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BERBER RULE AND ABBASID LEGITIMACY

The Almoravids (434/1042–530/1147)

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Introduction

The Almoravids (*al-Murābiṭūn* 434/1042–530/1147) were a Saharan Berber tribal federation who conquered the western Maghrib and most of al-Andalus in the second half of the fifth/eleventh century. From their capital at Marrakesh, the Almoravids were the first indigenous group to unify this part of the Maghrib and the first Maghrib-based empire to conquer al-Andalus. They revolutionized the political structures of the western or Far Maghrib[1] through a novel combination of local elements with others adopted from the broader Islamic world with which the region came into intense commercial and intellectual contact at this time. The Almoravid Empire brought the Far Maghrib to the attention of the wider Mediterranean and Muslim world.[2] In al-Andalus, where a deep-seated tradition of political legitimation already existed, the Almoravids also transformed political structures, symbols, and discourse, by emerging as the most powerful Muslim military force in the Western Mediterranean (a role once exclusively Andalusi) and by promoting interaction and administrative integration between the two territories.

The Almoravid leader adopted the novel title *amīr al-muslimīn* (Commander of the Muslims) at some point during the movement's development; the exact moment is disputed. This variation of the classical caliphal title *amīr al-muʾminīn* (Commander of the Believers, borne by ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb)[3] was formulated by the Almoravids to stop short of declaring full ideological independence from, or supremacy over, the Muslim community and its eastern center.[4] It was understood to subordinate symbolically the Almoravid ruler to the Abbasid caliphs of Baghdad. The gesture styled the Almoravid leader as deputy defender of the community in the west, vested by the universal rulers of the Muslim community. It also signaled a consolidation of

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power and bespoke the expanded ambition of a state that had evolved, from a tribal movement battling for control of trade routes, to one with a proper capital and governing structures capable of absorbing kingdoms and cities and regions with state traditions of their own. It communicated to followers, subjects, and neighbors that the Almoravid ruler aimed to conquer and was possessed of the moral justification to do so. That he intended to unify a divided region, to defend the believers from the internal threat of heresy and the external threat of crusade.

By the time of the Almoravids' rise, the Abbasid caliphs of Baghdad had ceased to have any real effective military power or political reach, relegated to occupying an office which had become increasingly symbolic from the middle of the fourth/tenth century.[5] They could not provide material support for campaigns in the distant west. Almoravid subordination was likewise symbolic. It did not constitute a genuine form of tributary status, as the Abbasid caliphs themselves were dependent on military rulers, or sultans, who protected them in exchange for symbolic currency resembling that derived by the Almoravids with their gesture of symbolic subordination. The Abbasid caliphs, in fact, had never been genuine power brokers in the Far Maghrib, or most of the Islamic West, a region where leaders had embraced outright theological and political independence from the very beginning of the Abbasid era. The Far Maghrib was never part of the Abbasid Caliphate and was home to renegades and refugees, in overt conflict with the Abbasid tradition. The Almoravid leader's symbolic investiture was therefore not a restitution and elicits the question of why invoke a tradition in a region which had been home to its greatest competitors: the Fatimid Imamate of Mahdiyya and (in its own way) the Umayyad Caliphate of Cordoba. How did a pro-Abbasid agenda become a recipe for Maghribi empire?

The answer involves a few separate but related aspects: First, there is an element of short-hand, employed by seventh/thirteenth-century historians taking on the task of describing the convulsive process of the creation of Maghribi empire. The narrative borrows from earlier historiographical traditions and identifies the Almoravids with a rising orthodoxy. Second, Abbasid investiture points to a wider process in which the Almoravids played a major role in the west: the so-called Sunni Revival, which was the rise of a new Sunni orthodoxy in North Africa in the wake of Fatimid empire and involved the articulation of a theory of orthodox Sunni Caliphate, as a symbolic office that lent legitimacy to champions and defenders. Notably, the dynasty most closely identified with the articulation of the new Sunni orthodoxy, the Seljuks (fl. fifth-sixth/eleventh-twelfth centuries), was comprised of non-Arab newcomers to the religio-political tradition who, much like the Almoravids, lacked a genealogical relationship to the Prophet's family (on which Abbasid legitimacy rested) or an ethnic identification with the origins of Islam. Seljuks, Ayyubids, and Almoravids were contemporary dynasties who led in the formulation of this new orthodoxy, which they defended and defined against internal enemies (such as Ibāḍīs and Ismāʿīlīs) and external ones, such as the Crusading Christians of the Latin West whose impact was being felt in Muslim lands across the Mediterranean, from Iberia to Syria.

Association with the Abbasids was but one ingredient in the complex endeavor to secure loyalty from a variety of groups brought together for the first time under the Almoravids. Such new combinations are often unstable and, when successful, encourage competition. The Ṣanhāja core of the Almoravid federation provided the military backbone as well as the top administrative tier of the empire. This military-administrative elite was controlled by a distinct subset of Ṣanhāja clans: the Lamṭa, Hintāta, and Lamtūna. They benefited from cohesion and commanded key posts and resources. But their cultural kinship, of western-Saharan background, proved exotic north of the High Atlas, in the Maghrib, and across the sea in al-Andalus especially. This rustic leadership had to implement a strategy to obtain the loyalty, fear, and grudging respect of rural, pastoral, and urban groups across a vast geographical region and of diverse ethnic and cultural make-up. What can be read in the historiographical tradition is, likely, the element of the strategy that spoke to the literate Arabophone elites. The Berberophone dimension (linguistically diverse and militarily most important), while largely lost to us, must be imagined in order to formulate a full picture. An Almoravid formula for political legitimacy had to speak convincingly to the different rural and urban groups of the Maghrib and al-Andalus and would have emphasized certain dimensions of legitimacy over others, according to context. The Abbasid caliphal investiture would have spoken to the Arabophone audience in and beyond the Maghrib and to the sectarian interests (or partisanship) of emerging anti-Ismāʿīlī and anti-Crusader powers and coalitions emerging across the southern Mediterranean. It also spoke to certain urban groups and literate classes in the Maghrib and al-Andalus who were recruited to fill the larger and lower part of the administration. These representatives of the tradition of higher learning (of the Maliki *madhhab*[6]) joined the Almoravid movement, providing it with a legal and practical administrative framework. The pro-Abbasid stance was suitably anti-Fatimid (a position in which the Maliki tradition was deeply invested) and elidable with the other caliphal tradition under which Malikism had thrived in al-Andalus (Umayyads of Cordoba). The Umayyad Caliphate of Cordoba was declared officially defunct in the first half of the fifth/eleventh century, and the Almoravids enthusiastically cultivated and coopted their symbols and institutional charisma. (Generic invocation of the Abbasid caliph as a legitimating strategy had first been revived by the vying powers in al-Andalus in the fifth/eleventh century, the *mulūk al-ṭawāʾif*.)[7]

A successful formula for political legitimacy is rarely straightforward or simple: no single cause or thing bestows the right to leadership. A bit like the question of happiness (What makes a person happy? What is a life worth living?), the answer is elusive and the question persistent, because answered communally and through performance and repetition. What constitutes legitimate rule can only be enacted and defined by the group through achievement, acceptance, and declaration. The answer is in the performance and in the receptivity of the audience. The strategy for legitimate political rule in a case such as the Almoravids is particularly interesting, moreover, because it comes about in a revolutionary and foundational moment, through the creation of a political community in a region where no such structure on this scale had existed. As in all such new imperial ventures and compositions, success depends on the meaningful combination of pre-existing patterns into a new but recognizable entity.

