and they were perhaps none other than the *Ḥaḍar Ṭalaba*. Al- Ghibrīnī, ‘*Unwān al-dirāyah*’, p. 161.

<sup>175</sup> Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu‘jib*, p. 200; Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 370.

whatever problem they face, then I am their sanctuary, and relief; and to me they belong’.

Al-Marrākushī commented: ‘... and since that day, they enjoyed great prestige, with Almohads expansively honouring and caring for them’.<sup>176</sup>

This text is of great importance, as it clarifies that the *ḥaḍar ṭalaba* did not come from the Almohads, and while their organisation began in the days of ‘Abd al-Mu’min, their influence became extensive in the time of his successors, at which point the Almohads began to fear them, and complained accordingly.

The high standing of this new body is evidenced by the honour and hospitality received by the elders of the *ḥaḍar ṭalaba*. Indeed, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ishbīlī was always the first person admitted to the audience of Yūsuf, and the last to leave, while interceding on behalf of strangers and *ṭalaba*.<sup>177</sup> His successor, Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd Allāh al-Māliqī, acted as Vizier and Amīn to Yūsuf.<sup>178</sup> The *Sheikh* of the *ḥaḍar ṭalaba* would sometimes attend committees that were examining corrupt ‘*Ammāl*’.<sup>179</sup>

The author of *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, reports that al-Nāṣir removed the requirement for Almohad *ṭalaba* to bear arms;<sup>180</sup> and he distinguishes between *ṭalaba* from the Almohads and *ṭalaba* from the Maṣmūda tribe in his narration. In his terminology, Almohad *ṭalaba* mean nobody other than the *ḥaḍar ṭalaba*. This narration indicates that the *ḥaḍar ṭalaba* worked in the military, alongside their role of imparting knowledge. However, participation in the military was lifted in the days of al-Nāṣir, and so they were dedicated exclusively to the realms of knowledge.

The formation of this body represents the most authentic example of the attempt by the Almohads to change their formations to suit the new and changing reality. From the beginning, ‘Abd al-Mu’min attempted to include scholars other than Almohads, in order to raise the status of his State in peoples’ hearts; especially since scholars enjoyed great esteem in society, especially in Andalus.<sup>181</sup> With time, they were integrated into the Almohad formations, as they were qualified by the knowledge they carried; indeed, knowledge was a vital pillar of the Almohad cause and the State.

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<sup>176</sup> Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu’jib*, p. 280.

<sup>177</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 229, 421.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid, p. 410.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid, p. 453.

<sup>180</sup> Al-Baydhaq, *Akhbār al-Mahdī*, p. 48.

<sup>181</sup> Al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-ṭīb*, vol.2, p. 106.

## 2.5 The Position of Non-Almohads

The plan to integrate scholars who were not Almohads in the administration placed the relationship of Almohads with others under the spotlight. The question being: what was their position?

The relationship of the Almohads with others in Ibn Tūmart's days was one of hostility and war. This changed following the establishment of the State. Those people subjected to the Almohad rule, who did not oppose the ideas of Ibn Tūmart, at least not publicly, were taken on in the state hierarchy and not in the Almohads' formations. Indeed, some of them were appointed in military leadership positions, like Ibn Khiyār al-Jīyanī, Ibrāhīm b. Burāz al-Masūfī, Zīrī b. Makhūkh al-Zanātī,<sup>182</sup> Yūsuf b. Mardanīsh, Ibn Hamshak, Ibn 'Azūn,<sup>183</sup> and the *Sheikh*-s of the Arabs of the Hīlāl tribe.<sup>184</sup> Some of them undertook administrative affairs, like the sons of Ibn Mardanish, al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī (of Mahdia), and 'Alī b. al-Rand in Qafsa.<sup>185</sup> It is clear that all of them enjoyed high standing in their society before the arrival of the Almohads, and hence their integration into the State system was to win them over, on the one hand, and also to benefit from their experience, on the other. In this case, considering the positive benefits drove Almohad policy in this direction, and this was the motive for change.

The change that came to the concept of "*Tawḥīd*", following the conquest of Marrakesh, helped to integrate those persons who submitted to the authority of the Almohad State. The concept of *Tawḥīd* was purely religious at the beginning, yet it became a political term after the founding of the State. The Caliphs, from the time of 'Abd al-Mu'min, considered that submission to the authority of the State was "*Tawḥīd*",<sup>186</sup> while rebelling against the Caliph represented a rejection of "*Tawḥīd*".<sup>187</sup> 'Abd al-Mu'min explained this new concept in a message he sent to the provinces in 1148, in which he instructed the *Ṭalaba* and the *Sheikh*-s:

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<sup>182</sup> Lévi-Provençal, *Rasā'il*, pp. 97-98; Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 138-139; Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 19-20, 100; Ibn al-Khaṭīb, *A'māl al-A'lām fī man būyi'a qabla al-Iḥtilām min mulūk al-Islām*, ed. Lévi-Provençal (Beirut, 1950), p. 265.

<sup>183</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 499, 503.

<sup>184</sup> Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 150; Ibn Abī Zar', *Rawḍ al-qirṭās*, p. 148

<sup>185</sup> *Kitāb al-Istibṣār fī 'Ajā'ib al-Amṣār*, p. 151, 156; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 11, p. 245; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-irab fī funūn al-adab*, p. 213.

<sup>186</sup> There are many examples; see Lévi-Provençal, *Rasā'il*, p. 125; Al-Baydhaq, *Akhbār al-Mahdī*, p. 120; Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 175, 377, 388-90; Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 82; Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, vol. 6, p. 519.

<sup>187</sup> Lévi-Provençal, *Rasā'il*, p. 44.

‘... and know - Allāh protects you - that those included by the word of Tawḥīd in the past or present regime, occupy the same area of right to justice, and you are accountable for all of them... the term, Almohads, includes us and them’.<sup>188</sup>

This new concept was accompanied by a re-structuring of the entire Almohad class hierarchy. ‘Abd al-Mu’min divided them into three classes; first, the early pioneers who had pledged their loyalty to the Imam al-Mahdī, accompanied and fought with him, living to the time of his successors, and participating in the event at al-Buḥīrah; second, those who joined the cause after the event at al-Buḥīrah and before the conquest of Oran in 1145; third, all those who joined after that.<sup>189</sup> We note that this new hierarchy seemed to follow the example of ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, when he assumed the Caliphate and divided the Muslims into levels according to their precedence in Islam.

The state of *Ahl al-Dhimma*, i.e., the Jews and Christians, was worse than ever. They faced great oppression and restriction, and since their status was not recognised by the Almohads, they were forced to profess Islam,<sup>190</sup> which in most cases did not serve them. It is reported that al-Manṣūr was suspicious of Jewish converts to Islam, and made them wear distinctive clothing. Al-Nāṣir refused to cancel this instruction, but merely changed it.<sup>191</sup> This position *vis-à-vis* *Ahl al-Dhimma* explains their responsiveness to al-Ma’ mūn, who cancelled the Mahdī’s taxes, and was followed by his son, al-Sa’īd, in the early days.<sup>192</sup> Despite all this, the Almohads still employed non-Muslim soldiers, given the State need.

The position of the Almohads, as opposed to others, was not fixed, and witnessed constant change in specific cases and in response to the developments in conditions and events. This confirms our conclusion regarding the flexibility of the Almohads in rising to the demands relating to different circumstances.

## 2.6 Education at that Time

The spirit instilled by al-Mahdī into his followers did not diminish overnight, and the insurrection after his death was only a temporary event, while the Almohads continued along their primary path. Ibn ‘Idhārī reports on their situation under ‘Abd al-Mu’min:

‘The man would fight... his father and brother within his household, if they were slow to follow al-Mahdī; each would declare the other an apostate’.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Naẓm al-Jumān*, p. 166.

<sup>189</sup> Lévi-Provençal, *Rasā’il*, pp. 47-55.

<sup>190</sup> Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu’jib*, p. 305; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-irab fī funūn al-adab*, p. 217.

<sup>191</sup> Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu’jib*, pp. 304-305; Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 205.

<sup>192</sup> Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu’jib*, pp. 304-305; Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 205.

<sup>193</sup> Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 85.

‘Abd al-Mu’min continued to execute the plan of his mentor, al-Mahdī, and conscientiously respected his legacy. After the conquest of Marrakesh, he called together the Almohad tribes and spoke to them, somewhat harshly, on the issue of knowledge, Tawhid, and the practice of religious obligations.<sup>194</sup> Indeed, he established an educational system for all the peoples in his State<sup>195</sup> and refused to accept anything less than the first chapter of Koran, i.e., the *Sūra* of *al-Fātiḥa*, and other *Sūra*-s, the study and memorising of the al-Murshidah (the “spiritual guide”, one of Ibn Tūmart’s texts on the creed), and emphasised the performance of ritual obligations. His successors followed in his footsteps, and it would seem that this policy continued until the days of Yūsuf al-Mustanšir, the fifth of the Almohad Caliphs in the Maghreb, who issued a directive in March 1220, urging the commanding of good and the forbidding of evil, and encouraging the common people to go to the mosques, read a portion of the Koran daily, and study the *Tawhīd* in mosques and markets.<sup>196</sup>

‘Abd al-Mu’min, in his education and the formations of the Almohads, took account of the roles that were to be performed by the learner, and those things he specified for the common people differed from what he required of the élite.<sup>197</sup> The formation programme he established for the *ḥuffāz* - presented previously - is good evidence of this approach. The main policy approach that was adopted by ‘Abd al-Mu’min centred on the concept of specialisation, and, as such, the formation of a suitable cadre followed this approach. In the same way that he established a school for the *ḥuffāz*, in order to turn out senior administrators and leaders, he also established a school in Rabat to qualify leaders for the naval fleet.<sup>198</sup> Perhaps this trend towards specialisation had begun in the time of al-Mahdī, but with ‘Abd al-Mu’min it was quite prominent, given the complex problems and circumstances of the State.

We mentioned that the foundation of the Almohads was fundamentally based on emotional isolation or detachment, and no doubt this isolation weakened progressively following the founding of the State, since this isolation at the beginning was that of a minority in a “sea” of enemies. However, following the founding of the State, the Almohads were now the rulers over the new society. Gradually, this emotional and spiritual isolation began to recede, due to the effects of time, civilisation, and openness to others. Beliefs began to lose strength, while doubts began to creep into hearts. This

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<sup>194</sup> Lévi-Provençal, *Rasā’il*, pp. 53-54.

<sup>195</sup> See *Risalat al-Fūṣūl* on Lévi-Provençal, *Rasā’il* and Al-Baydhaq, *Akhbār al-Mahdī*.

<sup>196</sup> Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 245.

<sup>197</sup> See *Risalat al-Fūṣūl*, mentioned previously.

<sup>198</sup> M. al-Manūnī, *al-‘Ulūm wa-al-ādāb*, p. 21 quoted from: *Muqadimat al-Fataḥ*.

occurred in the higher echelons of the State; indeed, al-Mansūr disclosed to his confidantes that he doubted the concept of the infallible *Imām* (*ʿIṣma*). If this was the case with the Caliph, then what about the common people?

Weak belief in the idea was the driver of all the events during the phase of decline. In this phase, party formations and ruling regimes were weakened. This linkage between the weakened faith in the idea in the hearts of followers, and the perturbations in organisations and regimes, is one of the key phenomena of the period of decline. This confirms the intimate relationship between the capability of an organisation and the type of person.

## **2.7 Consultative Councils**

During the phase of prosperity, the Caliphs wielded extensive powers relating to the religious and the earthly. However, they still consulted special bodies on specific matters. We have seen how consultative bodies were formed in al-Mahdī's time, and how these acquired greater importance after his death, to the point of rousing 'Abd al-Mu'min's fears, and so he set about changing the Almohad formations, replacing them with a new body: the Almohad *Sheikh* Council. He formed this body from the early adopters of the Almohad cause, and added other individuals, particularly from his tribe, the Kūmīyah.

As the Almohad State expanded, new elements were integrated into the Empire apparatus by 'Abd al Mu'min, and two other consultative bodies appeared, namely the Council of Arab *Sheikh-s* and the Council of al-Andalus *Sheikh-s*. During the time of Caliph Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf, a fourth body was formed from the *Sayyid-s*, 'Abd al-Mu'min's male line.

### **2.7.1 The Arab and Andalusī Sheikh-s**

The Council of the Almohad *Sheikh-s* consisted of the leaders of the tribes, which had adopted the Almohad cause at the very beginning, in addition to the leaders of the Kumīyah, Haskūra, and Sinhājah. Their children subsequently inherited their places. The *Arab Sheikh* Council was formed of the leaders of the Banū Hilāl tribes that had accepted the Almohad belief. Typically, the leadership position of the tribes was hereditary within a specific family. There is no indication that the first Almohad caliphs intervened in the selection of the leaders of these tribes. However, during the period of decline, that choice is largely dependent on the caliphs, who played the card of obedience and submission. On the contrary, when sovereigns lost their authority, the

Arab tribes would impose their own law, and the choice of the *qabīlah*'s leader will be made internally by its members.<sup>199</sup> As for the *sheikh*-s of al-Andalus, or those which the sources commonly refer to as *Qūwād* al-Andalus, this body was formed from the former notables and leaders of al-Andalus who had joined the Almohad call very early on, such as Ibn 'Azzūn of Jerez, Ibn al-Ḥajjām of Badajoz, Yūsuf al-Baṭrūjī of Niebla, Abū Muḥammad b. Wazīr of Beja, and Yūsuf b. Mardanīsh of Valencia.<sup>200</sup>

These bodies were only consulted on military matters, usually each body was consulted separately,<sup>201</sup> but sometimes with all four present.<sup>202</sup> Typically, the Caliphs would implement their advice.<sup>203</sup> Indeed, the power and jurisdiction of each of these bodies differed. For instance, the Andalus *Sheikh* Council was only consulted on matters relating to al-Andalus, while the Arab *Sheikh*-s were consulted on all of the military affairs in which they were involved, and on which they had previously been consulted.

There is no available evidence to indicate that these two latter bodies were in continuous existence, compared to the Almohad *Sheikh*-s and the *Sayyid*-s, which were in constant existence. Moreover, the remit of these two bodies went beyond military affairs. We have previously indicated that the approval of the Almohad *sheikh*-s was necessary for the pledge (*bay'a*) to be given to the Caliph, from the time that the state was founded until its downfall. They also deal with issues of security,<sup>204</sup> administration,<sup>205</sup> and public funds.<sup>206</sup> The Almohad *Sheikh*-s participated quite effectively in the State administration, and from the time that 'Abd al-Mu'min appointed his sons as governors, he sent with them some of these *Sheikh*-s, both as advisers and as scholars.<sup>207</sup> This became a tradition that was followed by his successors.<sup>208</sup>

The continuous existence of the Almohad *Sheikh* Assembly is also evidenced by the fact that the Caliphs chose a leader or head for these *Sheikh*-s, who was to act as the link with the Caliph. Indeed, this leader represented the *Sheikh*-s in the private pledge of allegiance. Mūsā suggests the possibility that the post was created by 'Abd al-Mu'min

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<sup>199</sup> See: Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, vol. 6, pp. 534, 542, 545, 546.

<sup>200</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 218, 399-400; Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 85.

<sup>201</sup> Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Naẓm al-Jumān*, p. 226; Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, pp. 113, 130, 198, 494; *al-Hulal al-Mūshiyya*, p. 118; Ibn Abī Zar', *Rawḍ al-qirṭās*, pp. 146, 147.

<sup>202</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 218-220, 494, 502, 507-508.

<sup>203</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, p. 502; Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, pp. 80, 151.

<sup>204</sup> Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 173.

<sup>205</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, p. 302.

<sup>206</sup> Al-Tījānī, *Riḥlat al-Tījānī*, ed. Ḥ. 'Abd al-Wahhāb (Tunis, 1981), p. 346.

<sup>207</sup> Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Naẓm al-Jumān*, p. 132.

<sup>208</sup> Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, pp. 111-112.

prior to the conquest of Marrakesh, and ‘Umar Aṣṇāj was the first Almohad *Sheikh* who held this position. Yet it became official after the State was established and it was seized by ‘Umar al-Hantātī during the rule of ‘Abd al-Mu’min, and then of Yūsuf.<sup>209</sup> ‘Umar al-Hantātī was succeeded by his son, Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Waḥid, who stayed in this post during the time of al-Manṣūr, and also of al-Nāṣir,<sup>210</sup> who, in 1206, appointed him as governor of Ifrīqiya, with exceptional powers to quell the rebellion by the Majorcans, and their Arab and A’zaz allies in that area.<sup>211</sup> Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Waḥid was succeeded by three persons, Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. ‘Umar b. Abū Zayd al-Hantātī, Abū ‘Alī ‘Umar b. Mūsā b. ‘Abd al-Waḥid al-Sharqī, and Abū Marwān ‘Abd al-Malik b. Yūsuf b. Sulaymān from Tīnmal. They were the ones who gave the special pledge of allegiance to al-Mustanṣir on behalf of all of the Almohad *Sheikh-s*.<sup>212</sup> When al-Ma’ mūn cancelled the Maḥdīyyah tax, this body ceased to exist, and when al-Rashīd restored this tax, Abū ‘Uthmān Sa’īd b. Zakariyya al-Jadmawiy became the pre-eminent elder, as he was the first to return to al-Rashīd, and he worked to bring back the others.<sup>213</sup> The leadership of the Almohad *Sheikh-s* at the time of the first three Caliphs therefore resided exclusively in the family of ‘Umar al-Hantātī and, subsequently, was given to anyone who captured the attention of the Caliph. In the phase of decline it was occupied by more than one person at a time.<sup>214</sup>

### 2.7.2 *The Sayyid-s, or the Almohad Princes*

As for the *Sayyids*’ body, they had their own meeting place, called *Dār al-Qarāba*.<sup>215</sup> Their leader was called *al-Sayyid al-A’lā*,<sup>216</sup> and he performed the pledge of allegiance on their behalf. The position of *al-sayyid al-a’lā* was occupied by Abū Ḥafṣ ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-Mu’min during the time of Abū Ya’qūb Yūsuf.<sup>217</sup> During the rule of al-Manṣūr, it was held by Abū Zayd ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-Mu’min,<sup>218</sup> while, at the time of al-Nāṣir, it was held by two *Sayyid-s*, Abū Zakariyya Yaḥya b. ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-Mu’min and Abū Mūsā ‘Isā b. ‘Abd al-Mu’min, the last of ‘Abd al-Mu’min’s direct

<sup>209</sup> Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 221, 232; Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, pp. 55, 59. al-Marrākushī claimed that ‘Umar Aṣṇāj was ‘Abd al-Mu’min’s first Vizier, although this is not confirmed.

<sup>210</sup> Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu’jib*, p. 313.

<sup>211</sup> Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 225; al-Tījānī, *Riḥlat al-Tījānī*, p. 362; Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, vol. 6, p. 583; al-Zarkashī, *Tārīkh al-dawlatayn*, p. 18.

<sup>212</sup> Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu’jib*, p. 326.

<sup>213</sup> Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, pp. 293-294; Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, vol. 6, p. 533.

<sup>214</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, vol. 6, p. 537.

<sup>215</sup> Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 385.

<sup>216</sup> Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 250-252; Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 60.

<sup>217</sup> Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, p. 221; Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 55.

<sup>218</sup> Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu’jib*, pp. 265, 313; Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 141.

line of descendants.<sup>219</sup> During the time of al-Rashīd, it was held by his uncle, the *sayyid* Abū Muḥammad Sa‘d.<sup>220</sup> It is clear that this position was, in the majority, kept within the family of Abū Ḥafṣ ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-Mu‘min.

The two positions, *al-Sayyid al-A‘la* and the leader of the Almohad *Sheikh*-s, were quite prominent, and may be considered higher than the level of Vizier, where the post holders would sit close to the Caliph.<sup>221</sup> Al-Marrākushī somewhat indicates this when he states that ‘Abd al-Mu‘min respected the status of ‘Umar Aṣnāj, considering that it was higher than that of a Vizier, and so granted it to Abū Ja‘far b. ‘Aṭīya. Similarly, Yūsuf considered that the status of his brother, ‘Umar, was higher than that of a Vizier, and gave it to Ibn Jāmi‘.<sup>222</sup> This may be because the first was perhaps the earliest leader of the Almohad *Sheikh*-s, while the second was the first leader of the *sayyid* body.

In addition to these consultative bodies, there was a higher body: the Privy Council (*Majlis al-Khāṣṣa*).<sup>223</sup> This was consulted on the most important and sensitive of matters. It was formed of high-ranking *Sayyid*-s, Almohad *Sheikh*-s, the *ḥaḍar ṭalaba*, the Caliphate orator (*Khaṭīb*), and the *qāḍī al-Jamā‘a*. In times of war, others who would participate in campaigns were invited, such as governors and judges in the larger provinces, as well as the high-ranking Arab *Sheikh*-s. This council only appeared during the time of Yūsuf b. ‘Abd al-Mu‘min.<sup>224</sup>

The role of these bodies never went beyond consultation, and it did not have anything to do with a say in ruling, or controlling and monopolising decision making during the rule of ‘Abd al-Mu‘min, following the conquest of Marrakesh, or indeed, during the rule of Yūsuf or al-Manṣūr. During the era of al-Nāṣir, and when one would expect that the *sheikh*-s would obtain more power, especially after the removal of the leader of the Almohad *Sheikh*-s: Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Wāḥid al-Ḥafṣī, from the scene, by convincing al-Nāṣir to appoint him as leader over Ifrīqiya, they received harsh penalties, and their status declined in favour of the Vizier, Ibn Jāma‘, who, according to Ibn Abī Zar‘, was in control of the caliphate.<sup>225</sup> However, this situation did not last long

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<sup>219</sup> Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu‘jib*, p. 326.

<sup>220</sup> Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 286.

<sup>221</sup> Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, p. 238; Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 286.

<sup>222</sup> Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu‘jib*, pp. 168, 244.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid*, p. 258.

<sup>224</sup> See Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu‘jib*, p. 258; Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 493-495; Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 371.

<sup>225</sup> Al-Tījānī, *Riḥlat al-Tījānī*, p. 360; Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, pp. 240-241.

and the *sheikh*-s soon managed to retrieve control of affairs following the succession of al-Mustans̄ir, who was too young.<sup>226</sup>

Conflict among the *Sheikh*-s was perhaps the single most serious thing that struck the Almohads at the time, who were squabbling over power, control, and status. It is sufficient to point out that the sons of Abū Ḥafṣ ‘Umar al-Hantātī were enemies of their cousins, the Banī Yawjān; each group conspired to deny the other the position of leadership and authority. The fifteenth-century geographer Ibn ‘Abd al-Min‘im al-Ḥimyarī commented on this animosity, saying: ‘... and Allāh placed [such antagonism] between these two households as that which was between the Banī Hāshim and Banī Umayyah’.<sup>227</sup>

This dispute undermined the power of the central authority, where the opponents did not provide sincere advice to the Caliph on matters that related to ministerial or military leadership appointments, nor did viziers or commanders trust the advice of their adversaries. This was one of the most important reasons for the massive defeat at the battle of al- Las Navas de Tolosa.<sup>228</sup> Those *Sheikh*-s who were in command did not listen to the advice tendered by their opponents, which reduced the State’s effectiveness in confronting its enemies, both internally and externally.<sup>229</sup>

Following the death of al-Mustans̄ir, the Almohad *Sheikh*-s were divided into two disputing blocs, each wishing to seize and monopolise power, and each seeking the help of the Hilāl Arabs. The Hantāta, Tīnmal, and Kidmīwah tribes represented one group, and they allied themselves with the Arabs of Sufyān,<sup>230</sup> while, on the other hand, there were the Haskūra, who were in alliance with the Arabs of al-Khult (the tribe). The Hantāta group therefore pledged allegiance to ‘Abd al-Wāḥid b. Yūsuf, Haskūra and the Arabs of al-Khalt, who supported al-‘Ādil. Indeed, when Hantāta joined forces with al-‘Ādil, Haskūra rebelled against him,<sup>231</sup> killing him, and pledging allegiance to al-Ma’mūn,<sup>232</sup> who conquered Marrakesh through their efforts.<sup>233</sup> When al-Rashīd changes his position in regard to the policy of his father, al-Ma’mūn, bringing closer to him the Almohad *Sheikh*-s from Hantāta and its allies; this was accompanied by a change in the

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<sup>226</sup> Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 243; Ibn Abī Zar‘, *Rawḍ al-qirtās*, p. 160.

<sup>227</sup> Al-Ḥimyarī, *Ṣifat Jazīrat al-Andalus*, p. 70; see about this hostility in Ibn Abī Zar‘, *Rawḍ al-qirtās*, pp. 69-70.

<sup>228</sup> Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p.241; Ibn Abī Zar‘, *Rawḍ al-qirtās*, pp. 157-158.

<sup>229</sup> See ‘Inān, *Dawlat al-Islām fī al-Andalus: ‘Aṣr al-Murābiṭīn wa-l-Muwaḥḥidīn* vol. 2, p. 346; it is sufficient to mention that al-Mustans̄ir did not mount a campaign during his rule.

<sup>230</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, vol. 6, p. 568.

<sup>231</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, vol. 6, p. 528.

<sup>232</sup> Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 252; Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Ibar*, vol. 6, pp. 528-529.

<sup>233</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, vol. 6, p. 530.

position of the Haskūra and the Arabs of al-Khalt, who joined forces with Yaḥyā b. al-Nāṣir.<sup>234</sup>

Power, in the hands of the Almohad *Sheikh*-s and their Arab allies, therefore led to a highly significant division, which ultimately led to the crumbling of the central authority, placing it at the mercy of this group of the other faction. They were helped to achieve control by the fact that the State's core military forces were made up of their men, and so the Caliphs fell victim to their whims.

It is not strange, then, that al-Ma'mūn would contemplate inviting non-Muslims to prop up his rule and restore his authority, cancelling the Almohad taxes, and killing the Almohad *Sheikh*-s. It would seem that acquiring greater privileges was the motive for the conflict between al-Ma'mūn and the Almohad *Sheikh*-s. Ibn 'Idhārī depicts how the Almohad *Sheikh*-s received the news of the restoration of taxes during the time of al-Rashīd:

‘...by Allāh, the extent of their happiness, and the depth of their satisfaction on hearing this; their tongues eloquent in supplication to Allāh to grant victory, help, and greater prestige to the Caliph; their revels included old and young, far and wide’.<sup>235</sup>

However, restoring taxes and privileges did not mean that these *Sheikh*-s regained the authority that they had enjoyed during the time when the Caliphs were weak, because al-Rashīd kept them under surveillance, and brutally suppressed those who attempted to seize power, especially the Arabs.<sup>236</sup> Al-Sa'īd followed the same policy,<sup>237</sup> and so many of them fled, especially from Hantāta and Kidmīwah to the Hafsid dynasty in Tunisia.<sup>238</sup> Hence, the existence of these consultative bodies was not continuous.

From the train of events, we note that the bodies that were established to provide advice to the strong Caliphs proceeded to monopolise control over affairs in times of weakness.

## **Conclusion**

It is certain that Ibn Tūmart, in the construction of his state, drew from the prophetic model, as influenced by Berber tribal traditions, but what was its originality? With Ibn Tūmart, the innovation of the system managed to hold together the two traditions: the

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<sup>234</sup> See: Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, vol. 3, pp. 263, 288, 323; Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, vol. 6, pp. 527, 528, 532, 534.

<sup>235</sup> Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 305.

<sup>236</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, vol. 6, p. 537.

<sup>237</sup> Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, vol. 3, pp. 363-364; Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, vol. 6, pp. 538.

<sup>238</sup> Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, pp. 368-370; Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, vol. 6, pp. 539.

prophetic and the tribal. This mixing of the two models that are described culminated with this excessive hierarchy. The Mahdī also demonstrates originality in the creation of certain categories, like those of *Ṭalaba* and *Huffāz*, not to mention his new religious practices. We note that this pyramidal aspect did not escape the watchful eye of chroniclers, who have characterised it as being ‘strange’ (*gharīb*). Moreover, one wonders how a simple *Faqīh*, and in such a limited time, was able to conceive of such a complicated system. The reform introduced by ‘Abd al-Mu’min in this system was both comprehensive and effective. He opened the way for new blood to enter the political system, and created new institutions for young people in order to train them and prepare them to take on the political and administrative functions of the state in the near future. All of these measures would ensure the continued effectiveness and stability of the political machine of the state. On the other hand, ‘Abd al-Mu’min extracted from Ibn Tumart’s system its most prominent features when he adopted a hereditary system that gave infinite power to his family, and that killed any hope for any member of the political categories of access to the throne, and thus, instead of that choice, a system that would have been based on competence had become dependent on the blood bond.

## The Political-Administrative Organisation of al-Andalus

Studying the administrative structures of Islamic governments is a very challenging task. Our sources do not shed enough light upon the political system's organisation, or on the various political administrators' roles and participation. This is mostly due to the tendencies of the writers, who seem to be interested in other issues, such as political events and the biographies of caliphs and writers. They barely describe the general features of political systems which are most often ambiguous and do not reach the requisite degree of detail so that we can reach conclusive results. This issue is further complicated when it comes to the governments of the cities and provinces that were far from the central authority, such as in al-Andalus.

Regarding the Almohads, the sources provide relatively acceptable information about the royal family, as well as the administrative staff and executives, from which we can draw a clear picture of the political system in the capital. As for al-Andalus, sources are often either silent or they provide information that is scattered and confusing. Some provide the official titles of functionaries, but they very rarely explain their roles. Perhaps this is what has caused researchers to refrain from research in this field and to focus their attention on the study of the sovereign authority in Marrakech.

Recently, a number of valuable studies have emerged that focus on regional governments, rather than on the central authority alone, like that of Mūsā and Buresi.<sup>1</sup> However, this chapter seeks to fill the gap and increase our understanding of the political system of the Almohads in al-Andalus by focusing on the political structures of its governments, their roles and influence, and how they relate to the government of the capital.

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<sup>1</sup> See the introduction to this thesis. See also Ramzi Rouighi, *The making of a Mediterranean emirate: Ifriqiya and Its Andalusis, 1200-1400* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); Dandash, *al-Andalus fī nihāyat al-Murābiṭīn wa-mustahall al-Muwaḥḥidīn*; A. Bennison, 'Power and the City in the Islamic West from the Umayyads to the Almohads', in Bennison A. K. and Gascoigne, A. L. (eds), *Cities in the Premodern Islamic World: the Urban Impact of Religion, State and Society*, (London, 2007), pp. 65-95; 'A. H. al-Sāmarrā'ī, *Tārīkh ḥaḍārat al-Maghrib wa-al-Andalus* (Tripoli, 2002); M. 'Inān, *Dawlat al-Islām fī al-Andalus* (Cairo, 1963).

## 1. *Provincial divisions*

Despite originating in the Maghrib, the administrative system of the Almohads in al-Andalus was much more organised than the central administration of their capital, Marrakesh. This is mainly due to the traditions of governments that had been established in the region since the Arab conquest and the founding of Islamic states, such as the Umayyad caliphate and the Taifa Kingdoms

Under the rule of the Muslims, and for political and administrative efficiency from the time of the conquest, al-Andalus had been divided into regions and provinces called *Kūra* (plural: *Kūwar*), corresponding roughly to Roman and Visigothic territorial organisations. The *kūwr*, in turn, were divided into minor administrative units, called *aqālīm* (*kūra* districts); each containing towns, villages and castles.<sup>2</sup> In most cases, the name of the *Kūra* refers to its capital, which was usually the largest town in terms of size and population, for example, the *Kūra* of Seville, Córdoba, Tortosa and Toledo. As for the number of provinces, Arabic sources contain limited, and often conflicting, information written according to the authors' own perceptions. Al-Muqaddasī, for example, mentioned eighteen *Kūwar* in al-Andalus, but added that this list is inaccurate and incomplete.<sup>3</sup> Yāqūt Ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥamawī (1179–1229) increased the number to 41 provinces. Modern research has suggested that until the eleventh century the number of Andalusī provinces was around 20-23 *Kūwar*, excluding *al-Thughūr* (the border provinces).<sup>4</sup> However, after the end of the Taifa kingdoms and the arrival of the Almoravids in al-Andalus in the 1090s, the administrative divisions of the provinces significantly changed. Some *kūwr* were removed from the Muslims' control by the Christian advance, while others disappeared, to be integrated into different districts.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For more information on the political and territorial divisions of al-Andalus, see: Joaquín Vallvé, *La división territorial de la España musulmana* (Madrid, 1986), *passim*; Roberto Marín-Guzmán, 'Some Reflections on the Institutions of Muslim Spain: Unity in Politics and Administration (711–929)', *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 21 (2004), pp. 26–56; J. V. Bermejo, *La división territorial de la España musulmana* (Madrid, 1986). The most comprehensive study of the administrative division of al-Andalus from the Islamic conquests through the rise Caliphate of Córdoba is Ḥusayn Mu'nis, *Fajr al-Andalus: dirāsa fī tārikh al-Andalus min al-fath al-islāmī ilā qiyām al-dawla al-Umawiyya (711–756 M)*, (Beirut, 2002), pp. 552–601.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Muqaddasī, *aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-āqālīm* (Leiden, 1906), pp. 235, 36.

<sup>4</sup> Lévi-Provinçal came to these conclusions after detailed and valuable research on the works of Ibn al-Faraḍī and Ibn Bashkuwāl. However, when a list of Andalusī *Kūwar* is created, the number is greater than twenty: Córdoba, al-Faḥṣ Ballūṭ (Plain of Pedrechones), Cabra, Ecija, Seville, Carmona Niebla Osonoba, Beja, Morón, Sidonia, Algeciras, Takurunna, Málaga, Elvira, Jaén, Pechina, Tudmir, Játiva, Valencia, Toledo, Santaver, and probably also the Balearic Islands, as well as the regions of Mérida, Badajoz, Santarem and Lisbon. Lévi-Provinçal, *Histoire de l'Espagne musulmane*, 3 vols (Paris, 1950-53), vol. III, pp. 49-51.

<sup>5</sup> For example, the *Kūra* of Toledo became a part of the Castilian kingdom in 1085; Oxuna, al-Fagar and Kunka have been distributed to Tudmir and Santaver; Bathr was integrated with Valencia, and Marmaria

The *Kūra* as an administrative division thus seem to be reformed so that the provinces of al-Andalus became fewer in number but larger in size than in the previous division. Recent studies have estimated that the number of administrative divisions in the Almoravid era reduced to only six provinces: Granada, Seville, Córdoba, Valencia, Murcia and Zaragoza.<sup>6</sup>

During the era of the Almohads, the provinces of al-Andalus retained the administrative division that had been used by the previous Almoravid regime, with a few exceptions. For example, Zaragoza was lost to Christian Aragon in 1118, and the Almohads were unable to retrieve it.<sup>7</sup> Málaga, which the Almoravids did not treat as an independent province, became a province under the jurisdiction of Ceuta and Granada at the beginning of the Almohad era, and later, in the reign of Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf, became an independent province. Furthermore, the *wilāyat al-gharb* (The province of the West or Algarve)<sup>8</sup> joined with Seville after the announcement of hereditary rule and then separated again during the succession of Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf, to become what it had been at the time of the Almoravids.<sup>9</sup> However, based on the available information, derived from Almohad sources and documents about the administrative divisions of al-Andalus during the era of the Almohads, we can identify nine major provinces:

1. The Province of Granada (including Granada, Almeria, Guadix, Almuñécar, Loja, and others).
2. The Province of Seville (Seville, Jerez de la Frontera, Medina-Sidonia, Cádiz, Écija, Carmona, Triana, La Algaba, Aznalcázar, Lora del Río, Arcos, Osuna, Algeciras, Ronda, and Niebla).
3. The Province of Córdoba (Córdoba, Baeza, and Andújar).
4. The Province of Valencia (Valencia, Xàtiva, Denia, Sagunto, and Alcira).
5. The Province of Murcia (Murcia, Orihuela, Alicante, and Lorca).

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integrated with Turtusha. For more detail about the *Kūwar* of Al-Andalus during the period of Muslim rule, see: Antonio Arjona Castro, *Andalucía Musulmana, Estructura Politico-Administrativa*, (Córdoba, 1982).

<sup>6</sup> M. ‘Inān, *Dawlat al-Islām: ‘Aṣr al-Murābiṭīn wa-l-Muwahhīdīn*, vol. 1, p. 415. H. A. Ḥusayn, *al-Tārīkh al-sīyāsī wā-l-ḥaḍārī lil-Maghrib wā-l-Andalus fī ‘aṣr al-Murābiṭīn* (Alexandria, 1997), p. 262; I. Ḥarakāt, *al-Maghrib ‘abra al-Tārīkh*, 3 vols (Casablanca, 2000), vol. 1, p. 196. There are some other studies that suggest that al-Andalus was divided into three main areas: the West lead by Seville, the centre by Córdoba, and the East by Murcia. ‘I. Dandash, *al-Andalus fī nihāyt al-Mūrābiṭīn*, p. 124; Kennedy, *Muslim Spain*, p. 176.

<sup>7</sup> Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 9, p. 223; Al-Qalqashandī, *Nihāyat al-irab fī ma‘rifat ansāb al-‘Arab*, ed. I. al-Ibyārī (Beirut, 1980), p. 209.

<sup>8</sup> Ch. Picard, ‘L’essor des localités de l’Algarve à l’époque musulmane (XI<sup>e</sup>-XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle)’, *Cahiers d’Histoire*, 37 (1992), pp. 3-21.

<sup>9</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāh, *al-Mann*, p. 207; R. el-Hour, ‘El Algarbe en época almorávide: Aspectos políticos y jurídicos’, in *Actas del I curso sobre la Península Ibérica y el Mediterráneo durante los siglos XI y XII*, ed. Fernando Valdés Fernández (Palencia, 27-30 July 1996), pp. 33-49.

6. The Province of Málaga (Málaga, Marbella, Bezmiliana, Lamaya, Morón, Archidona, Vélez-Málaga, and Alhama).
7. The Province of Jaén (Jaén, Úbeda, Baeza, Calatrava la Vieja, Baza, Quesada, and Segura).
8. The Province of the *wilāyat al-gharb*, containing Badajoz, Silves, Beja, and Mértola.
9. The Province of Mallorca (Mallorca, Ibiza and Menorca).



