

**MONUMENTAL AUSTERITY: THE MEANINGS AND AESTHETIC DEVELOPMENT
OF ALMOHAD FRIDAY MOSQUES**

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MONUMENTAL AUSTERITY: THE MEANINGS AND AESTHETIC DEVELOPMENT OF ALMOHAD FRIDAY MOSQUES

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This dissertation examines four twelfth-century Almohad congregational mosques located in centers of spiritual or political power. Previous analyses of Almohad religious architecture are overwhelmingly stylistic and tend to simply attribute the buildings' markedly austere aesthetic to the Almohads' so-called fundamentalist doctrine. Ironically, the thorough compendium of the buildings' physical characteristics produced by this approach belies such a monolithic interpretation; indeed, variations in the mosques' ornamental programs challenge the idea that Almohad aesthetics were a static response to an unchanging ideology. This study demonstrates that Almohad architecture is a dynamic and complex response to both the difficulties involved in maintaining an empire and the spiritual inclinations of its patrons. As such, it argues that each successive building underwent revisions that were tailored to its religious and political environment. In this way, it constitutes the fully contextualized interpretation of both individual Almohad mosques and Almohad aesthetics.

After its introduction, this dissertation's second chapter argues that the two mosques sponsored by the first Almohad caliph sent a message of political and religious authority to their rivals. The two buildings' spare, abstract ornamental system emphasized the basic dogma upon which Almohad political legitimacy was predicated, even as it distinguished Almohad mosques from the ornate sanctuaries of the Almoravids. Chapter Three turns to the mosque built by the second Almohad caliph in the Iberian capital of Seville. After demonstrating how the building's dimensions and privileged location broadcasted Almohad authority to an ambivalent Andalusian audience, an analysis of religious works by two court philosophers, Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Rushd,

helps to decode its complex ornamental program. Chapter Four examines the unfinished Friday mosque begun by the third Almohad caliph in Rabat. Its overwhelming dimensions and new typology dovetail with a recent theory that the caliph wished to make Rabat his new Maghribī capital, while the mosque's revised ornamental program reflects the caliph's desire to renew the political and religious foundations upon which Almohad political legitimacy rested. Chapter Five compares the Almohad mosques to the Cistercian convent of Las Huelgas, located in Castile, before the conclusion situates Almohad architecture within a broader Mediterranean context.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Jessica Streit received her Ph.D. in Islamic art history from Cornell University's Medieval Studies Program in 2013. Because the program values an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the medieval world, her minor fields include the history of the Crusades, Romanesque art and the Arabic language. Her interest in interdisciplinary study of medieval culture stems from undergraduate work at the University of New Mexico, from which she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Art History in 2005. There, she focused primarily on medieval Western European art and history with special emphasis on both the art of medieval Spain (both Christian and Islamic) and that of the early Italian Renaissance.

DEDICATION

To my first, best ally and friend: my sister Emily.

And to my own rude, mountain-dweller: Hamid, *takhsagh shik*.

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I must begin by thanking Cornell University and its Medieval Studies Program, for both unwavering support and accommodating my itinerant research methods! At Cornell, I have been privileged to work with professors Paul Hyams, whose insights about texts are matched only by his humor, and Ross Brann, who tirelessly encouraged my first fumbling efforts in Arabic and whose careful readings have greatly contributed to this project. Cornell University also gave me students, who both challenged me and allowed me to infect them with my passion for this material. I thank all of you for productive conversations and fond memories.

A good friend once correctly observed that dissertation writing is often lonely, making the restorative companionship of friends like Alyson Huff, Jessi Murphy-Blevins Campbell, Curtis Jirsa, Emily and Aaron Kelley, Sarah and Justin Harlan-Haughey, Zachary Yuzwa, Jane Calder and Kristen Strehle all the more valuable. I have been sustained by the unconditional faith that my parents and family have always had in me, newly strengthened by that of my in-laws. Finally, writing this thesis has revealed that Ibn Rushd counts my husband among his disciples; he has improved both my life and this study in innumerable ways.

There remains one person to thank: my advisor and friend, Cynthia Robinson. I'll never know what she saw in the grungy, nineteen-year-old sitting in the third row, but she is responsible for my decision to pursue a Ph.D. in Art History. For over ten years, she has guided my thinking, promoted me to future colleagues and shown me what it means to have a successful academic career. Her dedication, expertise and insight have impacted this project from its inception to its end. Of course, any errors remain entirely my own.

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INTRODUCTION

“Knowledge is a light in the heart that distinguishes in it the true, the particular and the darkly ignorant.” –Muḥammad Ibn Tūmart, Mahdī of the Almohads²

The brightly shining light of knowledge described by Ibn Tūmart (d. 1130), the founder of the Almohad movement, provides a fitting opening image for this study. In the pages that follow, I seek to shed needed interpretive light on both the cool interiors and the sun-drenched exteriors of four Almohad Friday mosques. Three of these buildings lie on Moroccan soil: the Tinmal mosque (c. 1153), which was both the site of Ibn Tūmart’s tomb and a major pilgrimage destination; the Kutubiyya mosque in the imperial capital of Marrakesh (c. 1158) and the Hassan mosque in Rabat (c. 1195), a city founded to replace Marrakesh, though this change was never effected.³ The fourth oratory is the Great Mosque of Seville (c. 1184), which was located in the Almohads’ eponymous Iberian capital. Finally, I will examine the implications of these Friday Mosques in three Mediterranean territories outside Almohad borders.

Most broadly, I aim to understand how the Almohad dynasty communicated ideological and political messages through these four buildings. In the service of this goal, I examine the mosques’ relationship to their immediate sociopolitical contexts, which determined key aspects of their construction. I also analyze their ornamental programs, demonstrating that the mosques’ décor encapsulates and displays official Almohad doctrine as it evolved over time. Both the buildings’ architectural and ornamental features respond to the successive needs of their patrons: the caliphs `Abd al-Mu`min (d. 1163), Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf (d. 1184) and Abū Yūsuf Ya`qūb al-

² Cited in Alan James Fromherz, *The Almohads: The Rise of an Islamic Empire* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 172.

³ See Moulay Driss Sedra, “La Ville du Rabat au VI/XII siècles : Le projet d’une nouvelle capitale de l’empire almohade ?” *Al-Andalus Maghrib* 15 (2008): 275-303.

Manṣūr (d. 1195). Once the buildings are understood within an Almohad context, I will broaden the scope to consider their close relationship to the Assumption Chapel of Burgos' Monastery of Las Huelgas (Burgos, founded c. 1187). In the conclusion, I also briefly explore the more tenuous ties between Almohad religious architecture and twelfth-century Norman Sicilian and Levantine architecture. In this way, my dissertation offers the first fully-contextualized interpretation of Almohad Friday mosques.

1 HISTORIOGRAPHY

The well-known French investigative team, Henri Terrasse and Henri Basset, first published the Maghribī Almohad mosques in a series of monographs dating to the 1920s.⁴ Due to the newness of the field and early twentieth-century methodology, their approach is essentially descriptive, providing a useful compendium of the buildings' characteristics but little interpretation. In the late 1940s, Leopoldo Torres Balbás continued Basset and Terrasse's foundational work by defining a set of identifying architectural features for Almohad buildings, including T-plans, rectangular prayer halls, brick pillars, pointed horseshoe arches framed by *alfices*, wooden latticed ceilings and *muqarnas* domes.⁵ In doing so, he reveals a belief that Almohad architecture remained static throughout the dynasty's seventy-year period of major construction efforts.⁶ Balbás presents an equally monolithic view of the mosques' ornament.

⁴ Basset and Terrasse's series of articles about Almohad mosques have been collected in a single volume: Henri Basset, Henri Terrasse, and Jean Hainaut, *Sanctuaires et forteresses almohades* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2001).

⁵ Leopoldo Torres Balbás, *Arte almohade. Arte nazarí. Arte mudéjar*, vol. 8 of *Ars Hispaniae; historia universal del arte hispánico* (Madrid: Editorial Plus-Ultra, 1949), 11.

⁶ His monolithic vision of Almohad architecture reveals itself in the 1949 volume of the *Ars Hispaniae* series, in which he speaks in non-specific terms about the entirety of Almohad monumental religious architecture. With the exception of a brief mention of the Almohad minaret from the mosque of Seville, none of the Almohad mosques are mentioned by name. Rather, the verbs, pronouns, possessives, etc., are simply rendered in the Spanish feminine plural (the Spanish word for mosque, *mezquita*, is a feminine noun). Thus, he places them into a single, generally describable group. He concludes his discussion with the proclamation that "the innovation of the mosques of the Unitarians [the Almohads] is found both in their tendency for symmetry and monumentality and in their sober decorative art, which disciplines and hierarchizes ornateness, reducing it to essentialized schemes." See Torres Balbás, *Arte almohade*, 11-13. In a smaller monograph dedicated to Almohad art and architecture, he notes that all

The Almohads were, in his mind, “rude mountain-dwellers” without an artistic tradition of their own who, when confronted with constructing monumental architecture, merely simplified the existing Andalusian repertoire.⁷ Their austere, spare aesthetic reflects both the Almohads’ policy of religious reform, predicated on the strict affirmation of divine unity, and also their desire to visually distance their oratories from the florid buildings of the Almoravids, their dynastic predecessors.⁸ When combined with the standard architectural features of Almohad mosques, the buildings constituted a statement of Almohad political and doctrinal hegemony.⁹

With the exception of Christian Ewert’s work, which compares Almohad mosques to Norman Sicilian palaces, and which I will examine in subsequent chapters, recent studies of Almohad religious architecture have not advanced the field.¹⁰ Marked by their synthesizing, taxonomic approaches, scholars either slightly refine or simply affirm Balbás’ definition of the

of their Maghribī mosques are defined by their austerity and simplicity. See Leopoldo Torres Balbás, *Artes almorávide y almohade* (Madrid: Instituto de Estudios Africanos. Instituto Diego Velásquez, del Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1955), 9.

⁷ Ibid., 9-10.

⁸ Almohad doctrine will be fully discussed in Chapter Two.

⁹ Torres Balbás, *Artes Almoravide*, 9.

¹⁰ Ewert outlines the comparison in greatest detail in Christian Ewert, *The Mosque of Tinmal (Morocco) and Some New Aspects of Islamic Architectural Typology*, (London: The British Academy, 1986), 127-139. Briefly, the similarities in their plans lead him to suggest that the Almohads may have been attempting to create a heavenly palace on earth. I explore this connection in Chapter Five. For Ewert’s other work on the Almohads, see Christian Ewert, “Tipología de la mezquita en Occidente: de los Omeyas a los Almohades,” vol. 1 of *Actos II Congreso de Arqueología Medieval Española* (Madrid: Comunidad de Madrid, Consejería de Cultura y Deportes, Dirección General de Cultura, 1987); Christian Ewert, “The Architectural Heritage of Islamic Spain in North Africa,” in *al-Andalus: the Art of Islamic Spain*, ed. Jerrilyn D. Dodds (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992); Christian Ewert, “El registro ornamental Almohade y su relevancia,” vol. 1 of *Los Almohades: problemas y perspectivas*, ed. Patrice Cressier, Ma. Isabel Fierro and Luis Molina, 223-247 (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2005). While Ewert’s meticulous scholarship has been of great assistance to the current project, he seems to conceive early Almohad architecture as a sort of unit. For example, he groups the first three Almohad monuments into what he calls the “classical phase of Almohad architecture,” using photographs from the Kutubiyya mosque side-by-side with photographs of the ruins at Tinmal in order to give the reader a sense of what Tinmal would have originally looked like. See Christian Ewert, *Forschungen zur almohadischen mosque. Die mosque von Tinmal (Marokko)*, (Mainz am Rhein: Von Zabern, 1985), plates 24-29, 33. Sergio Martínez Lillo also cites Ewert’s view to this effect in “La continuidad de la arquitectura bereber en el Magreb. Ciertos ejemplos en lo militar y religioso,” in *La arquitectura del Islam occidental*, ed. Rafael López Guzmán (Madrid: Lunwerg Editores, S.A., 1995), 160.

mosques' "canonical" traits.¹¹ Similarly, interpretive efforts, when present, continue to rest on the notion that the buildings' austere aesthetics reflect their patrons' strict interpretation of divine unity.¹² Ironically, the thorough compendium of the mosques' physical characteristics produced by this approach belies such a uniform interpretation: their variations challenge the idea that Almohad aesthetics were a static response to an unchanging ideology. My project meets this challenge by demonstrating that Almohad architecture is a dynamic and complex response both to the difficulties involved in maintaining an empire and to the spiritual inclinations of the buildings' patrons. As such, it argues that each successive building's messages and ornament underwent revisions that were tailored to its religious and political environment.

2 METHODOLOGICAL MODELS

One of the most recent and ground-breaking methodological trends of Islamic art history insists that non-figural ornament can be, and often is, the bearer of meaning. Cynthia Robinson provides an excellent model in *In Praise of Song: the making of courtly culture in Al-Andalus and Provence, 1005-1134 A.D.*¹³ Robinson reconstructs the social and literary environs surrounding an eleventh-century Islamic palace in Andalusia, revealing that the same intellectual processes through which courtiers would have understood the complex metaphors of court poetry

¹¹ See Teresa Pérez Higuera, "Arte almorávide y almohade," vol. 2 of *El retroceso territorial de Al-Andalus. Almorávides y almohades*, ed. María Jesús Viguera Molíns (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1994), 658. Sergio Martínez Lillo, writing a year later than Pérez Higuera and assigned the task of summarizing Almohad architecture, mentions the Kutubiyya mosque only twice, in both cases relating it to Tinmal. The first comparison he makes is between the plans, saying that "the plan type responds to the scheme of the two examples in Marrakesh (Kutubiyya), although in Tinmal's case the T-plan's number of naves is drastically reduced." The second is where he notes that the small courtyard which precedes the prayer hall at Tinmal, "that follows the same scheme of those that exist in the two united mosques of Marrakesh." He declines to offer an interpretation of any of the Almohad mosques. See Sergio Martínez Lillo, "La continuidad," 147-161.

¹² For many examples published as recently as 2005, see Volume 1 of *Los almohades: problemas y perspectivas*, ed. Patrice Cressier, Ma. Isabel Fierro and Luís Molina (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2005). To her credit, Pérez Higuera rightly points out that the interpretation of Almohad monuments as expressions of their new doctrine has been much insisted upon and yet is based upon an analysis that considers vegetal and geometric ornament separately. See "Arte almorávide," 660.

¹³ Cynthia Robinson, *In Praise of Song: the making of courtly culture in Al-Andalus and Provence, 1005-1134 A.D.* (Boston, MA : Brill, 2002).

also allowed them to interpret the palace's architecturally ambiguous ornament.¹⁴ Robinson provides another semiotic reading of non-figural ornament in a Christian building: the Clarisan convent of Santa Clara, located in Tordesillas, Spain. She first focuses on an atypical image of the Epiphany. In this painting, the Virgin Mary offers a diminutive tree—through whose branches a small bird ascends—to one of the three magi, whose backward-swaying posture reveals that he is deep within the throes of mystical ecstasy. Next, Robinson turns to the patio that precedes the space in which this Epiphany was housed; its stucco arcades feature naturalistic vegetal ornament. The prefacing of the figural image by the non-figural vegetation was, Robinson argues, no accident: each responds to contemporary devotional practices. These mystical exercises encouraged devotees to envision the ascent of their souls toward the divine as a bird climbing the branches of a tree in an idyllic garden setting.¹⁵

In both of these studies, Robinson presents a compelling case for a semiotics of non-figural ornament, an idea that also features in my reading of Almohad mosques. Equally important is the way in which she arrives at her conclusions: they would have been impossible to maintain without the support of contemporary texts. For the Islamic palace she considers poetry, one of the defining aspects of eleventh-century Andalusian court culture, which allows her to understand the ways that courtiers customarily deconstructed complicated metaphors. For the convent of Tordesillas, Robinson naturally turned to religious works—such as an Islamic mystical treatise, excerpts from the Kabbalah and a Jeronymite devotional text—all of which employ naturalistic imagery in order to meditate upon the divine.¹⁶ My own reliance on twelfth-

¹⁴ See Robinson, *In Praise of Song*, Chapters Three and Four.

¹⁵ Cynthia Robinson, "Mudejar revisited: A prolegomena to the reconstruction of perception, devotion, and experience at the mudejar convent of Clarisas, Tordesillas, Spain (fourteenth century A.D.)," *Res* 43 (2003-04): 51-77.

¹⁶ While acknowledging that each of the Iberian Peninsula's confessional groups understood and interpreted this imagery in specific ways, she also recognizes that its basic tenets were applicable for all three. See also Cynthia

century Almohad texts, identified and discussed below, is designed to give this study the contextual grounding that is so successful in Robinson's work.

Yasser Tabbaa and Gülru Necipoğlu offer other methodological considerations for this dissertation. The former has studied the architecture of the so-called Sunni Revival, which can be loosely defined as an attempt to foster Sunni ecumenicism in an effort to confront both Shī'ism and the internal ruptures within Sunni Islam.¹⁷ In his groundbreaking book, *The Transformation of Islamic Art during the Sunni Revival*, Tabbaa identifies several key artistic changes that took place in the eleventh- and twelfth-century Levant, and he argues that they constitute an effort to express patrons' Sunni identity and political agenda through architecture.¹⁸ In this way, he builds on Necipoğlu's work in *The Topkapı Scroll: Geometry and Ornament in Islamic Architecture*: the author argues that these same eleventh- and twelfth-century artistic changes came about alongside major theological debates in the Abbasid courts, in which an atomistic worldview eventually prevailed.¹⁹ Because both Necipoğlu and Tabbaa have successfully tied architectural forms, such as *muqarnas* and stylized vegetal ornament, to contemporary theological ideas, they offer other instructive examples of semiotic readings of Islamic ornament.²⁰

Stephennie Mulder's study both questions and refines Tabbaa's theories by examining the mausoleum of Imām al-Shāfi'ī, built in Cairo by the Ayyubid Sultan Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (d. 1193)

Robinson, "Trees of Love, Trees of Knowledge: Toward the Definition of a Cross-Confessional Current in Late Medieval Iberian Spirituality," *Medieval Encounters* 12.3 (2006): 388-435.

¹⁷ Yasser Tabbaa, *The Transformation of Islamic Art during the Sunni Revival* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), Chapter One, defines the Sunni Revival and goals.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 3-10.

¹⁹ Gülru Necipoğlu and Mohammad Al-Asad, *The Topkapı Scroll: Geometry and Ornament in Islamic Architecture: Topkapı Palace Museum Library MS H. 1956* (Santa Monica, CA: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1995), 95-7.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, Chapters Four and Five. For a distillation of his ideas about the ties between *muqarnas* vaulting and the Sunni Revival, see Yasser Tabbaa, "The Muqarnas Dome: Its Origin and Meaning," *Muqarnas* 3 (1985): 61-74.

and his successor.²¹ On the basis of physical and textual evidence, she determines that the monument represents internecine differences among Sunnis, rather than a unified Sunni front.²² Thus, Mulder demonstrates that the architectural style of the Sunni Revival, which Tabbaa presents as having a universal anti-Shī'ite ideological message, may obtain in certain specific cases, but that a generalized reading of Sunni Revivalism onto twelfth-century Sunni monuments is problematic. The parallel to my own work is clear: Mulder questions the universal application of the Sunni Revival paradigm in Egypt in much the same way that I will question the idea of a unified architectural and ornamental paradigm for Almohad mosques. Her study also points to one of the chief problems regarding semiotic readings of Islamic ornament: the same visual style—here, that of Tabbaa's Sunni Revival—can easily be transferred to other monuments and given new meaning. As Chapter Two of this dissertation will demonstrate, in order to argue that any ornament “means” anything, careful contextualization is necessary.

Finally, recent years have seen many fields produce meaningful studies of Almohad political and cultural life.²³ For example, Maribel Fierro's “Spiritual Alienation and Political Activism: The *ḡurabā'* in al-Andalus during the Sixth/Twelfth Century” examines the origins of the Almohad movement in the light of a hadith that describes the inevitable decline of Islamic society. According to this hadith, true believers will eventually constitute the minority of the faithful; it describes them as strangers (Ar. *ghurabā'*) in their own lands.²⁴ First, Fierro shows how individuals occupying various social positions all identified with this hadith, thereby

²¹ Stephennie Mulder, “The Mausoleum of Imam al-Shafi'i,” *Muqarnas* 23 (2006): 15-46.

²² *Ibid.*, 41-2.

²³ Instructive examples of this burgeoning trend can be found in many of the essays in the second volume of *Los almohades: problemas y perspectivas*, ed. Patrice Cressier, Maribel Fierro, and Luís Molina. (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2005).

²⁴ Maribel Fierro, “Spiritual Alienation and Political Activism: The *ḡurabā'* in al-andalus during the Sixth/Twelfth Century,” *Arabica* 47.2 (2000): 230-260.

underlining the fluidity of social categories easily misunderstood as being discrete.²⁵ She also identifies both how the Almohads drew on and how they deviated from the tradition of the *ghurabā*'.²⁶ Finally, she considers pre-Almohad Andalusian figures who may have identified as *ghurabā*', resulting in an understanding of minority dissent that transcends dynastic history and emphasizes historical continuity.²⁷

Fierro's methodology has important implications for this study. Although she characterizes the Almohad movement as revolutionary, she emphasizes both their breaks from and their continuity with the past. In other words, her work strikes a balance between recognizing Almohad difference and acknowledging that they used historical constructs to their advantage. This idea aligns perfectly with their architecture. While Almohad ornamental aesthetic deviates from previously developed paradigms, Chapter One shows how most of the building-blocks of this aesthetic had been developed previously. Furthermore, Chapter Two demonstrates that the Almohads consciously used preexisting architectural typologies to connect with venerable traditions of authority. A second valuable aspect of Fierro's methodology is how she does not, so to speak, lose the forest for the trees. She acknowledges the differences among the figures she discusses as *ghurabā*', but at the same time she discerns the general trends underlying their identifications as such. Again, this echoes one of the primary methodological concerns for my analysis of Almohad religious monuments: explaining the reasons that the mosques differ while also acknowledging their shared architectural idiom.

²⁵ *Ibid.* See the section headings beginning on pages 236, 248 and 253, respectively.

²⁶ Fierro uses a very similar approach in her essay entitled "Doctrina y práctica jurídicas bajo los almohades." First she outlines the reformist Malikite *'ulamā*' and their ideas, after which she discusses their relationship to doctrine and juridical practice under the Almohads, using specific case studies to support her conclusions. See vol. 2 of *Los almohades: problemas y perspectivas*, ed. Patrice Cressier, Maribel Fierro, and Luís Molina. (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2005), 895-935.

²⁷ See, for instance, discussion of eleventh-century *'ulamā*' on pages 238-240.

3 PRIMARY SOURCES AND TERMINOLOGY

3.1. BUILDINGS

As do the art historical studies cited above, this dissertation combines art historical and textual analysis, although the most significant primary sources are the extant Almohad oratories. A comprehensive survey of the latter would include Friday mosques, palace “chapels” and small parochial buildings; therefore, the first conceptual challenge that I faced when conceptualizing this project was deciding which buildings to include. My interest in the relationship between state-sponsored architecture and official ideology narrowed the scope to those Friday mosques located in centers of Almohad spiritual or political power, a process that yielded a list of five buildings: the Kutubiyya, Tinmal, Sevillan and Hassan mosques, plus the Great Mosque of Taza, which dates before 1147. `Abd al-Mu`min used Taza, located about seventy-five kilometers northeast of Fez, as his capital before ousting the Almoravids from Marrakesh in 1147. Unfortunately, extensive, and, to my knowledge, undocumented restorations of the Taza mosque greatly mask its original appearance, leading me to exclude it.

Of the four remaining buildings, the Kutubiyya mosque is the best preserved, although it is also the most likely to have undergone radical restorations.²⁸ Fortunately, Basset and Terrasse’s early photographs and descriptions can help reconstruct its twelfth-century appearance. As for Tinmal, residents of the eponymous small village abandoned the Almohad mosque centuries ago, and it had fallen into ruin when French colonialist survey teams “rediscovered” it in the early twentieth century. Although it has since been heavily restored, Basset and Terrasse’s initial studies again aid in determining its original contours, while

²⁸ This building, unlike the others included here, is still used for daily prayers. Therefore, the potential for its original appearance to have been modified during its upkeep is far greater than that of the other three buildings.

Christian Ewert's rigorous excavations provide information about its foundations.²⁹ In early sixteenth-century Seville, a team of architects and planners completely gutted and replaced the Almohad mosque with the city's Gothic cathedral. However, the minaret largely retains its Almohad design, and excavations of the surrounding streets have yielded small fragments of the mosque's interior stucco ornament. Finally, the Hassan mosque's truncated columns and minaret—not to mention its lack of a roof—indicate that it was never completed. Aside from the pillaging of certain raw materials, though, the building's structure does not seem to have been significantly modified.³⁰

3.2. TEXTS

While a general survey of the primary literature for the Almohad period lies beyond the scope of this study, I will briefly identify and discuss the sources that I have used in order to interpret the buildings and to understand their historical context. For the Kutubiyya and Tinmal mosques, the so-called *Book of Ibn Tūmart* (Ar. *A`azz mā yuṭlab*), which contains a collection of texts attributed to the Almohads' founder, has proven indispensable.³¹ Also relevant to the earlier

²⁹ The results of the excavations are described in Joudia Hassar-Benslimane, Christian Ewert, Abdelaziz Touri and Jans-Peter Wisshak, "TINMAL 1981: Fouilles de la mosquée almohade," *Bulletin d'archéologie marocaine* 14 (1981-2): 277-312.

³⁰ Jacques Caille, *La mosquée de Hassan a Rabat* (Rabat : Hautes-études Marocaines, 1954), 19-21.

³¹ For the text of the *A`azz mā yuṭlab*, I have consulted Muḥammad Ibn Tūmart, J.-D. Luciani, R. Gaudefroy-Demombynes, and Ignác Goldziher, *Le livre de Mohammed ibn Toumert mahdi des Almohades texte arabe, accompagné de notices biographiques et d'une introd.* (Alger: P. Fontana, 1903). Throughout this dissertation I shall refer to this text by its Arabic title. Because the earliest surviving manuscript of the work dates to the time of the second Almohad caliph, its authorship has been called into question. For example, some suggest that Ibn Rushd penned the so-called Almohad Creed contained within, while others affirm that Ibn Tūmart was its author. The first view is based on internal evidence, such as its similarities to Ibn Rushd's commentaries on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and parallels to al-Ghazālī's work, which Ibn Rushd would have known. See the preface to Madeleine Fletcher's translation, in *Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim and Jewish Sources*, ed. Olivia Remie Constable and Damian Zurro (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2012), 244. For his part, Frank Griffel resolves the dating difficulty by positing that the dates of early Almohad texts might have been altered to draw a closer biographical connection between him and the prophet Muḥammad, whose own revealed text was compiled after his death during the caliphate of `Uthmān. See Griffel, "Ibn Tūmart's Rational Proof for God's Existence and Unity, and his Connection to the Nizamiyya Madrasa in Baghdad," vol. 2 of *Los almohades: problemas y perspectivas*, ed. Patrice Cressier, Ma. Isabel Fierro, and Luis Molina (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2005), 766. I follow both Griffel's chronology and Fromherz's suggestion that the existence of an entire official body of Almohads dedicated to memorizing Ibn Tūmart's doctrine (Ar. *huffāz*), along with the Almohad sheikhs'

monuments are collections of `Abd al-Mu`min`'s official correspondence; they provide an essential window onto the official spin, so to speak, that the first Almohad caliph gave to events transpiring during his lifetime.³² For the general history of `Abd al-Mu`min`'s caliphate, I rely most heavily on Abū Bakr ibn `Alī al-Ṣanhājī al-Baydhaq, one of Ibn Tūmart's companions and a member of his household entourage.³³ His account begins with Ibn Tūmart's return to the Maghrib from eastern Islamic lands, and it ends shortly after `Abd al-Mu`min`'s death in 1163. Because of his close relationship to Ibn Tūmart and `Abd al-Mu`min, the author embroiders his narration with details that support the first caliph's legitimacy. Despite this agenda, the chronicle provides first-hand information about the Almohad movement's genesis.³⁴

The chronicle of Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt (d. 1198) richly details the later caliphate of `Abd al-Mu`min and most of Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf's reign.³⁵ Like al-Baydhaq, and as one would expect from a member of the court, Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt almost sycophantically supports the Almohads

knowledge of his teachings, would have precluded any major changes between Ibn Tūmart's original doctrine recorded some forty years after his death. See Fromherz, *The Almohads*, 180-1.

³² These include Evariste Lévi-Provençal, *Documents inédits d'histoire almohade; fragments manuscrits du "legajo" 1919 du fonds arabe de l'Escorial*, vol. 1 of *Textes arabes relatifs à l'histoire de l'Occident musulman* (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1928). A more recent collection of Almohad letters can be found in Aḥmad Azzāwī, *Rasā'il al-muwahhidīyya 2, Ṭab`a 1* (Al-Qunayṭira: Kulliyat al-adāb wa-l-`ulūm al-insāniyya, 1996).

³³ Al-Baydhaq, "Ta`rīkh al-muwahhidīn li-Abī Bakr bin `Alī al-Ṣanhājī al-maknā bi-l-Baydhaq," in *Documents inédits d'histoire almohade, fragments manuscrits du "legajo" 1919 du fonds arabe de l'Escorial*, trans. Evariste Lévi-Provençal, 50-133 (Paris: Librairie orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1928). The surviving manuscript of Al-Baydhaq's *Memoirs* was discovered in the archives of the Escorial Library by E. Lévi Provençal. The manuscript's 36 folia have no lacunae, but material from its beginning is missing, and its original title is unknown. Although it is often referred to as a "memoir," I will refer to this text simply as *Ta`rīkh al-Muwahhidīn* (Eng. "The History of the Almohads") for expediency's sake.

³⁴ For a defense of the usefulness of the *Ta`rīkh al-Muwahhidīn* and an analysis of the text, see Victoria Aguilar Sebastian, "Estudio de historiografía almohade. Un cronista al inicio de una dinastía: al-Baydhaq," in *Actas, XVI Congreso UEAI*, ed. María Concepción Vázquez de Benito and Miguel Ángel Manzano Rodríguez, 11-22 (Salamanca: Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional, 1995).

³⁵ The Arabic text can be consulted in `Abd al-Malik ibn Muḥammad ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt and `Abd al-Hādī al-Tāzī, *Al-mann bi-l-imāma. Ta`rīkh bilād al-maghrib wa-l-andalus fī ahd al-muwahhidīn* (Bayrūt: Dār al-gharb al-islāmī, 1987). I have used both the Spanish translation in `Abd al-Malik ibn Muḥammad ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt and Ambrosio Huici Miranda, *Al-Mann bil-Imāma* (Valencia: Anubar, 1969) and that found in Fátima Roldán Castro, "De nuevo sobre la mezquita aljama almohade de Sevilla: La version del cronista cortesano Ibn Sahib al-Sala," in *Magna Hispalensis (I). Recuperacion de la aljama almohade*, ed. Alfonso Jiménez Martín, 13-22 (Sevilla: Aula Hernán Ruiz, Cabildo Metropolitano, 2002). Citations will clearly indicate to which translation I refer.

and the caliph.³⁶ But again, Ibn Šāhib al-Šalāt’s account constitutes the only contemporary chronicle of the events that happened during his lifetime. Not only does he describe the construction phases of the Mosque of Seville, including the tensions it provoked between the Almohads and the Sevillans, but he also depicts the caliph’s intimate relationship with his court philosophers Ibn Ṭufayl (d. 1185) and Ibn Rushd (d. 1198). These philosophers’ religious works—including Ibn Ṭufayl’s *Risālat Ḥayy Ibn Yaḡẓān*,³⁷ composed in the later years of the philosopher’s life, and two of Ibn Rushd’s theological treatises—the *Decisive Treatise on the Relation of Philosophy and Religion* and the *Exposition of Religious Arguments*³⁸—play a decisive role in my reading of the Mosque of Seville’s ornament.

For Abū Yūsuf Ya`qūb al-Manṣūr’s caliphate, I have relied on the more general chronicles of `Abd al-Wāḡid al-Marrākushī (d. after 1224)³⁹ and Ibn `Idhārī (d. early 14th c.).⁴⁰

³⁶ One of the most informative analyses of Ibn Šāhib al-Šalāt’s chronicle is Linda Jones, “‘The Christian Companion’: A Rhetorical Trope in the Narration of Intra-Muslim Conflict during the Almohad Epoch,” *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* 38.2 (2008): 793-829.

³⁷ The full title in Arabic is *Risālat Ḥayy ibn Yaḡẓān fī asrār al-ḥikma al-mashriqiyya*, which translates to “The Epistle of Ḥayy ibn Yaḡẓān on the Secrets of Eastern Wisdom.” The Arabic edition used by many modern scholars is Léon Gauthier, *Ḥayy ben Yaḡdhān: roman philosophique d’Ibn Thofail, texte arabe avec les variantes des manuscrits et de plusieurs éditions et traduction française, 2^e édition, revue, augmentée et complètement remaniée* (Beirut: Imprimerie catholique, 1936). The edition used in the preparation of this study is Ibn Ṭufayl, *El filósofo autodidacto [Risāla Ḥayy ibn Yaḡẓān] de Ibn Ṭufayl*, trans. Ángel González Palencia (Madrid: Editorial Trotta, S.A., 2003).

³⁸ The *Decisive Treatise* can be consulted in Averroës and Muḡammad `Abid Jābirī, *Faṣl al-maḡāl fī taqrīr mā bayna al-sharī`a wa-l-ḥikma min al-ittiṣāl: aw, Wujūb al-naẓar al-maḡallī wa ḡudūd al-ta`wīl (al-dīn wa-l-mujtama`)* (Bayrūt: Markaz dirāsāt al-waḡda al-`arabiyya, 2007) and in English translation: Averroës and George Fadlo Hourani, *On the harmony of religions and philosophy. A translation, with introd. and notes, of Ibn Rushd’s Kitāb faṣl al-maḡāl* (London: Luzac, 1961). The edition used in the preparation of this study is Ibn Rushd, “Faṣl al-maḡāl o doctrina decisiva y fundamento de la concordia entre la revelación y la ciencia,” in Manuel Alonso Alonso, *Teología de Averroes* (Sevilla: Fundación El Monte, 1998), 150. Future citations will read Ibn Rushd, Faṣl al-maḡāl,” page. The *Exposition* can be consulted in Averroës and Muḡammad `Abid Jābirī, *al-Kaṣḡf `an manāḡij al-adilla fī `aḡā`id al-milla, aw, Naḡd `ilm al-kalām ḡiddan `alā al-tarsīm al-idīyūlūjī li-l-`aḡīda wa dīfā`an `ani al-`ilm wa ḡurrīyat al-ikhtiyār fī al-fikr wa-al-fī`l* (Bayrūt: Markaz dirāsāt al-waḡda al-`arabiyya, 2007) and in English in Ibrahim Najjar, trans., *Faith and Reason in Islam: Averroes’ Exposition of Religious Arguments* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005). Citations will read Ibn Rushd, *Exposition*, page.

³⁹ For the Arabic, see `Abd al-Wāḡid al-Marrākushī and Reinhart Pieter Anne Dozy, *The History of the Almohades, Preceded by a Sketch of the History of Spain from the Time of the Conquest Till the Reign of Yūsuf Ibn-Téshūfīn, and of the History of the Almoravides* (Amsterdam: Oriental Press, 1968). A French translation is available in E. Fagnan, trans., *Histoire des Almohades d’Abd el-Wāḡid Merrekechi* (Alger, Adolphe Jourdan, Libraire-éditeur, 1893). I have used both texts in the preparation of this dissertation, which are referred to by either their English or French titles.

My efforts to consult an “interpretive text”—akin to the *A`azz mā yuṭlab* for `Abd al-Mu`min or the philosophical works for Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf—alongside which to “read” the Hassan mosque have been frustrated. One possible lead that I have been unable to follow is a collection of hadith concerning ritual prayer and purity that the caliph is said to have compiled; catalogues of the holdings in Rabat’s Royal Library suggest that this work is conserved therein, but the archive is indefinitely closed for restoration. Nevertheless, I endeavor to use available sources in order to reconstruct the caliph’s religiosity, in the hopes of consulting this work as I refine this project for future publication. Finally, the works of Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406)⁴¹ and the Levantine Ibn al-Athīr (d. 1233) appear sparingly throughout this thesis.⁴²

3.3. ART HISTORICAL TERMINOLOGY

Before providing a brief outline of this study’s structure and an exposition of my findings, I wish to define the parameters within which I employ various art historical terms. While terminology referring to architectural styles, designs and elements allow their easy identification, the terms themselves are often ambiguous or used in a way that obfuscates their origins. A case in point is the term “*mudéjar*,” which is applied to Iberian Christian or Jewish architecture that appears (to art historians) to feature an Islamic visual aesthetic. *Mudéjar* is a term borrowed from social history, where it describes Muslims who lived under Christian rule. As Chapter Five will show, defining the multiple phenomena that the term supposedly describes—it has been applied to an ornamental style, a particular mode in which workshops built architecture and a determined set of raw materials—distract researchers from pursuing a

⁴⁰ Ibn `Idhārī al-Marrākushī, *Al-bayān al-mughrib fī akhbār al-andalus wa-l-Maghrib*, ed. G.S. Colin and Evaraste Levi-Provençal (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-`Ilmiyya, 2009). For a Spanish translation, see Muḥammad Ibn `Idhārī and A. Huici Miranda, *Al-Bayān al-Mugrib. Nuevos fragmentos almorávides y almohades* (Valencia: Anubar Ediciones, 1963).

⁴¹ Ibn Khaldūn, William MacGuckin Slane, Paul Casanova, and Henri Pérès, *Histoire des Berbères et des dynasties musulmanes de l'Afrique septentrionale* (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1925).

⁴² `Izz al-Dīn ibn al-Athīr, and D. S. Richards, *The chronicle of Ibn al-Athīr for the crusading period from al-Kāmil fī l-ta`rīkh* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2006).

richer understanding of the reasons that patrons chose certain stylistic motifs or elements over others.⁴³

A similar set of problems surrounds other conventional art historical terms denoting architectural forms or ornamental patterns. For example, the word “*sebka*,” which I use repeatedly throughout this study, refers to a netlike pattern of rhomboids that rise from interlaced, blind arcades to fill a defined field, thus resulting in an ornamental panel. Some scholars assert that this pattern is also termed *sebka* in Arabic, but there is little evidence supporting the idea that medieval architects, artisans or patrons referred to *sebka* as such.⁴⁴ In the interest of expedient identification of architectural forms and patterns, I shall continue to refer to *sebka*, *ataurique* (stylized vegetal ornament), lambrequin arches, *muqarnas* vaulting, and other architectonic features with their conventional labels. However, unless expressly stated otherwise, the reader can assume that I use these terms in order to facilitate identification and description, while making no claims about what the forms were called in the twelfth century.⁴⁵

4 GOALS AND STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

As indicated above, this dissertation’s primary objective is to provide a contextualized reading of Almohad Friday mosques. I have divided this goal into two smaller tasks: explaining how the buildings responded to their historical and geographic environments, and examining the ways in which their ornament reflected Almohad doctrine and ideology. As might be expected, Chapter One provides the background information essential to both of these aims. First, I narrate Ibn Tūmart’s biography and explain the elements of his doctrine that will relate to the mosques in later chapters. Second, I introduce the buildings’ patrons, briefly outlining the distinguishing

⁴³ See Chapter Five for a fuller deconstruction of *mudéjar* as a stylistic designator.

⁴⁴ See Chapter One, footnote 211, for details.

⁴⁵ *Muqarnas* is one architectural term that does seem to have roots in the middle ages. See Tabbaa, *The Transformation*, 104-6 for a clarification of its etymology.

features of each caliph's rule. Next, I discuss the monumental, architectural backdrop in which the Almohads' early struggles took place by identifying the basic features of both Almoravid and Almohad mosques. Chapter One's final section introduces the Kutubiyya, Tinmal, Sevillan and Hassan mosques, offering a review of the major literature and a stylistic analysis for each building.

Chapters Two through Four, each of which I have centered on a single Almohad caliph, build on these foundations. The chapters' opening sections reconstruct the monuments' historical contexts, including an identification of its patron or patrons, its audience and its sociopolitical environment. In turn, this contextual information serves to explain each mosque's particular features. The final sections of the monographic chapters define the relationship between Almohad aesthetics and doctrine. In them, I will not contest the idea that Almohad architecture features a plainer aesthetic relative to previous Maghribī and Andalusian architecture, nor will I dispute that Almohad theology was a factor in this change. Instead, I examine specific aspects of Almohad religiosity, distilled from twelfth-century texts associated with each building's patron, to understand how they determined aesthetic choices.

My findings in these monographical chapters confirm the thesis that Almohad architecture responds dynamically to its historical context. Chapter Two affirms that the Tinmal and Kutubiyya mosques sent a message of political and religious authority to the Almohads' Maghribī rivals by selectively incorporating venerable symbols of political legitimacy, while also manipulating key Almoravid architectural typologies and objects. The buildings' spare, abstract ornamental system emphasized the basic dogma upon which Almohad political legitimacy was predicated, even as it distinguished Almohad mosques from the Almoravids' ornate sanctuaries. In Chapter Three, I demonstrate how the Mosque of Seville's dimensions and privileged location

broadcasted Almohad authority to an ambivalent Andalusian audience. I also show that its complex ornamental program responds to the philosophical and spiritual concerns of the Almohad elite. Chapter Four examines the unfinished Friday mosque begun by the third Almohad caliph in Rabat. Its overwhelming dimensions and new typology dovetail with a recent theory that the caliph wished to make Rabat his new Maghribī capital, while the mosque's revised ornamental program reflects the caliph's desire to renew the political and religious foundations upon which Almohad political legitimacy rested.

Chapter Five addresses my secondary goal of relating Almohad mosques to contemporary architecture outside the empire's borders, and it centers on the kingdom of Castile. The Cistercian convent of Las Huelgas, located in Burgos and founded by the Castilian king Alfonso VIII, compares well with the Tinmal mosque: both contained an oratory and a royal pantheon, both were associated with pilgrimage routes, and both provided a place for spiritual retreat and instruction. The most intriguing parallel, however, is the architectural idiom that king Alfonso VIII chose for his burial chamber:⁴⁶ it clearly draws on early Almohad ornamental aesthetics.⁴⁷ Rather than representing an insoluble paradox—a Christian king inexplicably using the ornamental language of his political enemy—Alfonso VIII's aesthetic choice aligns perfectly with his other political and intellectual programs, each of which incorporated references to the Almohad project. Chapter Five also shows that an Almohad aesthetic befits the walls of the Cistercian convent that it adorned by demonstrating its compatibility with the order's aesthetic theory. Finally, the conclusion extends the contextualization of Almohad Friday mosques

⁴⁶ Though there is some debate about what precisely this space was used for, I agree with Sánchez Ameijeiras' reading of the chapel as a burial chamber. See Rocío Sánchez Ameijeiras, "El 'çementerio real' de Alfonso VIII en Las Huelgas de Burgos," *Semata* 10 (1998): 77-109. For an opposing viewpoint, see M. Gema Palomo Fernández and Juan Carlos Ruiz Souza, "Nueva hipótesis sobre las Huelgas de Burgos: escenografía funeraria de Alfonso X para un proyecto inacabado de Alfonso VIII y Leonor Plantagenet," *Goya: Revista de arte* 316-317 (2007): 21-44. Chapter Five will analyze both of these theories.

⁴⁷ See Pérez Higuera, "Arte Almorávide," 689.

beyond the Iberian peninsula, considering their connections to Norman Sicily and the architecture of the Levant.

Most generally, this dissertation argues that Almohad architecture, ideology, politics and religion cannot be studied separately if they are to be fully understood. As one of these elements changes, parallel shifts or developments inevitably occur in the others. My research also participates in broader methodological debates by asserting that non-figural Islamic ornament has every potential to “mean.” Both of these arguments are sustained by methodologies designed to maintain scholarly rigor: close readings of texts, close looking at monuments and a critical approach to both. Finally, this study acknowledges that no polity exists within a vacuum. Contact through war, diplomacy, trade, marriage brokering and pilgrimage, among others, had implications for all spheres of Almohad society: architectural and otherwise. As Yasser Tabbaa so aptly asked: “Can we, by problematizing instead of glossing over ruptures, disjunctions, and discontinuities, arrive at a better understanding of the meaning of change in Islamic architecture?”⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Tabbaa, *The Transformation*, 10.

CHAPTER ONE: FOUNDATIONS

“Know—and may God guide you as well as us—that it is incumbent upon every legally capable Muslim to know that Almighty God is singular in his power.” –Ibn Tūmart⁴⁹

With these words, Ibn Tūmart opened the second of the spiritual guides collected in the *A`azz mā yuṭlab*. He chose them carefully: the idea of God’s singularity was the foundation upon which his doctrine and mission were built. Likewise, this chapter introduces the figures, concepts and buildings central to this study. Its first two sections discuss historical events that unfolded before any Almohad mosque was erected. Section one briefly outlines the political, cultural and intellectual history of the Almoravid period. In addition to providing essential historical background, it identifies the characteristics of Almoravid society that provoked Ibn Tūmart’s disapproval. Section two addresses Ibn Tūmart directly, and it is divided into two parts. The first narrates his biography and describes the hierarchical organization of his movement. The second details his doctrine through an examination of the *A`azz mā yuṭlab* alongside a consideration of essential secondary sources.

This chapter’s final sections are dedicated to the mosques’ patrons—`Abd al-Mu`min, Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf and Abū Yūsuf Ya`qūb al-Manṣūr—and the objects of their sponsorship: the four Almohad Friday mosques.⁵⁰ As I outline each caliph’s reign, I use a paradigm of continuity and change. Comparing their accessions to the throne, political careers, efforts at propagating the Almohad state, court activities and religious inclinations allows me to identify the characteristics that defined each period. These features will, in turn, explain some of the

⁴⁹ *A`azz mā yuṭlab*, 241.

⁵⁰ In an effort to keep this chapter manageable, I will leave the introduction of Alfonso VIII, the Normans and the Sunni Revivalists for Chapter Five and the Conclusion.

buildings' unique aspects in subsequent chapters. Section four employs a similar method, this time to the Kutubiyya, Tinmal, Sevillan and Hassan mosques. After indicating the general characteristics of both Almoravid and Almohad religious architecture, I provide a description, formal analysis and an evaluation of the secondary sources for each Almohad building.

1 THE ALMORAVIDS IN THE MAGHRIB AND AL-ANDALUS⁵¹

The Almoravids belonged to one of the three great confederations of Maghribī Berbers: the Ṣanhāja. Among them, the Guddāla and Lamtūna tribes would come to form the backbone of the Almoravid movement.⁵² Both branches were pastoral desert-dwellers who wore a distinctive cloth that veiled the lower part of the face. Ibn Tūmart would later criticize this practice, as the veil was worn by Ṣanhāja men, while their women went uncovered. Sometime between 1036 and 1039, Yaḥyā ibn Ibrāhīm, a leader of the Guddāla, made the pilgrimage to Mecca. On his way back to the Maghrib, he stopped in Qayrawan, where he met the conservative Malikite jurist (Ar. *faqīh*, Pl. *fuqahā*) Abū `Imrān al-Fāsī. Troubled by the discrepancies that he had observed between eastern and western Islam, Yaḥyā ibn Ibrāhīm pleaded with the *faqīh* to send a teacher to the Guddāla in order establish religious orthodoxy. Abū `Imrān al-Fāsī directed Yaḥyā to a second Malikite scholar, Wajjāj ibn Zalwī, who had founded a Malikite center of instruction called Dār al-Murābitīn. Wajjāj chose one of his adepts, a Ṣanhāja Berber like Ibn Ibrāhīm, Ibn Yāsīn, to accompany Yaḥyā back to Guddāla territory.

⁵¹ Although much of the early history of the movement remains obscure, Vincent Lagardère and, more recently, Ronald Messier, have provided useful analyses accompanied by a separation of fact from fiction. It is from their respective *Les Almoravides jusqu'au règne de Yūsuf ibn Tāšfīn (1039-1106)* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1989) and "Re-thinking the Almoravids, Re-thinking Ibn Khaldoun" *The Journal of North African Studies* 6.1 (2001): 59-80 that the following is summarized. Other citations will be clearly indicated.

⁵² I acknowledge that the simple division of North Africa's Berber population into three "principle" tribal confederations, containing smaller independent tribal "branches," is problematic and reductionist. I maintain it here because the medieval sources themselves often refer to the Almoravids as "Ṣanhāja" and the Almohads as "Masmūda," which seems to indicate that the authors conceived of the rival polities along tribal lines.

The Guddāla accepted Ibn Yāsīn's doctrine easily, but adhering to his strict censure of customs proved a more difficult task. While the missionary managed to win a devoted core of followers, he also acquired enemies who tired of his constant moralizing. The conflict came to a head after Yaḥyā ibn Ibrāhīm's death, when certain of the Guddāla nearly ran Ibn Yāsīn out of town. Realizing his precarious situation, Ibn Yāsīn reconciled with the Guddāla through Wajjāj's intervention and subsequently redirected his proselytizing energies toward the energetic and ambitious leader of the Lamtūna, Yaḥyā ibn `Umar. The Lamtūna accepted Ibn Yāsīn's mission after he endorsed Yaḥyā ibn `Umar's authority, and the two allied leaders—one political and one spiritual—began to consolidate their power. This process included inviting neighboring tribes to embrace their version of Islam: advantageous in that it abolished illegal taxes in addition to claiming religious orthodoxy. If refused, however, Ibn Yāsīn and Yaḥyā ibn `Umar lost no time in conquering the offending party.⁵³ The Almoravid movement had officially begun.