A desert movement

Almoravid legitimacy evolved over a one hundred-year span through at least three clear stages: (1) an early period in the desert homeland, when the movement emerged as a local campaign against heterodox and heretical beliefs and practices; (2) a second stage, after the foundation of Marrakesh, when symbols were adopted and gestures made that conveyed broader regional ambitions; and (3) a third stage, as the Almoravids undertook the gradual conquest and annexation of al-Andalus, when the symbols, traditions, and institutional know-how of Umayyad al-Andalus were increasingly adopted. Some of the original formula for legitimacy would persist throughout their history and would be identified as an object of criticism by detractors. This was identified as the twin reliance on a narrow Ṣanhāja core and on the Maliki establishment. Opposition would seize on Saharan Ṣanhāja cultural otherness and rusticity as well as on a notion of Maliki dogmatism and literalness (characterized as a kind of spiritual poverty, criticized as rigid or misguided). This Ṣanhāja-Maliki alliance was thus a source of strength first and later of weakness, especially as groups unsuccessfully integrated began to mount an existential challenge.

The Almoravid movement rose in a region lacking state structures and traditions of political unity. From the beginning of the Islamic period, the region of what is today Morocco, Mauritania, and Algeria had been characterized by small polities that embraced forms of Islam at odds with the imperial Mashriq or Islamic East. Based in small urban centers founded on coalitions with surrounding groups and tribes, these polities were often founded by Muslim proselytizers who advocated alternative visions of Islam to the Umayyad and Abbasid imperial centers in the east, especially concerning community leadership. They espoused forms of the religion that fostered political independence, cherished by the indigenous Berber populations. Their relationship to the Arab elite was ambivalent. They were neither clearly tributary populations, like the Christian and Jewish communities that constituted a large part of Islamdom, nor were they full partners with Arab Muslims. They occupied a third status as non-Arab converts to Islam and clients of Arab tribes. Unrest was endemic. The Berber Revolt of 122/740–125/743, and the great cost of quelling it, contributed in no small way to the collapse of the Umayyad Caliphate of Damascus in 132/749. Unsurprisingly, the forms of Islam that subsequently took root in the Maghrib either completely opposed the idea of Arab leadership[8] – Ibāḍīs and Khārijīs espoused notions of community leadership based on individual piety – or championed rival claimants to the leadership of the universal community. Zaydī, Ismāʿīlī, and other Shiʿi and proto-Shiʿi groups opposed Umayyads and Abbasids and drove numerous rebellions across the growing expanse of the Islamic empire. The Maghrib was no exception. The Ibāḍī Rustamid dynasty established its center at Tāhart, in Algeria, and developed extensive commercial contacts including early trans-Saharan networks.[9] Likewise profiting from the development of Saharan and trans-Saharan trade was the caravan city of Sijilmāsa in the Tāfīlalt Valley in southern Morocco, where a Khārijī dynasty became established from the end of the second/eighth century.[10] Fes, the most important Far Maghribi urban center, was founded in the late second/eighth century by Idrīs ibn ʿAbd Allāh (d. 175/791), a descendant of Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib said to have fought alongside Ḥuṣayn at Karbalāʾ.[11] He had the support of the local Berber tribe of Awraba, and the cult to him and to his son, Idrīs ibn Idrīs, was foundational in the Islamization of the Far Maghrib and would become a long-lasting feature of the spiritual landscape of the region. Other indigenous Berber groups of the Maghrib are known to have converted to idiosyncratic forms of Islam. The best known (mostly from the fifth/eleventh-century Andalusi geographer Abū ʿUbayd al-Bakrī, d. 487/1094) are the Barghawāṭa, who inhabited the fertile Atlantic coastal plain, and the Bajaliyya, said to have inhabited the western Sūs.[12] Such idiosyncratic forms would be singled out by the Almoravids in their conquest of the Maghrib and their spiritual campaign to correct heretical beliefs and practices.

Perhaps the most significant challenge, east or west, to Abbasid spiritual leadership and political hegemony emerged in the Maghrib, following this same pattern in which a missionary proselytizer from the east found a receptive audience and mobilized them toward creating a new religio-political community. In this case, the missionary, al-Mahdī ʿUbayd Allāh (or ʿAbd Allāh, d. 323/934), became a charismatic leader in his own right, claiming descent from Ḥuṣayn ibn ʿAlī through Ismāʿīl ibn Jaʿfar. Through a coalition with Kutāma Berbers he founded the most important Ismāʿīlī Shiʿi empire of the medieval period and first Berber Islamic empire. The Fatimids first capital was at Mahdiyya in Ifrīqiya from where they endeavored unsuccessfully to capture the Maghrib before turning their attention eastward, leading to the eventual conquest of Egypt.[13] This turn shifted their power center to the east, where their constituency would become more Arab. Still, they posed an important precedent for the Almoravids as a model for Berber Islamic state-building and as a cause for the movement's rise, emerging in direct religious opposition to Ismāʿīlī religious ideology.[14] But the Almoravids did not appear in a region with an established religio-political tradition of Sunnism. Their espousal of Sunnism, "raising the black banners of the Abbasids," was a novel and creative formula combining a new set of ingredients. And their championing of the Maliki *madhhab* – the regional expression of Sunnism – occurred as a result of the latter's galvanization in the spiritual contest with the Fatimids in Ifrīqiya where the intellectual and spiritual roots of the Almoravid movement lay.

The two earliest literary sources on the Almoravids identify a student of Malikism, ʿAbd Allāh ibn Yāsīn al-Gazūlī, as the spiritual founder of the Almoravids. Ibn Yāsīn had studied under Waggāg ibn Zalwī in the Sūs Valley, south of the High Atlas. As his *nisba* indicates, Ibn Yāsīn was a Saharan Ṣanhāja of the Gazūla tribe[15] and was recommended by Waggāg on that basis to accompany a Gudāla Ṣanhāja chief on his return to the western Sahara from pilgrimage (*ḥajj*). The chief had been looking for a religious scholar to impart true and correct beliefs and practices of Islam to his people, where the religion was just being introduced. In one version of events, the returning chief had stopped in Qayrawān where he consulted with the preeminent Maliki jurist[16] of the time about an appropriate candidate for such a teacher. The jurist directed the chief to Waggāg and his students. A lesser known but earlier version of the story states that a Maliki scholar traveling with the same caravan appealed directly to Waggāg. Either way, Ibn Yāsīn agreed to travel south and settled among the Gudāla, where he taught and preached before falling out with them. He took up with another tribe, the Lamtūna, which, under Ibn Yāsīn's leadership, emerged as the dominant force behind the Almoravid movement. Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ, author of the earlier narrative and of the first biographical dictionary of Malikism in the Far Maghrib, included Ibn Yāsīn in the first generation of Malikī jurists there and wrote that he assumed command of the Lamtūna "before the days of Tāshfīn ibn ʿUmar and Yaḥyā ibn ʿUmar."[17]

> [The latter] was the one whom [Ibn Yāsīn] named *amīr al-muslimīn* and he was the first among them to be so called. He directed his affairs. He waged jihad with them and they charged him with the command of them. He executed his [conception of the] Qurʾānic punishments on their *amīr* and those below him. Then Yaḥyā died and he conducted himself in the same way with his brother Abū Bakr ibn ʿUmar. It is said that he struck Abū Bakr ibn ʿUmar with a whip, Abū Bakr being at the time *amīr al-muslimīn*, for something which, in his opinion, merited it. All were obedient to him. His conduct there and his decisions are well known and remembered. The shaykhs of the Almoravids are guided by them. They remember legal decisions and replies of his from which they do not deviate. He had made them all perform the Friday prayer. He punished any backslider with ten lashes for every *rakʿa* missed, since in his opinion they were of those whose prayer, on account of their ignorance of Qurʾānic reading and prayer, is not valid unless led by an *imām*. After many wars the land of the Desert was under the control of the Almoravids, with the lands beyond it of the Maṣāmida, the Qibla, and the Sūs. Then he led the people out to make holy war on the infidel Barghawāṭa. He attacked them with Abū Bakr ibn ʿUmar at the head of a great force of the Almoravids and the Maṣāmida. It is said that they were about 50,000 infantry and cavalry. He occupied their land of Tāmasnā, the Barghawāṭa having fled before him to their mountains and forests. The army advanced in pursuit of them and ʿAbd Allāḥ became isolated with a few of his companions. A great force of them [the Barghawāṭa] met him and he fought them mightily. But he met martyrdom (may God have mercy on him). That was in the year 450/1058–9. We have given his history at length in the *Kitāb al-Taʾrīkh*.[18]

So Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ, who was devoted to the Almoravid state, sketched the life of Ibn Yāsīn, underscoring the ingredients that bestowed legitimacy and credibility upon the movement's founder. Ibn Yāsīn fought and ultimately lost his life battling a heretical group. He unified and led the desert Almoravids resolutely. Embodying an Almoravid ideal, he exercised spiritual and military leadership, by exerting moral superiority over

Table 5.1 The Almoravid amīrs who ruled over al-Andalus

Yaḥyā b. ʿUmar (b. Ibrāhīm b. Targūt)	434/1042–447/1055
Abū Bakr b. ʿUmar	447/1055–480/1087
Yūsuf b. Tāshfīn (b. Ibrāhīm b. Targūt)	480/1087–500/1106
ʿAlī b. Yūsuf	500/1106–537/1143
Tāshfīn b. ʿAlī	537/1143–539/1145
Ibrāhīm b. Tāshfīn	539/1145
Isḥāq b. ʿAlī	539/1145–541/1147

Compiled by Camilo Gómez-Rivas

the tribal ruler. Leadership and legitimacy of the tribal chiefs who first led the movement is shown to have been bestowed by Ibn Yāsīn who kept them in check, punishing them for moral or ritual shortcomings. Introducing congregational prayer, imposing strict and correct performance of ritual, and imparting teachings about the faith through learned legal opinions (*fatwā*s), Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ depicts Ibn Yāsīn enacting the ideal of religious and spiritual authority as conceived by Malikism, a society where ritual, social, and political decisions are performed by consulting the most learned exponent of religio-juridical thought in the community, and where Sunni-Malikism defines the right path and defense against heterodox and heretical beliefs and practices, such as those of the Barghawāṭa. This authority is symbolically underscored by granting Ibn Yāsīn the power to bestow the new title, *amīr al-muslimīn*, on the Almoravid ruler ("the first under that title"). The *amīr* is guided by Ibn Yāsīn and punished when falling into error. A kind of constitutional arrangement and a theory of political power emerge from the sketch by this first biographer of Malikism in the Far Maghrib, encoded into the origin story of the religio-political community he championed.

An imperial capital

The Almoravids' economic basis for state formation was their control of trade networks in the western Sahara. From their base in Azzugi,[19] they captured Sijilmāsa, the caravan city in the Tāfīlalt Valley on the northern edge of the desert, from the Ṣufrī Midrārids, a Khārijī dynasty that had patronized Saharan trade. They also extended control southward to secure, if not direct military control (the exact nature of their presence is difficult to ascertain), then at least favorable terms with towns such as Awdaghusht, on the desert's southern edge in the Sahel. The Almoravids first emerged as a Lamtūna-led federation. The Masūfa and Lamṭa soon joined, while the Gudāla, displaced by the Lamtūna, resisted for some time. While other Berber groups would join the state, the term Almoravid was most closely associated with this original federation of Saharan Ṣanhāja.

The word "Almoravid" would carry an ethnic connotation, foreign to the majority of the population that would come under their rule, even if it has no such connotation in its origins. The word *murābiṭ* can be variously interpreted as "one who defends the religion on the frontier" or, more broadly, as "one who lives a pious life," dedicated to the faith, often on the frontier. The term (whence the French *marabout* derives or to which it is closely related) has deep and varied significance in the region, associated with expressions of Islamic piety.[20] It can connote solitude, reflection, and learning, but also fortification and jihad (as in defending a stronghold of the faith), which the Almoravids popularized through their successful military expansion, as they absorbed some groups and defeated others in the name of true religion and correct practice. Still, the image of the Ṣanhāja Almoravid in the northern Maghrib and al-Andalus would prove exotic, a characteristic upon which detractors would seize. They wore a distinctive headdress (in the way of the modern Tuareg) that visibly distinguished them from the rest of the population (the *lithām* and are thus often referred to as *al-mulaththamūn* in the literature). Saharan Ṣanhājan society itself was characterized by patterns of matrilineal inheritance. Women enjoyed a relatively high status,[21] and perhaps more significantly, women and men exercised gender roles in a way that appeared foreign. The women did not veil themselves (at least at certain times) – Ibn Tūmart famously scolded ʿAlī ibn Yūsuf's sister for not wearing a veil and for riding a horse through Marrakesh. Gender roles and their expression in Almoravid society appear to have been rather distinct from those of the cultures north of the Sahara and opponents and critics of the Almoravids amplified and construed these differences to constitute a complete and immoral inversion.[22] That said, and perhaps especially in the initial phase of imperial expansion, the appearance of the veiled warrior inspired awe and fear.

The imperial character of the Almoravid project became clear after they crossed the High Atlas and founded the city of Marrakesh, from where they would conquer the most important urban centers of the Western Maghrib, including Fes, Sabta, and Tlemcen. The move north of the High Atlas would necessitate the articulation of a means of political legitimation capable of asserting itself outside their region of origin. The manner in which they established themselves in this new area illustrated their ability and readiness to integrate new groups (through a combination of force, enticement, and negotiation.) It also revealed their potential to transform themselves into a city-building state, patron of urban institutions. The beginnings of this transformation can be glimpsed in the foundation of the city of Marrakesh as well as in the accession of Yūsuf ibn Tāshfīn who replaced his cousin Abū Bakr ibn ʿUmar shortly after. Having crossed north of the High Atlas in 450/1058, the Almoravids took Aghmāt,[23] a Maṣmūda town led by a Zanāta chief, from where Ibn Yāsīn pushed his message northward to Maṣmūda tribes and the Barghawāṭa federation, the latter among which he met his demise shortly thereafter.[24] Leadership of the movement was briefly taken up by another student of Waggāg who also died fighting the Barghawāṭa and then passed to the Lamtūna chief, Abū Bakr ibn ʿUmar.[25] He and Yūsuf ibn Tāshufīn had emerged as the strongest military leaders of the movement. Yūsuf pushed east and north. Abū Bakr's range of activity was directed more toward the south. Success in these campaigns would render Aghmāt too small for troops stationed and migrants attracted to the bustling town. Abū Bakr set about finding a location to build a new city. Writing two centuries later, Ibn ʿIdhārī, a key chronicler of Almoravid history, described Abū Bakr's search and how he negotiated with the locals:

> The place of assembly in the town of Aghmāt Warīka grew too narrow for the people in it. The Shaykhs of Warīka and Haylāna complained of this to the Amīr Abū Bakr ibn ʿUmar time and again until he said: "Determine for us a place in which I will build a city – if God, may He be exalted, so wills." His dwellings with his brothers was in tents … until he married Zaynab al-Nafzāwiyya in this year and the people in Aghmāt multiplied as a result … The Haylāna and Hazmīra were still determining a place where the city would be built. A dispute between them broke out over this, as each demanded that the city be built in their own land, so that its children could trace their lineage to them. It was on account of this that strife and the alternation of chieftainship (*mudāwalat al-imāra*) ensued between them until the shaykhs of the fighting tribes and others came together [to find a solution].
>
> The final consensus was that the city be located between the land of Haylāna and the land of Hazmīra. They [the representatives of the tribes] then informed their *amīr*, Abū Bakr ibn ʿUmar, and said to him: "We have thought of a desert spot where there is nothing tame but gazelles and ostriches, and nothing grows but the Christ's thorn (*sidr*) and the colocynth." Then some [others] of them [the representatives of the tribes] wanted the city to be on the Tānsīft valley. This became impossible for them, however, when [Abū Bakr ibn ʿUmar] said: "We are people of the desert and our livestock [travels] with us. Dwellings on the valley don't befit us." So they settled on the [first] place [proposed], where the valley of Nafīs would serve as its gardens, Dukkāla its fields, while the reigns of the Daran Mountains would be in the hand of its *amīr* for the duration of [the new city's] days. The Amīr Abū Bakr rode in [with] his troops with the shaykhs of the tribes. They walked with him to examine Marrakesh, in which was open country with nothing tame in it. They said to him: "Build here a city that will be an intermediary between Haylāna and Hazmīra.[26]