**Figure 6: *The Provinces of al-Andalus during the Almohad Era***

At the head of the administrative offices in each province, there was a *wālī* (governor), who lived and had his headquarters in the *al-qaṣaba* (the term for a walled fortification, from which the Spanish term *Alcazaba* was derived).<sup>10</sup> This official represented the leader of the Almohad dynasty in the province, and under his authority were the governors of all of the cities in the *Kūra*. Below the governor, in all of the provinces, there were offices for official correspondence, judicial affairs, and tax collection. All expenses were covered by money collected from people in the province: legal fees, extraordinary contributions, taxes, fines, and any other special expenses that the government decided to undertake. It was expected that the money collected in every province should cover its military spending and pay both the *‘aṭā’* (salaries) of the

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<sup>10</sup> L. Torres Balbás, *Ciudades Hispano-musulmanas*, Arabic trans. M. Ya‘lā, vol. 1 (Rabat, 2007), p. 34; Rebecca Bridgman, *Potting histories: Ceramics, Economy and Society in Almohad al-Andalus*. PhD dissertation, Southampton University (2007), p. 240.

soldiers and the cost of the defences in the border areas. The rest of the money, and other receipts and funds in the provinces, was sent to Marrakesh and remained there.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to the capital of Marrakech in al-Maghrib, the Almohads chose Seville as their capital in al-Andalus. For some researchers, this only means that the city became the place where the caliphs usually settled when they crossed to al-Andalus<sup>12</sup>, and also the place used as a gathering point for armies in preparation for *jihad* campaigns.<sup>13</sup> However, Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāh's account suggests other advantages were enjoyed by the capital. In his record of the events of 1164, when Caliph 'Abd al-Mu'min decided to move the capital of al-Andalus from Seville to Córdoba for security reasons, the author, who was an eyewitness, spoke about this transfer, stating that the order was issued for Córdoba to be "*the base of Almohad government in al-Andalus as it was during the Umayyad epoch, so the management of institutions (A'māl al-Ashghāl) would be settled in it and the orders would be released from it to the other regions*".<sup>14</sup> The transfer of the capital to Córdoba did not last long, as in mid-May 1163, the next caliph, Yūsuf, returned Seville to its preeminent position.<sup>15</sup> However, the statement of Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt provides a clear indication that the capital was also the centre of the Almohad administrative system and that governmental institutions in Andalusian cities, or some of their offices, were subject to the management of the capital and were under its control. The author also referred to some of these offices, and said that many of the *kuttāb* (secretaries) and *mushrifūn* (tax officers), accompanied by leading citizens, were ordered to move from Seville to the new capital.<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately, there is insufficient information to determine the nature of the administrative relations between the government of Seville and the Andalusian cities. The collection of al-'Azzāwī states that Caliph Yūsuf I mentioned to the *wālī* of Granada that he had asked the government of Seville to pay salaries (*barakāt*) for the government of Granada and Córdoba, and to provide weapons and necessary equipment to the garrison at Córdoba.<sup>17</sup> However, it is most likely that the authority of Seville was limited to financial management and its responsibility did not go beyond overseeing the workflow in their

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<sup>11</sup> The financial system, including sources of income and expenses, as well as the judiciary and its institutions, will be discussed in detail in the following chapters.

<sup>12</sup> 'I Musa, *al-Muwahhidūn fī al-Gharb al-Islāmī*, p. 175; Buresi, *Governing the Empire*, p. 62.

<sup>13</sup> Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu'jab*, p. 282; Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, pp. 132, 186, 193, 196, 200.

<sup>14</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāh, *al-Mann*, p. 138.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138, 139.

<sup>17</sup> A. Azzāwī, *Al-Rasā'il*, vol. 1, p. 117.

offices, while the authorities to appoint and dismiss and to account for staff were a prerogative of the central administration in Marrakech.

As for the political authorities, the power of the government of Seville did not extend beyond its territory. Unlike the Almoravids, the Almohad caliphs did not appoint deputies to rule al-Andalus. The only exception came with Caliph al-ʿĀdil who, in 1225, appointed his brother, Abū Al-ʿUlā al-Maʾmūn, as Governor of Seville, and as his deputy in al-Andalus. This position included the authority to appoint or remove governors.<sup>18</sup> It is worth mentioning the motivation behind the selection of Seville as the capital of al-Andalus. Córdoba was always the first choice for Islamic governments since the Muslim conquest of al-Andalus and the rise of the Umayyad dynasty. Even when this status declined during the Taifa period, when each province became independent and had its own capital, Córdoba soon became the capital again under the Almoravids. What prompted the Almohads to change this policy and choose Seville as their capital in Andalus?

The Moroccan author ʿIzz al-Dīn Mūsā, believes that the Almohads chose Seville as their capital in al-Andalus because it was the first major city to declare its allegiance and to enter peacefully into the Almohad doctrine.<sup>19</sup> This may be true, taking into account the policy followed by the Almohads under which those who joined the Almohad early on benefitted from great advantages and a high position at the top of the Almohad hierarchical classification. However, there is another, and more important, motivation that is related to the security situation in Córdoba, which was imposed by the political situation in al-Andalus after the fall of the Almoravids. The conflict between the Almohads and Ibn Mardānīsh, the King of Valencia and Murcia, which continued throughout the reign of Caliph ʿAbd al-Muʾmin, posed a major threat to Córdoba because of its proximity to combat zones, and therefore the possibility of exposure to repeated attacks from Ibn Mardānīsh's forces was too high.<sup>20</sup> Let us also not forget that the site of Córdoba, not far from the borders of the Kingdom of Castile, was unsuitable as the capital of al-Andalus since its territories would be vulnerable to attacks by the Christian forces. In contrast, Seville was relatively far from the conflict zone, which gave it the advantage of being a secure and stable base for the Almohads in al-Andalus. Additionally, the Guadalquivir River, which passes through Seville, as well as the

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<sup>18</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, vol. 6, p. 339; A. Azzāwī, *Rasāʿil*, vol.1, pp. 417-18; P. Buresi, *Governing the Empire*, pp. 262-63.

<sup>19</sup> I. al-Dīn Musa, *al-Muwahhidūn fi al-Gharb al-Islāmī*, p. 175.

<sup>20</sup> See Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, p. 120; Ibn ʿIdhārī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, pp. 128, 170, 205; Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, vol. 6, p. 332.

agricultural resources of its rich territory, made Seville the most suitable place to assemble armies and acquire the supplies required for the major campaigns that the Almohad caliphs launched in al-Andalus.

## **2. Government structures**

The organisation of the Almohad state in al-Andalus was not an easy task for ‘Abd al-Mu’min, firstly, because he had to unify a patchwork of independent principalities and, secondly, because the institutions bequeathed by Ibn Tūmart to the Almohad community, confined to the mountains of Darān, were not suitable for such a vast empire. Through sources, documents and official correspondence we have identified various and manifold administrative institutions. However, in this chapter we will deal with the upper categories of the pyramid in the administrative regional government.

### **2.1 The *Wālī* (governor)**

At the top of the Regional governmental structures, there was the *wālī* (the governor), who was responsible for the security, safety, and the provision of public services to the people of his province. His duties, authority, and the way he was chosen, varied based on the type of mandate that was awarded to him and the period in which he was appointed.

In the Almohad sources and documents, two titles have been given to the Almohad governors: sometimes they were referred to as *wālī* (plural *wulāt*), and sometimes *‘āmil* (plural *‘ummāl*).<sup>21</sup> ‘Azzāwī claims that the title *wālī* was often given to governors from the ruling family, while governors from the categories of *Sheikh*-s and *ḥuffāz* were called *‘ummāl*.<sup>22</sup> Apart from this, there does not seem to be any major difference between the two titles, and, in most cases, the use of a title depended on the author's own cultural background and writing style. However, unlike the *wālī*, the term *‘āmil* was also used to refer to those who were part of the provincial fiscal administration. In theory, all governmental institutions in the province, including the financial administration, came under the authority of the governor. However, during the era of the Almohads, and especially at the zenith of their power, the financial administration was tied directly to the state financial administration in the capital, Marrakesh. According to the Almohad sources, therefore, in each province there was a

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<sup>21</sup> Azzawi, *Rasa’il*, p. 278.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p. 229.

governor (*wālī* / *‘āmil*) and an *‘āmil* (fiscal officer).<sup>23</sup> In Valencia, for example, there was an *‘āmil* who was separate from the *wālī* at the head of the civil administration, and who controlled the activities of provincial treasurers, assessors and tax collectors.<sup>24</sup>

The appointment of the governor was the prerogative of the caliph, who would choose a person from the Almohad aristocracy whom he believed had the characteristics of leadership and the ability to apply the caliph’s policy in his province. In his study of the political and administrative systems of the Almohads, Mūsā provides lists of the Almohad governors that are mentioned in primary sources and Almohad documents, organised according to location and period of appointment.<sup>25</sup> Based on the data in these lists, along with relevant information recorded by chroniclers regarding the appointees, we can distinguish three historical phases of the Almohads that are reflected in the caliphate’s policy on the selection of governors: the period before the establishment of hereditary rule (1157); the period of prosperity and power, and the period of disintegration and fragmentation.

During the first period, the majority of governors were selected either from the Almohad political councils and military leaders, generally called *Sheikh*-s, or from local rulers who joined the Almohad authority soon after the conquest of Fez in 1146.<sup>26</sup> The sources do not mention the reasons for the government's reliance on these two categories. The only logical explanation can be inferred from the historical stages that the Almohads went through in the establishment of their empire.

At this stage of their development, the Almohads did not yet have complete control over all Andalusī territories. It is not surprising, then, that ‘Abd al-Mu’min resorted to the *Sheikh*-s, the most reliable men loyal to the cause of the Almohads, in order to lay the foundations of their emerging state and to ensure that occupied territories would remain under their authority. Among the *Sheikh*-s chosen were Burrāz b. Muḥammad al-Mussūfī, Yūsuf b. Sulaymān, and Abū Zakarīya Yaḥya b. Yūmūr, who ruled the provinces of Seville and Córdoba, respectively.

The same can be said about the use of local rulers. Several Andalusī territories were ruled by individuals who abandoned their loyalty to the Almoravids and

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<sup>23</sup> See: Ibn Šāḥib al-Salah, *al-Min*, pp. 203–04, 294, 298; Azzāwī, *Rasā’il, taqdīm* n° 1, 6, 15, 17, 18, pp. 411, 424, 438, 441, 442. The generic character of the term *‘āmil* led Sabbane to confuse the *‘āmil* as governor and the *‘āmil* as fiscal officer. In his study on the Almohad administrative system, he claims that in some provinces there were two governors with different responsibilities: an *‘āmil* to deal with the financial aspects, and a *wālī* for the defence and security of the province. A. Sabbane, *le gouvernement*, p. 266.

<sup>24</sup> Guichard, *Les Musulmans*, vol. 2, p. 337

<sup>25</sup> ‘I Musa, *al-Muwahḥidūn fī al-Gharb al-Islāmī*, pp. 352-64;

<sup>26</sup> Ibn Šāḥib al-Šalāt, *al-Mann*, p. 392; Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, pp. 93, 98, 101.

recognised the superiority and authority of the new rulers in Marrakech. Among those governors there were Ibn Quṣī of Mértola, Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥajjām of Badajoz, and Yūsuf Ibn al-Baṭrūjī of Niebla.<sup>27</sup> By accepting their loyalty and retaining them in their positions as governors, ‘Abd al-Mu’min sought to ensure loyalty and stability in the regions under their influence, and may have hoped that this measure would also encourage other governors to offer their loyalty. Moreover, it must not be forgotten that the Almohads were in a formative stage, transitioning from being a revolutionary movement to being a state with political systems and administrative institutions. ‘Abd al-Mu’min probably thought that by retaining the former governors, who had knowledge and experience of the principles of governance and administration, this would help in the growth of the state, especially since the Almohads were formed from Berber tribes who were not familiar with such matters.

However, this policy carried serious risks, the results of which appeared very early, and at the first opportunity. In 1148, a massive revolt that was launched against the Almohads by the tribes of the Sus soon attracted support from all over the Maghrib, including Ceuta and Sijilmāsa in the south. In al-Andalus, most of the leaders who had accepted Almohad rule renounced their allegiance, and only Ibn ‘Azzūn, in Jerez and Ronda, remained loyal. In response, Caliph ‘Abd al-Mu’min sent his armies, who succeeded in restoring control over the rebellious areas. Shortly afterwards, the local leaders were summoned to Marrakech and were replaced by new governors.<sup>28</sup> This decision was taken as a precautionary measure in anticipation that those who had already rebelled might be tempted to do so again at the first opportunity.

The second class of leaders appeared in 1155 as a result of a major political reorganisation that was launched by ‘Abd al-Mu’min when he placed his family in control of the caliphate. The first generation of rulers were initially replaced by the *ḥuffāz* and, subsequently, by *Sayyids*. The story behind this measure is reported by several chroniclers, but the most interesting detail is given by the historian Ibn Athīr:

‘Since it was difficult [for ‘Abd al-Mu’min] to remove them [the Almohad Sheikh-s, who were well-known companions of Mahdī Muḥammad b. Tūmart, and to whom ‘Abd al-Mu’min had entrusted the government in several provinces], he kept their children with him to be educated. Then, when they were big enough to serve as models, he said to their fathers ‘I want to have you with me to support my plans with your advice, and your children, who are now scholars and good jurists (fuqahā’), and will govern on your behalf’. They agreed very gladly and their children become governors. Then he (‘Abd al-Mu’min) told

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<sup>27</sup> Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, p. 98, 99, 102.

<sup>28</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, vol. 6, pp. 310–315.

a man that he trusted (who was selected for this) to tell them that: ‘I think you have done something very terrible and unkindly’. They said: ‘what is it?’ He said: ‘your children have places as governors, while those of the Amīr al-Mu‘minīn, although they are well educated and have good political consciousness, have none. There is reason to fear that you will lose the esteem of the Amīr al-Mu‘minīn if he realised’. Struck by the truth of this remark, they went to ‘Abd al-Mu‘min and asked him to give his son governance, but he pretended to refuse, but they insisted and would not leave him until he finally acceded to their request’.<sup>29</sup>

This event was reported in most of the Almohad sources but, with the exception of Ibn al-Athīr’s account, none of them suggests the role of Caliph ‘Abd al-Mu‘min in the appointment of his sons as governors of the provinces. Furthermore, according to an official letter issued by Caliph ‘Abd al-Mu‘min, the idea came from the *Sheikh-s*, *ṭalaba* and governors (*ummāl*). After consultation, the caliph decided, in order to make these designations officially, that he would associate each of his sons with a government, consisting of *ṭalaba*, *ḥuffāz*, *fuqahā* (Islamic law scholars), *qādīs* and personages of trust, as well as élite officers.<sup>30</sup>

Despite this, we cannot turn a blind eye to the story of Ibn al-Athīr, since Almohad sources were always cautious about Almohad higher authority, especially during the early stages, and consequently avoided recording what might have had a negative impact on the reputation of the royal family, which Almohad chroniclers always held to be beyond reproach. We also cannot rely entirely on the letter of ‘Abd al-Mu‘min, which denied that he had any involvement in the appointment of his sons, simply because this letter was issued by the man who was the direct beneficiary of this decision. Further, ‘Abd al-Mu‘min had just installed his son Muḥammad as heir-apparent in place of ‘Umar al-Hantāī, the most powerful man other than the caliph, and the primary candidate to succeed him.<sup>31</sup> By doing this, ‘Abd al-Mu‘min created a new policy in the Almohad movement, which destroyed any hope for the *Sheikh-s* to ascend to the throne, as the choice of the new caliph would no longer be based on leadership abilities, but on blood ties. The new decision was not welcomed by some Almohad *Sheikh-s* and there was initial opposition from the Mahdī’s brothers, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz and ‘Isā, who attempted to seize power in Marrakech. They failed and were put to death<sup>32</sup>. It

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<sup>29</sup> Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 9, p. 551.

<sup>30</sup> Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Naẓm al-Jumān*, p. 94–97; Lévi-Provençal, *Trente-sept lettres officielles almohades*, letter no. 14, pp. 61–66.

<sup>31</sup> For the appointment of Muḥammad as Crown Prince see: Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 9, pp. 407, 408; Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, pp. 48–50; Lévi-Provençal, *Trente-sept lettres officielles almohades*, letter no. 13, pp. 55–61; Huici Miranda, *Historia política*, pp. 159, 160.

<sup>32</sup> Al-Baydhaq, *Akhbār al-Mahdī b. Tūmart*, p. 118; Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, pp. 50–51; Lévi-Provençal, *Trente-sept lettres officielles almohades*, letter no. 11, pp. 38–47. The official letter mentioned refers only to the deprivation of the Mahdī’s brothers as a reason for the caliph’s discontent.

was thus necessary for ‘Abd al-Mu’min to follow this decision with another political act to reduce the authority of the aristocracy (the *Sheikh-s*), giving the ruling family more control, not only over the central authority in Marrakech, but also over the major provinces of the Empire.

Whatever was behind this measure, the decision was undertaken and *sayyid-s* were sent to the provinces as governors. The *Sheikh-s*, who had had an important role in the central and provincial government, were relegated to secondary levels as advisers to the *sayyid-s*. With few exceptions, control of important towns was given to the *sayyid-s*, while the *huffāz* took control of smaller towns. Sources list nine of ‘Abd al-Mu’min’s sons who ruled districts, including two in al-Andalus: Abū Sa‘īd ‘Uthmān of Granada, and Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf of Seville.<sup>33</sup> However, it is believed that all *sayyid-s* were appointed as *wulāt*, even the very young boy Abū Zaīd, who was given the leadership of the Sūs, the Almohads’ cradle’.<sup>34</sup>

Choosing the governors from the *sayyid-s* was a policy adopted by all Almohad caliphs. The number was sufficiently large to spark condemnation and criticism from some of the Almohads, even among the *Sheikh-s*. Ibn ‘Abd al-Malik al-Marrākushī referred to the Almohad *Sheikh* Abū Al-‘Abbās Aḥmed b. Yaḥya, who criticised Caliph Ya‘qūb al-Manṣūr’s policy on the appointment of his sons, young brothers, cousins and relatives, as governors in al-Maghrib and al-Andalus.<sup>35</sup>

A new pattern of governors emerged during the late Almohad era in Andalus, particularly after the reign of ‘Abd al-Wāḥid b. Yūsuf, which was considered a period of decay and fragmentation. Governors from the *huffāz* suddenly disappeared, and the position almost exclusively, was held by members of the Mūminid family. There were no clear criteria for selecting a new governor that can be monitored. Sometimes it was sufficient that the candidate be a member of the royal family, regardless of his ability and leadership potential. In some cases, the people of a city demanded that the caliph appoint one of the *sayyid-s* as their *wālī* in order to show their submission and loyalty to the royal family. In other cases, the position became hereditary within the family of the governor. The son of the governor was likely to begin his professional career as *wālī* in a small town, or beside his father as *nā’ib* (deputy), before succeeding him.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, it seems that even health and physical condition were not prerequisites for the selection of

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<sup>33</sup> See the table of governments.

<sup>34</sup> The chronicler al-Baydhaq claimed that the young prince, Abū Zaīd, was appointed, although he has never exercised. Al-Baydhaq, *Akhbār al-Mahdī b. Tūmart*, p. 77.

<sup>35</sup> Ibn ‘Abd al-Malik, *al-Dhayl wa-l-takmila*, vol.1, pp. 565, 566.

<sup>36</sup> See: ‘Azzāwī, *Rasā’il*, vol. 1, letters no. 52, 103, pp. 138, 232.

governors. Ibn ʿIdhārī stated that Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq al-Ghanfīsī, the *wālī* of Sijilamāsa and Darʿā at the time of al-Murtaḍā, was disabled, and could only move with the help of his slaves and the men paid to move him (*rijāl mustabiddīn li-thalika wa ʿabīd*).<sup>37</sup>

### ***The appointment of the wālī***

In theory, the appointment of a new *wālī*, which generally coincided with the beginning of a new reign, depended on the dismissal of the former *wālī*, which was dictated by the caliph and notified by a letter of dismissal. Pending the arrival of the new governor, the position did not remain vacant; a *shūra* council assumed interim control.<sup>38</sup> A notification of appointment would be sent to the province before the arrival of the new governor. In this announcement, the caliph was eager to highlight specific points: his interest in the province, the reasons for appointing a new governor, the governor's attributes and status among the Almohads, and the main tasks that were to be entrusted to him:

‘We devote to it (the city or province) all the care and attention we can, our concern for it continues at all hours and moments. We choose for its affairs (li-ashghali-ha) competent and efficient people so that its interests might advance along the path of righteousness and that it might receive a protection that pushes aside the attacks of evil and corruption.... In terms of what we have just evoked of our intentions to improve the lot of the subjects (lil-raʿīya) and their land, and of [our] desire to grant them security in green sweetness of its opulent plains, we have named Fulan to lead your regions ... to take charge of their interests and their resources, to spread complete security to all places and all localities, to guarantee for all regions, near and far, regular visits, to lead all districts, in improving easy paths and removing obstacles. He is known for his wisdom and reputed for his firmness, following the path of his predecessors in courage and bravery’.

At the conclusion of the letter, the caliph advised the recipients to support the governor and to stand by his side in order to enable him to perform his work properly.<sup>39</sup>

‘Thus, when he arrives among you, with the help of God - May He be glorified - refer to him for all your financial affairs, advance in obedience and collaboration on the true paths, be with him as one hand united to ordain good and prohibit evil. Much success to your interests, small and large, if God on High wills it...’

After the appointment was approved, a formal ceremony was held in Marrakesh on the day the new governor left for his province, and another was held in the province upon

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<sup>37</sup> Ibn ʿIdhārī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, pp. 410–11.

<sup>38</sup> Ibn ʿIdhārī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, p. 272.

<sup>39</sup> See the *taqādīm* in: ʿAzzāwī, *Rasāʿil*, vol. 1, pp. 411–78. An English translation of these messages is given in Buresi, *Governing the Empire*, pp. 245–405.

the governor's arrival, attended by its notables and dignitaries, to celebrate and welcome the appointment.<sup>40</sup>

### ***The Roles of the Governor***

The roles of the governor were derived from two main responsibilities: security and financial management. The *wālī* had a duty to maintain order in his province and to suppress any revolt in the name of the caliph. Further, the *wālī* was required to contribute to the military campaigns that the Almohad caliphs consistently launched in al-Andalus, either by sending soldiers or by providing military equipment and supplies. The *wālī* was also obliged to collect taxes, to punish the corrupt, and to ensure the implementation of judgments and orders issued by central government. Furthermore, the governor was responsible for providing public services, such as the building of mosques and markets, the repair of bridges and roads, water provision and the building of cisterns.<sup>41</sup> These, and other functions, were performed by the *wālī* through the offices of his government, which were very similar to those of the caliph in Marrakesh, but more limited and on a smaller scale.

The authority of the *wulāt* was not the same during all of the empire's stages. Several sources, including official documents, indicate that during the time of the first four caliphs, more precisely, from 'Abd al-Mu'min to al-Nāṣir, the power of the *wulāt* was relatively limited and was subject to strict control by the central government in Marrakech. In contrast, we do not see such control during the late stages of Almohad rule. For example, in the first period, the entourage was chosen under the care of the sovereign. In letter No. 14, already mentioned, we read that Caliph 'Abd al-Mu'min provided each of his sons' governorships with a government consisting of a council of *ṭalaba*, *ḥuffāz*, *qādī*-s and personages of trust, as well as an élite of trustworthy officers.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, Caliph Yūsuf I sent with Abū 'Abd Allāh b. Abī Ibrāhīm, who was appointed to govern Seville, a large group of selected *Sheikh*-s and *ḥuffāz*, in addition to a battalion of soldiers.<sup>43</sup> In 1183, Caliph Yūsuf appointed his four sons *wulāt* of Seville, Córdoba, Granada and Murcia, and sent them judges and *ḥuffāz* that were selected to be members of their governments.<sup>44</sup> However, during the period of decay, the caliph

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<sup>40</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalā, *al-Mann*, pp. 217–19.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, p. 186.

<sup>42</sup> Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Naẓm al-Jumān*, p. 94–97; Lévi-Provençal, *Trente-sept lettres officielles almohades*, letter no. 14, pp. 61–66.

<sup>43</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 217–18.

<sup>44</sup> Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, p. 156.

delegated this role to the *wulāt* of the provinces, who took charge of appointing the personnel in their government.<sup>45</sup> Even the authority to choose the governor, which was in the gift of the caliph, became a grant given to some governors. The *sayyid* al-Ma'mūn, *wālī* of Seville, was given full authority to manage al-Andalus by his brother, Caliph al-'Ādil, and through this power, al-Ma'mūn had the right to choose or dismiss governors without consulting the government in Marrakech.<sup>46</sup> This phenomenon also appears in the administrative powers relating to the financial management of the province. With few exceptions, during the period of the first four caliphs, fiscal functions were overseen by an independent administrative *'āmil* (agent), who was appointed by the caliph himself, and the caliph alone had the right to hold him accountable or to dismiss him. In contrast, 70% of the *taqādīm* (letters of appointment) that relate to the late Almohad period give the governor the right to control financial affairs.

The following letter of appointment, which is believed to have been issued by the Caliph of al-Rashīd, provides a good example of the full authority enjoyed by some governors in the late Almohads:

'We, persuaded that you are excellent representatives and assured that you seek to deploy all of your efforts and all of your zeal and that you are able to do so, entrust you with the administration of the aforementioned land and all that has come under your responsibility, as well as with [the administration] of neighbouring regions and places, both far and near, that come to you as a result of your [military] enterprises. We place under your competence all responsibility for finances in the region, whatever their nature. We have full confidence in your guardianship (*ishrāfikum*) and your vigilance (*iṭṭilā'ikum*) for all [of the land's] affairs. Exercise this power through persons that manifest noble competence and great care in the administration of interests and the permanent quality of counsel. Appoint to the office of guardian (*ḥāfīz*), judge (*qāḍī*) or agent (*'āmil*) those whom you judge [apt] and whose sense for responsibilities you appreciate. Choose for each post someone who will steadfastly invest it with his authority. Control all affairs, both small and large, in a way that respects, in this land and with its inhabitants (*ra'iyatihā*), our beautiful project and our generous principles'.<sup>47</sup>

This letter provides a clear picture of the extensive power enjoyed by governors, in contrast to the Caliph's authority. It should be noted that, during this period, the sources did not record any occasion on which a *wālī* or *'āmil* was held accountable or punished,

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<sup>45</sup> See: Ibn Šāhib al-Šalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 311, 324, 370, 372; Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, pp. 77, 87.

<sup>46</sup> Ibn Šāhib al-Šalāt, *al-Mann*, p. 324. This is the second time that a *wālī* was given full powers to manage his province. The first to own this grant was Abd al-Wāhid b. Abī Ḥafṣ, who was appointed by the fourth Caliph, Mohammed Nāṣir, in the province of *Ifrica* in 1198, with full administrative powers. Al-Zarkashī, *Tārīkh al-dawlatayn*, p. 18.

<sup>47</sup> 'Azzāwī, *Rasā'il*, vol. 1, pp. 411–12.

even the dismissal of a governor from his position was probably done at the request or consent of the inhabitants.

### ***Control and Punishment of Governors***

Upon ascending to the throne, the Almohad caliphs sought to strengthen their influence and extend full control over all parts of the empire. The caliphs were thus constantly eager to reduce the power of the governors, on the one hand by monitoring their activities to determine the extent of their loyalty, and, on the other, by examining their ability to manage their provinces, and to detect any irregularities or corruption in which they engaged, or which they did not take decisive action to prevent. In his letter, *Risālat al-‘adl* (Letter of Justice), ‘Abd al-Mu‘min reveals his intentions, and he encourages his *wulāt* to show fairness and responsibility in any matter and not to make decisions on certain issues without being consulted.<sup>48</sup>

The caliphs used different methods to be kept informed of what was happening in the provinces. On several occasions, the caliph summoned one or more governors to his *majlis* (council) in order that they be held accountable for their decisions and actions, and so that they could be punished in cases of misconduct. For example, in 1152 and just before ‘Abd al-Mu‘min launched his campaign toward Ifrīqiya, the ‘*ummāl* of the Seville Province were requested to come to Ceuta and meet the Caliph in order to give him a report about the progress of work in their areas. Likewise, Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt reported, in 1169, that Caliph Yūsuf summoned the governors of al-Andalus to Marrakech, including his brothers, the sayyid Abū Ibrāhīm Ismā‘īl of Seville and the sayyid Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm of Córdoba. According to information provided by the author, the visit was very serious, as it lasted for as long as eight months and was followed by a decision appointing a new government.<sup>49</sup> In other cases, the caliph drew on information about the performance and behaviour of the governor that was based on the people of his province, either by receiving delegations and letters of complaint, or by listening to traders and craftsmen. Al-Marrākushī, for example, highlighted the biography of Caliph al-Manṣūr, and said that:

‘he [the caliph] issued an order which allows ‘*umanā’ al-sūq* [market secretaries] and *Sheikh*-s to meet him twice each month, in order to ask about their markets, their prices, and their rulers. Moreover, when a delegation from a province came to visit him, the first thing that he inquired about was their ‘*ummāl* [employees],

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<sup>48</sup> Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Naẓm al-Jumān*, pp. 150–67; Lévi-Provençal, *Trente-sept lettres officielles almohades*, letter no. 10, pp. 25–30.

<sup>49</sup> See Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 394–96; Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, pp. 45, 138–39.

their *qāḍī*-s and their *wulāt*. So if they praised them, he would say: You must know that you are responsible for this testimony on *Yawm al-Qiyāma* [the Day of Resurrection], thus none of you should say anything except the truth'.<sup>50</sup>

From their early days until the first decade of the thirteenth century, the Almohad sovereigns exercised strict and immediate control over the management of provinces. The governors did not have the right to leave their seat of government.<sup>51</sup> In order to meet the Caliph, they were required to make a written request for permission to travel.<sup>52</sup> For example, the *wālī* of Seville, who is believed to have been the *sayyid* Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. al-Manṣūr, had to make several attempts in this regard by sending three formal requests until Caliph al-Nāṣir finally agreed to meet him.<sup>53</sup> On the other hand, a governor who was inept or corrupt faced a critical reaction from the caliph. The type of offence and the degree of risk determined the type of punishment. Sometimes the Caliph would find it sufficient to remove him and to replace him with a new governor. Abū Bakr b. Wazīr of Beja, for example, was removed and replaced by a new governor after the notables of the city complained about his poor policies and management. In other cases, the Caliph would arrest the governor because of the governor's despotism. Yaḥya b. Yaghmur, Governor of Seville and Córdoba, was thus arrested and brought to Marrakech in 1154, as a result of his tyranny and his mistreatment of the people of his province.<sup>54</sup> The Caliph might resort to the death penalty against a governor if it were proven that he was corrupt, had betrayed his trust, or had plotted to cease his obedience to the Caliph. For example, in 1212 Caliph Nāṣir issued an order to kill the corrupt rulers, Mohammed b. Yaḥya Al-Musūfī of Ceuta and ‘Abd al-Haq b. Abī Dāwūd of Fez, who had taken advantage of the *Amwāl al-makhzan* (money of the financial department).<sup>55</sup>

A passage from *al-Bayān* regarding the *wālī* of Murcia, Abū Ḥafṣ ‘Umar al-Rashid, al-Manṣūr's brother, exemplifies this theme. Ibn ‘Idhārī mentioned the abuses and atrocities of the governor, as well as the latter's claims to power, to the point that the Caliph summoned him to the capital and had him executed in 1189. Among the irregularities committed by the *wālī* were that: he imposed heavy illegal taxes on merchants, and he forced:

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<sup>50</sup> Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu‘jib*, p. 236.

<sup>51</sup> *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, p. 78.

<sup>52</sup> Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, p. 41.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 210.

<sup>54</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh*, vol. 6, pp. 316–17.

<sup>55</sup> Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, pp. 262–63.

‘the *‘ummāl* [treasury officials] to hand over the monies in their coffers [*Būyut al-Amwāl*], he imprisoned the *mushrif* of Murcia, Ibn Raja, and then killed him because he was unable to submit records of all contributions [*taqyīdāt al-Majābī*]; he also assassinated the *kātib*, Ḥakam b. Muḥammad, and threatened the *Ṣāhib al-A‘māl* of Murcia, Ibn Sulaymān, who had to flee to Valencia’.<sup>56</sup>

This event gives us an idea not only of the punishment of corrupt governors, but also of the nature of the administrative-political situation during the reign of al-Manṣūr: an independent tax administration facing the representative of the regional political power.

It should be noted that information on the livelihood of officials in the Almohad state apparatus is extremely rare. It is believed that every governor had a fixed salary. Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm thus complained about lower pay, and he asked the Caliph, in writing, to regularise the situation.<sup>57</sup> We also know that the governors received largesse, in the form of lots [*Sihām*] and silver [*In‘am*], from the sovereign; and they possessed *iqṭā‘āt* (land grants) and land that could be situated hundreds of kilometres from their workplace. In writing, the Caliph asked his governor to take his gift from the *makhzan* of Seville, although this gift was in the district of Regraga.<sup>58</sup> This example is not unique: the *Ifriqiyan* chronicler al-Zarkashī reported several Almohad *Sihām*, the most interesting being the famous governor of Ifriqiya, Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Wahid b. Abī Ḥafṣ, who had *iqṭā‘āt* in al-Andalus in the *Qarya* (village) of Qarba near Córdoba.<sup>59</sup> ‘Azzāwī says that these gifts were reserved for *Sayyid*-s and some influential Almohad *Sheikh*-s.<sup>60</sup>

While it is difficult to draw any definitive conclusions, it is notable that, despite their often extensive powers, which were granted to them as a result of their office and were supported by their status as *Sayyid*-s or *Sheikh*-s, the governors in the reigns of the first three sovereigns had limited room for manoeuvre. The centralisation of the state and the presence of the Caliph's grip obliged the governors to reduce personal initiative and to always refer to the capital. This situation did not last long. Ambitious governors, like Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Wāhid b. Abī Ḥafṣ of Ifriqiya, no longer maintained a link with the central government, apart from informal and ineffective recognition. The Almohad Empire, in the sense of being pervasive and centralised, thus no longer existed, even before the fall of its sovereign authority in the capital city of

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p. 183.

<sup>57</sup> Azzāwī, *Rasā‘il*, vol. 1, p. 198.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, p. 295.

<sup>59</sup> al-Zarkashī, *Tārīkh al-dawlatayn*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, p. 205.

Marrakech. The fourteenth-century historian, Ibn Abī Zar‘, summed up the situation of the Almohad government at the time of Yūsuf al-Mustanşir, the fifth Almohad Caliph:

‘He did not invade in his days nor he was able to do so; his orders were not being followed, and all of the governors have had full control over their city. The Almohad state in his days thus became powerless, struck by decrease, and started the way to disappearing’.<sup>61</sup>

The state of weakness that plagued the ruling power in Marrakech overshadowed the cohesion of the empire, and thus the power and influence of the governors of the provinces increased and their political ambitions were no longer limited to maintaining their position as governors, but rose to controlling the throne. Unfortunately for the Almohads, the fragmentation and divisions in the empire were caused by the Almohads themselves, and the most serious defections against the authority in Marrakech were carried out by the *sayyid-s*, the governors of the provinces, and members of the ruling family. In 1224, the *sayyid* Abū Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. al- Maṣṣūr, Governor of Murcia, did not recognise the authority of the new Caliph, Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Wāḥid, who was killed two months after ascending to the throne.<sup>62</sup> He declared himself caliph, with the title al-‘Ādil. Three years later, the *sayyid* Abū Al-‘Ulā Idrīs b. al-Maṣṣūr, the Governor of Seville, proclaimed himself caliph, with the title al- Ma’mūn, abandoning his obedience to his brother, al-‘Ādil, who was killed by the Almohad *Sheikh-s* after refusing to give up his throne.<sup>63</sup> Finally, in 1230, the *sayyid* Abū Mūsā b. Ya‘qūb al-Maṣṣūr of Ceuta refused to acknowledge the authority of his brother, the Caliph al-Ma’mūn, and declared himself caliph, with the title al-Mu’yyad. When he did not find support from the Almohads, he gave his allegiance to the Andalusian ambition, Ibn Hūd, who stopped obeying the Almohads and managed to gain control of most of their provinces in al-Andalus.<sup>64</sup>

## 2.2 The Vizier

The Vizier was not included in the hierarchy that had originally been developed by Ibn Tūmart. The first appearance of this word is uncertain. Al-Marrākushī was the only chronicler who claimed that Abū Ḥafṣ Aznāj was the first Vizier, and yet his account,

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<sup>61</sup> Ibn Abī Zar‘, *Rawḍ al-Qirṭās*, p. 178.

<sup>62</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, vol. 6, p. 338; Huici Miranda, *Historia política*, Arabic trans, pp. 446-47.

<sup>63</sup> Huici Miranda, *Historia política*, pp. 455-56.

<sup>64</sup> Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, p. 294.

which has been considered dubious, does not accord with historical analysis.<sup>65</sup> Most sources agree that the office was created soon after the Almohads established themselves in Marrakech, and the first to hold the position of Vizier was the Andalusian, Abū Ja‘far Aḥmed Ibn ‘Aṭīyya. He began his career as a *kātib* in the Almoravid government, and, at the fall of Marrakech, he surrendered to the Almohads and participated in the army that ‘Abd al-Mu‘min sent to eliminate the revolt that was launched by al-Massatī in 1148. Sources talk about an impressive message written by Ibn ‘Aṭīyya, who described the battle between the Almohads and the rebels and displayed his proficiency in language and style, to the extent that ‘Abd al-Mu‘min requested his services in the government. Summoned by the Caliph, he began his service as Secretary (*kātib*), and he distinguished himself so much that he was soon given positions of authority and received the title of Vizier.<sup>66</sup> Ibn Khaldūn even argues that Ibn ‘Aṭīyya:

‘... made his authority fill up across the empire; he commanded the army corps; he amassed treasures that he later spread profusely; and has finally reached a high degree of favour with the sultan that has never been reached since’.<sup>67</sup>

This was the beginning of the vizierate in the central capital, Marrakech, and the office continued until the end of the Almohads. As for al-Andalus, information about the presence of a vizier in the government of the provinces is either confusing or insufficient, to the point that one might wonder if this office even existed. The chroniclers were often interested in describing the leaders of the Almohads who took over an important position in provincial governments, for instance, as governor, writer, or judge, but we do not see such an interest in relation to the vizier. On the other hand, it seems that the presence of the Almohad *Sheikh*-s around the provincial governor as advisers and aides, reduced the need to use viziers. The role of the *Sheikh*-s, which was usually the prerogative of the vizier, may thus be the cause of the confusion among sources regarding some Almohad *Sheikh*-s, who were sometimes called *Sheikh*-s and, at others, were presented with the title of viziers. References about the presence of this position in the provinces often refer to individual cases, and on specific occasions, and even these are subject to debate.