After a series of military victories—including the capture of Sijilmasa, an important trading hub between the Maghrib and Saharan Africa—Yaḥyā ibn `Umar, Ibn Yāsīn and the latter's short-lived successor were all killed in battle. Their deaths left Yaḥyā's successor, Abū Bakr, as the religious and political head of the Almoravid movement, a position that had formerly been divided among two leaders. In addition to continuing their spiritual and political mission through both diplomatic and bellicose means, Abū Bakr founded a new capital city, Marrakesh, in 1071. In the same year, he was forced to quit the city when a rebellion rose in the Sahara. He left Yūsuf ibn Tashufīn (d. 1106), who had commanded the Almoravid garrison of

⁵³ The nascent Almoravid pattern of offering peaceful surrender terms and conquering if refused, coupled with a charismatic religious leader whose reforms justified his military aggression, is not unlike the beginnings of the Almohad movement. See Maribel Fierro, "Le mahdi Ibn Tūmart et al-Andalus : l'élaboration de la légitimité almohade," *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 91-2-3-4 (2001): 107-24. An alternative to Fierro's idea that Ibn Tūmart's Mahdism resulted from his contact with Andalusian culture is given in Mercedes García-Arenal, *Messianism and Puritanical Reform: The Mahdis of the Muslim West*, trans. Martin Beagles (Boston: Brill, 2006), 191. I tend to favor the latter's views.

Sijilmasa, as his lieutenant in the capital. Yūsuf's power and influence over the southern and central regions of the Maghrib grew significantly in Abū Bakr's absence. Wishing to avoid a confrontation, the latter granted his former general autonomous rule over the northern half of the Almoravid Empire and retired to the desert.

Under Yūsuf ibn Tashufīn, the Almoravids expanded into Andalusia, where regional lords collectively known as the Taifa kings governed Islamic Iberia. The most important of them ruled over Andalusia's largest cities, such as Toledo and Seville, and their surrounding areas.⁵⁴ Although the Taifa kings warred as frequently with one another as they did with the Christian kingdoms to the north, they were shaken when Toledo fell to Alfonso VI in 1086. This Castilian threat to the southern half of the peninsula necessitated outside help, and the Taifa kings called upon their Maghribī brethren to turn back the tides of Christian invaders. After soundly defeating Alfonso VI in the battle of Zalāqa, Yūsuf ibn Tashufīn's aid was requested a second time in 1088, this time to halt Christian aggression in Valencia. Finally, in 1090 Yūsuf obtained a legal ruling (Ar. *fatwa*) justifying a third expedition into Andalusian territory. In order to legalize this final intervention, which was not solicited by the Taifa kings, Yūsuf's jurists argued that both the Andalusian rulers' moral laxity and their inability to fend off Christian attacks rendered them unfit to rule. The conquest was completed a mere five years later, and the Almoravids became the new sultans of Andalusia.

Yūsuf ibn Tashufīn's son, `Alī ibn Yūsuf (d. 1143), would be marked by his involvement with peninsular culture. He was educated in a traditional Andalusian environment, well-versed in Arabic letters and was even the son of a Christian concubine. Perhaps looking to Andalusian

⁵⁴ For more on the Taifa kings in Andalusia, see David Wasserstein, *The Rise and Fall of the Party-Kings: Politics and Society in Islamic Spain 1002-1086* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985).

capitals such as Cordoba and Seville, he transformed Marrakesh into a true imperial city.⁵⁵

`Alī's team of architects and engineers provided it with an ample supply of water, and they constructed a luxurious royal palace along with a monumental entrance to the city. The sultan also built the large and densely ornamented `Ali ibn Yūsuf mosque, which the city used its Friday mosque until the Almohad conquest.⁵⁶ All of `Alī ibn Yūsuf's building efforts indicate two things. First, he seems to have been very interested in endowing his empire, which stretched from Andalusia to the Sahara, with external markers of greatness. Second, he had the financial means to do so. The Almoravids' control of sub-Saharan trade routes and their reinstatement of the "illegal" taxes that his predecessors abolished ensured their wealth, but also won them some enemies. Indeed, when Ibn Tūmart arrived in the Almoravid capital he disdained what he saw as the Almoravids' decadence, and he promised to abolish all taxes not sanctioned by Islam.

In addition to realizing these political and cultural achievements, the Almoravid sultans famously surrounded themselves with Andalusian jurists. Traditionally, the Almoravids are criticized for their reliance on the Malikiite *fuqahā'*, whom they are said to have consulted before making even minor decisions. In turn, the jurists are attacked for taking advantage of the trust that the Almoravid sultans had in them: rather than enforcing the law in good faith, their legal rulings increased their own influence by currying the Almoravids' favor.⁵⁷ The juridical methodologies of the most traditional Malikiite *fuqahā'* also have come under attack. They are accused of being overly derivative, focusing solely on manuals of jurisprudence written by their predecessors (Ar. *furū'*), rather than on the sources of the law (Ar. *uṣūl al-fiqh*, the Qur'ān and

⁵⁵ For the details of `Alī ibn Yūsuf's construction in Marrakesh, see Gaston Deverdun, *Marrakech des origines à 1912* (Rabat: Éditions techniques nord-africaines, 1959), 85-110 and Hamid Triki, "Marrakech: Retrato histórico de una metrópolis medieval. Siglos XI-XII," in *La Arquitectura del Islam occidental*, eds. Rafael J. López Guzmán and Pierre Guichard, 93-105 (Granada: Legado Andalusi, 1995).

⁵⁶ For a description of the `Alī ibn Yūsuf mosque, see María Marcos Cobaleda, "Los almorávides: Territorio, arquitectura y artes suntuarias" (PhD diss., University of Granada, 2010), 288-330.

⁵⁷ This position is summarized in Messier, "Re-thinking," 66-7.

Sunna).⁵⁸ Certain of them also rejected the teachings of Abū Hamīd al-Ghazālī, who had famously defended *uṣūl al-fiqh* in his *Ihyā' `ulūm al-dīn*, and the Almoravids ordered public burnings of the text in the early eleventh century.⁵⁹

I have been careful to label this interpretation of juridical activity during the Almoravid period as “traditional” because it must be nuanced. For example, Maribel Fierro describes an entire school of “reform Malikīs,” which includes important scholars in Almoravid Andalusia who were influenced by al-Ghazālī, Ash`arism, and *uṣūl al-fiqh*. One example is Abū Bakr ibn al-`Arabī (d. 1148): Fierro characterizes him as a Ghazalian censor of customs who felt estranged from his contemporaries.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, the Almoravids named him grand *qāḍī* (Eng. “judge”) of Seville.⁶¹ In return, he helped install them in Andalusia. Fierro also highlights Ibn Rushd al-Jadd, the grandfather of the famous philosopher. Like Abū Bakr ibn al-`Arabī, he was favored by the Almoravid sultans, although he left his position as Cordoba’s grand *qāḍī* in order to pen two works that adapted early Malikite texts to the principles of *uṣūl al-fiqh*.⁶² Furthermore, the idea that the Almoravids carried out any systematic or sustained persecutions of jurists who studied *uṣūl al-fiqh* or al-Ghazālī has been recently laid to rest by Delfina Serrano.⁶³ Instead, she points to the convenience, from the perspective of later Almohad sources, of

⁵⁸ Messier claims that even contemporaries criticized this aspect of Almoravid society. See “Re-thinking,” 67. Although he seems to indicate that this criticism comes from al-Ghazālī, Fierro believes that it is from al-Marrakūshī, a source generally favorable to the Almohads and therefore not entirely trustworthy. See Maribel Fierro, “La religión,” in *El retroceso territorial de al-Andalus, Almorávides y almohades, siglos XI al XIII*, ed. María Jesús Viguera Molíns (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, S.A., 1997), 439.

⁵⁹ While al-Ghazālī’s *Ihyā’* was certainly burned and his supporters persecuted, this seems to be a rather isolated incident in Almoravid history that was more related to the persecution of practitioners of speculative theology (Ar. *kalām*). Because practitioners of *kalām* also tended to favor al-Ghazālī’s methods and ideas, these latter came under attack as well. See Delfina Serrano, “¿Por qué llamaron los Almohades antropofistas a los almorávides?” vol. 2 of *Los Almohades: Problemas y Perspectivas*, ed. Patrice Cressier, Maribel Fierro and Luís Molina (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2005), 815-6.

⁶⁰ Maribel Fierro, “Doctrina y practicas jurídicas,” 899-901.

⁶¹ For more on Abū Bakr’s career, see Delfina Serrano, “¿Por qué llamaron,” 824-39.

⁶² These are the *Mudawwāna* of Saḥnūn and the *Mustakhrāja* of al-`Utbī. See *Ibid.*, 901.

⁶³ See *Ibid.*, 816.

establishing the incompetence of all the Maliki jurists, even as many of them fostered an environment receptive to certain of the Maḥdī's doctrines.⁶⁴

2 IBN TŪMART AND EARLY ALMOHAD DOCTRINE

2.1 IBN TŪMART'S BIOGRAPHY AND HIS MOVEMENT

Ibn Tūmart was born into the Hargha tribe of Masmūda Berbers in the southernmost range of Morocco's Atlas Mountains, sometime between 1078 and 1081.⁶⁵ The precise location of his native village, Iḡliliz, continues to elude modern researchers, although it is known to be situated in the Sus Valley.⁶⁶ Fromherz observes that Ibn Tūmart's career began when he traveled to Cordoba, Alexandria, Mecca and Baghdad in order to study theology and jurisprudence.⁶⁷ In the latter city, he studied at the well-known Nizamiyya school. As Frank Griffel argues compellingly, the education that Ibn Tūmart received there was based on the writings of al-Ghazālī and Ibn Sina, couched in the language of reason, and expressed in philosophical terms.⁶⁸ This early education contributed heavily to the formation of Ibn Tūmart's doctrine and to his later success in countering the arguments of the Almoravid religious scholars (Ar. *'ulamā'*).

Once he completed his studies, Ibn Tūmart returned to the Maghrib. Along the way, he briefly sojourned in several major North African cities. In each of these instances, al-Baydhaq describes how local students flocked to see him, crowding into the mosques in which Ibn Tūmart habitually lodged so that he might enlighten them with the wisdom that he had acquired in the

⁶⁴ Ibid., 844.

⁶⁵ On the rise of the Almohad movement, see especially Fromherz, *The Almohads*. See also Ambrosio Huici Miranda, *Historia política del imperio almohade, primera parte* (Tetuan: Editora Marroquí, 1956), 38-52; María Jesús Viguera Molíns, "Los almohades," in *El retroceso territorial de al-Andalus, Almorávides y almohades, siglos XI al XIII*, ed. María Jesús Viguera Molíns (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, S.A., 1997), 76-81.

⁶⁶ Fromherz, *The Almohads*, 20. Fromherz attempted somewhat unsuccessfully to identify its location in a previous article, Allen Fromherz, "The Almohad Mecca: Locating Iḡl and the Cave of Ibn Tūmart" *Al-Qanṭara: Revista de Estudios Árabes* 26.1 (2005): 175-190, before accepting the opinion of Jean-Pierre Van Staëval and Abdallah Fili in their joint article "'Wa waṣalna `alā barakat Allāh illā Iḡlīz' : A propos de la localisation d' Iḡlīz-des-Hargha, le ḥiṣn du Maḥdī Ibn Tūmart" *Al-Qanṭara: Revista de Estudios Árabes* 27.1 (2006): 155-97.

⁶⁷ Fromherz, *The Almohads*, 1.

⁶⁸ Griffel, "Ibn Tūmart's Rational Proof," 753-813.

East.⁶⁹ Ibn Tūmart did not neglect these buildings: he constructed new mosques in places where there were none, and he restored mosques that had fallen into disrepair. As Fromherz has explained, repairing or building mosques was an important part of Ibn Tūmart's popular appeal, and it provided the communities along his itinerary to the Maghrib with a physical reminder of his message even after he departed. Because he often remained in these cities for weeks, his stays also established a network of indoctrinated followers that could be utilized—or even marshaled—should Ibn Tūmart return.⁷⁰ Of course, for the purposes of this study, these buildings are extremely significant in that they could have provided a model for future Almohad constructions.

Despite his attention to these now-lost mosques, the most salient among Ibn Tūmart's activities as he journeyed across North Africa was the censure of customs, following the Qur'ānic precept of “commanding good and forbidding evil” (Ar. *ḥisba*). Mercedes García-Arenal has established the wide diffusion of this doctrine among twelfth-century Maghribī and Andalusian scholars, and her examples include one *faqīh* who has already been considered: Abū Bakr ibn al-`Arabī.⁷¹ García-Arenal also explains that a key factor in the *ḥisba*'s resurgence was its prominence in the works of al-Ghazālī, which comprised a fundamental part of Ibn Tūmart's education.⁷² Indeed, she offers Ibn Tūmart as the prime example of this trend of Ghazalian censors. Al-Ghazālī and Ibn Tūmart's understanding of the *ḥisba* had political as well as social implications: it sanctioned the censuring of the sovereign and even the use of force against him.⁷³

Therefore, as the Almohad movement developed, the *ḥisba* helped to legitimize their political

⁶⁹ See Al-Baydhaq, *Ta'riḫ al-Muwahḥidīn*, 50-70 for Ibn Tūmart's return journey to the Maghrib. This and all future citations are from the Arabic text, which begins on page 50 from the back of the volume.

⁷⁰ Fromherz, *The Almohads*, 44-45.

⁷¹ See Mercedes García-Arenal, “La práctica del precepto de *`amr bi-l-Ma`ruf wa-l-nahy `an al-munkar* en la hagiografía marroquí” *Al-Qanṭara: Revista de Estudios Árabes* 13.1 (1992), 151-3 for a description of twelfth-century censors of customs.

⁷² *Ibid*, 155-6.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 154.

authority. Indeed, Ibn Tūmart accused the Almoravids of moral corruption, and his successors repeatedly sent letters to local governors urging them to maintain the utmost moral rectitude.⁷⁴

Ibn Tūmart's strong dedication to the *ḥisba* often translated into a violent insistence that his fellow Muslims adhere to the Qur'ān and Sunna's requirements as he understood them. For example, al-Baydhaq describes how the Mahdī forcibly separated mixed groups of men and women by beating them with a staff, spoiled a bridal procession by breaking its musical instruments and forcing the bride to dismount her horse, and shattered wine jars in the markets.⁷⁵ As one might imagine, especially given the *ḥisba*'s political implications, his efforts often provoked retribution from local authorities. At the same time, he became renowned for his piety and gained a considerable following. Among them was `Abd al-Mu'min, Ibn Tūmart's eventual successor and the founder of the Almohad caliphate, who quickly became part of Ibn Tūmart's circle of closest advisors.⁷⁶

Ibn Tūmart's most famous conflict with local authority took place in Marrakesh, where he confronted the Almoravid sovereign `Alī ibn Yūsuf. In al-Baydhaq's version of the story, Ibn Tūmart entered the Friday mosque in Marrakesh and encountered `Alī ibn Yūsuf and his retinue. One of the sultan's viziers told Ibn Tūmart to greet the emir and to express the wish that `Alī should become caliph. Ibn Tūmart caustically replied that he saw no emir, only veiled women.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 156-7. Vincent Cornell has also noted the significance of the *ḥisba* to Ibn Tūmart's early activities and to the formation of the Almohad movement. See Vincent Cornell, "Understanding is the Mother of Ability: Responsibility and Action in the Doctrine of Ibn Tūmart" *Studia Islamica* 66 (1987): 71-103. Although Fromherz has recently foregrounded other unifying factors as the Almohad tribes were consolidating, Cornell is certainly correct in identifying the *ḥisba* as one of them. See "Mother of Ability," 102-3. Fromherz's ideas will be discussed below.

⁷⁵ See *Ta'rīkh al-Muwahḥidīn*, pages 52, 60 and 64-5.

⁷⁶ Huici Miranda believed that a different companion of Ibn Tūmart, al-Wānsharīshī, was intended to be his successor, but was prevented from doing so by his untimely death. As one might expect, al-Baydhaq's account of `Abd al-Mu'min and Ibn Tūmart's meeting is almost hagiographical: Ibn Tūmart immediately recognizes `Abd al-Mu'min as his successor, dubs him the "Lamp of the Almohads," and indoctrinates him. See al-Baydhaq, *Ta'rīkh al-Muwahḥidīn*, 54-7. Regardless of the veracity of this account, it demonstrates al-Baydhaq's desire to see the meeting of `Abd al-Mu'min and Ibn Tūmart as divinely ordered, something that would certainly come in handy as `Abd al-Mu'min struggled to maintain control of the movement. See Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 43-46. Their meeting will be further discussed in Chapter Two.

`Alī ibn Yūsuf immediately tore the veil from his face, saying, “He is correct.” After this admission, Ibn Tūmart affirmed that the caliphate belongs to God alone, and he made sure to remark that `Alī ibn Yūsuf was seated on a textile unfit for use in a mosque, since it had been dyed with impure materials. Thus provoked, the sultan organized a debate between Ibn Tūmart and his own religious scholars. Armed with both his mastery of speculative theology and the new argumentative tactics he had learned at the Nizamiyya school, Ibn Tūmart won handily.⁷⁷

After the debate, `Alī ibn Yūsuf’s *`ulamā`* declared Ibn Tūmart a dangerous innovator and had him imprisoned. He escaped and retreated to first to his native village of Igliliz, where he consolidated his doctrine and—perhaps—his political ambitions while meditating in a cave.⁷⁸ He also began to preach the coming of the Mahdī, or “rightly-guided one,” who was prophesied to appear in the furthest West and lead the Muslim community back to correct belief before ushering in the final days of the world.⁷⁹ After a particularly eloquent sermon on the matter, his followers declared him the Mahdī and swore allegiance to him.⁸⁰ During this period he also assumed the title of Infallible Imām (Ar. *al-Imām al-Ma`šūm*).⁸¹ In 1121, Ibn Tūmart immigrated to the village of Tinmal, about 100 kilometers southwest of Marrakesh, where he

⁷⁷ Al-Baydhaq, *Ta`rīkh al-Muwaḥḥidīn*, 67-9. Huici Miranda also gives another account of this meeting, written by Ibn Bujayr and followed by the *Hulāl al-Mawshīyya*. In it, Ibn Tūmart is seated in the first row of the `Alī ibn Yūsuf mosque, which is usually reserved for the ruler. When asked to relocate, he informs the guard that mosques belong to God alone and not to any temporal authority. After the service finished, he approached `Alī ibn Yūsuf and told him to correct the ills of his domain, since the behavior of his subjects is his responsibility, before leaving. Somewhat taken aback, `Alī left and sent a messenger to Ibn Tūmart, asking if there is anything he desired. Ibn Tūmart answered that he neither needed nor presumed to do anything other than correct the religious beliefs and practices of the people. See *Historia política, primera parte*, 53. Significantly, in both this and al-Baydhaq’s accounts, Ibn Tūmart wastes no time in confronting the Almoravid leader, against whom he would eventually lead an army.

⁷⁸ See Fromherz, *The Almohads*, 55-6.

⁷⁹ Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 36-7, 61.

⁸⁰ All of the medieval sources locate the Mahdī’s proclamation at Igliliz except al-Baydhaq, who affirms that it took place at Tinmal. See *Ta`rīkh al-Muwaḥḥidīn*, 73.

⁸¹ The Arabic term is difficult to translate, as the word *ma`šūm* essentially means “free.” In primary sources, such as the *A`azz mā yuṭlab*, *ma`šūm* is often followed by other nouns, the most common of which is “error” (Ar. *ḍalāl*). As one who is “free from error” is essentially “infallible,” this translation is often used.

began to advocate rebellion against the Almoravids.⁸² He justified this position by accusing them of “anthropomorphizing” God, a point to which I shall return.⁸³ For now, it suffices to say that this accusation established the Almoravids as heretics and therefore deserving of the holy war that Ibn Tūmart and his followers waged against them.⁸⁴

Ibn Tūmart spent the rest of his life leading his new religious and political movement against the Almoravids. In order to facilitate this, he organized his followers into a clear hierarchy. At its summit was the Mahdī himself, who answered to no temporal authority.⁸⁵ The “Council of Ten,”—the most important of whom were Abū Muḥammad `Abd Allah ibn Muḥsīn al-Wānsharīshī (also known as al-Bashīr), `Umar Asnāg al-Hintātī and `Abd al-Mu`min—followed Ibn Tūmart in importance.⁸⁶ This council included the Mahdī’s closest advisers, and he forbade them to show any disunity to the rest of the Almohads. After the Council of Ten came the “Council of Fifty” and the “Council of the Seventy,” who were composed of important men from the Almohad tribes. The *ṭalaba* (Sing. *ṭālib*), a body of scholars and missionaries well-versed in Ibn Tūmart’s doctrine, came next, followed by the members of Ibn Tūmart’s own household. The most important Almohad tribes, starting with the Masmūda, occupied the hierarchy’s lowest rungs.⁸⁷

Fromherz has explained how the Mahdī appropriated and manipulated pre-existing Berber social organization in order to rapidly implement his new hierarchy. His explanation hinges on the idea that the pre-Almohad Masmūda tribes constituted a “segmentary” society,

⁸² Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 58.

⁸³ See Delfina Serrano, “¿Por qué llamaron,” 815-852 for an analysis of this accusation. She concludes that while the Almoravids themselves were not necessarily anthropomorphists, it was politically convenient for Ibn Tūmart to accuse them of being so.

⁸⁴ Viguera Molíns “Los almohades,” 78.

⁸⁵ The obedience due to the Mahdī will be discussed in the following section.

⁸⁶ For a full description of the Council of Ten’s members, see Cornell, “Mother of Ability,” 85-8 and Fromherz, *The Almohads*, 122-4.

⁸⁷ For a more complete discussion of the Almohad hierarchy, see Fromherz, *Almohads*, 115-127 and J. F. D. Hopkins, *Medieval Muslim government in Barbary until the sixth century of the hijra* (London: Luzac, 1958).

meaning that alliances were formed according to expanding circles of loyalty. These included, but were not limited to, familial bonds. In the event of a conflict, an offended party sought redress from his circles of loyalty according to the social proximity of the offender. For example, when offended by a cousin, a member of a segmentary society would turn to a closer relative, such as a brother, for support. If the culprit belonged to a neighboring tribe, the same individual could count not only on his cousins' support, but on that of his entire village.⁸⁸ In Fromherz's words, Ibn Tūmart's success in incorporating the tribes into the Almohad hierarchy is due to his creation of an "even larger segmentary circle of loyalty:" the Almohad movement itself.⁸⁹ The Mahdī's goal was more easily realized because the tribes were faced with a common enemy (the Almoravids)⁹⁰ and could rally around a charismatic leader (the Mahdī).⁹¹

Fromherz adds that in order to reassign tribal loyalty to the Almohad movement, Ibn Tūmart adopted and redefined traditional Berber social institutions. One of these was the *agrao*, or the tribal council. Typically made up of forty men, the *agrao* served as the model for the Council the Fifty, which was comprised of forty leading men of the Almohad tribes, plus the Council of Ten.⁹² A second Berber tradition adapted to the Almohad super-tribe was the *āsmās*, or communal meal. Normally celebrated in order to cement new loyalties or to adopt outside individuals into a tribe, Ibn Tūmart participated in an *āsmās* with his followers after assuming

⁸⁸ See Fromherz, *The Almohads*, 93-94. See also Madeleine Fletcher, "The Anthropological Context of Almohad History," *Hesperis-Tamuda* XXVI-XXVII (1988-9): 25-51. At the time that Fletcher wrote her article, the segmentary model had fallen out of favor with French anthropologists, but, as she points out, a more accurate model has not been offered. See page 26 for this argument.

⁸⁹ Fromherz, *The Almohads*, 94.

⁹⁰ While I shall discuss the Almoravids as a common enemy in an ideological sense in the following section, I do not wish to neglect the other, perhaps more practical, reasons that the Almohad tribes would have opposed Almoravid rule. As explained by Fromherz, the consolidation of Almoravid territories fostered mercantile activity along the trans-Saharan trade routes, which passed through Masmūda territory. While the Masmūda initially benefitted from the passing of traders through their mountain passes, the Almoravids eventually levied heavy taxes on them. In other words, their continued rule no longer benefitted the Masmūda. This was certainly a factor in Masmūda support of Ibn Tūmart, who wished to overthrow the Almoravids and promised to impose no illegal taxes. See Fromherz, *The Almohads*, 131.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid., 125.

the title of Mahdī. This meal symbolized the new bonds of loyalty between Ibn Tūmart as the Mahdī, the physical embodiment of the Almohad movement, and his followers. Because of Ibn Tūmart's claims to divine guidance, the Almohad *āsmās* "became symbolic of the formation of Almohad ideology, the authority of Ibn Tūmart as Mahdī and the light and even the coming end of time."⁹³

A final tribal institution that Ibn Tūmart appropriated for the Almohad movement is the *tamyīz* (Eng. "distinguishing," "discrimination"). Pre-Almohad *tamyīz* was a process in which alliances were formed in a tribal confederation; it also refers to the organization of the alliance's troops and the drawing of its battle plans.⁹⁴ The Almohad *tamyīz* refers to a reunion of the Almohad tribes, but this gathering could take several forms: "a ceremony in preparation for battle, the ordering of different clans that had formed an alliance, or the killing of disloyal tribal members."⁹⁵ An example of the first sort of Almohad *tamyīz* would be the hierarchical arranging of Almohad troops for the distribution of pre-battle donations (Ar. *baraka*). The incorporation of new members of the Almohad super-tribe is also referred to as *tamyīz*, as part of their initiation involved determining where they "fit into" the rest of the Almohad hierarchy.⁹⁶

Al-Baydhaq provides the first account of the final sort of Almohad *tamyīz*. It occurred just before Ibn Tūmart ordered an important offensive against the Almoravids, which became known as the battle of Buḥayra:

A number of days passed, and God granted the Mahdī the call of al-Bashīr. He ordered the *tamyīz*. Al-Bashīr sent the transgressors, the hypocrites and the wicked out from the Almohads, until he had fully separated the wicked from the good. The people saw the truth [of their wickedness] with their own eyes, and the number of faithful increased. Then these enemies tested the fire, and they knew that they would fall into it, and that there was no escape from it. The *tamyīz* of al-Bashīr lasted from Thursday to the Friday that was forty days later. People from the five tribes died at the place called Aīghar-an-Ūsannān, where the Aīaldāyin-an-wah-Nāyn and some from the

⁹³ Ibid., 98.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 96.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 96-7.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 98.

Hintāta Imattazgā also died. The Aīn Māghūs died in the place called Aīghar-an-Aīt Kūriyīt, with the Gadmīwa of the Tākūsht. Then al-Bashīr reviewed the troops, wanting to go on campaign with the blessing of God Almighty.⁹⁷

As al-Baydhaq describes it, al-Bashīr's *tamyīz* amounts to the rounding up and execution of suspected dissidents.⁹⁸ Other authors, such as the Syrian chronicler Ibn al-Athīr (d. 1233), treat this episode as an example of Ibn Tūmart's duplicity, characterizing him as a leader who engages in "pre-emptive" murder of his own supporters in order to further his political goals.⁹⁹ While the violence and loss of human life caused by Ibn Tūmart's *tamyīz* should not be denied, it can perhaps be nuanced by recalling Madeleine Fletcher's observation that condemned members of a tribe were often killed by their own families in order to avoid retribution.¹⁰⁰ In all three of its Almohad forms, the traditional sense of the *tamyīz* as a "bilateral" loyalty between groups is transformed into a loyalty to a higher ideology and an acknowledgement of Ibn Tūmart's the ultimate authority.¹⁰¹

The Mahdī began his military campaigns against the Almoravids in 1121, the same year he emigrated to Tinmal. He proved to be a skilled commander, and he applied his new organization of the Almohad hierarchy to their battle formations. Al-Baydhaq recounts how each tribe was given a separate general who carried a distinctly-colored flag in order to be easily

⁹⁷ Al-Baydhaq, *Ta'rikh al-Muwahhidīn*, 78. Fromherz observes that those killed were often members of tribes that traditionally supported the Almoravids or older, more cautious members of the Almohad movement. After the *tamyīz*, Ibn Tūmart was left with the younger and more zealous among his followers. See *The Almohads*, 99.

⁹⁸ Although I have relied heavily on Fromherz in my discussion of the *tamyīz*, Fletcher also provides an insightful analysis on the relationship between segmentary societies and the kinds of preemptive defensive killing characterized by Ibn Tūmart's *tamyīz* and `Abd al-Mu'min's *i'tirāf*. She makes the point that many modern authors, quick to criticize changing loyalties in sources that describe segmentary societies, approach the issue from an incorrect angle. Western societies, she continues, value loyalty to one's professed and sworn lord. Those who do not maintain their oaths of fealty become social pariahs. With segmentary societies, however, there is no such sense of personal loyalty: the pariah is he who does not avenge his clan. See Fletcher, "Anthropological Context," 30-5.

⁹⁹ See Ibn al-Athīr and D. S. Richards, *The chronicle of Ibn al-Athīr*, 583-585.

¹⁰⁰ Fletcher, "Anthropological Context," 42. While the *tamyīz* shows the Almohads killing suspected threats to the movement, as opposed to condemned individuals, one must remember that the infallibility of the Mahdī assured his followers that the executions were justified.

¹⁰¹ Fromherz, *The Almohads*, 99.

recognizable.¹⁰² Aware that `Alī ibn Yūsuf's cavalry would have no trouble defeating the Almohads in a pitched battle, Ibn Tūmart instructed his troops to hold their lines in the mountains and let the enemy come to them; the full force of the Almohad army only streamed down the mountainside when they had already won a clear advantage.¹⁰³ The Mahdī also skillfully marshaled his army's morale before a major offensive, encouraging the Almohads to taunt the Almoravids by calling them anthropomorphists. In addition to the cathartic effect of slandering the enemy, this taunt also reassured the Almohads that their fight against the heretic Almoravids constituted true *jihād*.¹⁰⁴ Finally, Ibn Tūmart enlivened the Almohad warriors by promising them booty as a reward for their steadfastness in battle.¹⁰⁵

After several military victories and the *tamyīz*, Ibn Tūmart felt sufficiently confident to order an expedition against the Almoravids on the plain near Marrakesh. Because he was too ill to participate in the fight, al-Bashīr led the Almohad forces. This battle, called the battle of Buḥayra, was a disaster for the overzealous Almohads: they suffered not only defeat but also heavy losses, including al-Bashīr and three other members of the Council of Ten.¹⁰⁶ Many other Almohad leaders, such as `Abd al-Mu'min, were wounded. After the slaughter of so many Almohads, the army retreated to Tinmal, where it was pressured by `Alī's forces. The situation took a turn for the worse when Ibn Tūmart died in 1130. Although the Almohads recovered from this setback under the leadership of `Abd al-Mu'min, they did not make another attempt on the Almoravid capital until 1147.

2.2 *IBN TŪMART'S DOCTRINE AND JURIDICAL OUTLOOK*

Almohad doctrine is notoriously difficult to summarize, even when centering on this

¹⁰² Al-Baydhaq, *Ta'rīkh al-Muwahhidīn*, 75.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 77. I shall discuss the charge of anthropomorphism in the following section.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 79-81.

early, formative period. A major source of confusion is that none of the extant written sources—not even the *A`azz mā yuṭlab*—date to the Maḥdī’s lifetime. Rather, they claim to be compiled by his disciples. The first European scholars to study the *A`azz mā yuṭlab*, such as Ignác Goldziher in the introduction to his 1903 edition of the text, tend to understand Ibn Tūmart’s doctrine as a patchwork amalgam of Ash`arite, Mu`tazilite, Zahirite and Ghazalian ideas.¹⁰⁷ Other authors, including Dominique Urvoy, Vincent Cornell and García-Arenal, have justly criticized this approach, arguing that the Maḥdī’s doctrine ought to be considered both as a cohesive whole and on its own terms.¹⁰⁸ Accordingly, this section will focus most closely on Ibn Tūmart’s doctrine as it was expressed in his own writing. Rather than offering a comprehensive overview of the Maḥdī’s belief system, however, I discuss Ibn Tūmart’s doctrine and its sources when they are relevant to the understanding of a historical process—as was the case with his adoption of the Ghazalian principle of the *ḥisba*—or, in later chapters, a building.

The most salient tenet of Ibn Tūmart’s spirituality, from which the Almohads took the name *al-muwahḥidūn* (Eng. “those who profess God’s unity” or “the Unitarians”) is the absolute and total unity of God (Ar. *tawḥīd*).¹⁰⁹ Ibn Tūmart’s rejection of anthropomorphism, which is related to his idea of God’s unity, can shed some light on his doctrine of *tawḥīd*. Certain Qur’ānic verses describe God in anthropomorphic terms, mentioning his hands or face, which could lead to the idea that God inhabits a body similar to those of human beings.¹¹⁰ According to Ibn Tūmart, this corporeality, or even similarity, is both incorrect and absurd: God is completely

¹⁰⁷ See Ignác Goldziher, “Introduction: Mohammed Ibn Toumert et la Théologie de l’Islam dans le Maghrib, au XIe siècle,” in *Le livre de Mohammed Ibn Toumert, Maḥdi des Almohades. Texte Arabe accompagné de notices biographiques et d’une introduction par I. Goldziher, professeur à l’université de Budapest* (Alger : Imprimerie Orientale Pierre Fontana, 1903).

¹⁰⁸ See Dominique Urvoy, “La pensée d’Ibn Tūmart,” *Bulletin d’Etudes Orientales* 27 (1944), 19-20; Cornell, “Mother of Ability,” 72 and García-Arenal, *Messianism*, 174.

¹⁰⁹ Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 34-36.

¹¹⁰ Qur’an 11:37 is a good example: “And make the ark before *Our eyes* and (according) to *Our revelation*, and do not speak to Me in respect of those who are unjust; surely they shall be drowned.” Emphasis mine.

and necessarily unique, because similarity to creation would impose limits upon his necessarily limitless nature. The idea of God’s dissimilarity to created beings is expressed in the following passage from one of the two spiritual guides (Ar. *murshida*) contained in the *A`azz mā yuṭlab*:

[God] is the Eternal, not limited by How; the Glorious, not limited by similarity. Thoughts cannot define him, nor opinions imagine him; ideas do not reach him and reason cannot qualify him. Change and movement are not qualities that He possesses; neither is variation, ending, ignorance, necessity, impotence or poverty.¹¹¹

In this passage, God is utterly unlike his creation, and no possible effort to understand him using human faculties (i.e., thought, opinion and reason) can bear fruit. Neither does God possess the qualities of bodies that occupy a space, such as change or movement. Ibn Tūmart’s assertion of God’s immutable and immobile status also poses a problem to the verses of the Qur’ān that describe his interaction with the earthly sphere.¹¹² It follows that for the Almohads, both this kind of verse and those that suggest an anthropomorphic deity must be understood figuratively rather than literally. Although these may seem like esoteric distinctions, correct belief about these matters was of the utmost importance to Ibn Tūmart: it was the basis for the unforgivable charge of anthropomorphism that justified his wars against the Almoravids.

As a member of the intellectual elite, Ibn Tūmart must have known that his conception of God as a completely abstracted being—both unlike creation in every way and also unable to be apprehended by human faculties—was an extremely challenging concept. It is not surprising, then, that he composed several texts to communicate his doctrine of *tawḥīd* to his followers. These short treatises use different linguistic registers designed to appeal to distinct audiences. For example, the technical language of so-called “Almohad Creed” (Ar. *‘aqīda*) depends heavily on logic:

¹¹¹ Ibn Tūmart, *A`azz mā yuṭlab*, 241.

¹¹² Qur’an 7:57 describes such direct interaction: “It is He who looses the winds, bearing good tidings before His mercy, til, when they are charged with heavy clouds, We drive it to a dead land and therewith send down water, and bring forth therewith all the fruits.”

And to understand the denial of the similarity between Creator and created is to understand the absolute existence of the Creator, since everything that has a beginning, an end, delimitation, and specialization must also have an extension in space, mutability, a position in space, particularity, adventitiousness, and a Creator. The Creator has no beginning since everything that has a beginning has a period before it existed, and everything that has a period before it existed has a period after its existence, and everything that has a period after its existence has a limit, and everything that has a limit is created, and everything that is created needs a creator.¹¹³

Here, Ibn Tūmart arrives at the conclusion that God exists in an absolute sense. If God is the Creator, and if the Creator is completely dissimilar to all existing things, and if all existing things have delimitations, positions in space and a Creator, then it must follow that God has none of those things. Rather, he exists absolutely.

The *A`azz mā yuṭlab* also includes two shorter spiritual guides. Although still dependent on logic, these *murshidas* are more expository and less argumentative, employing both natural imagery and evocative pairs of opposites to express Ibn Tūmart's doctrine of *tawḥīd*.¹¹⁴ His first *murshida*, which Levi-Provençal suggests was a distilled version of the Almohad Creed meant for the ruling elite, is the shorter and more straightforward of the two. Here, evocations of nature and dichotomies occur in only a brief section, which declares that nothing exists apart from God, “not the earth nor the heavens, not water or air, not the inhabited or uninhabited worlds, not the light nor shadows, neither night nor day...”¹¹⁵ The second *murshida*, which `Abd al-Mu`min would eventually require every Muslim to memorize, was probably intended for a more general audience. It uses more binary pairs, natural imagery and Qur`ānic citations than does the first *murshida*, which, I would argue, better lend themselves to evoking an intangible God through tangible imagery.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Ibn Tūmart, “The Almohad Creed,” in *Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim and Jewish Sources*, ed. Olivia Remie Constable and Damian Zurro (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 248. For expediency's sake, I use Madeleine Fletcher's excellent English translation of the Almohad Creed.

¹¹⁴ This dependence on binary language and dichotomies has already been noticed in Cornell, “Understanding,” 93 and Fromherz, *The Almohads*, 173.

¹¹⁵ *A`azz mā yuṭlab*, 240-1.

¹¹⁶ The first part of this *murshida* reads, “Know—and may God guide you as well as us—that it is incumbent on all legally-capable [Muslims] to know that Almighty God is singular in his power. He is the Creator of the world in its

If the most important aspect of Ibn Tūmart’s thought was *tawhīd*, his doctrines of the Mahdī and Infallible Imām follow close behind. The qualities of the Mahdī and Imām elaborated in the *A`azz mā yuṭlab* can be used to define these concepts as Ibn Tūmart understood them. This chapter opens by insisting that belief in the Imamate, or the idea that Imāms exist to guide believers, is an obligation (Ar. *wujūb*) and “a pillar among the pillars of religion.”¹¹⁷ After affirming that God has always provided the faithful with an Imām, Ibn Tūmart affirms that “it is necessary that the Imām be free from falsehood, in order to destroy falsehood. For falsehood does not destroy falsehood.”¹¹⁸ In the same way, he continues, it is necessary that the Imām be free from error (Ar. *ḍalāl*), corruption (Ar. *fasad*), tyranny (Ar. *juwr*), innovation (Ar. *bida`*), ignorance (Ar. *jahl*), lies (Ar. *kadhib*), impurity (Ar. *najāsa*), darkness (Ar. *ẓulma*), profaneness (Ar. *ma`ṣiyya*), difference (Ar. *ikhṭilāf*) and disobedience (Ar. *ʿaṣiyyān*).¹¹⁹

Ibn Tūmart contrasts these qualities with their inverses, asserting that “nothing is repelled (Ar. *yudfa`u*) except by its opposite.”¹²⁰ It follows that rather than possessing falsehood, the Imām will possess truth (Ar. *ḥaqq*); and rather than error, tyranny, injustice, sin and difference, the Imām will possess right-guidedness (Ar. *hudā*), justice (Ar. *ʿadl*), light (Ar. *nūr*), obedience (Ar. *ṭā`a*) and agreement (Ar. *ittifāq*). Agreement, he continues, is only achieved through

entirety—that which is above and that which is below—the throne and the chair, the heavens and earth and all that each contains and all that is between them. All created beings are subject to his [transcendent] power, and not an atom is moved without His permission. He existed before creation, and *He has no before or after, no above or below, no left or right, no afore or behind, no “all” or “some.”* He cannot be particularized in the mind; He cannot be given form in the eye: He cannot be pictured in the imagination or conceived with reason. He is not attended by conjectures or by thoughts. There is nothing like Him: He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing. He has no one that directs him in creation and He has no associate in his power. He is the Living, the Unchanging; He is not overtaken by slumber or sleep. He is the Knower of what is seen and unseen, and nothing in heaven or on the earth is hidden from Him. *He knows what is in the land and in the sea; not a leaf falls but He knows it. There is not even a grain in the dark places of the earth, or a fresh or dry thing but that it is [written] in a clear book.*” Ibn Tūmart, *A`azz mā yuṭlab*, 241. The emphasis on the pairs and natural imagery is mine.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 245.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 245-6.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 246.

remitting all affairs to the highest authority, who is the Infallible Imām.¹²¹ That this Imām is also the Mahdī is elucidated a few passages later, when Ibn Tūmart writes, “falsehood can be destroyed only by the Mahdī, who is the only one who endeavors to bring about truth. . . . Belief in the Mahdī is obligatory (Ar. *wājib*), and any who doubts him is an infidel (Ar. *kāfir*), and truly the Mahdī is infallible in whatever he calls for of truth, for error is not permitted to him.”¹²²

Ibn Tūmart and his followers believed that he, as the Mahdī and Imām, possessed all of these qualities. Because of his special status of being free from error, his followers owed him both faith and total obedience, an essential point that Ibn Tūmart makes abundantly clear. For example, immediately following the passage that details the Imām and Mahdī’s qualities, Ibn Tūmart creates a genealogy of Imāms by listing those whom God has already sent to guide the faithful. This list includes, but is not limited to, the prophets Adam, Noah, Abraham, David, Jesus and Muḥammad, and the caliphs Abū Bakr and `Umar. Ibn Tūmart is sure to mention that the obedience (Ar. *ṭā`a*) to all of them, and to himself by extension, is commanded by God.¹²³ The consequence of rejecting this authority—at least as it was due to Ibn Tūmart—was death, either by *jihād* (for external enemies like the Almoravids) or by *tamyīz* (for disloyal Almohads).¹²⁴

A full explanation of Ibn Tūmart’s success in implementing his doctrines is beyond the scope of this study, but I shall briefly mention several key contributing factors suggested by other scholars. First, as Fromherz, García-Arenal and Halima Ferhat have noted, Ibn Tūmart’s claim to Mahdism was but one in a series of similar claims made throughout the history of the

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid., 257.

¹²³ Speaking about David, for example, Ibn Tūmart says that “God ordered the people to obey him, and to learn his *sunna* and to undertake his endeavors...” (Ibid.) Mercedes García-Arenal characterizes the obedience due to the Imāms, at least according to Ibn Tūmart, as “blind and unquestioning.” See Mercedes García-Arenal, *Messianism*, 181.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 171.

medieval Maghrib; in other words, it was a place particularly suited to the rise and recognition of Mahdīs.¹²⁵ Furthermore, Ibn Tūmart’s preaching, his charisma, his reputation for sanctity and purity, his performance of the *ḥisba* and his personal piety must have contributed to his recognition as the Mahdī.¹²⁶ Part of this reputation proceeded from the deliberate parallels that Ibn Tūmart and later chroniclers made between his life and that of the Prophet Muḥammad: both made a *hijra* from their native cities, both chose ten companions whom they termed *anṣār* (Eng. “supporters”), both were recognized as either prophet or Mahdī from underneath trees, both received revelatory information while meditating in a cave, both restructured their contemporary social organization and both eventually overthrew the reigning political authority.¹²⁷

A final way that Ibn Tūmart emulated the Prophet Muḥammad was by promising a return to Islam as it had first been envisioned. His conception of *tawḥīd* and his organization of his followers were part of this mission, as were his ideas about juridical reform. In his introductory study of the *A`azz mā yuṭlab*, Ignác Goldziher outlines the history of jurisprudence in the Maghrib, noting Malikism’s early entrenchment and its gradual replacement of *uṣūl al-fiqh* with study of the *furū`*.¹²⁸ With the exceptions already noted, this led to the state of juridical stagnation that characterized the Almoravid period. Like certain of his contemporaries, such as Ibn Rushd al-Jadd, Ibn Tūmart railed against this stale form of Malikism and urged a return to *uṣūl al-fiqh*. Rather than attempting to reconcile the two, however, Ibn Tūmart provided an alternative juridical method. The Mahdī rejected the use of opinion (Ar. *ra`y*, *ẓann*) and analogy (Ar. *qiyās*), making a distinction between the legal source that lead to certainty and those that

¹²⁵ See Fromherz, *The Almohads*, 137-49; García-Arenal, *Messianism*, 136-47 and 174-82; Halima Ferhat, “Littérature eschatologique et espace sacré au Maroc: Le cas de Māssa,” *Studia Islamica* 80 (1994): 47-56.

¹²⁶ Indeed, it was after “purifying” himself in the cave at Igliliz that Ibn Tūmart was declared the Mahdī. See García-Arenal, *Messianism*, 168.

¹²⁷ Many authors have remarked on the similarities between Ibn Tūmart and the Prophet Muḥammad. See Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 90; García-Arenal, *Messianism*, 173 and Fromherz, *The Almohads*, 117, 135, 153.

¹²⁸ Ignác Goldziher, “Introduction,” 24-5, 27.

have only a relative value.¹²⁹ He also denied the applicability of the general to the particular.¹³⁰

Unsurprisingly, Ibn Tūmart condemned the blind adscription to any of the four schools of Islamic jurisprudence, although he had a special reverence for Malik's *Muwatta'*.¹³¹

To conclude this section on Ibn Tūmart's life and mission, I shall summarize what seem to be the most significant aspects of his biography and works. Three facets of his doctrine were of the utmost importance: the *ḥisba*, *tawḥīd* and the doctrine of the Imām/Mahdī. The first provided moral legitimization both for the formation of his movement and for its resistance to the Almoravids, who were accused of being unable to uphold Islamic morality as Ibn Tūmart understood it. His doctrine of *tawḥīd*, which affirmed God's unity in the most abstracted and absolute terms, gave the movement a unifying doctrine and theological justification for their wars against the "anthropomorphizing" Almoravids. Finally, Ibn Tūmart's doctrine of the Mahdī, as identified with a series of Imāms whom God had chosen to guide believers, assured him unquestioning loyalty and obedience from his followers. Ibn Tūmart expressed his doctrine both in the language of reason and by using evocative, binary pairs of opposites. By appropriating institutions that were endemic to his tribal Berber milieu, he converted enough of his countrymen to enable his successor, `Abd al-Mu'min, to overthrow the Almoravid regime. It is to Ibn Tūmart's legacy, as created by the Almohad caliphs, that I shall now turn.

3 THE PATRONS

Shortly after the devastating battle of Buḥayra, the Almohads were dealt another blow when the Mahdī died in 1130. His death was hidden from all but a select few, who would confer

¹²⁹ Ibid., 46-7. Goldziher also makes the important point that although Ibn Tūmart rejected analogy in jurisprudence, it was the very basis of his theological system, which insists that the parts of the Qur'ān that describe God in less-than-abstract terms be interpreted analogically.

¹³⁰ Viguera Molíns, "Los almohades," 78.

¹³¹ I cannot pretend to undertake a full study of Ibn Tūmart's juridical ideas here. Interested readers can further consult Goldziher, "Introduction;" Urvoy, "La pensée," 19-44; Robert Brunschvig, "Sur la doctrine du mahdi Ibn Tūmart," *Arabica* 2 (1955): 137-49; Cornell, "Understanding," and Tilman Nagel "La destrucción de la *ṣarī'a* por Muhammad ibn Tūmart," *Al-Qantara: Revista de Estudios Árabes* 18.2 (1997): 295-304.

over his supposed sickbed and then give orders in his name.¹³² After three years, they could no longer credibly maintain the secret, and `Abd al-Mu`min emerged as the new leader.¹³³ Whether this was dictated by Ibn Tūmart or agreed upon by the Almohad sheikhs, `Abd al-Mu`min proved a capable commander. Even before he was proclaimed Ibn Tūmart's successor, `Abd al-Mu`min had begun the hard-fought military campaigns responsible for bringing the Maghrib under Almohad control. These battles officially ended in 1147, the year in which besieged Marrakesh finally fell.¹³⁴

Shortly after the Almohads occupied the former Almoravid capital, several conquered territories revolted. `Abd al-Mu`min was also faced with two attempted coups masterminded by the Maḥdī's brothers. Chapter Two will describe these rebellions in more detail, but they were partly prompted by changes that `Abd al-Mu`min made to the Ibn Tūmart's hierarchy: he assumed the title of caliph (one recalls Ibn Tūmart's assertion that the caliphate belongs to God alone), declared his firstborn son as his heir and delegated key positions of political power to his other sons. Once the caliph re-conquered the rebel territories and executed the Maḥdī's brothers, he undertook a sort of second *tamyīz*, called the *i`tirāf* (Eng. "recognition," "acknowledgement"), in which he, too, eliminated suspected dissidents.¹³⁵ These internal threats resolved, `Abd al-Mu`min made a celebrated expedition to Ifriqiyya, where he liberated the city of Maḥdiyya from its Norman Sicilian rulers and subjugated the Arab tribes who occupied the plains south of the

¹³² According to al-Baydhaq, five people knew of the Ibn Tūmart's death: `Abd al-Mu`min, Abū Ibrāhīm Ismā`īl, Abū Ḥafṣ `Umar al-Ḥintātī, Wasnār and the Maḥdī's sister, Umm `Abd al-`Azīz ibn `A`isha. See *Ta`rīkh al-Muwahḥidīn*, 81. The first three were surviving members of the Council of Ten, and his sister was a member of his household. I have not been able to determine the identity of Wasnār.

¹³³ For further discussion, see Chapter Two.

¹³⁴ For an account of these campaigns, see Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 109-46.

¹³⁵ Al-Baydhaq is the only chronicler to mention this event. See *Ta`rīkh al-Muwahḥidīn*, 109-112.

city.¹³⁶ Finally, he intervened in Andalusia, establishing Almohad presence in the Iberian Peninsula as early as 1147.