The passage intimates how Abū Bakr ibn ʿUmar was able to establish authority, including by binding himself to a leading local family when he married Zaynab bint Isḥāq al-Nafzāwī.[27] A fascinating historical figure, Zaynab is said to have been the wife of the Maghrāwa chief Laqqūṭ ibn Yūsuf or the concubine of the previous chief, Yūsuf ibn ʿAlī. She was legendary for possessing extraordinary beauty and refusing to marry anyone but the "true ruler of the Maghrib." She was also said to have had powers of divination and contact with the jinn. Widowed when Laqqūṭ was killed in the Almoravid conquest, Zaynab married Abū Bakr in 460/1067–8, consolidating his position in the area and granting him access to local wealth, resources, and stability that led to a period of growth. As A. Bennison points out, Zaynab symbolizes the wealth the Atlantic plain opened to the conquerors. She also stands in for the local culture and power structure the newcomers had to negotiate and understand. Abū Bakr then successfully took up the role of arbiter and benefactor as the families of Aghmāt and Aghāmt Warīka struggled for influence. In consultation with clan elders, Abū Bakr settled on a strategic location for his future capital, symbolically bare of civilization, where he would lay the foundational structures of the new empire.[28]

Abū Bakr would forever be associated with the foundation of the Almoravid capital,[29] a crucial step in the foundation of a political community capable of incorporating new groups, elites, and traditions. Marrakesh (from which the modern country's name derives) signaled a change in the horizons of the Almoravid state, from Saharan to Maghribi and from chiefdom to citied state. This transformation coincided with the transfer of power from Abū Bakr to Yūsuf or, construed differently, with the bifurcation of the state into southern and northern regions (with Yūsuf assuming administration of the latter). For shortly after founding Marrakesh, news of rebellion called Abū Bakr back south. He appointed Yūsuf deputy in the Maghrib. He divorced Zaynab, unwilling to leave her people. Zaynab then married Yūsuf, the sources say, by arrangement with Abū Bakr, after a stipulated period had passed. The year was 463/1071. A year later, Abū Bakr returned to resume command, but Yūsuf was thriving and felt torn. At Zaynab's instigation (illustrating her importance as political partner), Yūsuf declined to step down. He met Abū Bakr on the plain between Marrakesh and Aghmāt, presented him with gifts that put him on par in terms of rank, and they negotiated an amicable parting. The meeting – a staged performance of power – was a turning point in Almoravid history. Abū Bakr, loath to endanger the new state with a confrontation, said he was needed in the south to where he returned. He retained nominal leadership and is ascribed an important role in the founding conquests by several sources (a fact reflected, curiously, in the famous fourteenth-century Catalan Atlas, where an illustration of Abū Bakr bears the caption "sovereign of the Maghrib and Sahara"). Regardless, Yūsuf became de facto ruler and arguably the most important and powerful ruler of the empire's history. He was the stronger leader, a reality that his cousin likely understood when he agreed to the new arrangement. Zaynab became Yūsuf's chief adviser and political partner, a standout figure in the historiography of the period.

Within a year, Salé and Meknes along with other regions of the coastal plain, had been added to the territories and populations governed by Yūsuf. According to Ibn ʿIdhārī, it was around this time that, buoyed by the success of the new conquests and in need of articulating a more capacious definition of sovereignty, Yūsuf assumed the title of *amīr al-muslimīn* and formally invoked the Abbasid caliphs of Baghdad as ultimate authorities to invest him as local representative.

> And in this year [all] the shaykhs of the tribes united behind the Amīr Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf ibn Tāshfīn saying to him: "You are the Deputy of God in the Maghrib and/as your right/prerogative is greater than that claimed by any *amīr* except for the Amīr al-Muʾminīn (the Commander of the Believers)." He responded: "God forbid I be called by that name. Only the Caliphs are called that and I am a servant of the Abbasid Caliph fulfilling his call in the lands of the west." So they said to him: "You must have a name to be distinguished by." And he said: "Let it be Amīr al-Muslimīn, [then]." For it is said that he chose it for himself, and he ordered the scribes to use this name when writing to him or about him.[30]

Ibn ʿIdhārī contradicts ʿIyāḍ's account, dramatizing the event (which he dates to 466/1073) and weaving Yūsuf's adoption of the title into a narrative that highlights its classical Islamic political significance. Some modern scholars, following E. Lévi-Provençal, have contended that Yūsuf adopted the title even later, when the conquest of al-Andalus was under way. Contradictions notwithstanding, the title powerfully evoked the Islamic tradition and was consistent with an emerging theory of government in which caliphal power was vested in a secular political-military figure whose legitimacy was strengthened by the notion that this ruler exercised caliphal power locally, lending protection to its spiritual community. This afforded the Almoravids a new kind of legitimacy, legible on a broader scale, by taking on the role of Abbasid lieutenants in the Islamic West. This transformed the Lamtūna chief into a sultan in the service of the Abbasids, themselves connected back in time to the Prophet.

The office was innovative in the Islamic West, fitting for the leader of the first great Berber state of the Far Maghrib. Within two years, Yūsuf conquered Fes and Tlemcen. Most accomplished of Almoravid rulers, Yūsuf's career and persona straddled the gap between desert origins and imperial ruler of the two sides of the strait. During his reign the symbols and institutions of state in the urban centers of the Far Maghrib were put in place. He oversaw the construction of Marrakesh's first congregational mosque – the empire's symbolic spiritual center – and was said to have personally assisted in its construction. He unified the two quarters of Fes, ordered the city walls built, and renovated the congregational mosque. And he founded the Berber camp (Tākrārt) that, combined with Agadir,[31] would become Tlemcen. Yūsuf's state embraced a more cosmopolitan and diverse network of communities. The more capacious title fit with this broader outlook and points to the strengthening of the partnership between the military-political leadership and the network of Maliki scholars who formed a key constituency in the cities of the Maghrib, Ifrīqiya, and al-Andalus, and was capable of lending the legitimacy and prestige the empire needed to expand. Partnership with the Maliki learning establishment led to the quick development of the Maliki network in the Far Maghrib itself, where its presence had previously been modest. The institution of the amīrate allowed for this partnership to flourish, integrating the tribal-military component harmoniously with other constituencies, most importantly, perhaps, those associated with the urban milieu of Islamic learning and piety, which overlapped with a diverse set of communities beyond Yūsuf's dominions. This accounts, on some level, for overtures increasingly directed to Yūsuf from the cities of al-Andalus, where the rulers sought help and the learned Muslim class saw a new champion.

The conquest of al-Andalus

In what would become a pattern, the rise of a new military force in the Far Maghrib kindled hopes in al-Andalus that it could be marshaled to right the balance of power. In 478/1085, Alfonso VI of Castile-Leon took Toledo from the Dhū 'l-Nunids (following a series of intrigues between sovereigns with multiple ties and long familiarity). This bloodless conquest more than doubled the population of Alfonso's kingdom. It also added a great deal of prestige and wealth. Toledo became the largest urban center under an Iberian Christian sovereign. And it was certainly the largest urban center in Castile-Leon. The ancient Visigothic capital was the first great Muslim city to be lost to a Christian kingdom, an event that alarmed the rulers of the *mulūk al-ṭawāʾif*, such as ʿAbd Allāh ibn Buluggīn of Granada and al-Muʿtamid bi-Llāh al-ʿAbbādī of Seville. With the collapse of the Umayyad Caliphate at the beginning of the fifth/eleventh century, a race to replace the commanding role of Cordoba had ensued but failed to produce clear contenders as Taifa rulers were frustrated by their inability to unite and subjugate neighbors or produce military coalitions that could stand up to the combined forces being fielded by the Christian kingdoms.