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<sup>65</sup> See Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu‘jib*, p. 131; Ibn Abī Zar‘, *Rawḍ al-Qurṭās*, p. 192; Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 45.

<sup>66</sup> See his biography on Ibn al-Abbār, *A‘tāb al-Kitāb*, ed. S. al-Ishtar (Damascus, 1961), pp. 227-29; Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu‘jib*, p. 267; Ibn al-Khaṭīb, *al-Iḥāṭā fī akhbār Gharnāṭa*, vol. 1, pp. 127-134

<sup>67</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh*, vol. 6, p. 275.

The first appearance of the term vizier in the provinces coincided with a massive political reorganisation that was launched by ‘Abd al-Mu’min in 1155. During this event, the caliph placed the *Sayyid*-s at the head of the provincial governments, and he provided them with a government formed from the Almohad political categories. Among the elements of the government there were the *Sheikh*-s, who were selected for their wisdom and political experience. Ibn al-Qaṭṭān is the first author who indicated that those *Sheikh*-s were appointed as viziers to the *sayyid*-s. However, his account cannot be considered reliable if we take into account that he was the only author who referred to the members of the ‘*ashra*’ council as being viziers to Ibn Tūmart. Ibn Khaldūn followed the example of Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, and his statement has been accepted by some researchers to demonstrate the presence of the vizierate office in provincial government, without any supporting evidence from other sources.<sup>68</sup> In contrast, Ibn ‘Idhārī and the author of *al-Ḥulal al-Mūshīyah* listed the names of the *Sheikh*-s who accompanied the governors to the provinces, but without giving them the title of viziers.<sup>69</sup> For both authors, the main purpose behind the appointment of the *Sheikh*-s was to train and assist the *Sayyid*-s in their first leadership positions. We know that the *sayyid*-s had just graduated from the school that ‘Abd al-Mu’min opened in Marrakech for the education and training of leaders. After they were chosen as governors, therefore, it was necessary for them to be accompanied by *Sheikh*-s who had experience and ability, in order to train them and to prepare them to carry out their first challenges. In his account of the appointment of the *sayyid* Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf as governor of Seville, ‘Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī stated that “(‘*Abd al-Mu’min*) left him with *Sheikh*-s who have wisdom and education so he would discuss his ideas with them and rely on them in whatever he intends to do”.<sup>70</sup> The presence of the *Sheikh*-s around the governors as advisers had become a feature of the Almohad government from the time when ‘Abd al-Mu’min set his sons as governors of the provinces. On many occasions, sources refer to them as *kuttāb*, *quḍāt*, *shuyūkh al-qabā’il* (tribal leaders), *udabā’* (literati) and *qādah* (military commanders), but they are never mentioned as viziers.

Another point worth noting is that some *Sheikh*-s, whom Ibn al-Qaṭṭān and Ibn Khaldūn referred to as viziers, disappeared from accounts of events, while others appeared with new missions through direct instructions from the sovereign in

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<sup>68</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, vol. 6, p. 243; S. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd, *Tārīkh al-Maghrib al-‘Arabī*, p. 147; A. Sabbane, *Le gouvernement*, p. 265.

<sup>69</sup> Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 65; of *al-Ḥulal al-Mūshīyah*, p. 198.

<sup>70</sup> al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu‘jib*, p. 195.

Marrakech, shortly after their appointment.<sup>71</sup> For example, the *Sheikh* Yūsuf b. Sulaymān, who was appointed in Fez, appeared in 1161 at the head of a large army sent by Caliph ‘Abd al-Mu’min from Marrakech to support the combined forces in Seville.<sup>72</sup> Was this office a temporary job that ended when its objective was achieved? Let's not forget the statement of Ibn ‘Idhārī and the author of *al-Ḥulal al-Mūshāyyah*, which gives the chosen *Sheikh*-s a specific task: to train the *sayyid*-s.

Further references to the post of vizier, but this time regarding the era of Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf, have been found. Ibn ‘Idhārī pointed out that the Caliph appointed Abū ‘Abd Allāh b. Ibrāhīm as Governor of Seville, and chose Abū Zechariah b. Sinān as his vizier.<sup>73</sup> In contrast, Ibn Sa‘īd al-Maghribī stated that the *sayyid* Abū Sa‘īd ‘Uthmān, Governor of Granada, selected Abī Ja‘far b. ‘Abd al-Malik to be his vizier.<sup>74</sup> There is no apparent rule that can justify why the Caliph appointed a vizier for one governor, while another governor was allowed to choose his own. Perhaps the status of the Caliph allowed him to estimate which were the provinces that required a vizier alongside the governor, while he gave the freedom to some *sayyid*-s of high standing, like Abū Sa‘īd ‘Uthmān, to choose their own viziers. However, based on the information available, we cannot draw any definitive conclusions. Until new sources are discovered, this issue will remain without a clear answer.

These are the only occasions recorded that involved the appointment of viziers in the provinces. Furthermore, more than 176 official letters have been discovered, along with 77 letters of appointment, yet none of them mentions the appointment of a vizier in any of the regional governments. If this office really existed in the reign of ‘Abd al-Mu’min and Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf, we can thus say with confidence that it fell into abeyance under successive Almohad caliphs.

The 16th century historian, al-Maqqarī, said that after the Umayyad state the title of vizier in al-Andalus “*has become a general term for all of the kings' visitors and companions*”.<sup>75</sup> However, this statement does not apply to the dynasty of the Almoravids and their followers, the Almohads. Based on the available sources, this office was not an essential part of the provincial governments following the transfer, by the Berber dynasties, of power to Marrakech. In other words, the presence of the vizier, at least during this period, was confined to the central government, with only a negligible

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<sup>71</sup> See Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, p. 211; Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 68.

<sup>72</sup> Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 73.

<sup>73</sup> Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 155.

<sup>74</sup> Ibn Sa‘īd al-Maghribī, *al-Mughrib fī ḥulā al-Maghrib*, vol.1, p. 115.

<sup>75</sup> al-Maqqarī, *Nafh al-Ṭīb*, vol. 1, p. 442.

presence in the provinces. In contrast, when the cities of al-Andalus had the chance to be independent from the control of Marrakech, their rulers launched this office again. When the Almoravids lost their strength and the cities of al-Andalus became independent, its rulers took viziers. The same happened with the Almohads. After the disintegration of the Almohad Empire, when al-Andalus was out of their control, the rebels declared themselves independent and the vizier's office returned to prominence.

### 2.3 *The Kātib*

The fundamental office in government was that of the *kātib*, not only in terms of the complexity of the tasks entrusted to it, but also because of the number of people who were involved in it. In his *Muqaddima*, Ibn Khaldūn speaks about the transformation of writing to an official job (*hīrfah*):

‘In the Muslim dynasty, the Arabic language situation and (the custom of) expressing what one wants to express in good form intensified the need for the office. Thus, writing came to convey, as a rule, the essence of a matter in better stylistic form than was possible in oral expression... When the language became corrupt and a craft (that had to be learned), (the office) was entrusted to those who knew (Arabic) well’.<sup>76</sup>

With the development of Islamic governments the need for *kuttāb* (writers) increased. Their functions expanded and soon they became part of several governmental institutions, such as the judiciary, the financial system and military affairs. However, in this section, we will shed light on two categories of writers that had close contact with the ruling powers. The first, and the predominant type, was the *kuttāb al-rasā’il*. This class was responsible for drafting official correspondence, editing decrees and letters of appointment, and providing advice to governors or caliphs when needed. Moreover, the Almohad caliphs relied on them in the education and training of the young *sayyid*-s, who were appointed in the provinces and who had no experience of how to govern, as well as the *sayyid*-s who were studying at the school in Marrakech where the *kuttāb* were members of faculty.<sup>77</sup> They were a good tool for spreading the Almohad doctrine and the caliphs’ points of view. In this capacity, the letter *al-‘Adil* of ‘Abd al-Mu’min states:

‘... read it [the letter] to the entire population from the pulpits (manābir). Invite delegations from tribes of the countryside and cities. Make them hear distinctly and loudly.... When you have finished reading it to the masses and you have

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<sup>76</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddima*, English trans, vol. 2, p. 26.

<sup>77</sup> *Al-Hūlal al-Mūshīyah*, p. 151. M. Manūnī, *Ḥaḍārat al-Muwahhīdūn*, pp. 16–20.

enabled every citizen to be informed and to understand the content, make copies of it for the benefit of every tribe and town in your province'.<sup>78</sup>

The second class of *kuttāb*, which seems to have been formed officially during the era of Caliph Yūsuf b. 'Abd al-Mu'min, was the *kuttāb al-jund*.<sup>79</sup> Nothing much can be said with certainty about the duties of those *kuttāb*. Basically, they were responsible for *dīwān al-jund* (the military registry). In al-Māwardī's view, the task of this *dīwān* was to register military personnel and determine their salaries.<sup>80</sup> This office was interested only in those who joined the regular army, which was formed mostly from the Almohad tribes, who settled in the Iberian provinces, in addition to the most reliable Andalusian soldiers.<sup>81</sup> However, sources mention another *dīwān* that had a branch in al-Andalus, which seems to have been administered by the *kātib al-askar* of Seville, and concerned the regular soldiers and tribes who were recruited into the army in times of war and at the start of campaigns.<sup>82</sup> The duty of this *dīwān*, called the *dīwān al-tamyīz* (discrimination registry), was to record the names of those recruits who would be given grants for their participation.<sup>83</sup> It was also responsible for providing the army with the necessary weapons and ammunition, along with organising fighters in units on the basis of their tribes and social status, in preparation for campaigns.<sup>84</sup>

The *sayyid*-s had no role in this office and, unlike previous offices, the post of the *kātib* was almost exclusively the preserve of Andalusī notables.<sup>85</sup> The leadership of al-Andalus in this field, which was a product of the cultural prosperity of the Taifa period, lasted until the end of Islamic rule. Ibn Sa'īd al-Maghribī was therefore surprised when one of the Nasrid Sultans of Granada appointed a Moroccan *kātib* as his secretary.<sup>86</sup> In fact, the transition of political power to the rulers of al-Maghrib during the period of Berber dynasties gave the Andalusī *kuttāb* more space and new opportunities to increase their leadership in this office. For example, al-Marrākushī described the *kuttāb* in the era of the Almoravid Yūsuf Ibn Tāshfīn, and his successors: "he (*the Sulṭān*) and his

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<sup>78</sup> 'Azzāwī, *Rasā'il*, p. 69.

<sup>79</sup> Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu'jib*, p. 204. The sources give different names to *kātib* of this class, but all have the same meaning, such as *Kātib 'Askar*, *kātib al-Jaysh*. See Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, p. 254; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-A'shā fī ṣinā'at al-inshā* (Beirut, 1989), p. 33.

<sup>80</sup> Al-Māwardī, *al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyya wa-l-Wilāyāt al-Dīniyya*, ed. A. M. Baghdādī (Mansoura, 1989), pp. 266–67; Kallās, 'al-Jaysh 'inda al-Muwaḥḥidīn', p. 201.

<sup>81</sup> See: Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 121, 141, 148; S. Z. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, *Tārīkh al-Maghrib al-'Arabī, al-Manṣūr al-mūaḥḥidī*, vol. 5 (Alexandria, 2005), p. 129.

<sup>82</sup> Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 199, 347; Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, p. 218; A. 'Azzāwī, *Rasā'il*, pp. 91, 327, 372.

<sup>83</sup> Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 347–48.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, pp. 199, 348, 360; Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, p. 218.

<sup>85</sup> See 'Azzāwī, *Rasā'il*, pp. 18–36; M. Bencherifa, *Ibn 'Abd Rabbih al-Ḥafīd: fuṣūl min sīra mansiyya* (Beirut, 1992), pp. 19–24.

<sup>86</sup> Ibn Sa'īd, *al-Mughrib fī ḥulā al-Maghrib*, vol. 2, p. 215.

sons gathered around them from the *kuttāb* and the knights of rhetoric who have never been gathered to others in any ages”.<sup>87</sup>

Acquiring a position in the government as an official *kātib* was not easy. The *kātib* required highly specific qualities and levels of skill, such as a vast literary education, perfect knowledge of the Koran and the hadith (the traditions of the Prophet), very good calligraphy, good moral qualities and a good physical appearance.<sup>88</sup> Such *katib* was the traveler, author and poet Ibn Jubayr, who was a *katib* in Ceuta and Granada for the *sayyid* Abū Sa‘īd ‘Uthmān, governor of Granada, before he left on his journey which he wrote about in his well-known book, "The Travels of Ibn Jubayr".<sup>89</sup> In addition to these skills, the sovereign was very careful when choosing a *kātib*. The candidate was subject to a comprehensive test to check his loyalty, his talents, and his belief in the teachings of the Mahdī.<sup>90</sup> It is worth mentioning that some *kuttāb* had graduated from the schools that the Almohads established in al-Maghrib in order to produce leaders, scholars and *faqīhs*. The Moroccan author, Muḥammad Bencherifa, believes that the *kuttāb* Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, as well as the famous Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, studied there.<sup>91</sup>

At the time, the number of *kuttāb* in al-Andalus was very high, and biographical dictionaries are replete with the names of *kuttāb* and their literary and work activities. For the government and political authorities, this gave them a wide range of choice. Unfortunately for the *kuttāb*, it created strong competition and getting this job became an extremely difficult task. Perhaps the presence of such a large number of *kuttāb* explains the lack of indulgence by some *wulāt* to their *kuttāb*, who were dismissed, or even put to death, for lapses or simple mistakes. For example, the *sayyid* Othman b. ‘Abd al-Mu‘min, the *wālī* of Granada, killed his *kātib*, Abī Ja‘far b. Sa‘īd, during the era of ‘Abd al-Mu‘min, because he discovered that both were in love with the same woman.<sup>92</sup> The same *sayyid* killed ‘Abd al-Ghanī b. Ṭāhir by poison when he found a message sent from ‘Abd al-Ghanī to *sayyid* Ḥafṣ b. ‘Abd al-Mu‘min was expressing the desire to work with him again.<sup>93</sup> Sometimes the *kātib* was punished because of the actions of his *wālī*. Ibn Sa‘īd al-Maghribī described the suffering experienced by

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<sup>87</sup> Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu‘jib*, pp. 144, 151.

<sup>88</sup> Ibn Sālām al-Ishbīlī, *Al-dhakhā‘ir wa al-A‘lāq fī ‘Ādāb al-nufūs wa Makārim al-akhlāq*, ed. I D. Thāmirī, (Beirut, 2011), p. 334; Ibn ‘Abd al-Malik, *al-Dhayl wa-l-takmila*, vol. 8, p. 260.

<sup>89</sup> Ibn Jubayr, *Rihlat Ibn Jubayr*, English trans and ed. J.C Broadhurst as (London, 2005).

<sup>90</sup> Al-Ghibrīnī, *Unwān al-dirāyah*, pp. 53–54, M. Bencherifa, *Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih al-Ḥafīd*, p. 12.

<sup>91</sup> M. Bencherifa, *Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih al-Ḥafīd*, pp. 14–15.

<sup>92</sup> Ibn Sa‘īd, *al-Mughrib*, vol. 2, p. 138.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, p. 225.

Muḥammad Abū ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Ayyash, a *kātib* for the *wālī* of Murcia, who fled out of fear after the Caliph al-Manṣūr killed his *wālī* and threatened to punish his companions, including Muḥammad.<sup>94</sup>

The risks of the job did not prevent the *kātib* from seeking the position and taking advantage of any opportunity to display their skills and talents so that a governor might offer work. Some *kuttāb* managed to work for several governors.<sup>95</sup> For example, the Andalusian ‘Abd al-Malik b. ‘Ayyāsh, first worked for Abī Ishāq b. Burāz, Governor of Seville, then for the sayyid Abī Ḥafṣ of Tlemcen, then for the *sayyid* Abī Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Mu‘min, and, finally, he returned to Seville to work for the sayyid Yūsuf b. ‘Abd al-Mu‘min.<sup>96</sup> However, if someone were dismissed, he would be upset and seek help to return, or to obtain the same position in another place and for another governor.<sup>97</sup>

### 3. *Al-barīd* (Postal Service)

There is a real lack of information about the postal service, and so far only one text on this topic, which was written at the beginning of the empire, is known to have been preserved. It provides a very brief description of the status of the postal system and the government's efforts to develop it. The text is found in a circular letter (*Risālat al-‘Ādil*) of ‘Abd al-Mu‘min, which was written in 1148.<sup>98</sup> The caliph painted a bleak picture of the situation of the *barīd*, which deals with the two separate units of the Almohad state, the Maghrib and al-Andalus. The *Raqqāṣ-s*<sup>99</sup> (postmen) were also under the oversight of the caliph.

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid, p. 82. Further examples: the caliph al-Ma‘mūn killed his *kātib* Abī ‘Alī b. Yabqa al-Māliqī; the caliph al-Rashīd killed the *kātib* Ibn al-Mu‘mnānī; the caliph al-Murtaḍā’s directive to kill the *kātib* Abī Ja‘far: M. Bencherifa, *Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih al-Ḥafīd*, p. 17, note. 3.

<sup>95</sup> See Ibn Sa‘īd, *Ikhtisār al-Qadh*, p. 124; Ibn ‘Abd al-Malik, *al-Dhayl wa-l-takmila*, vol. 5, pp. 107, 607; Ibn al-Zubayr, *Ṣilat al-Ṣila*, p. 26.

<sup>96</sup> Ibn ‘Abd al-Malik, *al-Dhayl wa-l-takmila*, vol. 5, p. 27.

<sup>97</sup> M. Bencherifa, *Abū al-Muḥarrif Aḥmad b. ‘Amīrah al-Makhzūmī: ḥayātuhu wa-āthāruh* (Rabat, 1966), pp. 123–24.

<sup>98</sup> Ibn al-Qatṭān, *Naẓm al-Jumān*, p. 162–63.

<sup>99</sup> While the couriers were called *raqqāṣ* in the Maghreb and al-Andalus, he had several names in the East, such as *fayj*, *rasfūl*, and *sā‘ī*. J. Gruiguer, ‘Une organization du vieux Maroc, les Raqqas’, in *La tribune du vieux Maroc* (1948), pp. 5–9. For an extensive description of *barīd* in the Omayyad and Abbasid periods see: Adam Mez, *Die Renaissance des Islams*, English trans, S. Khuda and D. S. Margoliouth (Patna, 1937) pp. 501–505; S. D. Goitein, ‘The Commercial Mail Service in Medieval Islam’, in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 84, No. 2 (Apr – Jun., 1964), pp. 118–123; Y. Ragheb, ‘La transmission des nouvelles en terre d’Islam. Les modes de transmission’, in *Actes des congrès de la Société des historiens médiévistes de l’enseignement supérieur public*, Vol. 24, No. 24 (1993), pp. 37–48.

Caliph ‘Abd al-Mu’min denounced the poor organisation and management of the postal service and, above all, the *raqqās*’ misconduct. The text states that the postmen forced people to provide them with better food, as well as with feed for their horses, which suggests three possibilities: either they were not paid for their services, their grants were not sufficient for travel expenses, or they simply abused their prerogatives. It seems that they were moving too slowly and in groups, and that they were taking long breaks during their travel, which caused mail and news to arrive late. After outlining the disadvantages of the mail service, ‘Abd al-Mu’min suggested the steps for reform that the governments of al-Andalus had to follow, which can be summarised in four basic rules.

First, the government must improve the postal service by choosing new postmen who are honest, trusted, and have the ability to perform their jobs efficiently. Certainly there are other attributes that postman must possess. He should have a high level of fitness, enabling him to travel long distances, sometimes without breaks. The job requires particular skills, such as running and horseback riding.<sup>100</sup> Sometimes, postmen were described as knights, which raises the possibility that the postmen, or at least a branch of them, were formed from military elements – especially those who were entrusted with the transfer of governmental correspondence and military news from the battlefield.<sup>101</sup> The Almohads engaged in many wars in different places, and mail was sent to and from the battle camps continuously.<sup>102</sup> The Almohad sources do not have anything more to say on this point. However, the fourteenth-century historian and geographer, al-‘Umarī, claimed that the Hafsids, the successors of the Almohads (or, as someone might say, the Almohads' new version), used guards and slaves as mail couriers.<sup>103</sup>

Second, the government was requested to provide sufficient food and other supplies to the postman for his travel. The postman might take more than a month for his journey, and carrying enough food for such a long journey was illogical and would hinder the *raqqās*’ movement. The most logical solutions were either that the postman be given enough money for his travel expenses, or that food be offered to them at every town and village between the starting point and the final destination.

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<sup>100</sup> Abd al-Hādī al-Tāzī, ed. *al-Mann bi-l-Imāma* by Ibn Šāhib al- Šalāt, p. 77; Ḥasan Alī, *al-ḥaḍārah al-Islāmīyah fī al-Maghreb wa al-Andalus* (Cairo, 1980), p. 150.

<sup>101</sup> Ibn Šāhib al-Šalāt, *al-Mann*, p. 201.

<sup>102</sup> See: Ibn Šāhib al- Šalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 77, 130, 200; Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, pp. 43, 65, 310.

<sup>103</sup> Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Qādir, vol.4 (Al Ain, 2001), p.101; al-Qalqashandī, *Šubḥ al-A’sha*, p. 143.

The third point in 'Abd al-Mu'min's postal reform was to reorganise the mail service by setting a timetable stipulating the time required to deliver mail according to the length of the distance between cities. This required the provision of postmen and relay stations where riding animals – mules, horses, or camels – were changed frequently in order to ensure that mail arrived quickly and without interruption. We have noted that, occasionally, the *barīd* arrived faster or slower although following the same journey. The Moroccan scholar, 'Abd al-Hādī al-Tāzī, has indicated that there was a regular courier, who moved too slowly, and *raqqāṣ al-Sharṭ*, an express courier, who was faster and would travel day and night without rest until he reached the desired destination.

The fourth and final point in the Caliph's plan to improve the service was to observe the behaviour of the postmen, punishing those who behaved rudely with people, or forcing them to provide hospitality.

### ***Conclusion***

The Almohads built their provincial government on the basis of the political administrative systems of previous states. Their originality lies in the strategy followed by the Almohads in the operation of these institutions. The choice of governor was limited to the classes of the *Sayyid*-s and the high-ranking *Sheikh*-s, which prevented taking into account the competence and experience of those who were suitable for major leadership positions. The state lost the opportunity to benefit from the previous experience of the Andalusian leaders. The *ḥuffāz*, who were groomed to take over management positions, and on whom the state relied in the management of cities, disappeared following the second quarter of the thirteenth century. The Andalusians were excluded from the post of governor, while those whose loyalty was tested were absorbed as *kuttāb* to governors and *sayyid*-s, as well as financial managers. 'Izz al-Dīn Mūsā believes that the appointment of the *sayyid*-s as the *wālīs* had a positive effect on the growth of the empire and its increased cohesion, but they became a cause of weakness and conflict at the stage of collapse. It could be argued that limiting the position to one class was a fruitless policy from the outset, but the presence of powerful caliphs prevented its negative impacts from being apparent at the beginning. However, when weak successors took power and lost control of their provinces, ambitious governors took advantage of the opportunity and showed their desire to become *de facto* independent from the central authorities.

### 3

## The Financial Administrative System

The financial administrative system formed the mainstay of the Almohad regional government. It organised the financial relationship between the citizen and the state and identified the sources of income and the objects of expenditure. The government also relied on its financial organisation in the formulation of its various strategic policies, regarding whether projects of development or security operations, such as the preparation of the military campaigns which the Almohads consistently launched in the Maghrib and al-Andalus. In his *Muqaddima*, Ibn Khaldūn describes the financial institution, which he called *Dīwān al-A'māl wā al-Jibāyāt Office of Business and Levies* (The Ministry of Financial Operations and Taxation):

‘This ministry is an office that is necessary to the royal authority. It is concerned with tax operations. It guards the rights of the dynasty in the matters of income and expenditures. It takes a census of the names of all soldiers, fixes their salaries, and pays out their allowances at the proper times. In this connection, recourse is had to rules set up by the chiefs of such operations and the stewards of the dynasty. They are all written down in a book which gives all the details concerning income and expenditures. It is based upon a good deal of accounting, which is mastered only by those who have considerable skill in such operations. The book is called the *diwan*. At the same time, the word *dīwān* designates the place where the officials who are concerned with these matters have their offices’.<sup>1</sup>

However, the sources briefly speak about the financial system and provide vague terms to name the staff in this sector, such as *ṣāhib al-a'māl*, *ṣāhib al-ashghāl*, *nādir fī al-Majbā*, *ṣāhib al-Makhzan*, *al-Mushrif*, etc., without either an explanation or determining what their specialisations were, or their actions. In addition, some sources give us information that is incorrect and has no support from other sources. For example, Ibn Abī Zar' claimed that Caliph Yūsuf put Ibn Ṣāqr in charge of *al-khazā'in wa Bayt al-māl* (the government treasury), although the remaining sources agree that he was only responsible for the *Khazā'in al-Kutub* (the Library of the Caliph).<sup>2</sup> Likewise, Ibn al-Maqqarī was the only one who claimed that the chief financial officer in al-Andalus was

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<sup>1</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddima*, English trans, vol. 2, pp. 19-20.

<sup>2</sup> Ibn Abī Zar', *Rawḍ al-Qirtās*, p. 136; Ibn al-Khaṭīb, *al-Iḥātā fī akhbār Gharnāṭa*, vol. 1, p. 69; Ibn Farḥūn, *al-Dībāj al-mudhahhab fī ma'rifat a'yān 'ulamā' al-madhhab*, ed. Muḥammad A. Abū al-Nūr, 2 vols (Cairo, 1972), vol 1, p. 213.

called *ṣāhib al-ashghāl al-khirājiyya*.<sup>3</sup> In fact, all the evidence indicates that this title was originated by the Almohads and had always been called *ṣāhib al-ʿmāl*, or *Ṣāhib al-Ashghāl al-Makhzaniyya*, when sitting at the head of the financial organisation in the provinces.

In this chapter we will shed light on the financial administrative system, examining its structures and their functions. Then we will discuss the sources of income and the aspects of exchange, and we will conclude by addressing the *ʿUmlah* (currency) and its development.

## 1. Finance Officers

### 1.1 *Ṣāhib Ashghāl al-Barrayn*

This official can be considered the main manager of the financial institution in the Maghrib and al-Andalus. His office was located in the capital city of Marrakech, next to the Almohad Caliph, who alone had the right of appointment, dismissal or is able to hold this official accountable.<sup>4</sup> None of the four main sources for early Almohad history (al-Baydhaq, al-Mann, Naẓm al-Jumān, al-Muʿjib, and even the *Kitāb al-Ansāb*) speak of a *ṣāhib al-ashghāl*. It was not until 1196-1197 that this term made its first appearance in Ibn ʿIdhārī's account of the investiture of Ibn Yujjān at the head of the vizierate and the *Ashghāl al-Barrayn* ([financial] operations of the Maghrib and al-Andalus).<sup>5</sup>

Impressed by the efficiency and extreme honesty of his vizier, Caliph al-Manṣūr recommended that his successors keep Ibn Yujjān in his position.<sup>6</sup> This wish was fulfilled only for a time, because under the next Caliph, al-Nāṣir, we meet a vizier separately, Abū Saʿīd Ibn Jāmiʿ, and a finance officer, Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Azīz b. ʿUmar b. Abī Yazd al-Hantātī. The latter is designated either by the title *Ṣāhib Ashghāl al-ʿAdwatayn*, or by the title *Ishrāf al-Barrayn*.<sup>7</sup> Based on the information of Ibn ʿIdhārī, we believe that this officer was replaced by the famous Ibn al-Muthanna, who was designated with the simple title *Ṣāhib al-Ashghāl*.<sup>8</sup>

The sources have nothing to say about the office under the four caliphs who followed, until Ibn ʿIdhārī surprises us, for the first time, with a list of *ṣāhib al-ashghāl*-

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<sup>3</sup> Al-Maqqarī, *Nafh al-Tīb*, vol. 1, p. 217.

<sup>4</sup> The only exception was Ibn Waīn al-Khaīr, *ṣāhib al-ashghāl* during the reign of al-Rashīd, who was appointed by the order of the *Vizier*, Abū Zakarīya b. al-Ghamr. Ibn ʿIdhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 304.

<sup>5</sup> Ibn ʿIdhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 225.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 232.

<sup>7</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, vol. 6, p. 334; Ibn ʿIdhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 251.

<sup>8</sup> Ibn ʿIdhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 259.

s who were assigned during the era of al-Rashīd.<sup>9</sup> There is no definite explanation for the sudden interest of the author. Nevertheless, Dandash suggested the possibility that this might be a sign of the growing stature of the official in the central government from the time of al-Mustanşir, and their great responsibilities, which exceeded financial matters.<sup>10</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, followed by al-Zarkashī, mentioned the power of the *Şāhib al-Ashghāl* and their relations with the viziers. The vizier, Ibn Jāmi‘, and the *şāhib al-ashghāl*, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Abī Zaīd, began negotiations with the famous governor of Ifrīqiya, Abī Muḥammad b. Abī Ḥafş, to recognise the sovereignty of the young Caliph al-Mustanşir.<sup>11</sup>

Without exaggeration, and despite the late appearance of this office, it is believed that the holder had a lot of respect among his partners in the Almohad administration. Indeed, only Almohad *Sheikh*-s had access to this position, which was exercised by one man at a time.<sup>12</sup> They were chosen carefully by the Caliphs and, unlike other positions, the sources did not record any case in which they were arrested or were under suspicion for corruption.

As previously mentioned, the *şāhib al-ashghāl* was the head of the financial organisation and therefore all financial offices in the provinces were subject to his authority. He was also responsible for the corrupt members of the government, including the governors, and had the power to punish or dismiss them if they were found guilty. It is also through his advice that the Caliph brought order into the financial administration. Ibn Khaldūn summarises these trends by saying: ‘*He had complete charge of income and expenditures. He audited the finances, collected payments, and punished defaulters. One condition was that he be an Almohad*’.<sup>13</sup>

## 1.2 *Şāhib al-A‘māl* or *Şāhib al-Ashghāl al-makhzaniyya*

*Şāhib al-A‘māl* is typically a provincial position, and its presence is confirmed in almost all Almohad regions. The office represents the highest level of the Almohad financial apparatus in the province. The sources employ a number of terms that are used in

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 299. This list is not complete. A further *Şāhib al-Ashghāl*, Abū ‘Abd Allāh b. Abī Zayd b. Alī b. Yūsuf al-Tīnmālī, surfaced in Marrakech shortly before the preparation for the conquest of Gharb al-Maghreb. Ibid, p. 335.

<sup>10</sup> Dandash, *al-Andalus fī nihāyat al-Murabiṭīn*, p. 141.

<sup>11</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, vol. 6, p. 337; Al-Zarkashī, *Tārīkh al-dawlatayn*, p. 19.

<sup>12</sup> Mūsā, *Tanzīmāt al-Muwahḥidīn*, p. 198.

<sup>13</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, vol. 1, p. 300. According to al-Ghubrīnī’s description, which cannot be dated, *şāhib al-ashghāl* was also commissioned by the Caliph to pay the salaries of *imams* in mosques (here the salary of the *Imam* was six *dinars* and two *Mudds* (measures) of wheat). Al-Ghubrīnī, *Unwān al-dirāyah*, p. 325.

reference to the office, such as *al-Ashghāl al-makhzaniyya*, *A 'māl al-Makhzan*, or *al-Ashghāl al-khirājīyya*. These terms have almost the same meaning, which can be translated as the fiscal administration or the treasury, and the fact that such terms are used probably related to the context and the author's own expression. Likewise, the sources offer more than one title for the employee who is in charge of this office, such as *'āmil*, *ṣāhib* and *nādir*. However, the classic title *'āmil* was the term that was most frequently cited in our documents, especially in the Almohad *taqdīm*-s, which were first published by 'Azzawī.<sup>14</sup>

As previously stated, the fiscal administration in the provinces was often separate from the authority of the governors and was tied directly to the central financial administration in Marrakech. In each province, therefore, there was a *wālī* and an *'āmil*. The functions of the *ṣāhib al-a 'māl* seem to be very similar to those of the *ṣāhib ashghāl al-Barrayn*, and thus if the latter was responsible for the financial management of the Empire and was the link between Marrakech and provinces, the *ṣāhib al-a 'māl* was the one who ran the financial institution in the province and its districts. He was in charge of: *'levy, collecting, and handling money; to controlling the activities of officials and agents in this connection, and then to make disbursements for the proper amounts and at the proper times'*.<sup>15</sup> The *'āmil* was also being asked to prepare military expeditions and occasionally to supervise the Caliph's properties in the province.<sup>16</sup> Sometimes he was used to supervise public building projects, such as bridges, roads and palaces.<sup>17</sup>

Like other important Almohad offices, the appointment of the *'āmil* was a prerogative of the Caliphs only. The sources do not throw a clear light on the office at the beginning of the Almohad dynasty. Yet, in his study on the Almohad political organisation, Mūsā claims that the Almohads relied on the financial officers of previous governments for the management of the provinces.<sup>18</sup> However, with the growth of the Almohads, the office became exclusive to the Almohad *Sheikh*-s.<sup>19</sup> Ibn Khaldūn raised the possibility that occasionally, and in some places, the office was held by persons who were not Almohads, although there is no evidence to support his statement.<sup>20</sup> In fact, the newly discovered Almohad letters prove that the Caliphs committed to the policy of

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<sup>14</sup> See the *taqdīm* in 'Azzawī, *Rasā'il*, pp. 409-78; Buresi, *Governing the Empire*, pp. 245-405.

<sup>15</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddima*, English trans, vol. 2, p. 24.

<sup>16</sup> Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 31.

<sup>17</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣālat, *al-man*, pp. 240, 253.

<sup>18</sup> Mūsā, *Tanzīmāt al-Muwahhidīn*, p. 200.

<sup>19</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣālat, *al-man*, p. 396.

<sup>20</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, vol. 1, p. 304.

choosing the *ṣāhib al-a‘māl* from the Almohads, even in the later periods, when weakness and fragmentation began to creep into the pillars of the empire.<sup>21</sup> The first reference to the office in al-Andalus was in 1145, and Abū Ishāq b. Burāz al-Musufī seems to be the first of the Almohad *Sheikh*-s to have held the position, immediately after the Almohads’ occupation of Seville.<sup>22</sup> Abū Ishāq showed the capabilities and managerial skills that were appreciated by Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt and, most likely, by ‘Abd al-Mu’min as well. When the Caliph decided to transfer the capital of al-Andalus from Seville to Córdoba, Abū Ishāq was instructed to manage the transfer of the administration and then led the financial office until his death in 1163/4.<sup>23</sup>

Being chosen for the position of *ṣāhib al-A‘māl* was both a big ambition and a great opportunity to gain high political and social status. Al-Maqqarī, describing the status of the *ṣāhib al-A‘māl* in al-Andalus, said that he was ‘*greater than Wazīr, and has more followers and companions; more beneficial; to whom necks are tended and palms are opening*’.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, the job carried great responsibilities, and the ‘*ummāl* were subject to careful monitoring and examination to assess their performances and integrity. Those who were proven guilty of corruption or negligence were faced with heavy penalties, ranging from a fine to imprisonment or death. Caliph al-Manṣūr, for example, set up a commission in order to investigate the ‘*āmil* Dāwūd b. Abī Dāwūd on corruption charges. The interrogation continued for as long as six months and, in the end, Dāwūd was suspended from his office and fined an estimated 150,000 dinars.<sup>25</sup>

### 1.3 *Al- mushrif* (plural. *mushrifīn*)

The *khutṭa* of *al-Ishrāf* had been known in al-Andalus since the Umayyads, and was present in the Almohad financial administration from the reign of Caliph ‘Abd al-Mu’min.<sup>26</sup> Unlike the *Ṣāhib al-Ashghāl*, the *mushrifīn* existed in fairly large numbers in all regions of the Almohad state. They survived even after the demise of the Almohad Empire. Their relatively large number can be explained by a sort of common internal hierarchy in their category and, above all, by their essential role in the management of the treasury and tax.

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<sup>21</sup> See ‘Azzawī, *Rasā’il*, pp. 409-78; Buresi, *Governing the Empire*, pp. 245-405.

<sup>22</sup> Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 36.

<sup>23</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-man*, pp. 138-39.

<sup>24</sup> Al-Maqqarī, *Naḥḥ al-Ṭīb*, vol. 1, p. 217.

<sup>25</sup> Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, pp. 224-25.

<sup>26</sup> See Hopkins, *Medieval Muslim Government*, pp. 51-52.

Based on a single passing reference by the thirteenth-century writer and poet Abī Baḥr Ṣaffwān b. Idrīs, Abdellatif Sabbane believes that *mushrifīn* had a leader who was responsible for them and who was called the *Mushrif al-Mushrifīn*, and his headquarters was located in the capital city, Marrakech, and was called *Dār al-Ishrāf*.<sup>27</sup> However, the claim that the *mushrif*s had separate department that was managed by a *Mushrif al-mushrifīn* in Marrakech is illogical and not consistent with the hierarchy of the financial institution, because it would eliminate the role of the *‘āmil al-ashghāl*, who is recognised by several Almohad sources as the head of the pyramid in the provincial financial organisation, as well as being the direct supervisor of its staff. Moreover, Sabbane failed to notice that the title *mushrif al-mushrifīn* was used once again, by the same Ibn Idrīs, to refer to Abū Rejāl b. Ghalbūn, who seems to have served as a *mushrif* of Murcia during the reign of Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf, and who died in 1193.<sup>28</sup> This certainly refutes Sabbane's opinion but, at the same time, it raises another possibility, that the term *mushrif al-mushrifīn* could be used to denote the head of the *mushrifīn* at the provincial level, and not of the empire as a whole. In his description of the transfer of the administration from Seville to the new capital of Córdoba, Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt said that the *mushrifīn* and the *kuttāb* of Seville and its districts were summoned to come to Córdoba.<sup>29</sup> It has previously stated that in each city there was a local administration that had almost the same structures that the capital of the province had and, thus, it is most likely that the *mushrif* was a member of the local government, while the main *mushrif*, or, as Idrīs called him, the *mushrif al-mushrifīn*, was in the central administration in the provincial capital. As for the *Dār al-Ishrāf*, Marrakech was not the only city that possessed a headquarters. These appeared in four other cities, namely, Seville, Murcia, Fez and Tlemcen, and it is most likely that each province had one in its main city.<sup>30</sup> The headquarters itself seems to have been used as a centre for assembling financial data that related to the revenues and expenses of the province, as well as being the place where the *mushrif* and his staff were based.