In spite of his excellent military leadership, the sword was not the only means by which `Abd al-Mu`min secured his sovereignty. He also invested in a sociopolitical program designed to legitimize Almohad authority and broadcast Almohad presence in their territories. Certain of his strategies were visual, such as coining the new, characteristically square Almohad *dirham*.¹³⁷ Vega Martín et.al. list various interpretations for the *dirhams*' shape. First, because the weights used to measure coins were square in shape, the square *dirham* could reflect the Almohads' imposition of a standard weight for the coin, in keeping with their upholding of religious laws. The square *dirham* could also have been intended to mark the beginning of the Almohad era: one can imagine how the distinctive shape of the coins would have signaled the change in political sovereignty as soon as they were circulated. Finally, the authors themselves propose the idea that the coins could have been intended to recall a page from the Qur`ān, which often had a square format in the Maghrib.¹³⁸

`Abd al-Mu`min also used court ceremonies to showcase his power and sovereignty. The extensive and well-ordered military parades that accompanied the Almohad army offer an excellent example of the latter. During these processions, the caliph and his entourage followed the so-called Qur`ān of `Uthmān, which was said to have belonged to the caliph `Uthmān ibn `Affān (d. 656). The precious book was carried on a special camel litter adorned with four red

¹³⁶ See Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 184-95.

¹³⁷ Of course, `Abd al-Mu`min's visual strategies also included the Kutubiyya and Tinmal mosques, which will be discussed in Chapter Two.

¹³⁸ Miguel Vega Martín, Salvador Peña Martín and Manuel Fera García, "La doctrina almohade a través de la numismática," vol. 2 of *Los almohades: Problemas y perspectivas*, eds. Patrice Cressier, Ma. Isabel Fierro and Luís Molina (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2005), 1021-3.

banners.¹³⁹ `Abd al-Mu`min also underlined his elite status during his *majālis* (Sing. *majlis*, Eng. “official court reception”). In Ibn Šāhib al-Šalāt’s description of Abd al-Mu`min’s inaugural *majlis* at the fortress of Gibraltar, the caliph receives pledges of allegiance from the Andalusian cities. Each delegation included the city’s governor (often one of his sons) its *ṭalaba* and administrators, its leading Andalusian families and its most skillful poets. `Abd al-Mu`min ordered that the delegates be allowed to approach according to their importance, allowing each to renew their oaths of fealty and receive the caliph’s blessing in turn. Both eloquent sermons detailing the obligation to honor and obey this pledge and panegyric poetry were recited.¹⁴⁰ These events were calculated to reinforce caliphal hegemony by projecting an image of authority, strength and venerability onto the caliph’s person.¹⁴¹

`Abd al-Mu`min also took measures to ensure that his empire functioned efficiently. In addition to incorporating certain skilled Almoravid secretaries into his government, he founded a new school in Marrakesh to educate and train Almohad administrators (Ar. *ḥuffāz*, Sing. *ḥafīz*).¹⁴² Huici Miranda describes how the caliph filled this school with the sons of important Sevilan, Cordoban and Tlemceni families. He also selected promising young men from among

¹³⁹ This description proceeds from the *Hulāl al-Mawshīyya*, which is described in Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 185-6. The Qur`ān of `Uthmān’s role in propagating Almohad legitimacy will be further remarked upon in Chapter Two; here it is merely important to note the great ceremony that accompanied the Almohad army on campaign.

¹⁴⁰ Ibn Šāhib al-Šalāt, *Al-mann*, 25-7. While Ibn Šāhib al-Šalāt included parts of these poems in his account, Huici Miranda did not include them in his translation of the work. Almohad panegyric will be further discussed in Chapter Two.

¹⁴¹ See also Rafaela Castrillo Márquez, “Instituciones políticas,” in *El retroceso territorial de al-Andalus: Almorávides y almohades, siglos XII y XIII*, ed. María Jesús Viguera Molíns (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, S.A. 1997), 136-145 and Manuela Marín, “El califa almohade: una presencia activa y benéfica,” vol. 2 of *Los almohades: problemas y perspectivas*, ed. Patrice Cressier, Ma. Isabel Fierro and Luís Molina, 451-76 (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2005).

¹⁴² The most famous of the Almoravid ministers was Abū Ja`far ibn `Aṭīyya. Born in Marrakesh, he had worked in the Almoravid administration as a secretary. After fleeing the city, he joined Abū Ḥafṣ `Umar while the sheikh was on campaign, writing the letter that communicated one of his victories to `Abd al-Mu`min. The eloquence of his letter prompted `Abd al-Mu`min to grant Ibn `Aṭīyya the position of secretary and vizir, although he was later killed for purportedly having plotted against the caliph with the Mahdī’s brothers. See Aḥmad Azzāwī, *Rasā`il al-muwahhidiyya 1, Ṭab`a 1* (Al-Qunayṭira: Kullīyat al-adāb wa-l-`ulūm al-insāniyya, 1996), 18-9.

the Masmūda to attend, as well as his own sons. Once enrolled, these students studied the Qurʾān, Malik's *Muwattā'* and Ibn Tūmart's works, often memorizing the latter. They also participated in military drills and physical activities such as swimming, archery and horsemanship in order to prepare for their future role of supporting the Almohad state. All of these students enjoyed full scholarships, plus room and board, granted at the Almohad treasury's expense.¹⁴³ Furthermore, the author of the *Hulāl al-mawshiyya* asserts that the caliph personally convened these students after Friday prayers to assess their progress, and he participated in their system of rewards and punishments in order to win their respect, esteem and loyalty.¹⁴⁴

At the same time that `Abd al-Mu'min strengthened his family's position and his empire, he remained faithful to the Mahdī and his vision. Indeed, several factors indicate that `Abd al-Mu'min was a devout Almohad believer. First, the caliph associated closely with Ibn Tūmart as a member of the Council of Ten. Second, whether it was through the Mahdī's expressed wish or the ratification of the Almohad sheikhs, `Abd al-Mu'min was chosen to shepherd the Almohad movement in the crucial years following the Mahdī's death.¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, after assuming the caliphal title, `Abd al-Mu'min required that every subject citizen in his empire memorize the second of of Ibn Tūmart's spiritual guides, and he wrote letters that commanded local governments to uphold the same moral standards that the Mahdī had enforced. Finally, `Abd al-Mu'min honored Ibn Tūmart after the latter's death, through his attention to Tinmal. In addition to building the Mahdī's tomb, the Tinmal mosque and the adjacent royal pantheon, `Abd al-Mu'min made several pious visits to the Ibn Tūmart's grave over the course of his career.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 174.

¹⁴⁴ Cited in *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ While this does not prove that `Abd al-Mu'min was truly loyal, these factors do indicate that the most powerful members of the early Almohad movement believed him trustworthy.

¹⁴⁶ Ibn Šāhib al-Šalāt, *Al-mann*, 54.

This fidelity to the Maḥdī and his religious vision—fostered by years of personal contact with Ibn Tūmart—is one of `Abd al-Mu`min’s most defining characteristics.

When `Abd al-Mu`min died in 1163, he left behind both a vast empire and the bureaucratic structures capable of maintaining it.¹⁴⁷ Per the first caliph’s instructions, his first-born son, Muḥammad, was proclaimed caliph upon his father’s death. However, the *sayyid* (Eng. “lord,” in an Almohad context, a son of a caliph) Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf, governor of Seville, permanently usurped the throne just six weeks later. To explain this event, the primary sources cite Muḥammad’s affinity for wine and Abū Ya`qūb’s greater capabilities. Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt—a chronicler notable for his support of the Almohad caliphs—goes so far as to claim that the caliph ordered Muḥammad’s name removed from the Friday sermon just before his death, although no other source confirms his assertion.¹⁴⁸ Whatever the reason for Muḥammad’s deposition, Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf was fully supported by his uterine brother, the *sayyid* Abū Ḥafṣ, and they appear to have worked together in order to win the support of the remaining *sayyids*. Because the latter were initially reluctant to accept him as caliph, Abū Ya`qūb first assumed the title of “commander” (Ar. *amīr*), adopting the full caliphal title of “Commander of the Faithful” (Ar. *Amīr al-Mu`minīn*) in 1168.

Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf’s military career is less distinguished than that of his father. He did manage to quickly quell the two rebellions that arose in the Maghrib during his reign: the first took place in near Ceuta in 1167 and the second in Ifriqiyya in 1180. He was far less successful in Andalusia. During the first ten years of his sovereignty, the caliph struggled against the alliance of Ibn Mardānīsh and his father-in-law, Ibn Hamushk, two local lords centered in Murcia. Even after Ibn Hamushk surrendered to the Almohads, their territories were only

¹⁴⁷ The following section on Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf’s caliphate is largely summarized from Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 219-312. Other references will be clearly cited.

¹⁴⁸ Cited in Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 219.

secured after Ibn Mardānīsh's death in 1172. Furthermore, although Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf actively waged *jihād* against the Christians in the western and northern parts of the Iberian Peninsula, he was far less successful than his father or his son in Ifriqiyya or at Alarcos. Indeed, it was while on an ill-fated campaign to capture Santarem from the Portuguese that Abū Ya`qūb died in 1184.

Despite his less successful command of the Almohad army, Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf inherited his father's dedication to both glorifying the caliphate and the Mahdī's vision. First, as Seville's governor, he organized a massive celebration of `Abd al-Mu'min's triumph over the Normans in Mahdiyya. Initially, he ordered that the letter announcing the Almohad victory be read publicly; he then gave celebratory banquets—during which drums were beat and poetry was recited—for an entire month.¹⁴⁹ Once he became caliph, Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf also incorporated the Qur'ān of `Uthmān into his own military processions.¹⁵⁰ Second, Huici Miranda asserts that Abū Ya`qūb “studied Almohad theology and dogma profoundly, as did his father.”¹⁵¹ He also imitated `Abd al-Mu'min by distributing moralizing letters that urged the teaching and upholding of Almohad *tawhīd*, and he continued to support the specialized school in Marrakesh that trained Almohad administrators. Perhaps because of the time the caliph had spent there as a student, he seemed to particularly enjoy engaging the *ṭalaba* in debates regarding Almohad theology, holding frequent *majālis* for them both in his palaces and on campaign.¹⁵²

Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf's most defining characteristic is his scholarly disposition, evidenced both by his interaction with the Almohad *ṭalaba* and the highly-developed court life that he sponsored. Many authors, including Huici Miranda and Viguera Molíns, suggest that the

¹⁴⁹ Ibn Šāhib al-Šalāt, *Al-mann*, 16-7. The caliph commemorated his brothers' victories in a similar fashion: for example, after the *sayyid* Abū Ḥafṣ led a successful expedition against Ibn Mardānīsh, Abū Ya`qūb gave the soldiers “complete vestments of turbans, mantles, tunics, along with a cut of linen cloth and another of regular cloth” and monetary rewards according to their military rank. *Ibid.*, 88.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 178.

¹⁵¹ Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 309.

¹⁵² For more on this aspect of Abū Ya`qūb's personality, see Chapter Three.

caliph's long residence in Seville contributed to these inclinations by exposing him to the highly-educated Andalusian elite.¹⁵³ Both the caliph's extended stays in Seville and the Andalusian origin of many of the literati, historians, physicians, theologians and philosophers with whom he filled his court argue in favor of this idea. Most famously, Abū Ya`qūb sponsored two great Andalusian philosophers: Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Rushd. The caliph's relationship with these two men will occupy much of Chapter Three, and it will have specific implications for my reading of the mosque of Seville.

Although the third Almohad caliph, Abū Yūsuf Ya`qūb al-Manṣūr, had not been named heir apparent, he acceded to the throne in Andalusia the day following his father's death.¹⁵⁴ Once he had received pledges of allegiance from the most politically significant Andalusian cities, he departed Seville for Rabat, where he planned to take the title of Commander of the Faithful. As he left the city, the young caliph showed his penchant for the caliphal pomp and ceremony that had marked the reigns of his father and grandfather. He solemnly descended to the Guadalquivir River in a procession that included the Qur`ān of `Uthmān, and, after an official leave-taking ceremony, he boarded the ship bound for Rabat. To differentiate it from the fleet's other vessels, al-Manṣūr's ship had been carefully prepared with the same kind of cloth that distinguished the caliph's campaign tents from those of the main army.

After he assumed the caliphal title, al-Manṣūr's kingdom was plagued by wars on two fronts. The first originated in the Balearic Islands, over which the Banū Ghāniyya, a clan of Almoravid descendents, had been ruling since `Abd al-Mu`min's time.¹⁵⁵ After imprisoning the

¹⁵³ Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 309; Viguera Molins, "La historia," 89.

¹⁵⁴ As was the case in the previous section, the information presented here is summarized from Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 313-90. Other citations will be clearly indicated.

¹⁵⁵ Their leader, Ishāq ibn Ghāniyya, periodically sent tribute booty seized through Mediterranean piracy to Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf, who, in turn, turned his campaigns against other enemies. See Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 320. Huici Miranda also refers the reader to a study by Codera, "Decadencia y desaparición de los almorávides," in *Las Baleares bajo los almorávides* (no publishing information given).

Almohad ambassador sent to Mallorca by Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf, the Banū Ghāniyya took the Ifriqiyyan city of Bougie. Both Bougie and Mallorca were recovered in the early months of al-Manṣūr's caliphate, but the situation degenerated when the Banū Ghāniyya attempted to re-take the island. Al-Manṣūr decided to intervene personally, and ultimately he succeeded in bringing peace to the region. However, the Banū Ghāniyya regrouped soon after the caliph's departure and continued their struggle for independence. The second stage of al-Manṣūr's wars was Andalusia, where he faced near-constant pressure from the Christian kingdoms. He first campaigned against the Portuguese in 1188. Although the caliph amassed a large army, the Almohad "victory" consisted of a treaty promising seven years of peace in exchange for the city of Silves. In 1191, the caliph broke this pact and conquered Alcaçar do Sal. Al-Manṣūr's final and most celebrated Andalusian campaign, this time against the Castilians, culminated in the decisive Almohad victory at the battle of Alarcos in 1195.

Al-Manṣūr also contended with the familiar threat of internal uprisings. The first of these took place while the caliph was on campaign in Ifriqiyya; believing al-Manṣūr's defeat to be certain, two of his uncles and his brother planned to depose him upon his return. After the caliph's triumph, they were executed as high traitors to the throne. In 1190, while al-Manṣūr was in Andalusia, a second rebel called al-Jazīrī began stirring up the Almohad territories. Although the caliph ordered his immediate capture, al-Jazīrī's uncanny ability to escape gave rise to the rumor that he was able to magically transform into an animal. Eventually he was caught and crucified, but not before provoking a general state of unrest in the Maghrib and winning many followers. Significantly, Ibn Sa`īd characterizes al-Jazīrī's rebellion as an attempt to restore the purity of Ibn Tumart's mission.¹⁵⁶ The rebel al-Ashall presents a similar case: he preached a providential mission in Ifriqiyya and gathered a significant following, after which he

¹⁵⁶ From his *Muḡrib fī hūla al-maḡrib*, cited in Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 353.

was decapitated by the local Almohad government. Huici Miranda characterizes al-Ashall as an “illuminated one,” which suggests ties to Sufism or claims of divine guidance, although the Spanish historian does not comment further.¹⁵⁷ I will consider the implications of the similarities between these two rebels and Ibn Tūmart in Chapter Three.

One of the key areas in which al-Manṣūr differs from his predecessors is his keen interest in administrative affairs, especially as they related to upholding justice and rooting out corruption. In the beginning of his reign, the caliph held a weekly audience in Marrakesh in which citizens appealed to him directly to resolve their disputes. Because commoners frequently abused the other members of the court who were present at these meetings, they were soon abandoned. However short-lived, they demonstrate al-Manṣūr’s commitment to exercising caliphal justice. Al-Manṣūr also took a strong stand against the corruption of his local governors, not only writing letters urging them to maintain the strictest morality, as did `Abd al-Mu`min and Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf, but also spontaneously inspecting their offices and treasuries as he passed through on campaign. Furthermore, the caliph met monthly with inspectors who were to oversee the correct functioning of local administrations, and he customarily inquired of visiting delegations as to whether their province or city was appropriately governed.

Al-Manṣūr’s theological and juridical positions also distinguish him from the preceding generations of Almohad caliphs. At least one medieval source affirms that he did not believe in Ibn Tūmart’s doctrine of the Maḥdī and Imām.¹⁵⁸ Nevertheless, he was a sincere and pious Muslim, and he took his duties of leading Friday prayers and guaranteeing the salvation of his subjects seriously. Al-Manṣūr is also described as an avid admirer of the Andalusian jurist Ibn

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 360.

¹⁵⁸ Al-Marrakūshī cites three examples of al-Manṣūr’s doubt in the Ibn Tūmart’s doctrines of the Maḥdī and Imām, all of which are discussed in Chapter Four. See Ernest Fagnan, trans., *Histoire des Almohades d’Abd al-Wāh`id Merrākechi*. (Algiers : Adolphe Jourdan, Libraire-éditeur, 1893), 253.

Hazm, who established the Zāhirī school of jurisprudence in Andalusia. Al-Marrākushī even claims to have witnessed the burning of books of Malikite *furū`* ordered by the caliph.¹⁵⁹ If authentic, this report suggests that al-Manṣūr wished to eradicate the Malikite school at the same time as it could confirm his preference for Zahirism or even for Ibn Tūmart’s juridical methods, both of which reject *furū`*.¹⁶⁰ Finally, Halima Ferhat suggests that al-Manṣūr was deeply affected by the Sufism, which flourished during his reign. She compares al-Manṣūr’s piety, his charity towards the dispossessed and his simplicity of dress with his Sufi counterparts, and notes that the caliph incorporated Sufis into his courts.¹⁶¹

4 THE BUILDINGS

4.1 ALMORAVID RELIGIOUS ARCHITECTURE

Because this study argues that Almoravid mosques demonstrate an aesthetic break from Almoravid buildings, a definition of the general characteristics of Almoravid mosques is in order. María Marcos Cobaleda’s remarkably comprehensive doctoral dissertation identifies, thoroughly describes and formally analyzes extant Almoravid architecture. In summarizing her conclusions, I shall focus on those sections that pertain to mosques, beginning with their typologies. Marcos Cobaleda observes that Almoravid mosques contain an odd number of naves that run perpendicular to the *qibla* wall. The central nave and *qibla* transept are slightly wider than the rest of the aisles, making the buildings examples of “T-plan” mosques. She also notes that the arcades of Almoravid mosques’ prayer halls rest upon square, brick pillars; however, in

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 241.

¹⁶⁰ On the comparison between Ibn Tūmart and Ibn Hazm’s juridical outlooks, see Goldziher, “Introduction,” 51; Cornell, “Understanding,” 94-5 and Muḥammad al-Gharāwī, “Al-mūwaḥḥidūn wa-l-madhhab al-zāhirī,” in *Al-sirā` al-madhhabī bi-bilād al-maghrib fī al-`aṣr al-wasīṭ*, ed. Hassan Ḥāfīzī `Alawī, 193-212 (Al-Rabāt: Jāmi` a Muḥammad al-Khāmis, 2008). The effect of al-Manṣūr’s purported distaste for Malikism and favoring of Zahirism is not easily traced in the historical record. See Camille Adang, “Zāhirīs of Almohad Times,” in *Biografías almohades II*, vol. 10 of *Estudios onomásticos-biográficos del al-Andalus*, eds. María Luisa Ávila and Maribel Fierro, 413-479 (Madrid-Granada: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2000).

¹⁶¹ Halima Ferhat, *Le Maghrib au XIIeme et XIIIeme siecles: les siecles de la foi* (Casablanca: Wallada, 1993), 95-9.

Andalusia the use of marble columns continued. As time passed, the horseshoe arches of the buildings' arcades gradually became more attenuated, although polylobed and lambrequin arches are also employed. Either nerved domes or *muqarnas* vaulting (the latter beginning around 1115) crown the most religiously significant parts of the mosques: the *mihṛāb* niche, *qibla* transept and axial nave.¹⁶²

Marcos Cobaleda divides Almoravid ornament into three distinct categories: geometric, vegetal and epigraphic. The first category is generally illustrated by friezes or panels, whose geometric forms are often curvilinear (Figure 1.1). Almoravid vegetal ornament is characteristically prolific, with the palmette as its principal motif. As Marcos Cobaleda observes, its leaves are often divided into toothy digits, and they tend to curl over themselves, forming tiny circles (Figure 1.2). These circles, or, as Marcos Cobaleda terms them, "eyelets," are one of the identifying characteristics of Almoravid vegetal ornament. The Almoravids also introduced the smooth palm into their vegetal repertoire, which, as its name implies, lacks the digits of its toothed counterparts. The pinecone also appears frequently, and Marcos Cobaleda notes that their angular forms provide a contrast to the curvilinear vegetal leaves. Almoravid mosque epigraphy tends to repeat Qur'ānic phrases or pious formulas, in addition to providing information such as the name of the building's patron and the date of its founding. Although kufic script is the most frequently employed, the Almoravids also elevated cursive script to a monumental forum.¹⁶³

4.2 ALMOHAD RELIGIOUS ARCHITECTURE

Pérez Higuera neatly summarizes the typical characteristics of Almohad mosques, observing that they tend to feature a T-plan, with *muqarnas* domes in their *qibla* transept and

¹⁶² Marcos Cobaleda, "Los almorávides," 1001-2.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 1003.

hierarchically distributed arches (Figure 1.3). She also notes the widespread employment of lambrequin arches (Figure 1.4).¹⁶⁴ These are usually found in the central aisle that leads to the *mihrāb* and/or in the *qibla* transept, whereas polylobed arches are used both in the mosques' lateral naves as well as to demarcate the *qibla* transept from the transepts of the main prayer hall. The bays of the latter are typically separated by smooth, pointed horseshoe arches. Viewed from the outside, the characteristically large dimensions of Almohad mosques are accentuated by a tall, square minaret (Figure 1.5). All of these structural elements have a place in Almoravid architecture; the Almohad innovation was to systematize their distribution within the buildings.

Perhaps the most distinguishing feature of Almohad religious architecture is its ornamental style. Like the Almoravids, the Almohad caliphs reserved the richest decoration for the *qibla* transept and especially the *mihrāb* façade. Their choice of a relatively austere aesthetic, on the other hand, contrasts markedly with their dynastic predecessors. This change can be appreciated in two principle ways. First, the proportion of bare to ornamented wall space increased dramatically under the Almohads (compare Figures 1.6 and 1.7), and second, they favored angular geometric interlace and architecturally-derived motifs. The frieze of eight-pointed stars that frames the *mihrāb* niche of the Tinmal mosque (Figure 1.7) and the *sebka* panels that adorn the Great Mosque of Seville's minaret (Figure 1.23) are good examples. Unlike the Almoravids, the Almohads used vegetal ornament sparingly, reserving it for marginal spaces such as window screens or for ornamental details (Figure 1.8). This last tendency is most pronounced in early buildings and seems to have relaxed as time progressed.

Almohad epigraphy also differs from previously-established models. María Antonia Martínez Núñez highlights the exclusively religious content of Almohad inscriptions, which are either Qur'ānic citations or short eulogies dedicated to God, as opposed to Almoravid epigraphic

¹⁶⁴ Pérez Higuera, "Arte almorávide," 658.

programs that also include foundational information.¹⁶⁵ Furthermore, the Almohads tailored the religious content of their Qur’ānic epigraphy to suit the area in which it was placed, and they typically chose verses that had a specific meaning for Almohad ideology. Martínez Núñez offers the example of the verses inscribed in the Kutubiyya mosque’s *mihrāb*, part of which reads “Oh, you who believe! Incline yourselves! Prostrate yourselves! Adore your Lord!” Although this verse, Qur’ān 22:76, is frequently used in *mihrābs* throughout the Islamic world, she signals that the Almohads also included verse 77 of the same *sura*: “Fight for God as it is owed to Him! He has chosen you. He has not placed difficulty in religion.” This monumental call to *jihād* befits the Almohads, whose claims to political legitimacy included waging holy war in both Ifriqiyya and Andalusia.¹⁶⁶ The Almohads also used cursive almost exclusively as their “official” script. Kufic continued to be employed, however, in a new system that reproduced the aforementioned eulogies to God.¹⁶⁷ Termed *motivo-tipos* by Manuel Ocaña Jiménez, these designs have distinctive compositions (Figure 1.9).¹⁶⁸ Typically, the Arabic words *li-llah* or *Allah* form their bases, while the vertical stems of their letters rise to form a framework of arch-like forms.¹⁶⁹ These arches are, in turn, filled with stylized vegetal and sometimes geometric ornament.

4.3 THE KUTUBIYYA MOSQUES

Soon after Marrakesh fell in 1147, `Abd al-Mu`min closed and partially destroyed the `Alī ibn Yūsuf mosque. Construction began on the Kutubiyya mosque almost immediately. This

¹⁶⁵ María Antonia Martínez Núñez, “Ideología y Epigrafía Almohades,” vol. 1 of *Los almohades: Problemas y perspectivas*, ed. Patrice Cressier, Maribel Fierro and Luís Molina (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2005), 7, 36.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 25-7.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁶⁸ Manuel Ocaña Jiménez, “Panorámica sobre el arte almohade en España,” *Cuadernos de la Alhambra* 26 (1990): 91-111. See also Martínez Núñez, “Ideología y Epigrafía,” 15. Writing about Granada’s Alhambra, José Miguel Puerta Vílchez cites the “mantric” value of these kinds of short, laudatory phrases. He proposes that their brief and evocative content encases other, more extensive blessings, which have been encapsulated and summarized in a word or two. By the force of their repetition on the walls of a building, these words channel the power of the divine word present in the Qur’ān, transforming them into a powerful blessing. See José Miguel Puerta Vílchez, *Los códigos de utopía de la Alhambra de Granada* (Granada: Diputación Provincial de Granada, 1990), 96-104.

¹⁶⁹ Ocaña Jiménez, “Panorámica,” 15.

first building was later expanded by the addition of the second Kutubiyya (c. 1158), which was accessed through the *qibla* wall of the first (Figure 1.10). The impetus for this rapid addition has attracted much attention, and scholars frequently theorize that the second mosque was an attempt to correct the first building's faulty orientation.¹⁷⁰ In fact, the second Kutubiyya's *qibla* is even less accurate than was the first building's orientation, but this is not as problematic as it may seem. Mosques built during the Almohad period have a remarkably consistent *qibla*, but they are by no means perfectly aligned with Mecca.¹⁷¹ Furthermore, both the rapidity with which the second foundation followed the first and the second Kutubiyya's re-oriented *qibla* argue for this interpretation.

Jacques Meunié and Henri Terrasse provide an alternative to the *qibla*-reorienting theory. They cite the anonymous, twelfth-century *Kitāb al-Istibṣār*, which describes how the two buildings existed in tandem at least until the end of the twelfth century.¹⁷² Were the orientation of the first building deemed grossly incorrect, the authors suggest, it probably would have been destroyed immediately. Therefore, they posit that the second building reflects the growing population of Marrakesh, which, the authors affirm, would have housed an increasing number of soldiers and Almohad administrators. They cite similar cases to support their argument, such as the Great Mosque of Cordoba, which was enlarged three times over the course of the city's

¹⁷⁰ See Henri Basset and Henri Terrasse, "Sanctuaires et forteresses almohades. II. Les deux Kotobiya," *Hesperis* 4 (1924), 201; Deverdun, *Marrakech*, 181 and Georges Marçais, *L'architecture musulmane d'occident: Tunisie, Algérie, Maroc, Espagne et Sicile* (Paris: Arts et métiers graphiques, 1955), 205.

¹⁷¹ See Michael E Bonine, "The Sacred Direction and City Structure: A Preliminary Analysis of the Islamic Cities of Morocco," *Muqarnas* 7 (1990): 50-72.

¹⁷² "The caliph and imām `Abd al-Mu'min built there a cathedral-mosque, to this mosque he added a second mosque of the same size and larger toward the *qibla*, over the site of a palace. And so in this way the greatest minaret, of which the like has never built in Islam, was found between these two buildings. It was their caliph Abu Ya`qūb who completed it [the minaret]." Cited in Deverdun, *Marrakech*, 172-3.

history. In this way, the authors view the second Kutubiyya as an alternative solution to breaking down the mosque's exterior walls and adding more naves.¹⁷³

Although Muslim rulers frequently justify their mosque expansions—which were quite costly—by citing population growth, careful consideration of the two Kutubiyya mosques seems to recommend Meunié and Terrasse's hypothesis.¹⁷⁴ When compared to the vast dimensions of the Almohad mosque in Seville (the Sevillian structure is over twice as large), the first Kutubiyya seems almost diminutive; however, both Marrakesh and Seville were populous capitals of the Almohad empire that would have needed an enormous space for communal Friday prayers. Although it is difficult to precisely determine Marrakesh's medieval population, it makes sense that it would have grown during the first ten years of Almohad rule and that `Abd al-Mu'min would have provided for the community's needs.¹⁷⁵ If the first building's *qibla* was deemed at all faulty, a new building with an adjusted orientation would correct this as well.

The real puzzle posed by the addition of the second Kutubiyya is why `Abd al-Mu'min chose to graft a conceptually whole building onto the first Kutubiyya, rather than simply adding additional naves. Part of this issue can be resolved formally: one of the characteristics of Almohad mosques is their striking symmetry, which would have been broken had naves been added to only one side of the building.¹⁷⁶ Of course, the building's symmetry could have been

¹⁷³ Jacques Meunié and Henri Terrasse, *Recherches Archéologiques a Marrakech*, Publications de l'Institut des Hautes Études Marocaines, Tome LIV (Paris: Arts et Métiers Graphiques, 1952), 41-2.

¹⁷⁴ The idea of expanding a Friday mosque in order to accommodate a growing population forms part of the idealized portrait of a Muslim sovereign. In 836, for example, the Umayyad caliph `Abd al-Rahmān II claimed to have added to the Mosque of Cordoba because his "strict adherence to Malikism" made him loathe to build a second congregational mosque for Cordoba's rising population. See Nuha N. N. Khoury, "The Meaning of the Great Mosque of Cordoba in the Tenth Century," *Muqarnas* 13 (1996), 83. As Chapter Three will show, the Mosque of Seville was justified in a similar fashion.

¹⁷⁵ While it is difficult to say with any statistical accuracy how much Marrakesh's population increased in `Abd al-Mu'min's time, the city certainly prospered and grew under Almohad rule. See `Abd al-`Azīz al-Makhdūlī, "Min masā'il al-ta'mīr wa-l-ist'amāl al-majāl fī-l-ahdīn al-murābiṭī wa-l-mūwahhidī," in *Marrākeh: Min al-tā'sīs ilā ākhir al-`aṣr al-mūwahhidī* (Al-Muhammadiyya: Maṭba'a Fiḍāla, 1989), 78-84.

¹⁷⁶ This broken symmetry is one of the more jarring features of the Mosque of Cordoba, its post-Islamic transformation into the city's cathedral notwithstanding. While the building's elaborate *maqṣūra* area was originally

preserved by adding an equal number of naves to its eastern and western sides. However, these walls were already shorter than their northern and southern counterparts, and adding another eight naves to each side (to equal the additional space provided by the second Kutubiyya's seventeen) would have resulted in a very long building. Additionally, the resulting awkward dimensions would probably have been difficult to fit into Marrakesh's pre-existing urban environment.¹⁷⁷ Finally, Meunié and Terrasse propose a historical reason for the joined buildings: `Abd al-Mu'min might have wished to separate himself and his entourage from those Marrakeshi factions that did not support his caliphate.¹⁷⁸ Although the authors characterize this interpretation as conjecture, I shall reconsider it in Chapter Two.

I begin the Kutubiyya mosques' description and formal analysis with those characteristics that can most clearly be assigned to both buildings. Of course, they share a patron, `Abd al-Mu'min, who seems to have founded them in order to fulfill the pragmatic need for an Almohad congregational mosque in Marrakesh. The buildings have similar dimensions—each measures approximately sixty by eighty meters—and both were constructed principally of brick. Both buildings' T-plans feature seventeen naves (Figure 1.11), and each mosque's four eastern- and westernmost aisles extend northward beyond the prayer hall to border a small courtyard. Their prayer halls were arranged into a series of arcades supported by either square or cruciform pillars. Finally, both mosques contained a *maqṣūra*, a partitioned area in a mosque reserved for the ruler's use (Figures 1.12 and 1.13). These latter are the Kutubiyya mosques' most unique aspect, and they will contribute significantly to Chapter Two's analysis of the building.

The second Kutubiyya mosque uses a system of hierarchically placed arches, resting on

axially planned, later additions to the mosque's western side interrupt this symmetry and present the viewer with a rather lopsided organization of its interior space.

¹⁷⁷ Indeed, the first Kutubiyya was constructed over the annexes and perhaps the ruins of `Alī ibn Yūsuf's funerary enclosure, which formed part of his palace. See Deverdun, *Marrakech*, 172.

¹⁷⁸ Meunié and Terrasse, *Recherches Archéologiques*, 42.

brick piers, to organize its interior space. While most of the arches that span the building's naves feature smooth horseshoe arches, which terminate in an obtuse point and are surrounded by an *alfiz*, polylobed arches immediately precede the *qibla* transept. The building's most religiously significant areas feature lambrequin arches: they distinguish the extreme lateral naves from the main prayer hall's naves, they support the entire *qibla* transept, and they frame the entire bay directly in front of the *mihrāb*. The undersides—or *intradós*—of the latter also contain *muqarnas* cells, lending extra visual weight to this area.

A system of brick piers support the arches in the second Kutubiyya. The two rows of piers that flank the *mihrāb* aisle, the row that borders the south edge of the small courtyard and those that support the corners of each *muqarnas* dome in the *qibla* transept are all cruciform (Figure 1.11). Additional rows of cruciform piers appear three rows to the east and west of the central aisle. T-shaped piers border the *qibla* transept; they also hedge the west, north and east sides of courtyard and the two rows of piers to the immediate left and right of the central aisle. The buildings' remaining piers are simple and square. All of the Kutubiyya's piers receive slender, engaged columns, topped with elaborate and varied capitals. Most of these capitals are made of carved stucco and feature incised vegetal motifs. However, marble capitals spoliated from the Andalusian Umayyad caliphal period (c. 929-1030) crown the columns located closest to the *mihrāb* area. These latter will play a role in Chapter Two's interpretation of the monument (Figure 1.14).¹⁷⁹

The extant Kutubiyya mosque boasts six *muqarnas* domes: one dome in the *mihrāb* chamber, and five symmetrically placed domes in the *qibla* transept. Terrasse and Basset note that each dome is modified to fit the space that it spans; for example, the more rectangular-

¹⁷⁹ See Basset and Terrasse, "Sanctuaires et forteresses almohades (suite)," *Hesperis* 6.2-3 (1926), 160-161; Ewert "Registro Ornamental," 228.

shaped, westernmost bay receives a dome with a double “cap,” as opposed to the centrally-planned dome found in the square *mihrāb* bay.¹⁸⁰ The *muqarnas*’ individual cells vary in texture and appearance: some are smooth and others feature fanned vertical impressions, giving them a fluted appearance (Figure 1.15). The ribs that separate each section of individual cells are quite pronounced, creating an aesthetic analogous to a garment that has been stitched together with its seams showing. As a result, the viewer can readily appreciate the underlying geometry of the *muqarnas* form.¹⁸¹ All of the Kutubiyya’s domes rest on a frieze of window screens composed of featureless, thick vegetal ornament, which allow natural light to illuminate the domes’ facets.

The second Kutubiyya’s *mihrāb* is the decorative focus of the building.¹⁸² Its façade is divided into three registers: two higher, narrow bands of ornament and a large panel including the *mihrāb* niche’s opening. (Figure 1.16). A frieze of interlacing stars and polygons occupies the top register. The middle register features an arcade of five alternating blind horseshoe and polylobed arches, and pulpy vegetation fills the latter’s screens. The third and largest register contains the *mihrāb* arch: a horseshoe-shaped opening ornamented by a band of scalloped stucco and supported by two slender columns. A second pair of columns immediately flanks them, which appear to support a blind, scalloped horseshoe arch. This arch concentrically surrounds the *mihrāb* arch’s opening. This entire composition is encased in an *alfiz* whose molding turns outward at a right angle at the springing of the arch and then continues down to the floor. Floral

¹⁸⁰ Basset and Terrasse, “Sanctuaires et forteresses (suite),” 132-3.

¹⁸¹ See Chapter Two for a comparison to Almoravid *muqarnas* domes.

¹⁸² The first Kutubiyya’s *mihrāb* façade is conserved on the exterior, north wall of the second Kutubiyya. Although it is currently in a lamentable state, photographs taken during the first half of the twentieth century permit a rough description of its design. It featured two stacked registers of geometric star and polygon ornament, the second of which folded down at right angles to encompass the entire façade until the springing of the *mihrāb* arch. An arcade of alternating blind lambrequin and smooth windows with rounded upper frames occupied the next lowest register. The *mihrāb* niche’s opening took the form of a slightly pointed keel arch resting on slender columns; like the second Kutubiyya, this opening was framed by a second, blind arch of the same kind. However, the arcs are not concentric; rather, were the bases of each arc completed, they would share a single point at the circle’s base. Neither of these arches features scalloped decoration, although they do employ a small, organic “finial” that extends upward from their apexes. These arches are encased first by an *alfiz*, and then by a band of very spare geometric ornament.

motifs occupy the corners of the *alfiz*, and a second band of geometric star and polygon motifs fills the space between the *alfiz* and the second register, extending downward to terminate at the springing of the arches.

The *mihrāb*'s niche is octagonal in plan, and its corners are embellished with slender engaged columns topped by elaborately carved capitals, which presumably transition to its central *muqarnas* dome.¹⁸³ Two smaller *muqarnas* domes occupy the southern corners of the niche's ceiling. An epigraphic frieze is applied to the five of the chamber's walls; carved in cursive script, the stems of its upper letters intertwine organically, occasionally terminating in the thickly-rendered leaves that also fill the frieze's background. The inscription features the Qur'ānic formulas of the *bismillah*, the *taslīyya* and the *ta`wīda*, followed by Qur'ān 22:76 and part of Qur'ān 22:77.¹⁸⁴

The second Kutubiyya conforms to the previously-established paradigm of Almohad mosques. It is reasonably large and T-planned, with *muqarnas* domes in the *qibla* transept, and its interior space is organized by a hierarchical system of arches. Exclusively Qur'ānic, cursive inscriptions adorn its *mihrāb* niche, while now-faded kufic *motivos-tipos* and panels of painted geometric and vegetal ornament decorate the ornament of its prominent minaret (Figure 1.5). Finally, all of the visual elements in the second Kutubiyya serve to emphasize its *mihrāb* and *qibla* wall: they use the most elaborate of the arch typologies, they receive the *muqarnas* domes

¹⁸³ Because the Kutubiyya mosque is still used today as a place of worship, I have been unable to photograph this most sacred area.

¹⁸⁴ In Arabic, the inscription reads:

"بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ وَ صَلَّى اللَّهُ تَعَالَى وَ مَلَائِكَتِهِ الْكَرِيمُونَ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا وَ مَوْلَانَا مُحَمَّدِ النَّبِيِّ الْمُصْطَفَى الْكَرِيمِ وَ عَلَى آلِهِ وَ صَحْبِهِ وَ أَزْوَاجِهِ الْكَرِيمِينَ الطَّاهِرِينَ الْأَبْرَارِ الْأَخْيَارِ وَ سَلَّمَ تَسْلِيمًا كَثِيرًا كَرِيمًا إِلَى يَوْمِ الدِّينِ. اَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ. " يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَ اسْجُدُوا رَبِّكُمْ وَ اجْعَلُوا الْخَيْرَ لِعَلَّكُمْ تَقْلِحُونَ وَ جَاهِدُوا فِي اللَّهِ حَقَّ جِهَادِهِ. " صدق الله العظيم. "

It can be translated thus: "In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful, prayers of Almighty God and His noblest angels upon our Lord and Master Muḥammad, the highest and noblest Prophet, and also upon his best, most righteous, purest and noblest family, companions and wives, and peace be upon them until Judgment Day! O ye who believe! Bow down and prostrate yourselves, and worship your Lord, and do good, that haply ye may prosper. And strive hard for God as is due unto Him hard striving." I shall examine the meaning of this inscription in an Almohad context in Chapter Two.

and they are the most ornamented. Indeed, it rather seems that the Kutubiyya mosque formed the baseline against which other Almohad buildings have been evaluated, as I am unaware of any interpretations that go beyond the standard assertion of ornamental austerity as a reflection of the Almohads' rigorous doctrine. Chapter Two will begin to rectify this situation by focusing on the building's most unique aspect: its inclusion of a *maqṣūra*.

4.4 THE TINMAL MOSQUE

Tucked away in Morocco's High Atlas Mountains, Tinmal offers a rare opportunity to the modern pilgrim. An isolated mosque invites its viewers to contemplate the earth-colored arches of its prayer hall against the blue sky. While recent restorations may have repaired its crumbling pavement, the roof of the building has long since disappeared (Figure 1.3). Abd al-Mu'min built the Tinmal mosque, which dates to 1153, *in memoriam* of the Mahdī and also to serve as a royal pantheon: the Mahdī and the first three Almohad caliphs were buried on site.¹⁸⁵ Soon after Ibn Tūmart's death, Tinmal became a major pilgrimage destination, receiving devotees from all over the Maghrib who hoped to benefit from the *baraka* (Eng. "blessing") that was said to emanate from his grave.¹⁸⁶ Interestingly, archeological evidence suggests that the mosque was built upon a preexisting structure;¹⁸⁷ this idea was first offered by Basset and Terrasse, who state that it took the place of the Mahdī's mosque,¹⁸⁸ and later echoed by Huici Miranda, who affirms that Ibn Tūmart was "buried secretly in his own house or the mosque adjacent to it."¹⁸⁹ The whereabouts

¹⁸⁵ Henri Basset and Henri Terrasse, "Sanctuaires et forteresses almohades. I. Tinmal," *Hesperis* 4 (1924), 36. See also Ewert, "Architectural Heritage," 87; Antonio Fernández-Puertas, "Spain and North Africa," in *The Mosque: History, architectural development and regional diversity*, eds. Martin Frishman and Hasan-Uddin Khan (London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd., 1994), 114; Hassar-Benslimane, et. al., "TINMAL 1981," 277-331, 278-9.

¹⁸⁶ Huici Miranda references Ibn Khaldūn, stating that "in its time, the grave of the Mahdi was an object of great veneration, the Qur'an was recited in front of it, pilgrims came to it with offerings, and visits were regulated by guards." *Historia política, primera parte*, 88.

¹⁸⁷ See Hassar-Benslimane, et. al., "TINMAL 1981," 295.

¹⁸⁸ Basset and Terrasse, "Sanctuaires et forteresses almohades. I. Tinmal," 35.

¹⁸⁹ Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 87. He gives no further information.

of his and the caliphs' tombs are unknown, but archeological evidence points to the possibility of the burials being located to the south of the mosque's *qibla* wall.¹⁹⁰

Modern study of the mosque dates to the early twentieth century, when it was “discovered” by French colonialists. The building had almost completely fallen into ruin, and it has undergone frequent restorations beginning in the 1930s and lasting until the late 1990s. A team of archeologists led by Christian Ewert excavated the site in the early 1980s.¹⁹¹ All of these alterations make the initial surveying and photographing of the site by Basset, Terrasse and Ewert all the more valuable. Compared to other Almohad mosques, Tinmal is somewhat petite, measuring roughly forty by forty-three meters. The prayer hall is comprised of nine aisles that run perpendicular to the *qibla* transept (Figure 1.17). Its central aisle, two lateral aisles and *qibla* wall are wider than the other aisles, making Tinmal an example of a T-plan mosque that also incorporates a U-shaped “ambulatory.”¹⁹² As Ewert has noted, the U-shape is actually doubled at Tinmal: the larger U that forms the perimeter of the mosque engulfs a smaller U that borders the small courtyard.¹⁹³ Like the Kutubiyya mosque, the Tinmal mosque is constructed almost entirely of brick.

The use of different arch types is highly systematized and hierarchical at Tinmal. The most religiously significant parts of the mosque employ lambrequin arches, such as those used in the building's lateral naves (Figure 1.3). Lambrequin arches also frame the bay directly in front of the *mihrāb*. These latter receive further stucco ornamentation: a narrow panel of *sebka*

¹⁹⁰ Hassar-Beslimane, et. al., “TINMAL 1981,” 311.

¹⁹¹ The results of the excavations are described in Hassar-Beslimane, et. al., “TINMAL 1981.” For a fascinating (if somewhat romantic), memoir-style account of the earliest restoration efforts, including an account of the feuds between the author and the Basset and Terrasse team, see Jules Borély, *Tinmel (Douze carnets de notes)* (Paris : Les Marges, 1934). The author continues his chronicle in Jules Borély, *Nouvelles observations sur Tinmel* (Paris : Au Portique, no date).

¹⁹² For a complete discussion of the typology of the Tinmal mosque, see Basset and Terrasse, “Sanctuaires et fortresses. I. Tinmel.” and Christian Ewert, *The Mosque of Tinmal (Morocco)*.

¹⁹³ Ewert, *Mosque of Tinmal (Morocco)*, 116-7.

occupies their undersides. Its raised contours have been carefully incised with a schematized vegetal design, and it terminates in a small *muqarnas* dome at the arc's apex (Figure 1.18). Additionally, two deeply carved palmettes rest on springing of the arch that immediately precedes the *mihrāb* façade (Figure 1.19).

The remaining arcades of the building are also hierarchically conceived, and their typologies vary considerably compared to those of the Kutubiyya mosque. The arches that separate the *qibla* transept from the prayer hall feature the most elaborate forms. Within this arcade, the central, eastern- and westernmost arches are lambrequin, but the three arches between them are each spanned by three polylobed arches. The lobes of each set's central arch are grouped into subdivisions of three. The arches in the Tinmal mosque's prayer hall are also varied. While the arcades that divide its naves feature smooth, pointed, horseshoe-shaped arches encased by a tall *alfiz*, those that separate its transepts differ according to their placement. Viewed from the building's courtyard, the central nave employs a taller pointed horseshoe arched framed by a second, attenuated blind horseshoe arch. The two naves flanking the central nave house smaller and shorter horseshoe arches encased in concentric pointed blind arches. The aisles that border the furthest two lateral aisles use simple pointed horseshoe arches. Their height is the same as the blind arches in the adjacent naves, and they do not feature a framing arch.

The prayer hall's arcades are supported by single brick piers; some include the remains of very slender engaged columns. Composite pillars with engaged columns are used where the naves meet with both the *qibla* transept and the transept that borders the courtyard on its eastern side, and they employ either a T-shaped arrangement or a cruciform arrangement, respectively. The mosque's remaining piers feature engaged columns on their east and west sides. Carved

stucco capitals originally crowned all of the mosque's engaged columns; enough are extant to observe that they are noticeably more ornate around the *mihrāb* area, with the most elaborate reserved for the columns that frame the *mihrāb* arch.

In its original state, Tinmal boasted four *muqarnas* domes: one in the *mihrāb* chamber, one in the bay directly in front of the *mihrāb*, and one crowning each of the extreme lateral bays of the *qibla* transept. Of these, only the domes that adorn the *mihrāb* chamber and the eastern bay of the *qibla* transept remain. Like the Kutubiyya mosque's *muqarnas* domes, they feature some fluted cells and "seams" between their composite sections.¹⁹⁴ Both the extant domes and the remains of the dome in the *mihrāb* bay rest upon friezes of vegetal window screens, at least four of which feature *motivos-tipos* upon a field of thick, featureless vegetal ornament (Figure 1.20). The north, south and east sides of the eastern dome contain the inscriptions: *Subhāna Allah* (Eng. "High praise to God"), *al-Hamdu li-llah* (Eng. "Praise be to God") and *Lā ilaha illā Allah / Muḥammad sūl* [sic for *rasūl*] *Allah* (Eng. "There is no god but God / and Muhammad is his messenger"). The north side of the dome in the *mihrāb* bay features the inscription *Allahu al-malik waḥdahu* (Eng. "God alone is Master"). These window screens constitute the only extant epigraphy at Tinmal, and they occur at a height and in a calligraphic style difficult for viewers to see or read.¹⁹⁵

Predictably, the mosque's densest ornamental program is reserved for the *mihrāb* façade. It is divided into three horizontal registers. The highest contains a narrow band of interlacing stars and polygons similar to those of the Kutubiyya mosque (Figure 1.7) A small arcade of seven arches occupies the second, equally narrow register; they alternate between slim, pointed,

¹⁹⁴ I have included a photograph of only the eastern dome, as that which caps the *mihrāb* chamber is—as of November 2011—inhabited by a formidable-looking colony of wasps.

¹⁹⁵ I have found no evidence, photographic or otherwise, pointing to the existence of an epigraphic frieze similar to the one in the Kutubiyya mosque's *mihrāb* chamber. However, given that the building had all but crumbled into ruin only to be heavily restored, the possibility cannot be discounted.

blind horseshoe arches and wider rounded arches. Although the round arches' window screens have been largely destroyed, the example on the furthest right conserves fragments of tight geometric interlace. The bottom and largest register contains the *mihṛāb* arch itself: a rounded, obtuse keel arch is nestled into a taller, equally obtuse blind keel arch, the underside of which is scalloped and the top of which comes to a small point. Were the arcs of these two arches completed, they would share a single point at their bases. Both blind and true arches are supported by slender engaged columns crowned with ornately carved capitals. A short *alfiz*, featuring two flower-shaped depressions in either corner, frames the *mihṛāb*'s opening, and another band of geometric star and polygon interlace encases the entire *alfiz* and terminates at the springing of the *mihṛāb* arches.

Other than hailing it as one of the quintessential Almohad monuments, with the accompanying reading of its spare ornamentation as a manifestation of the Almohads' reforming doctrine, few scholars have offered an interpretation of the Tinmal mosque. To my knowledge, the only exception is Christian Ewert. In a monograph dedicated to the Tinmal mosque, Ewert highlights its unique plan typology, which "fix[es] the critical dimensions of [the] building on diagonals" (Figure 1.17).¹⁹⁶ After tracing this plan type through pre-Islamic periods, he notes that it appears almost exclusively in palatine and residential—in other words, secular—architecture.¹⁹⁷ The building that Ewert identifies as the closest to Tinmal in plan typology is also secular: the Norman palace of the Zisa, in Palermo.¹⁹⁸ These similarities lead Ewert to wonder whether the Tinmal mosque was meant to render the "image of a heavenly palace in paradise."¹⁹⁹ While Ewert's suggestion is thought-provoking, especially given the bellicose and

¹⁹⁶ *The Mosque of Tinmal (Morocco)*, 122.