Taifa rulers turned to the Almoravids, and they did so with some reluctance, since they saw themselves as the inheritors of the Umayyads' role as regional leaders, along with the traditions of legitimation that this implied. A title such as al-Muʿtamid bi-Llāh (itself calqued on Abbasid caliphal ones) exemplifies how these rulers saw themselves, and perhaps especially the ruler of Seville and Cordoba.[32] The Andalusi traditions of state and government enjoyed a kind of prestige the Almoravids lacked. Maghribi tribal coalitions, however, began to emerge as the true power brokers in the region. The center of power of the Muslim polities of the Western Mediterranean moved from Cordoba and Seville to Marrakesh and Rabat – with Almoravids and Almohads – a transformation that would become permanent, as later Christian advances would demonstrate. This also meant that the central military concern for Far Maghribi empires would be with their own tribal coalitions and the immediate neighbors of these coalitions, in their own backyard, so to speak. So, while clashing with the armies of the infidel in grand field battles would come to bestow the maximum prestige and legitimacy for these Berber empires, their most pernicious enemies attacked them from "within" (the Almohads rose in the mountains outside Marrakesh). For this reason, mindful of his position at home and because of the challenges a Saharan Ṣanhāja *amīr* would face in al-Andalus, Yūsuf was reluctant to intervene and had to be approached a number of times. He did not want to be perceived as moving against fellow orthodox Muslims.[33] He demanded that the Andalusi Maliki establishment lend its support and declare any Almoravid intervention necessary and lawful. He also obtained several strategic concessions from the Banū ʿAbbād, including naval support in the conquest of Sabta (which would become the Almoravids' most important port in the Maghrib) and the surrender of Algeciras as a foothold in the peninsula. Yūsuf agreed, but after a campaign in al-Andalus to stem the Christian assault, including the celebrated battle of Zallāqa in 479/1086, he realized that the conquest and unification of the Taifa kingdoms was the most expedient solution for defense against the Christian advance. Discord among the Taifa kingdoms, the need to defend against infidel aggression, and the prestige of acting as the defender of the Muslim community in the west justified the move.

Box 5.1 El Cid

Alejandro García-Sanjuán

El Cid Campeador is one of the most famous figures of the Spanish Middle Ages. Although an historical character, he soon became a mythical legend and a literary figure. He is at the origin of the first epic poem of Castilian literature, *El Cantar de Mío Cid*, which, at the same time, is the first literary work written in Castilian. The most ancient preserved version was composed around 1200.

The historical character, Rodrigo Diaz, originally from the village of Vivar, near Burgos, was a characteristic figure of the fifth/eleventh century in Iberia: a warlord who knew how to successfully move in the changing and convulsive world of the Taifa kingdoms, leading his own group of warriors (*mesnada*). Between 1081 and 1086 he acted as a warrior at the service of the king of Zaragoza, al-Muqtadir, fighting against his enemies, both Muslims and Christians. His most important success was the conquest of Valencia which he ruled from 1094 until his death in 1099. The city later remained under the rule of his wife Jimena Diaz until 1102, when it was taken by the Almoravids.

Due to his great prestige as a warrior, Rodrigo Diaz has gone down in history with the nicknames of "el Cid," from the Arabic *sīdī*, "lord", and "the Campeador" (referring, no doubt, to the battlefield, with the sense of "fighter"), usually used jointly as El Cid Campeador.

The historical figure of El Cid has often been distorted, especially in the Spanish cultural tradition, but also through other visions, in particular those that have turned him into a popular hero, mainly thanks to the cinematographic version realized in 1961 by the American director Anthony Mann.

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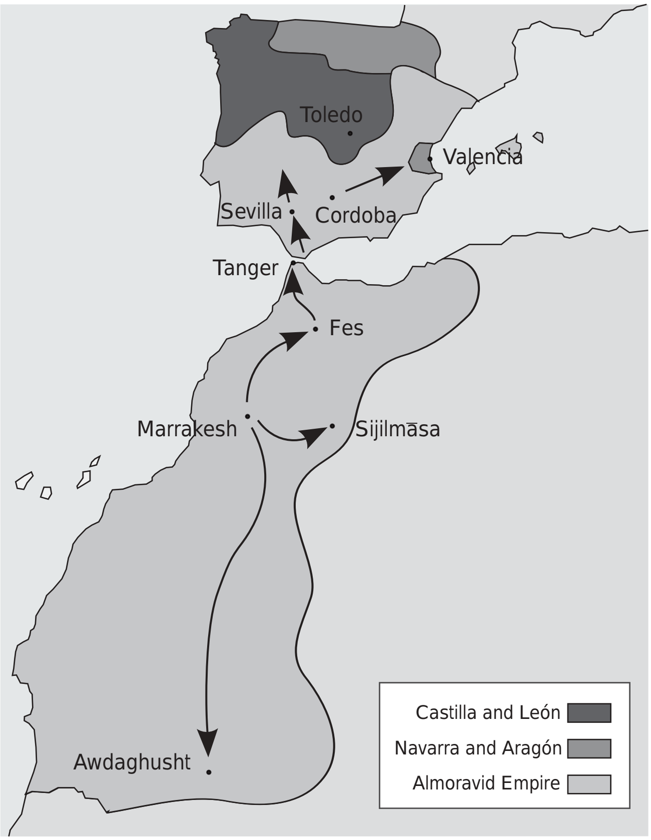
With the collapse of the Umayyad Caliphate of Cordoba, local power and leadership emerged across al-Andalus in a wide variety of different and competing forms. One of these, of particular note here, was that of judges and judge-families turned rulers, including Ibn ʿAbbād of Seville and Ibn Jaḥḥāf of Valencia (who replaced al-Qādir when the Almoravids and El Cid violently competed for the city and its environs). They assumed leadership of their respective city states and, in some cases, adopted the trappings and titles associated with sovereignty. Maliki jurists also played a key role as mediators and negotiators between Andalusi rulers and the Almoravids as they advanced in al-Andalus. They were thus employed by the growing empire as judicial administrators in the empire *and* as negotiating agents in relations with Muslim Andalusi states or kingdoms. They were valuable assets in lending support and legitimacy in the eyes of local Andalusis.[34] Courtly opinion, and that of rival military elites, was much less sympathetic to the Almoravid advance, which proceeded not entirely without difficulties. The Taifa rulers themselves were often caught between two powerful and threatening forces, such as the kingdom of Castile-Leon or Aragon to the north and the Almoravid armies to the south. These armies, moreover, rarely appeared synchronously, leaving the Taifa rulers to negotiate, sign treatises, and make conflicting promises to appease the immediate threat.[35] This uncomfortable position is vividly captured in the first-person account of the Berber Zīrī *amīr* of Granada, ʿAbd Allāh ibn Buluggīn (r. 456/1064–483/1090), who was entrapped by accusations of collaborating with Alfonso VI of Castile-Leon, and forced into exile in Aghmāt. Ibn Jaḥḥāf in Valencia would face a similar conundrum, negotiating outside forces and local intrigue. Valencia, moreover, proved perhaps the most significant set-back to Yūsuf's reign and advance, as the city was lost after it had been conquered, when Rodrigo Diaz Vivar (El Cid), laid siege to the city in 486/1093 and took and ruled over it until his death in 492/1099.[36] While the Almoravids retook the city in 495/1102, the episode shows how their forces could become easily overextended in the peninsula and how local support could be fickle and fissiparous. Saragossa would prove a more problematic source of instability during the reign of ʿAlī ibn Yūsuf, as did the entire frontier with Aragon, which expanded aggressively during this time.