It is very difficult to pinpoint what exactly the role of the *mushrif* was. In his *L'histoire et la littérature de l'Espagne*, Professor R. Dozy claims that the role of the *mushrif* in al-Andalus was limited to controlling trade on the border and to collecting

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<sup>27</sup> Ṣaffwān b. Idrīs, *Zād al-musāfir wa-ghurrat muḥayya al-adab al-sāfir*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir Maḥdād (Birut, 1939), p. 72; A. Sabbane, *Le gouvernement et l'administration de la dynastie almohade (XIIe-XIIIe siècles)*. PhD dissertation, Pantheon-Sorbonne University (2004), p. 282.

<sup>28</sup> Ṣaffwān b. Idrīs, *Zād al-musāfir*, p. 30.

<sup>29</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 138-39.

<sup>30</sup> Ibn ‘Idharī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, pp. 134, 300; Ibn al-Khaṭīb, *al-Iḥātā fī akhbār Gharnāṭa*, vol. 2, p. 300; Ibn ‘Abd al-Malik, *al-Dhayl wa-l-takmila*, vol. 5, p. 264.

taxes on imported goods.<sup>31</sup> However, during the era of the Almohads, the duty of the *mushrif* seems to have been expanded to include the collection of *kharāj* (land tax), *Zakāt* (alms) and public taxes. For example, during the process of the reconstruction of Córdoba, in 1165, *mushrifīn* were assigned to oversee the process of collecting *Zakāt* and other legal taxes (*al-Farā'id al-Mafrūda*).<sup>32</sup> Likewise, Ibn 'Idhārī stated that the land tax, as well as the market tax of Beja, was handed over to the *Dār al-Ishrāf* of Seville.<sup>33</sup>

The position was a great opportunity for those who aspired to improve their professional career and also their social status. Yet, it carried a lot of responsibilities and ethical challenges. Through study of the Almohad sources and the records of the chroniclers, we have realised that most of the characters who were charged with administrative and financial corruption in the Almohad governments were from the category of *mushrifīn*. The punishment for corrupt *mushrif* was strict and had multiple forms. Sometimes, the punishment was not only confined to the *mushrif*, but affected his staff as well. For example, during the process of investigation which was led by Caliph Yūsuf I against corrupt administration officials in September, 1201, this resulted in the punishment of 18 employees, including the *mushrif* of Fez, 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Yaḥiya, and his staff, Al-Dhabbī and al-Ṭarḥūqī.<sup>34</sup> The Almohad Caliphs were keen to stiffen penalties against corrupt members of the government so as to send a clear warning message to those who might consider doing the same. In some cases, the penalty was greatly exaggerated. Ibn 'Idhārī described the punishment of Muḥammad b. Isa, the *mushrif* of Seville, who was found guilty of financial corruption in January 1176.

'His money and his estates were confiscated and then he received a severe punishment. The pain was so great that he tried to kill himself using a knife, but he failed. They continued to torture and beat him until he died, then he was wrapped in a mat connected in the middle with rope and threw him in the wādī of Seville [Guadalquivir]... so this became a lesson for people of understanding, we seek refuge with Allāh from the bad consequences'.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> R. Dozy, *Recherches sur l'histoire et la littérature de l'Espagne pendant le moyen age*, (Paris, 1881), pp. 380-81.

<sup>32</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 138-39.

<sup>33</sup> Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, p. 134. Also, Ibn 'Idhārī stated that in October, 1173, Ibn Muthanna, the *mushrif* of Tunis and Kairouan, arrived in Marrakesh with the *kharāj* money of both cities: *al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, p. 130.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, p. 158.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, p. 135.

#### 1.4 *Kuttāb al-Makhzan (The Secretaries of Finance)*

The relative abundance of information that we have about the Secretaries of the Almohad Chancery (*Kuttāb al-Inshā'*), contrasts with the paucity of data available on the Secretaries of Finance. Obviously, ignoring the latter is not due to the scarcity of their presence in the Almohad governments. In fact, some researchers have estimated the number of the *kuttāb* from this category to be very high, compared to other employees.<sup>36</sup> The expansion of the empire; the increase in the number of its provinces; and the wide diversity of income sources and overall expenditure, all increased the need to recruit large numbers of *kuttāb* who possessed the required knowledge in different financial departments, or *dwāwīn* (single. *Dīwān*). However, with the absence of information on the financial institution, only two types of *kuttāb* can be identified: *kuttāb* of military affairs, and *kuttāb* of public finances.

We mentioned earlier that the financial affairs of the military were managed via two organs: *dīwān al-Jund* and *dīwān al-Tamyīz*, and the *kuttāb* of these organs were assigned to record military personnel, both regular and irregular army, and to determine the grants that were given to them.

The second type of *kuttāb*, about which the information is too little, belonged to those who worked in public financial institutions. They appeared in the sources only three times, but with different duties. The first appearance was during the process of the construction of the settlement, including the castle, which was established by 'Abd al-Mu'min in Gibraltar in 1160. The *kuttāb* were responsible for the preparation of financial records and for providing the necessary expenditure for construction work.<sup>37</sup> Their second appearance was during the transfer of the capital to Córdoba in October, 1162. During this event, the *kuttāb*, who were brought from Seville, were assigned to restrict the *amwāl al-makhzan* (money from the city treasury) of Córdoba and its territories, including the areas that were recovered by Ibn Mardanih. They also were entrusted with the task of collecting the *Zakāt* (alms) and taxes. Our chronicler, Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, was an eyewitness to this event and most likely belonged to this type of *kuttāb*, because he was one of the *kuttāb* who were chosen to move to Córdoba, but he apologised, preferring to remain in Seville.<sup>38</sup> For Ibn Khaldūn, all these tasks fall within the duties of the *dīwān al-a'māl wa-l-Jibāyāt* (financial operations and taxation) which

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<sup>36</sup> M b. Shirīfā, *Ibn 'Abd Rabbā*, p. 35; S. Z. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, *Tārīkh al-Maghreb al-'Arabī*, vol. 7 (Alexandria, 2005), p. 151.

<sup>37</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 185-87.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 138-39.

were managed by the *ṣāhib al-ashghāl*. This seems to be true, because on both occasions the person who was in charge of the transference of Córdoba, and who was one of the chief managers of the settlement's project in Gibraltar, was the same *ṣāhib al-ashghāl*, Burrāz b. Moḥammad al-Mussūfī.

The third reference was presented by Ibn 'Idhārī, in his record of the events of 1197. During his stay in Seville, Caliph al-Manṣūr ordered an investigation into some members of the government who were under suspicion of corruption. Among them there was Abī Sulymān Dāwod b. Abī Dāwod, the *'āmil* of Seville. The author stated that almost fifty *kātib*-s has been tasked to look into the records and financial documents to find out the truth about this case.<sup>39</sup> This kind of investigation against corrupt members was carried out several times throughout the empire and, based on this occasion, the *kuttāb* were most likely the key element in such an operation, not to mention the large number of *kuttāb* who were assembled to conduct the investigation, which gives us an idea about the extent of their presence in the financial management of the state.

Certainly, having high skills in accounting, and a good knowledge of Sharia Law on various financial affairs, are two of the most important requirements for obtaining this position. Apart from that, there is no clear distinction between the attributes of those *kuttāb* and the *kuttāb al-Inshā'*. In fact, several *kuttāb*, through their talent, gained access to both offices. Abū al-Ḥasan al-Hawzānī, for example, began his career as *Kātib* with the *'āmil* Ibn al-Mu'allim of Seville, before getting noticed, thanks to his technical accounting (*al-Muḥāsaba*) and his calligraphy skills, by the Vizier, Abū Ḥaṣṣ 'Umar, who added him to the group of Secretaries in the central government.<sup>40</sup>

### 1.5 Other Financial Officers

Different sources indicate the existence of other financial officials, but the information about them is so rare that it sometimes does not go beyond a mere mention. Al-Baydhaq mentioned an official called *Amīn al-Ḍīya'*. The author stated that Abū Bakr b. Malūl was *Amīn al-Ḍīya'* during the reign of al-Manṣūr.<sup>41</sup> This term has appeared in al-Andalus since the Umayyad dynasty, and it was used to refer to the official in charge of the Caliph's domain<sup>42</sup>. Some researchers, such as Mūsā and Sabbane, have claimed that

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<sup>39</sup> Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 225.

<sup>40</sup> Al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-Ṭīb*, vol. 2, p. 277; M b. Shirīfā, *Ibn 'Abd Rabbā*, p. 17.

<sup>41</sup> Al-Baydhaq, *Akhbār al-Mahdī*, p. 40

<sup>42</sup> Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, vol. 2, p. 199; S. A. al-Khalaf, *Nuẓum ḥukm al-Umawīyīn wa-rusūmihim fī al-Andalus* (Medina, 2003), p. 368.

the term *Mutawallī al-mustakhlaṣ*, or *al-Mukhtaṣ*, which appears once in Ibn ‘Idhārī’s account and once in the *taqāḍīm*, was used also to denote the same employee.<sup>43</sup> However, this term appeared in al-Andalus very early on and it is used infrequently in Arabic sources. It is most likely that it describes the state’s properties, such as buildings, farmland and markets, although the available information does not allow for the drawing of definitive conclusions.

Another financial official that the sources rarely speak about was the *khāzin*, who seems to be the manager of a warehouse, which were present in all major cities. They seem to have had different duties. Ibn ‘Idhārī makes a mention of two of them: one responsible for the city treasury (*khāzin al-māl*), and the other for granary and food (*khāzin al-ṭa‘ām*).<sup>44</sup> Both *khāzin*-s seem to administratively belong to the *dār al-Ishrāf*, and their direct supervisor was the mushrif. However, there is evidence to suggest the existence of other *Khāzin*-s for clothing and weapons, and they were most likely under the supervision of the *dīwān al-Jund*.<sup>45</sup> One might argue that the official who ordered the *khāzins* to bring significant sums of money to be distributed to the Almohad army during the events of 1171 was none other than the Vizier Abū al-‘Ulā Idrīs Ibn Jāmi‘.<sup>46</sup> However, let us not forget that the vizier was responsible for the financial institution throughout the reign of the first two caliphs, and that the position of *ṣāhib al-ashghāl* does not appear in the Almohad government until the era of Caliph al-Manṣūr.

Finally, the official *Nāzir al-Majābī* (tax collector) also raises many questions to which the sources have not helped us to provide a definitive answer. The position appeared once during the occupation of Seville, in 1147, and the *Sheikh* Abū Yahya b. Jabr was the first of the Almohads who held the office<sup>47</sup>. Surprisingly, the job disappears completely from the sources, to appear once again in the *taqāḍīm* that emanate from the era of al-‘Ādil to Murtaḍā (1224 to 1269).<sup>48</sup> The sources did not mention the reason behind this disappearance. Nevertheless, sometimes management strategies can be understood through their historical contexts. Soon after the Almohads established themselves in al-Maghrib and al-Andalus, the Caliph ‘Abd al-Mu‘min annulled all *mukūs* (excise), taxes and *qibāla*, with the exception of *al-kharāj* (land tax),

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<sup>43</sup> Mūsā, *Tanzīmāt al-Muwaḥḥidīn*, p. 203; Sabbane, *le gouvernement*, p. 276.

<sup>44</sup> Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, p. 158.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 172, 175.

<sup>46</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, p. 348.

<sup>47</sup> Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 36.

<sup>48</sup> See ‘Azzawī, *Rasā’il, taqdim* No. 17, 42, pp. 440, 470; Buresi, *Governing the Empire*, pp. 321, 388.

which was organised in 1160 and was managed and collected by the *dār al-Ishrāf*.<sup>49</sup> However, the Caliphs who followed abandoned 'Abd al-Mu'min's restrictive policy on tax, and taxes increased gradually until they reached their highest rates in the period of decay.<sup>50</sup> It is most likely, therefore, that the position of the *Nāzir al-Majābī* was also cancelled during the era of 'Abd al-Mu'min because the purpose of his presence no longer existed. In contrast, when the tax increased, the post once again found its way into the Almohad government.

## **2. Revenue and Expenditure of the State**

### **2.1 The State Revenue**

The study of the financial resources of the Almohad Empire is a daunting task. First, there are no financial records that have survived, like those produced by the crowns of England and Aragon, which can provide a better understanding of fiscal policy, such as the amount of the revenue and the size of the empire's treasury. Second, the revenue, which was expected to be legitimate, was presented along with other resources that are inconsistent with the religious principles that were advocated by the Almohads, and this was one of the factors in their success at the beginning of their movement. Although the state was trying to show control over it, as we will see later, it always found a way back, even if in the shadows. On this subject, we will shed light on the revenues and methods that were used to collect the state's revenue, and then we will look at the taxes, which were considered illegal, and how the Almohads dealt with them.

#### **2.1.1 *Ghanā'im* or Booty**

The *Ghanīma* (plural: *ghanā'im*) was the primary source of income for the Almohads during the stages of their development and in the transition from being a religious reform movement to becoming a vast empire. During their rule, the Almohads launched several military campaigns against their enemies, who were both Islamic governments and the Christian kingdoms. The Almohads considered Muslims who did not accept their call as both their enemies and as *kuffār* (Infidels).<sup>51</sup> Everything that was captured from those who submitted to the Almohad authority by force, such as wealth, animals and weapons, was considered to be lawful spoils. In al-Andalus, the cities surrendered

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<sup>49</sup> Ibn Abī Zar', *Rowḍ al-Qurṭās*, p. 173.

<sup>50</sup> Mūsā, *Tanzīmāt al-Muwahhidīn*, p. 202.

<sup>51</sup> Ibn Tūmart, *A'Azzu mā-Yuṭlab*, pp. 404-10; Fromherz, *the Almohads*, pp. 161-62.

peacefully, with the exception of the eastern province, which remained under the authority of Ibn Mardanīsh, and the Almohads were unable to impose their control on it until the beginning of the reign of the second Caliph, Yūsuf I. The sources record the stages of this military conflict and mention that a fair amount of war booty was obtained from Ibn Mardanīsh and his Christian allies on different occasions.<sup>52</sup> For example, in 1164, a battle was fought near Murcia at a site known as *Fahṣ al-Jullāb* and, according to the Arabic sources, Ibn Mardanīsh's forces were heavily defeated and fled to Murcia, while the Almohads dispersed to plunder and pillage in the region without any resistance.<sup>53</sup> Shortly afterwards, the Almohads launched a series of raids in the areas of Galera, Caravaca, Baza and Segura Mount, and the forces returned with great booty along with tens of thousands of animals, including cows.<sup>54</sup>

Sporadic raids were also launched in the lands of the Christian kingdoms, especially in periods when a truce was broken, but the largest and most valuable booty came from the major military campaigns that were organised and led by the caliphs themselves. For example, in the battle of Alarcos, according to Ibn al-Athīr, 13,000 Christian soldiers were captured, along with massive spoils consisting of 46,000 horses, 100,000 mules, 100,000 donkeys, 70,000 helmets and 60,000 shields.<sup>55</sup> Although these figures seem exaggerated, it was clearly a harsh defeat, and the volume and value of the spoils were extremely large.

Obviously, not all collected *ghanā'im* belongs to the state treasury. According to Islamic law, only one-fifth of the *ghanā'im* goes to *bayt al-māl*, while the remaining four-fifths are distributed among the soldiers who captured them.<sup>56</sup> The state's share of the spoils, although this seems very low, was enough for the Almohads at the beginning of their state's existence, at least in terms of covering army expenses and the requirements of military operations. However, with the expansion of the state, the expenses increased and frequent wars, which were fought by the Almohads in al-Maghrib and Al-Andalus, burdened the state treasury and therefore new sources of revenue were introduced, including land tax, which was imposed by 'Abd al-Mu'min in

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<sup>52</sup> Kallās, 'al-Jaysh 'inda al-Muwaḥḥidīn', p. 205.

<sup>53</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 199-200; Huici Miranda, *Historia Politica*, pp. 215-16.

<sup>54</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 203-04.

<sup>55</sup> Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 10, p. 134.

<sup>56</sup> In certain cases, booty was not shared, but was an occasion to create new taxes. For example, after the conquest of Tunis, the inhabitants received the right to remain in their houses in exchange for a tax, which fell on half the houses in the city. Ibn al-Athīr, *al-kāmil*, vol. 9, p. 258; Mūsā, *Tanzīmāt al-Muwaḥḥidīn*, p. 324.

1160.<sup>57</sup> In fact, one notion that it is possible to suggest is that the repeated defeats suffered by the Almohads after the era of al-Nāṣir, along with the lack of spoils, were one of the reasons for the emergence of illegal taxes.

### 2.1.2 *Zakāt*

*Zakāt* is legitimate tax, which represents one of the five pillars of Islam. It is a practice of taxation that is imposed on Muslims on the basis of accumulated wealth, and which is to be distributed to poor Muslims in order to eliminate inequality among the followers of Islam. The *zakāt* is expected to be paid by all Muslims, but this depends on the amount of wealth and the type of assets that the individual possesses. In Māwardī's view, *zakāt*able wealth is of two kinds: manifest and hidden. He says:

‘... the first refers to that which cannot be concealed, like crops, fruit and cattle; the second, to that which can be concealed, like gold and silver and merchandise. The person in charge of tax collection does not concern himself with the *zakāt* of concealed goods and wealth, as their owners are more entitled to pay the *zakāt* thereof, unless they hand it over to him of their own free will’.<sup>58</sup>

The *zakāt* is required on many products for which Islamic law specifies the taxable minimum. The amounts can be summarised as follows:

- Grains: *Zakāt* is payable on all stored grain. The guideline is set to 1/10<sup>th</sup> of the crop for dry farming, and 1/20<sup>th</sup> for irrigated crops. The taxable minimum is 5 *awsuq* (plural of *wasq*, the equivalent of 60 *Ṣā'*, or 653 kg).
- Tree crops: fig, walnut, almond and other fresh or dried fruits are not subject to *zakāt*. Only grapes, dates, and olives for the press are concerned.
- Livestock: First, for camels, the taxable minimum is five camels, for which the *zakāt* is set at a one-year-old goat or a sheep. For sheep, the taxable minimum is 40 heads, and the *zakāt* is attached to one goat or sheep (not less than 1-year-old). Finally, for cattle, the minimum is 30 heads, for which the *zakāt* is set at one-year-old calf.
- The *zakāt* of gold and money relates only to amounts that are hoarded and not involved in the circuits of trade and not loaned to a third party. The rate is fixed at 1/40<sup>th</sup> of the total.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Ibn Abī Zar', *Rawḍ al-Qirṭās*, p. 129.

<sup>58</sup> Al-Māwardī, *al-Aḥkām al-sultāniyya*, (*The Ordinances of Government*), trans. A. Yate (London, 1996), p. 168.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 168–78. See also: Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb, *Kitāb al-Kharāj*, ed. A. al-Dūrī (Cairo, 2009); Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām, *Kitāb al-Amwāl*, ed. K. Muḥammad (Beirut, 1975); Qudāma b. Ja'far, *Kitāb al-Kharāj wa-ṣinā'at al-kitāba* (Baghdad, 1981).

Being a state built on the basis of a religious movement, the Almohad Caliphs showed their eagerness for *Zakāt*, which, they claimed, had been neglected by the Almoravids and replaced by illegal taxes. In his famous letter, *al-Fuṣūl*, Caliph ‘Abd al-Mu’min ordered his *‘ummāl* to take on the duty of collecting *Zakāt* seriously, and to look for those who hesitate or refrain from performing the payment, and punish them.<sup>60</sup>

The operation of collecting *Zakāt* began very early and, in some cases, coincided with the access to the Almohad movement. Al-Baydhaq, for example, claimed that once the famous tribe, the *Birghuwāṭa*, had acceded to the Almohads, the caliph sent three of his men to receive the *zakat*.<sup>61</sup> In al-Andalus, *zakāt* affairs was administered by a fiscal administration *kātib*, who also seems to have been responsible for the affairs of inheritance (*al-mawārīth*). There is no information about the way in which the *zakāt* affairs were administered in al-Andalus during the period. Yet, Ibn Sa‘īd mentioned the *khuṭṭa* of *zakāt* and inheritance in Seville during the era of Caliph al-M’mūn, in passing, and he commended its workflow, through an interesting phrase: "it is brilliant" (*inaha nabihat hunāk*).<sup>62</sup> As for *zakāt al-Fiṭr* (alms for breaking the fast), even if it is a tax that is not included in the state treasury, it was carefully managed by the Almohads from the reign of Caliph ‘Abd al-Mu’min. So, upon arrival of famous letter, *al-‘adl*, in Seville, Ibn ‘Idhārī informs us that among the incarcerated *‘āmil*, two were in charge of this *zakat*.<sup>63</sup> *Zakat al-Fiṭr* is a duty for a particular period of time, and the product of this *zakāt* would be distributed to the poor once it had been collected, without first putting it into the state treasury.<sup>64</sup> The distribution process was conducted by a *qāḍī*, who was also subject to state control. Ibn Sa‘īd, in his advocacy of the *qāḍī* Ibn Marwān, who was removed from his post, said that the latter was accused of mishandling the products of the *zakāt al-Fiṭr*.<sup>65</sup>

### 2.1.3 The Fifth: Metals (*Akhmās al-Ma’ādin*)

On this subject, our sources are extremely sketchy. In all of the material, we have only a few poor clues that do not value this rich vein for mining in the Almohad period. In relation to the events of the year 1171, al-Baydhaq briefly recounts an offensive of ‘Abd al-Mu’min against a faction of the Wāwzguīt tribe that had attacked the ‘adāniyīn

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<sup>60</sup> Lévi-Provençal, *Rasā’il*, p. 133.

<sup>61</sup> Al-Baydhaq, *Akhbār al-Mahdī*, p. 69.

<sup>62</sup> Ibn Sa‘īd, *al-Mughrib*, vol. 2, pp. 286-87.

<sup>63</sup> Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, pp. 37-38.

<sup>64</sup> Lévi-Provençal, *Rasā’il*, p. 167.

<sup>65</sup> Ibn Sa‘īd, *al-Ghuṣūn al-Yāni’a fī maḥāsīn shu’rā’ al-mi’a alsābi’a*, ed. I. al-Abyārī (Cairo, 1945), p. 29.

(operator of minerals) in the Jebel Sirwa (mountain). To defeat the rebels, the Caliph mobilised three corps of his army and lead it himself. Once order was restored, ‘Abd al-Mu’min went down to Ijlīz of Hargha to begin a pilgrimage to the tomb of the Mahdī, which was located near the scene of the incident.<sup>66</sup>

The text of Ibn ‘Idhārī’s account is very brief, but it is very informative, and begins ‘*summary the dispatch of the caliph Abū Ya‘qūb into the Sus region to put an end to the activities of fraudsters [al-munāfiqīn] of the mines*’. In Safar 1183, the Caliph began a punitive expedition against mineral operators in the Daran Mountains, near the region of the Hargha tribe of Ibn Tūmart. The author tells us that the sovereign demanded the income from the tax that rightfully his, and that he had not, at that time yet received from this activity. The text reveals neither the nature of the minerals, nor the part of the Caliph in this. All we know is that the production from the mine has been profitable (*akhraja minhu shay’un lam-yu‘had fī qadīm al-zamān wa-lā ṣalaḥ qaṭṭu ahlu dhālika al-Makān*), and thus Abū Ya‘qūb built a fort and left a permanent garrison (*ajnād*), probably for the next royalties of the state but mainly to cope with the almost constant rebellion in that place.<sup>67</sup>

We still cannot unravel the mystery of the silence of the sources on this subject, and yet the soil of the Empire was full of various minerals, to the point that the author of *al-Mu‘jib* reserved an annexe in his book for mining exploitation in the Maghrib and al-Andalus in the Almohad period. In al-Andalus, Marrākushī pointed out some areas where metals are located, as follows:

- In the region of Córdoba, in a place called Shlūn, mercury was extracted and distributed to the Maghrib.
- The metal, lead, is found in the region of Almería, in a place known as Dalayia.
- In the region of Almería also, iron is located in Bacarés (Bakkaārish).
- Iron was also extracted from Urba, a place between Dénia and Xàtiva.<sup>68</sup>

#### **2.1.4 The Kharāj or Land Tax**

In a well-known passage, Ibn Abī Zar‘ indicates that the caliph ‘Abd al-Mu’min, aware of the lack of tax revenue, began a Cadastration (*taksīr*) of the entire al-Maghrib so as to

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<sup>66</sup> Al-Baydhaq, *Akhbār al-Mahdī*, p. 90.

<sup>67</sup> Ibn ‘Idhārī, *Al-Bayān*, p. 147.

<sup>68</sup> Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu‘jab*, pp. 260-61; M. K. Dinnetz, *Iron and Steel in Islamic Spain: A study of the early Islamic ferrous industry with particular reference to al-Andalus*. PhD dissertation, London University (2001), p. 52.

impose *kharāj*.<sup>69</sup> Without repeating all the criticisms that have been made of the text, it is believed that the first Caliph may well have reorganised the perception of the land tax and expanded it to areas where it was not yet a common practice.<sup>70</sup>

However, what about al-Andalus? If one follows the information in the same chronicle, it informs us, a few pages later, that the land was subject to the land tax.<sup>71</sup> Nonetheless, by reporting events that had taken place in Jerez, Ibn Abī Zar‘ claimed that the inhabitants of this town were not paying the *kharāj*, in recognition of their very early entry into the Almohad movement.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, in her study on the political and cultural history of al-Andalus during the second *Taifa* period, Dandash went even further, and claimed that the Almohads had imposed land tax in al-Andalus that were half the amount of the tax levied in the lands of al-Maghrib. In her view, the Almohads resorted to this measure to ensure the loyalty of Andalusians and also to encourage the eastern provinces in the same way.<sup>73</sup> These two procedures encourage us to say that the land tax was established differently, not only between cities, but also between both parts of the Almohad Empire: al-Andalus and al-Maghrib.

Apart from this classical document, but still questionable, it is rare to have clearer indications, particularly on the part the Almohad chroniclers, with one exception, that of the author of *al-Mu‘jib*. Al-Marrākushī, in a paragraph he calls ‘*The Extent of the Empire and the Rise of the Kharāj*’, emphasises the importance of the tax that he believed would contribute to the financial strength of the second Caliph. As an example, the author has stated the *kharāj* of *Ifriqiya* only (Tunis) was 150 mule loads per year.<sup>74</sup> Then, immediately afterwards, and with no apparent connection, he began cutting a [whole territory into provinces (*‘umālāt*) with estimates of the extent of each one, and finally he took his dissertation on the *kharāj*.<sup>75</sup> Would there have been relations between the estimated *kharāj* of Ifrīqiya and this note on the Almohad provinces? I believe that the description is not coincidental. In making the comparison between the extent of the territory of each province, and those of Ifrīqiya, the author certainly wants to give an

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<sup>69</sup> Ibn Abī Zar‘, *Rawḍ al-qirṭās*, p. 133.

<sup>70</sup> This text has been extensively analysed. See Hopkins, *Medieval Muslim Government*, pp. 34-36; Charles-André Julien, *Histoire de l’Afrique du Nord: Des origines à 1830*, Arabic trans, vol. 2 (Tunis, 2011), p. 110; ‘A. ‘Allām, *al-Da‘wā al-Muwaḥḥidiyya bil-Maghrib* (Cairo, 1964), p. 264; Mūsā, ‘al-Nashāt al-iqtiṣādī’, p. 176.

<sup>71</sup> Ibn Abī Zar‘, *Rawḍ al-qirṭās*, p. 135.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, p. 122.

<sup>73</sup> Dandash, *al-Andalus fī nihāyat al-Murābiṭīn*, p. 157.

<sup>74</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt provides the same figure (150 loads of money), but it is unclear whether it was the *kharāj* revenue of Ifriqiya or a contribution to the preparations for war. Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, p. 418.

<sup>75</sup> Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu‘jab*, p. 149.

idea of the cash received from the *kharāj*. Al-Marrākushī adds, a few lines later, that one of his friends (*aṣḥābī*), who took care of the public treasury (*Buyut al-Amwāl*), showed him documents (*khrā'it*) and bags from the proceeds of *kharāj*. Unfortunately, apart from these two texts (those of *Rawḍ* and *al-Mu'jib*), the sources are always silent. Finally, it is believed from many scattered references in the sources that the *kharāj* was paid either in kind or in cash.

### 2.1.5 Confiscation (*Al-Muṣādarah*)

Confiscation was one of the means used by the Almohads as a punishment, and also as a legitimate source of income for the state. This procedure began very early on, and was used firstly against the Almoravid leaders and their allies immediately after the Almohads came to power.<sup>76</sup> Almohads also took possession of the properties of rebels or traitors who cooperated with the enemies of the state. For example, in 1162 and immediately after the recovery of Granada from Ibn Hamushk's forces, the Almohads confiscated the money of those who assisted and supported the invading forces and this money was deposited in the state treasury.<sup>77</sup> Government members did not survive this procedure. In fact, the most common forfeitures in Almohad sources are those carried out by the Caliphs against officials who were charged with administrative and financial corruption.<sup>78</sup> Apparently, the revenue produced from seizing properties in this category was too large. For example, during the investigation launched by Caliph al-Manṣūr in Seville, in 1196, two members of the government were found guilty of corruption: Dāwud b. Abī Dāwud and Abū 'Alī 'Umar b. Ayyūb. Besides being imprisoned, their property was seized and they were both fined 15,000 and 50,000 *Dīnārs* respectively.<sup>79</sup>

### 2.1.6 Investments

Arab sources report a number of investment projects carried out by the Almohads in al-Maghrib and Al-Andalus. Agricultural investments were at the forefront of the Caliph's concerns and formed a steady source of revenue for the empire. Among these projects there were the Sultan's orchards, like those of the *Sharaf* region to the west of Seville, which were densely planted with olive and fig trees.<sup>80</sup> The Almohads also received revenue from *iqṭā'āt* (fiefs), or what the Almohad sources used to call *Sihām* (single.

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<sup>76</sup> Ibn 'Abd al-Malik, *al-Dhayl wa-l-takmila*, vol.5, p. 176; Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 117,201, 203; Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 29.

<sup>77</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, p. 201.

<sup>78</sup> See *Ibid*, p. 224; Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, pp. 121, 135, 139, 155.

<sup>79</sup> Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 225.

<sup>80</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, p. 467.

*Sahm*). In her study, Dandash claimed that the feudal system of the Almohads was based on sharecropping, in the sense that the state entered into a partnership with the owner and had a share of the proceeds of the land.<sup>81</sup> If we believe Dandash, the revenue from this source was massive, taking into account the large amounts of land that had been granted. The Caliphs used to reward the Almohad *Sheikh*-s and Andalusian leaders with fiefdoms, especially in the territories of al-Andalus.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, Al-Marrākushī stated that the Almohad soldiers were given *iqṭā'āt* along with fixed salaries.<sup>83</sup>

The Almohads also invested heavily in the construction of *Aswāq* (markets) and *Hwānīt* (shops), which were built, and then rented, across the state in order to increase its revenue and improve the commercial activity in the country. Thanks to Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt we have valuable information about the markets of Seville during the era of Abū Yusūf Ya'qūb. In 1196 the Caliph ordered the construction of markets and shops around the Great Mosque, Adabas, on the land that is currently occupied by the cathedral. It was carefully built and had four doors and a magnificent architectural form. After the construction was completed, traders and craftsmen crowded round to rent the *ḥwānīt* (shops) and, as a result, "the *kharāj* grew dramatically".<sup>84</sup> A further reference concerning the *sūq* in al-Andalus is found in al-Bayān al-Mughrib. Ibn 'Idhārī mentioned the *sūqs* and houses (*ruba'*) which were built in Beja in 1175, and states that the rent was sent to *dār al-Ishrāf* in Seville<sup>85</sup>. The rent process was carried out through bidding, which appears to have been managed by the *dār al-Ishrāf*, which was also responsible for collecting rent and then depositing the money in the *bayt al-māl*.<sup>86</sup>

### 2.1.7 Other Taxes

Eliminating illegal tax has always been a mobilising slogan in the Muslim world. Like the great jurist *al-Māwardī*, Ibn Tūmart, during his religious reform, reserved an entire chapter of his *A'Azzu mā-yuṭlab* to the taxes of the Almoravids, which he presented as being heavy and non-canonical.<sup>87</sup> Upon coming to power, his successor, 'Abd al-Mu'min, in his famous letter of 1152, made clear his intentions with respect to taxation, and he took stock of the infractions and abuses that would condemn the Almohads:

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<sup>81</sup> Dandash, *al-Andalus fī nihāyat al-Murābiṭīn*, p. 160.

<sup>82</sup> See Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu'jab*, pp. 199, 200, 217, 225, 265; Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Nuẓm al-Jumān*, p. 137; al-Maqarī, *Nafḥ al-Tīb*, vol. 3, p. 419.

<sup>83</sup> Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu'jab*, p. 290.

<sup>84</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, p. 485.

<sup>85</sup> Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 134.

<sup>86</sup> Ibn al-Zayāt, *al-Tashūf*, p. 277.

<sup>87</sup> Ibn Tūmart, *A'Azzu mā-yuṭlab*, p. 387.

‘If we informed - and Allāh is the witness - that a kind of these forbidden types, or a sort of these dark varieties, is carried out by anyone, or that he allowed such a deplorable act, we will punish him by eliminating him, a punishment which will remain an example and a lesson for those who warn of the injunction, and wke-up call for those who are heedless’.<sup>88</sup>

He did it again four years later, in an official letter addressed to the inhabitants of Constantine in the central Maghrib.<sup>89</sup> ‘Abd al-Mu’min did not resist the temptation to engage in a severe indictment of the Hammadid tax system (1008–1152). Here, the tone is set for a return to basics: the establishment of an Almohad tax, based on the principles of Islam, the Qur’an and Sunnah. We can always ask: why, and for what purpose, did the first Caliph write the two letters? This could be a reference to the multiplicity of illegal taxes in this period and to the presence of resentment among the people, to the point that it required frequent intervention from the Caliph to rectify the situation. One might also wonder whether this tax had survived the Almoravid period, or was quite simply a product of the Almohad movement. Yet, between the death of Ibn Tūmart and the installation on the throne of ‘Abd al-Mu’min, little time had elapsed, and this would certainly not have supported the development of a new tax.<sup>90</sup> Al-Idrīsī, one of the most vocal authors against the Almohads, acknowledged that they had removed multiple taxes.<sup>91</sup> In al-Andalus, a lot of illegal taxes and excise were introduced in the period that followed the rule of the Almoravids, which is known as the second *Taifas*. As a result of the turbulent political situation and economic stagnation, some Andalusian leaders handled the fiscal deficit by imposing exorbitant taxes, which increased public discontent and eventually led to them being overthrown.<sup>92</sup> The situation was much worse in the eastern provinces. Ibn Mardanīsh, in order to meet his heavy financial commitments to his Christian allies, went too far in the imposition of taxes and levies, which, according to Ibn al-Khaṭīb, were imposed on everything, even on occasions such

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<sup>88</sup> Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Nuẓm al-Jumān*, pp. 193-94.

<sup>89</sup> E. Lévi-Provençal, *Rasā’il*, no. 7, pp. 21-22.

<sup>90</sup> Abn Abī Zar’, praising the reign of Almoravid Ibn Tāshfīn, said "*There is no province in his empire and throughout his reign in which we find excise tax (maks), aid fee (ma’ūna) or land tax (kharaj)*". Even if we accept the author's idyllic picture, the fact still remains that, under the reign of his son Alī b. Yūsuf, taxes had increased so much that several studies have placed burdensome taxes among the causes of the fall of the Almoravid dynasty. Abn Abī Zar’, *Rawḍ al-Qurṭās*, p. 88; Y. Benhima, ‘La fiscalité au Maroc médiéval: évolution historique et processus fiscal’, paper presented at *Congreso Fiscalidad y sociedad en el Mediterráneo bajomedieval*, Málaga, May 17-20, 2006; M. Ismā’il, *Maqālāt fī al-fīkr wa al-Tārīkh* (Casablanca, 1979), pp. 88-91; H. Junhānī, *Dirāsāt fī al-tārīkh al-iqtisādī wa-al-ijtimā’ī lil-maghrib al-Islāmī* (Beirut, 1986), pp. 98-99.

<sup>91</sup> Al-Idrīsī, *Nuzhat al-mushtāq*, vol. 1, pp. 235-36.

<sup>92</sup> I. Dandash, *al-Andalus fī nihāyat al-Murābiṭīn*, p. 231.

as weddings and parties. Taxes were very high, to the extent that many farmers and smallholders were obliged to abandon their farms because they were unable to pay the taxes, which exceeded the value of their land yield.<sup>93</sup> There is no doubt that this bleak picture changed with the entry of the Almohads into al-Andalus and the extension of sovereignty over its provinces. However, we cannot say for sure that the Almohads got rid of all the illegal taxes, or whether irregularities remained in some areas, and thus the removal of taxes is reported at the beginning of each reign, without ever mentioning where they had been imposed, or who had imposed them.

Despite 'Abd al-Mu'min's anti-tax campaign, taxes still appear in some parts of the empire and maybe even in the capital, which drove the Caliph to say "*If this abuse exists in our capital, then what about distant places?*"<sup>94</sup> However, if the Almohads had succeeded in reducing illegal taxes in the empire during the era of the early Caliphs, the situation appears to have been changed from the beginning of the thirteenth century, and the later Caliphs lost control of it, at least in the provinces. Almost all the Almohad letters of appointment (*taqādīm*) from the reign of al-Rashīd urged the stopping of this scourge called tax, which won the few parts remaining in the empire. Every sovereign strongly calls his newly elected officials to stop the rise and the heaviness of illegal and illicit taxes (*maḥaq al-Rusūm allatī lā yubīḥuhā al-shar'*). The nature of these abuses is not specified, but one could infer from a few recommendations to the responsible tax authorities, that one of the practices that was criticised was the collecting of taxes before the legal deadline. In fact, insisting repeatedly on the need to fulfil the duty (or amounts due) when the legal deadline was one year for both livestock and goods hoarded. The writer also refers to the need to respect legal procedures in tax matters: process (*Islūb*) and law (*qānūn*) of the financial administration (*Ashghāl makhzanīyya*) are frequently cited to describe the normative framework regulating the activity of the tax authorities.<sup>95</sup>

This attitude of sovereigns leads us to a question: who imposed these taxes? Certainly not the Caliphs, since several *taqdīms* declared the abolition of a particular type of tax in one area, while in others nothing was reported. Moreover, the Caliphs were often decisive about the phenomenon of illegal taxes, and the most common behaviour was to dismiss a governor and then to appoint a new one, and this indicates the exclusive involvement of local government in this matter. Local rulers must have acted individually and imposed their tax policy, which contravened the instructions of

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<sup>93</sup> Ibn al-Khaṭīb, *A'māl al-a'lām*, p. 261; Ibn al-Khaṭīb, *al-Iḥāṭa fī akhbār Gharnāṭa*, vol. 2, pp. 72-73.