¹⁹⁷ He outlines the typology in *Ibid.*, 127-139.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 126-32.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 135.

economic interactions between the Norman Sicilians and the Almohads, I have chosen not to incorporate it into my analysis of the Tinmal mosque, although I will revisit it in the conclusion to this study. The intense differences in the buildings' functions—one as a cultic space and the other a palace—coupled with the disconnection between their interior organization of space, renders the comparison inappropriate to my mind. Instead, Chapter Two's analysis of the building will take the site's funerary function as its principle point of departure.

4.5 THE GREAT MOSQUE OF SEVILLE

The next Almohad mosque lies beyond the Strait of Gibraltar in Seville. In 1171, Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf began an extensive building program in the southernmost part of the city, including a new palace complex and the Great Mosque. Work on the latter was continually interrupted throughout Abū Ya`qūb's reign, though most of the prayer hall was complete by the time of his death in 1184.²⁰⁰ Al-Manṣūr finished the mosque in 1198, and he used the occasion to celebrate his recent victory over the Castilians at the battle of Alarcos. Part of the festivities included marking the mosque's official completion, crowing its minaret, the last part to be finished, with an enormous finial made of three gold-plated spheres. These were said to be visible at a day's journey from Seville.²⁰¹

Study of Seville's Great Mosque is somewhat complicated, as much of the prayer hall, including the *miḥrāb*, was destroyed during the fifteenth century and the city's cathedral built in its place. Only the monumental portal, a few walls, the courtyard and its arcades, and the minaret remain (Figures 1.21 – 1.23). However, the smooth, slightly pointed arcades of its

²⁰⁰ For details of the mosque's construction phases, see Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt, *Al-Mann bi-l-imama*, cited in Fátima Roldán Castro, "De nuevo," in *Magna Hispalensis (I)*. I use this Spanish translation rather than Huici Miranda's version for all the citations of Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt that pertain to the construction of the mosque, because, as Roldán Castro notes, Huici Miranda "offers a quite rigid and sometimes incomprehensible translation due, at times, to an excessive closeness to the original text or as a result of inexact interpretations." See page 15, footnote 7.

²⁰¹ Juan Clemente Rodríguez Estévez, *El Alminar de Iṣbiliya: La Giralda en sus orígenes (1184-1198)* (Sevilla: Area de Cultura, Ayuntamiento de Sevilla, 1998), 27.

courtyard indicate what the prayer hall might have looked like: especially in their state of restoration, they resemble the arches found in the Tinmal mosque's transepts. The Mosque of Seville measured approximately 100 by 150 meters, and archeological efforts suggest that it was T-planned, with its seventeen aisles divided by square, brick pillars (Figure 1.24).²⁰² The main portal, aligned with its central axis, was particularly prominent. Extant epigraphy is limited to this portal's doors, which include hexagonal cartouches of *motivos-tipos*, while Qur'ānic inscriptions embellish the door-knockers (Figure 1.25).²⁰³

Reconstructing the mosque's ornamental program is almost as difficult as recovering its typology, but both its minaret and remnants of its interior stucco permit an attempt. As Rodríguez Estévez observes, the minaret's unusual position along the building's eastern wall allows its north and east faces to be viewed from the mosque's courtyard. On the other hand, its south and west faces can be seen together from the adjacent Almohad palace.²⁰⁴ Each face of the tower houses an ornamental composition made up of two registers of three decorative panels. Two vertically stacked lambrequin arches, each framing a series of two window openings, occupy the central panel of each register. Twin panels of *sebka* spring from two small, blind arches that flank the lower of the central lambrequin arches. These panels extend upwards to border the higher lambrequin arch as well. Although each of the minaret's registers differs slightly in terms of arch typologies and the forms of the *sebka*'s polygons, they are united by this

²⁰² Alfonso Jiménez Martín, "Las Mezquitas," in *Sevilla almohade*, eds. Magdalena Valor Piechotta and Ahmed Tahiri (Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, Junta de Andalucía, Ayuntamiento de Sevilla, 1999), 100.

²⁰³ Quran 24: 36-37 "[The guided people worship Allah] in the houses that Allah has permitted to be raised, and where His name is recounted and His purity is pronounced, in the morning and in the evening, (36) By the men whom no trade or sale makes neglectful of the remembrance of Allah, nor from establishing Salah and paying Zakah; they are fearful of a day in which the hearts and the eyes will be over-turned. (37)," and Quran 15: 46-8 "Enter here in peace, free of fear." (46) We shall have removed whatever grudge they had in their hearts, (thus making them) brothers, sitting on couches, face to face. (47) No weariness shall touch them nor will they be expelled from there. (48)" adorn the doorknockers. See Martínez Núñez, "Ideología y Epigrafía Almohades," 24-5. For the door's text see *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁰⁴ Rodríguez Estévez, *El Alminar de Iṣbiliya*, 87-9.

composition. Finally, the sequentially higher level at which each façade's lower register begins reflects the spiraling ascent of the tower's interior ramp. The striking difference between the orderly effect of upward motion produced by the Mosque of Seville's minaret and the more static programs of the other buildings' minarets will be one of Chapter Three's points of departure.

While small and fragmentary, the remnants of stucco decor proceeding from the Mosque of Seville's prayer hall clearly feature polychrome vegetal motifs encased in a net of *sebka*, which probably formed part of a panel of ornament adorning the mosque's *mihrāb*.²⁰⁵ While this location is to be expected, given the concentration of ornament near the Kutubiyya and Tinmal mosques' *mihrābs*, the more naturalistic character of the Mosque of Seville's vegetation is a departure from the thickly-rendered, abstract leaves found in the earlier buildings. The extant stucco in the intrados of the mosque's principal entrance—just beyond its massive doors—is similarly naturalistic: although any trace of polychrome has long disappeared, the composite parts of the leaves are indicated by incisions into their voluminous, almost three-dimensional forms. Chapter Three will more fully discuss the visual effect of the Mosque of Seville's vegetation, its distinction from that of `Abd al-Mu'min's constructions and possible reasons for this aesthetic shift.

The Mosque of Seville has enjoyed more thorough investigation than any of the other buildings included in this study. Its scant surviving structures make the essays collected in the volume *Magna Hispalensis (I). Recuperacion de la aljama almohade*, which detail the restoration efforts dedicated to the mosque's patio, an invaluable tool in assessing its initial appearance.²⁰⁶ Additionally, the volumes *Seville almohade* and *La catedral de Sevilla* include

²⁰⁵ See Rosario Huarte Cambra, "Fragmentos de yeserías relacionados con la aljama almohade de Sevilla," *Laboratorio de arte* 14 (2001), 183.

²⁰⁶ Antonio Jiménez Martín, ed., *Magna Hispalensis (I). Recuperacion de la aljama almohade* (Sevilla: Aula Hernán Ruiz: Cabildo Metropolitano, 2002).

insightful essays that establish the building's chronology and its place within the original urban environment.²⁰⁷ Juan Clemente Rodríguez Estévez and Enrique Luis Domínguez Berenjéno have proposed the most significant interpretations of the building. Both authors argue that the construction of the Mosque of Seville, with its sweeping proportions and location between the Almohad quarter of Seville and the rest of the city, was meant to communicate Almohad presence and strength to the population. At the same time, it provided a strategic position from which to monitor the citizens' actions.²⁰⁸ These ideas will form the basis for Chapter Three's political analysis of the mosque.

Rodríguez Estévez also offers an interpretation of the ornament found on the Mosque of Seville's minaret: he believes that it was intended to be a representation of heavenly paradise. The author first observes that the tower's registers echo the façades of Almohad palaces, pointing to the "Stucco Patio" (Sp. *Patio del Yeso*) in the palace complex adjacent to the Mosque of Seville as an example. Because these façades often open onto reflecting pools, Rodríguez Estévez argues that the minaret would have called images of architecture, reflected in pools of water, to the minds of its viewers. Furthermore, the author believes that the formal characteristics of the tower's *sebka*, which, in certain cases, is composed of two layers of superimposed lozenges, was meant to mimic the distortions of viewing architecture reflected in the waves of a pool of water. To support this idea, he cites three poems that employ aquatic

²⁰⁷ See Magdalena Valor Piechotta and Ahmed Tahiri, eds., *Sevilla almohade* (Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, Junta de Andalucía, Ayuntamiento de Sevilla, 1999) and José Sánchez Dubé, ed., *La catedral de Sevilla* (Sevilla: Ediciones Guadalquivir, 1984). Magdalena Valor Piechotta has also published several works that have been useful for this study, including the monograph *Sevilla almohade* (Málaga: Editorial Sarria, 2008) and a joint article with Miguel Ángel Tabales Rodríguez, "Urbanismo y arquitectura almohades en Sevilla. Caracteres y especificidad," vol. 1 of *Los Almohades: Problemas y Perspectivas*, eds. Patrice Cressier, Ma. Isabel Fierro and Luís Molina, 190-222 (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2005).

²⁰⁸ Rodríguez Estévez, *El Alminar de Išbiliya*, 21; Enrique Luis Domínguez Berenjéno, "La remodelación urbana de *Ishbilia* a través de la historiografía árabe," *Anales de arqueología cordobesa* 12 (2001), 187.

imagery: one describes the effects of wind blowing over a pool, the second compares mesh to the water of a pool over which wind has blown and the third uses images of a frozen net.²⁰⁹

These associations between net-like forms and water lead Rodríguez Estévez to search for a visual tradition of water depicted as rhomboid shapes. Although he finds certain examples within the ancient and Islamic worlds, the most recent dates to the eighth century; in other words, he is not able to historically connect these potential sources to the Almohad period.

Nevertheless, the author points out that the Almohads did use rhomboids to decorate the canals of the “Patio of the Crossing” (Sp. *Patio del Crucero*), housed in the aforementioned Sevillian palaces. Seeking other sources for the aquatic-rhombus association, Rodríguez Estévez cites seasonally dry lakes in Morocco whose salt content causes them to form diamond-shaped patterns on the ground.²¹⁰ The author acknowledges that if *sebka* were to have a source in aquatic imagery, it would undermine scholars’ current understanding that it is derived from architectural motifs. He attempts to resolve this problem by suggesting that fully developed *sebka*, as it appears in Andalusia, must be separated from its “metamorphosed development,” presumably meaning its development from forms evoking water to forms evoking architecture.²¹¹

Rodríguez Estévez continues his analysis with a discussion of the shapes of the lozenges found in the Mosque of Seville’s minaret, which include simple architectural themes, soft waves and stylized vegetation. The organic motifs, the author asserts, “animate” the *sebka*’s rigid architectural scheme, thereby transforming it into a garden.²¹² After spending some time linking

²⁰⁹ The respective authors are al-Butūtī (d. 897), Ibn Sufyān, (d. 1071) and the Taifa ruler of Seville, al-Mu`tamid (d. 1095).

²¹⁰ Rodríguez Estévez asserts that the Arabic name for these is “*sebka*,” but he also cautions against an association between this word and the Spanish term designating panels of interlaced arches because of the late entry of the word in the Spanish vocabulary (Ibid., 117). The term *sabkha*, meaning salt lake, does exist in Arabic (سبخة). If the word were to have an Arabic origin, the reader familiar with the language will notice that the *khā*’ (خ) has been replaced by a “k” sound in its Hispanized version.

²¹¹ Ibid., 113-117.

²¹² Ibid., 119.

the ideas of water and gardens, he invokes the well-known, generalized interpretation that verdant Islamic imagery is meant to depict paradise. The author also cites the Almohads' construction of public gardens and their promise of paradise to believers. Combining this analysis with the aquatic associations that he assigned to the minaret's *sebka*, Rodríguez Estévez concludes that the idea of a paradisiac garden, with all of its connotations of coursing water and prolific vegetation, is "impressed" into the tower. In other words, the minaret was meant to function iconographically as a representation of paradise.²¹³

While Rodríguez Estévez's stylistic analysis and aesthetic sensitivity are remarkable, I find his interpretation of the Mosque of Seville's ornament less satisfying. The formal connection between its registers and Almohad palace façades is undeniable, although with such close chronology between constructions like the Almohad Stucco Patio and the Mosque of Seville it is rather difficult to determine which construction was meant to evoke the other.²¹⁴ However, the author's intense search for an aquatic source for the tower's *sebka* is, to my mind, largely unsuccessful. While I am willing to entertain the possibility that the Almohads associated rhomboid shapes with water, as the references in court poetry and especially the polygonal frescos on certain canals support this hypothesis, I cannot think of any example of *sebka* that does not spring from arcades. Rodríguez Estévez himself admits that *sebka* is solidly considered an architecturally-derived form.²¹⁵ Notwithstanding, the presence of organic shapes in the minaret's *sebka* is an observation with which I agree. Rather than ascribing them to a generic

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 119-20.

²¹⁴ Indeed, I have always theorized that the formal association was meant to underline the connection between the Almohads' public religiosity—as represented by the minaret—and their private lives. While I have not tested this theory, it would speak to the Almohads' known interest in maintaining a consistent image of strict moral and religious uprightness, upon which their political legitimacy was based.

²¹⁵ Far be it from me to stubbornly maintain a venerable, yet spurious, art historical truism, but in this case I am simply not convinced. His argument that the motif would have undergone a transformative process from aquatic designs such as those found in Maghribī salt lakes would have been more compelling had he provided examples—or even descriptions of lost exempla—that traced the development of a "proto-aquatic-sebka" into the more architecturally based form, but he offers none.

representation of paradise, though, I will argue that they were meant to evoke the plants of the earth. However mundane, these representations were far from secular, as Chapter Three will explain.

4.6 THE HASSAN MOSQUE IN RABAT

Although Abd al-Mu'min founded Rabat in 1151, the third Almohad caliph, al-Manṣūr, endeavored to build its Friday mosque. Unfortunately, work halted after his death in 1199, leaving the mosque in its current, incomplete state (Figure 1.26).²¹⁶ Of all the buildings that I shall discuss, the Hassan Mosque is the most distinctive. It is large even by Almohad standards, measuring approximately 183 by 139 meters, and had it been finished, it would have been the largest mosque in the Islamic West.²¹⁷ The Hassan mosque's plan typology is also unique; it features three *qibla* transepts instead of one, along with two small lateral courtyards located between the main courtyard and the *qibla* transepts (Figure 1.27).²¹⁸ Rather than using pillars in its prayer hall, the Hassan mosque employs columns constructed of large, stacked, cylindrical discs. Finally, its materials differ from those of other Almohad mosques: the exterior walls, minaret and columns were hewn either from dressed stone or marble.²¹⁹

The unfinished minaret, which is positioned directly opposite what would have been the mosque's *mihrāb* bay, is the only part of the mosque that retains any ornament. With the exception of the southern façade, each of the minaret's faces is divided into three horizontal registers. The unfinished, highest registers feature a single, wide panel of *sebka* composed of interlacing lambrequin arches on the northern and southern sides, and polylobed arches on the eastern and western sides. These panels spring from three blind, polylobed arches; on the north

²¹⁶ See Caillé, *La mosquée de Hassan*, 15-19.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 29.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 31.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 43.

and south sides, the lobes of these arches alternate in width. Below this register, all four faces of the tower house a nearly-square frame that encases a large arch, the typology of which varies from façade to façade. On the east and west sides, pointed, polylobed arches enclose a smaller arcade of three polylobed arches. These latter generate a truncated panel of *sebka*. The southern façade's arch displays a similar composition, but the lobes of its framing arch are quite attenuated and themselves subdivided into seven small lobes. This arch encircles a blind, smooth horseshoe arch containing two lambrequin arches. A diminutive panel of *sebka* rises from them.

The minaret's north face is the most elaborate. Below the upper panel of *sebka*, a square frame encases a large lambrequin arch with small, blind horseshoe-shaped windows in its upper corners. A petite horseshoe-shaped window opens directly below the lambrequin arch's peak, below which rests a small arcade of three polylobed arches. The arcade's two lateral arches feature small, tri-lobed window openings. Finally, a third register of three blind arches occupies the tower's north face; each of these is encased in its own *alfiz*. The central arch of this register contains a horseshoe-shaped window opening. As a whole, the ornamental complexity of the Hassan mosque's minaret lies between that of the Kutubiyya minaret and that of the great mosque of Seville. Although its use of *sebka* panels as a primary decorative motif recalls the Sevillian tower, the Andalusian minaret's complexity render the evenly-distributed registers of the Hassan mosque's minaret static and monumental by comparison.

Jacques Caillé's study of the Hassan mosque addresses many of its structural particularities. Caillé believes that its original plan probably consisted of eleven aisles and eighteen transepts surrounded on three sides by large courtyards. These would have been bordered by porticos, while another portico would have separated the *qibla* wall from the main prayer hall. While this plan would have been unique in the Western Islamic world, Caillé notes

that it echoes the eastern tradition of courtyard-mosques. This leads him to suggest that al-Mansur might have originally wanted to evoke these monuments, but that he later decided to modify this plan. The two lateral courtyards would have reflected this change, as a consequence of uniting the mosque's side walls to porticoes outside the great courtyards.²²⁰ For his part, Ewert has offered an explanation for the use of marble columns rather than the brick piers so characteristic of other Almohad structures. As al-Manṣūr prepared for the extensive campaign that would lead to his victory at the Battle of Alarcos in Andalusia, he used columns to recall those housed in the quintessential Andalusian mosque: the Great Mosque of Cordoba.²²¹

A final, crucial element of the Hassan mosque's ornamental program also involves stucco fragments recovered through archeological intervention in what would have become the building's prayer hall. These fragments, which I will more thoroughly discuss in Chapter Four, display an even more striking naturalism in their handling of vegetal motifs than does the mosque of Seville. I will argue that their firm departure from the more typical Almohad abstraction of vegetal forms aligns with the caliph al-Manṣūr's efforts to renew the caliphate, efforts that carried into the religious, juridical, political and architectural spheres.

5 CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter I have provided essential information upon which to base further discussion of the Kutubiyya, Tinmal, Seville and Hassan mosques. While certainly worthy of a more sustained consideration, the Almoravid period serves as the backdrop in which Ibn Tūmart called the tribes to embrace *tawḥīd*. I then discussed Ibn Tūmart's life, movement and works in some detail, underlining not only the doctrines of *tawḥīd* and the Maḥdī, but also the logical arguments and binary pairs of opposites through which he expressed his ideas. Next, I sketched

²²⁰ Ibid., 70-1.

²²¹ Ewert, "Architectural Heritage," 95.

the political and cultural histories of the first three Almohad caliphs, with the intention of expanding them in the following chapters. Finally, I introduced the monuments at the heart of this study, foregrounding each building's unique characteristics. In the Kutubiyya mosque, I highlighted the *maqṣūra* area as deserving of additional attention. My discussion of the Tinmal mosque will center on its function as a royal pantheon and pilgrimage site. The extant parts of the Mosque of Seville will focus my attention on its minaret and on the stucco fragments recovered from its prayer hall, and finally, I hope to more fully explain the new plan type and vegetal style employed in the Hassan Mosque.

FIGURES CHAPTER ONE

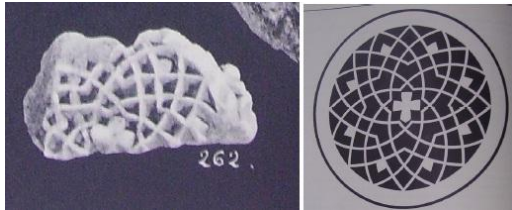


Figure 1.1. Almoravid Geometric Ornament, Qasr al-Hajar Palace, Marrakesh (Jacques Meunié, *Recherches archéologiques à Marrakech* (Paris: Arts et métiers graphiques, 1952), fig. 60; page 66.)



Figure 1.2. Almoravid Vegetal Ornament, the Qubbat al-Barūdiyyīn, Marrakesh (c. 1115) (Author's Photo)



Figure 1.3. Hierarchical Arch Distribution, Side Aisle (left) to *Mihrāb* (right), Tinmal Mosque (Collage of Author's Photos)



Figure 1.4. Lambrequin Arches, *Qibla* Transept, Tinmal Mosque (Author's Photo)



Figure 1.5. Exterior, Kutubiyya Mosque (Author's Photo)



Figure 1.6. *Mihrāb*, Tlemcen Mosque (c. 1136) (Neurdein Freres, "Mihrab in Great Mosque of Tlemcen (Jemaa el-Kebir), Photograph, c. 1860. *The Documentarist* <http://www.documentarist.com/mihrab-in-great-mosque-tlemcen-algeria-1860-1890> (accessed March 31, 2013).)



Figure 1.7. *Mihrāb*, Tinmal Mosque (Author's Photo)



**Figure 1.8. Vegetal Screen, Tinmal Mosque
(Author's Photo)**



**Figure 1.9. *Motivo-tipo*, Tinmal Mosque
(Author's Photo)**



Figure 1.10. Mihrāb of Kutubiyya I, through which Kutubiyya II was accessed (Author's Photo)

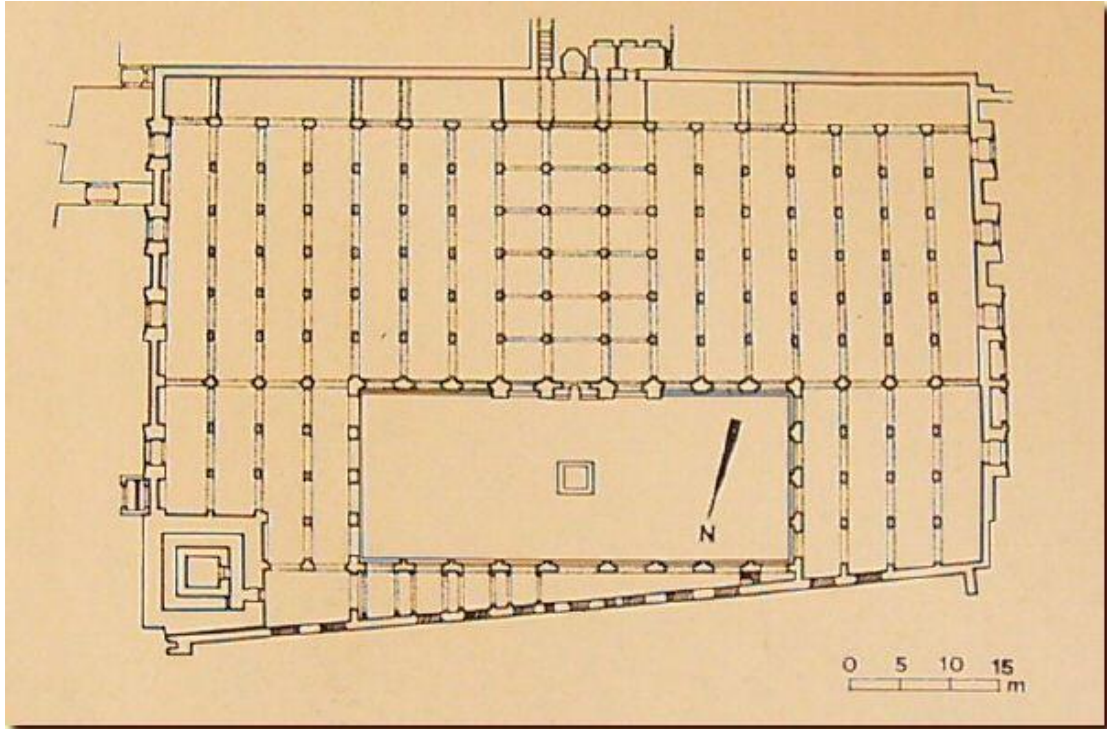


Figure 1.11. Plan of Kutubiyya Mosque (“Almohades, new Marrakech, mosque Kutubiyya, 525, (1147)”
Kaizen Gallery <http://www.kaizengallery.com/Mosques-plans.htm#Africa> (accessed May 14, 2013).).



Figure 1.12. Grooves on pillars, Kutubiyya Mosque, accommodating *maqṣūra* (Author’s Photo)

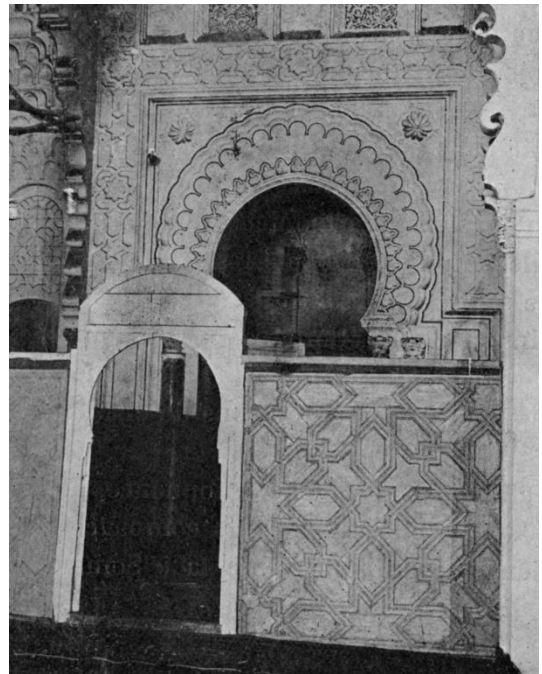


Figure 1.13. *Maqṣūra*, Kutubiyya Mosque (Basset and Terrasse, “Sanctuaires et forteresses almohades (suite),” fig. 70.)



Figure 1.14. Umayyad Capitals, Kutubiyya Mosque (Author's Photo)

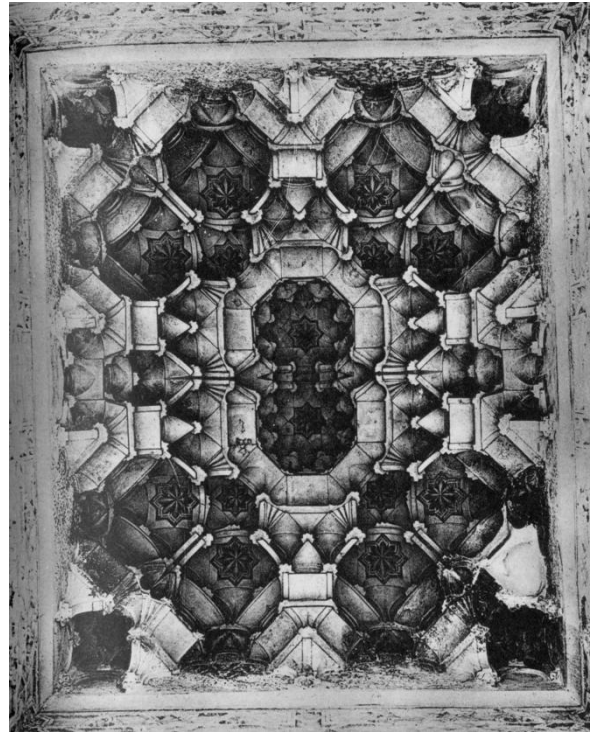


Figure 1.15. Fluted *Muqarnas*, Kutubiyya Mosque (Basset and Terrasse, "Sanctuaires et forteresses Almohades (suite)," pl. 23.)

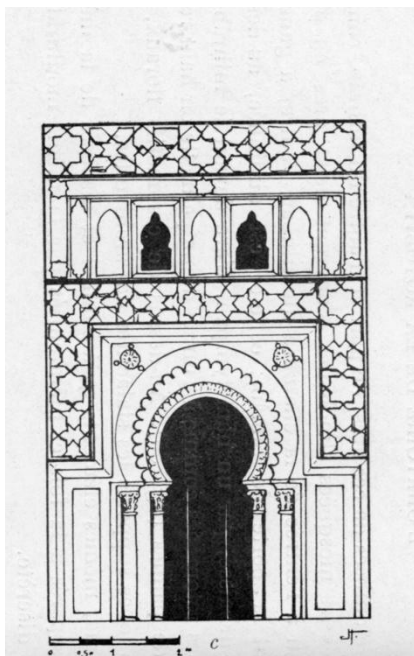


Figure 1.16. Drawing of *Mihrāb*, Kutubiyya Mosque (Basset and Terrasse, "Sanctuaires et forteresses almohades (suite)," fig. 71 c.)

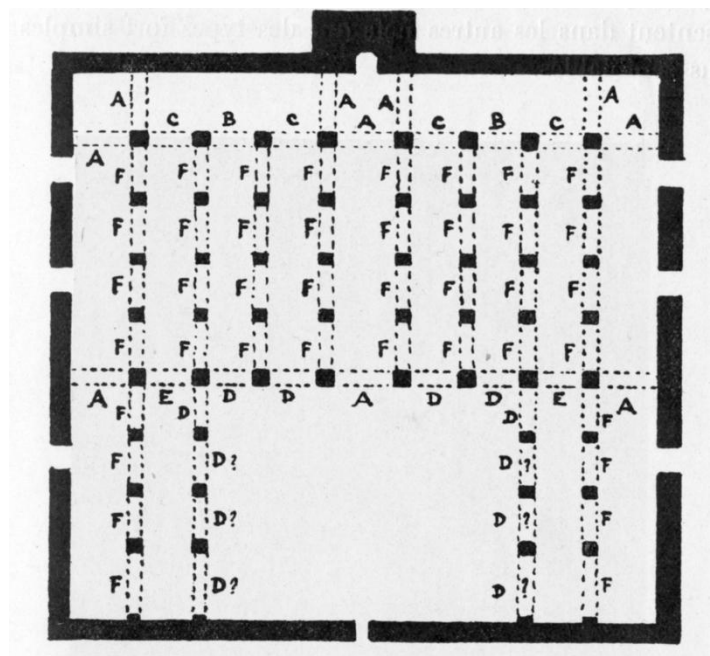


Figure 1.17. Plan, Tinmal Mosque (Henri Basset and Henri Terrasse, "Sanctuaires et forteresses almohades. I. Tinmal Tinmal, *Hesperis* 4.1 (1924), fig. 12.)



Figure 1.18. Intrados, Arch Framing *Mihrāb* Bay, Tinmal Mosque (Author's Photo)



Figure 1.19. Palmette Motif, Tinmal Mosque (Author's Photo)



Figure 1.20. *Muqarnas*, Tinmal Mosque (Author's Photo)



Figure 1.21. Aerial View, Mosque of Seville (Author's Photo)



Figure 1.22. Portal, Mosque of Seville (Author's Photo)



Figure 1.23. Minaret, Mosque of Seville (Author's Photo)

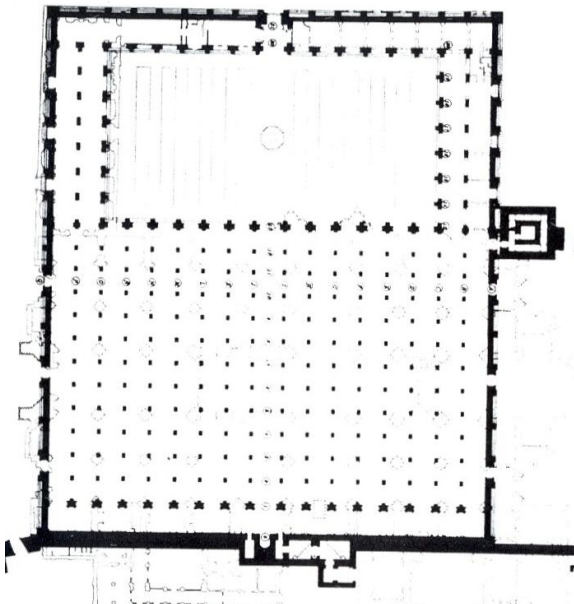


Figure 1.24. Plan, Mosque of Seville ("Restauración hipotética de la Mezquita Mayor de Sevilla, super-puesta sobre la planta de la actual catedral (cortesía de Don Alfonso Jiménez Martín," in Juan Clemente Rodríguez Estévez. *El alminar de Isbiliya: la Giralda en sus orígenes* (Seville: Ayuntamiento de Sevilla, Área de Cultura, 1998), fig. 2).



Figure 1.25. Door-knocker, Mosque of Seville (Author's photo)



Figure 1.26. General View, Hassan Mosque (Author's Photo)

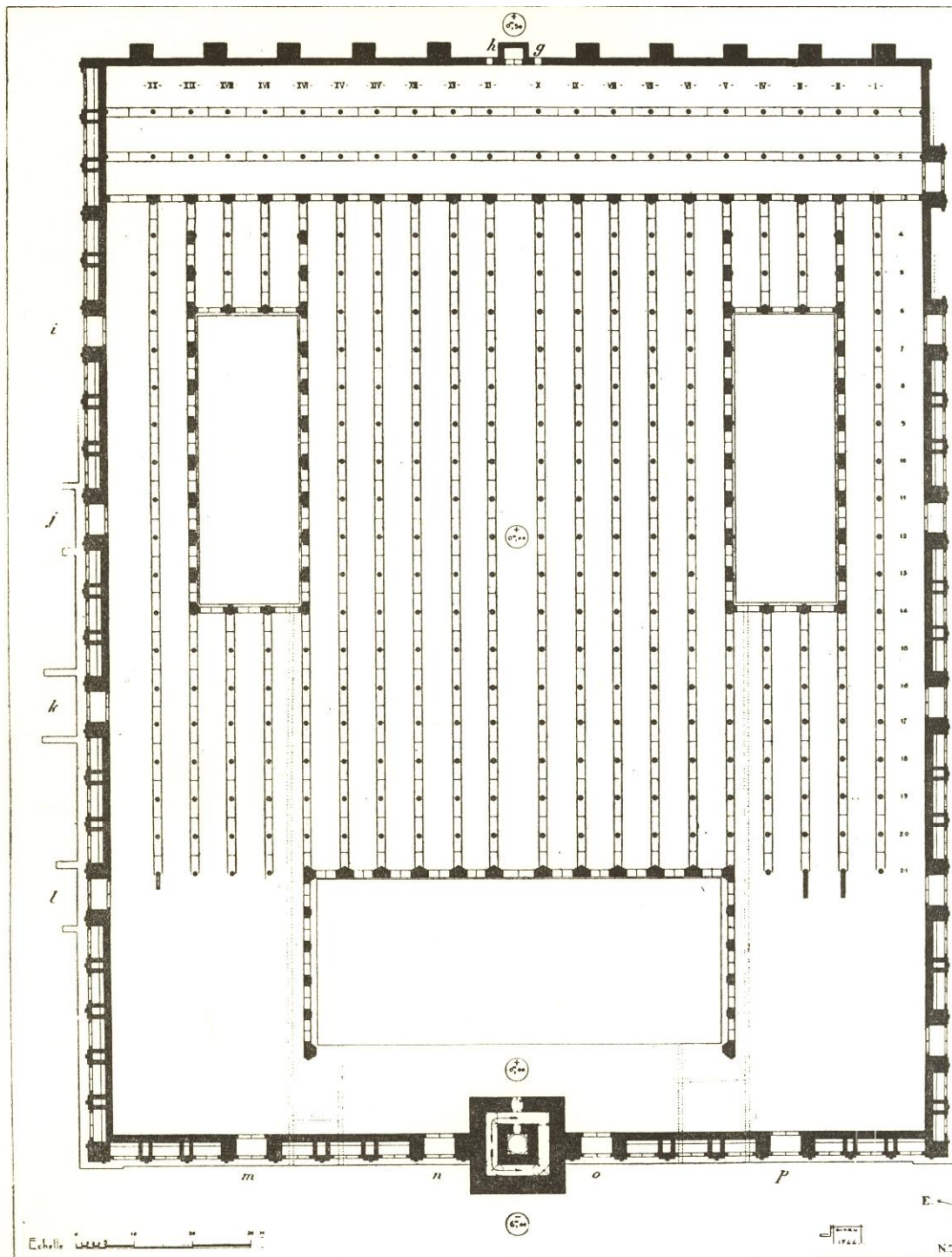


Figure 1.27. Plan, Hassan Mosque (Jacques Caillé, *La mosquée de Hassan a Rabat* (Rabat: Hautes-études Marocaines, 1954), fig. 5.)

CHAPTER TWO: `ABD AL-MU`MIN AND THE KUTUBIYYA AND TINMAL MOSQUES

“While I prepared their lamps, I heard him [Ibn Tūmart] say that religion will only be strong under `Abd al-Mu`min ibn `Alī, Lamp of the Almohads. The [future] caliph wept upon hearing those words, saying, “Oh faqīh, who am I to do any of that? I am merely a man seeking purification from my sins.” The Impeccable replied, “Purification from your sins is the world set right by your hand!” –Al-Baydhaq²²²

In 1147, a battle-hardened `Abd al-Mu`min pitched his red tent on the plain outside Marrakesh. After seven long years of imposing Almohad authority over the Maghrib, the caliph prepared for the siege that would wrest the great capital city from the Almoravids. It was a great prize: the city had quickly become a bustling metropolis after its founding in the late eleventh century, leading Yūsuf ibn Tashufīn to fortify its defenses. In 1126, `Alī ibn Yūsuf erected the city’s walls to defend against the growing threat of the Almohads in the nearby Atlas Mountains. `Alī took on projects of a more civil nature as well: he transformed the modest stone fortress of his father into an imperial palace, he founded Marrakesh’s Friday mosque, which bore his name as a reminder, and he endowed its dusty desert streets with public fountains and gardens made possible by an advanced irrigation system.²²³ `Alī also sponsored important religious scholars from the Islamic West at his capital court, and both merchants and traders profited from both the agricultural bounty from the regions to its north as well as the sub-Saharan gold trade.²²⁴

Thus, the city that `Abd al-Mu`min contemplated from outside its walls was one that its defenders would not concede without a fight. As the Almohad revolution gained strength, one can imagine the growing anxiety within its Almoravid walls, with all eyes trained on the

²²² Al-Baydhaq, *Ta`rīkh al-Muwaḥḥidīn*, 56.

²²³ Chapters four and five of Gaston Deverdun, *Marrakech* detail the construction program of the last great Almoravid sultan. See also Triki, “Marrakech,” 93-106.

²²⁴ See Deverdun, *Marrakech*, 131-3 and Triki, “Marrakech,” 93-4, respectively.

mountains that sheltered the enemy the southern horizon. Indeed, al-Baydhaq describes how the Almoravid army met the Almohads at Igliliz in a failed attempt to avoid a siege of the capital.²²⁵ After the Almoravids sounded the retreat, they closed Marrakesh's gates against the Almohads. A nine-month siege ensued, during which `Abd al-Mu'min allowed hunger to slowly weaken the city. At last he distributed ladders among his troops, ordering the Almohads to scale the capital's walls.²²⁶ Marrakesh's citizens and the remaining Almoravid troops fought valiantly against this final onslaught of Almohads, but the city was overrun. Its fortress was the last to fall, defended by what remained of its Almoravid contingent along with, at least according to al-Baydhaq, an Almoravid princess named Fanū bint `Umar. Unbeknownst to her attackers, she disguised herself as a man and bolstered the remaining defenders' courage with her own bravery. Once she was killed, the fortress was taken and Marrakesh officially passed into Almohad hands.²²⁷

After the victory, al-Baydhaq tells how the Almohads remained outside Marrakesh's walls for three days, refusing to settle in the city. When the capital's religious scholars approached the Almohads, wondering why they would not enter, they received the response: "The Mahdi refused it."²²⁸ Al-Baydhaq adds that the "impurity" of the city's mosques, coupled with their incorrect orientation, contributed to the Almohads' reticence. Nothing daunted, the *fuqahā'* offered the practical solution of simply tearing down the existing mosques and building new ones, which, al-Baydhaq continues, was swiftly done.²²⁹ The `Alī ibn Yūsuf mosque was among the affected structures: while the Almohads did not destroy it entirely, they locked its

²²⁵ Al-Baydhaq, *Ta'rīkh al-Muwahhidīn*, 102.

²²⁶ Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 141.

²²⁷ Al-Baydhaq, *Ta'rīkh al-Muwahhidīn*, 103. One recalls here Ibn Tūmart's criticism of Almoravid women, who remained unveiled: a practice he would have reserved for men. When al-Baydhaq casts the Almoravid princess in another gender transgressing role, he further bolsters Ibn Tūmart's view that the morally-depraved Almoravids deserved the rebellion he led against them.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 104.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*

doors and prohibited believers from worshipping there.²³⁰ `Abd al-Mu`min quickly provided an alternative to these “impure” houses of worship, founding the Kutubiyya mosque almost immediately after taking Marrakesh.²³¹ In 1158, he decided to add an additional mosque, the second Kutubiyya, to the first building. It is the second Kutubiyya that still stands today.

The second Kutubiyya mosque and the Tinmal mosque (c. 1153) represent the best-preserved Almohad Friday mosques built during `Abd al-Mu`min’s caliphate. In this chapter, I will demonstrate how each of these structures responded to the caliph’s threefold political and religious concerns. First, `Abd al-Mu`min had to defend his nascent empire against his rivals. He also needed to maintain the support and devotion of the Almohad faithful while, finally, indoctrinating the non-Almohads among his subjects. As will subsequent chapters, this chapter first addresses the more overtly political aspects of each building. Accordingly, it opens with an exposition of Abd al-Mu`min’s political challenges, which involved both internal strife and external rebellion, and how he met them.

Next, I examine the ways that the Kutubiyya mosque supports `Abd al-Mu`min’s political designs. I begin by identifying the mosque’s audience, which would have included Marrakeshi citizens, remaining members of the previous Almoravid administrative and religious elite and, of course, the conquering Almohads. Significantly, all three of these demographics contained groups hostile to Almohad sovereignty. The Kutubiyya mosque addresses these dangerous elements of Marrakeshi society by defining the caliph’s relationship to past authorities: the Umayyads of Andalusia and the Almoravids. Through careful appropriations of

²³⁰ Triki, “Marrakech,” 95.

²³¹ A recent study has challenged the idea that the Almohads’ impetus for destroying the Almoravid mosques was their concern for a correct *qibla* orientation, arguing instead that their motivation was purely political. See Muḥammad Rābiṭa al-Dīn, “Min ṣadā tawjīhat Ibn Tūmart fī-l-ḥāyat al-yawmīyya bi-majāl siyādat al-muwaḥḥidīn: Qirā’a fī masā’lat al-qibla,” in *Al-Sirā` al-madhhabī bi-bilād al-Maghrib fī al-`aṣr al-wasīlī*, ed. Ḥassan Ḥāfzī `Alawī, 147-213 (Al-Rabāt: Kulliyat al-adāb wa-l-`ulūm al-insāniya, 2009).

objects associated with each dynasty, the Kutubiyya mosque presented `Abd al-Mu`min as the heir of a legitimate caliphate on the one hand, and the triumphant restorer of correct religious belief on the other.

Chapter Two's first section concludes with an analysis of the Tinmal mosque, which `Abd al-Mu`min dedicated to the memory of the Mahdī and the beginnings of the Almohad movement. Like the Kutubiyya mosque, it underscores `Abd al-Mu`min's religious and political hegemony by connecting him to legitimizing authority. However, it does so by using a completely different set of references. I first define the mosque's audience as the Almohad faithful, coupled with a steady influx of pilgrims who made pious visits to the Mahdī's tomb. Then, I provide historical context for these kinds of pilgrimages—which were directed not only toward Ibn Tūmart's tomb but also toward those of Sufi saints—by drawing a detailed comparison between the Almohad movement and twelfth-century Sufism. Their similarities include strong ontological ties between Sufi saints and the Mahdī and also between Tinmal and rural centers of Sufi training. Through these comparisons I argue that `Abd al-Mu`min's constructions at Tinmal were meant to redirect the spiritual prestige of the Sufi religious centers to his own, even as they honored the Mahdī and fostered his cult.

This chapter's final section discusses the innovative architectural aesthetic that `Abd al-Mu`min created, as it is manifested in the Tinmal and Kutubiyya mosques. In order to do so, I first examine the caliph's religiosity. Because of `Abd al-Mu`min's relationship with the Ibn Tūmart and the measures that he took to foster the acceptance of the Mahdī's message, I argue that the mosque's aesthetics were intended to communicate Ibn Tūmart's doctrine to a wider audience. At the same time, it visually differentiated his polity from the Almoravids. In the service of this opinion, I define the salient features of `Abd al-Mu`min's Almohad aesthetic—its

austerity and its abstraction—through both stylistic analysis and a comparison to the Almoravid mosque at Tlemcen. Finally, I argue that the Almohads’ new ornamental style, as conceived by `Abd al-Mu`min and manifested in the Tinmal and Kutubiyya mosques, proceeds from Ibn Tūmart’s aesthetic values and his doctrine of *tawhīd*.

1 THE MOSQUES’ POLITICAL DIMENSIONS

1.1 MIGHT: THE KUTUBIYYA MOSQUES

1.1.1 `Abd al-Mu`min’s Succession Struggles

When Ibn Tūmart died in 1130, `Abd al-Mu`min and the four other members of the Mahdī’s intimate circle decided to conceal his death during three years. Although one cannot precisely determine their reasons for doing so, hiding Ibn Tūmart’s death may have bought the Almohad leaders time in which to nominate the Mahdī’s successor, while still maintaining the army’s morale.²³² Perhaps in order to establish himself as an authoritative figure, `Abd al-Mu`min acted as *de facto* leader during this period, although his actions were said to have been ordered by an infirm and bedridden Ibn Tūmart. Once the secret became too difficult to keep, the Mahdī’s death and `Abd al-Mu`min’s succession were announced to the Almohads. It was not an easy transition. Al-Baydhaq describes how `Abd al-Mu`min only won the allegiance of the tribes after the Masmūda elite—including Abū Ibrāhīm Ismā`īl, a member of the council of ten, and `Umar Aṣṅāg, a trusted companion of Ibn Tūmart—preached several sermons in his favor.²³³ The Almohads’ resistance stemmed from `Abd al-Mu`min’s Zanāta tribal origins: unlike Ibn Tūmart and the rest of the core members of the Almohad movement, `Abd al-Mu`min was not a Masmūda Berber, nor did he hail from the Atlas Mountains. The idea of being led by

²³² See Amira K. Bennison, “The Almohads and the Qur’ān of Uthman: The Legacy of the Umayyads of Cordoba in the Twelfth Century Maghrib,” *Al-Masaq: Islam and the Medieval Mediterranean* 19.2 (2007-2009), 143; Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 87, 105-108.

²³³ Al-Baydhaq, *Ta’rīkh al-Muwahhīdīn*, 85.

someone from outside the tribe, even if he was chosen by their leaders, was difficult for the Almohad masses to accept.²³⁴

After `Abd al-Mu`min was confirmed as the new head of the movement, a second point of contention emerged among the most influential members of the Almohad hierarchy. It centered on `Abd al-Mu`min's formation of a hereditary caliphate: it was one thing for the sheikhs to acknowledge his leadership skills, but quite another for them to accept his creation of a new, Mu`minid dynasty. Indeed, the Mahdī's distribution of Almohad authority had included neither a caliph as a figurehead nor a hereditary transfer of power. In spite of this last point, `Abd al-Mu`min's actions especially strained the relationship between the new caliph and surviving members of the Mahdī's family, who had their own pretensions to inheriting Ibn Tūmart's authority. The situation came to a head in 1153, just five years after Marrakesh fell, when the Mahdī's brothers rebelled openly.²³⁵ This first attempt was a failure, and the caliph exiled them to Andalusia. In 1155, `Abd al-Mu`min named his son Muḥammad as heir apparent, and one year later he designated his other sons as governors of the empire's most important regional capitals. In response, the Mahdī's brothers, who had since been recalled to Marrakesh, staged a *coup d'état*.²³⁶ This second attempted rebellion ended with their executions, clearly indicating the troubled state of Almohad internal politics.

`Abd al-Mu`min must have known that overtly advancing his family's interests—so different from the Mahdī's initial vision—would cause internal strife. Indeed, one of his

²³⁴ The primary sources either directly state or imply that `Abd al-Mu`min was chosen by Ibn Tūmart. Al-Baydhaq, for example, explicitly declares that `Abd al-Mu`min was Ibn Tūmart's designate heir (Ibid., 85), while other authors such as al-Marrākushī simply do not mention the succession, implying that was a smooth one. However, most of these sources are generally favorable to the Almohad caliphs and therefore unlikely to question the legitimacy of `Abd al-Mu`min's succession.

²³⁵ Roger Le Tourneau understands this revolt as early resistance to `Abd al-Mu`min's consolidation of his own political power. See Roger Le Tourneau, "Du mouvement almohade a la dynastie mu`minide : La révolte des frères d'Ibn Tumart de 1153 a 1156," in *Mélanges d'histoire et d'archéologie de l'Occident musulman. Tom. II: Hommage à Georges Marçais* (Algiers: Imprimerie Officielle, 1957), 112-3.

²³⁶ Ibid., 113; Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 169-73; al-Baydhaq, *Ta'rīkh al-Muwahhīdīn*, 118-9.

circulatory letters, which Lévi-Provençal dates to the beginning of 1156, carefully casts Muḥammad's designation as heir as a decision made by the Almohad elite.²³⁷ The letter explains the situation thus: a group of Ifriqiyyan delegates came to the caliph in Rabat, requesting that they be given Muḥammad as their local governor. `Abd al-Mu'min convened a council of the Almohad *ṭalaba*, *ḥuffāz* and sheikhs in order to reach a decision. But rather than settling the matter of Muḥammad's governorship, the council concluded by naming him heir to the caliphate itself!²³⁸ The historian Ibn al-Athīr explains this unusual outcome by recounting how the eastern delegates were bribed, so that they would support Muḥammad's succession over the powerful Almohad sheikh Abū Ḥafṣ `Umar.²³⁹ It is therefore telling that `Abd al-Mu'min's letter grants the role of announcing the Almohad sheikhs' consensus to Abū Ḥafṣ. After the sheikh finished speaking, the letter continues, all of the gathered parties suddenly expressed their long-held, secret desire for precisely the same outcome.²⁴⁰ As Lévi-Provençal observes, `Abd al-Mu'min's letter absolves him of any responsibility for this declaration, a prudent course of action given that the Mahdī's brothers had risen up against him once already.²⁴¹

In a second letter dated to 1156, `Abd al-Mu'min explains how he came to nominate his sons as governors of the most important cities within the empire. Since Muḥammad was now heir apparent, the same Ifriqiyyan delegates entreated the caliph to send them one of his other sons, arguing that a royal figurehead would foster unity and stability in the region. The *ṭalaba* discussed the matter and concluded that it would be in the kingdom's best interest to grant the

²³⁷ Evariste Lévi-Provençal, "Un recueil de lettres officielles almohades. Introduction et étude diplomatique. Analyse et commentaire historique," *Hespéris* 28 (1941), 36.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 35.