The Almoravid conquest of al-Andalus, including its richest and largest Taifa, entailed a significant reorganization of resources in the peninsula. This affected elite families most. The course of Almoravid rule in cities such as Cordoba and Seville was punctuated by highs and lows, illustrating the limitations of Almoravid legitimacy and success in al-Andalus and the positions of supporters and detractors. Members of the Andalusi Maliki establishment proved among the state's most loyal and committed supporters, even when things had turned irrevocably. It was Andalusi Maliki scholars who fully articulated an Almoravid theory of government and legitimacy in the Islamic West, investing them as full members of the Umma or Islamic Commonwealth. This theory rested on the Almoravid's patronage of justice (embodied in the *sharīʿa* and cultivated by the Maliki *Madhhab*), investiture by the universal spiritual leader of the Umma (the Abbasid caliph), and their unique ability to defend the Muslim community against its enemies in the west. They also, and to much popular acclaim, championed the abolishment of non-canonical taxes. All of these characteristics were deemed lacking in the Andalusi Taifa leadership who, unable to defend itself, taxed its subjects heavily to pay tribute and protection money to Aragon and Castile. Some of the best-known instances of Andalusi Malikis elaborating such a theory include Abū Bakr ibn al-ʿArabī's letter of support for Yūsuf from the Abbasid Caliph al-Mustaẓhir bi-Llāh, Ibn ʿAbdūn's treatise on the branches or fields of government, and Ibn Rushd al-Jadd's *fatwā*s to Yūsuf's son and successor, ʿAlī ibn Yūsuf.

Abū Bakr ibn al-ʿArabī's (d. 543/1148) career and the diplomatic missives he brought back from his travels richly illustrate the incentives and tensions involved in formulating an Almoravid strategy for legitimation and in the stakes Andalusi Malikis like himself had in the success of such a formula.[37] At the tender of age of seventeen, Abū Bakr followed his father, ʿAbd Allāh – a former member of the ʿAbbādid elite – into exile, having lost wealth and possessions in the Almoravid takeover. Abū Bakr and his father left for the relative safety of a long eastward journey, which they took as an opportunity to go on pilgrimage and to educate young Abū Bakr, as a study trip to meet scholars, experience which could be leveraged for a position upon returning home. So while father and son left, victims of the foreign invasion and chaos stemming from the upturning of the Sevillan elite, they also appear to have known what would curry favor with the new rulers and how to fit into the emerging political order. With many stops along the way, ʿAbd Allāh and Abū Bakr made their way to Seljuk Baghdad where they waited for two years for an audience with the Abbasid caliph. They also met many leading scholars of their time including the most famous, "the reviver of the age," Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111). By the time they set out to return to Seville they had gathered a set of important letters: In one, ʿAbd Allāh asks the caliph to sanction Yūsuf's intervention in al-Andalus as representative of the Abbasid Caliphate and unifier of the Islamic West and recognize him as holy warrior against the inimical Latin Christians. He also asks that his and his son's efforts to obtain such a letter be acknowledged and that they be compensated for this effort. And what ʿAbd Allāh had in mind here was more than the mere (and by no means insignificant) effort of traveling from Seville to Baghdad, but also acknowledgment of their role as Andalusi Maliki scholars: pious and learned guardians of the region's most prestigious religious learning tradition. One letter bore the caliph's support and investiture of Yūsuf. In another, al-Ghazālī wrote in support of Yūsuf's defense of the Muslims against the infidel. These letters were later copied into a manuscript discovered in the Maghrib where they became prized for their religious and political significance and were incorporated into the historiographical tradition.[38]

Another member of the Sevillan Maliki *ʿulamāʾ* wrote the best-known description of government in Almoravid al-Andalus. Translated into French and Spanish in the mid-twentieth century (as *Séville musulmane au début du XII siècle*),[39] Ibn ʿAbdūn's *Risāla fī 'l-qaḍāʾ wa'l-ḥisba* deals with city government under the Almoravids and has long been prized for the embedded historical detail, as it vividly illustrates daily life and even the tensions that would surface in the city under the Almoravid regime. Ibn ʿAbdūn complains of individuals masquerading as Almoravids, by wearing their distinct face cover (*lithām*), to intimidate or extort from fearful locals. He calls for strict observance of a dress code in which only *bona fide* Saharan Ṣanhāja of the military government be allowed to wear the *lithām*. He also exhibits a detailed preoccupation with social morality. He called for stricter separation of the sexes (he complained that women should not be allowed to visit barbers alone). Discussion of a rise in "religious conservatism" aside (the text has in the past been taken to support the view that the Almoravids initiated a wave of religious zealotry by empowering the "conservative" Malikis to impose their strict conventions), what is noteworthy for this discussion is that Ibn ʿAbdūn articulates very clearly, and perhaps for the first time since the fall of the Umayyad government, a theory of government under the office of the sultanate, in which the powers of government are distinctly apportioned to distinct and separate social powers and for clearly expressed reasons. From the title, Ibn ʿAbdūn shows an interest in defining offices of government and their unique roles and responsibilities. *Risāla fī ’l-qaḍāʾ wa’l-ḥisba* deals with the functions and jurisdictions of local government: *ḥiṣba*, on inspecting and policing city transactions and behavior, and *qaḍāʿ*, on the responsibilities of judges.[40] Ibn ʿAbdūn argues for the centrality of the latter as guardians of justice and indispensable partners of governors and rulers in preserving the social order. His vision of government seamlessly harmonizes with the concept of sultanate, of the Almoravid government invested by a universal power, and the Maliki establishment acting as local representative of that symbolic office, guarantor of the



Map 5.1 The Almoravids

justice of government and its lawfulness – the bindingness of decisions, judgments, and contracts, from the gravest to the least consequential. Almoravid government in al-Andalus was justified by its ability to defend the community and empower the local forces of virtue and order, found in those who cultivated the spiritual and moral tradition.

Yūsuf ibn Tāshfīn's successor was born into something much closer to Andalusi culture than he had been. Born in the port city of Sabta, ʿAlī ibn Yūsuf received a cosmopolitan, Andalusi, and Arabo-Mediterranean education. The second and last long-reigning Almoravid sovereign, ʿAlī set about continuing and in many cases considerably developing the work and policies of his father. He completed the conquest of al-Andalus and significantly developed the urban core of the main cities of the Maghrib (e.g., he built the ramparts of Marrakesh and enlarged the Great Mosque of Tlemcen), and he developed the institutional framework of the empire considerably beyond the somewhat rudimentary provisions laid down during his father's rule. It is during ʿAlī's reign, for example, that we witness the full development of a network of Maliki judges, consultants, and legal and administrative officers, especially in the Far Maghrib, where it developed in some places from practically non-existent to fully formed.[41] A whole new generation of Maliki-literate *ʿulamāʾ* appeared in the region; the consequent adoption of Andalusi practice and knowledge was extensive and far reaching, since Andalusi Malikis provided the most important source for the development of this network in the Far Maghrib both in terms of personnel and knowledge. ʿAlī ibn Yūsuf, moreover, left a record of this process and his patronage, as he submitted important matters of state to consultation by Maliki jurisconsults or muftīs. These were later recorded and compiled, and they included legal opinions (*fatwā*s) written by the leading Andalusi jurist of the time, Ibn Rushd al-Jadd, who, among other things, played a key role in the theoretical overhaul of Maliki law in the sixth/twelfth century, mirroring a development occurring in the other major schools.[42] The coincidence of this development with the rise of the Almoravid state and its patronage of this legal tradition should not be ignored.

Examples of ʿAlī's consultations with Ibn Rushd al-Jadd include questions that touched on vital aspects of Almoravid legitimacy. Around 514/1120, for example, he (or his clerical staff most likely) wrote Ibn Rushd a question on the relative virtue of pilgrimage to Mecca (an individual religious obligation, when performable) versus engaging in armed defense of the community (a communal obligation to be performed by those able of body and according to need). ʿAlī asks what obligation (*ḥajj* or jihad) should be prioritized by individuals and communities living in the Islamic West, with its very specific characteristics, including the threat posed by the aggressive kingdoms to the north.[43] And while there is a great deal to say on the context of this question (J. Hendrickson has recently analyzed it within a discourse on the exceptionalism of the Islamic West and its relationship to pilgrimage),[44] what should be underscored here is how the question shows that ʿAlī ibn Yūsuf had institutionalized a practice of consultation between two branches of government (or between two separate vectors of social power) and that he submitted questions that went to the heart of his legitimacy as sovereign to this process. From Ibn Rushd's answer, in which he emphasizes the importance of jihad over that of *ḥajj* (an obligation, which, in his opinion, had fallen from the inhabitants of the Islamic West due to the difficulty of its performance and the urgent need to defend the community from hostile infidel forces), we glean that the Maliki *ʿulamāʾ* of al-Andalus played a crucial role in bolstering the image of the Almoravids as legitimate and sole regional wagers of jihad, that is, as a group whose *raison d'être* was the military defense of the community. This justified Almoravid rule in al-Andalus and underscored the Almoravids' dependency on the Maliki *ʿulamāʾ* for moral guidance and the lawful administration of society and state. This portrayal is, furthermore, in harmony with the visions of government being articulated in the Levant and Egypt where non-Arab dynasties emerged as key and sole able wagers of anti-crusader jihad, thereby symbolically legitimated as rulers with a particular and new kind of relationship to their subjects.