<sup>94</sup> Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Nuẓm al-Jumān*, p. 87.

<sup>95</sup> 'Azzāwī, *Rasā'il*, pp. 232, 233.

the Caliph, taking advantage of the large distance between al-Andalus and the central government in Marrakech, together with the difficulties and slowness of communications, not to mention the turbulent political situation, which the empire has passed through in the period.

Our documents, mostly chronicles, give us very little information on taxation in the Almohad period. In her recent article, H. Ferhat gave an overview on "*Taxation in the Maghrib*", and she notes the ambiguity of the terms used and the shift in meaning from one period to another.<sup>96</sup> In the *taqdīm*-s, a number of terms were used to refer to non-legal taxes, but provided no detailed descriptions of their nature. Instead, the sovereign described them by using religious terms that would have an impact on society in order to show his rejection, such as *muḥdathāt*, *munkarāt* and *mazālim*. Among the terms for the tax in the Almohad era, four that keep appearing in our sources: *rusūm*, *maghārim*, *mukūs* and *qibālāt* (the words used nearly always in the plural). The *rusūm* are defined as taxes put on goods and agricultural products in the *suq*-s and open markets (*Maḥq al-Rusūm allātī lā yubīḥuha al-Shar' min al-Aswāq wa-l-Abwāb*).<sup>97</sup> It is believed that this scourge had, by the end of the empire, won many Almohad cities, and thus, when he came to power, the last sovereign, Abū Dabbūs, abolished several taxes, among which Ibn 'Idhārī quotes (rights of doors or grant).<sup>98</sup>

Excise, *mukūs*, were tolls on merchandise that had to be paid when a merchant left a city or a district with goods. This is certainly different from the tithe ( *'ushūr*), which is considered a legal tax according to Sharia Law, and which was imposed on non-Muslim traders when they entered the country. As for *al-maghārim*, the Almohad sources have nothing to say. Yet, in his study of the Umayyad governmental system in Al-Andalus, Sālim stated that this tax appeared in al-Andalus from the reign of the Umayyads and was imposed by the Caliph or governors on the inhabitants of a region or a city as a punishment.<sup>99</sup> This could be the case with the Almohads because we read in al-Nāṣirī's *al-Istaqṣā'* that in the al-Rashīd era the commander, Ibn Wānūdīn, imposed a heavy *maghārim* on the population of Miknasa for not being faithful to the Almohads.<sup>100</sup> The two official letters from the time of 'Abd al-Mu'min, already reported, mention two

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<sup>96</sup> H. Ferhat, *La fiscalité au maghreb du XI au XIII siècle: enjeux et conflits*, p. 127-142. See also, Lagardere, 'Les bases fiscales du pouvoir au Maghreb al-Aqṣā et en Andalus au XI' et XII' siècle', in *Le Maghreb Médiéval*, Aix en Provence, 1991, p. 35- 36; Guichard, *Musulmans*, t. II, p. 245. Mūsā, 'al-Nashāt al-iqtisādī fī al-Maghrib', p. 162-180.

<sup>97</sup> 'Azzāwī, *Rasā'il*, p. 293.

<sup>98</sup> Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 449.

<sup>99</sup> S A. al-Khalaf, *Nuẓum ḥukm al-Umawīyīn wa-rusūmihim fī al-Andalus*, vol. 2, (Medina, 2003), p. 387.

<sup>100</sup> Al-Nāṣirī, *al-Istaqṣā' li-'akhbār dwal al-Maghrib al-aqṣa*, eds. J. Al-Nāṣirī, M. Al-Nāṣirī, 3 vols (Casablanca, 1997), vol. 3, p. 10.

taxes: *al-Mukūs* and *al-qibālāt*. So early in his reign, the Almohad Caliph stood up against the *qibālāt*, which would have re-emerged around the various Almohad cities, including in the capital. We know from several indications that. At the time of the Almoravids this tax affected all products that were manufactured, and no doubt, this would have been maintained during the Almohad dynasty.<sup>101</sup> Moreover, Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, amazed by the architecture of a bridge built in Seville during the reign of Abū Yūsuf Ya‘qūb in 1171, wrote twice that the Caliph put it at the disposal of people without paying *qibāla* (tolls). The fact that this historian insists on the free use of the bridge implies two things: first that it is an exceptional circumstance, secondly that the *qibālāt*, despite the severity of ‘Abd al-Mu‘min, had not disappeared completely, or else it had reappeared after the death of the Caliph.<sup>102</sup>

## **2.2 The State’s Expenditure**

### **2.2.1 Military Expenditure**

The military absorbed the largest share of the Almohad state budget. Due to the continual wars in North Africa and Spain, the Almohad military budget far exceeds that of other sectors. In addition to equipment and maintenance, Almohad regular troops received salaries (*rawātib*) and although the sources do not mention the amount of the salary, it was described as being quite generous. The rank of the soldier and the category to which he belonged were recorded in the *dīwān* in order to determine the amount of his salary, which, according to Marrakesh, was offered three times a year, every four months.<sup>103</sup>

The Almohads also gave money in the form of bonuses or grants (*baraka*), which were distributed to the troops either before, during, or after military operations, along with clothing, weapons and horses.<sup>104</sup> Sometimes, the *baraka* was too large. For example, in 1171, a significant amount of *baraka* was distributed to a massive army, consisting of 10,000 Almohads and 10,000 Arabs, which was gathered in Marrakech for a major campaign which Caliph Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf was preparing to launch in al-Andalus. Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt provides a detailed record of payment rates: among the Almohads, a fully equipped horseman was given 10 dinars, a partially equipped one 8,

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<sup>101</sup> Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 37.

<sup>102</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 235, 463.

<sup>103</sup> Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu‘jab*, p. 289; Kallās, ‘al-Jaysh ‘inda al-Muwahhidīn’, p. 204.

<sup>104</sup> See: Ibad, p. 282; Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 201, 271, 436, 510; Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, pp. 64, 66, 92, 97, 129, 149.

with 5 for a fully equipped foot soldier, and 3 for the remainder. As for Arab troops, the rate was higher: 25 for the fully equipped horse man, and 15 for the partially equipped one, with 6 dinars for the foot soldiers. Each Arab *Sheikh* was given 50, and each tribal chief 200 dinars, along with three thousand horses to be distributed among their Arab forces as well as clothes and weapons.<sup>105</sup> This type of military campaign was costing the state treasury very large sums of money, not to mention the military supplies and food expenses, especially if we take into account the size of the army and the duration of campaigns, which would normally last for several months.

The relationship between the two sectors of the army and expenditure was a close one. In fact, for every great expedition, sources speak of revocation and punishment of those accused of mismanagement *'ummāl*. Ibn Ṣāhib Ṣalāt, upon the indictment of the Vizier, 'Abd al- Salām al-Gumī, noted this with the words: '*in the past, Lamtūna the [Almoravids] ruled up to Tlemcen and paid their jund. And we [Almohads] own more than they had, in addition all Ifrīqiya, and yet have nothing to be given to Almohads*'. The answer came. On that day, two Almohad *Sheikh*-s who were present in the circle of the Caliph, were: loss the money of the *makhzan* (*tadyī' al-makhāzin*) and incriminated the vizier and his financial policy. However, in my opinion, the most interesting thing in this passage is the close link between finance and the military: the maintenance of *jund*, which was mainly based on the payment of balances that were funded by the Almohad *makhzan* (Bayt al-Māl).

*Al-Mwāsāt* was another type of pay that was often a certain amount of money given monthly, once or more often, depending on the availability of resources, and at the request of the Caliph. For example, Caliph 'Abd al-Mu'min offered *Mwāsāt* two or three times a month when funds were available, while his successor, Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf, provided it once in a month.<sup>106</sup> However, *Mwāsāt* may sometimes be an amount of yield, which was distributed annually among the soldiers when it had been collected. This was the case with the Hafsid state, which, in many ways, was a new version of the Almohad state, and most of its political and administrative organisations were adopted from its predecessor.<sup>107</sup>

Further military expenses were those relating to the Almohad fleet, such as shipbuilding and maintenance, as well as the sailors' expenses, such as salaries, food

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<sup>105</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, p. 437; Kallās, 'al-Jaysh 'inda al-Muwahhidīn', p. 203.

<sup>106</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 233; Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Nzum al-jumān*, p. 131; Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 70; Kallās, 'al-Jaysh 'inda al-Muwahhidīn', p. 205.

<sup>107</sup> Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-A'shā*, vol. 5, p. 141.

supplies and weapons.<sup>108</sup> The fleet played an important role in the twelfth century, especially in the control of Ifrīqiya and to secure the necessary support for infantry forces during military operations.<sup>109</sup> The Almohad Caliphs focused their attention on the reconstruction of ports and shipyards on the coast of al-Maghrib and al-Andalus, taking advantage of the availability of iron ore and wood in the two parts of the empire. The sources differed in determining the size of the fleet. Ibn Abī Zar‘ said that 400 ships were built in 1162, including 80 ships built in al-Andalus.<sup>110</sup> The seventeenth century historian, Ibn Abī dīnār, increased the number to 700 ships.<sup>111</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, recording Caliph ‘Abd al-Mu’min’s preparations for his military campaign in al-Andalus, pointed out that the number of ships that were built to take part in the campaign reached 200 ships.<sup>112</sup> Although these figures are varied, it give us an idea about the great size of the fleet and, even if the sources provide no information about the amount of expenditure in this field, there is no doubt that significant funds were spent from the state treasury to raise the efficiency of the fleet, which became, as Charles-André Julien said, the most powerful fleet in the Mediterranean in the twelfth century.<sup>113</sup>

### 2.2.2 Salaries and Rewards (*hibāt*)

Salaries ranked second in the list of the state's expenses. All members of the government received a salary from the state treasury, for instance, the *‘āmil*, *kātib*, *ṣāhib al-ashghāl* and *Nāzir al-Majābī*.<sup>114</sup> The Almohad *Sheikh*-s received the highest privileges. In addition to the feudal lands that were given to them, the *Sheikh*-s thus

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<sup>108</sup> Kallās, ‘al-Jaysh ‘inda al-Muwaḥḥidīn’, p. 211.

<sup>109</sup> The strength of the Almohad fleet was demonstrated on several occasions, such as the naval battles that broke out between the Almohads and the Lisbon fleet near Silves, in 1181, and another between the Almohads and the Normans near the fortified city of al-Mahdīya, in 1159. Great detail about the organisation of the Almohad fleet and its role in military operations in al-Maghreb and al-Andalus have been provided in C. Picard’s works: *La mer et les Musulmans d’Occident ou Moyen âge: VIII<sup>e</sup>-XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1997); *L’océan Atlantique musulman: de la conquête arabe à l’époque Almohade navigation et mise en valeur des côtes d’al-Andalus et du Maghreb occidental Portugal-Espagne-Maroc* (Paris, 1997); ‘L’échec maritime musulman?’, in *La Puissance Maritime: actes du colloque international tenu à l’Institut catholique de Paris, décembre 2001*, Presses de l’Université Paris Sorbonne (Paris, 2004), pp. 123-142; ‘Les Arsenaux musulmans de la Méditerranée et de l’océan Atlantique (VIIe-XVe siècles)’, in *Chemins d’outre-mer: études sur la Méditerranée médiévale offertes à Michel Balard*, (collection Byzantina Sorbonensia), Publications de la Sorbonne (Paris, 2004), 691-710.

<sup>110</sup> Ibn Abī Zar‘, *Rawḍ al-Qirṭās*, pp. 164-65.

<sup>111</sup> Ibn Abī Dīnār, *al-Mu’nis fī akhbār Ifrīqīyā wa-Tūnis* (Tunis, 1286), p. 112.

<sup>112</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 147-48.

<sup>113</sup> Charles-André Julien, *Histoire de l’Afrique du Nord Tunisie, Algérie, Maroc, de la conquête arabe à 1830*, (Paris, 1952), p. 124.

<sup>114</sup> ‘Azzāwī, *Rasā’il*, p. 340, Mūsā, *Tanzīmāt al-Muwaḥḥidīn*, p. 333.

enjoyed a salary of 40 dinars, which was distributed four times a year.<sup>115</sup> The *qādīs* also received a monthly salary (*Mwāsāt*). This includes those people who are relevant to judicial organisation, such as *shurḍī* (policemen) and *muḥtasib*, as well as those who work in the religious field, such as the *faqīh*, *imām* and *muezzin*.<sup>116</sup> The fourteenth-century historian, al-‘Umarī, points out that *qādī al-Jamā‘ā*, in the Hafsid State, earned fifteen dinars as a monthly salary, and it is most likely that this amount did not differ much from those salaries offered in the Almohad state.<sup>117</sup> The *ṭalaba*, the caliphate's favourite project, received a special privilege from the reign of ‘Abd al-Mu‘min. The *ṭalaba* thus not only received monthly salaries, but the government provided them with financial grants for investment in economic projects to improve their situation. Ibn al-Qaṭṭān pointed out that Caliph ‘Abd al-Mu‘min lent a thousand dinars to the *ṭalaba*, which were taken from the *bayt al-māl*, to be used in trade to help improve their financial situation and, yet, they were never asked to repay the loans. The author adds an interesting note that this contribution came to fruition and these loans were the cause of their wealth.<sup>118</sup>

There were other categories that benefited from fixed salaries, but they were in a narrow range and were limited to those who were in close contact with the government. Among them there were doctors, such as Ibn Zuhr, who served Caliph ‘Abd al-Mu‘min and his successors, Yūsuf and Ya‘qūb; Ibn Ṭufaīl, doctor of Caliph Yusūf; Ibn Rushd, doctor of Caliph Ya‘qūb.<sup>119</sup> There are also engineers, such as the famous Ahmad b. Bayāsa, who carried out the wonderful architectural works in Seville and Gibraltar, as we shall see.<sup>120</sup>

We will conclude this topic with the sums that were given to certain people who had a great social or political influence which could be used against the state's interests. From the reign of ‘Abd al-Mu‘min, the Almohad Caliphs granted former leaders funds, fiefdoms and gifts, in order to gain their satisfaction and ensure their loyalty so that they would never think about the conspiracy against them again. Among those who enjoyed these funds were Yaḥya b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, the former leader of Béjaïa, Banū Mardaniš of Valencia and Murcia, al-Ḥasan Ibn ‘Alī of al-Mahdiyya, the Hilaliyyah Arab leaders

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<sup>115</sup> Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-A‘shā*, vol. 5, p. 140-41.

<sup>116</sup> Al-Ghibrīnī, *Unwān al-Dirāiyya*, p. 172.

<sup>117</sup> al-‘Umarī, *Masālik al-Abṣār*, p. 20.

<sup>118</sup> Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Nuẓm al-Jumān*, p. 137.

<sup>119</sup> Al-‘Abbās b. Ibrāhīm, *al-I‘lām bi-man ḥalla Marrākush wa-Aghmāt min al-i‘lām*, ed. R. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb (Rabat, 1993), pp. 117-18.

<sup>120</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 170-71.

and the Banū Ghānīya of the Balearic Islands.<sup>121</sup> Writers and poets were also among those who enjoyed the generosity of the sovereign. Praising the Caliph and boasting of his military victories and achievements through poems that they wrote, were the best source of income for the poets and were a great way to gain more publicity and fame for the Caliph. In all events that were hosted by the Caliph, poets were among the first to attend, competing in declaiming poems of praise and veneration in the hope of getting paid generously and of being given valuable gifts. Caliph ‘Abd al-Mu’min, for example, gave one poet 1,000 dinars in exchange for one single praising verse, and gave another an estate as a reward for a poem.<sup>122</sup> Caliph Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf also spent generously on this category. Poet Abū al-Ḥakam b. al-Riḍā Al-Balancī, for example, recited a long poem praising the Caliph and once having completed it, he was granted property (*sahim*) in his native Malaga, along with bags full of gifts, a promotion decree and a permanent monthly wage from the State Treasury. Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, who recorded this event, received his own share of the Caliph's generosity, which consisted of a loyalty decree and a salary (*mūāsāt*).<sup>123</sup> Caliph al-Manṣūr and his successor, al-Nāṣir followed the tradition of their predecessors in granting money and gifts on any occasion, especially when these coincided with military victories.<sup>124</sup> It should be noted that from the reign of al-Mustanṣir such traditions and occasions, where money and gifts were distributed, were no longer mentioned by the sources, either because the historians lost interest in recording them, or because the rulers stopped performances on these occasions because the State Treasury could no longer afford such expenses.

### 2.2.3 Construction Projects

An extensive construction boom was witnessed by al-Maghrib and al-Andalus during the era of the Almohads. The chronicles collect together all of the construction activities of the Almohads and mention proudly the works carried out by each Caliph, accompanied by the annals of his reign. The sovereign was directly involved in the planning of each construction project. Among these projects are the building of towns, as in Gibraltar and Rabat, the founding of bridges, mosques and *sūq*-s, as in Seville, and

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<sup>121</sup> See: Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 9, p. 186; Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 472-73; Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu‘jab*, pp. 207, 253, 254-55, 318; Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 97.

<sup>122</sup> Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-irab*, vol. 22, p. 95; al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-Ṭīb*, vol. 4, p. 386.

<sup>123</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 421-430.

<sup>124</sup> Al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-Ṭīb*, vol. 4, p. 172; H. I. Ḥasan, *al-Ḥaḍarah al-Islāmiyya fī al-Maghreb wā al-Andalus*, p. 224.

the construction of hospitals, as in Marrakesh.<sup>125</sup> The Caliphs also devoted special attention to public utility works, such as the water industry.<sup>126</sup> For example, the 'Aīn Baraka aqueduct in Sale, which was launched during the era of 'Abd al-Mu'min, and the sewers of Carmona in Seville, by Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf, in 1171.<sup>127</sup> Some of the projects were allocated to members of the government and to statesmen, such as the construction of cottages for government officials and *Sheikh*-s. According to al-Maqqarī, the number of residences for *Ahl al-dawla* in Córdoba, during the Almohad era, was 6,300 houses.<sup>128</sup> There were also reconstruction projects that were set up by the Caliph to restore security to certain cities and towns that had been devastated by rebels, or that were subjected to enemy attacks, such as the renovation project of Alcacer de Sal in 1191<sup>129</sup>; the reconstruction of Córdoba after the attacks of Ibn Mardānīsh's forces in 1155<sup>130</sup>; the construction of a wall and ditch around Seville, and the great tower, known as the Torre del Oro, on the banks of the Guadalquivir, around the year 1220.<sup>131</sup> In some cases, the cost was too heavy. Caliph al-Nāṣir spent 120 loads of gold to repair the devastation caused by Ibn Ghānīya in Ifrīqiya.<sup>132</sup>

The Caliphs were extremely generous in their spending on these projects. Al-Ḥimyarī, talking about the city of al-Fatḥ in Gibraltar, said that the money raised for the constructions could not be counted.<sup>133</sup> Sometimes, this spending was too excessive, perhaps in order to show the richness of the Empire, or to bring more publicity for the Caliph's reign. Ibn Abī Zar' claimed that the bronze gilded balls, which were placed at the top of the minaret of the mosque in Seville, were worth 100.000 golden dinars.<sup>134</sup> This, and other architectural projects, drained the empire's budget. Some consumed large amount of funds and ultimately seems to have failed to achieve their purpose. According to Ibn Abī Zar', Caliph al-Manṣūr, in his last days, expressed his regret about three acts during his rule, including the large amounts of money that he had spent on the

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<sup>125</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 464-66; *al-Istibṣār fī 'ajāib al-amṣār*, ed. S. Zaghlūl (Casablanca, 1984), p. 210; Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu'jab*, p. 287; Ibn Abī Zar', *Rawḍ al-qirtās*, p. 139; al-Ḥimyarī, *Ṣifat Jazīrat al-Andalus*, p. 141; L. Torres Balbás, *Ciudades Hispano-musulmanas*, pp. 153-55, 474; Al-Manūnī, *al-'Ulūm wa-l-ādāb*, pp. 242-252.

<sup>126</sup> *al-Istibṣār fī 'ajāib al-amṣār*, p. 210.

<sup>127</sup> Al-Manūnī, *al-'Ulūm wa-l-ādāb*, pp. 252-53; A. Jiménez Martín, 'Los Caños de Carmona, documentos olvidados', in *Historia. Instituciones. Documentos*, 2 (1995), pp. 317-28.

<sup>128</sup> al-Maqqarī, *Naḥḥ al-Ṭīb*, vol. 4, p. 315.

<sup>129</sup> Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 211.

<sup>130</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, p. 206.

<sup>131</sup> Kennedy, *Muslim Spain*, p. 260.

<sup>132</sup> Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu'jab*, p. 318.

<sup>133</sup> Al-Ḥimyarī, *Ṣifat Jazīrat al-Andalus*, p. 141.

<sup>134</sup> Ibn Abī Zar', *Rawḍ al-Qirtās*, p. 151.

reconstruction of Ribāṭ al-Faḥ to no avail.<sup>135</sup> Finally, it is worth noting that most of the construction projects, if not all, were set up in the time of the first four caliphs as a result of political and economic stability, not to mention military victories, which were the main source of spending for most of these projects. However, if the authority spent generously on architectural plans during its golden age, it was not able to do so in subsequent periods as a result of the absence of military victories, and the resultant lack of resources and an increase in the number of economic crises.

The Almohad sovereigns showed a clear interest in relation to social contributions, and historians recorded a number of occasions on which the Caliphs distributed huge amounts of alms, and handouts to the poor and low-income people, whose names appear to have been kept in a special file among the state documents so as to track their numbers and facilitate access to them. After Caliph Yūsuf recovered from his illness in 1170, 30 Dīnārs were distributed to each of those whose name was recorded under the poor section (*Miskīn*).<sup>136</sup> The sources recorded a number of individual handouts paid by the Caliphs on sporadic occasions. However, major alms giving was usually linked to important events, such as the renewal of allegiance to the Caliph, or the arrival of a new one. For example, the first action taken by al-Manṣūr after he was announced as the new Caliph, was to take 100,000 gold Dīnārs from the *bayt al-Māl* and to distribute them to the poor.<sup>137</sup> The government was also responsible for providing the necessary assistance to the residents of areas that were suffering from a serious crisis. For example, when famine occurred in 1213, Caliph al-Mustanṣir ordered the warehouses, which were intended for the storage of food, to be opened and the food to be distributed, without cost to the poor, and with a price to the wealthy.<sup>138</sup> In this regard, Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt spoke of Cuenca residents who had suffered weakness and a severe shortage of supplies as a result of the blockade that was imposed by the Christian forces for as long as five months, in 1172. Caliph Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf requested the conducting of a census and found that there were just 700 inhabitants. The Caliph then gave them payment, which was distributed as follows: 12 dinars to a horseman, 8 dinars to a foot soldier, 4 dinars to women and children. They were also given 70 cows and a large amount of grain, and the Caliph encouraged his entourage to give them alms.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid, p. 152.

<sup>136</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, p. 421.

<sup>137</sup> Ibn Abī Zar‘, *Rawḍ al-Qirṭās*, p. 142.

<sup>138</sup> Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 244.

<sup>139</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 505-06.

The socio-medical field did not escape the ruler's attention. Dozens of *Bimaristans* were created, especially under the reign of al-Manṣūr.<sup>140</sup> The Almohad *Bayt al-Māl* took care of patients and paid the costs of hospital stays and medication. Al-Marrākushī, a fervent admirer of al-Manṣūr, said that the latter would provide, at the beginning of each year, for the circumcision of young orphans and the abandoned. He writes that he 'Gives each a small *mithqāl* (*Dinār*), a garment, a loaf, a pomegranate, and often adds two brand new dirhams'.<sup>141</sup>

To conclude on this theme, two facts must be considered. Firstly, there is considerable ambiguity with respect to the origins of these huge sums. With the exception of very rare cases, the sources provide no clear distinction between the funds of the state treasury and those of the sovereign, to the point that one might wonder if the Caliph himself recognised such a distinction. This confusion also appears in the gifts of land and estates that were given by the Caliph on many occasions, without any reference to their origin. Secondly, all the money was given under the supervision of the Caliph himself, or by his order, which leads us to believe that spending authority, in this field, was outside the terms of reference of local governments. Even the subsidies to towns were provided by his permission. For example, the inhabitants of Alcacer de Sal, a small town near Lisbon, had to wait until 1191 when Caliph al-Manṣūr ordered payment of regular subventions from the treasuries of Seville and Ceuta to help them to survive in their dangerous position.<sup>142</sup>

### **3. *Al-Sikkah* or Almohad Coinage**

In his essay on Almohad numismatic reform, Prieto Vives describes the profound changes that they introduced into their currencies.<sup>143</sup> The specific form introduced by the Almohads in numismatics is the square coin, a feature that makes the Almohads' and their successors' coins easily recognisable. However, the fact that the Almohad coins had no issue date on them makes it difficult to determine when the first Almohad coin was minted. Some historians have stated that the first coin was minted during the reign of the Maḥdī, who set the precedent for coining square dirhams and for engraving

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<sup>140</sup> *al-Istibṣār fī 'ajāib al-amṣār*, p. 210.

<sup>141</sup> Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu'jab*, p. 249; Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 228.

<sup>142</sup> Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 211; Kennedy, *Muslim Spain*, p. 243.

<sup>143</sup> A. Prieto Vives, 'La reforma numismática de los almohades', *Miscelánea de estudios árabes* (Madrid, 1915), pp. 13-144.

a square on the round dinar.<sup>144</sup> Ibn Khaldūn went even further, and he claimed that “*the Mahdī was described as the ‘master of the square dirham’ by the practitioners of magic who predicted the coming of his dynasty*”.<sup>145</sup> This statement, and the fact that the Almohad coins have no date of issue, casts doubt among modern researchers. Salvador Fontenla, for example, believes that, although Ibn Tūmart never produced gold coins, he must certainly have minted silver dirhams.<sup>146</sup> He support his argument, beside the statement of Ibn Khaldūn and al-Marrākushī, with the fact that ‘Abd al-Mu’min, who produced silver half dirhams bearing his own name, did not, however, have it engraved on dirhams which, in Fontenla's interpretation, was a way of respecting the style and inscriptions of the coins that the Mahdī had put into circulation.<sup>147</sup> Other researchers, like F. Codera and Maribel Fierro, believe that the first coin was produced during the reign of ‘Abd al-Mu’min and most likely after the occupation of Marrakech and the founding of the empire.<sup>148</sup> Codera considered that, although it might be assumed that the dirhams that have engraved on them the name of al-Mahdī were coined during the life of the founder, this is not acceptable in any way, because many of them had on them the names of towns that were not conquered by the Almohads until after the death of al-Mahdī. We must also take into account that, during the period of the Mahdī, the Almohads had not yet obtained political authority over the ground that qualified them to issue their own currency. However, in spite of serious attempts and arguments made by each team to support its point, the fact still remains that, with the absence of dates on the Almohad coins, there is no way to prove whether Ibn Tūmart or ‘Abd al-Mu’min minted coins before the year 541.

The monetary policy of the Almohads differs greatly from that carried out by the Almoravids as their respective ideologies were radically different. Dinars minted by the Almohads represent not only a complete numismatic breakdown regarding their defeated predecessors in power, but also a radical departure from the policies of coin minting that were generally followed in the Islamic world. While the quality of the gold remained at exactly the same grade until then, the weight, size and the design were drastically altered. The old standard weight of 4.2 grams, which had been the weight

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<sup>144</sup> Abī al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Yūsuf al-Ḥakīm, ‘al-Dūḥah al-Mushtabīkah’, ed. I. Mu’nis, *Ṣaḥīfat Ma’had al-Dirāsāt al-Islāmīyah*, 1-2 (Madrid, 1958), pp. 63-204.

<sup>145</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddima*, English trans., vol. 2, p. 57.

<sup>146</sup> Salvador Fontenla Ballesta, ‘Especificidad la moneda almohade’, *Los almohades: Problemas y Perspectivas*, vol. 1, pp. 53-67.

<sup>147</sup> Salvador delivers other arguments to support his point of view, such as: the mention of people in charge of the mint in the hierarchy of Ibn Tūmart in the version of *Kitāb al-ansāb* (which is highly debatable); the existence of Almohad dirhams minted in Tnmal, the Almohads' first capital.

<sup>148</sup> F. Codera y Zaidín, *Tratado de numismática árabe-española* (Madrid, 1879), p. 22.

desired by the Almoravids, was inconsistent with the Umayyad dinar that was established during the first century of Islam and which was adopted, despite political differences or ideological ones, by the `Abbasids. Instead, the Almohads introduced a smaller dinar with an average weight of 2.27 grams and a diameter of between 19 and 22 mm. This reduction in weight could have been due more to economic restrictions than to reasons of ideology. The route to sub-saharan Africa and the gold mines would not have been fully protected by the Almohads in the early phase of its hegemony. It is also uncertain that the cordial relations that linked the Almoravids with West Africa, where gold was mined and exported, continued to exist after the Almoravids were defeated by the Almohads.

Consequently, the Almohads coined what modern numismatists have come to call the “double dinar”, whose average weight is 4.55 grams and whose diameter ranges between 27 and 32 mm. This dinar would emerge for the first time during the caliphate of Abū Yūsuf Ya‘qūb al-Manṣūr (1184-1199) and appears to have been introduced to fill the gap in the circulation of gold coins after the collapse of Ibn Mardaniṣh and the consequent devaluation and eventual disappearance of the dinars that he coined.

As for al-Andalus, the situation is less difficult. Studies agree that the first coin was minted during the reign of ‘Abd al-Mu‘min. According to Ibn Abī Zar‘, the first to swear allegiance (*bay‘ā*) to the Almohads in al-Andalus was ‘Alī b. b. ‘Īsā Maymūn, the Almoravid naval commander, who delivered the first *khuṭbā* of loyalty to the Almohads in al-Andalus in the mosque at Cádiz, in 1146.<sup>149</sup> There is no evidence, so far, that coins were issued as a result of this act. However, taking into account the evidence now available, the first coins issued by, or on behalf of, the Almohads were minted in al-Andalus workshops even before their final victory against the Almoravids in 1146.<sup>150</sup> It is fairly certain that the early Almohad coins must have been minted by ‘Aḥmad b. Qasī in western al-Andalus (*Gharb al-Andalus*). They were engraved on one side with the *Shahādātān* (the two testimonials of Muslims) and, on the other side, with what could be described as an expression of the Almohad doctrine: *Allāh rabbuna wā-Muḥammad nabiyyuna wā-l-Mahdī imāmuna*. The Almohad Caliph would only be identified by his title, *al-Imām al-Qā‘im bī-Amr Allāh*.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Ibn Abī Zar‘, *Rawḍ al-Qirṭās*, p. 121.

<sup>150</sup> See José Rodrigues Marinho. ‘The monetary issues of Ahmad ibn Qasī in Silves and the beginning of the characteristic Almohad coinage’, pp. 43-58.

<sup>151</sup> Among the many variants, see: Vives Antonio y Escudero, *Monedas de las dinastías arábigoespañolas* (Madrid, 1893), No. 1915, p. 318.

### 3.1 The Almohad Dinar

The first dinar coined in the name of ‘Abd al-Mu’min was stamped at the mint of Jaén in 1146<sup>152</sup>. Interestingly, it is in the style of the Almoravids’ dinars. In one of the central areas there are phrases as follows.

<p><i>lā ilāha illha Allāh waḥdahu lā sharīka la-hu amīr al-mu’minīn ‘Abd al-Mu’min b. ‘Alī</i></p>	<p>There is no God but Allāh He is only One. No partners for Him Leader of the Faithful ‘Abd al-Mu’min b. ‘Alī</p>
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In the phrases on the border the following are collected:

*bism Allāh, ḍuriba hadhā al-dīnār bi-Jayyān, ‘ām ihḍa wa-arba’īn wa-khams mī’a*

(In the name of God, this dinar was struck in Jaén in 541)

In the other central area the phrases are as follows:

<p><i>Allāh rabbuna Wā-Muḥammad nabīyyuna Wā-l-Mahdī imāmuna</i></p>	<p>Allāh is our God Muḥammad is our Prophet Al-Mahdī is our Imam</p>
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While the phrase that can be read on the border is the "Prophetic Mission".



Figure 7: Dinar, minted in Jaén<sup>153</sup>

The use of the Almoravid style in these dinars is also seen in subsequent Almohad releases conducted in the mint at Ceuta, where a rare copy was coined in 1147<sup>154</sup>, in whose central obverse phrases we read:

<p><i>lā ilāha illā Allāh Muḥammad rasūl Allāh ṣalla Allāh ‘alay-hi wasallam al-Mahdī al-qā’im bi-amr Allāh</i></p>	<p>There is no God but Allāh Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh, May Allāh honour him and grant him peace Al-Mahdī is the One who carries out God’s orders</p>
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<sup>152</sup> Arlette Nègre, ‘Le trésor islamique d’Aurillac’, *trésors monétaires*, 9 (1987), No. 49; Hanna E. Kassis, ‘La moneda, pesos y medidas’, in Viguera (ed), *El retroceso territorial*, vol. VIII/2, pp. 303-37.

<sup>153</sup> Coins of al-Andalus, Tonegawa collection

[http://www.andalustonegawa.50g.com/almoravids\\_taixas.htm](http://www.andalustonegawa.50g.com/almoravids_taixas.htm) (Last accessed 1 August, 2015).

<sup>154</sup> This coin, and another issued in the following year, are treated in Hanna E. Kassis, ‘Qāḍī ‘Iyād’s Rebellion against the Almohads in Sabtah (A. H. 542-543/A. D. 1147-1148): New Numismatic Evidence’, pp. 504-14.

The dinars from Jaén and Ceuta are not at all representative of the Almohads' monetary policy, since in their dinars, without exception, they did not include the date. Moreover, most of the known coins do not indicate the mint at which they were struck.

In contrast to what was happening with their predecessors, the Almohads' dinars are very uniform, in as far as style and phrases are concerned. Generally, we could group the Almohad coins that are associated with al-Andalus into six distinct phases, as follows:

- **First phase: *The reign of 'Abd al-Mu'min (1146-1163)***

The dinars minted during this phase have an average weight of 2.28 grams. This weight became a pattern for subsequent dinars, containing the following core phrases:

**Obverse:** *lā ilāha illā Allāh, Muḥammad rasūl Allāh*

**Reverse:** *al-Mahdī Imām al-umma, al-qā'im bi-amr Allāh.*

The phrases on the border or margin, which usually have a circular shape surrounding the central phrase, are here put in a square, thus being divided into four segments, as follows:

**The obverse:**

1<sup>st</sup>. Segment: *bism Allāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm*

2<sup>nd</sup>. Segment: *ṣallā Allāh 'alā Muḥammad*

3<sup>rd</sup>. Segment: *wa- ahli-hi al-ṭayyibīn*

4<sup>th</sup>. Segment: *al-ṭāhirīn*

**The Reverse:**

1<sup>st</sup>. Segment: *Abū Muḥammad 'Abd*

2<sup>nd</sup>. Segment: *al-Mu'min b. 'Alī*

3<sup>rd</sup>. Segment: *amīr al-mu'minīn*

4<sup>th</sup>. Segment: *al-ḥamd li-Allāh rabbu al-  
'ālamīn.*



**Figure 8: 1/2 Dinar minted in Córdoba<sup>155</sup>**

The name of the mint, if present, is inscribed in smaller characters, in either position, either above or below the central phrases. Among the cities whose names are engraved

<sup>155</sup> Coins of al-Andalus, Tonegawa collection, <http://www.andalustonegawa.50g.com/almohads1.htm> (Last accessed 1 August, 2015).

on the dinars minted in this phase, three were located in al-Andalus: Córdoba<sup>156</sup>, Seville<sup>157</sup> and Jaén.<sup>158</sup> Clearly, the absence of Kur'anic passages in the phrases is something that rarely happens in Islamic numismatics. Equally remarkable is the claim of the caliphate by 'Abd al-Mu'min, set, as shown, in the Jaén dinars mentioned above. There is no evidence that might suggest that the term *Amīr al-Mu'minīn* refers to the Abbasid Caliph of Baghdad. However, any debate one may have about this claim to the caliphate is dissipated by the phrases of the dinars minted in the second phase.

- **Second phase: *The reign of 'Abd al-Mu'min, with his designated heir Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad (1156-1163) and the first part of Abū Ya'qūb Yusūf's reign (1163-1168)***

While starting the second phase of monetary development in 1156, the Almohads had established an iron grip on al-Andalus, except in the area of *Sharq al-Andalus*, which remained under the control Ibn Mardanīsh. The dinars issued during this phase firmly established the style of coinage for the rest of the Almohad period. The legends reflect more strongly the politico-religious ideology, particularly in terms of the caliphate. Moreover, the absence of Kur'anic passages on the dinars from the previous phase was rectified by introducing the following verse: *wa-ilāhu-kum ilāhun wāḥid lā ilāha illā huwa al-raḥmān al-raḥīm*, (your God is one God. There is no deity [worthy of worship] except Him, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful)<sup>159</sup>, a verse that reflects the theology of the Almohads.

The central legends give the impression that the text that was started on the front continues on the back:

**Obverse:**

*bism Allāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm, lā ilāha illā Allāh, Muḥammad rasūl Allāh, al-Mahdī imām al-umma*

**Reverse:**

*al-Qā'im bi-Amr Allāh al-khalīfa Abū Muḥammad 'Abd al-Mu'min b. 'Alī, amīr al-mu'minīn.*

The central phrases are framed by marginal phrases on the same manner as they were in the first phase dinars:

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<sup>156</sup> J. D. Brethes, *Contribution à l'histoire du Maroc par les recherches numismatiques* (Casablanca, 1939), no. 1029.