²³⁹ Ibn al-Athīr, *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athir*, Part 2, 81; Huici Miranda notes that this account is the only one that names Abū Ḥafṣ as successor. (Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 170.) Even were it to be fallacious, Abū Ḥafṣ was clearly `Abd al-Mu'min's second-in-command and therefore perfectly positioned to take over the reins of the Almohad movement before the caliph declared his intent for his son to succeed him.

²⁴⁰ Lévi-Provençal, "Un recueil de lettres," 35.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

petition. This action prompted a wave of similar requests from the delegates of the other Almohad provinces, and a second council of *ṭalaba* was convened. Although `Abd al-Mu`min was present throughout these deliberations, the letter presents him as a passive, listening member of the court: he simply heeds the good counsel of his advisors and attends to the needs of his subjects.²⁴² Similarly, the *sayyids`* new political positions, ratified by the *ṭalaba*, are carefully presented as beneficial to the Almohad empire in general, rather than the caliph`s family specifically. However, the tension between the “official spin,” so to speak, given by these letters and the direct consequences of the events described (the rebellions of the Mahdī`s brothers) indicate that `Abd al-Mu`min sought to diffuse their divisive potential by minimizing his personal responsibility.

In addition to these intra-Almohad rebellions, `Abd al-Mu`min faced two insurgences fomented by external enemies. The first was an extensive revolt led by Ibn Hūd al-Massafī, which will be discussed in the context of the Tinnal mosque. After this uprising was quashed, the disparate but still determined rebels rallied one last time around an equally dangerous figurehead: the Almoravid prince al-Ṣaḥrawī.²⁴³ Al-Baydhaq introduces al-Ṣaḥrawī as Fez`s Almoravid governor in his account of the Almohad siege of the city. When it fell (according to al-Baydhaq, the result of al-Ṣaḥrawī`s pressuring a private citizen to lend him money, annoying him to such an extent that he offered to open the gates for the Almohads), al-Ṣaḥrawī fled to Andalusia.²⁴⁴ He was called back to North Africa by the Qādī `Iyāq of Ceuta, whose rebellion against the Almohads was suffering from an Almohad blockade of the city`s port.²⁴⁵ In Ceuta,

²⁴² Ibid., 37.

²⁴³ Al-Ṣaḥrawī was the grandson of Yūsuf ibn Tashufīn and considered himself the last heir of the Almoravid dynasty. See Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 150-1.

²⁴⁴ Al-Baydhaq, *Ta`rīkh al-Muwaḥḥidīn*, 101.

²⁴⁵ Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 151; al-Baydhaq, *Ta`rīkh al-Muwaḥḥidīn*, 106-7. On the Qādī `Iyāq`s political endeavors, see Halima Ferhat, *Sabta des origines au XIVème siècle* (Rabat: Ed. Al-Manahil, 1993) and Hannah E. Kassis, “Qādī `Iyāq`s Rebellion against the Almohads in Sabtah (A. H. 542-543/A. D. 1147-1148),

al-Şaḥrawī won the trust of the Almohad admiral `Alī ibn `Isā ibn Maymūn by feigning submission to Almohad authority. He arranged a meeting with the admiral, but as the latter disembarked from his ship, al-Şaḥrawī charged him and delivered a fatal blow with his horse. Al-Şaḥrawī crucified `Alī ibn `Isā's body on the city's ramparts, in the view of the rest of the Almohad fleet.²⁴⁶ After leaving Ceuta, al-Şaḥrawī formed alliances with resistance movements centered in Tangier, Salé, Barghwāṭa country and Dukkāla.²⁴⁷ Recognizing the threat posed by an Almoravid figurehead, `Abd al-Mu'min responded with the full force of the Almohad army. By 1148, the last embers of this rebellion had been extinguished.²⁴⁸

These revolts shook the Almohad territories to their core, and after they were finally pacified `Abd al-Mu'min took several steps to ensure that the peace would last. The first was to disseminate another letter that, among other things, exhorted the governors in the provinces to meticulously uphold the law and to end their abuses of power, threatening death to those who refused to comply.²⁴⁹ The caliph also imitated the Mahdī by undertaking a sort of second *tamyīz*: essentially, a purging of political dissidents and other perceived threats. Al-Baydhaq is the only chronicler to mention `Abd al-Mu'min's *tamyīz*, which he terms the *i`tirāf* (Eng. "recognition," "acknowledgement"). The process was straightforward: lists of the names of suspected individuals were distributed among the Almohad territories. Those unfortunate enough to be named were then systematically executed. Al-Baydhaq estimated that over thirty thousand people died. Although this figure is impossible to verify and likely exaggerated, the author

New Numismatic Evidence," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 103.3 (1983): 505-514. Kassis affirms that while the Qādī `Iyād is not necessarily pro-Almoravid, he saw them as a preferable alternative to what he viewed as Almohad heterodoxy. (511)

²⁴⁶ Al-Baydhaq, *Ta`rīkh al-Muwaḥḥidīn*, 107.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.; Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 151.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 152.

²⁴⁹ For the text, see letter six of `Azzāwī, *Rasā'il al-muwaḥḥidiyya 1, Ṭab'a 1*, 61 and Lévi-Provençal, *Documents inédits*, page 13 of the Arabic section. For analysis of this letter, see Aḥmad `Azzāwī, *Rasā'il al-muwaḥḥidiyya 1, Ṭab'a 2* (Al-Qunayṭira: Kullīyat al-adāb wa-l-'ulūm al-insānīyya, 1996), 14-15 and Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 153.

clearly wished to indicate that a great many people were killed. After the *i`tirāf*, al-Baydhaq is sure to mention, peace reigned throughout the empire.²⁵⁰

Chapter One has already discussed certain of the symbolic measures that `Abd al-Mu`min took to buttress his legitimacy. Here, I would like to examine his method of forging connective links between his own caliphate and venerable traditions of authority. Both Amira Bennison and Pascal Buresi have analyzed the caliph's efforts to align his dynasty with the first caliphate of the Islamic west: the Umayyads of Andalusia.²⁵¹ For example, the Mu`minids claimed to be the Umayyads' heirs both through familial ties and through their actions. In an analysis of `Abd al-Mu`min's genealogies cited by both articles, Maribel Fierro is surprised that `Abd al-Mu`min did not claim to be paternally descended from the Prophet Muḥammad, especially since this heritage was, according to Arab genealogists, a prerequisite to forming a caliphate.²⁵² Rather, he claimed to be maternally related to the Prophet and paternally descended from the Qāys, a distinct familial group. Departing from Fierro's study, Bennison suggests that `Abd al-Mu`min's contrived claim to Qāysī ancestry was intended to link him to the Cordoban Umayyads rather than to the Prophet.²⁵³ The Mu`minids also cast themselves as heirs to the Umayyads' commonly-understood caliphal role as combatants against Christians. Chapter One has shown

²⁵⁰ Al-Baydhaq, *Ta`rīkh al-muwaḥḥidīn*, 112.

²⁵¹ See Amira K. Bennison, "The Almohads and the Qur`ān of Uthman." For his part, Buresi, whose article was prepared independently and within almost the same time frame, agrees with many of her conclusions. See Pascal Buresi, "D'une péninsule à l'autre: Cordoue, `Utman (644-656) et les arabes à l'époque almohade (XIIe-XIIIe siècle)" *Al-Qantara, Revista de Estudios Árabes* 31.1 (2010), 7. Manuela Marín had also signaled this relationship in a more generalized way, asserting that the Almohad caliphs sought to align themselves with the image of the "classical" Islamic ruler. For the Almohads, she believes this would have been the Andalusian Umayyads, whom the former would have considered inherently legitimate. See "El Califa Almohade: una presencia activa y benéfica," vol. 2 of *Los almohades: problemas y perspectivas*, ed. Patrice Cressier, Ma. Isabel Fierro and Luís Molina (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2005), 452-3.

²⁵² Maribel Fierro, "Las geneologías de Abd al-Mu`min, primer califa almohade," *Al-Qantara: Revista de estudios árabes* 24.1 (2003), 83.

²⁵³ Bennison, "Almohads and the Qur`ān of Uthman," 146; Buresi, "D'une péninsule à l'autre," 24.

how they waged *jihād* against Christian armies in both the Iberian peninsula and in Ifriqiyya.²⁵⁴

In addition to their conquests there, the Almohad caliphs managed to monopolize all the *jihād*ing activity in and around their territories.²⁵⁵

`Abd al-Mu`min also emulated the Umayyads through his additions to Marrakesh's urban environment. Bennison asserts that when `Abd al-Mu`min built a new royal city on the outskirts of Marrakesh, he was mirroring the actions of the Umayyad caliph `Abd al-Rahman III (d. 961), who founded the palatial city of Madinat al-Zahra' near his capital of Cordoba.²⁵⁶ Between the walls of the old city of Marrakesh and the new Almohad addition, a large, open enclosure housed a caliphal audience pavilion (Ar. *qubba*). `Abd al-Mu`min needed this space because, like the Umayyads, he and his successors valued the role that public ceremonies played in projecting their caliphal identity. They could be civic in nature, such as the frequent recitals of poetry in praise of the caliph. These poems were not merely propaganda: Teresa Garulo argues that in "panegyric, especially in the moment of public recitation, the poet feels himself to be the representative of a community before the sovereign, who frequently still maintains a divine aura."²⁵⁷ This, she continues, transforms the act of reciting panegyric into a collective reaffirmation of loyalty as well as a reminder to the sovereign about the ideals that he should maintain.²⁵⁸ She also points out that panegyric poetry proliferated under both the Umayyads and the Almohads, since both dynasties sought to legitimize their adoption of the caliphal title.²⁵⁹

The connection between Almohad and Umayyad poetry extends to stylistic devices as well, as

²⁵⁴ Bennison, "Almohads and the Qur'ān of Uthman," 146-7; Buresi, "D'une peninsule a l'autre," 20. For example, when the Almohads called the Banū Hilāl Arabs to *jihād* against the Christians in Andalusia, the Banū Hilāl were already fighting the Christians in North Africa.

²⁵⁵ Buresi, "D'une peninsule a l'autre," 20.

²⁵⁶ This paragraph is largely summarized from Bennison, "Almohads and the Qur'ān of Uthman," 148-9.

²⁵⁷ Teresa Garulo, "Los panegíricos de época almohade," vol. 1 of *Los Almohades: Problemas y Perspectivas*, eds. Patrice Cressier, Ma. Isabel Fierro and Luís Molina (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2005), 976.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 977.

Michael Brett demonstrates how they shared themes such as divine guidance, light and war.²⁶⁰

Finally, recitation of poems praising the Almohad caliph reminded the Andalusian members of their audience—who had derided the Almoravids for under-appreciating the linguistic subtleties of Arabic poetry—of the extent of their sophistication.²⁶¹

Almohad public ceremonies could also take the form of military parades that, like the Umayyad military parades that marched from Cordoba to Madinat al-Zahra, emphasized the might of the caliph through a display of sheer force.²⁶² Chapter One has already described how these parades were conceived under `Abd al-Mu`min's reign, and the caliph was fully aware of their effect. Al-Marrākushī, for example, describes a scene in which one of `Abd al-Mu`min's viziers encounters the caliph in a garden pavilion; the flowers were in full bloom and wild birds sung as they flitted between the branches of trees. After receiving his vizier's greeting, the caliph asked him how he found the garden. The vizier replied that it was a marvelous spectacle, but the caliph remained silent. A few days later, the same vizier accompanied `Abd al-Mu`min as he reviewed his troops, watching as they marched "tribe by tribe, battalion by battalion, with each one's weapons, mounts and embodiment of strength more beautiful than the last."²⁶³ The caliph turned to his vizier and said, "Behold! Truly this is the marvelous spectacle, not your

²⁶⁰ Buresi, "D'une peninsule a l'autre," 22; Michael Brett, "Lamp of the Almohads: Illumination as a Political Idea in Twelfth-century Morocco," in Michael Brett, *Ibn Khaldun and the Medieval Maghrib* (Brookfield: Ashgate, 1999), 13. For his part, Hassan Jallāb points out how the Almohads limited themselves to sponsoring panegyric and even censored certain styles or subjects that they found morally questionable. He relates this to their performance of the *ḥisba* as a part of their legitimizing strategy. See Hassan Jallāb, *Al-Dawla al-muwaḥḥidiyya: Athar al-`aqīda fī-l-adab* (Al-Dār al-Bayda': Mu'asassa bi-nashra, 1983), 49-51.

²⁶¹ Garulo, "Los panegíricos," 982.

²⁶² On Umayyad parades, see Janina M. Safran, *The Second Umayyad Caliphate: The Articulation of Caliphal Legitimacy in al-Andalus* (Cambridge: Harvard Center for Middle Eastern Studies, 2001), 77-8.

²⁶³ Al-Marrākushī, *Histoire des almohades*, 176.

fruits and trees!”²⁶⁴ As Bennison notes, these kinds of parades “functioned as a moveable symbol of Almohad identity which could be deployed throughout the empire.”²⁶⁵

Almohad processions were accompanied by drums, banners and two Qur’āns: the first had belonged to the Maḥdī and the second was believed to have belonged to the caliph `Uthmān ibn `Affān (d. 656). According to legend, the caliph `Uthmān was holding this second Qur’ān as he was assassinated in Medina, and droplets of his blood splattered on its leaves. The Andalusian Umayyads subsequently recovered the Qur’ān of `Uthmān, safeguarding it in the Mosque of Cordoba. Once the Almohads took the city, the Cordobans allegedly recognized that `Abd al-Mu`min was the rightful heir to the precious Qur’ān, and so they amicably relinquished it to them, a process Bennison characterizes as “a symbolic and divinely ordained confirmation of the caliph’s legitimacy.”²⁶⁶ `Abd al-Mu`min then ceremoniously brought the Qur’ān back to Marrakesh, where it was embellished with jewels and given a special case. At the turn of a key, the case’s doors would open and the Qur’ān would mechanically slide out.²⁶⁷

All of the Mum`inids’ carefully constructed connections to the Andalusian Umayyads crystallize in their appropriation and display of the Qur’ān of `Uthmān, an actual caliphal object. However, Bennison and Buresi have independently determined that all of the primary sources that explicitly mention the Qur’ān of `Uthmān date from the third quarter of the twelfth century. In other words, no author before the Almohad period refers specifically to the Qur’ān of `Uthmān. The authors conclude that while there was indeed a precious Qur’ān preserved in the Mosque of Cordoba that could have been given to the Almohads, it was the latter who invented and fomented the idea that it had belonged to `Uthmān before incorporating it into their

²⁶⁴ Ibid. As with all historical anecdotes, even if this story were fabricated, it indicates that the author had either directly experienced or heard about the awe and wonder that Almohad military parades inspired.

²⁶⁵ Bennison, “Almohads and the Qur’ān of `Uṭmān,” 149.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 151.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

ceremonies.²⁶⁸ For our purposes, whether or not the Almohads' Qur'ān of `Uthmān was the authentic relic of Islam's third caliph is less significant than the Mum'inids' careful propagation of the legend and their self-casting as the tome's rightful heirs.

1.1.2 The Kutubiyya Mosque

For three days after `Abd al-Mu'min and the Almohads took Marrakesh, its gates remained closed and no one was allowed to enter or leave. During this time, the Almohads raided the city, slaughtered many of the Almoravid ruling family and took prisoners.²⁶⁹ In the aftermath, the caliph declared a general amnesty: prisoners were ransomed and freed, and all seized property was ordered to be turned over to the Almohad treasury.²⁷⁰ Despite this attempt at making amends, the terror that had reigned during these three days, coupled with the prolonged siege that the city had suffered, must have hardened the dispositions of Marrakesh's citizens toward their new overlords. These feelings would likely have been more pronounced for those who had ties to the old regime: the surviving members of the defunct Almoravid ruling family spring immediately to mind.²⁷¹ Furthermore, while certain of the Almoravid administrators passed into the service of the new regime, their Malikite *fuqahā'* would likely have been marginalized, at least at first.²⁷² The harassed inhabitants of Marrakesh and the dethroned Almoravids, combined with the triumphant Almohads—not all of whom supported `Abd al-Mu'min—constituted the audience for the caliph's new congregational mosque.

²⁶⁸ See Bennison, "Qur'ān of `Uthmān," 135-141; Buresi, "Une péninsule à l'autre," 10-16.

²⁶⁹ According to Halima Ferhat, eighty-six members of the Almoravid family were spared. See Halima Ferhat, "Abu l-`Abbas: Contestation et sainteté," *Al-Qantara: Revista de estudios árabes* 13.1 (1992), 186.

²⁷⁰ See al-Baydhaq, *Ta'rikh al-muwahhidin*, 105-6; Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 144.

²⁷¹ These Almoravids had ties to men who had respected the Mahdī in his lifetime, such as the sons of the Almoravid sheikh Yintan ibn `Umar (who had released Ibn Tūmart from Marrakesh's prison) or Zaynab bint Yūsuf ibn Tashufin (whose husband deserted his own tribe to support the Almohad cause). See Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 144.

²⁷² Chapter One has already explained how Almohad doctrine presupposed the opinions of Malikite jurists that had been so valued under the Almoravids. As for administrators, while he was not discovered through the Almohad capture of Marrakesh, the scribe and professional composer Ibn al-`Aṭiyya served both the Almoravids and `Abd al-Mu'min. It is his pen that was responsible for so many of the caliph's first official letters, including those mentioned above. See `Azzāwī, *Rasā'il al-muwahhidīyya 1*, 18-19 for a brief biographical sketch.

In the caliph's bid for political and religious legitimacy, Friday mosques became an important weapon in his ideological arsenal, and the Kutubiyya is a perfect case in point. In Chapter One, I identified two physical characteristics unique to the building: its *maqṣūra* and its concentrated reuse of Umayyad capitals near the *miḥrāb* (Figures 1.13 and 1.14). Recalling the other symbols of the Umayyad caliphate that `Abd al-Mu'min appropriated and deployed, it is not surprising that the *maqṣūra* of the Kutubiyya mosque features spoliated Umayyad capitals. Like his symbolic appropriation of the Qur'ān of `Uthmān, `Abd al-Mu'min's self-proclaimed status as heir to the Umayyad caliphs gave him the right to reuse the physical remnants of their civilization. In the Kutubiyya mosque, the Umayyad spolia is permanently incorporated the area of the mosque most closely associated with the sovereign. The building invoked the Almohads' Umayyad predecessors in a second way as well, through the use of a *sābāt*: a covered passageway that connects the *maqṣūra* area of a mosque to an adjacent palace. Just as the Umayyad caliphs traveled in secret (thus protecting them from assassination attempts) from their palace to the Great Mosque of Cordoba, so did `Abd al-Mu'min in Marrakesh.²⁷³

Maqṣūras had been commonly used in mosques since the early eighth century, but in both its first and second incarnations the Kutubiyya's *maqṣūra* was quite dramatic: its screen was engineered to rise automatically out of hidden channels in the floor (Figure 1.12). This happened just before the caliph appeared through a small door to the left of the *miḥrāb*, and its theatrical impact must have been considerable. Likewise, the wooden *minbar*, or pulpit, of both Kutubiyya mosques mechanically rolled out of a storage space to the right of the *miḥrāb* as the Almohad *imām* approached. And although both buildings were founded and built by the Almohads, its

²⁷³ In the words of the anonymous author of *Al-hulāl al-mawshiyya*, "when `Abd al-Mu'min finished its [the Kutubiyya mosque's] construction, he made a small passageway through which he entered the mosque from the palace, without anyone seeing him." Cited in Ambrosio Huici Miranda, trans., "*Al-Hulal al mawsiyya*": *crónica árabe de las dinastias almorávide, almohade y benimerín* (Tetuán: Editora Marroquí, 1951), 172.

minbar was taken from the `Alī ibn Yūsuf mosque before its closing. This rededicated pulpit had been manufactured in Cordoba, and it typifies the stunning level of craftsmanship that had been achieved in Almoravid-era woodworking (Figure 2.1).²⁷⁴ Stefano Carboni has argued that the Almohads' salvaging and reusing of the Almoravid *minbar* was an act of political domination over the recently conquered Almoravids—a position with which I agree.²⁷⁵ However, when this view is developed further, it aligns even more closely with my interpretation of the Kutubiyya mosque as a vector of political hegemony.

Although it has received little attention, the *minbar*'s program of inscriptions is the key to unlocking its Almohad meaning. Both of its sides feature Qur'ānic references to the Throne of God. The group of inscriptions on its right flank, for example, contains Qur'ān 7:54-61. Verse 54 declares: "Surely your Lord is God, who created the heavens and the earth in six days / then sat Himself upon the Throne."²⁷⁶ The left flank of the *minbar* is inscribed with the Throne Verse (Qur'ān 2:225), part of which reads, "His [God's] Throne comprises the heavens and earth; the preserving of them oppresses him not; He is the All-high, the All-glorious."²⁷⁷ As Jonathan Bloom observes, the Throne Verse enjoys widespread use in various media.²⁷⁸ When interpreted literally, however, it implies that God has a body with which to occupy a throne, a notion fundamentally rejected by Almohad doctrine.²⁷⁹ Indeed, Ibn Tūmart demonized the Almoravids by calling them anthropomorphists, and he insisted that this type of Qur'ānic verse be interpreted

²⁷⁴ Jonathan Bloom, "The Minbar from the Kutubiyya Mosque," in *The Minbar from the Kutubiyya Mosque*, ed. Jonathan Bloom (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Madrid: Ediciones el Viso; Rabat: Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Kingdom of Morocco, 1998), 3.

²⁷⁵ See Stefano Carboni, "The Historical and Artistic Significance of the Minbar from the Kutubiyya Mosque," in *The Minbar from the Kutubiyya Mosque*, ed. Jonathan Bloom (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Madrid: Ediciones el Viso; Rabat: Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Kingdom of Morocco, 1998), 47.

²⁷⁶ Cited in Bloom, "Minbar," 18. For a complete listing of all the inscriptions on the *minbar* and their Qur'ānic sources (when applicable), see the Appendix in *The Minbar from the Kutubiyya Mosque*, ed. Jonathan Bloom (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Madrid: Ediciones el Viso; Rabat: Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Kingdom of Morocco, 1998), 104.

²⁷⁷ Cited in Bloom, "Minbar," 19.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

metaphorically or allegorically.

Other inscriptions on the minbar contain Qur'ānic verses that were equally objectionable to the Almohads, if they were understood literally. One example is also housed on its right flank, and it emphasizes God's direct involvement in the world:

It is He who looses the winds, bearing good tidings before His mercy, until, when they are charged with heavy clouds, We drive it to a dead land and therewith send down water, and bring forth therewith all the fruits. Even so We shall bring forth the dead; haply you will remember.²⁸⁰

As was true for the verses containing references to God's Throne, the Almohads, whose strict abstraction of the idea of God precluded His direct involvement in the world, could not have accepted this part of the Qur'ān at face value. On the other hand, the Almoravids, at least according to Ibn Tūmart, would have affirmed that God literally does all the aforementioned things, bringing rain to barren areas just as He will raise the dead from their graves.

By incorporating the Almoravid *minbar* into the Kutubiyya mosque, `Abd al-Mu'min chose to reuse an object that embodied the very theological position that justified his wars against the Almoravids. But lest there have been any doubt that the appropriation of the *minbar* was hegemonic, its appearance depended on the arrival of a powerful symbol of the new religious order: the Almohad *imām*. The control that the Almohad *imām* exercised over the minbar—his mere presence provoked its appearance—constituted a powerful statement concerning its new ownership. The automated *maqṣūra* screen added to this effect by drawing a striking and immediate visual parallel between the Almohad political and religious elite. That *minbars* themselves are highly political objects evoking the memory (and ultimate authority) of the Prophet Muḥammad adds an additional layer of meaning to the Almoravid *minbar*'s new

²⁸⁰ Qur'ān 7:57, Cited in Bloom, "Minbar," 18.

Almohad context.²⁸¹

All of these factors support my thesis that the Kutubiyya mosque represents a statement of political authority on the part of `Abd al-Mu`min. This message was directed against the Almoravids, their supporters in Marrakesh and his internal rivals, and the caliph tailored the transmission of this message to these three audiences. For the Almoravids, his declaration of hegemony could not have been clearer: after a lengthy siege and a brutal three-day free-for-all at the city's expense, `Abd al-Mu`min either destroyed or closed their familiar houses of worship and built his own mosque in their place. Within these circumstances, Meunié and Terrasse's suggestion that the second Kutubiyya mosque was meant to provide some degree of separation between the caliph with his entourage and the rest of the city's population makes political sense. `Abd al-Mu`min skillfully combined these actions with the dramatic repoliticization of the Almoravid *minbar* from the `Alī ibn Yūsuf mosque, the symbol of both his enemies' erroneous doctrine and their temporal authority. All of this, of course, was effected in the former Almoravid—and new Almohad—capital city of Marrakesh.

While all of `Abd al-Mu`min's fellow Almohads would have appreciated these signs of rupture with the Almoravid regime, not all of them supported him as the Almohad caliph. The impressive visual parallel that the mobile *maqṣūra* screen and *minbar* drew between the Almohad *imām* and caliph—presenting them as a united front—could not have been lost on this audience.²⁸² The presence of the screen itself was also infused with meaning: its simple function

²⁸¹ See Richard Ettinghausen, Oleg Grabar and Marilyn Jenkins, *Islamic Art and Architecture 650-1250* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 40; Carboni, "Historical and Artistic Significance," 41.

²⁸² Maribel Fierro has also argued that the Umayyads of Cordoba used the Mosque of Cordoba's *minbar* in order to evoke the authority of the Prophet Muḥammad. Although not automated like the Almohad example, she notes that its dramatic removal from the closet to the right of the *miḥrāb* chamber, the same side from which the caliph would appear before prayer began, dramatically announced the presence of the prophet and aligned him with the sovereign. She characterizes this use and display of the *minbar* as relic-like: only at certain times and on certain occasions was the *minbar* to be seen. See Maribel Fierro, "The Mobile *Minbar* in Cordoba: How the Umayyads of al-Andalus claimed the inheritance of the Prophet," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 33 (2007), 159-61.

as a barrier between the ruler and his subjects can be interpreted as a reminder of both the caliph's elite status and the previous attempts on his life.²⁸³ And given the amount of effort that `Abd al-Mu'min expended on fomenting his Andalusian Umayyad "heritage," members of both groups would have recognized the symbolic value of the Umayyad capitals. Finally, these visual messages were deliberately placed in the most privileged area of the mosque: the space most closely associated with both the Prophet and the caliph. Indeed, one can imagine an audience of Marrakesh's elite, including both Almohads and the city's most talented religious scholars and administrators, praying alongside the caliph even as they contemplated the visual markers of his authority.

1.2 NEARNESS: THE TINMAL MOSQUE

1.2.1 Sufism and Holy Men in the Islamic West

Much of Tinmal's uniqueness stems from the nature of the site, rather than from any architectonic feature. `Abd al-Mu'min's constructions there were meant both to commemorate the life of Mahdī and to found a royal pantheon near the latter's tomb, which had quickly become a recognized source of *baraka* and therefore a significant pilgrimage site.²⁸⁴ Part of the Almohads' efforts toward fostering the Mahdī's cult also involved maintaining two other hermitages near his home village, Igliliz, where he had retreated from the Almoravids before settling in Tinmal.²⁸⁵ Like Ibn Tūmart's grave, these shrines were also visited by pilgrims, who considered the land sacred and capable of healing.²⁸⁶ Because Tinmal was the birthplace of the Almohad movement and the principle pilgrimage destination of the Almohad faithful, the

²⁸³ Indeed, the first *maqṣūra* screens were designed to prevent assassination attempts. See *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W. P. Heinrichs and Ch. Pellat (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), s.v. "Masjdīd."

²⁸⁴ Basset and Terrasse, *Sanctuaires*, 28.

²⁸⁵ Halima Ferhat, *Le Soufisme et les Zaouyas au Maghrib: Mérite Individuel et Patrimoine Sacré* (Casablanca : Les Editions Toubkal, 2003), 92.

²⁸⁶ See also Fromherz, "The Almohad Mecca," 176-183.

audience associated with these shrines was made up of both Almohad partisans and devout pilgrims. Indeed, Tinmal remained the final bastion of Almohad loyalty as the dynasty crumbled in the thirteenth century.²⁸⁷

The veneration of Ibn Tūmart fits squarely into a long-standing Maghribī tradition of revering holy men. Though its roots lie in pre-Islamic Berber religious beliefs, in a medieval Islamic context this phenomenon is manifested through widespread devotion to Sufi saints.²⁸⁸ According to Vincent Cornell, early Moroccan Sufism (c. 1000-1200 CE) is perhaps best characterized as a practical, ethically-grounded spiritual tradition.²⁸⁹ In other words, early Maghribī Sufis were more concerned with morally-correct behavior and extreme piety than they were with esoteric spiritual knowledge or attaining gnosis. He also describes early Moroccan Sufism as primarily an urban phenomenon; even when Sufis founded hermitages in the hinterlands, they themselves were typically urban-educated if not always from a major city.²⁹⁰ With these points in mind, Cornell follows the thirteenth-century hagiographer al-Tādhilī in defining Moroccan Sufis as “a collectivity of men (plus a few women) whose rhetorical purpose is to exemplify the Sunna of the Prophet Muḥammad.”²⁹¹ Their devotees believed that they possessed deep religious knowledge, which ratified the favor that God placed in them. This divine grace was, in turn, manifested by the Sufis’ miracles.²⁹²

²⁸⁷ After the fall of Marrakesh in 1269, the Almohad faithful made their last stand at Tinmal before succumbing to the onslaught of the Merinid armies. After Tinmal fell, the conquerors sacked the city and defiled the tombs of the caliphs and the Mahdī. See Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 386.

²⁸⁸ For more on early Berber religious beliefs, see Madeleine Fletcher, “Al-Andalus and North Africa in the Almohad Ideology,” in *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*, 235-238, ed. Salma K. Jayyusi (Leiden: Brill, 1994).

²⁸⁹ Cornell, *Realm*, 4.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁹² *Ibid.*

In this section, I shall first discuss three “types” of saints.²⁹³ Two of them follow Cornell’s distinction between urban-educated Sufis—including those who stayed within their cities’ walls and those who moved into the countryside—and Sufis who had no formal education. To them, I add an additional category: Sufis that became Mahdīs. Next, I will offer a summary of the similarities between Sufi saints and Ibn Tūmart, followed by an identification of the commonalities shared among Sufi hermitages and the Mahdī’s retreat at Tinmal. This discussion will ultimately bolster my argument that the Tinmal mosque was another pillar supporting the political legitimacy of both `Abd al-Mu`min and the Almohad caliphate. Nevertheless, the building referred to different traditions of authority than did the Kutubiyya mosque.

Many of the earliest urban-educated Sufis were jurists who, as embodiments of the values of Sunni Islam, rigorously upheld religious law (Ar. *sharī`a*) in their local environments.²⁹⁴ This tendency dovetailed with the goals of those reform Malikite jurists, studied by Fierro and discussed in Chapter One, who wished to supplant the stale form of Malikism practiced by certain Almoravid *fuqahā`*. As an alternative, these jurists promoted a renewal of the study of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, and they aimed to establish a standardized set of sources and methods for practicing jurisprudence including the Qur`ān, hadith, the use of analogy (Ar. *qiyās*) and the consensus (Ar. *ijmā`a*) of the Muslim community.²⁹⁵ This juridical tradition spread throughout Andalusia and North Africa in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries.²⁹⁶ When combined with the widespread diffusion of al-Ghazālī’s *Iḥyā`*, which not only explained his ideas about juridical

²⁹³ While these categories are useful for the purposes of this study, it is important to remember that they are artificial and even somewhat arbitrary, as certain Sufis could be placed in two or more of them simultaneously.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 7. Cornell makes the crucial point that one must always keep in mind that the later appellation of “Sufi,” given to these early jurists, might not have been one that they applied to themselves. See *Ibid.*, 9-12, for discussion.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

methodologies but also detailed his views as a mystic, “an ascetic, praxis-oriented, and jurisprudentially validated form of mysticism” developed.²⁹⁷

Al-Ghazālī’s importance to the development of both Sunni Islam and Sufism in the Maghrib is difficult to overstate.²⁹⁸ In addition to foregrounding the *uṣūl al-fiqh*, his *Ihyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn* expounds several politically relevant ideas. First, al-Ghazālī insisted that all learned Muslims could represent their wider communities. These delegates could be members of the *fuqahā’*, educated Sufis or both.²⁹⁹ As Cornell notes, they could even raise their voices to confirm or reject political authority, making them a potential threat to the state. A second key point found in al-Ghazālī’s *Ihyā’* is his insistence on the *ḥisba*. As Mercedes García-Arenal observes, when al-Ghazālī characterized performance of the *ḥisba* as an obligation, he provided Sufis and others with a theoretical framework that supported the censure of political leaders.³⁰⁰ By extension, if the sovereign could be denounced for his own behavior or for that of his subjects, he could also be declared unfit to rule. Of course, Chapter One has already detailed how Ibn Tumart used the *ḥisba* to undermine Almoravid authority.³⁰¹

Two biographies of twelfth-century Sufi-jurists, one Andalusian and one Maghribī, illustrate the ways in which the urban Sufi-jurists interacted with their social environments. The first is that of Ibn al-‘Arīf (d. 1141), who was born in Almeria, although his father was a native of Tangier. In his youth, Ibn al-‘Arīf excelled in both Qur’ānic sciences and hadith studies, eventually becoming a market inspector and censor in Valencia. In turn, this position introduced

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 17.

²⁹⁸ See García-Arenal, *Messianism*, 119-120 for a short, nuanced evaluation of al-Ghazālī’s role in defining Sufism in the Islamic West.

²⁹⁹ Cornell, *Realm*, 23-4. García-Arenal maintains that al-Ghazālī actually stressed the authority of the Sufis in preference to that of the *fuqahā’*. See *Messianism*, 127.

³⁰⁰ Mercedes García-Arenal, “La práctica,” 154.

³⁰¹ See Ibid., 153 and 154, respectively.

him to the practices of asceticism, scrupulousness and altruism.³⁰² Ibn al-`Arīf also defended the poor and the politically disenfranchised throughout his career. He justified this advocacy by affirming that God granted His authority to the Sufis.³⁰³ These activities, in conjunction with his support for *uṣūl al-fiqh* and al-Ghazālī's works, led to a summons to Marrakesh for questioning by the Almoravid authorities.³⁰⁴ In 1141, Ibn al-`Arīf died in one of the capital's prisons, immediately becoming a martyr for those who opposed Almoravid rule.³⁰⁵

Ghazalian ideas also flourished among the intellectual who gathered around Abū Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ ibn Ḥirzihim (d. after 1112) in Fez.³⁰⁶ Abū Muḥammad's nephew, Abū al-Ḥasan `Alī (d.1164), inherited his uncle's spiritual mission after experiencing a dream in which the Prophet Muḥammad whipped him for disapproving of the *Iḥyā'*. From that point forward, he became one of al-Ghazālī's most dedicated supporters, and his efforts proved instrumental in disseminating the Iranian mystic's ideas. Ibn Ḥirzihim was also both an accomplished jurist and learned in the Qur'ānic sciences, and he embodied the Sufi values of asceticism, piety, modesty and religious virtue. Like Ibn al-`Arīf, Ibn Ḥirzihim's opinions—especially his disregard for political status and his criticism of Almoravid policies—eventually drew unwanted attention from the ruling elite.³⁰⁷ As a result, the Almoravids closed his Sufi school in Fez and exiled him to the capital, where he continued to censure their behavior in spite of their close proximity.³⁰⁸

Rather than working within the city's walls, a second type of urban-educated Sufi moved into the countryside after completing his studies. These sheikhs served surrounding communities

³⁰² Cornell, *Realm*, 19-20.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 20-1.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 22. See Chapter One for a discussion of the Almoravids' rejection of al-Ghazālī and *uṣūl al-fiqh*.

³⁰⁵ Cornell, *Realm*, 22.

³⁰⁶ The following is summarized from *Ibid.*, 24-5.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.

³⁰⁸ The best example of this is his rebuke of `Alī ibn Yūsuf, who attempted to dispose of the body of another politically-executed Sufi, Ibn Barraḡān, in a garbage heap. By disseminating the message that he, Ibn Ḥirzihim, had ordered the people to attend Ibn Barraḡān's funeral, the Almoravids were forced to give him one. See Cornell, *Realm*, 26.

as educators, tribal mediators and spiritual masters.³⁰⁹ The roots of this form of Sufism reach back to the mid-tenth century, when Malikite jurists from both Andalusia and the Maghrib founded a series of rural centers of religious education in North Africa. These sites were intended to normalize the many heterodox versions of Islam that persisted throughout the countryside.³¹⁰ Termed *ribāṭs*, these earliest centers offered instruction on the basics tenets of Islam, on Malikite jurisprudence and on *uṣūl al-fiqh*.³¹¹ By the twelfth century, the *ribāṭ* was a well-established institution that provided dogmatic and practical religious education, as well as Sufi training. This was effected through their pupils' adherence to a venerated Sufi master who embodied all of the desirable qualities that he sought to instill in his students.³¹² Sufi leaders of *ribāṭs* also filled the role of local, unbiased arbitrators; they were seen both as neutral parties who could resolve local conflicts and as regional delegates to the centralized authority.³¹³

Rather than focusing on the biographies of specific rural sheikhs, I shall discuss Ribāṭ Tīṭ-n-Fiṭr, which served the Ṣanhāja peoples on the Atlantic coast, about eight kilometers south of the present-day Moroccan city of El Jedida. Ribāṭ Tīṭ-n-Fiṭr's history is recorded in a fourteenth century manuscript entitled *The Delight of Observers, the Intimacy of the Gnostics and the Agency of the Lord of the Worlds*.³¹⁴ Its author, Muḥammad al-Zammūrī, recounts its foundation story, which I now paraphrase from Cornell's summary.³¹⁵ A tenth-century Medinese

³⁰⁹ Following Cornell, I reject the term "*murābiṭ*" to describe these early figures, as it was not widely used in Morocco until the sixteenth century. See *Realm*, 39.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 33. Targeted populations of the effort included the inhabitants of Barghwāṭa country and Sijilmasa, who practiced a local form of Islam related to Kharijism; the Ghumāra, who had been seduced by a false Berber prophet; and the Sus valley, whose tribal rivals divided themselves along sectarian lines.

³¹¹ *Ibid.* The reader will also recall the role that these institutions played in the rise of the Almoravids, who trace their origins to the networks of *ribāṭs* associated with Abū `Imrān al-Fāsī's station in Qayrawān.

³¹² Cornell, *Realm*, 40.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, 47-9, 54. See also Francisco Rodriguez-Mañas, "Charity and Deceit: The practice of *i`ṭām al-ṭa`ām* in Moroccan Sufism," *Studia Islamica* 91 (2000), 65.

³¹⁴ The manuscript is housed in the Royal Library behind Rabat's palace walls. Unfortunately, it was closed indefinitely for remodeling and inventory as of July 2011. Therefore, my summary relies on Cornell's work.

³¹⁵ The story is given in more detail in Vincent Cornell, "Ribāṭ Tīṭ-n-Fiṭr and the Origins of Moroccan Maraboutism," *Islamic Studies* 27.1 (1988): 23-36.

ascetic, called Abū Ibrāhīm Ismā`īl, received instruction from a hidden voice that told him to follow a light into the Maghrib. He ended his journey at the place where the light came to rest, upon which he founded Ribāṭ Tīt-n-Fiṭr. Once it was established, Abū Ibrāhīm Ismā`īl continued his ascetic practices and also began a mission to serve the local Ṣanhāja as an educator of Islamic belief and practice. His son and successor, Abū Ja`far, formed a contractual relationship with the surrounding Ṣanhāja, who pledged to give them a portion of their produce tax as long as the *ribāṭ* maintained its high status and location. Over the years the site grew in size and importance, receiving pilgrims as well as permanent residents who hoped to benefit from the saints' *baraka*. In the twelfth century, the sheikhs of Tīt-n-Fiṭr produced the earliest-recorded Maghribī Sufi brotherhood: al-Ṭā'ifa al-Ṣanhājiyya.³¹⁶

As illustrated by Ribāṭ Tīt-n-Fiṭr, the spiritual practices of rural Sufism seem to have been, as Cornell aptly puts it, “short on metaphysical principles but long on *ṣalāḥ* [Eng. “socially conscious virtue”] and asceticism.”³¹⁷ For example, Ribāṭ Tīt-n-Fiṭr's Sufi adepts are reported to have been particularly scrupulous in maintaining the principles of the Sunna. They also studied the texts central to Malikite jurisprudence, *uṣūl al-fiqh* and the teachings of al-Ghazālī. Their sheikhs required them to adhere to ten official behavioral rules, which were based on principles of Sufi chivalry (Ar. *futuwwa*). These rules included the avoidance of dispute, the pursuit of justice, generosity, contentment with what God provides, forbearance, concealment of esoteric teaching from the uninitiated, concealment of the sins of others, concession of the final word in an argument, satisfaction with one's lot in life and refusal to exert oneself for worldly goods.³¹⁸ In addition to fostering the spiritual development of the adepts, several of these guidelines focus on maintaining harmony within the walls of the *ribāṭ*.

³¹⁶ Cornell, *Realm*, 41-4.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 45.

³¹⁸ The preceding paragraph is paraphrased from Cornell, *Realm*, 45.

A third Maghribī saint, Abū Ya`zzā (d. 1177), received no formal education but was highly venerated during and after his life. Rather than declaring his endorsement of al-Ghazālī or promoting *uṣūl al-fiqh*, Abū Ya`zzā drew devotees through the force of his personal sanctity and his ability to work miracles.³¹⁹ Abū Ya`zzā's connection to God was so strong that he literally radiated with divine light; upon meeting him for the first time, his fellow Sufi Abū Madyan—whose career will be discussed in Chapter Four—was blinded by the radiance of his face. As an illiterate Masmūda Berber who did not speak Arabic, Abū Ya`zzā represents a religious figure whose manifest spiritual power proceeds from his direct relationship with God, rather than from study. In their desire to access and benefit from Abū Ya`zzā and his *baraka*, pious believers made pilgrimages to his hermitage in the village of Taghya from all over the Maghrib. Abū Ya`zzā was just one of an entire group of Maghribī Sufis—including those who also fit into Sufism's urban tradition—who attracted followers due to their ability to mediate between the earthly and spiritual realms.³²⁰

The final Sufi paradigm includes two Sufis that became Mahdīs. The first is the Mahdī Ibn Hūd of Ribāṭ Māssa, which served the Masmūda tribes on the Atlantic coast south of the present-day Moroccan city of Agadir.³²¹ Although there is far less documentary evidence concerning this *ribāṭ* than Ribāṭ Tīṭ-n-Fiṭr, it was nevertheless an extremely important Sufi center. The first extant mention of Ribāṭ Māssa dates the ninth century, when the geographer al-Ya`qubī characterizes Māssa as an important trading hub with a *ribāṭ* on its coast.³²² By the

³¹⁹ For further discussion of Abū Ya`zzā, which this paragraph summarizes, see García Arenal, *Messianism*, 144-5. See also Ferhat, *Le Soufisme*, 102-109 and Cornell, *Realm*, 67-79.

³²⁰ García Arenal, *Messianism*, 144.

³²¹ He is also referred to as al-Māssafī, Ibn Hūd al-Māssī al-Salāwī, Abū Yakāndī and `Umar ibn al-Khayyāt.

³²² Cited in Patrice Cressier, "De un *ribāṭ* a otro: Una hipótesis sobre los *ribāṭ*-s del Magrib al-Aqsa," in *Fouilles de la rābita de Guardamar I, El ribāṭ califal: Excavaciones e investigaciones (1984-1992)*, ed. Rafael Azuar Ruiz (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2004), 204. See also D. al-Hussayn Asgān, *Al-Dawla wa-l-mujtama` fī-l-`aṣr al-muwahḥidī, 1125-1275 (Al-Rabāt: Al-Ma`had al-malikī li-l-thaqāfa al-amāziḡhiyya, 2010)*, 47. Asgān adds that Ribāṭ Māssa would have connected the city to both the Sudan and the Saharan trade routes.

eleventh century, the *ribāʿ*'s spiritual role seems to have grown: the Andalusian geographer al-Bakrī (d. 1094) describes Ribāʿ Māssa as a “retreat for those given to pious devotions.”³²³ In texts dating to the Almohad period, however, references to Ribāʿ Māssa become almost nonexistent; not even al-Tādhilī, the famous hagiographer, mentions it. As Halima Ferhat points out, this tacit refusal to discuss Ribāʿ Māssa probably results from the site’s infamy as the origin of the first major rebellion against the Almohads.³²⁴

On the basis of his pretensions to Mahdism, Ibn Hūd forged an alliance against the Almohads. Although the specifics of his messianic mission have been lost, he received widespread inter-tribal support from the regions between Ribāʿ Māssa and Salé.³²⁵ Perhaps underestimating the seriousness of the threat, `Abd al-Mu`min initially sent only a small squadron of soldiers to meet the rebels. Ibn Hūd’s forces won this first battle, which prompted the uprisings of al-Ṣaḥrawī and his allies, along with defections in Andalusia.³²⁶ At this point all of `Abd al-Mu`min’s territories were openly rebelling, except those held by his firmest allies in Marrakesh and Fez. In response, the caliph sent Abū Ḥafṣ `Umar—who, in addition to being his right-hand man, was a brilliant military commander—to beat the Māssatī rebels back into submission with the full force of the Almohad army. The general executed Ibn Hūd in the spring

³²³ Cited in Cornell, *Realm*, 49. Halima Ferhat notes the difficulty in determining the *ribāʿ*'s history beyond these most general characterizations, as the earliest mentions of its foundations are shrouded in legends. The most famous recounts that Ribāʿ Māssa was founded by the prophet Jonah—said to be buried on site—after the whale relinquished him. See Ferhat, “Littérature eschatologique,” 53.

³²⁴ This rebellion is but one in a series of political uprisings that are associated either directly with Ribāʿ Māssa or within the wider region of the Sus. For example, Ferhat points out that it housed Wajjāj ibn Zālwi’s Dār al-Murābiṭūn, the *ribāʿ* of Ibn Yāsīn. She also notes that Ibn Tūmart, the most successful Mahdī, was a native of the Sus region. This association of Māssa with Mahdīs continues into the fourteenth century, when Ibn Khaldūn describes how the common people still wait for the Mahdī to appear at Ribāʿ Māssa, and even into the fifteenth, with the activities of the Mahdī al-Jazūli. See Halima Ferhat “Littérature,” 54-55.

³²⁵ Al-Baydhaq describes his followers as: “the Hāhā, after their submission to Almohad power, the Ragrāga, the Hazmīra, the Haksūra of al-Waṭā’, the Dukkāla and the Banī Waryāghal.” Al-Baydhaq, *Ta’rīkh al-Muwahḥidīn*, 106.

³²⁶ Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 147-8.

of 1147, transported his body to Marrakesh on a donkey and crucified it on the city's Sharī'a Gate.³²⁷

Ibn Qasī (d. 1151), who rebelled against the Almoravids in Andalusia, is a better-documented example of a Sufi-Mahdī.³²⁸ As a young adult, Ibn Qasī renounced his property and embraced a life of wandering asceticism. After a visit to Marrakesh, he returned to Andalusia and settled in Jilla, where he founded a *ribāṭ*. He spent his time there studying the teachings of al-Ghazālī and preaching rebellion against the Almoravids to his devotees. Ibn Qasī criticized the Almoravid *fuqahā'* especially, whose dry exposition of the law he considered the root of improper belief and action. Against them, he promoted the idea of his own enlightenment or illumination, because of which he must be recognized as the Imām, or the correct person to lead the community. García Arenal concludes that by necessity, this kind of *imām* is also infallible, and that Ibn Qasī's "infallibility and impeccability did not derive from the Imām's genealogical relationship to the Prophet, but rather from his personal qualities and illumination."³²⁹ Ibn Qasī eventually garnered enough support to lead an army against the Almoravids, and after defeating them at Mertola, he officially took the titles of Imām and Mahdī.

By now, the implication of this foray into early Sufism should be clear: Ibn Tūmart fits squarely into the spectrum of twelfth-century Andalusian and Maghribī Sufism.³³⁰ Like Ibn al-'Arīf, Ibn Ḥirzihim, and Abū 'Abd Allāh of Ribāṭ Tīt, Ibn Tūmart received an urban, juridical education, which included a strong emphasis on *uṣūl al-fiqh* and the works of al-Ghazālī. Like

³²⁷ Letters 5 and 6 of *Rasā'il al-muwahḥidiyya 1* detail the killing of the rebellion's leader and 'Abd al-Mu'min's actions after it was put down. They begin on pages 56 and 61, respectively.

³²⁸ The life of Ibn Qasī is summarized from García Arenal, *Messianism*, 136-7. See also Vincent Lagardère, "La tariqa et la révolte des Muridun en 539 H / 1144 en Andalus," *Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée* 35 (1983): 157-170 and Tilman Nagel, "Le Mahdisme d'Ibn Tūmart et d'Ibn Qasī: une analyse phénoménologique," *Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée* 91-92-93-94 (2000): 125-35.

³²⁹ *Messianism*, 137.

³³⁰ These comparisons rest upon Chapter One's exposition of Ibn Tūmart's biography, doctrine and foundation of the Almohad movement.