While the Maliki establishment lent enthusiastic support to the new rulers, who also appeared to enjoy significant popular appeal, especially in the beginning, with their promise to reunify and reinstate an ascendant Muslim polity in the peninsula, the Almoravids also met significant resistance and hostility that would multiply in certain quarters and was articulated variously as Andalusi cultural superiority, rejection of Almoravid and Maliki dogma in favor of alternate spiritual, often Messianic or mahdist expressions, and as outright military and political rebellion. Even in the view of some Maliki *ʿulamāʾ*, such as Ibn ʿAbdūn, the Almoravids were characterized by a rough cultural otherness that required being kept in check. When Almoravid military campaigns did not yield the outright defeat of the Christian armies and turned, moreover, to quell and repress Andalusi individuals and communities, rejection became outspoken, as can be gleaned in the extraordinary letter by Ibn Abī 'l-Khiṣāl against his own masters or in the mocking and lampooning of al-Andalus's master of the *zajal*, Ibn Quzmān.[45]

Box 5.2 Mértola

Filomena Barros

Mértola (in Arabic Mīrtula) is located on a rocky outcrop, enjoying an interfluvial position between the Guadiana river and the Oeiras stream. It was part of the territory of the province (*kūra*) of Beja. The navigability of the Guadiana had always allowed permanent contact with the Mediterranean. In the Islamic period, that fact permitted the significant growth of this urban center, from the fourth/tenth century on, when it became integrated into the network of interchange of al-Andalus.

At the regional level, Mértola played an important part in the redistribution of products coming from Western Mediterranean routes, namely luxury ceramic articles. Arabic sources tend to classify this urban center indifferently as *ḥiṣn* or *madīna*, which was often the case with sites exhibiting a craggy topography and a particularly defensive morphology – in this case, dating back to Roman times. The space inside the walls, with an area of 60,000 square meters, is consistent with a town of medium importance.

Its centrality in the region favored several attempts at autonomy. From 410/1020 to 435/1044, Ibn Tayfūr took over power. In the sixth/twelfth century, it became a political center in the hands of the mystic of *muwallad* origin, Ibn Qasī, in his anti-Almoravid rebellion. Ibn Qasī conquered it in 538/1144 and proclaimed himself a *mahdī*. Acknowledged by the two principal lords of the Gharb al-Andalus, Ibn al-Mundhir and Sidrāy ibn Wazīr, his divergences with the latter made him appeal to the intervention of the Almohads, whose forces invaded the Algarve in 540/1146. For approximately two years, Ibn Qasī served the Almohad caliph, giving up his political and ideological programme and, therefore, the title of *mahdī*. From 542/1148 to 543/1149, Ibn Qasī rebelled against the Almohads, asking for military assistance from the first Portuguese king, Afonso Henriques. For this reason, he was murdered by his own followers.

Mértola then became subject to Almohad power, whose architectural interventions left a characteristic mark on its space: in the mosque – the only one in Portugal that has functioned without interruption to this day as the town's mother church – and in two boroughs built from scratch, one inside the citadel (alcazaba) and the other on the harbor, near the Guadiana river. In one house of this borough there are crosses engraved on the inside, on the threshold of a door giving access to the living room. We cannot tell whether this is an isolated instance of a Christian family, or a whole Christian district. In any case, it is a testimony that members of this religious minority lived under the Almohads.

The incorporation of Mértola into the Portuguese kingdom, in 1233, sentenced the town to decline, due to the cutting of the Mediterranean routes and the resulting disappearance of the harbor.

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When Almoravid control weakened, a series of rebellions broke out. Some in popular urban centers, such as Cordoba, others led by Messianic leaders in the countryside, such as Ibn Qasī's *murīdūn* movement in Mértola and the Algarve.[46] The Almoravids and their Maliki agents in al-Andalus became consumed with quelling and controlling the leadership of this spiritual rebellion. The most important Andalusi mystics of the time, Ibn al-ʿArīf and Ibn Barrajān, were summoned to Marrakesh to explain themselves (although treated differently, both died of illness there). Taken alongside the much-discussed burning of al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā' ʿulūm al-dīn*, these events point to the emergence of numerous sources of alternative and anti-Almoravid religious leadership, with important consequences for Andalusi religio-political traditions of social authority.

The reasons and consequences for the collapse of Almoravid power in al-Andalus are many and complex, but a few major points should be highlighted: The effect of anti-Almoravid sentiment can be overstated (at least as a political factor). Cultural otherness characterized many military casts and in al-Andalus itself, the Almoravids were but one variation in a series of Berber ruling military groups, content to occupy their specialized role. While the formulas for political opposition employed by Andalusis were significant in the long run for the religio-political culture of al-Andalus, the real force that undermined Almoravid rule came from the Maghrib – the Almohads, who, significantly shared important aspects with movements such as those of Ibn Qasī; the new tribal federation at the core of the Almohad movement undid the Almoravid Empire, coopting several of its constituents. The Almohad movement and empire benefited from the Almoravid experience: it employed some of the same strategies while adopting others in stark contrast (notably in its theology). It lasted longer, was better able to integrate its constitutive parts, and left a deeper mark textually, architecturally, and artistically speaking, and largely erased and obliterated its predecessor. It is certainly true that the Almoravid political revolution in the Maghrib and its conquest of al-Andalus facilitated Almohad conquest and rule. But it should also not be forgotten that Almoravid legitimacy and the loyalty it commanded was more long-lasting than most historical descriptions give it credit for. A major thorn in the side of the Almohad empire, stubbornly emerging and re-emerging over generations, came from the inconveniently lingering Almoravid dynasty (of the Banū Ghāniya), originating ironically in al-Andalus and ensconced firmly in the Balearic islands, from where they persistently harassed Almohad territories in the central and east Maghrib to the empire's very end.[47]

Conclusion

The success of the Almoravid political and economic experiment awakened a variety of new forces that aspired to capture the rich resources on which the Almoravids had capitalized, chief of which was a long-distance trade network with ports and points of exchange from West Africa to Iberia and the Mediterranean. The most powerful challenge rose in the heart of the empire, where another Berber group, which had been only partially incorporated, began forming a new coalition. Challengers emerged throughout the empire and the Almoravids' core military leadership became overstretched. The Masmūda-led federation of the Almohads ultimately flourished, underscoring how such Far Maghribi tribal federations had become the source of large-scale political power in the Islamic West capable of intervening in the Iberian crusades where native Muslim communities could not. Opposition and rebellion to the Almoravids took on a variety of forms. Tellingly, these expressed ideological opposition squarely directed at the basis of Almoravid legitimacy and at its perceived weaknesses and shortcomings. As the dynasty ultimately failed and was replaced and overwritten – often quite literally – by the symbols and histories of succeeding empires, the list of Almoravid deficiencies was recorded and hardened, somewhat in the way of heresiographies recording defunct religious movements. They were accused of theological shallowness, of blind adhesion to legalities and formalities while neglecting the fundamentals of religion and justice. The opposition denounced the Saharan Ṣanḥāja as a foreign ethnic group and culture that inverted gender roles and lacked the civility that underlies the proper functioning of moral society. They also attacked the Maliki establishment, promoting alternate forms of spiritual leadership in the community, including mystical, charismatic, and Messianic figures.[48]

The critique articulated by opposition to the Almoravids and the historiographical narratives that ultimately emerged also reflect, albeit obliquely, the ingredients of Almoravid legitimacy and those which endured or were successfully coopted and reformulated by succeeding powers. The Maliki network in the Far Maghrib was one element that ultimately endured the Almohad campaign against it and found its position in the balance of social powers in the Maghrib. Over time it adapted and mingled with the new sources of spiritual and moral authority that emerged under Marinids and Saʿdians, including mystical fraternities and other charismatic movements such as Sharīfism. The Almoravid articulation of a basis of legitimacy as a sultanate invested by the Abbasid caliph was the beginning of a more permanent and widespread development in the region, and it reflects the interests of a social group newly ascended to power. It demonstrates how this group staked its claim in Maghribi and Andalusi society and set a model for Berbers more broadly to argue for their place in the wider Islamic world – its history and destiny – no longer to be ignored.