<sup>157</sup> Vives Antonio, *Monedas*, no. 2057, 2058, p. 346.

<sup>158</sup> F. Codera, 'Cecas arábigo-españolas', *Revista de Archivos, Bibliotecas y Museos* (Madrid, 1874), p. 343.

<sup>159</sup> Koran, Sūra, 2:163.

**Obverse:**

- 1<sup>st</sup>. Segment: *wa-ilāhukum*  
 2<sup>nd</sup>. Segment: *ilāhun wāhidun*  
 3<sup>rd</sup>. Segment: *lā ilāha illā huwa*  
 4<sup>th</sup>. Segment: *al-raḥmān al-raḥīm*

**Reverse:**

- 1<sup>st</sup>. Segment: *al-amīr al-ajall*  
 2<sup>nd</sup>. Segment: *Abū ‘Abd Allāh*  
 3<sup>rd</sup>. Segment: *Muḥammad b.*  
 4<sup>th</sup>. Segment: *Amīr al-Mu’minīn.*



**Figure 9: 1/2 Dinar minted in Fes<sup>160</sup>**

As in the case of dinars in the first phase, the name of the mint, if present, is stamped in smaller characters in either a position that is above or below the central legends.

The dinars of this phase first appear during the period in which Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad was appointed the heir of Abd al-Mu’min (1156-1163). When, instead, his brother Abū Yūsuf Ya‘qūb came to power in 1163, the legends on the dinars remained unchanged, except that they were coined in relation to the marginal inscription on the back, which holds the title *al-amīr al-ajall*, and replaces the name of his deposed brother with his own. These changes left the legend disposed as follows:

- 1<sup>st</sup>. Segment: *al-amīr al-ajall*  
 2<sup>nd</sup>. Segment: *Abū Ya‘qūb*  
 3<sup>rd</sup>. Segment: *Yusūf b.*  
 4<sup>th</sup>. Segment: *Amīr al-Mu’minīn*

During this period, of all the cities of al-Andalus only the name of Seville appears on the dinars.

- **Third phase: The second part of Abū Ya‘qūb Yusūf’s reign (1168-1184)**

The third phase is characterised by the investiture of Abū Yūsuf Yu‘qūb with the title *Amīr al-Mu’minīn*, in 1168.<sup>161</sup> This is reflected in the legend around the reverse of these coins, which are undated, where *al-amīr al-ajall* is replaced by *amīr al-Mu’minīn*.

<sup>160</sup> Coins of al-Andalus, Tonegawa collection, <http://www.andalustonegawa.50g.com/almoahads1.htm> (Last accessed 1st August, 2015).

<sup>161</sup> Harry W. Hazard, *The Numismatic History of Late Medieval North Africa* (New York, 1952), no. 492, p. 148.

Again, Seville is the only city in al-Andalus that is named on the dinars from this period.<sup>162</sup>



**Figure 10: 1/2 Dinar minted in Seville**<sup>163</sup>

- **Fourth phase: *The reign of Abū Yūsuf Ya‘qūb al-Manṣūr (1184-1199)***

The fourth phase saw the expansion of the content of the central legends, which are thus more extensive. Most notable of this extension is the inclusion of parts of two Qur’anic verses, ‘*wa-mā bikum min ni‘matin fa-min Allāh*’ (Whatever you have of favour, it is from Allāh)<sup>164</sup> and, ‘*wa-mā tawfīqī illā bi-Allāh*, (My success is not but through Allāh).<sup>165</sup> The affiliation also becomes more widely expressed: the name of the caliph appears, and it is associated with the names of his father and his grandfather.

It was during this phase that a double-sized dinar was introduced into the Almohad currency. The new dinar (known in Spanish sources as a “doble” has an average weight of 4.55 grams and a diameter of between 27 and 32 mm. The central legends of this ‘doble dinar’ are as follows:

**Obverse:**

*bism Allāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm wa al-ḥamd li-Allāh waḥdah, la ilāha illā Allāh / Muḥammad rasūl Allāh / al-Mahdī imām al-ummā.*

**Reverse:**

*al-qā’im bi-amr Allāh al-khalīfa Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Mu’min b ‘Alī / amīr al-mu’minīn Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsūf b. amīr al-mu’minīn.*

The legends on the border, or margin, continued the tradition of the previous phases but appear to be more compacted, especially on the face, so as to accommodate the Qur’anic texts that were added. These legends are as follows:

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<sup>162</sup> Vives Antonio, *Monedas*, no. 2062, p. 347; For another copy, which includes Seville, see Hazard, *The Numismatic*, no. 498, p. 149.

<sup>163</sup> Coins of al-Andalus, Tonegawa collection: <http://www.andalustonegawa.50g.com/almoahads1.htm> (Last accessed 1st August, 2015).

<sup>164</sup> Koran, Sūra, 14: 53.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid, Sūra, 11:88.

**Obverse:**1<sup>st</sup>. Segment: *wa-ilāhukum ilāhun wāḥidun*2<sup>nd</sup>. Segment: *lā ilāha illā huwa al-rahmān al-rahīm*3<sup>rd</sup>. Segment: *wā-mā bikum min ni'matin fa-min Allāh*4<sup>th</sup>. Segment: *wā-mā tawfiqī illā bi-Allāh***Reverse:**1<sup>st</sup>. Segment: *amīr al- mu'minīn*2<sup>nd</sup>. Segment: *Abū Yusūf Ya'qūb*3<sup>rd</sup>. Segment: *b. amīr al- mu'minīn*4<sup>th</sup>. Segment: *b. amīr al- mu'minīn*

As has become apparent, no mint in al-Andalus appears on dinars from this period.<sup>166</sup>



**Figure 11: Dinar minted during the period of Ya'qūb al-Manṣūr<sup>167</sup>**

***Fifth phase: The reign of Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb al-Nāṣir (1199-1213) and Abū Yusūf Ya'qūb al-Mustanṣir (1213-1224)***

The legends on the dinars of this fifth phase are usually the same as those in the previous period, except for precise amendments due to the change of ruler and the desire to publicly display the dynastic list.<sup>168</sup> However, there are two significant changes in the legends on the margins: The first is the elimination, once again, of the passage from the Koran that are inscribed on the fringe of the front, which happens to be replaced by the name of the ruler. The second is the introduction of the proud expression *al-Khulafā' al-Rāshidūn* (Orthodox Caliphs) as an epithet for the Almohad Caliphs. It must be remembered that this term was formerly applied only to the first four caliphs of Islam, and they were all peers and members of the tribe of the Prophet. The overuse of the term *amīr al-mu'minīn* in dinars of both this and the previous phase seems to have had the desired effect, which occurs even in Christian sources, where the Almohad ruler is best known for this title, rather than by any other name.

<sup>166</sup> An example without indication of the mint is Vives Antonio, *Monedas*, no. 2066, p. 348.

<sup>167</sup> Coins of al-Andalus, Tonegawa collection: <http://www.andalustonegawa.50g.com/almohads1.htm> (Last accessed 1st August, 2015).

<sup>168</sup> Some dinars minted during the reign of Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb al-Nāṣir recover the style of the dinars in the second phase, with *al-Amīr al-ajall Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Amīr al-Mu'minīn*, replacing the legend on the margin of the back. Vives presented one in the form of a "doble dinar", no. 2070, and another in the form of a single dinar, no. 2071. Vives Antonio, *Monedas*, p. 349.



**Figure 12: Dinar minted during the period of Muḥammad al-Nāṣir<sup>169</sup>**

- **Sixth phase: *The reign of Abū al-‘Ulā Idrīs b. Ya‘qūb (1227-1230)***

The adjustments to the "double dinars" of this sixth phase were associated with the reign of Abū al-‘Ulā al-Ma‘mūn (1227-1232), the last Almohad Caliph with effective power that was connected with al-Andalus.<sup>170</sup> In the legends of the two known types of "double dinars" the tradition of expression, to make known the long list of names of their predecessors, and the omission of the passage from the Koran continues. One of the copies introduces the term *al-Mujāhid al-Ma‘mūn* as an epithet for the Caliph Abū al-‘Ulā.<sup>171</sup> The expression *Ibn al-khalīfatayn* appears on both coins and differs only in respect of their distribution of the legend.<sup>172</sup>



**Figure 13: Dinar minted during the period of Abū al-‘Ulā Idrīs b. Ya‘qūb<sup>173</sup>**

<sup>169</sup> Coins of al-Andalus, Tonegawa collection: <http://www.andalustonegawa.50g.com/almohads1.htm> (Last accessed 1st August, 2015).

<sup>170</sup> This link is limited to the fact that he was proclaimed Caliph and loyalty (bay'a) was sworn to him in Seville; see Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, p. 274.

<sup>171</sup> Vives Antonio, *Monedas*, no. 2076, p. 351.

<sup>172</sup> For the second type, see Hazard, *The Numismatic History*, no. 512, p. 153.

<sup>173</sup> Coins of al-Andalus, Tonegawa collection, <http://www.andalustonegawa.50g.com/almohads1.htm> (Last accessed 1st August, 2015).

### 3.2 Silver Coins

The Almohad dirhams more often present us with the names of cities in al-Andalus. These dirhams can be either circular<sup>174</sup>, with an inscribed square containing the legend, or square, the latter being the most common. The names of the mints in al-Andalus, when they appear, are recorded under the legend on the reverse side in square dirhams that bear the name of 'Abd al-Mu'min. The legends are as follows:

**Obverse:** *al-ḥamdu li-Allāh rabbu al-'ālamīn*

**Reverse:** *Abū Muḥammad 'Abd al-Mu'min b. 'Alī amīr al-mu'minīn.*

These Andalusian mints which appear impressed on the silver coins are the cities of Granada<sup>175</sup>, Seville<sup>176</sup>, Jaén<sup>177</sup>, Malaga<sup>178</sup> and Murcia.<sup>179</sup> During the governments of all the Almohad Caliphs that followed 'Abd al-Mu'min, square dirhams were struck in which one could typically read the same Almohad legends:

**Obverse:** *lā ilāha illā Allāh / al-amr kulluhu li-Allāh / lā quwwata illā bi-Allāh*

**Reverse:** *Allāh rabbunā / Muḥammad rasulunā / al-Mahdī imāmunā.*

When the name of the mint appears, it does so positioned under the legend on the back. A number of cities in al-Andalus are mentioned in these pieces: Valencia, Dénia, Granada, Seville, Jaén, Málaga, Menorca, Mallorca, Murcia, Córdoba and Jerez.<sup>180</sup>



**Figure 14: Two Dirhams minted during the period of 'Abd al-Mu'min b. 'Alī<sup>181</sup>**

<sup>174</sup> For example, see Hazard, *The Numismatic History*, no. 1065, p. 264.

<sup>175</sup> Ibad, no. 1072, p. 265.

<sup>176</sup> Vives Antonio, *Monedas*, no. 2116, p. 360.

<sup>177</sup> Ibad, no. 2114, p. 360.

<sup>178</sup> Ibad, no. 2115, p. 360.

<sup>179</sup> Ibad, no. 2117, p. 360.

<sup>180</sup> See: Vives Antonio, *Monedas*, no. 2089-2099, pp. 356-57.

<sup>181</sup> Coins of the Muwahhid (Almohad) dynasty, Coins from Morocco and Al Andalus, <http://coins.alif.fr/Muwahhid/Muwahhid.html>.

## ***Conclusion***

It is not clear whether the financial system of the time existed in al-Andalus before the Almohads, or to what extent the latter put their mark on this system. What is certain is that the financial institution performed efficiently and, as a result, the state never suffered, except for some short periods, from any serious financial crises. A hierarchy of financial apparatus enjoys relative autonomy, along with the constant monitoring by sovereigns, have created a kind of financial stability and its results were reflected in the economic situation in the country. However, as in any other institution, when the state loses its power as a result of internal political conflicts, or external defeats, the revenue sources are reduced and economic crises begin to emerge. Financial institutions, no matter how energetic and well-organised, will be unable to cut the deficit in their budget. Here is the role of government: either to seek the help of the sovereign, or to apply their own rules and resort to common methods, such as the imposition of new taxes, even if they are contrary to their principles.

## Judicial and Religious Institutions under the Almohads

The identity of any community is reflected by its institutions, and the ability of a state to survive and develop rests on the stability of those institutions. Like other organisations, the judicial institution is a very important area of study, especially when it comes to a state that is built on a religious basis, promising comprehensive reforms in various institutions and, above all, in its judicial organisation.

As a preliminary observation, we have two points to make: on the one hand, unlike the Fatimids, whose movement was based on an idea and religious structures, the Almohads never designated under the label *wazā'if dīniyya* (religious functions)<sup>1</sup>. It is certain that the Almohads did not need either *fuqahā'*, or other men of religion, to legitimise their actions. Furthermore, the centralisation of the Mašmūdien state considerably hampered and limited the power of the judges and *Faqīh*-s. In addition, a brief overview of the primitive hierarchy shows that the charges which could be refer to as "religious" were ranked at the bottom of the table and sometimes, in some lists, they were completely ignored. On the other hand, the shortage of documents contrasts with the interest that Muslim writers have generally agreed upon in this area. It also contrasts with the concern for justice, which is based on the very project of the dynasty's founder, Ibn Tūmart. This certainly makes our job quite difficult, as it requires research into several kinds of sources in order to provide a better understanding of the nature of the religious and judicial organisation of the Almohad state. However, the main types of these sources are twofold: firstly, official documents, which in turn can be divided into the letters to administrative officials, which address various issues, and the letters or the *taqādīm* of appointments of *qādī*-s. Secondly, there are the biographical dictionaries that are of inestimable interest in establishing an almost exhaustive list of *qādī*-s.

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā*, vol. 3, p. 486.

Sometimes, these books present some aspects of the activities of judges, although the data are usually standardised, because the authors tended to reject many details.

This chapter examines the judiciary institution in al-Andalus such as *khuṭṭat al-Qaḍā'*, *al-Ḥisbā* and *al-Shurṭa* and shed light on the religious functions, namely the *Imām*, *Khaṭīb* and *Mu'dhdhin*. Finally, we will analyse the attempts of the sovereign to reform judicial law by adopting a regenerative project against the Mālikī School. It should be noted that this chapter will not address the doctrine of the Almohads, nor the caliph's judicial privileges, as they have been studied in depth in several other studies<sup>2</sup>.

## 1. Judicial Institutions

### 1.1 Qāḍī al-Jamā'a

A typical Andalusian position, which continue to be maintained at this time, was the *Qāḍī al-Jamā'a*, or the "judge of the community", which was established at Córdoba in the Umayyad period, and which stood at the top of the judicial hierarchy.<sup>3</sup> Historians believe that the position was similar to the position of the *qāḍī al-quḍāt*, which first appeared in the Abbasid Caliphate and was then adopted by other eastern Islamic states, such as the Fatimid and Ayyubid dynasties.<sup>4</sup> At this time, the Almohads followed their predecessors, the Almoravids, in maintaining the post of *qāḍī al-jamā'a*, and the sources indicate 12 judges who occupied this position in the capital, Marrakech<sup>5</sup>. As for al-Andalus, we read, in Ibn al-Abbār's *al-Takmila*, that the well-known Ibn Rushd was *qāḍī al-Jamā'a* of Córdoba.<sup>6</sup> In the same source, the author claimed that Aḥmad b. Mūḥammad al-Lakhmī al-Bājī was *qāḍī al-Jamā'a* of Seville for a long time, and until

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<sup>2</sup> For recent and relevant studies on these subjects, see the special issue of *Revue des Mondes Musulmanes et de la Méditerranée*, nos. 91-4 (1999). Especially relevant to this thesis are Michael Brett, 'Le Mahdī dans le Maghrib médiéval: l'élaboration de la légitimité Almohade', pp. 93-106; Maribel Fierro, 'Le Mahdi Ibn Tumart', pp. 107-24; Tilman Nagel, 'Le mahdisme d'Ibn Tumart et d'Ibn Qasi: une analyse phénoménologique', pp. 125-36; and Mercedes Garcia-Arenal, 'Imām et Mahdī: Ibn Abī Mahallī', pp. 157-80. There are also two excellent colloquium collections *Mahdisme: crise et changement dans l'histoire du Maroc* (Rabat, 1994); and *Los Almohades: problemas y perspectivas*, vol. 2, pp. 739-1230.

<sup>3</sup> According to the 10<sup>th</sup> century faqīh and historian, Abī 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad al-Khashnī, the first *qāḍī* who took the title of *qāḍī al-jamā'a* was Yaḥyā b. Yazīd al-Tajībī during the reign of 'Abd al-Raḥmān I (731-788). Al-Khashnī, *Quḍāt qurṭuba wā 'ulamā' Ifrīqiya*, ed. A. A. al-Ḥusīnī (Cairo, 1953), p. 28; Hopkins, *Medieval Muslim Government*, p. 120.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Nabbāhī, *Tārīkh quḍāt al-Andalus: al-Marqaba al-'uliyā fīman yastahīqu al-qaḍā' wa-l-futtiyā*, ed. Lajnat Iḥiya al-ṭurāth al-'Arabī (Beirut, 1983), p. 117; al-Maqqarī, *Naḥḥ al-Ṭīb*, vol. 2, p. 101.

<sup>5</sup> Hopkins, *Medieval Muslim Government*, p. 131-32.

<sup>6</sup> Ibn Abbār, *al-Takmila*, vol. 2, p. 149.

1234.<sup>7</sup> Some researchers, such as J. Bosch Vilà<sup>8</sup>, F. Rodríguez Mediano<sup>9</sup> and ‘Azzāwī<sup>10</sup> took these references as evidence to indicate the existence of the post in al-Andalus at that time. Mūsā ‘Izz al-Dīn, on the other hand, argues that, in such cases, the title was honorary, rather than being an official mandate, given by the author to some judges as a form of respect, and in honour of their professional skills and status in Andalusian society.<sup>11</sup> This may be true for certain reasons: first, other than the two references mentioned above, none of the Almohad sources and documents speak of the *qāḍī al-jamā‘a* in al-Andalus, and this is particularly true of the eyewitness accounts, such as Ibn Šāḥib al-Šalāt who, for example, was in contact with the *qāḍī* Ibn Rushd, but who never refers to him as the *qāḍī al-jamā‘a*.<sup>12</sup> Secondly, the *qāḍī al-jamā‘a* was considered one of the central administrative positions because his main duties required him to be in the capital of the Empire, next to the caliph and under his direct supervision; to be a member of the special advisory board and one of tools upon whom the caliph relied when making political decisions or administrative reforms alongside judicial duties.

Apparently, the position of the *qāḍī al-jamā‘a* was established very early, but did not have a specific title or duties. We know that the Mahdī chose Abū Ibrāhīm Ismā‘īl al-Khazrajī, a member of the Council of *Ten*, to decide disputes on his orders.<sup>13</sup> With the arrival of ‘Abd al-Mu‘min, another character Abū Mūsā ‘Imrān b. Sulaymān al-Kafīf, the stepfather of the caliph and a member of the Assembly of *Fifty*, carried out the same duties but, again, without a specific title as the first one.<sup>14</sup> However, once the administration was equipped with new institutions, the Almohads no longer had, from the very beginning, access to the office, which was reserved solely for distinguished scholars from the *Ḥaḍar ṭalabat* and secretaries.<sup>15</sup>

As with other important positions, the appointment or dismissal of the *qāḍī al-jamā‘a* was exclusive the privilege of the sovereign, which usually occurred with the death of the caliph and the rise of a new one. Depending on professional skills, sometimes the judge was exercising another job along with his judicial duties, as in the

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, vol. 2, p. 163.

<sup>8</sup> Bosch Vilà, ‘The Organisation and consolidation of the Islamic administration in al-Andalus’, *Regierung und Verwaltung des vorderen Orients in islamischer Zeit* (Leiden, 1979), vol. 2, p. 130.

<sup>9</sup> F. Rodríguez Mediano, ‘Instituciones judiciales: cadies y otras magistraturas’, in *Historia de España*, pp. 171-186.

<sup>10</sup> ‘Azzāwī, *Rasā’il*, vol. 2, p. 248.

<sup>11</sup> Mūsā, *Tanzīmāt al-Muwahḥidīn*, p. 230.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Ibn Šāḥib la-Šalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 149, 223, 226, 410, 496.

<sup>13</sup> Al-Baydhaq, *Akhbār al-Mahdī*, p. 33.

<sup>14</sup> Ibn Šāḥib la-Šalāt, *al-Mann*, p. 224; Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Nuẓm al-Jumān*, p. 175; Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 80.

<sup>15</sup> See the table of *qāḍī al-jamā‘a* given by Hopkins in, *Medieval Muslim Government*, p. 153-55.

case of the famous Ibn Rushd, who exercised, on the one hand, the functions of *qāḍī al-jamā'a* and eminently religious functions in Muslim society, and he was, on the other hand, the official philosopher and one of the doctors of the caliph, Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb.<sup>16</sup> The removal of a *qāḍī al-jamā'a* resulted almost immediately in the impeachment of the other *qāḍī*-s within the region of Marrakech, who were appointed by him.<sup>17</sup> Yet the biographical sources, like *Dhayl*, *al-Takmila* and some *taqdīms*, show that this function was hereditary and had a degree of continuity.<sup>18</sup>

### **What was the role of the *Qāḍī al-Jamā'a*?**

As mentioned previously, the *qāḍī al-jamā'a* had a seat on the Council of the Caliph, which was the highest consulting authority in the Almohad Empire. During the reign of al-Ma'mūn, and after the catastrophe that had befallen the *Sheikh*-s, the *qāḍī* became the caliph's first adviser and he appeared to be a director of the basic state policy.<sup>19</sup>

Amongst his activities, the judge presided over court proceedings, which seem to have been held in the Palace of the Caliph.<sup>20</sup> It was his task to pronounce the *bay'a* for the new Caliph, and to present delegations arriving in caliphal palace.<sup>21</sup> He also accompanied the sovereign on major military expeditions.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, he chaired the solemn prayer in the capital, managed the product of the *zakat*, and celebrated religious festivals.<sup>23</sup> The *qāḍī* would also have carried the responsibilities of *Khaṭīb*. Al-Marrākushī thus praised *the qāḍī al-jamā'a* of Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb, Abū Mūsā 'Isā b. 'Imrān al-Tāzī, and said that he was also a good orator (*Khaṭīb*).<sup>24</sup> However, the eastern author, al-Ṣafādī, in his description of the Board of the Caliph al-Nāṣir, made a big difference between the *Khaṭīb* who sat right next to the Caliph, and the *qāḍī* who sat a little further away.<sup>25</sup>

As regards administrative responsibilities, the authority of the *qāḍī al-jamā'a*, as the chief of the judicial organisation, appears to be less than had been expected.

<sup>16</sup> See R. Arnaldez, 'Averroes', *les Africains*, IV (1977), p. 43-67

<sup>17</sup> See examples cited by Ḥ. A. Ḥasan, *al-ḥaḍārah al-Islāmiya*, p. 155-57.

<sup>18</sup> 'Azzāwī, *Rasā'il*, vol. 2, p. 248, and see the references provided.

<sup>19</sup> Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, pp. 256, 284; Ibn al-Khaṭīb, *al-Iḥāṭa fī akhbār Gharnāṭa*, vol. 1, p. 419.

<sup>20</sup> Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu'jab*, p. 285.

<sup>21</sup> M. al-Zuhaylī, *tārīkh-al-qḍā' fī al-Islām* (Damascus, 1995), p. 327.

<sup>22</sup> A fairly recent study of the famous Almohad *qāḍī* Abū al-Rabī' Sulaymān al-Kilā'ī states that this judge handled the organisation of military expeditions, choosing tactics and commanding the troops in combat: T. Lihī, *Abū al-Rabī' Sulaymān b. Mūsā b. Sālim al-Kilā'ī: hayātuhu wa-āthāruhu* (Casablanca, 1994), p. 108.

<sup>23</sup> M. Gaudefroy Demombynes, 'Notes sur l'histoire de l'organisation judiciaire en pays d'Islam' *Revue des études islamiques*, II (1939), p. 109-147

<sup>24</sup> Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu'jab*, p. 285.

<sup>25</sup> Al-Ṣafādī, *al-Wāfī bi-l-wafīyāt*, ed. A. al-Arna'ūfī (Beirut, 2000), vol. 17, p. 575.

Theoretically, the *qāḍī al-Jamā'a*, by virtue of his office, was in charge of appointing the judges of the provinces, monitoring their performance and transferred or dismissed those who were guilty of corruption, or who had failed to perform their duty.<sup>26</sup> In practice, the authority of the *qāḍī al-jamā'a* was limited to in the capital and its districts, and thus the appointment of judges in the provinces became an exclusive privilege of the Almohad Caliph.<sup>27</sup> This means that the administrative authority of the *qāḍī al-jamā'a* was similar to that of the provincial judges who, in turn, were responsible for the appointment of the lesser judges in their regions. Restricting the power of the judge in the capital seems to have been a strategy that was inherited by the Almohads from their predecessors, the Almoravids, who, in turn, did not invent it but maintained the sections of the provincial judicial institution which was created as a result of the political division that prevailed in al-Andalus after the disintegration of the Umayyad dynasty into separate emirates, into what is known as the Taifa states.<sup>28</sup>

As might be expected, the sources do not provide much information about the salary of *qāḍī al-jamā'a* or his financial position. However, Ibn Abī Zar' noted the words of the *qāḍī al-jamā'a* of al-Manṣūr, Mūḥammad b. Ṭāhir al-Ḥasīnī 'It reached me from the Amīr al-Mu'minīn al-Manṣūr since I've known him [in 587] until his death [in 595] about nineteen thousand [dīnārs] without counting *khula'* [presents], *marākib* and *Iqṭā'* [fiefs]'.<sup>29</sup>

Finally, it is difficult to assess the *qāḍī's* degree of autonomy over the administrative apparatus. This, according to H. Djait:

'... relied heavily on the holder's personality, but in any case, being a high official authority, appointed by the government, the *qāḍī* was related, whether he liked it or not, to the regime. Yet he was more than that, and could appear in moments of crisis or power vacuum as the leader of the Islamic community'.<sup>30</sup>

## 1.2 Provincial Judges

The sources sometimes called provincial judges *quḍāt al-wilāyāt* and sometimes *ḥukām al-jihāt*. They rank third in the judicial pyramid (after the Caliph and the *qāḍī al-jamā'a*) and come at the top of the legislative and administrative authority of the provincial judicial institution. As previously mentioned, the judges in the provinces

<sup>26</sup> Al-Khashnī, *Quḍāt qurṭuba*, p. 29; M. al-Zuhaylī, *tārīkh-al-qḍā' fī al-Islām*, p. 327.

<sup>27</sup> See Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Nuẓm al-Jumān*, p. 132; Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 129, 231, 233; See also the *taqdīm-s* in Pascal, *Governing the Empire*, pp. 406-97.

<sup>28</sup> El Hour, 'The Andalusian Qāḍī', p. 68; Ḥ. A. Ḥasan, *al-ḥaḍārah al-Islāmiya*, p. 162.

<sup>29</sup> Ibn Abī Zar', *al-Dhakhīra al-Sunniyya*, p. 48; Ḥarakāt, *al-Maghrib 'bra al-tārīk*, vol. 1, p. 325.

<sup>30</sup> H. Djait, 'La wilāya d'Ifrīqiya au II<sup>e</sup>/VIII<sup>e</sup> siècle (86-184H / 705-800)', *Annales ESC*, XXVII (1967), p. 103.

were appointed and dismissed by the Caliph, and he never delegated his power to any member of his government, at least until the first quarter of the thirteenth century. However, the *taqdīms*, which were published by ‘Azzāwī, contain a *taqdīm* that shows a different act. Here the Caliph, perhaps al-Rashīd, did actually delegate his power, and thus a governor officially receives the right to make appointments to the offices of *ḥāfiẓ*, *qāḍī* and *‘āmil*.<sup>31</sup> It must be remembered that these *taqdīm*-s were issued during the period in which the central authority had lost its full control over the provinces, and yet the fact that only one *taqdīm* contains this delegation indicates that the Caliph had not authorised the governors to appoint the judges of their provinces, except within a very narrow range, even in the difficult conditions that were experienced by the Empire during the thirteenth century.

Once the judge was chosen, a decree of appointment was issued in two forms: one would be sent to the chosen *qāḍī* and it confirmed the location of the appointment and the duties of the position, including the Caliph’s injunction to dispense justice according to the Koran and the Sunna. The second would be sent to the destination, announcing the appointment, the reason behind it, and the Caliph’s testimony regarding the qualification of the judge and his professional conduct, concludes with a clear order for the local government to co-operate with him and to facilitate his work. A *taqdīm* issued by the caliph al-Ma’ mūn between September 1227 and November 1229, is a case in point:

‘Know that your land—May God make it a plain—enjoys in our heart exclusive and constantly renewed attention. For your place with us, by the seniority of your friendship, is protected by the generous solicitude of its shepherds (al-ra’yi). This is why we continually distinguish you by watching over your situation, why we enquire ceaselessly about the state of your affairs, small and large, and why we propose to act on all that concerns you in a way that magnificently fulfills your most ambitious hopes.... We have judged it a good thing, after having asked the help of God on High, to name Fulan to judge your affairs related to the Law and to take charge of the religious aspects of your problems; he enjoys a celebrated rank and place of choice in our religion, and everyone agrees on his purity and devotion. We advised him before to fear God on High.... We have ordered him to base his judgments on the Book of God and the Tradition of His messenger, to use them as the basis of his words and actions, and to choose well his instrumentary witness and secondary judges (musaddidīn); indeed, they are the cornerstone on which he founds and authenticates his judgments. We have prescribed that he grant everyone their place, as long as it does not conflict with the Law; indeed, he must take this under consideration, see and hear only it; and no one should have more than another in regards to the imperatives of the law, there is no exception for rank in the pronouncement or execution of a sentence. Once our letter has been read before you, submit your decisions (aḥkām) to him, [come together] behind him so that he may arbitrate among you in case of

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<sup>31</sup> ‘Azzāwī, *Rasā’il*, vol.1 p. 248.

disagreements. Be in agreement, rather than opposition, you will find the blessing that offer concord and union. Know that we have chosen him for those among you with the most perfect valor, education, and religious practice. By our benevolence for you we have designated him to take charge of this responsibility for you and occupy this rank. Bring him support, your aid, and your assistance, if God on High wills it'.<sup>32</sup>

Apart from their valuable information on the judicial positions, biographical dictionaries, as well as the *taqdīm*-s, highlight two important phenomena: the first is the large number of Andalusian judges compared with the number of judges from the Maghrebi side. In his article on the judicial system, El-Mostafa Benouis claimed that the sources mention approximately 361 judges who practised the charge during this time, of whom 284 were Andalusian, mostly from Córdoba, followed by Granada, Seville, Valencia, Murcia and Malaga, respectively.<sup>33</sup> This phenomenon can be explained by the cultural superiority of al-Andalus and the centres for religious sciences and Islamic jurisprudence that had long been established in its cities. It is not thus surprising that the number of Andalusian judges who held this position in Maghrebi cities was higher than the presence of Maghrebi *qādīs* in al-Andalus. In any case, one should keep in mind that biographical dictionaries did not count all the judges but focused on those who have a good reputation and were well-known at the level of the city or region. El-Mostafa also raises the fact that most of these books were written by the Andalusians and therefore the list of Andalusian judges would be more complete and detailed.<sup>34</sup>

The second phenomenon is the frequent movement of the *qādīs*, either between the cities or between al-Andalus and al-Maghreb. The biographical dictionaries are full of examples of judges who exercised the judiciary in more than one place, and who moved during their professional careers from city to city, and from one region to another, all over the empire.<sup>35</sup> For example, Abū Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh b. Sulaymān al-Anṣārī was appointed as a judge in Seville, Mallorca, Murcia, Córdoba, Ceuta, Salé, and then returned to Murcia and died in Granada in 1215.<sup>36</sup> Similarly 'Abd Al-Min'im b. Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān, known as Ibn al-Faras, was appointed in Alcira, Guadix, Jaén and Córdoba and then moved to his hometown Granada with another

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<sup>32</sup> 'Azzāwī, *Rasā'il*, vol. 1, p. 479; Buresi, *Governing the Empire*, pp. 406-08.

<sup>33</sup> E. Benouis, 'L'Organisation du qaḍā' sous les Almohades', *Los Almohades: problemas y perspectivas*, vol. 2, p. 509.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, p. 511.

<sup>35</sup> See Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ishbīlī, *Brnāmij shīūkh al-Ra'īnī*, ed. I. Shabbūh (Damascus, 1962), pp. 132, 151, 154; Ibn al-Zubayr, *Ṣilat al-Ṣila*, pp. 18, 34, 65, 72, 139; Ibn 'Abd al-Malik, *al-Dhayl wa-l-takmila*, vol. 5, pp. 388, 448, 572, 676; al-Ghubrīnī, *Unowān al-dirāya*, pp. 120, 129, 160; Ibn al-Khaṭīb, *al-Iḥātā fī akhbār Gharnāṭa*, vol. 1, p. 181.

<sup>36</sup> Al-Nabbāhī, *Tārīkh quḍāt al-Andalus*, p. 112.

judicial duty where he died in 1201.<sup>37</sup> The sources provide no information about the purpose of the active mobility within the category of judges, but it seems to have had positive effects in the development of the judicial system. On the one hand, the practising of the judiciary in different towns and cities helped the judge to improve his judicial skills, and gave him more experience, which qualified him to obtain a higher position and more responsibilities. The *qāḍī* often started his professional career as a secondary judge (*musadid*), who exercised his duties as a judge in small towns in order to acquire the necessary experience which qualified him to be promoted to judge and to move to a big city. On the other hand, it offered him a good opportunity to get to know the scholars and the *fuqahā'* of other places, and to take advantage of their knowledge, skills and their views in the field of the judiciary and *sharī'a* law. On the part of the caliphate, this strategy could have been designed to reduce the influence of the judges on a given community. Thus, according to El-Mostafa's statistics, two *qāḍī*-s out of three exercised their post outside their hometown.<sup>38</sup> This strategy was also designed to act as a means to prevent corruption. In fact, only one case was reported in which the judge was accused of bribery and even this is questionable.<sup>39</sup>

As regards the function of the judge, the sources throw a light on many of the administrative and judicial affairs that were covered by the judge's duties, not to mention the social and religious activities that were linked to his position as a representative of the religious authority and the most prominent and influential figures in the Muslim community. In terms of judicial and administrative affairs, Māwardī, followed by Nabbāhī, who served as the *qāḍī* of Granada during the fourteenth century, listed the cases that fell within the responsibility of the judge, such as, settling suits between litigants; guardianship over those who were insane or foolish, and imposing restrictions on those considered bankrupt; the supervision of wills and mortmain donations, and of the marrying of marriageable women who did not have a legal guardian and were demanded in marriage; the supervision of (public) roads and buildings within his zone of jurisdiction. The *qāḍī* was also responsible for the application of the *ḥudūd* (prescribed penalties) to those deserving such punishments, as long as proof had been established, either by confession or by the testimony of others.<sup>40</sup> However, the judges in the regions did not have a free hand to judge in certain cases

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<sup>37</sup> Ibn al-Zubayr, *Ṣilat al-Ṣila*, p. 195; Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Takmila*, vol. 3, p. 127.

<sup>38</sup> E. Benouis, 'L'Organisation du qāḍā'', p. 516.

<sup>39</sup> This was the case of Ibn Ja'fir Ibn Abī Ghālib, *qāḍī* of Málaga. Ibn Sa'īd, *Ikhtisār al-Qidh*, p. 123.

<sup>40</sup> See Māwardī, *al-aḥkām al-sultāniyya*, pp. 119-21, English trans. pp. 106-08; Al-Nabbāhī, *Tārīkh quḍāt al-Andalus*, pp. 5-6.

until they had received approval from al-*Ḥaḍrah* (the capital). These were matters such as those related to blood money for head fractures, blood money for the body organs, a penalty for theft, manumission and slavery. Furthermore, they were prevented from implementing the death penalty on anyone, whether from among the Almohads or from outside the empire. In his letter to the provincial governments, the Caliph ‘Abd al-Mu’min stated that these cases fell within the jurisdiction of the sovereign and the judges were mandated to transfer them to the capital, with all the related documents and records, including witness statements and testimony, the arguments of the plaintiffs, and the confessions or the arguments of the accused.<sup>41</sup> However, this authority appears to have exceptionally been given to some of the provincial judges. Al-Manṣūr thus delegated the *qāḍī* of Granada, Ibn al-Faras, to judge in cases involving bloodshed.<sup>42</sup>

Within his administrative responsibilities, the judge was in charge of appointing the judge of small towns, or, as the sources called them, *Musaddidūn*, whose duty seems to have been limited to addressing minor cases<sup>43</sup>. Yet, the caliph, and sometimes certain *wālī*-s, could use their authority to appoint such *qāḍī*-s within the scope of his province, especially if the residents of the city requested them to do so<sup>44</sup>. The *wālī* of Seville, for example, appointed ‘Alī b. Aḥmed b. ‘Alī as a judge of Jerez de la Frontera at the behest of its population.<sup>45</sup> The *qāḍī* also appointed the staff in his office, such as the judge’s deputies (*nāib al-qāḍī*), secretaries (*kuttāb*) and notaries (*muwaththiqun*). However, instrumental witnesses, or *shuhūd*, were the *qāḍī*’s most important staff members. Indeed, the *taqāḍīm* spoke frequently about the importance of the witnesses and of their great role in helping the judge to make his decisions and to authenticate his judgments. He was therefore strongly advised to select them carefully and personally, and to regularly examine their behaviour and reliability. For example, in the *taqāḍīm* No. 52, the Caliph al-Ma’ mūn advised the *qāḍī*, Abū Muḥammad, who was appointed as Judge of Jerez,

‘To accept as witnesses only those who are known for their sense of justice and honesty, famous for their vigilance and sagacity, as well as for their purity and virtue, for testimony is the judge’s pillar and support (by which he issues or receives... that he refuses) and it is the source of what he binds or unbinds in his

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<sup>41</sup> Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, pp. 304-05; Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Nuẓm al-Jumān*, pp. 159-61.

<sup>42</sup> Ibn al-Zubayr, *Ṣilat al-Ṣila*, p. 19.