Ibn al-`Arīf and Ibn Ḥirzihim, Ibn Tūmart's performance of the *ḥisba* extended to the ruling elite, making all of them a target for Almoravid persecution. Furthermore, Ibn Tūmart also dedicated his life to teaching what he viewed as the correct understanding of *tawḥīd* to the Almohads. This activity compares favorably to the leaders of Ribāṭ Tīt-n-Fiṭr, who provided religious education to their clients and eventually established their own Sufi order. Ibn Tūmart even placed similar demands on his followers—such as obedience and mutual forgiveness—as did Abū `Abd Allāh; in both cases, these requirements were designed to further their spiritual education as well as to maintain internal cohesion. Moreover, Ibn Tūmart was the ultimate tribal mediator: while the sheikhs of Ribāṭ Tīt acted as brokers for the Ṣanhāja, Ibn Tūmart's goal was to unite *all* the tribes under the banner of Almohadism. He undertook the majority this mission at Igliliz and at Tinmal, both rural centers for religious education and spiritual training that effectively replicate the roles played by Maghribī *ribāṭs*.

In addition to these biographical and ideological similarities, Ibn Tūmart's character and personal qualities echo those of the Sufis. First, from an Almohad perspective, his conscious effort to mirror the life of the Prophet Muḥammad and his infallibility surpassed even the Sufis' embodiment of the Sunna and their profound religious knowledge. Like the saints of Ribāṭ Tīt and Abū Ya`zzā, Ibn Tūmart was also known for his asceticism and modesty: he wore simple woolen clothing and rode an emblematic donkey.³³¹ Finally, Ibn Tūmart possessed the same kind of connection to the divine that graced Abū Ya`zzā. Unlike the latter, however, Ibn Tūmart, along with Ibn Qasī and Ibn Hūd al-Massafī, claimed that this enlightenment transformed them into *mahdīs*, a higher level of being. Each of these men inspired admiration and devotion, and the faithful flocked to them in order to receive their wisdom and blessing. All three Mahdīs received their devotees in the rural *ribāṭs* that, at least in the Maghrib, formed an integral part of

³³¹ Fromherz, *The Almohads*, 42.

the landscape.³³² Finally, all of these men attempted to overthrow the reigning political authority.

1.2.2 Ribāt Tinmal

Just as Sufism is crucial to the understanding of Ibn Tūmart's Maḥdīsm, the architecture it inspires can inform an analysis of the Tinmal mosque. Unlike the Kutubiyya mosques, the Tinmal mosque was part of a compound where each building served a distinct, but related, purpose. There was the mosque itself, as well as Ibn Tūmart's tomb and the royal pantheon. While the burial sites have yet to be uncovered archeologically, the twelfth-century cartographer al-Idrīsī has left us a description of the Maḥdī's sepulcher: "In these times, the chamber is an object of pilgrimage for the Masmūda, who travel to it from all their lands. A perfect and high dome was built upon it, but in accordance with the law it is neither ornamented nor decorated."³³³ In addition to pointing out that the Maḥdī's tomb was housed in a separate, monumental building, al-Idrīsī's account indicates that it was crowned with a dome, in Islamic architectural terminology, a *qubba*. *Qubbas* have a funerary or commemorative function throughout the Islamic world, and those buried under them were often Sufi saints.

Although I am yet unaware of any Maghribī funerary *qubbas* that firmly date to the Almohad period, several examples survive in Andalusia. Unfortunately, they are understudied,

³³² It is more difficult to argue for a similar widespread diffusion of the same sort of *ribāts* in Andalusia that are found in the Maghrib. While very early Andalusian *ribāts* have been excavated, they seem to be geared more toward the defense of Islam's borders than toward education. See the essays in *Fouilles de la rābita de Guardamar I, El ribāt califal: Excavaciones e investigaciones (1984-1992)*, ed. Rafael Azuar Ruiz (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2004) for more on this and other Andalusian *ribāts*.

³³³ Al-Idrīsī. *Description de l'Afrique septentrionale et saharienne. Texte arabe extrait du "Kitab Nuzhat al-Muchtaq fi Ikhtiraq al-Afaq"* d'après le édition de LEYDE [1866], par R. DOZY et J. de GOEJE. Published by Henri PERES. (Alger: La Maison des Livres, 1957), 31. The Arabic reads:

"في هذا الوقت بيت جعله المصامدة حجا يقصدون اليه من جميع بلادهم و عليه بناء متقن كالقبة العلية لآكنها غير مزخرفة و لا مزينة كل ذلك على طريق الناموس."

and many were ruined or significantly altered through Christian conquest.³³⁴ Nevertheless, at least two that date to the Almohad period have been published. The first is located near the Portuguese city of Evora. Through archeological and historical evidence, M. José Pires Gonçalves classifies it as a funerary monument.³³⁵ Henri Terrasse connected it to Sufism, although only circumstantially: he adds that at the time this small *qubba* was built, Sufism was widespread and the practice of veneration of the tombs was diffuse.³³⁶ A second example is located in the Spanish municipality of Burguillos del Cerro, in the province of Badajoz. Archeological evidence also dates it to the Almohad period, and its centralized plan and dome conform to the *qubba* typology.³³⁷ Pending further archeological examination, Gibello Bravo and Amigo Marcos have proposed that the building originally housed the tomb of a saint.³³⁸

If one broadens this comparison of Almohad-Sufi architecture, the results are satisfying. Funerary *qubbās*, like that which covered the tomb of Ibn Tūmart, frequently formed part of Sufi *rābiṭas* or *zawiyyas*. Torres Balbás has established both their Andalusian and Maghribī typology as follows:

a building or group of buildings, almost always constructed around a venerated tomb, which was used as a sort of monastery, Qur’ānic school or hospice. The most complete examples contained a small oratory with a *miḥrāb*, the tomb of a saint, a classroom for religious education and one or more rooms for the lodging of students, pilgrims, or the sick. The presence of a small cemetery for the pious that wished to be buried near the tomb of the saint was also common.³³⁹

³³⁴ Leopoldo Torres Balbás, “Rábitas hispanomuṣulmanes,” *Al-Andalus* 13.2 (1948): 475-491. Balbás provides a helpful catalogue of where and when many of these structures were built, though there are no photographs and only one diagram of a Granadan example.

³³⁵ José Pires Gonçalves, *A Cuba de Monsaraz*, separata de *A cidade de Évora* n. 47, 1964, 21 p., 2 plans, 7 illustrations photographiques, cited in Henri Terrasse, “Une ‘*qubba*’ funéraire d’épochè almohade au Portugal,” *Al-Andalus* 34.2 (1969), 421. Unfortunately, I have been unable to track down the journal in which the original it is published, and here I refer to Terrasse’s summary of the article.

³³⁶ “*Qubba*,” 421.

³³⁷ See Victor M. Gibello Bravo and Rafael Amigo Marcos, “San Juan Bautista: una rabita hispano-musulmana inédita en la antigua iglesia parroquial de Burguillos del Cerro (Badajóz),” *Mérida. Ciudad y patrimonio: Revista de arqueología, arte y urbanismo* 5 (2001), 177.

³³⁸ The authors actually propose three possible functions for the building. The second is that it was an exclusively funerary building for a distinguished member of the community. The third is that it would have been an oratory inside an old Islamic hermitage complex. While all three are possible, the authors lean toward their first hypothesis. See *Ibid.*, 178-9.

³³⁹ “Rábitas,” 477.

The parallel to Tinmal is clear: in addition to Ibn Tūmart’s *qubba*, the site housed both a cemetery that allowed his devotees—the Almohad caliphs—to be buried near him and a grander manifestation of a “small oratory with a *miḥrāb*,” the mosque itself.

The similarities between Tinmal and Ribāṭ Tīṭ-n-Fiṭr’s extant architecture will ground Balbás’ theoretical model to a physical reality. But first, a clarification of his terminology is in order: while Balbás spoke of Sufi *rābiṭas* and *zawiyyas*, Tīṭ-n-Fiṭr is referred to as a *ribāṭ*. There has been much debate about how to define these terms, and scholars often use them interchangeably or out of their historical or geographical context.³⁴⁰ For example, a *ribāṭ* is frequently defined as a fortress-convent that protected the borders of Islam, while *rābiṭas* and *zawiyyas* are understood as Sufi hermitages.³⁴¹ However, as Patrice Cressier observes, modern attempts to find a universal translation for these words are inherently flawed, as medieval definitions for the same term seemed to have differed from region to region.³⁴² At the very least, it seems certain that Maghribī *ribāṭs* appear to have completely lacked a military function (being instead centers for religious instruction and spiritual retreat), while their Andalusian and Tunisian counterparts did indeed defend against potential invaders.³⁴³

For the purposes of this chapter, it is important to keep two things in mind regarding the terminology regarding sites like Ribāṭ Tīṭ-n-Fiṭr and the applicability of Balbás’ typology to them. The first is that Balbás himself used these terms rather interchangeably: for him, “*zawiyya*” is but the Maghribī term for the Andalusian *rābiṭa*, which itself could both include

³⁴⁰ Balbás himself is guilty of this. See “*Rābitas*,” 475-9.

³⁴¹ Patrice Cressier, “De un *ribāṭ* a otro,” 210.

³⁴² *Ibid.*

³⁴³ *Ibid.* Cressier also signals that the terminology for the Ifriqiyyan and Andalusian models is also more varied than that of the Maghrib; while the former could also be called *qaṣr* (Eng. “castle”), *ḥiṣn* (Eng. “fortress”) or *qaṣaba* (Eng. “citadel”).

and originate from a *ribāṭ*.³⁴⁴ The second is that whether one calls these twelfth-century complexes *ribāṭs*, as the medieval sources tend to do; *rābiṭas*, which are similar but tend lie within city walls;³⁴⁵ or *zawiyyas*, a term that the medieval sources do not use until the fifteenth century, when it replaces the first two;³⁴⁶ they all imply a space reserved for religious education and Sufi training. All of these buildings would have housed a sheikh who represented the latest link in a long chain of venerable teachers associated with the site. Therefore, the similarities of their function, their leaders and their adepts imply the same architectural necessities, an idea that justifies the adoption of Balbás' universal typology. With this in mind, I shall return to the comparison between the Ribāṭ Tīṭ-n-Fiṭr and Tinmal's structures.

Abū Ja`far Ishāq, Ribāṭ Tīṭ-n-Fiṭr's second sheikh, determined the site's permanent physical layout. Although he and his followers first lived in small dwellings clustered around his father's tomb, Abu Ja`far eventually built sturdier residences for himself and his dependents, along with a congregational mosque large enough to accommodate the influx of settlers seeking his *baraka*.³⁴⁷ Like Tinmal, Ribāṭ Tīṭ-n-Fiṭr conforms to Torres Balbás' typology. Both housed the tomb of its founder, and both tombs attracted devotees seeking a source of *baraka*. Each also had a congregational mosque serving the needs of an expanding settlement. While I have not yet been able to confirm the date of Tīṭ-n-Fiṭr's cemetery, Abū Ja`far did at first live near his father's tomb, and it is reasonable to surmise that members of the early community would have been buried alongside it, just as the Almohad caliphs were buried near the Maḥdī. Finally, both *ribāṭs*

³⁴⁴ "Rábitas," 477.

³⁴⁵ Cornell, *Realm*, 359.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 43.

were founded by ascetic men with clear didactic missions. This would have necessitated a space dedicated to teaching: Torres Balbás' "classroom for religious education."³⁴⁸

I propose that `Abd al-Mu`min used architecture already associated with Sufism—the *ribāṭ* typology—at Tinmal for several reasons. The most straightforward of these is that it was an established model to honor in death the holy man he had known in life. Given the complicated political situation, I would also argue that Abd al-Mu`min deployed this familiar architectural idiom in order to strengthen his link to the legitimizing religious authority of the Mahdī; put simply, a twelfth-century pilgrim would have made the connection between the site of the Mahdī's tomb and the sites of other saints' tombs. By creating recognizable parallels between the Mahdī and the Sufis, `Abd al-Mu`min could lend—or even redirect—the Sufis' spiritual prestige and authority to his own nascent polity. Indeed, by establishing an Almohad *ribāṭ* as an alternative to those at Tīṭ-n-Fiṭr or Māssa, the caliph could attract new devotees to the Almohad movement even as he staved off other rebellions led by "false" Sufi *mahdīs* like Ibn Hūd.³⁴⁹ In this way, the Tinmal mosque underscores both the legitimacy and the superiority of the Almohad alternative to set models of holiness, even as it conforms to them.

2 THE MOSQUES' SPIRITUAL DIMENSION: ALMOHAD AESTHETICS UNDER `ABD AL-MU`MIN

2.1 "THE MOST UNDERSTANDING OF STUDENTS:" `ABD AL-MUM`IN AND THE MAHDĪ'S DOCTRINE

A fateful day brought the future Mahdī Ibn Tūmart together with the future Almohad caliph `Abd al-Mu`min. Al-Baydhaq's version of the events is almost hagiographical and

³⁴⁸ A second site that can be classified as a *ribāṭ* of the Mahdī Ibn Tūmart is his original retreat at Igliliz, and both Fromherz and Asgān identify it as such. See *Almohads*, 57 and *Al-Dawla*, 73-79. Asgān even differentiates between Ibn Tūmart's identity at Ribāṭ Igliliz and at Ribāṭ Tinmal, characterizing his role at the first as its sheikh and at the second as its Mahdī and Imām (*Al-Dawla*, 80-2). Unfortunately, nothing that can be identified as the Mahdī's first *ribāṭ* has been uncovered archeologically. For a discussion of its possible location, see Van Staëvel and Fili, "À propos."

³⁴⁹ That `Abd al-Mu`min recognized the threat posed by the Sufi sheikhs—whose values and behavior was dangerously similar to Ibn Tūmart's—is indicated by his interviewing of several of them, including Abū Ya`zzā, in the capital.

certainly suggests divine providence. He prologues the meeting with a number of prophetic stories about `Abd al-Mu`min`'s youth; these include both `Abd al-Mu`min`'s and his parents' dreams of the future caliph's greatness. Once `Abd al-Mu`min` came into Ibn Tūmart's presence, at a large gathering in one of Malalla's mosques, the latter astonished the crowds by his foreknowledge of the future caliph's background. As the meeting drew to a close, the people rose to return to their homes. `Abd al-Mu`min` followed suit, but Ibn Tūmart curtly insisted that he stay. He then asked al-Baydhaq to bring him a book and to light two lamps by which they could study. Al-Baydhaq continues:

He [Ibn Tūmart] taught the caliph from the book a short distance away, and while I prepared their lamps, I heard him say that religion will only be strong under `Abd al-Mu`min` ibn `Alī, Lamp of the Almohads. The [future] caliph wept upon hearing those words, saying, "Oh *faqīh*, who am I to do any of that? I am merely a man seeking purification from my sins." The Impeccable replied, "Purification from your sins is the world set right by your hand!"³⁵⁰

During an entire month, continues al-Baydhaq, Ibn Tūmart personally instructed `Abd al-Mu`min` in religious matters, and he describes the future caliph as "the most understanding of the students."³⁵¹ Of course, the chronicler was a loyal partisan of Ibn Tūmart and `Abd al-Mu`min`, but Ibn Tūmart and his followers clearly regarded the future caliph highly: he was one of the Mahdī's closest advisors and a member of the Council of Ten.

After he became caliph, `Abd al-Mu`min`'s close relationship to Ibn Tūmart translated into a desire to enforce the Mahdī's teaching and uphold his values. For example, he institutionalized the body of Almohad *ṭalaba*, which had been present since Ibn Tūmart's time, and he created both the *ḥuffāz* and the specialized school in Marrakesh that helped them memorize the Mahdī's works.³⁵² In the caliph's most famous circular letter, which he sent after quashing the rebellions that endangered his early rule, `Abd al-Mu`min` also reproaches local

³⁵⁰ Al-Baydhaq, *Ta`rīkh al-muwaḥḥidīn*, 56.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 57.

³⁵² For further analysis of the *ṭalaba*, see Émile Fricaud, "Les talaba dans la société almohade (Le temps d'Averroès)," *Al-Qantara : Revista de estudios árabes* 18.2 (1997) : 331-387.

governments for the laxity of morals found in their domains, ordering the strict observance of Islamic values.³⁵³ `Abd al-Mu`min gives specific instructions about how this is to be effected: those subjects who know Arabic were ordered to study the Mahdi's doctrine of *tawḥīd*, and the *ṭalaba* were to memorize and comment on the Almohad Creed. Every citizen—man and woman, free and slave, educated and illiterate—was required to learn and understand the second of Ibn Tūmart's *murshidas*, and those who did not were to be put to death.³⁵⁴ Furthermore, the *ṭalaba* were to maintain a strictly orthodox performance of the five daily prayers, and to this end every believer was required to know at least two Qur'ānic *suras* (including the first, *al-Fātiḥa*).³⁵⁵ Again, the punishment for those who did not comply was the sword.

These efforts to indoctrinate all believers and to censure local customs suggest that `Abd al-Mu`min was as invested in upholding the Mahdī's doctrine as he was in bolstering Almohad political legitimacy. He pursued these two goals simultaneously and on several levels. Beyond his military and letter-writing campaigns, Chapter One has already introduced several of its visual vectors: the caliph skillfully combined clear formal changes in Almohad epigraphy and numismatics with a message that reflected Almohad religiosity and—by extension—their right to rule. These visual changes were as revolutionary and ground-breaking as the call to embrace Almohad *tawḥīd* and submit to the Mahdī, and they communicated Almohad presence, authority and legitimacy throughout their kingdom. The final—and perhaps the most dramatic—visual articulation of Almohad legitimacy and doctrine is `Abd al-Mu`min's distinctive architectural aesthetic.

³⁵³ My exposition of the letter's contents is paraphrased from Lévi Provençal's summary. See *Documents inédits*, page 23 of the French section. The letter can be consulted on pages 134-40 of the Arabic section.

³⁵⁴ The text of this *murshida* begins on page 241 of Ibn Tūmart, *A`azz mā yuṭlab*. In his letter, `Abd al-Mu`min signals that it is this particular spiritual guide that the *ṭalaba* must memorize by citing its opening line, "Know, and may God guide us with you, that all who are legally sound of mind..." See Lévi Provençal, *Documents inédits*, 145.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

2.2 A RIGHTLY-GUIDED AESTHETIC

Perhaps the most immediately appreciable aesthetic change in early Almohad buildings is their marked austerity.³⁵⁶ The smooth, plain silhouettes of the Kutubiyya mosque's arcades, which dominate the viewer's vision, illustrate this characteristic nicely (Figure 2.2). At Tinmal, the effect is less appreciable due to the mosque's semi-ruined state, but one can still glean an idea of its massive, bare volumes from the reconstructed arcades (Figure 2.3). Of course, the mosques do feature some ornament, and Chapter One described how it was concentrated in the buildings' most religiously significant areas, such as the *mihrāb* bays and *qibla* transepts. However, even in these relatively embellished areas the principle of austerity reigns: when viewed alongside the density of ornament adorning the Almoravid Great mosque of Tlemcen (completed c. 1136), the Tinmal and Kutubiyya mosques seem restrained and almost Spartan in comparison (Compare Figures 1.6, 1.7 and 1.16, respectively).

The austere ideal also extends to the forms of the ornament. The Tinmal and Kutubiyya mosques' vegetal ornament, which also breaks from the Almoravid tradition, best typifies this characteristic. Almoravid vegetal ornament depicts each individual frond of its compound leaves, and it completely fills the spaces that it occupies, leaving almost no negative space (Figure 1.2). In comparison, Almohad vegetal ornament is strikingly sober: for example, the Kutubiyya mosque's window screens present smooth, featureless outlines of plants. And rather than filling their fields with leafy abundance, the Almohad vines calmly wind through their panels' ample background space (Figure 2.4). Even in the few places where the Tinmal and Kutubiyya mosques' vegetation consists of more than a silhouette, its location downplays the visual impact of the vegetal elements. For example, one could understand the incisions on the

³⁵⁶ Because their ornamental programs are so similar, my analysis identifies the aesthetic elements that are shared between the Kutubiyya and Tinmal mosques. For a fuller description of both buildings, see Chapter One.

leaves of the Almohad-made capitals of each building as abstracted representations of their composite parts (Figure 2.5). However, these capitals seem small and insignificant compared to the massive volumes of the arcades above them (Figure 2.6). Similarly, the Kutubiyya mosque's minaret houses panels of analogous vegetal ornament, but a viewer would have a difficult time discerning its details, since the panels are located in its upper registers.

The principle of austerity also dictates the forms of the Tinmal and Kutubiyya mosques' geometric ornament, if in a subtler way. In both buildings, one finds the principle geometric motif in a frieze of eight-pointed stars that frames parts of their *mihrāb* façades and surrounds the entire perimeter of their *qibla* transepts (Figures 2.7 and 2.8). Certain of the Kutubiyya mosque's vaulted ceilings, as well as several panels found in the highest registers of its minaret, also house either latticed or painted geometric motifs (Figures 2.9 and 2.10, respectively). At Tinmal, the small frieze of windows on the *mihrāb* façade originally featured tight geometric interlace. With the exception of the latter, the geometric ornament in `Abd al-Mu'min's mosques is relatively open: the wide spaces between its lines clearly define its positive and negative space. Moreover, the ornament is also exclusively composed of straight lines. While certain similarities do obtain between Almohad and some Almoravid designs, the former's uncomplicated forms and sharp definition still conform to the principles of austerity and restraint.³⁵⁷

There is a clearer difference between the use of architectural motifs in the Almoravid and early Almohad buildings. First, the Kutubiyya and Tinmal mosques substitute the Almoravid mosques' proliferation of lush, intricate floral and vegetal motifs with a greater reliance on spare

³⁵⁷ The Almohads do seem to have straightened the curvilinear lines found in Almoravid geometric ornament (Figure 1.1). This example of curvilinear Almoravid geometric ornament is perhaps not the best comparison, as one is from a secular building and the other a movable liturgical object. However, given the paucity of exempla it is the best available.

architectural silhouettes. The architectural forms in `Abd al-Mu`min`'s constructions are also more restrained than those found in Almoravid mosques. A comparison between the rather standard polylobed arches found in the Kutubiyya and Tinmal mosques (Figures 2.11 and 2.12) and those in the Almoravid Qarawiyyin mosque in Fez (Figure 2.13) make the Almoravid examples—with their nearly-circular lobes, pointed apex and somewhat awkward proportions—seem almost mannered. A similar impression obtains in a comparison of these three buildings' lambrequin arches: the Almohad examples do feature small flourishes and S-shaped incisions, but the Almoravid arches' lobes are even further divided into smaller triplets.

Like many scholars before me, I affirm that the typical restraint of Almohad religious architecture stems from both the Mahdī's values and his doctrine. Concerning the former, al-Baydhaq describes several instances in which Ibn Tūmart either condemns the vice of luxury or upholds the virtue of austerity. For example, when he entered the city of Bajja, he “prohibited the people from wearing sandals that had tassels and turbans from the Age of Ignorance. [...] He also said, ‘Do not dress in women’s clothing, for it is prohibited.’”³⁵⁸ In the village of Sa’, the Mahdī also censured women who took pains to enhance their beauty. Addressing their *faqīh*, Ibn Tūmart said:

“How can you leave the women bejeweled and adorned like that? As though they were in a marriage procession going to their husbands! Do you not fear God? Truly there is no right way for those [*fuqahā`*] who alter [what is known to be] evil; on the contrary, this is an act of the first era of ignorance, and they oppose God in these deeds. Do they not take an example from the speech of the Most High, “And tell the female believers to lower their eyes, to guard their sex and to not show the ornaments of their bodies...?”³⁵⁹

In both of these cases the Mahdī censures the decadent customs of his contemporaries and urges them to adopt more modest, austere practices. This activity clearly forms part of Ibn Tūmart's performance the *ḥisba*, which indicates that for him, limiting the ways that Muslims were allowed

³⁵⁸ Al-Baydhaq, *Ta`rīkh al-muwaḥḥidīn*, 52.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 61.

to adorn themselves formed part of “forbidding evil.” In this sense, Ibn Tūmart led by example: he wore plain woolen clothing and his mount of choice was a simple donkey.

The Mahdī led by example in another important way as well. Chapter One has already explained how he built mosques where they were needed and restored others that had fallen into ruin. According to al-Baydhaq, this happened on at least six occasions, and he raised one of these new mosques in Tinmal.³⁶⁰ Fromherz affirms that Ibn Tūmart’s restoration of crumbling North African mosques prefigures his role as a restorer of religion, although the author also acknowledges that without a thorough archeological survey of the Mahdī’s route, it is impossible to confirm that they had existed.³⁶¹ However, if the Mahdī did build or restore many mosques, these structures would have provided important architectural models for `Abd al-Mu`min, as he accompanied Ibn Tūmart across the Maghrib. Given the latter’s emphasis on personal austerity, the mosques would likely have been rather plain. García-Arenal lends textual support to this idea by identifying a text by al- Ṭurṭūshī—with whom the Mahdī reportedly studied—that lists certain changes that had been made in mosque architecture and advocates a return to the simplicity of the buildings used by the earliest Muslim community.³⁶²

In addition to manifesting Ibn Tūmart’s values, `Abd al-Mu`min’s austere aesthetic expresses certain aspects of the doctrine of *tawhīd*. In the preceding pages, I have explained how the Mahdī demanded that all of his followers acknowledge and affirm his interpretation of God’s

³⁶⁰ See *Ibid.*, 52, 58, 71 and 72. In the city of Mallala, the impetus actually came from the townspeople, who wished to build a mosque so that Ibn Tūmart would have a place to teach. *Ibid.*, 52.

³⁶¹ Fromherz, *The Almohads*, 44, and notes 103 and 104, page 217.

³⁶² García-Arenal, *Messianism*, 187. The text is al- Ṭurṭūshī’s *Kitāb al-hawādith wa-l-bida`* and it can be consulted in Muḥammad ibn al-Walīd Ṭurṭūshī and `Abd al-Majīd Turkī, *Kitāb al-Ḥawādith wa-al-bida`* (Bayrūt, Lubnān: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1990). In it, al-Ṭurṭūshī relates a hadith in which the Prophet’s companions wish to ornament a certain mosque that had been constructed in Medina. In response, the Prophet says, “‘Nay, a booth like the booth of Moses,’ and added the words *Mā arā al-amr illā a`jal min ḍālika* according to one version, or *al-amr asra` min ḍālika* according to another. In this case, and as Kister points out, *amr* is equivalent to *sā`a*, the time of total calamity which will be followed by resurrection. *Amr* denotes here an affair which will put an end to life in general. The Prophet was saying that there was no need to restore or sumptuously embellish the mosques because the Hour was near.” (García-Arenal, *Messianism*, 187.) See also Meir J. Kister, “A booth like the booth of Moses. A study of an early *ḥadīth*,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and Africa Studies* 25 (1962): 150-155.

unity: a highly abstracted concept that denied all notions of God's corporeality and similarity to the created world. In order to foster this conceptualization of *tawḥīd*, Ibn Tūmart composed his two *murshidas*, one of which `Abd al-Mu'min required his subjects to memorize on the pain of death. The first part of this *murshida* reads:

Know—and my God guide you as well as us—that it is incumbent (Ar. *wujiba*) on all legally capable [Muslims] to know that Almighty God is singular in his power. He is the Creator of the world in its entirety, superior and inferior, the Throne and the Chair, and the Heavens and Earth, including all that each contains and all that is between them. All created beings are subject to his [transcendent] power, and not an atom is moved without his permission. He existed before creation, and he has no before or after, no above or below, no left or right, no in front or behind, no “all” or “some.” He is not particularized in the mind and not given form with the eye, nor is He pictured in the imagination or conceived with reason. He is not attended by conjectures or by thoughts. There is nothing like Him; He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing.³⁶³

This citation reveals both Ibn Tūmart's strict abstraction of the concept of God and his insistence that *every* Muslim individual share this belief. It also demonstrates that the Mahdī did not view belief in *tawḥīd* to be beyond the intellectual capacities of his followers, or at least those who were legally competent. Instead, he elucidates the doctrine using simple language featuring contrasted pairs of binary opposites.

It is significant that in later generations, this egalitarian approach to understanding *tawḥīd* is substituted by the idea that certain religious truths, the Almohad idea of *tawḥīd* among them, should be kept from those believers with lesser intellectual capacities.³⁶⁴ For example, the famous philosopher Ibn Rushd (d. 1198), who was employed by `Abd al-Mu'min's successor Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf, strongly believed that everyday Muslims must be discouraged from inquiring about God's incorporeality. Because the ordinary believer was incapable of fully understanding God's absolute transcendence, Ibn Rushd argues that such inquiries would likely lead him to apostatize.³⁶⁵ However, Ibn Tūmart does not seem to think it necessary for the average believer to comprehend God's transcendence. Rather, he simply commands his

³⁶³ Ibn Tūmart, *A`azz mā yuḥlab*, 241. The last sentence is Qur'ān 42:2.

³⁶⁴ This idea will be further analyzed in Chapter Three.

³⁶⁵ Ibrahim Najjar, trans. *Faith and Reason in Islam*, 75-7.

followers to “know” (Ar. *ā`lim*) that God is absolutely one, that He cannot be situated in a place or imagined in the mind and that He is unlike any other thing that they have ever experienced. In other words, for Ibn Tūmart, whether an Almohad believer had actually thought through the mechanics of God’s transcendence was secondary to his sincere affirmation of it.

I propose that Ibn Tūmart’s simple, egalitarian approach to understanding *tawḥīd* finds expression not only in his *murshidas*, but also in the ornamental austerity of the first Almohad mosques. While the Maḥdī’s earthly, political organization was clearly hierarchical, the Almohads believed that God would judge all believers according to the same divine criteria, foremost of which was affirmation of the Almohad *tawḥīd*. And while Ibn Tūmart never—at least in the medieval sources—criticized the rich aesthetic of Almoravid mosques, he certainly condemned `Alī ibn Yūsuf for defiling their sanctity with his rich vestments. The implication is that had the Almoravid sultan been more aware of his surroundings and less concerned with impressing his courtiers, he might have prevented this sacrilege. It is fitting, then, that when an ordinary Almohad believer walked into an Almohad house of worship, he was not confronted with a decadent and overwhelming aesthetic akin to that found in the Almoravid mosques. Rather, the Tinmal and Kutubiyya mosques’ unadorned walls and sober, simple ornamental systems could have reminded him of his belonging to a group that defined themselves by an uncomplicated acknowledgment of God’s unity.

In practice, of course, even early Almohad society was deeply stratified. In the first section of this chapter, I argued that `Abd al-Mu`min took great pains to ensure that both his fellow Almohads and his new subjects recognized and affirmed the caliph’s elite status. Indeed, I believe that both the Kutubiyya mosque’s *maqṣūra* screen and—if Meunié and Terrasse are correct—the addition of its second building were meant to foreground the caliph’s status by

separating separating him and his entourage from the rest of Marrakesh's population. Neither of these efforts sit particularly well with the egalitarian interpretation just proposed for the Tinmal and Kutubiyya mosques' aesthetic. However, recognizing that the Almohad caliphs, beginning with `Abd al-Mu'min, employed multifaceted legitimizing strategies "regardless of mutual contradictions" helps resolve this problem.³⁶⁶ In other words, the Almohads were less concerned with presenting a watertight system of inculcation as they were with instilling Almohad doctrine and prolonging their rule with respect to as many opposing positions as was possible.

`Abd al-Mu'min's manipulations of his genealogy help to illustrate this principle. For the Masmūda majority, who wanted a leader from among their own tribe, he could invoke his adoptive ties to the Mahdī, which, according to Fromherz and Fletcher, would have trumped his actual Zanāta heritage.³⁶⁷ Once he took the caliphal title, however, `Abd al-Mu'min chose to emphasize his ties to both the Prophet Muḥammad and to the Andalusian Umayyads. Both of these claimed bloodlines are quite unlikely, or at least very difficult to prove, given his Zanāta origins. In short, `Abd al-Mu'min presented himself as the heir to whoever was politically expedient, regardless of contradictions. I argue that he employed this same strategy when it came time to build his mosques.³⁶⁸

While `Abd al-Mu'min's ornamental system is clear and orderly when viewed holistically, it is also defined by a certain ambiguity in its detail. For example, strikingly organic shapes embellish the *sebka* situated underneath the arches that frame the Tinmal mosque's *miḥrāb* bay (Figure 2.14). However, *sebka* is typically an architecturally-derived motif: in this case it even originates in a small, blind arch depicted at the larger arch's base. This tension

³⁶⁶ Buresi, "D'une péninsule à l'autre," 7.

³⁶⁷ Fromherz, *The Almohads*, 102; Fletcher, "Anthropological Context," 45.

³⁶⁸ In fact, the Kutubiyya mosque was not the only Almohad building intended to be "read" in different, even conflicting, ways by distinct sets of viewers; Chapter Three will argue that the Mosque of Seville functioned in a similar way.

between organic and inorganic forms also characterizes the blind arcades housed within the Kutubiyya mosque's *mihrāb* niche. Immediately above the capitals that crown their engaged columns, an S-shaped motif incised with similar organic designs transitions to the arch above.³⁶⁹ The two buildings' *muqarnas* domes present a final example of this phenomenon. Unlike the small panels of dense vegetal ornament tucked into the cells of Almoravid *muqarnas* (Figure 2.15), early Almohad *muqarnas* includes fluted cells that recall the floral and palmette designs incorporated into the buildings' *mihrāb* façades and bays (Figures 1.15, 1.7 and 1.19, respectively).

The tension between the Tinmal and Kutubiyya mosques' architectural and vegetal forms takes its cues from Ibn Tūmart's doctrine. As shown above, the Maḥdī used evocative pairs of opposites, often coupled with natural imagery, to foster his followers' belief in God's necessity, His transcendence and His dissimilarity to the created world. In Ibn Tūmart's words, "neither the earth nor the heavens, not water nor air, neither the inhabited nor uninhabited worlds," can exist apart from God; furthermore, "He has neither before nor after, neither above nor below," and "He knows what is in the land and in the sea."³⁷⁰ Ibn Tūmart also employed binary opposites when he expounded his doctrine of the Imām and Maḥdī, both of whom must possess truth, right-guidedness and justice in order to dispel falsehood, error and injustice.³⁷¹

While it is difficult to characterize any one visual element as the "opposite" of another, contrasting formal characteristics like those just described fundamentally affect the way that a viewer experiences art and architecture. In fact, the contrast between vegetal and more static forms such as geometry or architecture has been commonly deployed in Islamic ornamental

³⁶⁹ Because capitals featuring leafy ornament had transitioned between columns and arches for centuries before the Almohads, I do not consider them as exempla of this visual ambiguity.

³⁷⁰ Ibn Tūmart, *A`azz mā yuṭlab*, 240-1.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 245-6.

systems since their inception.³⁷² Yet the Tinmal and Kutubiyya mosques' deliberate, typological ambiguity between vegetal and architectural forms is less common: in the pre-Almohad Islamic West, leaves tend to remain leaves, as opposed to transforming into columns or arches. I contend, then, that Almohad "organification" of static, architectural forms was meant to force the viewer to mediate between these two contrasting visual elements. In the same way, the Maḥdī believed that God's absolute transcendence was best apprehended by conceptualizing Him as neither above nor below, yet cognizant of everything contained in the inhabited and uninhabited worlds. Stated another way, studying the ambiguous vegetal-architectural ornamental details in the Tinmal and Kutubiyya mosques requires the same mental exercise as does arbitrating this conflicting language. Both activities align with Ibn Tūmart's methods of fostering belief in an abstract and absolute God.³⁷³

A final characteristic of `Abd al-Mu'min's aesthetic system is its abstraction. Although the relatively large quantity of geometrically- and architecturally-based motifs overshadows the Tinmal and Kutubiyya mosques' vegetal ornament, its pared-down silhouettes are the most recognizably abstracted forms in both buildings. When considered alongside the Maḥdī's second *murshida*, the radical abstraction of the vegetation translates his conception of *tawḥīd* into visual language. For Ibn Tūmart, God "is not given form with the eye, nor is He pictured in the imagination." The rendering of a leaf—itsself a very recognizable, everyday form—in a highly abstracted way reproduces the cerebral process of divesting God of his similarities to the created world, of abstracting the very notion of God. If, before their identification as Almohads, an

³⁷² Some wide-ranging examples are the lush vegetation depicted alongside buildings on very early Islamic monuments such as the Umayyad Mosque of Damascus (c. 715); the pierced stucco dome of the Almoravid mosque of Tlemcen, with its slender ribs and lush vegetation (c. 1136) and the mosaics covering the Great Mosque of Isfahan, which depict vegetation nestled into architectural framework (begun 1611).

³⁷³ I do not argue that all of the Almohads would have understood these complex references to Ibn Tūmart's complicated doctrine of *tawḥīd*. Indeed, the ornament's concentration in the areas closest to the *miḥrāb* suggests that it was intended to be viewed by an audience of the Almohad elite.

Almohad believer imagined God as an anthropomorphic form or even occupying a space, they were now called to forcibly abstract this idea, to not only remove the fronds from the leaf, but to eventually erase even its silhouette.

3 CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, I have proposed a multifaceted interpretation for the two most emblematic Friday mosques sponsored by the first Almohad caliph: the Tinmal and Kutubiyya mosques. Section one concentrated on the mosques' political dimensions. Through each building, `Abd al-Mu`min sought to legitimize his dynasty by defining his relationship to past authority, presenting himself as either continuing a venerable tradition or breaking with an illegitimate one. However, the sets of references that `Abd al-Mu`min used to communicate these ideas differed according to the mosque's location and audience. In the Kutubiyya mosque, they took the forms of the Umayyad capitals in the *maqṣūra*—which fit into `Abd al-Mu`min's larger strategy emulating the Cordoban Umayyad caliphs—and the dramatically-repoliticized Almoravid *minbar*. These citations would have been appropriate for Marrakesh's audience, composed of political rivals (both Almohad and Almoravid), who would have had access to the privileged space in which the message was sent.

At Tinmal, `Abd al-Mu`min painted in broader strokes, using an entire typology—that of the Sufi *ribāṭ*—instead of an architectural detail. This strategy was conceived for an audience of Almohad faithful and pilgrims who were attracted to holy figures embodied by contemporary Sufis. Through an exposition of the development of Andalusian and Maghribī Sufism, I first demonstrated that Ibn Tūmart and his pretensions to Mahdism fit into larger Sufi models of sanctity and authority. When I extended the comparison between Sufism and Almohadism to include architecture, the parallels between these two groups became even clearer. Finally, I

argued that by employing a recognizable typology associated with Sufism, in a place like Tinmal, which was already known for housing the Mahdī's tomb, `Abd al-Mu'min sought to appropriate some of the Sufis' spiritual prestige and even win over some converts to his cause. At the same time, he provided an Almohad alternative to Sufi models of sanctity. This would, in turn, guard against the success of rebels such as Ibn Hūd al-Māssafī, whose movement garnered widespread support and was based on similar claims to Mahdism as was Ibn Tūmart's.

Section two sought to interpret the Kutubiyya and Tinmal mosques' new aesthetic, which, unlike the references that they used to bolster `Abd al-Mu'min's political hegemony, is much the same. As a first step, I explained how the patron's own spiritual inclinations would have aligned closely with the Mahdī's theological outlook, given their relationship. Turning back to the buildings, I identified one of their key aesthetic motifs as austerity, which, I asserted, stems from both the Mahdī's personal asceticism and his straightforward understanding of how his followers ought to accept Almohad *tawhīd*. Next, I argued that the typological ambiguity present in the mosques' ornamental details reproduces the effect of mediating between the binary pairs included in Ibn Tūmart's *murshidas*. Finally, I pointed out that much of the mosques' ornamental program features abstracted forms. This abstraction illustrates Ibn Tūmart's most crucial theological point: the absolute transcendence of God. All three facets of `Abd al-Mu'min's aesthetic assisted him in communicating the Mahdī's message to a larger group of his subjects, even as they visually distinguished him from his dynastic predecessors, the Almoravids.

These efforts indicate that `Abd al-Mu'min's was as invested in upholding the Mahdī's doctrine as he was in underlining his dynasty's political legitimacy. But although I have chosen to place these two activities into separate sections of this chapter, it is important to acknowledge that they are mutually reinforcing. On the one hand, if `Abd al-Mu'min could convince non-

Almohads that the Almohad position was the correct one, it would put an end to many of the divisions within his empire and greatly aid in extending its borders. On the other, if he could convince his own supporters that he was upholding the doctrine of their Mahdī, his non-Masmūda origins and his consolidations of his family's power might be more easily overlooked.

FIGURES CHAPTER TWO



Figure 2.1. Kutubiyya Minbar (Photo courtesy of Antoine Reveau)



Figure 2.2. Arcades, Kutubiyya Mosque (Basset and Terrasse, "Sanctuaires et forteresses almohades (suite)," fig. 75.)



Figure 2.3. Bare Arcades, Tinmal Mosque (Author's Photo)



Figure 2.4. Vegetal Ornament, Kutubiyya Mosque (Basset and Terrasse, "Sanctuaires et forteresses almohades (suite).," pl. 25.)



Figure 2.5. Capital, Tinmal Mosque (Author's Photo)

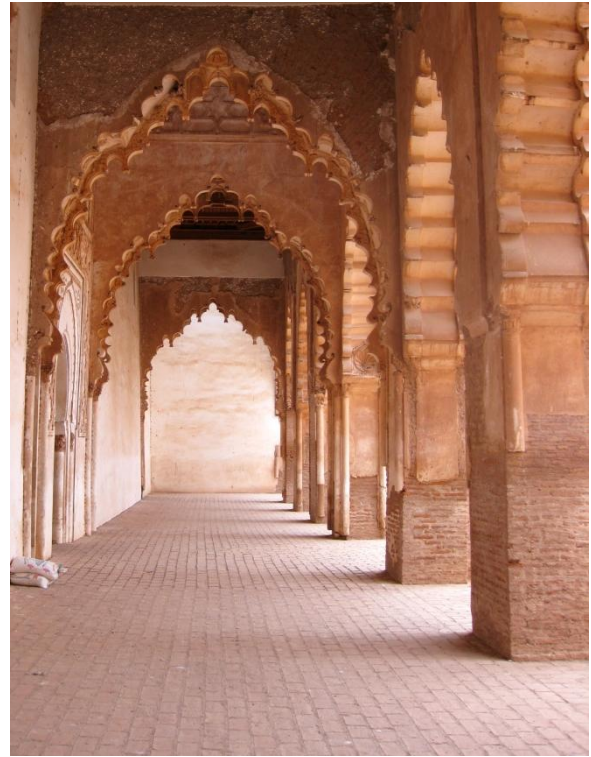


Figure 2.6. Tinmal Capitals in Architectural Context (Author's Photo)



Figure 2.7. Star Frieze, Tinmal Mosque (Author's Photo)

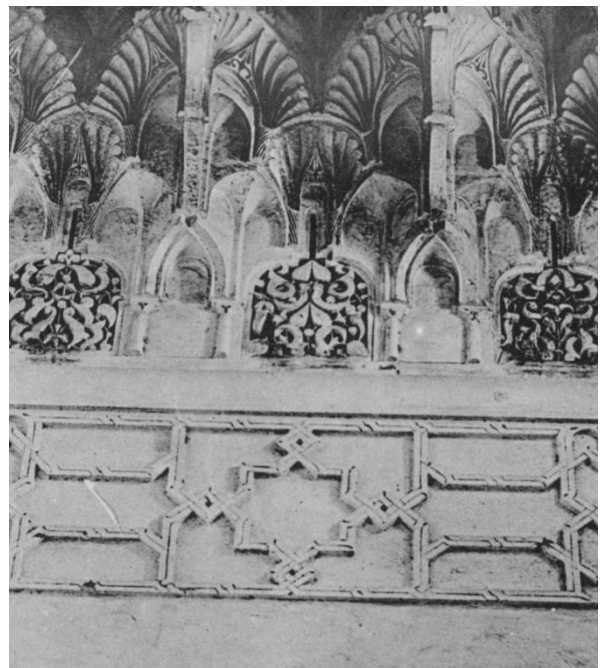


Figure 2.8. Star Frieze, Kutubiyya Mosque (Basset and Terrasse, "Sanctuaires et forteresses almohades (suite)," pl. 25.)

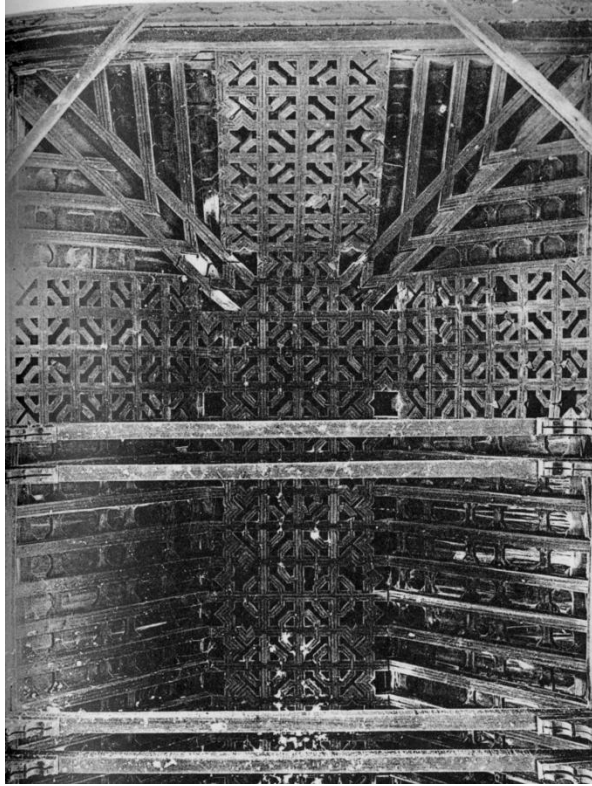


Figure 2.9. Ceiling Lattice, Kutubiyya Mosque (Basset and Terrasse, "Sanctuaires et forteresses Almohades (suite).," pl. 24.)



Figure 2.10. Remnants of Geometric Ornament, Upper Kutubiyya Minaret (Author's Photo)



Figure 2.11. Polylobed Arches, Kutubiyya Minaret (Author's Photo)

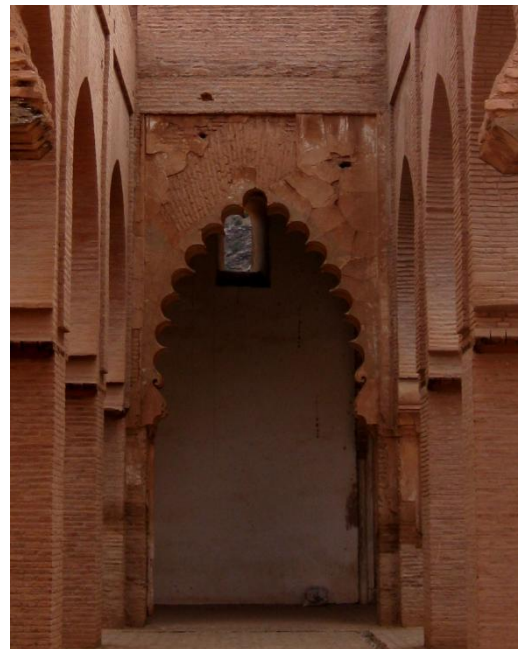


Figure 2.12. Polylobed Arch, Tinmal Mosque (Author's Photo)



Figure 2.13. Polylobed Arch, Qarawiyyin Mosque (Mounir Aqbesi, in Marcos Cobaleda, *Los almorávides*, 395.)



Figure 2.14. Detail of Tinmal's *sebka* (Author's Photo)



Figure 2.15. Vegetal Ornament, Almoravid *Muqarnas*, Qarawiyyin Mosque (Mounir Aqbesi, in Marcos Cobaleda, *Los almorávides*, 399.)

CHAPTER THREE: ABŪ YA`QŪB YŪSUF AND THE GREAT MOSQUE OF SEVILLE

“In this way he [Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf] highlighted the city of Seville, transforming it into a metropolis and edifying it with the most astonishing thing that has ever been seen or heard...”
—Ibn Šāhib al-Šalāt³⁷⁴

In January of 1147, the leading citizens of Seville faced a crisis. If the crumbling authority of the city’s Almoravid governors—who had so decisively swept through Andalusia just fifty years prior—had not been worrisome enough, the winter brought a second Maghribī army to the city walls. The tribes filling this army’s ranks were partisans of a new religious movement calling themselves the Almohads, and they surrounded Seville with fierce determination. Fully aware that they could not withstand an Almohad siege, the city’s Almoravid lieutenant and his garrison fled, and the victorious army flooded the city. The Almohads settled in the palace and surrounding quarter, ousting Sevillian residents and confiscating their property. In response, the city’s leading families sent a delegation to the caliph `Abd al-Mu`min in Marrakesh, hoping that by recognizing his authority, they could address this problem and smooth over the rough transition.

Although `Abd al-Mu`min was sympathetic to the delegates’ complaints, their efforts were largely in vain. Soon after their arrival in the Almohad capital, Seville rebelled against its new sovereigns only to be re-subjugated with an iron fist. Tensions continued throughout the first ten years of Almohad presence in the city, prompting its prominent residents to send a second delegation to Marrakesh. This time, they petitioned the caliph for one of his own sons to govern Seville. The sovereign consented, sending the *sayyid* Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf along with an

³⁷⁴ Ibn Šāhib al-Šalāt, *Al-Mann*, cited in Roldán Castro, “De nuevo,” 16.

army, administers and his trusted adviser, Abū Ja`far Aḥmad ibn `Aṭīyya, to Andalusia.³⁷⁵

`Abd al-Mu`min could not have known it at the time, but assigning Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf to Seville was a decisive moment for both the city and his empire. Seville's cultural landscape had been shaped by the Andalusian Umayyad caliphate (c. 929-1030), during which it had been an important regional center adorned with an impressive Friday mosque and palaces for the caliph's lieutenants.³⁷⁶ During the Taifa period (c. 1030-1091), the city's kings made every effort to ensure its political autonomy and continued flourishing. In particular, their courts attracted learned religious, scientific and literary scholars, whose distinguished presence defined the city as an academic and cultural center.³⁷⁷ Although the final years of Taifa control were chaotic, the peace and stability ushered in by the Almoravids allowed Seville to remain an important cultural capital of Andalusia. When Abū Ya`qūb arrived in 1157, then, he was immersed in a city that had been steeped in poetry, science, jurisprudence and politics for centuries. Despite the scant information concerning his governorship, several scholars have posited that the young man's considerable intellectual gifts would have been further nurtured by contact with the Andalusian elite.³⁷⁸

Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf's career changed dramatically after `Abd al-Mu`min's death in 1163. After a brief reign of forty-five days, the caliph's eldest son Muḥammad was dethroned and Abū Ya`qūb set up in his place, though initially he bore the title of *amīr*, or "commander," rather than caliph. Abū Ḥafṣ `Umar, `Abd al-Mu`min's son and Abū Ya`qūb's full brother, seems to have

³⁷⁵ Jacinto Bosch Vilá, *La Sevilla Islámica 712-1248* (Seville: Universidad de Sevilla, 1984), 152. Much of the introductory material is summarized from this study.