Notes

1 A translation of the Arabic *al-Maghrib al-Aqṣā*.

2 Not to be understood as a homogenous whole. While for the modern world, it is important to argue that there is no such thing as a single Muslim world (it is diverse and not unified), for the sixth/twelfth century something close to the opposite is what is meant: that, in spite of a world in which communication was difficult and slow, a set of tools and institutions appeared which facilitated communication, associated with Islam and Islamicate civilization.

3 And thereafter by the successors of the Prophet. Another tradition maintains that the title was bestowed upon ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib by the Prophet.

4 The classic treatment of this subject can be found in Lévi-Provençal, "Le Titre Souverain des Almoravides." He poses the subject around the relationship and causality between (1) adoption of the title, (2) investiture by the Abbasids, (3) conquest of al-Andalus. Appearance of the title and variants in numismatic evidence is taken into account, and he comments on his edition of ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-ʿArabī's letter. Bennison, "Relations between Rulers and Ruled in the Medieval Maghrib" is a recent discussion of the development of political legitimacy in the Maghrib from the Almoravid to the Almohad period.

5 Ironically, and as many have noted, the office of the caliph only became ideologically and legally defined after it had ceased to wield effective power.

6 “Way,” most often translated as legal school. *Madhhab* should be understood as something broader, however, because it encompasses important regional identity and ritual dimensions.

7 Lévi-Provençal, “Le titre souverain des Almoravides,” 266.

8 The Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs by definition being Qurayshī.

9 On the Ibāḍī traditions, see Gaiser, *Muslims, Scholars, Soldiers*.

10 A recent work on Sijilmāsa is Messier and Miller, *The Last Civilized Place*.

11 D. Eustache, “Idrīs I,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition.

12 R. Le Tourneau, “Barghawāṭa,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition. P. E. Walker, “al-Bajalī,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*-Three.

13 Brett, *The Fatimid Empire*.

14 Levtzion, “Abd Allāh b. Yāsīn and the Almoravids,” 79; Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib*, 68, 77; Bennison, *The Almoravid and Almohad Empires*,” 236.

15 Kinsmen of the Lamṭa. G. S. Colin, “Djazūla,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition.

16 Abū ʿImrān al-Fāsī (d. 430/1039).

17 Serrano, “Ibn Rušd al-Ŷadd”; Gómez-Rivas, “Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ (d. 544/1149).”

18 Levtzion and Hopkins, *Corpus of Early Arabic* Sources, 102–103; Norris, “New Evidence on the Life of ʿAbdullāh b. Yāsīn”; ʿIyāḍ ibn Mūsā, *Tartīb al-madārik*, 8:82–83.

19 Bennison, *The Almoravid and Almohad Empires*, 25, 37, presents one of the most recent and complete histories of the Almoravids in English. The most complete political history of the Almoravid period is Bosch Vilá, *Los Almorávides*. Also useful is Lagardère, *Les Almoravides jusqu'au règne de Yūsuf b. Tāšfīn* and Lagardère, *Les Almoravides: Le Djihad Andalou*.

20 Waggāg's center for learning was called the *dār al-murābiṭīn*. And one historiographical tradition credits the creation of a *ribāṭ* to Ibn Yāsīn, now thought to be legendary. The term is understood to be more closely related to the verbal noun (*murābaṭa*). Moraes Farias, “The Almoravids: Some Questions Concerning the Character of the Movement;” Meier, “Almoraviden und Marabute.”

21 Marín, “The Princess and the Palace;” Lourie, “Black Women Warriors in the Muslim Army Besieging Valencia.”

22 Fromherz, “Being Like Women to Be Better Men: Mythical Origins of the Male Veil.”

23 Aghmāt had far-ranging commercial contacts, being part of the same network as Sijilmāsa.

24 In 450/1059. Bennison, *The Almoravid and Almohad Empires*, 32.

25 During Ibn Yāsīn's lifetime, power appears split or shared between spiritual and tribal leader. With the accession of Abū Bakr, that leadership appears to coalesce in him, and later Yūsuf, as single leader.

26 Ibn ʿIdhārī, *al-Bayān al-mughrib*, vol. 4:19.

27 Also known as the daughter of Isḥāq al-Ḥawwarī. Bennison, *The Almoravid and Almohad Empires*, 33.

28 Other sources identify the tribes and clans in dispute differently. Bennison, *The Almoravid and Almohad Empires*, 34, note 32. Anonymous, *Kitāb al-Ḥulal al-mawshiyya*, 15–16; Lagardère, *Les Almoravides jusqu'au règne de Yūsuf b. Tāšfīn*; Messier, *The Almoravids*, 41–42.

29 Which Ibn ʿIdhārī dates to 23 Rajab 462/7 May 1070.

30 Ibn ʿIdhārī, *al-Bayān al-mughrib*, 4:27. Bennison, *The Almoravid and Almohad Empires*, 49.

31 A word meaning fortified granary in Amazigh.

32 Seville had replaced Cordoba locally as the main seat of power. The Banū ʿAbbād with their capital at Seville had emerged as one of the strongest of the *mulūk al-tawāʿif* in the fifth/eleventh century.

33 That is, coreligionists of the same stripe as his. Orthodoxy evolves and enjoys a certain diversity.

34 On Almoravid relations with Andalusi Malikis and their roles in administration and negotiation, see El Hour, *La administración judicial almorávide en al-Andalus*.

35 On the denoument of the Taifa, see Viguera Molins, *Los reinos de taifas*.
36 Fletcher, *The Quest for El Cid*, 166–186. More broadly on Valencia and the Christian conquest, see Guichard, *Les Musulmans de Valence*.
37 Garden, "The *Riḥla* and Self-Reinvention of Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī."
38 Ibn Khaldūn cites them in the *Muqaddima*. The text of the letters brought back by Abū Bakr ibn al-ʿArabī are in Muḥammad Yaʿlà, *Tres Textos Árabes*.
39 Ibn ʿAbdūn, *Séville Musulmane*.
40 Chalmeta, *El Zoco Medieval*; García-Sanjuán, "Jews and Christians in Almoravid"; Bennison, "Relations between Rulers and Ruled in the Medieval Maghrib."
41 Gómez-Rivas, *Law and the Islamization of Morocco*, 39–42.
42 Fierro, "Proto-Malikis, Malikis, and Reformed Maliks;" Fernández Félix, *Cuestiones legales del Islam temprano*.
43 Gómez-Rivas, *Law and the Islamization of Morocco*, 93–99.
44 Hendrickson, "Prohibiting the Pilgrimage."
45 Guichard, *Les musulmans de Valence*, I, 91–92; Monroe, *The Mischievous Muse*.
46 Ebstein, "Was Ibn Qasī a Sūfī?;" Casewit, *The Mystics of al-Andalus*.
47 Baadj, *Saladin, the Almohads and the Banū Ghāniya*.
48 Fierro, *The Almohad Revolution*.

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