<sup>43</sup> The *wālī* could sometimes use his authority to appoint judges in the small towns that fell within the scope of his province, especially if he were asked by the residents of the city to do so. The *wālī* of Seville, for example, appointed ‘Alī b. Aḥmed b. ‘Alī as a judge of Jerez de la Frontera at the behest of its population.

<sup>44</sup> Ibn al-Zubayr, *Ṣilat al-Ṣila*, pp. 18, 22, 130, 184; Ibn ‘Abd al-Malik, *al-Dhayl wa-l-takmila*, vol. 5, pp. 61, 168, 280.

<sup>45</sup> Ibn al-Zubayr, *Ṣilat al-Ṣila*, p. 277-78.

judgments. Thus, to that must he dedicate all his efforts and recognise or refuse [witnesses] as he should'.<sup>46</sup>

As noted by Cahen, the term *shāhid* refers to two categories: witnesses for the material facts, who change from case to case, and who cannot therefore be subject to prior designation, and the other category are those who are "instrumental witnesses", who demonstrated through their participation the regularity of judicial acts, and who could technically form a list from which the *quḍāt* can recruit their normal auxiliaries.<sup>47</sup> Zāfir Al Qāsimī simply named the first category "witnesses of litigants", and the second "witnesses of the judge".<sup>48</sup> The number of witnesses was not limited and depended on the type of case and the reliability of the witnesses, and the more the number increased, the more content the judge would be with his decision. Ibn Khaldūn claimed that witnesses (most likely the witnesses of litigants) had their own premises in every city, where people who had transactions to make could engage them to function as witnesses and to register the (testimony) in writing, although there no sign that this was recorded in the case of al-Andalus.<sup>49</sup>

In addition to judicial affairs, the judge enjoyed a central position in the Muslim community for being both an *‘ālim* (*sharī‘a* scholar), who participated in the transfer of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and the prophetic tradition, and as a man of political influence, who had a close link with the authority of the empire. This distinctive character of the judge in the community gave him different social-religious and political responsibilities. For example, the judge gave a sermon and led the prayer at major events, such as religious celebrations.<sup>50</sup> He also oversaw the collection and distribution of *Zakāt al-Fiṭr* among the poor.<sup>51</sup> Ibn Abī Zar‘ went even further, by making the judge of Seville, Abū ‘Abd Allāh b. Ṣaqr, the administrator for the collection of *kharāj*,<sup>52</sup> though this could be an exceptional case because there is evidence that provincial treasuries came under the responsibility of an independent office that was led by an *‘āmil*. The *qāḍī* also often appeared in the sources by acting as the representative and spokesperson for the community. We see, for example, Abū Bakr al-Ghāfiqī and Ibn al-Jadd, the Judges of Seville and Córdoba<sup>53</sup>, respectively, heading a delegation to meet

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<sup>46</sup> ‘Azzāwī, *Rasā’il*, vol. 1, pp. 483-84; Pascal, *governing the Empire*, pp. 417-18.

<sup>47</sup> C. Cahen, ‘A propos des Shuhūd’, *Studia islamica*, 31 (1970), p. 71.

<sup>48</sup> Zāfir Al Qāsimī, *Niẓām al-ḥukim fī al-Sharī‘a wa-l-tārīkh al-Islāmī, al-Sulṭa al-qadā’iyya* (Beirut, 1987), p. 371.

<sup>49</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, vol. 1, p. 280.

<sup>50</sup> Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 254.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>52</sup> Ibn Abī Zar‘, *Rawḍ al-Qirṭās*, p. 207.

<sup>53</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, p. 149; Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 69.

the Caliph ‘Abd al-Mu’min in Gibraltar in 1160, in order to renew the *bay‘a* on behalf of the people of Seville and Córdoba. Similarly, during the Almohad campaign in Ifrīqiya, the entire population of Gabès, with its *qādī* at its head, came out of the city to greet the Almohad army and to declare their submission.<sup>54</sup>

This mixture of power and social status raises a question about the wealth of the judge and the amount of his income. In theory, *fuqahā’* pointed out that the *qādī* should not be poor, in order not to be tempted to accept any benefits (*rashwa*), and to keep his financial independence *vis-à-vis* political power. In reality, only a few of the biographies mention *qādī*-s having sufficient wealth, which most likely did not come only from their wages, but also from family inheritances, the Caliph’s award (*a‘īyāt*) and previous administrative activities, or activities that were outside the judiciary, such as teaching and writing. Among the few who had great wealth there are the *faqīh* Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Yaḥīya b. al-Jad<sup>55</sup>, the *faqīh* ‘Abd Allāh b. Aḥmad b. Abī al-Qāsim<sup>56</sup>, and the *faqīh* Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. ‘Abd Allāh.<sup>57</sup> Certainly, judges in different categories were paid a salary in exchange for their activity in the judicial institution. Muḥammad Zuḥaylī assumed that the salary of judges in al-Andalus was higher than their counterparts in al-Maghrib, due to the contrast in the civilizations and the standards of living between the two areas.<sup>58</sup> The sources do not provide any information about the amount of such salaries. They do, however, mention to cases in which the judge was living in austerity, such as the *faqīh* Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd Allāh b. Ḥajjāj who never spent his salary for his personal needs but distributed to the poor<sup>59</sup>, or in others where possible judges showed their rejection of the post. The *qādī* ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Bāghā’ī, for example, refused to take the office and, at the insistence of the *qādī al-jamā‘ā*, Abū Yūsuf Ḥajjāj, that he accept the offer, he responded by saying ‘*By God, were I to be split with a saw from head to heels I would not accept this office for you*’, so he was excused.<sup>60</sup> This reluctance to accept the *qādī*ship is found in al-Andalus from earliest times and drew the attention of the biographers of judges, such as Abū ‘Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad al-Khashnī (ob. 972) and Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī al-Nabbāhī (ob. 1391), who devoted a chapter in their biographical dictionaries to those who were

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<sup>54</sup> Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 67.

<sup>55</sup> Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Takmila*, vol. 2, p. 64.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, vol. 2, p. 307.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, vol. 3, p. 228.

<sup>58</sup> M. Zuḥaylī, *Tārīkh al-qadā’*, p. 339.

<sup>59</sup> Al-Ghubrīnī, *‘Unwān al-dirāya*, p. 245. For another examples see Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Takmila*, vol. 2, p. 282; Ibn ‘Abd al-Malik, *al-Dhayl wa-l-takmila*, vol. 5, p. 170.

<sup>60</sup> Al-Tadīlī, *al-Tashwwuf*, p. 186.

offered the position of judge and refused it. The most common reason for this reluctance is the fear of the warning statements contained in the Koran and the hadith regarding the judiciary. For example, we read in the Koran that: '*whoever does not judge by what Allāh has revealed, such are the defiantly disobedient*'<sup>61</sup>; also, in the hadith, the Prophet said:

'Judges are of three types, one of whom will go to Paradise and two to Hell. The one who will go to Paradise is a man who knows what is right and gives judgment accordingly; but a man who knows what is right and acts tyrannically in his judgment will go to Hell; and a man who gives judgment for people when he is ignorant will go to Hell'.<sup>62</sup>

However, the interest of such sources in such cases cannot be considered as evidence of this being prevalent behaviour among judges. In fact, in addition to the example mentioned above, only two cases were recorded in which the judge declined to accept the post, one of which was for a political reason.<sup>63</sup> This also applies to judges who refused to take a salary, or who insisted on being paid for only the days when they were exercising their judicial duties.<sup>64</sup>

As they were also appointed by official decrees, what was the relationship between the governors and the Almohad *qāḍī*-s? This question is difficult to ascertain, the few cases available show the two officials next to each other during religious festivals, or when the Caliph was passing in the area. However, this attitude does not exclude plots and underhand intrigues. Moreover, this hidden confrontation may also make us consider the independence of the two charges, and this is not often easy to distinguish.

### 1.3 *The Subordinate Judges*

In medieval Islamic law, judicial power was exercised by virtue of a delegation of authority. This, for the same reason, could define the objective and territorial jurisdiction of the magistrate invested. Under this principle, the Mālikī doctrine allowed the appointment of substitutes who were delegated with all or part of the jurisdiction of the *qāḍī*, in order to assist him in the exercise of his powers.

The first in the list of those assistants comes the *nā'ib* (deputy) who intervened during times of the absence or the illness of the judge.<sup>65</sup> Sometimes the *qāḍī* delegated

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<sup>61</sup> Koran, Sūra, 3: 44.

<sup>62</sup> Al-Termithī, *Sunan al-Termithī*, ed. A. Shākir (Cairo, 1975), vol. 3, p. 605.

<sup>63</sup> See Ibn al-Zubayr, *Ṣilat al-Ṣila*, p. 184; Ibn 'Abd al-Malik, *al-Dhayl wa-l-takmila*, vol. 5, p. 170, 667.

<sup>64</sup> Al-Nabbāhī, *Tārīkh quḍāt al-Andalus*, p. 54.

<sup>65</sup> 'Azzāwī, *Rasā'il*, vol. 1, pp. 485, 494, 496, 501; Pascal, *governing the Empire*, pp. 422, 445, 448, 462.

some of his powers to his *nā'ib* who could be a simple *faqīh*<sup>66</sup> or a secondary judge of any small town, to take on this task. The *faqīh* Sulaymān b. 'Amīthil b. Yaḥya, for example, had exercised the *qaḍā'* in several towns in the province of Malaga before being appointed as deputy to the *qāḍī* of Malaga.<sup>67</sup>

Among the assistants of every Judge there was *mushāwar* or *muftī*. The first of the two terms<sup>68</sup> comes from the verb *Shawara*, "to advise" and refers to the assistants of the judge from whom the latter sought advice on specific issues. The *muftī*, for his part, was in charge of issuing legal opinions when a problematic issue arose.<sup>69</sup> At this time, both terms refer to the advisor to the judge, and in fact are often used interchangeably to refer to the same people. Ibn 'Abdūn also informs us that the judge should have two *fuqahā'* as assistants, and that the total number shall not exceed four, two in the court of the *qāḍī* and two in the mosque.<sup>70</sup> However, in the time of the Almoravids, this number is not confirmed.

Another *faqīh* with judicial role was called *Ḥakam* or *Ṣāhib al-Aḥkāṃ*, and his mission was initially to monitor compliance with the judgments of the *qāḍī*, but he also acquired powers to issue sentences in some cases by the judge's delegated power. The missions of the *Ḥakam* are well explained by Ibn 'Abdūn, who says the *qāḍī* must '*designate a secondary judge [Ḥakam], who is both a man of science, of goodness and fortune, to judge the minor matters of the poorer classes, but without intervention in monitoring the use of funds [of the pious foundations], in proceedings relating to orphans and as well as anything regarding the business of government or state officials*'.<sup>71</sup> A little later he adds that the fundamental mission of the judge is to reconcile the parties, and to be assigned a salary from the state treasury.<sup>72</sup>

Other specific tribunals in certain cases are, for example, the *qāḍī* of *khuttat 'aqd al-manākiḥ* or of *khuttat al-mawārīth*. The first was specialised in issues arising from marriage contracts. Among this *quḍāt* there are Mukhlid b. Yazīd b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān who was appointed in Córdoba<sup>73</sup>, Qāṣid b. 'Alī b. Ya'mur in Ceuta<sup>74</sup>, and Muḥammad

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<sup>66</sup> Ibn al-Zubayr, *Ṣilat al-Ṣila*, p. 383.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, p. 358.

<sup>68</sup> E. Tyana, *Histoire de l'organisation judiciaire en pays d'Islam* (Leiden, 1960), p. 214; Lévi-Provençal, *Espagne musulmane*, vol. 3, p. 127.

<sup>69</sup> E. Tyana, *Organisation judiciaire*, p. 219.

<sup>70</sup> E. Lévi-Provençal, *Trois traités hispaniques de ḥisba*, Arabic text (Cairo, 1955), p. 10.

<sup>71</sup> E. Lévi-Provençal, *Trois traités hispaniques* p. 11.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, p. 12.

<sup>73</sup> Ibn al-Zubayr, *Ṣilat al-Ṣila*, p. 51.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, p. 353.

b. Muḥammad al-Marādī in Murcia<sup>75</sup>. The *qāḍī* of *khuṭṭat al-mawārīth* was dealing with issues related to inheritance. However, at the time of the Almohads, this office seems to have disappeared, and thus only few who have been mentioned by the sources and they had either changed their post afterwards<sup>76</sup> or were also carrying the duties of *muḥtasib*.<sup>77</sup>

In addition to these specialized *fuqahā'*, each *qāḍī* was surrounded by a group of administrative and legal officials such as *kuttāb* and *muwaththiqūn*. The duty of the first was to write and record verdicts for the right of the litigants.<sup>78</sup> The *muwaththiqūn*, for his part, was a specialist in writing contracts and covenants.<sup>79</sup> Of course, the work in both offices requires legal knowledge and skills and therefore most of them were *fuqahā'* and some of them became judges in the future.<sup>80</sup>

Certainly, bibliographical dictionaries are the primary sources for information about the holders of these offices. However, the information they give remains limited, and gives a view that is frozen in time, and they do not allow us to provide a complete picture of the situation in the period under study.

#### 1.4 The *ḥisba*

The *ḥisba*, or the office of market supervisor (*muḥtasib*), is a religious position that had been known in the Muslim West, specifically in Spain, since the Umayyad period. Based on the Koranic verse *al-amr bi-l-ma'rūf wa-l-nahī 'an al-munkar* (to command to do good and to forbid to do evil), the office was established to supervise economic and commercial practices in order to keep everything in order according to Sharia law. However, Buresi alludes to the fact that the *muḥtasib* did not have an important role in the era of the Almohads, if compared to their role during the era of their predecessors, the Umayyads and the Almoravids.<sup>81</sup> He argues that the Almohad authority was constantly enjoining local governments to carry out the religious obligation: "enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong". The *ḥisba*, which was the reserve of the *muḥtasib*, thus 'became an obligation for all the officials of the Almohad state'. Buresi based his argument on the fact that all the discovered works in this field were written

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<sup>75</sup> Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Takmila*, vol. 2, p. 99.

<sup>76</sup> Ibn 'Abd al-Malik, *al-Dhayl wa-l-takmila*, vol. 5, p. 508.

<sup>77</sup> Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Takmila*, vol. 1, p. 275.

<sup>78</sup> M. Zuḥaylī, *Tārīkh al-qadā'*, p. 366.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, p. 367.

<sup>80</sup> E. Lévi-Provençal, *Trois traités hispaniques* p. 13; Ibn al-Zubayr, *Ṣilat al-Ṣila*, pp. 150, 284, 287, 299, 302, 353.

<sup>81</sup> Buresi, *the Empire*, p. 202.

before the Almohads came to power, e.g., treatises of Aḥmad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abd al-R’ūf (1033)<sup>82</sup>, Ibn ‘Abdūn<sup>83</sup>, and Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Ṣafaṭī (at the end of eleventh century). In contrast, there is no reference to the *ḥisba* in the Almohad *taqdīm*-s. However, the absence of the *muḥtasib* from the *taqdīm*-s, which were basically addressed to the governors and judges of the provinces, does not necessarily mean that the position had ceased to exist. Many of the *fuqahā’* who were appointed to the position of *muḥtasib* in the era of the Almohads are mentioned in biographical dictionaries, even more than those who held the position during the time of the Almoravids. Among those *muḥtasib*-s there are Sulaymān b. Yahya b. Sulaymān al-Qīsī, who held the position several times in Seville<sup>84</sup>, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh in Valencia<sup>85</sup>, Muḥammad b. al-Ma‘z al-Yafrnī in Palma de Mallorca<sup>86</sup>, and Muḥammad b. Ghalbūn in Murcia.<sup>87</sup> The *muḥtasib* was found even in the capital of the empire and his status gave him a seat among the high administrative and political officials in the headquarters of the Caliphate on the day when the caliph practised *the qaḍa’ al-mazālim*<sup>88</sup>. In his article: ‘*ḥisba in al-Andalus*’, Muḥammad Ma‘mūrī goes even further and states that the *ḥisba* institution in the era of the Almohads was more organised than it had been during the time of their predecessors, the Almoravids.<sup>89</sup> The latter, according to him, did not dominate fraud cases in the markets, especially in the time of ‘Alī Ibn Yūsuf (1106-17), not to mention the professional incompetence and unethical behaviour of some *muḥtasibs*, which was observed by some historians. One of these cases was reported by the Cordovan popular poet (*zajjāl*), Ibn Quzmān (1067-1159), who complained poetically that the *muḥtasib* of his days used to indulge in wine and prostitutes, and he blamed the *qāḍī* for appointing them. He said:<sup>90</sup>

‘*Shariba al-Khamr al-muḥtasib wa-zana qāḍī al-Muslimīn anta huwa al-sabab*  
*Syyidī laysh ja ‘alta hādhā Muḥasiba wa-yahkum fī amr ahl al-adaba*  
*Wa-huwa zānī zanīm kathīr al-zinā*

<sup>82</sup> Ibn ‘Abd al-R’ūf, *Trois traités hispaniques de Ḥisba*, ed. E. Lévi-Provençal (Cairo, 1955), pp. 70-116.

<sup>83</sup> Ibn ‘Abdūn, *Trois traités hispaniques de Ḥisba*, ed. E. Lévi-Provençal (Cairo, 1955), pp. 3-65.

<sup>84</sup> Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Takmila*, vol. 4, p. 104.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 74.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 97.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, vol.2, p. 152.

<sup>88</sup> See Ibn al-Zayyāt, *al-Tashwwuf ilā regāl al-Taṣawwuf*, p. 223; Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a ‘shā*, vol. 5, p. 140; Ibn al-Qāḍī, *Jādhwat al-iqtibās fī dhikr man ḥalla min al-a ‘lām madīnat Fās* (Rabat, 1973), p. 209, 218. The literal meaning of Qaḍā’ al-Mazālim is a judge who deals with grievances. For more on this tribunal, see H. A. R. Gibb and H. Bowen, *Islamic Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1969), vol. 2, p. 116-129; S. Zubaida, *Law and Power in the Islamic World* (New York, 2003), 51-56.

<sup>89</sup> M. M’ mūrī, ‘al-Ḥisba fī al-Andalus’, *Majallat al- ‘ulūm al-insāniyya*, Babylon University, 1 (2012), 87-98.

<sup>90</sup> Ibn Ḥujja al-Ḥamawī, *Bulūgh al-Amal fī Fann al-Zajal*, ed. A. al-Tāzī (Damascus, 1974), p. 58.

Such behaviour shows a manifestation of the neglect that was suffered by the institution during this period, which probably was a reason that led some *fuqahā* of that time to write treatises about the importance of the *ḥisba* and the duties of the *muḥtasib*. Al-Ṣaqaṭī, for example, wrote his treatise, at a time when he was no longer *muḥtasib*, at the suggestion of his friends, who incited him to write a kind of manual to restrain the permanent violation of the regulations relating to the *ḥisba*. The author said:<sup>91</sup>

‘I learned about fraudsters among the merchants and artisans who are in the markets, their deception on measurements and weight, the means they employ to depreciate goods, the tricks which are customary in their transactions, their hypocrisy in how they present and do business, the frequent incompetence of the judges responsible for that office who have neither detailed nor general knowledge about halal or haram’.

To conclude on this point, one should distinguish between the obligations of ‘commanding right and forbidding wrong’, as a means for social and moral reform that encouraged people to help in preventing reprehensible acts<sup>92</sup>, and the *ḥisba* as an institution of market inspector. The attention of the Caliphs towards the Koranic obligation does not thus mean that they neglected the role of the *ḥisba* institution, but, to the contrary, it might have been a motivation for the regional governments to pay more attention to the institution, in order to achieve the Caliph's desire. Signs of this attention was reflected on the Andalusian society and was observed by Ibn Sa‘īd (1213 -1286), who stated that the regulations of the *ḥisba* were deliberated on and learned by the people of al-Andalus, similarly to the way in which *Fiqh* law is studied.<sup>93</sup> Apparently, the statement of Ibn Sa‘īd refers to the *ḥisba* treatises, which seem to have been widely available for everyone, especially to merchants, and it was used as a guide to their rights and obligations.

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<sup>91</sup> Al-Ṣaqaṭī, *Fī ādāb al-Ḥisbā (Un manuel hispanique de hisba)*, eds. G. S. Colin and Lévi-Provençal (Paris, 1931), pp. 1-2.

<sup>92</sup> The founder, Ibn Tūmart, had himself exercised this role as soon as he returned from his trip to the East, using this obligation as a basis for moral reform. From then on, every Caliph considered this obligation one of their basic duties, and confirms this by a letter issued to the regions of the Empire, enjoining the Almohads to ‘command right’ and ‘forbid wrong’. According to Musa's study, this role was passed to the *ṭalaba*, whom Ibn Tūmart had prepared to play the role of a moral and religious preacher, along with their military action. Later, with the absence of the *ṭalaba*, it became a duty to everyone. Mūsā, *Tanzīmāt al-Muwahḥidīn*, p. 240.

<sup>93</sup> Al-Maqqarī, *Naḥḥ al-Ṭīb*, vol. 1, p. 219.

Generally, despite the originality of the term *muḥtasib*, the most common title used for the official, in both al-Andalus and al-Maghreb, was *ṣāḥib al-sūq*.<sup>94</sup> The term appeared in al-Andalus from the time of the Umayyad dynasty, and it is most likely a transposition of the term *ʿāmil al-sūq*, which was used in the *Mashriq* for the same official.<sup>95</sup> Clearly, this title was derived from the nature of the *muḥtasib*'s work, which was done mostly in the *sūq* area (the marketplace), where the commercial, industrial, and most of the religious and literary activities took place. The same also applies to the *ḥisba* institute itself, which became known as *khuṭṭat al-sūq* or *wilayāt al-sūq*.<sup>96</sup>

Several treatises were written by the Andalusian *fuqaha* providing a great deal of information about the *muḥtasib*, his qualifications and skills. They also focus on the practical aspects of the burden of the *muḥtasib*, offering long taxonomies of their activities and all of the things that fall under their responsibility. Generally, the information given by the works which were issued in the West, about the *muḥtasib* and his qualifications, does not differ much from those written in the Islamic East. The *muḥtasib* was invested by the governor or *qāḍī*, and his skills did not go beyond the limits of the city.<sup>97</sup> Theoretically, besides his moral qualities and his legal knowledge (the *muḥtasib* was often, at the same time, a *faqīh*), which was generally required of him, he also needed professional experience (as a merchant, for example). Ibn ʿAbdūn stresses that *muḥtasib* must be an Andalusian because he would know the habits and behaviour of the people of the country more than others.<sup>98</sup> This may be the case during the Almohad period because all the *muḥtasib*-s mentioned in the dictionaries were Andalusian. The responsibility of the *muḥtasib* was comprehensive, covering all the social, religious, and economic activities that took place in the market. Generally, the duties of the organisation are all related to the control of the public's behaviour and the tracking of irregularities, whether these were moral, religious or economic. For example, within the purview of the *muḥtasib* or *ṣāḥib al-sūq* was the monitoring of the fulfilment of prayers for traders and artisans, the correct use of mosques, morality and public order in the streets, squares and baths; monitoring the cleanliness and maintenance of streets and pavements.<sup>99</sup> However, the main responsibilities of the *muḥtasib* are to control weights and measures, as well as to examine prices and quality.

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<sup>94</sup> Al-Nabbāhī, *Tārīkh quḍāt al-Andalus*, p. 5.

<sup>95</sup> Y. Essid, *A critique of the origins of Islamic economic thought* (Leiden, 1995), p. 117.

<sup>96</sup> M. A. M'mūrī, 'al-Ḥisba fī al-Andalus', p. 90.

<sup>97</sup> E. Lévi-Provençal, *Trois traités hispaniques* p. 20; M. A. M'mūrī, 'al-Ḥisba fī al-Andalus', p. 92.

<sup>98</sup> E. Lévi-Provençal, *Trois traités hispaniques* p. 16.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, p. 23-61.

Such monitoring was also exerted on all of the corps of the most diverse traders and artisans.<sup>100</sup> Al-Ṣaqaṭī listed six of these trade guilds: flour makers and bakers, butchers, perfumers and pharmacists, slave traders, artisans (such as tailor, pigment providers, blacksmiths and carpenters) and the suppliers of manufactured products.<sup>101</sup> Each group had a representative member, called an *Amīn*, whose appointment was proposed by his guild and approved by the *muḥtasib*. The role of the *amīn* is quite simple: it is he who was an expert in the corporative disputes that might arise between artisans and customers. He was also the one who conveyed the wishes of his corporation to the *muḥtasib* in respect of the establishment of the fixing of prices.<sup>102</sup> Apparently, they were also required to inform the Caliph about market conditions in their areas. The Caliph al-Manṣūr, for instance, arranged a meeting with them twice a month, in order to ask them about market conditions and the prices of goods and commodities.<sup>103</sup>

### 1.5 *The Shurṭa or Almohad Police*

There is limited information about this position during the Almohad period. In the majority of cases, Ibn ‘Idharī’s work is the only source.

In a murder case dating back to the period of the second Caliph, Abū Yūsuf Ya‘qūb, we find that the brother of the victim asked the Caliph to send *ṭalaba* for the arrest of the murderer.<sup>104</sup> Was the Almohad *shurṭa*, in its early stages, then a matter for *ṭalaba*? There can be neither a denial nor a confirmation of this. However, it was not until the reign of al-Manṣūr that the sources talk about the *Shurṭa* itself. The author of *al-Mu‘jib* was the first to mention the *shurṭa* in the time of al-Manṣūr, claiming that the vizier Abū Yaḥyā also held this position. In this case, and even in other cases of this period, the role played by the *shurṭa* is the same as that of al-*Muḥtasib*.<sup>105</sup> After a silence that enveloped the reign of the six successive caliphs, the Almohad *shurṭā* appears significantly during the reign of al-Rashīd. As many as six individuals, followed one another in this post, and appear in the list of *shurṭa* provided by Ibn ‘Idhārī<sup>106</sup>, who adds later another police chief in the capital, Marrakech. What can one deduce?

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<sup>100</sup> Al-Ṣaqaṭī, *Un manuel hispanique de hisba*, pp. 11-20.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 20-72.

<sup>102</sup> M. A. al-Ma‘mūrī, ‘al-Ḥisba fī al-Andalus’, p. 92; Y. Essid, *A Critique of the origins of Islamic economic thought*, p. 132.

<sup>103</sup> Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu‘jib*, p. 285; I. Ḥarakāt, *al-Maghrib ‘br al-tārīkh*, p. 339.

<sup>104</sup> ‘Azzāwī, *Rasā’il*, vol. 2, p. 352.

<sup>105</sup> Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu‘jib*, p. 183; Ibn al-Abbār, *Tuḥfat al-Qādim*, ed. I ‘Abbās (Beirut, 1986), p. 186.

<sup>106</sup> Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 300.

The first observation that can be drawn is that the position was eminently political, the *Aṣḥāb al-Shurṭa* overshadowed judges who do not even appear in this list of Ibn ‘Idhārī in relation to al-Rashīd's government.<sup>107</sup> In addition, all of these characters were from the Almohad's original tribes (here are the Kūmīyya, Hantāta and Haskūra) and this confirms the words of Ibn Khaldūn, who notes that this very important burden in Almohad state was only assigned to the true Almohads.<sup>108</sup> Finally, the presence of *Aṣḥāb al-shurṭa* in the entourage of Caliph al-Rashīd is explained by the importance of the advice that they could provide in the field of security. Indeed, the reign of the Caliph was marked by numerous upheavals and conflicts that threatened order constantly.

If, at first, the Vizier was in charge of the police (as was the case of Abū Yaḥyā, the Vizier of al-Manṣūr), at the time of al-Rashīd the post was given to personalities of lesser importance than the Vizier, but it still had weight in Almohad society. The first in the list of al-Bayān, Abū Mūsā Ibn ‘Aṭṭiyā, has thus replaced the Vizier during his absence from the capital, before accessing the post of *ṣāhib al-shurṭa*. Ibn Khaldūn wrote:

‘In the Almohad dynasty in the Maghrib, (the office) enjoyed a certain reputation, even though it did not have general (jurisdiction). It was entrusted only to important Almohad personalities. It did not have authority over government dignitaries.’<sup>109</sup>

Are we able to determine the role of the Almohad *shurṭī*? Basically, his main duty was to implement the orders of the Caliph or the *wālī*. For example, according to Ibn al-Abbār in the *Tuḥfat*, al-Manṣūr had ordered the *ṣāhib al-shurṭa* of Seville to arrest and apply a thousand lashes to the *qādī* of Málaga, Abū al-Rabī‘ al-‘Abdarī, on suspicion of treason and of having released the famous rebel, Ibn al-Jazīrī.<sup>110</sup> During his anti-corruption programme, al-Manṣūr had also put anti-sumptuary measures in place. He allegedly ordered the *shurṭa* of Seville to terminate the activity of musicians and female singers and to take action against promiscuous people.<sup>111</sup> As has been said previously, this role was normally the responsibility of *al-Muḥtasib*.

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid, p. 301.

<sup>108</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, vol. 1, p. 450.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, vol. 1, p. 450.

<sup>110</sup> Ibn al-Abbār, *Tuḥfat al-Qādim*, p. 186.

<sup>111</sup> Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 174.

Among the few details left by Ibn ʿIdhārī, the primary activity of the *shurṭa* of al-Rashīd was repression. There were heavy blows against the dignitaries of the state. For example, the *shurṭī* Ibn Aslmāt, often called al-Ḥakīm, was commissioned by the sovereign to arrest the son of the Vizier, Ibn Yūnis, and to confiscate his property. Another *ṣāhib al-shurṭa*, Abū Muḥammad Maksen, was given the mission to arrest, for the first time, the famous *Sheikh* Muʿāwiyya al-Haskūrī, and on the second occasion, a conceited Arab leader, Masʿūd b. Ḥimīdān. The *shurṭī*, because of a lack of courage, failed to arrest the first wanted man, but the second was captured and executed.<sup>112</sup> This attitude of al-Rashīd, in launching his police against the high dignitaries of the Almohad state, denied Ibn Khaldūn’s claims that the *shurṭa* had no influence over Almohad nobles.

Basically, despite the lack of information, we note that the Almohad police began, under the cover of *ḥisba*, to then tackle the toughest duties of a political nature and those that were closely linked to power. Finally, with the disappearance of al-Rashīd, the record of the Almohad *shurṭa* became secret and, to my knowledge, no information is available for the following periods.

Among the charges which were close to the *shurṭa*, we have the *Ṣāhib al-Madīna* (the prefect of the city). For Mūsā ʿAzz al-Dīn, the *ṣāhib al-Madīna* was only the second name for the *ṣāhib al-shurṭa*, and was just the same as the *ṣāhib al-Layl*.<sup>113</sup> In reality, this deduction is completely erroneous. In his treatise, Ibn ʿAbdūn, as well as al-Saqfī, makes a clear difference between the *shurṭa* and *ṣāhib al-Madīna*, even if their judgment on one and the other are totally divergent.<sup>114</sup>

For the Almohad period, a single passage has been preserved. In *al-Bayān*, under the reign of the second caliph, the author stated that among the dismissed there was a certain Ibn ʿUmar, the *ṣāhib al-Madīna* of Meknes.<sup>115</sup> Without doubt, the role of the latter was important, because all those who were disgraced and who were cited in this passage, were officials who were placed in the Almohad administration.

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<sup>112</sup> Ibn ʿIdhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 301-3; Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, vol. 6, p. 255; Huici Miranda, *Historia Política*, pp. 481-83.

<sup>113</sup> Mūsā, *Tanzīmāt al-Muwahḥidīn*, p. 242.

<sup>114</sup> E. Lévi-Provençal, *Trois traités hispaniques* p. 17. About this judgment see Guichard, *Musulmans*, vol. 2, p. 335.

<sup>115</sup> Ibn ʿIdhārī, *al-Bayān*, p. 158.

For his part, Ibn al-Zayāt speaks repeatedly about the *ḥurrās abwāb al-Madīna* (the guardians of the city gates), who had to be a subordinate of the *ṣāhib al-Madīna*.<sup>116</sup> These doors were closed at night and were guarded by watchmen (*al-Sāmir*), who let in people after the doors were closed.<sup>117</sup> According to other indications, one might suggest that the same neighbourhoods were also closed at night.<sup>118</sup>

Another indication of the author of *al-Tashawwuf*, a contemporary of the Almohads, highlights another auxiliary to the *ṣāhib al-Madīna*, and these were the *Ḥurrās al-Layl* (the watchmen). These, according to our texts, had a bad reputation and were unreliable.<sup>119</sup>

## 2. Religious authorities

### 2.1 *Imām or Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt*

In the original hierarchy, a man named Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Sulaymān, a member of the Ten, was appointed by Ibn Tūmart to say prayer as an Imam.<sup>120</sup> From that moment, the post of the *ṣāhib al-ṣalāt* continuously existed until the end of the Almohad state.

Though, in the beginning, this responsibility was assigned to an Almohad grand dignitary and also to a member of the Board of *al-‘shrah*, later, this duty became obsolete and it would be bequeathed to a simple *faqīh*. The head of this modest function was invested by the *qādī*, or sometimes by the *Ahl al-Balad* (local residents) and he would consider it a failure if he could not climb the ladder to a higher post. Ibn ‘Abd al-Malik draws the story of a *ṣāhib al-ṣalāt* and his misadventures until his death.<sup>121</sup> This case reflects the situation of this *khutṭa* in Almohad times. This character, an *imām* at a neighborhood mosque in Seville, was deposed by the *qādī* who also dispossessed him of the house that he had built with his own money, just next to the mosque. The unfortunate *Ṣāhib al-salāt*, left for the capital, where he won a favoured senior office in the Almohad headquarters and he

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<sup>116</sup> Ibn al-Zayyāt, *al-Tashwwuf*, pp. 231, 278, 305.

<sup>117</sup> Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, p. 127.

<sup>118</sup> Ibn al-Zayyāt, *al-Tashwwuf*, p. 285.

<sup>119</sup> In *al-Tashawwuf* as well as *Nayl al-Ibtihāj* it was claimed that the *ḥurrās al-Layl* inflicted the death penalty simply for night noises and disturbances: Ibn al-Zayyāt, *al-Tashwwuf*, p. 455; Al-Tunbuktī, *Nayl al-Ibtihāj bi-taṭrīz al-Dībāj*, ed. A. A. Harāmah (Tripoli, 1989), p. 95.

<sup>120</sup> *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, p. 31.

<sup>121</sup> Ibn ‘Abd al-Malik, *al-Dhayl wa-l-takmila*, vol. 5, p. 281.

subsequently managed to return to his property, as well as to the *imām*'s post. Soon afterwards he also became a notary and continued to hold the two posts until his death in 1206. Another fortunate person was the *ṣāhib al-ṣalāt* of Ceuta. The latter monopolised the *Imāma*, *al-khuṭba*, and the responsibility for the keys of the citadel (*amānat Maḥātib al-Qaṣba wa-l-Bilād wa-l-Baḥar wa-l-Majāz*) for another forty years.<sup>122</sup> There are many more examples of the holders of that office, but, basically, the function had no reputation and its holder, in order to improve his living standards, had to have a second job.

## 2.2 The Preacher or al-Khaṭīb

In each mosque there was a *khaṭīb* who was appointed by the *qāḍī* of the city. His situation differed from that of the *ṣāhib ṣalāt*, described above. In the capital, Marrakech, this position was eminently political, he was the preacher of the Capital (*khaṭīb al-Ḥaḍrah*), also known as the *khaṭīb al-Khilāfa*, who was a great Almohad dignitary, or the head of the *ṭalabat al-Ḥaḍar*.

If researchers knew and appreciated the long chapter that al-Marrākushī reserved for the Almohad *khuṭba* (speech) on Friday,<sup>123</sup> they would relish the information provided in a very long passage from the author of *Janī Zahrat al-As*, on the preachers of the al-Qarawiyyīn mosque from the time of the Almohad Caliph, Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb until the advent of the Marinid dynasty.<sup>124</sup>

The passage in question, begins with an Almohad custom. Indeed, they were replacing the *khaṭīb*-s of the great mosques, who did not speak, in addition to Arabic, the Berber language, or who did not know the credo of the Mahdī. At first, the *khaṭīb* of the Qarawiyyīn invested by the Almohad authority held the two charges: the *imāma* and *khuṭba*; but, little by little, the two *khuṭba*-s were been separated. Nevertheless, the authority remained in the hands of the Imam, and not those of the *khaṭīb*. In addition, at the end of the dynasty, the sovereign lost all control of both the *Imām* and the *khaṭīb* who were now invested by the Almohad *Sheikh*-s.

Ultimately, the Almohad preachers were one of the main pillars of Almohad propaganda. They were present throughout the country through the efforts invested by the state in the construction of mosques, following an ancient tradition that was

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<sup>122</sup> Ibn Sa'īd, *Ikhtisār al-Qidh*, p. 108.

<sup>123</sup> Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu'jib*, p. 256.

<sup>124</sup> 'Alī al-Jazkā'ī, *Janī Zahrat al-As*, ed. A. Manṣūr (Rabat, 1991), p. 33.

attributed to the Mahdī who, on his return from the Eastern path, took the initiative to build or renovate mosques wherever he stopped.

### 2.3 Al-Mu'adhhdhin or Muezzin

The author of *Kitāb al-Ansāb* is the only writer to integrate *mu'adhhdhin*-s into the hierarchy of Ibn Tūmart in the fifteenth rightful place, alongside the *jund*.<sup>125</sup> Nothing in this source nor in any of the others, can help to clarify this position, except that later, the Caliph al-Nāṣir had prevented the muezzins, such as the *ṭalabat al-Ḥaḍar*, to bear arms.

The origin of the *mu'adhhdhinun* is very diverse; either they are from the Almohad tribes, or they are chosen from among the townspeople. We do not know what the criteria for recruitment were. However, the presence of the Kūmiyya tribe in the list that was provided by the *Kitāb al-Ansāb* proves that such information does not relate to the period of Ibn Tūmart, but to that of his successors. The *mu'adhhdhinun* from the townspeople were divided into two groups, those who were travelling with the sovereign, and those who did not leave the capital. This confirms that the author was only referring to the *mu'adhhdhin*-s of Marrakech and this class of muezzins was not extended to all of the Almohad cities.