³⁷⁶ See Rafael Valencia, "Islamic Seville: Its Political, Social and Cultural History," vol. 1 of *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*, ed. by Salma Khadra Jayyusi (Leiden, New York, Köln: E.J. Brill, 1994), 138.

³⁷⁷ Wasserstein offers incisive analysis of the politics of this period and also touches on the Almoravids' entry to Andalusia. See especially *The Rise and Fall*, 283-91. For a summary of Seville's cultural life during the Taifa period, see Valencia, "Islamic Seville," 139-40.

³⁷⁸ Viguera Molíns, "Los almohades," 89; Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 309. Of course, the foundation of Abū Ya`qūb's formation was the education he received at his father's school in Marrakesh.

been the main architect of this scheme, and indeed, he participated heavily in decisions made during Abū Ya`qūb's years as *amīr*.³⁷⁹ After a five year diplomatic and letter-writing campaign, Abū Ya`qūb won the support of the rest of his brothers, and he assumed the caliphal title in 1168.³⁸⁰

Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf assumed an active military role over the course of his caliphate, particularly in Andalusia.³⁸¹ Many of his campaigns were directed against Ibn Mardānīsh, the *Rey Lobo* (Eng. "Wolf King") of Christian chronicles and a key Castilian ally, who had emerged as the lord of eastern Andalusia during the chaotic transition period between Almoravid and Almohad rule. *Jihād* against the Christian kingdoms was another of Abū Ya`qūb's major military activities, and official expeditions were preceded by carefully crafted ceremonies, processions, distributions of gifts and banquets.³⁸² The caliph campaigned reasonably successfully against the Castilians but far less so against the Portuguese, whose powerful general Giraldo Sem Pavor (Eng. "Giraldo the Fearless") took advantage of the sovereign's periodic absences to make slow, constant advances on Almohad territory. The Portuguese forces consolidated further after they won Lisbon, Extremadura and Santarem from the Almohads, and the caliph died during an unsuccessful attempt to re-take the latter city in 1184.

Although Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf's military leadership is often criticized, as it compares rather unfavorably to the sweeping successes of his father, the cultural achievements that he fostered are justifiably lauded. In addition to sponsoring scholarship in a wide range of disciplines and amassing a huge collection of books in Marrakesh's royal library, he is

³⁷⁹ Azzāwī, *Rasā'il al-muwaḥḥidiyya 2, Tab'a 1*, 16.

³⁸⁰ Viguera Molíns, "Historia politica," 90.

³⁸¹ The Banū Ghāniyya revolt, which plagued Abū Ya`qūb in the Balearic Islands and Ifrīqiyya, will be further discussed in Chapter Four.

³⁸² Ibn Šāḥib al-Šalāt, *Al-mann*, 208, for example, describes the typical ceremonial processions that took place before the siege of Huete.

traditionally considered to have been a formidable philosopher.³⁸³ This characterization may stem from the privileged relationship that he maintained with the philosophers Ibn Ṭufayl (d. 1185) and Ibn Rushd (d. 1198). Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf also initiated a major building campaign in the southern quarter of Seville that completely transformed the city's urban structure. The project included defensive walls, several palaces (both intra- and extramuros) and urban infrastructure as well as the city's new congregational mosque (Figure 3.1). Its architect, Aḥmad ibn Bāsō, and his construction team broke ground for the Great Mosque of Seville in 1171, and most of the prayer hall was finished by the time of Abū Ya`qūb's death in 1184.³⁸⁴ The caliph's son and successor, al-Manṣūr, fully realized his father's ambitions in 1198 by completing the building and crowning its minaret with an enormous finial made of three gold-plated spheres, said to be visible at a day's journey from the city.

Beyond adorning Seville with architectural wonders such as the Great Mosque—in Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt's words, “the most astonishing thing that has ever been seen or heard”—Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf clearly favored the seat of his former governorship. He secured the city's status as the Almohad capital of Andalusia even after his father had granted that title to Cordoba in 1162. He also carefully divided his time between the city and the empire's true capital of Marrakesh, and at times his Sevillian sojourns lasted years. But for all the favor that the caliph bestowed on the city, the rapport between the Almohads and the Sevillans was complicated, and not all of its citizens were amenable to Almohad presence. Accordingly, the first section of this chapter analyzes how the Mosque of Seville responds to its political environment. It does so first

³⁸³ See Chapter One of Majid Fakhry's *Averroes (Ibn Rushd): His Life, Works and Influence* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2001). The view that the Almohad caliphs were philosophers has recently been questioned by Sarah Stroumsa in her essay “Philosophes almohades ? Averroès, Maïmoides et l'idéologie almohade,” in *Los almohades: problemas y perspectivas*, ed. Patrice Cressier, Ma. Isabel Fierro and Luís Molina, 1137-1162 (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2005). I discuss her argument in more detail below.

³⁸⁴ For details of the mosque's construction phases, see Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *Al-Mann*, cited in Roldán Castro, “De nuevo,” 13-22.

by identifying and discussing the mosque's potential audience, including the Sevillans, the heirs of the subjugated Ibn Mardānīsh and a small but significant group of religious minorities. By combining this analysis with a close reading of Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt's narrative of the mosque's foundation and construction, I argue that the mosque's dimensions and its location were intended to mediate between its patrons and audience.

The next section will show how Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf communicated specific religious ideas through the mosque's ornament. In the service of this goal, it first identifies both the spiritual inclinations of the caliph and their sources. Specifically, the caliph's relationship to the philosophers Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Rushd, as well as to their discipline of philosophy, will be defined. Next, a close reading and comparison of three of Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Rushd's religious texts is offered. In addition to foregrounding the faith that both philosophers had in the rationality of the physical world, these works show that they divided the community of faithful into categories based on their capacities for religious understanding. Although Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Rushd limited the acquisition of true religious knowledge to the elite, each provided simpler ways in which the masses could affirm their faith in God. Finally, I argue that all of these ideas—that of inherent rationality, that of restricting knowledge and that of universal religious truth—are physically manifested in the Mosque of Seville.

This chapter's third section opens with an analysis of Ibn Rushd's aesthetic system through a consideration of three of his philosophical commentaries. They demonstrate his conviction that visual representation is a powerful communicative tool capable of reinforcing societal values. As a contemporary of the Mosque of Seville, Ibn Rushd's belief in the communicative potential of art strengthens the semiotic interpretation of the Mosque of Seville's ornament offered in Section two. Finally, I conclude by identifying the typological and

ornamental changes that have taken place since `Abd al-Mu`min`s time, as well as a change in intended audience. All of these shifts respond to both the political evolution of the Almohad Empire and the evolving needs of the Almohad community.

1 THE MOSQUE OF SEVILLE`S POLITICS OF MEDIATION

1.1. THE ALMOHADS IN SEVILLE AND THEIR ANDALUSIAN AUDIENCE

The first submissions to Almohad authority in Andalusia took place just months before their army threatened the gates of Seville. `Alī ibn `Īsā ibn Maymūn of Cadiz and Ibn Qasī of Mertola—both independent lords who had taken advantage of the weakening Almoravid state—recognized `Abd al-Mu`min as their sovereign in 1146.³⁸⁵ In response to these capitulations, the caliph sent an army led by the sheikh Abū Ishāq Barrāz ibn Muḥammad al-Masūfī in order to hunt down any remaining Almoravids and to submit local kings to his rule. This army took most of central and western Andalusia during 1146 and 1147, including Seville in the latter year. The Sevillans sent a delegation to Marrakesh soon after, intending to officially recognize `Abd al-Mu`min`s authority and, perhaps, to solidify the shaky relations between the Almohads and the Sevillans that had been provoked by the city`s initial resistance.³⁸⁶ Unfortunately, news of Seville`s uprising arrived during the delegation`s stay in the capital; the disconcerted delegates could but nervously observe that Almohad troops constantly surrounded their lodgings, watching their every move.³⁸⁷

The situation ended favorably for the Sevillans in Marrakesh when their compatriots reconciled with the Almohads, but this episode points to the troubled relations between the

³⁸⁵ This latter, as we saw in Chapter Two, had already been waging war against the Almoravids since 1144. See Viguera Molíns, “Los almohades,” 86.

³⁸⁶ Rachid El Hour, “La transición entre las épocas almorávide y almohade vista a través de las familias de ulemas,” in *Estudios Biográficos-Onomásticos de Andalusia X*, ed. Maribel Fierro and María Luisa Ávila (Madrid-Granada: Centro Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1999), 289-90.

³⁸⁷ Manuela Marín, “Abu Bakr ibn al-Yadd y su familia,” in *Estudios Biográficos-Onomásticos de Andalusia X*, ed. Maribel Fierro and María Luisa Ávila (Madrid-Granada: Centro Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1999), 240.

Almohads and Sevillans. Part of the problem was that the Almohad garrison and administrative body had confiscated property from sizeable portion of Seville's inhabitants so that they might all be lodged in the same neighborhood. Soon after the first influx of Almohads, the Maḥdī's brothers arrived with even more. They, too, seized property in what could now be termed the city's "Almohad quarter," and they even killed some leading citizens.³⁸⁸ The attack of a contingent of Almoravids from Cordoba further exacerbated the situation, as prices soared and hunger gnawed at the Sevillans' stomachs. All of these factors resulted in social unrest and unfavorable public opinion of the Almohads, who had brought war, poverty and instability along with them.³⁸⁹ It is no wonder, then, that the city rebelled against their new lords at the first opportunity, even though this action was sure to have negative consequences for their delegation in Marrakesh.

After the Almohads put down the city's revolt, `Abd al-Mu'min directly addressed the complaints of its citizens in a letter sent to their governors. In addition to chastising the latter for exploiting the Sevillans and demanding that they uphold the law, he summoned the Maḥdī's brothers to Marrakesh, thereby removing a key destabilizing factor.³⁹⁰ The caliph also nominated a new governor, Yūsuf ibn Sulaymān, in the hopes that he would represent a fresh start of Almohad-Sevillian relations. For his part, the general al-Masūfī built a fortress near the royal palace in an attempt to address the complaint that Almohad forces were actually living in the city's cemetery. However, his actions only further incited the Sevillans: in order to clear ground for the new complex, more homes and shops were destroyed. In addition to the inconvenience of displacement, these buildings' proprietors felt that they were unfairly

³⁸⁸ María Jesús Viguera Molíns, "La ciudad almohade de Sevilla," in *VIII Centenario de la Giralda (1198-1998)*, coord. Falcon Marqués (Córdoba: Publicaciones Obra Social y Cultural Cajasur, 1998), 18-19.

³⁸⁹ El Hour, "La transición," 291.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.* Once in Marrakesh the Maḥdī's brothers promptly began to foment the rebellion against `Abd al-Mu'min that led to their deaths.

recompensed for their demolished property.³⁹¹ The situation was still precarious in 1157 when the second Andalusian delegation to Marrakesh requested that `Abd al-Mu`min give them one of his sons as governor, no doubt because of the tranquilizing effect that his presence was likely to have. Under Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf's direction, Almohad-Sevillian relations do seem to have improved, although not without additional conflict.³⁹²

The Mosque of Seville's audience included not only the Sevillian citizens but also the Banū Mardanīsh. Beginning with `Abd al-Mu`min's caliphate, Murcia spearheaded the Andalusian resistance to Almohad authority, with Ibn Mardanīsh and his father-in-law, Ibn Hamushk, controlling the territories extending from Valencia to Segura and Jaen, including Ecija, Carmona, Guadix and, briefly, even Cordoba. In 1160, their armies marched dangerously close to Seville, forcing Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf, still in the capacity of governor, to urgently request reinforcements from his father.³⁹³ While the troops he received were enough to stave off a siege of the city, Ibn Mardanīsh and his army—Christian mercenaries and troops from allied Castile among them—continued to plague Abū Ya`qūb once he became caliph.³⁹⁴ In 1165, for example, he and his brother Abū Ḥafṣ `Umar campaigned against them with only limited success.³⁹⁵

In 1169, Ibn Hamushk submitted to the Almohads.³⁹⁶ When he and his new Almohad allies attacked Ibn Mardanīsh three years later, the Almohads were finally able to make significant territorial gains. Consequently, an increasing number of Ibn Mardanīsh's allies

³⁹¹ Viguera Molíns, "La ciudad almohade," 19.

³⁹² Marín, "Abu Bakr ibn al-Yadd," 244-5.

³⁹³ Viguera Molíns, "Los almohades," 86.

³⁹⁴ These Christian allies did not go unnoticed by the Almohads, who made every attempt to demonize Ibn Mardanīsh and Ibn Hamushk by their association with the infidel. For an excellent analysis of these propagandistic efforts, see Jones, "The Christian Companion." The relationship between Christians and Muslims in the Almohad period will be further considered in Chapter Five.

³⁹⁵ Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *Al-mann*, 74-89 describes these campaigns.

³⁹⁶ The Almohad sources give the impetus for Ibn Hamushk's submission as his "regret," the increasingly unpredictable and bizarre behavior of Ibn Mardanīsh—who went as far as to murder one of his wives, Ibn Hamushk's daughter—and steady Almohad advances. See Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *Al-Mann*, 147.

defected to the Almohads, and when the Wolf King died in March of 1172, still sovereign of Murcia, he had already arranged for his sons to surrender to Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf. In exchange for their autonomy, the Banū Mardanīsh married into the royal family, receiving important political and administrative positions, often in the same cities that they had governed on behalf of their father.³⁹⁷ However, as Viguera Molíns points out, the Almohad chroniclers do not cast these surrender terms entirely positively, their interest in emphasizing the mercy and goodwill of the caliph notwithstanding. She cites al-Baydhaq in particular, who relates how Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf installed trusted members of the most loyal Almohad tribes in the eastern parts of the peninsula. Their task was to monitor the degree to which the Banū Mardanīsh faithfully represented Almohad authority to their former territories.³⁹⁸

Both the Sevillans and the Banū Mardanīsh represent disaffected Muslim audiences for the Great Mosque of Seville. Of course, Andalusia had also been home to significant Jewish and Christian subject populations since the eighth-century Arab conquest.³⁹⁹ With this in mind, I now consider the religious minorities of the Almohad period, who comprise a third audience for the mosque. In the primary sources, Almohad conquests of Maghribī cities tend to have disastrous consequences for their resident Christians or Jews, whose choice is often presented as conversion or death.⁴⁰⁰ Al-Marrākushī, for example, describes how the Almohads rejected the

³⁹⁷ Abu Ya`qūb himself married a daughter of Ibn Mardanīsh and his son Abū Yūsuf (al-Manṣūr) married another. See Viguera Molíns, "Los almohades," 93. On the integration of the Banī Mardanīsh into the Almohad hierarchy, see Ambrosio Huici Miranda, "La participación de los grandes jeques en el gobierno del Imperio Almohade," *Tamuda* 6 (1958), 263-4.

³⁹⁸ Viguera Molíns, "Los almohades," 94.

³⁹⁹ An analysis of the history of the religious minorities in Andalusia clearly lies beyond the scope of this study, but interested readers might start with Richard Hitchcock, *Mozarabs in medieval and early modern Spain: identities and influences* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2008) for Christian minorities and Norman Roth, *Jews, Visigoths, and Muslims in medieval Spain: cooperation and conflict* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994) for their Jewish counterparts. My discussion will rely heavily upon a recent article by Amira Bennison, "Almohad *tawhid* and its implications for religious difference," *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 2.2 (2010): 195-216. This issue of *JMIS* is, in its entirety, dedicated to the study of religious minorities under the Almohads.

⁴⁰⁰ As Bennison notes, this appears in the context of a famous edict said to be given by `Abd al-Mu`min to recently-conquered Ifriqiyya and extrapolated for the rest of the Almohad period. Significantly, she continues, it is mostly

pact of the *dhimmī* and how there was “neither synagogue nor church to be found in all the Islamic lands of the Maghrib” for as long as they controlled them.⁴⁰¹ As Bennison points out, it is all too easy to de-contextualize these reports—which narrate a complex series of events that unfolded within an equally-complex process of building an empire—and simply attribute them to Almohad (or, I might add, Berber) “fanaticism.”⁴⁰²

With this cautionary advice in mind, it is worth pausing to examine the causes, effects and extent of the Almohads’ persecution of members of the other confessions.⁴⁰³ Bennison explains that justifications of intolerance for any religious deviation can easily be culled from Almohad doctrine.⁴⁰⁴ However, she is also quick to point out that in practice, entire communities—including both small hamlets during Ibn Tūmart’s time and large cities during Abd al-Mu’min’s campaigns—were “converted” to Almohadism⁴⁰⁵ without any accompanying rituals or contracts. The pragmatic and wholesale way that the Almohads allowed conquered communities to embrace Almohad *tawḥīd* calls into question the genuineness of their conversion.⁴⁰⁶ Indeed, al-Marrākushī tells us that al-Manṣūr fretted over the sincerity of Jewish

later or eastern sources such as *Al-kāmil fī-l-ta’rīkh* of Ibn al-Athīr or al-Nurwayī’s *Nihayat fī-l-`arab fī funūn al-adab* that cite this edict. See Bennison, “Almohad *tawḥīd*,” 196.

⁴⁰¹ Al-Marrākushī, *Histoire des almohades*, 266.

⁴⁰² Bennison also deftly tackles the difficult problem of the veracity of these sources, noting that early scholars such as tended to take them literally, where others dismissed them as fictitious on the basis of their confused chains of transmission. Most recently, several scholars have concluded that there is a lost, common source for many of the Eastern authors. This work, which was written by a Zirid prince exiled in Damascas who was also a member of `Abd al-Mu’min’s court, would have potentially been quite accurate. See “Almohad *tawḥīd*,” 197-199.

⁴⁰³ If reports such as al-Marrākushī’s are true, one could question the very existence of communities during the Almohad period.

⁴⁰⁴ Briefly, she analyzes the hadīth found in the *A`azz mā yuṭlab* and concludes that the Almohads viewed their movement in much the same way as the early Muslim community did theirs: it sought to bring all monotheists under the umbrella of the one true religion, this time represented by Almohad *tawḥīd*. See “Almohad *tawḥīd*,” 203. When coupled with the Almohad moral imperative to command right and forbid wrong, which I discussed in Chapter One, this idea could authorize violence against all non-Almohad communities, as it did with the Almoravids.

⁴⁰⁵ For expediency’s sake, I define “Almohadism” as the adherence to the set of Islamic beliefs professed by Ibn Tūmart and propagated by his successors. Of course, at any given time these beliefs could be modified.

⁴⁰⁶ Bennison, “Almohad *tawḥīd*,” 207.

converts to Islam, forcing them to wear ridiculously long-sleeved garments and special caps in order to distinguish them from “old” Muslims.⁴⁰⁷

So while it is safe to assume that the sizes of both Maghribī and Andalusian communities of Christians and Jews decreased significantly during the Almohad period, the situation is more complex than it might first seem. Along with the uncertainty—shared by the Almohad caliphs’—about how fully these communities embraced Almohad Islam throughout the empire, in Andalusia the conquest narratives do not always describe the new subject populations’ options as conversion, immigration or death.⁴⁰⁸ For instance, no mention of brutality accompanies the conquest of Cordoba, which was home to the great Jewish theologian and philosopher Maimonides, his family and a community of his coreligionists.⁴⁰⁹ This contrasts sharply with the cases of Granada and Seville; in the latter city, for example, we have already seen violence perpetrated against *all* the opponents of the Almohads, regardless of their creed. Finally, in

⁴⁰⁷ “Toward the end of his reign, Abū Yūsuf [al-Manṣūr] ordered the Jews living in the Maghrib to distinguish themselves by a particular style of dress consisting of blue vestments that had sleeves so long that they fell upon their feet and, instead of a turban, a cap of the vilest shape ... What prompted Abū Yūsuf to take this measure of imposing a particular and distinctive dress upon them was his doubt concerning the sincerity of their Islam: ‘If,’ he would say, ‘I were sure that they were really Muslims, I would allow them to mix with the Muslims by marriage and by all other ways, and if I were certain that they were infidels, I would kill their men, enslave their children, and confiscate their property for the benefit of all Muslims. However, I am undecided about them.’ al-Marrākushī, *Histoire des almohades*, 265. Maribel Fierro also discusses this anxiety in “Conversion, ancestry and universal religion: the case of the Almohads in the Islamic West (sixth/twelfth-seventh/thirteenth centuries),” *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 2.2 (2010): 155-173. Al-Manṣūr’s fears were not unfounded; a text traditionally attributed to the great Jewish philosopher and theologian Moses ben Maimon (Maimonides), *The Epistle to Yemen*, encourages Jews to convert outwardly and practice Judaism in secret if they are unable to immigrate to a place where they may freely profess their faith. See Moses Maimonides and Abraham S. Halkin, *Epistle to Yemen* (New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1952) for the Arabic original plus three medieval Hebrew translations and a modern English translation. For a recent study of Maimonides, see Sarah Stroumsa, *Maimonides in His World: Portrait of a Mediterranean Thinker* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

⁴⁰⁸ The sources also mention several instances in which `Abd al-Mu`min allowed a grace period for minorities to sell their possessions and depart a conquered city. See Bennis, “Almohad *tawhid*,” 213.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid. Indeed, Maimonides’ biography supports the idea that Jewish life was present and active after the rise of the Almohads. For example, sometime in the middle of the twelfth century, Maimonides and his family moved from Cordoba to Fez. Although this move has often been described as a reaction to Almohad persecution of the Jews in Cordoba, Davidson rightly points out that if this were the case, the ben Maimon family would hardly have moved closer to the Almohad center of power in Marrakesh. He also provides a thorough discussion of the historical accounts of the Almohads’ brutality toward the Jews, concluding that some of the reports may have been exaggerated. See Herbert A. Davidson, *Moses Maimonides: The Man and His Works* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 9-28.

addition to these “native” Andalusian minorities, we must acknowledge that populations of Christian slaves, mercenaries,⁴¹⁰ prisoners of war and merchants also traveled throughout the empire.⁴¹¹ Along with their Muslim counterparts, these groups must be counted among the Great Mosque of Seville’s viewers.

1.2. BETWEEN RULER AND RULED: THE MOSQUE AS MITIGATOR

When ground was broken for the Great Mosque of Seville in 1172, the mosque of Ibn `Adābas had already served as the city’s Friday mosque for centuries. This building was sponsored by the eponymous *qāḍī* of `Abd al-Raḥmān II, the Andalusian Umayyad caliph, in 829-30.⁴¹² Although Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf could have renovated or expanded upon the Ibn `Adābas mosque, Ibn Šāḥib al-Šalāt tells us that he founded an entirely new building because of

the religious zeal and piety by which the Most High set him apart—in this way he highlighted the city of Seville, transforming it into a metropolis [with the rank of capital] and edifying it with the most astonishing thing that has ever been seen or heard—and [because of] the fact that he had lived in Seville during the spring and summer.⁴¹³

According to Ibn Šāḥib al-Šalāt, then, the caliph founded the new mosque not only because of his piety, but also because of a personal connection to the city of Seville that was cultivated by his having lived there “during the spring and summer,” and, no doubt, during the eight years of his governorship.

The passage following Ibn Šāḥib al-Šalāt’s declaration of the caliph’s motivations, which expounds the reasons that a new building was necessary, is also worth citing in full:

⁴¹⁰ On Christian mercenaries, often prisoners of war, see Eva Lapiedra Gutiérrez, “Christian participation in Almohad armies and personal guards,” *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 2.2 (2010): 235-250. Although the Christian contingents were often deported to Morocco to avoid a potential alliance with their Northern coreligionists, the presence of Christians in the caliph’s personal guard suggests that certain of them would have circulated in Andalusia as well.

⁴¹¹ On the special status afforded to Italian Christian merchants during Almohad times, see David Abulafia, “Christian Merchants in the Almohad Cities,” *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 2.2 (2010): 251-257. While there is no mention of Andalusian cities, the study underscores the pragmatic and often economically-motivated nature of relations between the Almohads and religious minorities.

⁴¹² Although it is no longer standing, the foundations of the Ibn `Adābas mosque’s patio can be seen near the current church of San Salvador. See Berenjano, “La remodelación,” 182-3.

⁴¹³ Ibn Šāḥib al-Šalāt, *Al-Mann*, cited in Roldán Castro, “De nuevo,” 16.

The Almohads had conquered this city [Seville] and used a small Friday mosque situated in the fortress, inside the city of Seville, both for daily prayers and for Friday prayers. But once they were established [in Seville], the mosque became too small because of the natural increase of the population and because of the influx of the Almohad delegations and their dependents. There was another Friday mosque in Seville known as ‘the mosque of [Ibn] `Adābas,’ that also became too small for its inhabitants, who resorted to praying in its patios, in the adjacent open spaces and even in the margins of the contiguous markets. Because of this, they could not follow the prescribed ritual forms of prayer, and it is possible that their prayers might even be invalidated as a result. But in no previous time could any of the sovereigns or emirs undertake the necessary interventions in order to enlarge the mosque, and this was because they were so focused on the exercising of power and so impassioned about waging war, not to mention because of how they abandoned the Muslims [their subjects]. [Nor had they had the opportunity] to build a place of residence for the caliph until God—may He be glorified—united Islam with both the noble restoration of *tawhīd* after this period of negligence and with the proclamation of the caliph—the Commander of the Faithful Abū Ya`qūb, son of the Commander of the Faithful, may God be pleased with them—with whom He restored the caliphate. With him [Abū Ya`qūb] they reached the highest limits of science and religion, gaining recompense and reward with the construction of this great Friday mosque that offered spaciousness to the faithful.⁴¹⁴

By offering this set of circumstances that prompted the caliph to build Seville’s the new mosque, Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt casts Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf in the mold of the ideal Islamic sovereign, concerned with and responsible for the physical and spiritual well-being of his subjects.⁴¹⁵ Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt contrasts the caliph with the previous “sovereigns or emirs” who were too busy enjoying their temporal authority and waging war even to enlarge the old mosque, let alone to provide themselves with a proper residence. This lamentable situation only changed with the reestablishment of *tawhīd*, which, in an Almohad context, can be identified with submission to Almohad religious and political authority.⁴¹⁶ Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt closes this passage by portraying Abū Ya`qūb’s caliphate as the fullest realization of Almohad *tawhīd* and by predicting that God will reward him for his attention to the needs of his faithful subjects.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

⁴¹⁵ Domínguez Berenjano comes to a similar conclusion about the constructions of Abu Ya`qūb in Seville in general. See “La remodelación,” 185. This idea intersects with my previous observations about how the caliph’s circular letters indicate his concern for the spiritual well-being of his subjects. Indeed, the idea of expanding a Friday mosque in order to accommodate a growing population forms part of the trappings of ideal Islamic sovereignty. In 836, for example, the Umayyad caliph `Abd al-Raḥmān II built added on to the Mosque of Cordoba because “strict adherence to Malikism” made him loathe to build a second congregational mosque to house Cordoba’s rising population. See Nuha N. N. Khoury, “The Meaning of the Great Mosque of Cordoba in the Tenth Century,” *Muqarnas* 13 (1996), 83.

⁴¹⁶ Roldán Castro, “De nuevo,” 16.

One expects precisely this kind of favorable treatment of the caliph's intentions and impetuses from Ibn Šāhib al-Šalāt, even as he omits parts of the narrative unfavorable to his patron. Indeed, the author alludes to the controversy that is likely to have surrounded the Great Mosque of Seville's construction when he notes that houses, stores and booths were demolished to provide space for the new building. This occurred on no less than three separate occasions. The first happened in 1172 while the prayer hall was still being built, the second cleared ground for the minaret in 1184 and the final took place in 1196, when the caliph al-Manšūr began building the markets that were to border the new mosque.⁴¹⁷ Significantly, this same kind of confiscation and destruction of private property to accommodate the needs of the Almohads prompted the city to revolt in 1147. With just twenty-five years spanning that event and the first round of demolition for the new mosque, it is likely that the precedent—and its consequences—weighed heavily on the Sevillans' minds.⁴¹⁸

A second divisive factor related to the Mosque of Seville's construction was the Almohads' programmatic re-urbanization of the entire city. The new Almohad mosque and its surrounding mercantile quarter completely displaced Seville's existing religious and commercial centers, which had formerly centered on the mosque of Ibn `Adābas and its adjacent cloth markets.⁴¹⁹ Abū Ya`qūb had been preparing to relocate Friday services to the new Almohad mosque even before its prayer hall was finished; in 1175, the Ibn `Adābas mosque's the *minbar* and *maqšūra* screen—both powerful symbols of religious and political authority—had already

⁴¹⁷ Ibn Šāhib al-Šalāt, *Al-Mann*, cited in Roldán Castro, "De nuevo," 15, 19 and 21, respectively. While it is true that the seizure of private property for the exclusive benefit of Almohad elite is different from the seizure of private property in order to found a public building that benefits the city in general, this does not guarantee the happy compliance of citizens whose property is destroyed. A modern equivalent would be a house that is destroyed to make room for public transit; although the latter benefits everyone, one would not be surprised to discover that the family that occupies the house opposes it. Furthermore, we shall see that the Sevillans had reason to reject the idea of an Almohad Friday mosque in their city on general principle.

⁴¹⁸ The last round of demolition happened only 49 years after the revolts inspired by the Mahdī's brothers' abuses. It is therefore perfectly possible that the younger participants in those rebellions would still have been alive to see it.

⁴¹⁹ Domínguez Berenjano, "La remodelación," 182.

been transferred to the new building.⁴²⁰ In 1182, Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf released a decree that “established the *obligation* to attend Friday prayer and sermon” in the new Almohad mosque, a move clearly conceived to promote the city’s new center.⁴²¹ In order to enforce this promulgation, the caliph prohibited the city’s *imām* from giving the Friday sermon in the Ibn `Adābas mosque. For his part, al-Manṣūr continued the urbanization project that his father had begun, by building markets near the Almohad mosque analogous to those clustered around the mosque of Ibn `Adābas.⁴²² The caliphs’ intentions could not be clearer: they required that the Sevillans—many of whom had probably prayed in the Ibn `Adābas mosque and shopped nearby throughout their entire lives—attend Friday services in the Almohad mosque, near the Almohad palace, with a new Almohad-built commercial area close at hand.

Taken together, these circumstances characterize Seville as a potentially dangerous place for the Almohads. Not only were they on shaky ground with the native Muslim inhabitants of the city, both historically and as the mosque was being built, but Ibn Mardanīsh’s progeny, heirs of a bitter political enemy who could be forgiven for resenting their new overlords, had also been regular visitors or residents of Seville since their capitulation in 1172.⁴²³ Finally, converts to Islam whose sincerity in their new faith and goodwill toward the Almohads were questionable likely comprised a small part of the Sevillian demographic. These dissident members of Almohad society represented a threat that cannot have been lost on the ruling elite, especially given Andalusia’s history of resistance protagonized both by Seville’s rebels and the Banī Mardanīsh.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

⁴²¹ Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *Al-Mann*, cited in Roldán Castro, “De nuevo,” 18. Emphasis mine.

⁴²² Ibid., 21.

⁴²³ Members of the Banī Mardanīsh family would have stayed in the Alcazares during visits to the capital. See Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *Al-Mann*, 194.

Abū Ya`qūb's inclusion of "a solid wall in the city's fortress that would begin from the start of the building and pass in front of the esplanade of Ibn Khaldūn" in his initial plans for the mosque evidences that the Almohads recognized this menace.⁴²⁴ This wall would have connected to its minaret, which was to be built at the same time, and it would have completely isolated the Almohad palace and fortress from the rest of the city. Several authors have noted that the wall represents a "militarization" of the mosque, as it was probably intended to defend against an attack originating within the city. Rodríguez Estévez, for example, explains how the Almohad fortress principally defended against external aggression but that it also "protect[ed] a governing elite that knew it was the minority, both socially and ethnically, from the Andalusian population of the city."⁴²⁵ At the least, Abū Ya`qūb's wall sorted Seville's inhabitants into "Almohad" and "non-Almohad" categories, and it manifested a desire to distance the two groups from one another.

Unlike his father, al-Manṣūr's constructions seem to have taken conciliatory steps toward the Sevillans. He abandoned the wall between the minaret and fortress, which Domínguez Berenjeno reads as an effort to keep the physical connection between the Almohads and the Sevillans open.⁴²⁶ Al-Manṣūr also repaired the Ibn `Adābas mosque in 1196, although there is no mention of Friday services having been resumed.⁴²⁷ Finally, he ordered that citizens receive full compensation for any properties destroyed to clear space for his planned markets, and he ensured that these latter were well-crafted. According to Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, the Sevillans expressed satisfaction with these measures and quickly established their shops in the new

⁴²⁴ Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *Al-Mann*, cited in Roldán Castro, "De nuevo," 19. Domínguez Berenjeno explains that this wall formed part of Abu Ya`qūb's conceptualization of the Almohad part of the alcazares as a "closed and isolated section." ("La remodelación," 187.)

⁴²⁵ See Antonio Jiménez Sancho, "Seguimiento arqueológico de las Gradass de la Puerta del Perdón," in *Magna Hispalensis (I). Recuperación de la aljama almohade*, ed. Alfonso Jiménez Martín (Seville: Aula Hernán Ruiz: Cabildo Metropolitano, 2002), 345; and Rodríguez Estévez, *El Alminar de Isbiliya*, 18.

⁴²⁶ "La remodelación," 189.

⁴²⁷ Valor Piechotta and Tabales Rodríguez, "Urbanismo y arquitectura almohades," 193.

stalls.⁴²⁸ Whether his actions were intended to appease the Sevillans or whether they formed part of al-Manṣūr's generalized campaigns against corruption is impossible to tell.⁴²⁹ Of course, the case need not be one or the other, and the caliph must have been aware that repairing a venerable religious building and recompensing a beleaguered neighborhood for their confiscated properties (al-Manṣūr's round of demolitions was the third in 22 years) would make a favorable impression.

The Great Mosque of Seville sends a clear hegemonic message to its hostile and disenfranchised viewers. The building's massive proportions, prominent portal and dominating minaret projected Almohad presence, authority and strength, standing as a bastion—potentially quite literally—of Almohad sovereignty. That Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf had planned for the minaret to be “militarized” by including a defensive wall strengthens this idea; its subsequent abandonment by al-Manṣūr, who seems to have been more sensitive to the Sevillans' concerns, indicates that these latter fully understood the wall's symbolism. Significantly, the Mosque of Seville sent its domineering message in a very public way. Unlike the Kutubiyya mosque, which communicated Almohad hegemony to Muslim dissidents in the building's most exclusive area, the Mosque of Seville broadcasts the same idea without its audience ever having to enter the building. This tactic is as effective for non-Muslims as it is for Muslims. Finally, the mosque's location next to the Almohad palaces not only physically connected its patrons to the building, but also offered the Almohads an opportunity to keep an eye on the population, especially in the light of the requirement that Friday prayer be performed there exclusively. In Rodríguez Estévez's words, “The old mosque of Ibn `Adābas ... had been the assembly space of the city *par excellence*.”

⁴²⁸ See Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *Al-Mann*, cited in Roldán Castro, “De nuevo,” 21-2.

⁴²⁹ We shall examine the latter further in Chapter Four.

Losing its rank in the interest of a new mosque, built next to the Almohad fortress, the control of the populace was guaranteed.⁴³⁰

A second way to understand the Mosque of Seville is as a mediator between the rulers and the ruled, again by the virtue of its location between the strictly Almohad part of the city (the fortress and palaces) and its other neighborhoods (inhabited by non-Almohad Andalusians). In this context, its sweeping dimensions, which were almost twice as large as the mosque of Ibn `Adābas and which rivaled the Great Mosque of Cordoba, could have been intended to inspire awe and wonder for both the building and, hopefully, the dynasty that created it. This second interpretation tempers the Almohads' efforts to keep the Sevillans under surveillance, and it obtains for all types of viewers, regardless of their feelings toward the Almohad regime. It also recalls Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt's description of Abū Ya`qūb's motivations for building the mosque: in addition to desiring to ennoble and beautify the city, Seville lacked a space large enough for all its faithful to gather on Friday. Viewed from this perspective, the mosque testifies to Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf's provision for his subjects' spiritual well-being, as an ideal Islamic ruler must do. The interpretation of the mosque as a mediator especially holds true in the light of the reconciling changes in Seville's urbanization undertaken during al-Manṣūr's reign, such as the demolition of the fortifying wall, the construction of sturdy new market stalls and the restoration of the Ibn `Adābas mosque.⁴³¹

These two interpretations of the mosque—that it manifests both the discord and the desire for harmony in twelfth-century Almohad Seville—need not be considered mutually exclusive, nor is the idea that different audiences interpret the same visual material according to their own circumstance a new one. Karen Mathews, for example, posits three different ways that the portal

⁴³⁰ *Alminar de Isbiliya*, 20-1.

⁴³¹ Domínguez Berenjano argues that al-Mansur's end goal for the city's reurbanization was not to replace the Ibn `Adābas quarter but rather to create a new urban axis between the two centers. See "La remodelación," 189.

sculpture on the southern façade of Romanesque cathedral of Santiago de Compostela (c. 1115) could be understood, depending on the disposition of its audience toward the bishop who sponsored the program.⁴³² To do so, she applies Reception Theory—which, in studies of literature, focuses on how a message sent by an author is understood by a reader rather than on the ideas that the author meant to convey—to the visual arts.⁴³³ My reading of the Mosque of Seville differs from Mathews’ methodology in that it assumes that the patrons themselves wished to send distinct (but related) messages to differently-inclined audiences, who would *then* interpret the building themselves. The best example is the dimensions of the mosque inspiring both fear in the Almohads’ enemies and admiration in its allies, both of whom could shift their position in response to the destruction of a home or the construction of a well-planned market. Again, this need not be a difficulty. Chapter Two explained how the sending of complex and somewhat contradictory messages characterized the symbols of Almohad sovereignty (visual and otherwise), and there is no reason that this idea cannot apply here as well.

2 THE MOSQUE OF SEVILLE’S SPIRITUAL DIMENSION

2.1. THE BUILDING’S PATRONS AND THE CRAFTERS OF ITS MEANING

Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf, the principle patron of the Mosque of Seville, was not only a pious Muslim, but he was also well-versed in Almohad doctrine. He received a thorough education in the theological schools inaugurated by his father in Marrakesh, and the oldest-surviving collection of Ibn Tūmart’s teaching was produced under Abū Ya`qūb’s aegis, which included a new section on the importance and spiritual benefits of *jihād* that was sponsored by the caliph.⁴³⁴ Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf also emulated Abd al-Mu`min’s famous circular epistles with letters of his

⁴³² Karen Rose Mathews, “Reading Romanesque Sculpture: The Iconography and Reception of the South Portal Sculpture at Santiago de Compostela,” *Gesta* 39.1 (2000): 3-12.

⁴³³ Mathews, “Reading Romanesque,” 7.

⁴³⁴ This is, of course, the *A`azz mā yuṭlab*. The section on *jihād* linked to Abu Ya`qūb Yusuf begins on page 376 of the 1902 edition. For more on the *ṭalaba* see Fricaud, “Les *talaba*,” 346-8.

own that urged moral uprightness and faith in the Almohad doctrine of *tawḥīd*.⁴³⁵ But perhaps the best example of Abū Ya`qūb's interest in and mastery of Almohad doctrine is his predilection for discussion with the *ṭalaba*, who were responsible for the propagation and upholding of Almohad doctrine. He held regular *majālis* for the *ṭalaba al-ḥaḍar*—an elite group of *ṭalaba* that served the caliph directly,—and these scholars accompanied him on military campaigns.⁴³⁶ Indeed, the caliph failed to dispatch Almohad reinforcements during the disastrous siege of Huete, and Ibn Šāḥib al-Šalāt directly blames this negligence on Abū Ya`qūb's having become too involved in debate with the *ṭalaba*, Ibn Rushd among them. The author continues by narrating how God relieved the besieged Christians' thirst with a rainstorm because the caliph was more concerned with his intellectual pursuits—albeit theological in nature—than he was with *jihād*.⁴³⁷ Ibn Šāḥib al-Šalāt's criticism, in the face of his characteristic approval of caliphal actions, lends some credibility to this anecdote. He also carefully cites his source: the same Almohad sheikh who had requested the reinforcements. In any case, the episode indicates that Ibn Šāḥib al-Šalāt believed that his patron neglected his other caliphal responsibilities because of the time he dedicated to debate with the *ṭalaba*, an activity that combined his piety and his intellectualism.⁴³⁸

⁴³⁵ Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 229. Certainly, part of these efforts sought to uphold Almohad political legitimacy, which was predicated upon the doctrine of the Mahdī and the censuring of customs, but this does not preclude what seems to have been genuine piety on the part of the caliph. See Maribel Fierro, "Almorávides y almohades en andalucía," in *El retroceso territorial de andalucía. Almorávides y almohades, siglos XI al XIII*, ed. María Jesús Viguera Molíns (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1994), 446.

⁴³⁶ See Fricaud, "Les *ṭalaba*," 353-365 for a discussion of the *ṭalaba al-ḥaḍar*.

⁴³⁷ Ibn Šāḥib al-Šalāt, *Al-mann*, 211. In this context, one is tempted to read the caliph's commission of the sections on the benefits of *jihād* included in the *A`azz mā yuṭlab* as a sort of directive to himself, although this is impossible to confirm.

⁴³⁸ Of course, one could argue that Ibn Šāḥib al-Šalāt was merely looking for a way to explain away the Almohads' failure to take Huete. While this is possible, both his consistently positive depictions of the caliph and his attributions of other Almohad military failures to factors outside the control of the caliph support the idea that his criticism was genuine.

This cultivated intellectualism is what most distinguishes Abū Ya`qūb from his father and son, and it is the most remarked-upon aspect of his caliphate.⁴³⁹ Within his active court life, the caliph formed important relationships with Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Rushd, as they both served him as advisers, members of the *talaba al-ḥaḍar* and personal physicians. Because this association makes them potential co-creators of the Mosque of Seville's religious meaning, I shall pause to establish the nature of the caliph's relationship with these two scholars and to their discipline of philosophy. Although Ibn Ṭufayl was a native of Almeria, in southern Andalusia, he relocated to Marrakesh in 1147, where he began his public career with its triumphant Almohad conquerors.⁴⁴⁰ While in the service of Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf, Ibn Ṭufayl also completed several philosophical works. The only to survive is the narrative *Risālat Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān*, which will have important implications for the Mosque of Seville.⁴⁴¹ For his part, Ibn Rushd was born into a distinguished Cordoban family of Malikite jurists in 1126, and he received an education that included jurisprudence, Arabic letters, theology and medicine.⁴⁴² His writing includes important commentaries on many Aristotelian texts and on Plato's *Republic*, as well as religious works,

⁴³⁹ This is apparent, for example, in examining the chapter-essays in *El retroceso territorial de Andalucía. Almorávides y almohades, siglos XI al XIII*, ed. María Jesús Viguera Molíns (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1997). For example, Viguera Molíns remarks that Abu Ya`qūb's residence in Sevilla since 1155 had transformed him into "an extremely cultured man" and that he was the most educated (Sp. *culto*) of the Almohad caliphs (see "Los almohades," 90); Fierro notes that the sources describe the caliph as being interested in philosophy, medicine and astrology, and she mentions both his vast collection of books and his patronage of philosophers (see "La religión," 445). Huici Miranda also characterizes the caliph as highly educated; see *Historia política, primera parte*, 310. Of course, I do not mean to imply that `Abd al-Mu`min and al-Manṣūr were anti-intellectual or dull. In fact, quite the opposite was true, and all three of them sponsored intellectual study. See Maribel Fierro, "Alfonso X the Wise: The Last Almohad Caliph?" *Medieval Encounters* 15 (2009), 177-185 for an excellent summary of what she calls the "Almohad Cultural Project." However, Abū Ya`qūb seems to have been the most personally involved in intellectual and theological pursuits; al-Manṣūr comes close, but his inclinations seem to be more of a reforming juridical kind. I shall pursue this last idea in Chapter Four.

⁴⁴⁰ Initially Ibn Ṭufayl was employed at least in part as a propagandist. See Lawrence Conrad, "An Andalusian Physician at the Court of the Muwahhids: Some Notes on the Public Career of Ibn Ṭufayl," *Al-Qanṭara: Revista de estudios árabes* 16.1 (1995): 3-13; and Lawrence Conrad, "Introduction," in *The World of Ibn Ṭufayl. Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Lawrence I. Conrad (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 19. See also Emilio García Gómez, "Una qasida política inédita de Ibn Ṭufayl," *Revista del Instituto Egipcio de Estudios Islámicos en Madrid* 1 (1953): 21-28, which includes the text of an exhortatory poem calling the Ifriqiyyian Arabs to *jihād* against the Christians.

⁴⁴¹ Again, the edition used in the preparation of this article is Ibn Ṭufayl, *El filósofo autodidacto [Risala Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān] de Ibn Ṭufayl*, trans. Ángel González Palencia (Madrid: Editorial Trotta, S.A., 2003).

⁴⁴² This biographical sketch of Ibn Rushd relies on Chapter One of Fakhry's *Averroes*.

such as a lost commentary on the Creed of Ibn Tūmart, the *Decisive Treatise on the Relation of Philosophy and Religion* and the *Exposition of Religious Arguments*.⁴⁴³ These last two will significantly contribute to my interpretation of the Mosque of Seville.

With these two distinguished philosophers in his employ, it is perhaps not surprising that Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf is conventionally considered to be a great philosopher himself.⁴⁴⁴ This view is primarily based on al-Marrākushī's narration of the first meeting between the caliph and Ibn Rushd, which was facilitated by Ibn Ṭufayl. According to al-Marrākushī, who speaks on the authority of one of Ibn Rushd's students, Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf asked Ibn Rushd about the philosophers' opinion concerning the creation of the universe: Had it always existed or was it created in time? Taken aback, and nervous about revealing his opinion on this controversial topic, Ibn Rushd denied that he had ever studied philosophy. To put the young man at ease, the caliph responded by expounding some of his own views on the subject, as well as those of Plato, Aristotle and other philosophers, complete with rebuttals from Muslim scholars. Impressed and surprised, Ibn Rushd entered into the service of the Almohad court.⁴⁴⁵

Perhaps because of its richness in anecdotal detail or its purported source, scholars frequently cite this version of the event, and they take it more or less at face value. However, the view that the Almohad caliphs—Abū Ya`qūb in particular—were also philosophers is not uncontested.⁴⁴⁶ Stroumsa, for one, questions al-Marrākushī's reliability, arguing the author's general amenability toward the Almohads could have caused him to exaggerate or even invent the extent of the caliph's philosophical knowledge, in order to reflect favorably upon his

⁴⁴³ The reader will recall that I use the English translations cited in the Introduction for citations.

⁴⁴⁴ In addition to Fakhry's view, already cited in note 66 of Chapter One, this view is upheld by other scholars such as Huici Miranda (see *Historia política, primera parte*, 309) and Miquel Forcada in Miquel Forcada, "Síntesis y contexto de las ciencias de los antiguos en época almohade," in *Los almohades: problemas y perspectivas*, ed. Patrice Cressier, Ma. Isabel Fierro and Luís Molina, 1091-1135 (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2005).

⁴⁴⁵ See al-Marrākushī, *Histoire des almohades*, 209-210.

⁴⁴⁶ See Sarah Stroumsa, "Philosophés almohades," 1141.

learning. She contends that descriptions of the Almohad caliphs in pro-Almohad sources tend to be more eulogizing than accurate, and she also suggests that Ibn Rushd's famous commentaries on Aristotle—ostensibly commissioned by the caliph—were more probably completed of his own volition. Stroumsa does, however, acknowledge that the Almohad caliphs were interested in intellectual and speculative pursuits and that Ibn Rushd's methodology of starting from the most basic elements, or the fundamentals, of knowledge, is indebted to the intellectual climate that they fostered.⁴⁴⁷ Indeed, this kind of approach recalls Ibn Tūmart's insistence upon *uṣūl al-dīn* and *uṣūl al-fiqh* as the only legitimate points of departure that lead to truth.⁴⁴⁸

Forcada argues against Stroumsa, asserting that the Almohad caliphs did actively pursue philosophical studies, partly because Ibn Tūmart's doctrine depends on philosophical discourse.⁴⁴⁹ He nuances this opinion by stating that the caliphs would have selectively chosen the courtiers with whom they discussed philosophy and that they would have easily retracted and reinstated their patronage of philosophers according to the socio-political climate.⁴⁵⁰ This rebuttal raises an important point about Almohad society's views of philosophy: both the *'ulamā'* and the general public opposed philosophical study on the grounds that it claimed to

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., see especially 1142-1145.

⁴⁴⁸ See Chapter One, 13-5.

⁴⁴⁹ Miquel Forcada, "Síntesis," 1096-7. As noted for Ibn Tūmart's surviving works, the authorship of these texts is contested, with some researches such as Fletcher arguing that Ibn Rushd himself might have penned certain of them.