However, al-Marrākushī has left other details of the situation in the provinces. In fact, the holders of that function were grouped into a kind of corporation that was headed by one of their own, who was called the *Ra'īs*. He held the honour of announcing the *khuṭba* and the Friday prayer, and it was incumbent upon him to hold the stick which the preacher uses as a support on Friday. In addition, al-Marrākushī added: '*the adhān* [The call to prayer] *is shouted by three gifted mu'adhhdhinun who have beautiful voices of different timbres, and who are chosen after extensive research*'.<sup>126</sup> The number of *mu'adhhdhinun* was thus quite high and, after a rigorous selection, only three were deemed to have deserved the job.

Curiously, the information from al-Marrākushī and the author of *Kitāb al-Ansāb* exclusively concerns the period of the Caliph al-Nāṣir, which suggests that this *ṭabaqa* (category) experienced a change that our authors considered worth writing about during the reign of the Caliph.

Even in the area of the call to prayer, the sources attribute to al-Mahdī some new practices that involve the use of Berber formulas that were attached to the *ādhān*, like

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<sup>125</sup> *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, p. 58.

<sup>126</sup> Al-Marrākushī, *al-mu'jib*, p. 343.

*tasallayt, Nardi*, and the cry of the mu'adhhdhin at daybreak *Aṣḥaḥa wa-li-Llāhi al-Hamd* ('It's sunrise' and 'praise be to God').<sup>127</sup>

### **3. The Mālikī School and the Almohad Reform Project**

This issue began with the account of al-Marrākushī regarding the events that took place in Fez during the reign of Al-Manṣūr. The author, who was an eyewitness, stated:

'During his time [al-Manṣūr] the science of furū' collapsed; the jurists were afraid of the ruler; he had the books of the prevailing school or the Mālikites burnt, after he had extracted the Koranic and traditional passages contained in them and quoted in them'

Al-Marrākushī continued his testimony:

'I myself was a witness when whole loads of these books were gathered in Fez and given over to the flames. Under threat of heavy punishment, this ruler charged the people to refrain from preoccupation with the science of ra'y'.<sup>128</sup>

This is the only clear record of the event in all of the sources, although some historians, speaking about certain *Mālikī* books, mention that they were burnt during the period<sup>129</sup>, which confirms al-Marrakech's statement. These sources mention also something that has been considered a consequence of this event. According to them, three of the leading *Mālikī* scholars were arrested and examined, namely the *faqīh* Abī al-Ḥusīn b. Zarqūn (d. 1224)<sup>130</sup>, Abī Bakr b. 'Alī (d. 1199)<sup>131</sup> and Abī Muḥammad 'Abd al-Kabīr (d. 1220)<sup>132</sup>, each of whom were originally from Seville, the place where the decision was made. However, based on this small number of *fuqahā'* who were arrested, it is clear that the process was not directed against all of the *Mālikī* scholars and the sources, which are mostly post-Almohad, may exaggerate the extent of the phenomenon. So what was the purpose of this procedure? For al-Marrākushī, al-Manṣūr wished to eradicate the *Mālikī* School altogether from al-Maghreb, and to lead people towards the *ẓāhir* in the Koran and in traditions.<sup>133</sup>

To achieve this goal, Al-Manṣūr, al-Marrākushī goes on:

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<sup>127</sup> Hasan, *al-ḥadārah al-Islāmiya*, p. 332.

<sup>128</sup> Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu'jib*, p. 202-03.

<sup>129</sup> See Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Takmila*, vol. 2, p. 71; Ibn al-Juzayy, *al-Qawānīn al-Fiḥriyya* (Algiers, 1987), p. 331; Al-Tunbuktī, *Kifāyat al-muḥtāj li-ma'rifat man laysa fī al-Dībāj*, ed. M. Muḍī', 2 vols (Mohammedia, 2000), vol. 1, p. 154.

<sup>130</sup> Ibn Farḥūn, *al-Dībāj al-Mudhahhab*, vol. 2, p. 205.

<sup>131</sup> Al-Dhahbī, *al-Mustamlīh min Kitāb al-Takmila*, ed. B. A. Ma'rūf (Tunis, 2008), p. 88.

<sup>132</sup> Ibn al-Abbar, *al-Takmila*, vol. 2, p. 67.

<sup>133</sup> Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu'jib*, p. 204.

‘... commissioned some of his court scholars to edit a collection of laws on prayer and related matters, similar to Ibn Tūmart’s collection of traditions on ritual cleanliness... the ruler, then, dictated this work personally to his subjects and obliged them to study it... those who memorised it by heart could expect a valuable reward, in terms of clothing and other valuables, from the ruler’.<sup>134</sup>

Despite al-Marrākushī’s explicit statement, disagreement among historians has continued: on whether these actions were intended to lead the people towards the Zāhirī School<sup>135</sup>, or whether they were simply attempts to urge scholars to diligence in issuing the *fatwa* dependence on the Koran and the Hadith, without regard for the views of former scholars. If so, was this action a coup against the Almohad ideology by al-Manṣūr, or had the implementation of the deferred project existed since the time of Ibn Tūmart.

Al-Marrākushī, after his testimony, adds that it was only in the days of al-Manṣūr that ‘*all emerged that had remained hidden during his father’s and grandfather’s time*’.<sup>136</sup> This is confirmed by number of sources. The author and scholar of the thirteenth century, Moḥammad b. Aḥmed b. ‘Alīsh, stated, that:

‘Abd al-Mu’min met a number of Mālikī leaders, and his Vizier, Abū Ja’far b. ‘Aṭīyya, on behalf of him blamed them of adhering to the books of *furū’*, especially “Mudūnat Ibn Saḥnūn”, which was used as the main source of their *fatwa*, without attention to the texts of the Koran and the Sunnah’. The author continues ‘The faqīh Abū ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Zarqūn, trying to defend their attitude, stand up and explain to the caliph that all what in this book [Mudunat Ibn Saḥnūn] is based on the Koran, the tradition and the Ijmā’ (the consensus of the *‘ulamā’*), but it has been summed up by scholars to make it easier for learners and students’.<sup>137</sup>

According to the author, no further action was taken by the Caliph on this subject after this event.<sup>138</sup> Yet, Ibn Abī Zar’ claimed that, in 1155, ‘Abd al-Mu’min ordered the books of the *furū’* to be burned and to lead people to the tradition of the Prophet.<sup>139</sup> This is the only claim that attributed the burning of books to a caliph other than al-Manṣūr,

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid, p. 204.

<sup>135</sup> The Zāhiriyya is a Sunni school of thought in Islamic jurisprudence, and is named after one of its early prominent jurists, Dawud ibn Khalaf al-Zahiri. The school is known for its insistence on sticking to the manifest (*zahir*) or apparent meaning of expressions in the Koran and the Sunnah. The school’s most prominent representative was the Andalusian Ibn Hazm (1064). See further I. Goldziher, *The Zāhirīs. Their Doctrine and their History. A Contribution to the history of Islamic Theology*, ed and trans. W. Behn (Leiden, 1971); A. Osman, *The Zāhirī Madhhab (3rd/9th-10th/16th Century): A Textualist Theory of Islamic Law* (Leiden, 2014); C. Adang, ‘The Beginnings of Zāhiri Madhhab in al-Andalus’, in *The Islamic School of Law: Evolution, Devolution and Progress*, eds. P. Bearman, R. Peters and Frank E. Vogel (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2005).

<sup>136</sup> Ibid, p. 204.

<sup>137</sup> Muḥammad b. ‘Alīsh, *Fath al-‘Alī al-Mālik fī al-fatwa ‘la madhhab al-Imam Mālik* (Beirut, n. d), vol. 1, p. 201.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid, vol. 1, p. 202.

<sup>139</sup> Ibn Abī Zar’, *rawḍ al-qirṭās*, p. 195.

and for a number of researchers, this was most likely a conflation of the author, and, even if we believe his account, the decision certainly did not come into force.<sup>140</sup>

However, the threat of the implementation of the action reappeared again in the era of the second Caliph, Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf<sup>141</sup>. A passage from al-Marrākushī, told by Abū Bakr b. al-Jadd (d. 1190), illustrates this:

‘When I had my first audience with the Commander of the Believers, Abū Ya‘qūb, I found in front of him the book of Ibn Yūnus. "O Abū Bakr" he said to me, "I am looking here at these divergent opinions which developed later in God's religion. You find four, five, and more different interpretations for one and the same question. Where, now, is the truth, and which of the divergent opinions must the worshippers follow?" Now, I began to explain. But he interrupted me, saying: "O Abū Bakr, there is only this here - and he pointed to a copy of the Koran - or this here - pointing to Abū Dāwūd's Sunan on his right - or the sword'<sup>142</sup>

It is not known that subsequent caliphs pursued a different policy towards the *Mālikī* School. However, the repetition of this orientation from the first three Almohad caliphs confirms that this was the strategy of the caliphate, and not merely an individual tendency.

### ***Zāhirī Doctrine or the Call for Diligence***

Historians debate whether the attitude of the Almohad Caliph is a tendency to conversion to *Zāhirīsm*, or just an unintended approach to it and to convergence. This difference seems to be due to the divergent views of the Eastern accounts against the silence of their counterparts in the Islamic West. In general, they are divided into two groups: the first believe that al-Manṣūr was inclined to the *zāhirī* doctrine, and wanted to publish it in the Maghreb and al-Andalus at the expense of the *Mālikī* School.<sup>143</sup> Besides al-Marrākushī, the provision of this group is based mostly on the statement of Ibn al-Athīr. In his speech about the Caliph al-Manṣūr, the author said:

‘[al-Manṣūr] publicly professed to belonging to the *Zāhirīyya* and turned away from the *Mālikī* branch. Consequently, the cause of the *Zāhirīs* received a great

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<sup>140</sup> See Al-Mannūnī, *al-‘ulūm wa al-adān*, p. 53; ‘Allām, *al-Dawlah al-Muḥhidīya b-l-Maghrib fī ‘ahd ‘Abd al-Mu‘min b. ‘Alī* (Cairo, 1971), p. 308; S. A‘rāb, ‘Mawqif al-Muwaḥhidīn min kutub al-furū‘ wa-ḥaml al-nās ‘ilā al-madhhab al-Ḥazmī’, *Da‘wat al-Haqq*, 249 (1985), p. 26-30; I. Goldziher, ‘Materialien zur kenntnis der Almohadenbewegung’, *ZDMG*, 41 (1887), p. 99.

<sup>141</sup> Fierro claimed that the caliph in question was al-Manṣūr, see ‘The legal policies of the Almohad caliphs and Ibn Rushd’s *Bidāyat al-mujtahid*’, in *Historia de España Ramón. Almorávides y Almohades, siglos XI al XIII* (Madrid, 1997), p. 236. However, it is quite clear from the text and the context that it was, in fact, Yūsuf I.

<sup>142</sup> Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu‘jib*, p. 203.

<sup>143</sup> See Ibn al-Juzayy, *al-Qawānīn al-Fiqhiyya*, p. 331; Ibn Farḥūn, *al-Dībāj al-Mudhahhab*, vol. 2, p. 205; Al-Dhabī, *al-Mustimlīh*, p. 88.

impetus during his time. In the Maghrib they were represented by many exponents who, with reference to Ibn Ḥazm, are called by the name Ḥazmiyya; however, they were merged into the Mālikī School. But in his time, they became independent once again and widespread.<sup>144</sup>

The second group believe that al-Manṣūr intended to urge scholars not to imitate the former *fuqahā*, but that their judgments should be the result of their own thought, derived from the issues that are addressed by the Koran, Hadith, the opinions of the *Ṣaḥāba* (the companions of the Prophet) and *Qiyās* (analogical reasoning). Among this group there are Ibn Khallikān<sup>145</sup> followed by al-Nāṣirī<sup>146</sup>, but above them all is the Syrian traveller, Tāj al-Dīn b. Ḥamawayh al-Dīmashqī, who visited al-Maghrib around 1197, and stayed there until the year 1203.<sup>147</sup> During his stay, Ibn Ḥamawayh was able to meet al-Manṣūr and to enjoy his hospitality. His testimony, in terms of importance, is thus more valuable than that of other historians, even al-Marrākushī, whose age during the event of the burning of the *Mālikī* books did not exceed the age of ten. In his testimony, Ibn Ḥamawayh said that '*He [al-Manṣūr] was memorising the Quran very well and the matn [text] of the Hadīth as well... he also speaks in fiqh in eloquent words ... and he himself has issued a number of fatwas based upon his knowledge*'.<sup>148</sup> A few pages later, the author states that '*al-Manṣūr is inclined to the view of Ahl al Hadīth [People of the hadīth]*'.<sup>149</sup> The term *Ahl al-Hadīth* is used to refer to those who reject *taqlid* (uncritical following) and who seek guidance in matters of religious faith, practices and Islamic law from the Koran, the authentic hadīth, the statements of the Companions and *qiyās* respectively.<sup>150</sup> Due to their rejection of *taqlid*, they are, in this case, in agreement with the *zāhirī* School. However, the main dispute between them is that the latter refused to accept the opinion of the Companions unless they all agreed on one thing.<sup>151</sup> They also rejected *qiyās* in the jurisprudence.<sup>152</sup> This means that al-

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<sup>144</sup> Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 10, pp. 161-62; translated in Goldziher, *The Zāhirīs*, p. 160.

<sup>145</sup> Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, vol. 7, p. 11.

<sup>146</sup> Al-Nāṣirī, *al-Istiḳṣā*, vol. 2, p. 200.

<sup>147</sup> Al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-Ṭīb*, vol. 3, p. 99.

<sup>148</sup> L. Bū-Laṭīf, *Fuqahā' al-mālikīyya wa-l-tajriba al-siyāsiyya al-mūḥḥidiyya fī al-gharb al-Islāmī* (Beirut, 2009), p. 276.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 280.

<sup>150</sup> 'U. al-Ashqar, *Madkhal ila al-sharī'a wa al-fiqh al-Islāmī* (Jordan, 2005), pp. 188-93. 'A M. 'Abd al-Majīd, *al-Ittijāhāt al-fiqhiyya 'ind aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth fī al-qarn al-thālith* (Cairo, 1979), p. 91. In this book, al-Ashqar explains the method of *ahl al-ḥadīth* in the development of the *fatwa*: 'if *Ahl ul-Hadīth* do not find anything within the Revelatory Sources of the Koran and Sunna they then take the statements of the Companions. Anything they find in the Koran they make the Sunna judge on it and anything found in the Sunnah they make the understanding of the Salaf judge on it. If they do not find anything, they then take into consideration the statements of the Companions. However, if they do not find anything within the sources mentioned above, then they use *qiyas*'.

<sup>151</sup> Al-Ashqar, *Madkhal ila al-sharī'a*, p. 193.

Manṣūr, although he rejected the *mālikī* view, did not aim to adopt the *ẓāhirī* viewpoint, but intended to return people to the school of the *Salaf* (the first three generations, which included Muḥammad's contemporary companions and followers). However, assuming that al-Manṣūr was inclined to *Ahl al-Hadīth*, then who was responsible for the claim that he adopted the *Zāhirī* School? Ibn al-Ḥamawayh, who probably witnessed the conflict between al-Manṣūr and the Maliki *fuqahā'*, did not forget to mention that the latter attribute the *ẓāhirī* School to al-Manṣūr.<sup>153</sup> However, what drove *fuqahā'* to make such a claim?

Throughout the history of al-Maghrib and al-Andalus, *Mālikī fuqahā'* occupied the lead among the Islamic schools, which enabled them to hold the most important positions in Islamic governments, along with a distinct social status that qualified them to act as spiritual leaders and as representatives of the society on many occasions. Therefore, it is likely that the *fuqahā'*, for fear of losing, had to launch their propaganda weapons against the new orientation of the caliphate, taking advantage of what they had instilled in the cultural background of the society over the centuries of reverence for the *Mālikīs*, and condemnation of the *ẓāhirīs*. By creating such a claim, the *fuqahā'* were thus aiming to stir up public opinion against the Caliph's policy, and to put pressure on the authority to abandon its project. However, the campaign against al-Manṣūr's project did not only rely on this measure. Many works of jurisprudence were issued by the *Mālikīs* during this time. They were interested in the defence of the *Mālikī* School and in clarifying the importance and strength of its scientific methodology in all of its fields, including '*ilm al-furū'*'. For instance, the *faqīh* Abū Bakr b. Abī Jamra al-Mursī (d. 1202) wrote two books in the Maliki School and *fiqh al-furū'* namely '*Iqlīd al-taqlīd al-mu'addī ila al-naẓar al-rashīd*'<sup>154</sup> and '*Natā'j al-Ibkār wa-manāhij al-Nuzzār fī m'ānī al-Āthār*'.<sup>155</sup> Likewise, the *faqīh* 'Alī b. Aḥmad al-Ghassānī (d. 1212) wrote '*Nahaj al-Masālik lil-tafaqqh fī Madhhab Mālik*' which has 10 volumes, and '*al-Tarṣī' fī Sharḥ masā'il al-Tafrī'*'.<sup>156</sup> On the same subject, the *faqīh* Abū al-Rabī' b. 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Ghirmānī (d. 1202) wrote '*al-Masā'il al-Majmū'a 'an al-Tahdhīb*' in 8 volumes.<sup>157</sup> The famous Abū al-Walīd b. Rushd (d. 1198) also wrote, and his best-known work in this

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<sup>152</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, vol. 1, p. 564; *The Muqaddima*, English trans, vol. 3, pp. 4-5; A. Osman, *The Zāhirī Madhhab*, p. 120. Other differences are mentioned in A. M. 'Abd al-Majīd, *al-Ittijāhāt al-fiqhiyya*, pp. 361-67.

<sup>153</sup> Būldīf, *Fuqahā' al-mālikīyya*, p. 280.

<sup>154</sup> Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Takmila*, vol. 2, p. 81.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid, vol. 2, p. 81.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid, vol. 3, p. 225.

<sup>157</sup> Ibn al-Zubayr, *Ṣilat al-Ṣila*, p. 292.

field is *'Bidāyat al-Mujtahid wa-Nihāyat al-Muqtaṣid'*. In this work, Ibn Rushd promised, in more than a paragraph, that he would write a second book on the jurisprudence of the *furū'* of the Mālikī School.<sup>158</sup> Furthermore, in parallel with works that focus on supporting the *Mālikī fiqh*, and attempt to revitalise its position in the community, there was another type of works that aimed to undermine the Almohad project by attacking the *zāhirī* School. Amongst these works, there are the *'al-Mu'llī fī al-Rad 'la al-Muḥallī wa-l-Mujallī'* of Ibn Zarqūn (d. 1224)<sup>159</sup>, *'Hujjat al-ayyām wa-quḍwat al-anām'* of the *faqīh* Abū Zakariyā al-Zawawī al-Bajā'ī (d. 1214)<sup>160</sup>, and *'al-Nibrās fī al-rad 'la munkar al-qiyās'* of Abī 'Alī al-Masīlī.<sup>161</sup>

The contradictions around the incident of the burning of the *Mālikī* books and al-Manṣūr's purpose in this procedure can be understood through the results that followed the incident. These are perhaps clearer than the historians' statements, which seem, to a large degree, to be exaggerated. The most notable statement is that of al-Marrākushī, which pointed to the breadth of *Zāhirī madhhab* in the era of the Almohads. The author states that:

'...he [Ibn Ḥazm] is the most famous scholar of al-Andalus these days; and the most mentioned one in the Councils of the leaders, and on the tongues of scholars, and that is because of his dispute with madhhab Mālik in the Maghrib, and his leading in the knowledge of the *Zāhir*. To my knowledge, no one [*zāhirī*] was known before him; the number of his followers in al-Andalus today is large'.<sup>162</sup>

This statement is greatly exaggerated, at least when it is based on the material that is available in the sources. On the one hand, the author gives the impression that the *Mālikī* scholars no longer had the prominence that they previously enjoyed. However, according to the biographical dictionaries, the scientific activity of the *Mālikī* scholars continued to flourish, and the books of *Mālikī fiqh*, especially *fiqh al-furū'*, were still produced and studied, even after the burning incident.<sup>163</sup> On the other hand, and according to the same sources, there does not appear to be any significant increase in the number of *Zāhirī* scholars during the Almohad period, compared to the preceding one, the Almoravid period.<sup>164</sup> In her study of the *Zāhirīs* at the time of the Almohads, Camilla Adang was able to prepare a list of all the scholars during the period who had

<sup>158</sup> Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Takmila*, vol. 2, p. 74.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid, vol. 2, p. 107; Ibn Farḥūn, *al-Dībāj al-mudhahhab*, vol. 2, p. 205.

<sup>160</sup> Al-Ghibrīnī, *Unwān al-dirāya*, p. 135

<sup>161</sup> Ibid, p. 116; Al-Tunbuktī, *Kifāyat al-muhtāj*, vol. 1, p. 116.

<sup>162</sup> Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu'jib*, p. 203.

<sup>163</sup> See Būldīf, *Fuqahā' al-mālikiyya*, pp. 280-85.

<sup>164</sup> C. Adang, 'Zāhirīs of Almohad time', in *The Almohad revolution*, pp. 411-479.

been mentioned in the biographical dictionaries. According to her, only sixteen *Zāhirīs* were active during this period. Of course, there may well have been other *Zāhirīs* who were neglected from these mentions, because they were less important, but this must have been the case for the *Mālikī* scholars, who did not make it into these dictionaries either. Camilla, however, noticed that most of the *Zāhirī* who were mentioned were active during the period of al-Manṣūr.<sup>165</sup> This is, of course, due to the suitable atmosphere that was created by the Caliph for the *Zāhirī Madhhib* to spread. Yet, their number was still very limited and does not reflect the picture that was painted of them by al-Marrākushī. This also applies to their existence in the Almohad government. Among all the *Zāhirī* scholars on the list, only one *Zāhirī* assumed judicial office in the Almohad government throughout the period of the Almohads, namely Ibn Ḥawṭ Allāh al-Anṣārī (d. 1215), who was appointed as *qāḍī* in Seville, Murcia, Salé and Ceuta.

In sum, certainly the Almohads, from the era of ‘Abd al-Mu’min, were planning to bring about reform to the jurisprudence in al-Maghrib and al-Andalus, either through the withdrawal of ‘*lim al-furū*’ from the *Mālikī* School, or by entirely removing the *Madhhib* itself. However, the political circumstances in the region, along with the power and influence of the *Mālikī* prevented the implementation of their purpose.

## ***Conclusion***

The authority prohibited *qāḍī*-s from applying the death penalty and they centralised major legal cases. Due to these measures, the power of the *qāḍī*-s diminished, but they had independence from political power and this allowed them to continue to respect the established traditions. However, although the Almohad *qāḍī*-s were politically less important, they retained a great moral influence in society. It is noteworthy that letters of appointment, issued at the end of the Mu’minid dynasty, emphasise the vagueness of the boundary between the judiciary and the administrative area in the Almohad state.

Throughout this period, cases of refusal to exercise *qaḍā*’ were less numerous than in the Almoravid era. Almohads seem to have appointed to the posts of *qāḍī* respected scholars, who had a reputation for fairness and honesty. We know only one case in which a judge let himself be corrupted by bribes, and another in which the *qāḍī* refused to exercise *qaḍā*’ for political reasons. Various sources give us a glimpse scarcity conflicts between representatives of the judiciary and political power. Indeed, the

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid, p. 469.

Almohad state based on religious bases and restorative, needed lawyers to maintain the stability of society and mobilize the people for the holy war. It also notes that many Almohad judges and scholars engaged in it and participated voluntarily.

## Conclusion

In this thesis, I have tried, through examination of a wide range of sources, to offer a comprehensive study of the political and administrative system of al-Andalus during the era of the Almohads. Close study of these systems throughout this period of Almohad rule has revealed a number of results that increase our understanding of this sprawling state. First, one cannot but admire the disciplined hierarchical system that was invented by Ibn Tūmart, using the existing, non-official institutions of the Berber tribes. Tribes were placed in different layers with different tasks and this formed the basis for the political institutions of the future state: an advisory body that was selected from all the tribes, that represented the ruling authority; and which was a mobilising institute used to spread the principles of the Almohads and thus to gain more followers; and, finally, a military organisation that was composed of all of the tribes. Credit can also be given to ‘Abd al-Mu’min, who was the only one in Ibn Tūmart’s system who had no tribe, and yet he managed, through his cunning, to become the leader of a huge empire and to later limit the power to his descendants.

Under ‘Abd al-Mu’min, the hierarchical system underwent major change. Almohad councils were expanded to include other tribes, but their powers were confined, little by little, to an advisory role after he first denied them any hope of access to the throne, through establishing hereditary rule, and, second, access to power and privileges, through the appointment of his sons to head the provinces of the country. The *ṭalaba*, on the other hand, who played a major propaganda role, were moved to performing military functions, and a new category of *ḥuffāz* and *ṭalaba* of *ḥadar* were created. These were selected carefully from among the Almohads and Andalusians, to carry out administrative and political responsibilities throughout the Empire.

Political and administrative systems in al-Andalus also underwent change, even though the caliph maintained the existing structures. Governors who were of Andalusian origins were replaced, and the office gradually became, with rare exceptions, reserved for *sayyid*-s. Jurists (*fuqahā*) who had acted as civil governors in the era of the Almoravids lost their power and they were replaced by *sheikh*-s who became the right hand of the *wālī*. Financial institutions which were usually under the control of the governor seem to have enjoyed a certain autonomy and reported directly to Marrakech. Apart from this institution, authority in the provinces did not change much. The *wālī* was the head of the government and oversaw the rulers of the cities within the scope of

his province. However, the Caliph still monitored his overall conduct, and the *wālī* had to refer to Marrakech in all his decisions. All the governors and major financial officials, whose appointment was released from the *Ḥaḍar*, were also held accountable and could be dismissed by order of the caliph. As for the appointees, Andalusians were well represented in the Iberian government. With the exception of the post of governor and head of the financial institutions, who were required to be Almohads, the Andalusians had access to all administrative positions. Indeed, some offices maintained the original tradition and they remained the exclusive privilege of the Andalusians, such as the post of *kātib* and *mushrif*.

This pattern also appears in the judicial system, which was characterised, as far as one can tell, by integrity and enjoyed a good reputation, so much so that only one case of judicial bribery was recorded. Below the judge, there was a series of assistant judges, who were appointed by him according to his needs, and each of whom dealt with specific issues. Constant mobility in this institution is one of the most prominent manifestations of this period, and was perhaps one of the factors that contributed to an increasing effectiveness and that limited the cases of corruption. However, like any other institution, the judge did not have the absolute freedom to deal with all matters and he had to consult Marrakech before issuing his provisions, especially in criminal cases.

All of these organisations, political or judicial, in spite of the central authority, seem to have enjoyed a relative degree of stability, especially before the beginning of the thirteenth century. One might ask, then, what was the cause of the sudden collapse of the Almohad Empire? Researchers have put forward several hypotheses, most of which privilege socio-religious or economic factors. However, the Almohad crisis was primarily a crisis of the system that had been established by ‘Abd al-Mu’min. The hereditary system was not limited to the position of the Caliph alone. All the other Almohad positions, sheikhs, *ḥuffāz* and *wālī*-s, were inherited from one reign to the next. As far as Iberia was concerned, it could be argued that it was this failure of successive caliphs to co-opt Andalus into the highest positions of authority in the Almohad imperial system that undermined its effectiveness. This policy prevented the emergence of new blood with the competence and capacity to assume a position of power. The system which may be considered one of the reasons for the state’s power had thus become, with the passage of time, the major factor in its weakness and disintegration.

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## APPENDIX

	Version of <i>Kitāb al-Ansāb</i> pp. 30-32	Version of <i>Al-Yassa</i> , according to <i>Ibn al-Qaṭṭān</i> , p. 125	Version of <i>Ibn al-Qaṭṭān</i> pp. 126-28	Version of <i>Al-Marrākūshī</i> pp. 244-246	Version of <i>Al-Ḥulal al-Mūshayyah</i> p. 108	Version of <i>Ibn Abī Zar'</i> p. 113	Version of <i>Ibn al-Khaṭīb A'māl al-A'lām</i> , vol.3, pp. 268-69	Version of <i>Al-Zarkashī</i> p. 6
1.	'Abd al-Mu'min b. 'Alī	Al-Bashīr	'Abd al-Mu'min b. 'Alī	'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Sharqī	'Abd al-Mu'min b. 'Alī	'Abd al-Mu'min b. 'Alī	'Abd al-Mu'min b. 'Alī	'Abd al-Mu'min b. 'Alī
2.	Abū Ḥaḥṣ 'Umar al-Ṣanhājī	Abū Ḥaḥṣ 'Umar al-Ṣanhājī	Al-Bashīr	'Abd al-Mu'min b. 'Alī	Abū Ḥaḥṣ 'Umar al-Ṣanhājī	Al-Bashīr	Al-Bashīr	Abū Ḥaḥṣ 'Umar al-Ṣanhājī
3.	Sulaymān b. Makhlūf	'Abd al-Mu'min b. 'Alī	Ismā'īl al-Hazrajī	Abū Ḥaḥṣ 'Umar al-Ṣanhājī	Ismā'īl b. Makhlūf	Abū Ḥaḥṣ	'Umar al-Hintāfī	'Umar al-Hintāfī
4.	Ismā'īl al-Hazrajī	Abū Bakr b. Yigīt	Abū Ḥaḥṣ 'Umar al-Ṣanhājī	'Umar al-Hintāfī	Abū Ibrāhīm	'Umar al-Hintāfī	Abū Ḥaḥṣ 'Umar al-Ṣanhājī	Ismā'īl b. Makhlūf
5.	Mūsā Tamārā al-Gadmīwī	Al-Ḥsan b. 'Alī	Sulaymān b. Makhlūf	Yūsuf b. Sulaymān	Ismā'īl b. Mūsā	Abū Ḥaḥṣ 'Umar al-Ṣanhājī	Sulaymān b. Makhlūf	Ismā'īl al-Hazrajī
6.	Abū Bakr b. Yigīt	'Umar al-Hintāfī	Mūsā b. Tamārā al-Gadmīwī	'Abd Allāh b. Sulaymān	Abū Bakr b. Yigīt	Sulaymān b. Makhlūf	Ismā'īl al-Hazrajī	Ismā'īl b. Mūsā
7.	Muḥammad b. Sulaymān	Al-Faqīh al-Ifrīqī	Abū Bakr b. Yigīt	Mūsā b. 'Alī l-Ḍarīr	'Abd Allāh b. Sulaymān	Ismā'īl al-Hazrajī	Ibn Malwīya	Abū Bakr b. Yigīt
8.	Ibn Malwīya		Muḥammad b. Sulaymān	Ismā'īl al-Hazrajī	Ibn Malwīya	'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Khudrī	'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Khudrī	Muḥammad b. Sulaymān
9.	Al-Bashīr		'Umar al-Hintāfī	Abū Bakr b. Yigīt	'Umar al-Hintāfī	Mūsā Tamārā al-Gadmīwī	Mūsā Tamārā al-Gadmīwī	Ibn Malwīya
10.	'Umar al-Hintāfī		Ibn Malwīya	Ayyūb al-Gadmīwī	Al-Bashīr	Abū Bakr b. Yigīt	Abū Bakr b. Yigīt	Al-Bashīr
11.	'Isā b. Mūsā al-Ṣaūḍī							
12.	'Abd al-'Azīz al-Ghīghā'ī							

Figure 15: *Majlis al-'Ashara or The Council of Ten*

**Figure 16: The Almohad governors of the Andalusī Provinces**

Governorship	‘Abd al-Mu’min Before the hereditary rule	‘Abd al-Mu’min After hereditary rule	Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf
<i>wilāyit al-gharib</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aḥmed b. Qusī</li> <li>• Sīdray b. Wazīr</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd Allāh b. Abī Ḥafṣ b. ‘Alī</li> <li>• Sayyid Yūsuf b. ‘Abd al-Mu’min</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sīdray b. Wazīr</li> <li>• ‘Umar b. Tīmṣalīt</li> <li>• ‘Umar b. Saḥnūn</li> </ul>
Seville	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Burrāz b. Muḥammad al-Mussūfī</li> <li>• Yūsuf b. Sulaymān</li> <li>• Abū Zakarīya Yaḥyā b. Yūmūr</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abū ‘Abd Allāh b. Abī Ibrāhīm</li> <li>• Sayyid Abū Ibrāhīm b. ‘Abd al-Mu’min</li> <li>• Sayyid Abū ‘Alī al-Ḥusaīn b. ‘Abd al-Mu’min</li> <li>• Sayyid Abū Ishāq b. Yūsuf</li> </ul>
Córdoba		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abū Zayd ‘Abd Allāh b. Yakīt</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sayyid Abū Sa‘īd b. ‘Abd al-Mu’min</li> <li>• Sayyid Ibrāhīm b. ‘Abd al-Mu’min</li> <li>• Sayyid Abū al-Ḥusaīn ‘Alī b. ‘Abd al-Mu’min</li> <li>• Sayyid Abū Yaḥyā b. Yūsuf</li> </ul>
Granada			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sayyid Abū Sa‘īd b. ‘Abd al-Mu’min</li> <li>• Abū ‘Abd Allāh b. Abī Ibrāhīm</li> <li>• Sayyid Abū Zayd b. ‘Umar</li> <li>• Sayyid Abū Zayd b. Yūsuf</li> </ul>
Malaga		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sayyid Abū Sa‘īd b. ‘Abd al-Mu’min</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sayyid Muḥammad b. ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-Mu’min</li> <li>• Sayyid Abū al-Ḥassan b. Abī Muḥammad ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abd al-Mu’min</li> </ul>
Murcia			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sayyid Ya‘qūb b. ‘Abd al-Mu’min</li> <li>• Sayyid Abū ‘Abd Allāh b. Yūsuf</li> </ul>
Valencia			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abū al-Ḥajjāj Yūsuf b. Mardānīsh</li> </ul>
Jaén		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Kūmī</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Muḥammad b. Ṣanādīd</li> </ul>

Governorship	Ya‘qūb al-Manşūr	‘Abd Allāh al-Nāşir	Abū Ya‘qūb al-Mustaşir
<i>wilāyit al-gharib</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Īsā b. Abī Ḥafş b. ‘Alī</li> <li>• Sayyid Muḥammad b. ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-Mu‘min</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Abd al-Wāḥad b. Yūsuf b. ‘Abd al-Mu‘min</li> </ul>	
<b>Seville</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sayyid Abū Yaḥyā b. Yūsuf b. ‘Abd al-Mu‘min</li> <li>• Sayyid Ya‘qūb b. ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-Mu‘min</li> <li>• Sayyid Abū Zayd b. Yūsuf</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sayyid Abū Zayd b. ‘Abd al-Mu‘min</li> <li>• Sayyid Abū Muḥammad b. al-Manşūr</li> <li>• Sayyid Abū Ishāq b. Yūsuf</li> <li>• Sayyid Abū Mūsā b. ‘Abd al-Mu‘min</li> <li>• Sayyid Abū Ishāq b. al-Manşūr</li> <li>• Sayyid Ibrāhīm b. Yūsuf b. ‘Abd al-Mu‘min</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sayyid Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. Yūsuf</li> <li>• Sayyid Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. al-Manşūr</li> <li>• Sayyid Abū al-‘Alā’ al-Ma‘mūn</li> </ul>
<b>Córdoba</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sayyid Muḥammad b. Yūsuf b. ‘Abd al-Mu‘min</li> </ul>		
<b>Granada</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sayyid Ishāq b. Yūsuf</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sayyid Abū Ibrāhīm b. Yūsuf b. ‘Abd al-Mu‘min</li> <li>• Abū ‘Abd Allāh b. Abī Yaḥyā b. Abī Ḥafş</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sayyid Abū Muḥammad b. al-Manşūr</li> </ul>
<b>Malaga</b>		Idrīs b. al-Manşūr	
<b>Murcia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sayyid ‘Umar b. Yūsuf b. ‘Abd al-Mu‘min</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sayyid Abū Muḥammad b. al-Manşūr</li> <li>• Abū al-Ḥasān b. Wājāj</li> <li>• Abū ‘Umrān b. Yāsīn al-Hintātī</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sayyid Abū Muḥammad b. al-Manşūr</li> </ul>
<b>Valencia</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sayyid Abū ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-Mu‘min</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Uthmān b. Abī Ḥafş ‘Umar al-Hintātī</li> <li>• Sayyid Abū Zayd al-Bayāsī</li> </ul>
<b>Jaén</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Muḥammad b. Şanādīd</li> <li>• Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sayyid Abū Mūsā b. Abī Ḥafş b. ‘Abd al-Mu‘min</li> <li>• Sayyid Abū Zayd b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Uthmān b. Abī Ḥafş ‘Umar al-Hintātī</li> </ul>
<b>Mallorca</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Abd Allāh b. Ṭā‘allah al-Kūmī</li> <li>• Sayyid Abū Zayd</li> <li>• Sayyid Abū ‘Abd Allāh b. Abī Ḥafş b. ‘Abd al-Mu‘min</li> <li>• Abū Yaḥyā b. ‘Alī b. Abī ‘Umrān al-Tīnamālī</li> </ul>	

<b>Governorship</b>	<b>‘Abd al-Wāḥid al-Makhlū‘</b>	<b>‘Abd Allāh al-‘Ādil</b>	<b>Abū al-‘Alā’ al-Ma’mūn</b>
<b>Seville</b>	• Sayyid ‘Abd Allāh al-Bayāsī	• Sayyid Abū al-‘Alā’ al-Ma’mūn	
<b>Córdoba</b>	• Sayyid Idrīs b. al-Manşūr	• Sayyid ‘Abd Allāh al-Bayāsī, then attached to Seville	• Sayyid Abū al-Rabī‘
<b>Granada</b>	• Sayyid Abū al-Ḥasan b. al-Manşūr		
<b>Malaga</b>	• Sayyid Abū al-Ḥasan b. al-Manşūr		
<b>Murcia</b>	• Sayyid Abū Muḥammad b. al-Manşūr	• Sayyid ‘Īsā b. Abī Mūsā b. ‘Abd al-Mu’mīn	
<b>Valencia</b>	• Sayyid Abū Zayd al-Bayāsī	• Sayyid Abū Zayd al-Bayāsī	
<b>Jaén</b>	• Sayyid Abū Muḥammad al-Bayāsī • Sayyid Sulaymān b. Abī Ḥafş ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-Mu’mīn	• ‘Umar b. ‘Īsā b. Abī Ḥafş Yaḥyā	
<b>Mallorca</b>	• Sayyid Abū Muḥammad b. al-Manşūr		• Abū Yaḥyā Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. Abī ‘Umrān