⁴⁵⁰ Forcada, "Síntesis," 1100. Forcada, like many other scholars, uses the political climate during the end of al-Manṣūr's reign—namely the opposition of the *'ulamā'* to philosophy and the support lent to them by the general public—to explain Ibn Rushd's fall from grace and eventual reinstatement. See also Fakhry, *Averroes*, 2; Fricaud, "Les talaba," 378; Pierre Guichard, "Averroès dans son temps," in *Averroès Et L'averroïsme (Xiiie - Xve Siècle) : Un Itinéraire Historique Du Haut Atlas À Paris Et À Padoue : Actes Du Colloque International Organisé À Lyon, Les 4 Et 5 Octobre Dans Le Cadre Du "Temps Du Maroc"*, ed. André Bazzana, Nicole Bériou and Pierre Guichard, (Lyon: Presses universitaires de Lyon, 2005), 23; Delfina Serrano Ruano, "Explicit cruelty, explicit compassion: Judaism, forced conversions and the genealogy of the Banu Rushd," *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 2.2 (2010), 223; and Émile Fricaud, "Le problème de la disgrâce d'Averroès," in *Averroès Et L'averroïsme (Xiiie - Xve Siècle) : Un Itinéraire Historique Du Haut Atlas À Paris Et À Padoue : Actes Du Colloque International Organisé À Lyon, Les 4 Et 5 Octobre Dans Le Cadre Du "Temps Du Maroc"*, ed. André Bazzana, Nicole Bériou and Pierre Guichard, (Lyon: Presses universitaires de Lyon, 2005), 161-5. Mona Abousenna provides a fascinating alternative to this explanation, positing that it was actually Ibn Rushd's assertion of hidden and apparent meaning in religious texts that caused his temporary falling out with al-Manṣūr. See Mona Abousenna, "Ibn Rushd, Founder of Hermeneutics," in *Averroès and the Enlightenment*, ed. Mourad Wahba & Mona Abousenna (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1996), 105-12.

lead to absolute truth in all the sciences, including theology. In other words, it self-consciously abrogates the need for revealed religion.⁴⁵¹ While the Almohad caliphs seem to have been receptive to philosophy at least in a general sense, they must have been aware of its unpopularity and the political consequences of supporting its practitioners. As a pragmatic solution to this dilemma, Fierro suggests that as long as the philosophers did not stir the pot, so to speak, they were allowed to pursue their intellectual interests.⁴⁵² This lenience seems to have extended through the whole of Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf's caliphate.⁴⁵³

Fortunately, for our purposes it does not matter whether or not Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf was as incisive a philosopher as al-Marrākushī would have us believe.⁴⁵⁴ It is enough that the caliph surrounded himself with them and seemed to enjoy their company.⁴⁵⁵ The primary sources corroborate this last point: al-Marrākushī relates how Ibn Ṭufayl often stayed for days at a time in the royal palace (a statement that does possess the same level of anecdotal detail as does his account of Ibn Rushd's first audience with the caliph) and the reader will recall Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt's ill-fated scene in which Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf was distracted from battle by debates with the

⁴⁵¹ For more on the conflict between *'ulamā'* and philosophers, see Fricaud, "Le problème," 161-2; Yasin Dutton, "The Introduction to Ibn Rushd's "Bidāyat Al-Mujtahid,"" *Islamic Law and Society* 1.2 (1994): 188-205; P. Mangada Cañas, "Averroes: Contexto Político-Cultural. Estado De La Cuestión," in *Alarcos 1195, Al-Arak 592: Actas Del Congreso Internacional Conmemorativo De VIII Centenario De La Batalla De Alarcos (1995. Ciudad Real)*, ed. R. Izquierdo Benito and F. Ruiz Gómez (Ciudad Real: Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 1996), 625-30; and J.P. Montana, "El pensamiento de Averroes en su contexto personal y social," *Miscelánea de estudios árabes y hebraicos* 38.1 (1997): 307-324.

⁴⁵² "Almorávides y almohades," 473.

⁴⁵³ Indeed, both Vincent Cornell and Lawrence I. Conrad state that Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf is the only Almohad caliph to have been interested in philosophy. See "Ḥayy in the Land of Absāl: Ibn Tufayl and Sufism in the Western Maghrib during the Muwahhid Era," in *The World of Ibn Tufayl. Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Lawrence I. Conrad, 163; and "Introduction," 13, respectively.

⁴⁵⁴ As far as this issue is concerned, I position myself somewhere between Stroumsa and Forcada. I tend to favor Stroumsa's arguments, which, while not denying that the Almohad caliphs were interested in speculative theology or dialectical argumentation, seem to reject the idea that they would, for example, have produced their own philosophical treatises. However, I believe that Forcada is correct in saying that the Almohad caliphs would have understood philosophy inasmuch as it helped them comprehend religious doctrine, and I am not sure that Stroumsa would disagree.

⁴⁵⁵ Cornell characterizes Ibn Ṭufayl as "lucky" to have found a sympathetic patron that was "fond" of philosophical discussion. See "Ḥayy in the Land of Absāl," 163.

ṭalaba, including Ibn Rushd.⁴⁵⁶ It seems safe to say, then, these two philosophers regularly engaged the caliph in discussion, and it is likely, given this rapport and Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf's lenience toward philosophical study, that they would have shared their religious viewpoints with him. In order to determine what impact that their ideas had on the Mosque of Seville, the next section identifies them through an analysis of Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Rushd's religious works, beginning chronologically with Ibn Ṭufayl's *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān*.

2.2. THE TEXTUAL KEYS TO THE MOSQUE'S MEANING

Ibn Ṭufayl probably composed his *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān* (hereafter referred to as “the *Ḥayy*,” to distinguish it from its protagonist, “*Ḥayy*”) in the last years of his life, between 1177 and 1182; it is thus contemporary to the construction of the Mosque of Seville's prayer hall.⁴⁵⁷ In order to provide a context for the themes that are relevant to the mosque, I will first offer a general summary of its narrative. The *Ḥayy* is the fictional biography of Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān (Eng. “Alive, son of Awake”) who was isolated from civilization on an island from his birth until he reached maturity.⁴⁵⁸ A female gazelle adopts the infant Ḥayy and nurses him as though he were her son, and as he grows up, he discovers the existence of the soul and of God by using only his keen powers of observation and his ability to reason. Once Ḥayy reaches maturity, he adopts spiritual practices in which he purifies his body and denies his ego, ultimately arriving at mystical union with God.

After he achieves gnosis, Ḥayy encounters another ascetic, Absāl, who hails from a neighboring island. Their first meeting is hampered by Ḥayy's inability to speak, but Absāl soon

⁴⁵⁶ Al-Marrākushī, *Histoire des almohades*, 208.

⁴⁵⁷ The work would have been completed before Ibn Ṭufayl's death in 1185, and Conrad has posited that Ibn Ṭufayl was occupied with the composition of the *Ḥayy* during the later part of his life. See “Introduction,” 7.

⁴⁵⁸ He arrives in one of two ways: by being placed in a wooden coffer and relinquished to the sea by his mother or by being spontaneously generated by the island's favorable environmental conditions. See *El filósofo autodidacto*, 45 and 47-50, respectively.

teaches Ḥayy human language, and later marvels at his descriptions of the mystical state (Ar. *ḥāl*). Ḥayy accepts Absāl as his student, and the latter eventually also attains mystical union with God. He also indoctrinates Ḥayy in his religion (which is easily identifiable as Islam), and Ḥayy accepts its basic tenets, realizing that they are essentially the same as those at which he arrived through reason alone. He is puzzled, however, both by the Prophet's use of allegory to express religious truths and by the Holy Book's permissiveness in terms of acquiring and protecting material possessions. Eventually, Ḥayy decides to accompany Absāl to the latter's home in order to instruct others in religious truth, which he identifies with his own spiritual methods of asceticism and their end result of gnosis. However, he finds that the islanders are too distracted by worldly matters to follow his path of esoteric knowledge. Realizing that they were better off as they were before, performing religion's external obligations with sincere belief, Ḥayy returns to the island with Absāl, where each worships God after his own fashion until his death.

The *Ḥayy*'s first important theme is its protagonist's dedication to observing the natural world, which leads him to discover important spiritual truths. For example, Ḥayy dedicates himself to the systematic study of all the things on the island, sorting them into categories including animals, plants and minerals. The endless variety that he finds, present even among the composite parts of the same entity, leads Ḥayy to conclude that all beings have "multiple essences."⁴⁵⁹ However, he soon realizes that for all their differences, these "essences" obey a single directive; for example, all the characteristics of an animal exist in order that it might continue living. Ḥayy identifies this single directive as the soul, or the true essence of beings.⁴⁶⁰ Next, Ḥayy's studies of the changes in the states of water—liquid, solid and gas—suggest to him the idea of a "creator" of form, and he begins to re-examine the world, looking for signs of a

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., 63.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid.

Creator. These he finds in abundance, “and he marvels at the signs of the Creator’s art and wisdom that he sees in great and small beings.”⁴⁶¹ Ibn Ṭufayl continues:

He [Ḥayy] then attentively examined all the species of animals and he saw how this Author had given each of them its form and taught it to use it ... From this moment on, each time that Ḥayy saw a being given beauty, splendor, perfection, power or any other superiority, he reflected and recognized that it was an emanation of this Author, of His existence and of His action.⁴⁶²

Using only his incisive observations and his rational faculty, Ḥayy has confirmed the existence of the soul and of God, whose perfection is manifested in all the aspects of His creation.

A second theme in the *Ḥayy* is its insistence upon rationality and order, an excellent example of which has just been encountered in the context of Ḥayy’s observations of the natural world. Dominique Urvoy further explores this idea in his essay “The Rationality of Everyday Life: An Andalusian Tradition? (Apropos of Ḥayy’s First Experiences).”⁴⁶³ In addition to foregrounding Ḥayy’s consistent use of everyday experiences to draw rational conclusions about universal truths, Urvoy also considers Ibn Ṭufayl’s use of language: when Ḥayy makes a logical inference about an unstated truth, Ibn Ṭufayl employs phrases such as “‘it occurred to him...’ (*waqa`a fī nafsihi...*) and ‘it became practically certain to him...’ (*kāna yaghlibu `alā ḡannihi ghalaba qawiya...*).”⁴⁶⁴ Ibn Ṭufayl, Urvoy concludes, espoused the “idea that everyday experience itself can be intrinsically rational.”⁴⁶⁵ By citing examples as diverse as a treatise on cooking, the curricula for musical conservatories and the recitation of the Qur’ān, Urvoy posits that the idea of rationality was a generalized cultural factor in medieval Andalusian society, which he characterizes as “a very ‘pensive’ civilization where the idea of ‘order’ was dominant.”⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., 79.

⁴⁶² Ibid.

⁴⁶³ In *The World of Ibn Ṭufayl. Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Conrad I. Lawrence (Leiden: Brill, 1996).

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid., 43.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid., 46.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., 50. The analysis of these various sources begins on page 46.

A final theme of the *Ḥayy* is the notion of a segregated society, divided into the intellectual and spiritual elite on the one hand, and the rest of humanity on the other. This motif figures prominently in the last chapters of the story, appearing first when Ḥayy and Absāl return to the latter's island. When the two mystics enter the city, they encounter Absāl's friends, whom Absāl describes as the most understanding and desirous of truth among all of island's inhabitants. Although they venerate and respect Ḥayy, Absāl's friends reject his attempts to teach them concepts that transcend their own literal understanding of religion.⁴⁶⁷ However, this failure to reach Absāl's friends leads Ḥayy to reflect on the different categories of believer. He concludes

that the greatest benefit that the masses could receive from religious Laws concerned only their mundane lives, in order that they might tranquilly pass their existence without any man taking advantage of the private property of another. Only the isolated and the rare among them would attain the happiness of the hereafter [in this life]...⁴⁶⁸

After finally understanding that God has provided each kind of believer with a sure path to salvation, Ḥayy says his goodbyes, admitting that he was in the wrong and urging the islanders to continue practicing their religion as before.

Ibn Ṭufayl makes a final allusion to the separation of believers into the elect and the masses in the *Ḥayy*'s final chapter. Speaking in his own voice, he worries that the "weak in spirit" will believe that the philosophical ideas espoused in his work should be hidden from the masses, whereas he has chosen to elucidate these ideas in order to bring all the faithful closer to the truth. However, Ibn Ṭufayl continues, in composing his narrative he has had recourse to "veiled" language: while the initiated will rapidly uncover the truth, the veil will prove too opaque for the "undeserving" to penetrate.⁴⁶⁹ This section of the text reveals a tension in Ibn Ṭufayl's intentions: shortly after he claims to have bared the truth for all to see, he claims to have

⁴⁶⁷ Ibn Ṭufayl, *El filósofo autodidacto*, 111-2.

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 111.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 113.

hidden it under a linguistic veil that only the worthy can lift.⁴⁷⁰ Ultimately, however, this “veiling” divides Ibn Ṭufayl’s readership into two categories: those deserving and those undeserving of discovering the philosophical and religious knowledge that his work contains. This division conforms to Ibn Ṭufayl’s previous separation of the faithful into the elite and the masses.

For his part, Ibn Rushd concerned himself with themes that are very similar to those present in the *Ḥayy*. In this sense, his two most important texts are the *Exposition of Religious Arguments* (hereafter referred to as the *Exposition*) and the *Decisive Treatise on the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy* (hereafter referred to as the *Decisive Treatise*). These works form part of a trilogy of theological treatises composed around 1179, making them contemporary with both the *Ḥayy* and the construction of the Mosque of Seville’s prayer hall. Ibn Rushd opens the first chapter of the *Exposition* by declaring his intent to expound the external religious dogma in which all Muslims are required to believe, regardless of their intellectual capacities. The most fundamental of these beliefs is the existence of God. But before he explains the ways that one can be certain of God’s existence, Ibn Rushd enumerates the methods offered by what he terms the four major “sects” of Islam: the Ash`arites, the Mu`tazlites, the esotericists and the literalists. None of them hold up to Ibn Rushd’s rigorous standards, and his criticisms are largely based on logical fallacies in their arguments.⁴⁷¹

Ibn Rushd’s alternative to these methods, and that which the Qur’ān itself recommends, hinges on the observation of the created world. There are two ways that this can lead to the

⁴⁷⁰ See J. Christoph Bürgel, “Symbols and Hints: Some considerations concerning the meaning of Ibn Tufayl’s *Hayy ibn Yaqzan*,” in *The World of Ibn Tufayl. Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Hayy ibn Yaqzan*, ed. Lawrence I. Conrad (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 124-130, for a full discussion Ibn Ṭufayl’s veiled language.

⁴⁷¹ *Exposition*, 17-33. Ibn Rushd spends the most time defending against the Ash`arites, whom he accuses, among other things, of being too abstruse for the masses to understand, of using rhetorical rather than dialectical arguments and of affirming similarities between that which discernible in the physical world and that which lies beyond our perception.

certainty that God exists. First, Ibn Rushd calls the faithful to notice how God has provided for man's comfortable inhabitation of the earth, "creating all existing things for his sake." The philosopher terms this proof the "argument from providence," and it relies on two assumptions.⁴⁷² One is that all of the animate and inanimate things in Creation ensure and aid man's subsistence. Among other examples, Ibn Rushd offers the phenomena of night and day, the light from the sun and moon, and the passing of the four seasons. The second premise is that the earth's perfect suitedness to man's existence cannot be coincidence; rather, a knowing and willing Agent, God, caused it to be. Finally, he advises those who wish to obtain a complete knowledge of God to deepen their understanding of the inherent utility of all aspects of creation.⁴⁷³

The second way that human beings are called to believe in God is through what Ibn Rushd terms the "argument from invention."⁴⁷⁴ This proof also entails a consideration of the created world, now in terms of its mere existence. It also rests on two premises. First, all existing beings must have been invented, or caused to be. Ibn Rushd considers this to be self-evident, and he bolsters his opinion with the Qur'ānic challenge directed at humankind to create (or invent) a creature even as lowly as a fly.⁴⁷⁵ The second premise is that anything that is created requires a creator, which Ibn Rushd states simply and without further explanation, implying that he believes this idea to be easily understood by all. From these premises, he continues, "it correctly follows that for every existing entity there is an agent who is its inventor."⁴⁷⁶ Given that human beings—the only earthly creatures endowed with reason—cannot even produce a fly, the ultimate inventor of the observable world must be God. Ibn

⁴⁷² Ibid., 33.

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid., 34. The Qur'ānic citation is 22:73.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid.

Rushd closes his exposition of this argument by urging those who wish to have a more perfect knowledge of the Creator to study the essences of created entities so that they might also understand their utility, thereby increasing their comprehension of the argument from divine providence.⁴⁷⁷

In the *Decisive Treatise*, which is also thematically similar to the *Ḥayy*, Ibn Rushd explains the proper way to understand the relationship between religion and philosophy. From the start, Ibn Rushd defends philosophical inquiry, which he defines as “nothing more than the examination of existing beings and reflection on them, inasmuch as they determine knowledge of the Artisan.”⁴⁷⁸ He then declares that the study of philosophy is not simply permissible under Islam, it is a *requirement* for all of those who are intellectually capable of undertaking it.⁴⁷⁹ Since, Ibn Rushd continues, the commandment that humankind observe and study creation proceeds from God, one must carry out this investigation using the best possible method: demonstrative reasoning.⁴⁸⁰ However, demonstrative reasoning is not limited to the study of the observable world; it should also be applied to the study of the Qur’ān. For instance, Ibn Rushd signals that knowledge gained through demonstrative reasoning sometimes conflicts with the literal meaning of certain Qur’ānic verses. Rather than indicating a flaw in scripture or in logic, these contradictions signal that the literal meaning of these passages is not the true one. It follows that these kinds of verses must be interpreted allegorically or metaphorically.⁴⁸¹

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibn Rushd, “Faṣl al-maqāl,” .

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁰ “It is clear that this way of study [examination of the world as a reflection of its Artisan], to which revelation itself invites and summons the faithful, is the most perfect kind of speculation, [achieved] through the most perfect kind of reasoning, which is called ‘demonstrative reasoning.’” Ibid., 142.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid., 162. Students of the Almohad period will notice that this is a very similar argument to that used by Ibn Tūmart, when he insists on an allegorical interpretation of the anthropomorphic verses of the Qur’ān. The extent to which Ibn Rushd is an intellectual heir of the Almohad movement has been much discussed, and the interested reader can consult Stroumsa, “Philosophés almohades ?”; Mark Geoffroy, “L’almohadisme Théologique D’averroès (Ibn Rusd),” *Archives d’histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen-âge* 66 (1999): 9-47; Ibid., “A propos de

However, Ibn Rushd is careful to limit both the task of Qur'ānic interpretation and the verses that can be subject to it. He divides humankind into three increasingly exclusive classes according to their intellectual capacities: the rhetorical, the dialectical and the demonstrative classes.⁴⁸² Only the demonstrative class is permitted to interpret the Qur'ān.⁴⁸³ Ibn Rushd also categorizes the verses of the Qur'ān according to how they must be understood by each class of believer. Certain verses *must* be taken at their literal value by everyone, some must be taken literally only by the masses and allegorically only by the elite, and the rest are unclear.⁴⁸⁴ In other words, it is absolutely forbidden for the masses to interpret these first two categories, and it is equally forbidden for the elite to interpret the first kind of verse or to take the second kind literally. As for the verses in the “unclear” category, the masses must accept them at face value, but God will forgive the elect if they err in interpreting them.⁴⁸⁵

Next, Ibn Rushd explains why some verses must be understood literally while others require exegesis by the elite. God has made allowances for those believers whose intellects do not allow them to perform demonstrative reasoning, a skill that is required to fully understand religious truths, so that humankind might be saved in its entirety. Thus, for the lesser-endowed among his faithful God used

symbols that represent [religious truths], and He summoned the faithful to assent to them, given that this assent can be made through the proofs that are common to all men, that is to say, to the dialectical and rhetorical classes. This is the reason why Divine Law [scripture] is divided into apparent and esoteric meanings; the apparent meanings consist of those figures used to express those ideas, whereas the esoteric meaning consists of the ideas themselves, which are only revealed to those capable of understanding demonstrative reasoning.⁴⁸⁶

l'almoahadisme d'Averroes: l'anthropomorphisme (*tagsim*) dans la seconde version du *Kitab al-kasf`an manahig al-adilla*,” vol. 2 of *Los almohades: Problemas y perspectivas*, ed. Patrice Cressier, Ma. Isabel Fierro and Luís Molina (Madrid: Centro Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2005) 853-894; and Maribel Fierro, “The Legal Policies of the Almohad Caliphs and Ibn Rušd’s *Bidayat al-Mujtahid*,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 10.3 (1999): 226-248.

⁴⁸² Ibn Rushd, “Faṣl al-maqāl, 159-161.

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*, 168.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 183-4.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 184.

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 181.

Here, Ibn Rushd clearly privileges the demonstrative class that, alone and numerically few, is able to understand the hidden truths of religion. However, he recognizes that in order for all the believers to attain salvation, God must speak in “images” that themselves indicate to the learned where interpretation is needed.

Before turning to the impact that these works of Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Rushd would have had on the Mosque of Seville’s ornament, a comparison of their themes is instructive. First, both Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Rushd believe that observing creation is a necessary step on the path that leads to knowledge of God.⁴⁸⁷ Ḥayy, bereft of any contact with other human beings, was able to unite with the Creator through a deductive process that begins with a thorough investigation of the plants, animals and minerals on his island. Similarly, Ibn Rushd offers two proofs that will lead his reader to certainty about God’s existence in the *Exposition*, both of which involve observing the natural world. For both authors, the focused study of the natural world must be combined with humankind’s rational faculty in order to bear fruit, leading to the texts’ second point of comparison: a clear insistence on rationality and order. In the *Ḥayy*, the hero of the tale unfailingly draws conclusions about the natural and metaphysical world through reason, and he also divides the entities that he encountered into categories corresponding to their shared characteristics. Without an inherent order in the natural world, this kind of inference and systematization would have been impossible. In the *Decisive Treatise*, Ibn Rushd directly states that the best way to study creation—an activity that is commanded by God—is by demonstrative reasoning, a method that is even applicable to exegesis. In the *Exposition*, his characterization of the idea that created beings require a creator as self-evident shows both an assumption that his

⁴⁸⁷ Their conception of this process is different than the idea of pantheism, which asserts that God is manifest and simply waiting to be found. For Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Rushd, the rational mind must think through (as opposed to receiving an insight into) the connections between the Creator and His creation in order to arrive at certainty of the former’s existence.

audience has at least a basic rational capacity and an affirmation that the universe functions in an orderly, logical way.

A final point of comparison among these three texts is their division of society into a small group of the elect, who are able to understand the true nature of religion, and the masses, who must not be instructed in these truths. This idea is quite literally embodied in the characters of the *Ḥayy*: the protagonist and his protégé represent the elite for whom esoteric religious knowledge is attainable, and the islanders symbolize the rest of the faithful who are better served by fulfilling their external religious obligations.⁴⁸⁸ Similarly, in the *Decisive Treatise* Ibn Rushd sorts believers into three increasingly exclusive intellectual categories, signaling that certain Qur'ānic citations must be interpreted by the elite even as he prohibits them from divulging their interpretations to the rest of the faithful. These same ideas appear in the *Exposition*: although both the elect and the majority will become certain about God's existence through the arguments from invention and providence, the elect add "that which is known through demonstration" to their observations of the world.⁴⁸⁹ Finally, both authors establish different types of reader for the texts that they discuss: Ibn Ṭufayl applies this concept when he signals his own "veiled language" in the *Ḥayy*, while Ibn Rushd refers to the "images" and analogies in the Qur'ān waiting to be deciphered by the demonstrative class.⁴⁹⁰

While I would argue that these works of Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Rushd have more in common than not, they also differ in two key respects. For Ibn Ṭufayl, when a member of the intellectual

⁴⁸⁸ See also Lawrence Conrad, "Through the Thin Veil: On the question of the communication and the socialization of knowledge in *Ḥayy ibn Yaḳẓan*," in *The World of Ibn Ṭufayl. Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Ḥayy ibn Yaḳẓan*, ed. Lawrence I. Conrad, 238-266 (Leiden: Brill, 1996) and Bürgel, "Symbols and Hints," 124-130.

⁴⁸⁹ See page 37.

⁴⁹⁰ Cruz Hernández also points to this phenomenon when he explains Ibn Rushd's justification for the use of "remote and complicated analogies" to understand scripture that can only be deciphered by the learned, establishing "categories" of readers. See Miguel Cruz Hernández, "Averroes y el sentido del Islam," in *Averroes Y Los Averroísmos : Actas Del III Congreso Nacional De Filosofía Medieval. Congreso Nacional De Filosofía Medieval (3. 1998. Zaragoza)* (Zaragoza: Sociedad de Filosofía Medieval, 1999), 25.

elite applies his rational faculty to the observation of the natural world, he achieves not only a complete understanding of religious truths—as would a learned person in Ibn Rushd’s view—but also mystical union with the divine.⁴⁹¹ Indeed, Ibn Ṭufayl presents this union as Ḥayy’s ultimate spiritual accomplishment and as the logical outcome of all of his previous efforts. In Ibn Rushd’s works there is no such treatment of gnosis, even for the demonstrative class. The pinnacle of their intellectual efforts is simply complete and perfect knowledge of religion.⁴⁹² Indeed, when Ibn Rushd does discuss the subject of mystical union with the divine, he shows skepticism. In the *Exposition*, for example, he explains how the mystics believe that religious understanding stems from an insight granted to those who have purified themselves of their desires.⁴⁹³ Ibn Rushd responds by dryly stating that were such an approach to exist, it would not work for all men and is therefore useless. By contrast, he asserts that “the Qur’ān in its entirety is but a call to theoretical investigation.”⁴⁹⁴

The second difference between the two authors is that Ibn Ṭufayl is somewhat more disparaging toward the masses, at least as they are represented by the islanders. For instance, Christoph Bürgel, in an analysis of Ibn Ṭufayl’s critique of contemporary society, emphasizes the way that the philosopher subverts certain Qur’ānic verses in the *Ḥayy*, giving them a context that differs from the Qur’ānic one. When Ḥayy reflects upon his encounters with Absāl’s group of friends, for example, he uses the Qur’ānic citation “they are like cattle, except even more led astray.” In the Qur’ān this verse actually refers to unbelievers, rather than to believers who are unable to understand the true meaning of religion.⁴⁹⁵ One does not get the same impression from

⁴⁹¹ The best discussion that I have read of mystical ideas in *Ḥayy* is Cornell, “Ḥayy in the Land of Absāl,” cited above.

⁴⁹² See Fakhry, *Averroes*, 167.

⁴⁹³ See Ibn Rushd, *Exposition*, 32. An example of such verses is Qur’ān 8:29, which reads “O you who believe, if you fear God, He will provide you with a criterion [to distinguish right from wrong].”

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁵ Qur’ān 25:44. For further discussion, see Bürgel, “Symbols and Hints,” 129.

Ibn Rushd. He employs a more matter-of-fact tone when describing the different intellectual capacities of believers, stating, for example, that it is simply “not part of the nature of the majority of the public to grasp” certain spiritual truths.⁴⁹⁶

2.3. WELL-REASONED GROWTH: THE MOSQUE AS MESSENGER

Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Rushd’s religious ideas find expression in two specific areas of the Mosque of Seville: the vegetal ornament of its prayer hall and the minaret. Although the former was entirely replaced by the cathedral, two short descriptive passages by Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt, together with archeological fragments found among the material excavated from the cathedral’s exterior, provide valuable insight into its original appearance. First, Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt praises the artisanship of mosque’s interior:

The architects exerted much effort and took a special interest in the construction of the dome that was elevated above the *miḥrāb* of the mosque, [built] with the greatest enthusiasm in terms of the stucco’s workmanship; in the [other] domes of the building and in the woodworking. All these labors were treated with extreme care. A vaulted gallery (*sābāt*) was built in the left flank of the *miḥrāb* wall, through which one could walk with ample space. This gallery was made so that the caliph, coming from the palace, could access the mosque in order to be present at Friday prayers.⁴⁹⁷

He also describes how the mosque’s *minbar*

was adorned with the most extraordinary art: the most noble, sculpted, embossed, decorated wood was selected, it was exemplary in all types of artisanship and it was worked with mastery. All of this [was accompanied by] an admirable technique, astonishing moldings and geometry, marketry of sandalwood, inlays of ivory and ebony that shone and gave the impression [by contrast] of lighted embers, plates of gold and silver and forms sculpted from [a] gold [so] pure [that it seemed to be] made of light itself, in such a way that anyone who saw those forms in the darkness of night would think that they were full moons. Later, work on the *maqṣūra* continued, [which was equally constructed] with the most beautiful wood, and which safely veiled [the sovereign].⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁹⁶ *Exposition*, 57. Ibn Rushd’s neutral tone toward the masses is particularly salient in the section on God’s attribute of corporeality in the *Exposition*. Ibn Rushd acknowledges the difficulty of the concept that God is not a body, and he affirms that teaching the public about this aspect of his nature only confuses them and causes them to lose faith. This is simply because they are unable to grasp the idea of a being’s existence without accompanying form; in other words, Ibn Rushd does not use disparaging language or re-contextualized Qur’ānic citations, like Ibn Ṭufayl. See pages 56-62 for the full discussion.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt, cited in Roldán Castro, 17.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

In the first citation, Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt points out that the building contained a *sābāt* for the caliph, and he also highlights the dome that was placed over its *miḥrāb*, specifying that its ornament was made of stucco and that its elaboration required great concentration and skill on the part of the artisans. Combined with the richness of both the *minbar*, described in the second citation, and the extant ornament featured on the mosque's minaret, which will be further discussed below, the Mosque of Seville seems to have been significantly more ornate than its predecessors.⁴⁹⁹

Archeological excavations performed in the Patio of the Lemon Trees, contained within the Pavilion of Offices, an auxiliary group of administrative buildings abutting the western half of the cathedral's southern wall, confirm Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt's assertions. In the strata of remains that date to the mosque's construction, excavators discovered a portion of a subterranean passageway—measuring four meters in width and extending from the southwest corner of the mosque to the area just behind the *miḥrāb*—that would correspond to his description of the mosque's *sābāt*.⁵⁰⁰ Additionally, archeologists uncovered a small cache of polychrome stucco fragments that they believe to proceed from the *miḥrāb* area of the Great Mosque, the same place where Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt describes the great care taken with the stucco ornament.⁵⁰¹ Although these remnants were found on the exterior side of what would have been the mosque's *qibla* wall, it is entirely possible that they originated from the building's interior, since Seville's

⁴⁹⁹ Jiménez Martín agrees with this assessment, stating that “diverse authors have made references to the forms of the mosque as examples of austerity, as though the splendid brick frame that defines its fundamental elements and the large adobe mud bricks would have remained visible, when it is evident that the key elements of the architecture had stucco décor. In the same way, the small portals would have had their molded ridges and the archivolts would have been decorated with lambrequins ... [The portal] that gives onto the mosque's axis shows that its original form was polylobed and that it was decorated with beautiful stucco ornament, very Cordoban in style, that are perfectly conserved. The *muqarnas* domes were also decorated with stucco, making for an elaborate surface.” See Alfonso Jiménez Martín, “El patio de naranjos y la Giralda,” in *La Catedral de Sevilla*, ed. José Sánchez Dubé (Seville: Ediciones Guadaluquivir, S.L., 1984), 92. While I believe that Jiménez Martín's assessment is quite possible, that there is only architectural evidence to corroborate the minaret's appearance and the stucco of the mosque's main entrance makes me reticent to accept it at face value.

⁵⁰⁰ Tabales Rodríguez and Jiménez Sancho, “Intervenciones arqueológicas,” 432.

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*

Christian conquerors habitually pierced through this wall in order to add chapels to the re-consecrated cathedral.⁵⁰² Neither does the paucity of recovered pieces necessarily correspond to a dearth of stucco ornament in prayer hall. The excavated area in which the fragments were found spans only a fraction of the length of the *qibla* wall, and Christian workers easily might have discarded or reused the rubble from demolished parts of the mosque—including broken stucco—as filler in the walls or foundations of their additions to the building.

The set of stucco pieces has been analyzed and published by Rosario Huarte Cambra (Figures 3.2 and 3.3).⁵⁰³ Despite their fragmentary state, the author identifies small sections of architectural forms that suggest *sebka*, which can be seen in the largest stucco fragment from Figure 3.3.⁵⁰⁴ Carefully incised vegetal ornament, observable in almost all the recovered stucco pieces, winds its way through the *sebka*'s architectural lines, leading Huete Cambra to conclude that these remnants would have formed part of “a large panel of *sebka*, composed of a succession of interlaced polylobed arches, into which a complex design of vegetal motifs was inserted.”⁵⁰⁵ The idea that the Mosque of Seville would have featured a large panel of *sebka* near the *mihrāb* seems more plausible when combined with our knowledge of how Christian builders broke through the building's *qibla* wall, potentially reusing the resulting rubble, and Ibn Šāḥib al-Šalāt's description of the labor-intensive stucco in the *mihrāb* dome.⁵⁰⁶

Huarte Cambra does not discuss the nature of the vegetal ornament itself, which has taken on a new naturalism. This characteristic is evidenced in part by the fragments'

⁵⁰² Ibid.

⁵⁰³ Huarte Cambra, “Fragmentos de yeserías,” 181-196.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid., 183.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid. A closer examination of the stucco fragments themselves would greatly aid in accepting or rejecting this hypothesis, as the curvature of the stucco's face would indicate the shape of the surface that they adorned. However, I have been unable to see them in person and must work from black and white drawings. Similarly, further excavations along the *qibla* wall of the mosque would indicate how widely distributed we can posit the prayer hall's stucco ornament to have been.

polychrome, which uses a reddish, earth-colored tone coupled with black for its arcades and green for the vegetation's vines, leaves and stems. To my knowledge, this is the only instance of polychrome vegetal ornament in any Almohad public building.⁵⁰⁷ Of course, the passage of time could have washed the color from other structures that were exposed to the elements. Indeed, the minaret of the Kutubiyya mosque in Marrakesh (c. 1157) features now-faded polychrome ceramic décor and frescos. However, the many of these elements of the Kutubiyya mosque's minaret take the form of painted geometric interlace or monochrome ceramic tiles, rather than panels of vegetal ornament. When vegetation does appear, its monochromatic hue renders it quite unlike the Mosque of Seville's vegetal motifs, which were pigmented in a way that reflects how architectural and vegetal forms appear in reality.

The idea of fidelity to nature is also present in the forms of the leaves themselves, which feature precise, wedge-shaped lines such as those incised into the largest stucco fragment reclaimed from the Mosque of Seville (Figure 3.3). In this piece, the incisions present on its left-most portion transforms what would be a rather nondescript organic silhouette into a depiction of a plant in two principle ways. First, the lines indicate its composite parts; the upper lobe, for example, is clearly divided into three sections whose shapes suggest a central flower or bud and flanking leaves. They also lend a sense of depth to the vegetation, which can be seen in the middle bud of this compositional cluster. Here, the vertical incision bisecting the form implies a fold or crease.⁵⁰⁸ Certainly, these are abstracted representations of foliage, but relative to other interior Almohad vegetal ornament one could characterize them as "naturalistic." A comparison

⁵⁰⁷ This is not the case in domestic architecture or in buildings that were not officially sponsored by the Almohads. See the essays in Julio Navarro Palazón, ed. *Casas y palacios de Andalucía. Siglos XII y XIII* (Barcelona – Madrid: Lunberg Editores S.A., 1995) for further discussion.

⁵⁰⁸ Again, an examination of the fragments would greatly benefit this formal analysis. However, I have confirmed that the leaves of the Almohad vegetal ornament found on the underside of the mosque's principal entrance (the so-called *Puerta del Perdón*) are carved in rounded relief, lending them a quite three-dimensional appearance.

to the few panels of vegetation found in the Tinmal and Kutubiyya mosques' prayer halls is instructive in this sense: in the earlier building's window screens, the curling vegetal forms are entirely smooth, and they give no indication of fronds or digits (Figures 2.7 and 2.8 show side-by-side examples).

In fact, the only truly appropriate comparanda for the Mosque of Seville's floral forms are those that adorn the Kutubiyya mosque's Almohad-made capitals and those found on its minaret. However, they produce a significantly different visual effect than does the Mosque of Seville's vegetal ornament. First, Chapter Two has already argued that the Kutubiyya's capitals seem small and insignificant when compared to the massive volumes of the stark, smooth arcades that they support, whereas the vegetation presented in panels—as the Mosque of Seville's would have been—forms an integral part of the ornamental program (Figure 2.8). And while the panels of vegetal ornament placed on Kutubiyya's minaret do feature some embellishments that are similar in character to those of the Mosque of Seville's stucco vegetation, a viewer would be hard-pressed to notice them because of their high placement.⁵⁰⁹

The relative naturalism Mosque of Seville's vegetal ornament directly relates to contemporary religious ideas espoused by Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Rushd. The preceding section detailed both scholars' opinion that knowledge of the Creator stems from the observation of the created world. In the process of doing so, each philosopher provides descriptions of prolific vegetation. While Ibn Rushd refers to creation in more general terms, he cites Qur'ān 80: 24-33 as an example of God's providing for human inhabitation of the earth, part of which reads:

Then, We split the earth wide open;
Then caused the grain to grow therein;
Together with vines green vegetation;
And olives and palm trees;
And gardens with dense trees,

⁵⁰⁹ Notably, the vegetal ornament applied to the Mosque of Seville's minaret—whose large forms are similar to those of the prayer hall—is easily distinguishable from ground level.

And fruits and grass,
For your enjoyment and that of your cattle.⁵¹⁰

For his part, Ibn Ṭufayl describes how during one of the phases of Ḥayy’s studies of the natural world, he “turned to examine the diverse species of plants, and he saw that the stems, leaves, flowers, fruits and actions of each individual plant resembled the others.”⁵¹¹ Given these scholars’ close relationship with Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf, I propose that the vegetal ornament in the Mosque of Seville’s prayer hall was intended to manifest God’s presence by evoking the same verdant aspects of His creation described in these texts. The vegetation’s realistic color scheme, its details suggesting depth, stems, leaves and vines; and its location in easily-viewable areas support the argument that the ornament provided viewers with an opportunity to contemplate a relatively naturalistic representation of the fruits of God’s creative labors. When considered within Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Rushd’s theological systems, this reflection would lead to an affirmation of the Creator.

Before turning to the ornament of the mosque’s minaret (known in modern times as the Giralda), a brief overview of the tower and its visual effects is in order. The Almohad minaret—including its now-lost crowning chamber and golden finial—originally stood an imposing sixty four meters tall (Figure 3.4). Its plan can be described as two hollow, square, “concentric” shafts. The tower’s ramp winds up between the walls of the inner and outer shafts, which allowed beasts of burden to carry construction materials to the top. The smaller, interior shaft is vertically divided into seven chambers, each covered with an unadorned dome. Though it has been replaced by the tower’s sixteenth-century construction, this shaft originally protruded up from the outer shaft’s walls, forming the aforementioned top-most chamber that was crowned

⁵¹⁰ Ibn Rushd, *Exposition*, 35. These verses do not actually appear in the manuscript, but as note 44 of Najjar’s commentary makes clear, the citation of only verse 24 implies their presence.

⁵¹¹ Ibn Ṭufayl, *El filósofo autodidacto*, 64.

with the three golden orbs of its finial. With the exceptions of spoliated marble capitals that rest on certain of the minaret's columns and the tower's base, the minaret is composed entirely of brick.

The Giralda's ornament is concentrated on the upper two-thirds of the tower, and each of the minaret's faces receives a slightly different treatment. All four sides are horizontally divided into two registers of ornament, with each register featuring two symmetrical, lateral panels of *sebka* that spring from two small, blind arches (Figure 3.5). Their central panel houses a column of two vertically stacked ornamental units, each of which houses two identical, recessed windows (the only exception is the lower window of the lower register of ornament on the tower's west face, which has only one window). These are enclosed by a tall *alfiz*, a rectangular frame that encases an arch, whose corners were once filled with stucco décor.⁵¹² In turn, the windows' *alfices* are framed by either a lambrequin or polylobed arch whose *alfiz* contains either vegetal ornament similar to that of the mosque's prayer hall or a *sebka* panel that originates in the arch that frames them.⁵¹³

Owing in part from the structural irregularities produced by the internal ascent of the ramp, the ornament of the minaret's four sides begins at different heights (Figure 3.6). The northern face's bottom-most register is the lowest of the four, followed in sequence by the western, southern and eastern bottom registers. This lends them a staggered, sequential appearance, although all of the lower registers of ornament measure approximately the same height. By contrast, the Giralda's upper registers of ornament differ appreciably in height; this

⁵¹² See Alfonso Jiménez Martín, "Las yeserías de la Giralda," *Andalucía Islámica* 2-3 (1981-2): 195-206. Jiménez argues, on the basis of 19th century photographs, that these included "zoomorphic" figures. After examining the same photographs, I see nothing to suggest that this was the case.

⁵¹³ While stucco media of the prayer hall allows for greater detail in the vegetation, the Giralda's vegetal ornament is still more elaborate than that found in the Tinmal or Kutubiyya mosques. In the *alfiz* surrounding the lower-most lambrequin arch on the minaret's northern façade, for example, one sees clear outlining of the forms of the leaves as they connect to their vines. This solution is faithful to the delineated vegetal forms of the prayer hall while respecting the flatness of the minaret's brick.

difference corresponds to the level at which each face's lower register began. Accordingly, the *sebka* panels of the northern side's upper ornamental register are the longest, followed by the western, southern and eastern sides. As Rodríguez Estévez observes, the spiraling ascent of the minaret's ornament as it sequentially traverses the four faces lends a degree of upward movement to the tower that clearly reflects the ascent of its ramp.⁵¹⁴ The effect is heightened by both the lighter appearance of the *sebka* in the Giralda's upper-most ornamental registers, which consists of two distinct and superimposed fields of lozenges, and the attenuation of the arches from which they spring.⁵¹⁵

The impression of upward motion generated by the Giralda takes on a symbolic meaning when examined alongside Ibn Ṭufayl's *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān*. Indeed, this spiraling ascent specifically recalls some of the spiritual exercises that Ḥayy performed in order to achieve gnosis. Having reasoned that the celestial bodies were in perpetual communion with the Creator, and desirous of the same kind of union with God, Ḥayy dedicated himself to imitating their perfection. This included mimicking their orbits by moving in circles, and Ibn Ṭufayl describes Ḥayy's movement and its effects thus:

He forced himself to reflect upon the Necessary Being by moving away from sensory things, closing his eyes, shutting up his ears and energetically struggling against the seductions of his imagination. With all his strength, he willed himself to not think of anything but Him and to not associate any other thought or object with Him. In order to do this, he had recourse to spinning in circles around himself, faster and faster. When he began to feel strong vertigo, sensory things were banished from him, and his imagination and all the other faculties that require corporeal organs weakened, which, in turn, strengthened the actions of his essence which was now free of his body. In certain instances, his understanding became purified of all contamination and he received intuitive vision of the Necessary Being.⁵¹⁶

Although mystical ideas are notably absent (or disparaged) in Ibn Rushd's works, Ibn Ṭufayl clearly maintained their validity, and he was not alone. Indeed, Vincent Cornell describes a

⁵¹⁴ See Rodríguez Estévez, *Alminar Isbiliya*, 75-6.

⁵¹⁵ See *Ibid.*, 58-9 and Juan Clemente Rodríguez Estévez, "Alminares almohades," in *Andalusia y el norte de África: Relaciones e influencias*, ed. Pablo Benito and Fátima Roldán (Sevilla: Fundación El Monte: 2004), 208-9.

⁵¹⁶ Ibn Ṭufayl, *El filósofo autodidacto*, 93.

twelfth-century flourishing of both Andalusian and Maghribī Sufism of which the caliphs must have been aware.⁵¹⁷ Its Maghribī branch, to which Ibn Ṭufayl could have been exposed during this time in Marrakesh, maintained that gnosis was possible for the mystic who purified himself of his desires.⁵¹⁸ While descriptions of Sufi exercises are not forthcoming for this period, Ibn Ṭufayl’s narration of Ḥayy’s movements suggests that turning in circles may have played a part in the process of a mystical ascent toward God. This movement is clearly echoed in the Mosque of Seville’s minaret.

The distinctive, ordered nature of the Giralda’s *sebka* offers additional opportunities for interpretation. The minaret’s northern and western faces feature single-layered *sebka* in their lower registers, while the southern and eastern sides have only double-layered *sebka*, creating two compositional units comprised of the north–west and south–east façades. A strict order can be observed in the tower’s single-layered *sebka*: the lozenges spring directly from the small lambrequin arches at their base, and their forms replicate the arches’ undulations with rigorous precision (Figure 3.5). While they are wider, larger and more complex than the former, the diamond shapes that create the overlapped layer of the double-layered *sebka* are similarly faithful to the form of the arch from whence they originate. However, the double-layered *sebka*’s under-layer departs from this pattern; having no parent arch, these layers vary widely across the four faces of the Giralda, with some featuring serpentine motifs and others quite organic looking forms (Compare Figures 3.5 and 3.7).

Despite this variety, the *sebka* panels contribute to the overall effect of the minaret’s ornamental program, which is one of orderliness and systemization. This can first be observed in the way the starting position of the ornamental registers both indicate the tower’s interior

⁵¹⁷ See Cornell, “Ḥayy in the Land of Absāl,” 138-155.

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 159-61.

design and reflect the ramp's ascent. In other words, the ornament's external organization clearly reproduces the minaret's internal structure. Second, the division of the Giralda's four sides into two compositional "sets" facilitates the viewing of each set from two logical vantage points: one inside the courtyard, where the north and east facades are clearly visible, and the other in the adjacent palace, where the south and west sides could be seen as a unit.⁵¹⁹ Next, all four sides of the minaret, though varied in their details, are compositionally unified. This is achieved both by their symmetry, with the panels of *sebka* flanking the central column of window openings, and by the repetition of the basic elements of their ornament: essentially, the entire program is derived from architectural motifs and only punctuated by the *alfices*' vegetal forms. Finally, the shapes of the *sebka* itself are systematized: in their majority, their contours logically proceed from those of the arches from which they originate. Although this is not the case with the under-layers of the double-layered *sebka* panels, their background position suggests that they are submitted to the orderly system of the program.

I posit that the forms of the minaret's *sebka*, and indeed, the tower's ornamental program as a whole, represent an ordered, rational universe, an interpretation that also proceeds from contemporary ideas. Both Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Rushd believed that the universe follows a strict order imposed by its divine Creator, and this idea formed an important premise underlying their proofs for God's existence. As was the case with the Mosque of Seville's vegetal ornament, this connection is manifested in the way these two philosophers use language. The range of verbs used to describe Ḥayy's thought processes—he "deduces," "discerns" and "reasons"—directly reveals Ibn Ṭufayl's faith in the rational order of the natural world.⁵²⁰ Perhaps more subtly, both Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Rushd are prone to organizing their subjects into logical groups. Ḥayy does

⁵¹⁹ Ibid., 87-89.

⁵²⁰ See Ibn Ṭufayl, *El filósofo autodidacto*, 67, 68 and 72, among others. Urvoy, of course, has already drawn attention to Ibn Ṭufayl's choice of words.

so by sorting the objects he encountered on his island, and Ibn Rushd systematizes both the intellectual capacities of believers and the verses of scripture. Without a fundamental belief in the underlying order of the universe, these tendencies to impose structured systems onto earthly and religious phenomena would hardly have been possible.

In this context it is worth turning once more to Urvoy's ideas about the rationality of the Andalusian experience, as his discussion concerning how this rationality infused even the most traditional disciplines dovetails nicely with the present analysis of the Giralda's *sebka*. He draws a contrast between methods of Qur'ānic recitation endemic to the Islamic east and the Andalusian approach, which "expresses itself as a decorative fixed theme with figures that are both rhythmic and melodic, and which are very close to the arabesque in the decorative arts."⁵²¹ Essentially, Urvoy's extension of the basic rationality of musical theories to the aesthetics of Qur'ānic recitation is analogous to my application of the rationality of Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Rushd's religious texts to the ornament of the Mosque of Seville's minaret. Notably, Urvoy includes the visual sphere in his discussion, although in a less precise way than I have offered.

One final thematic similarity in Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Rushd awaits a translation into the visual language of the Mosque of Seville: their separation of the elite from the masses. This dichotomy is present in various ways. Previous discussion of the history of Almohad involvement in Seville revealed that twelfth century Sevillian society was clearly segregated into the socio-political elite (the Almohads) and the masses (the rest of the city's inhabitants). In this context, I argued that the mosque mediated between the two social classes, defining—and, in Abū Ya`qūb's time, fortifying—a shared, religiously-infused space that served both to emphasize the worshippers' religious common ground and, for the Almohad governors, to keep a close watch on potential dissidents. With this in mind I argue that the idea of separating the elite

⁵²¹ Urvoy, "The Rationality of Everyday Life," 50.

from the masses was a generalized characteristic of twelfth-century Almohad and Andalusian society, although Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Rushd intended for their elite to be an intellectual or spiritual one.⁵²²

This is not to say that the ideas of spiritual and intellectual elitism are not physically present in the Mosque of Seville as well. In a Rushdian sense, the building's vegetal ornament represents a way to attain knowledge of the Creator for both the masses and the elite, and its visibility could have helped to communicate this idea to all the mosque's viewers. Ibn Rushd's system also encourages the elite to deepen their investigations into natural phenomena in order to achieve a more perfect understanding of the argument for God's existence from providence. For the elect viewer, then, the mosque's vegetal ornament could have prompted associations between his private studies and the leafy abundance on the ceiling above him, especially if the ornament was relatively naturalistic in its pigment and its forms. Ibn Ṭufayl's system excludes the masses to a greater degree; without divine revelation, Ḥayy was only able to achieve knowledge of the Creator through created beings because he was a member of the elect. Nevertheless, in the Ṭufaylian system the same argument obtains for those believers, like Ḥayy who are able to realize the connection between creation and the Creator in the naturalistic vegetal ornament of the prayer hall.

Something similar happens when we consider the separation of the elect from the masses in terms of the ornament of the Giralda, which, I have argued, reflects ideas of a rationally-ordered universe. It is a bit more difficult to argue that the masses—even if they formed part of an inherently rational society—would have understood the connection between the highly-structured *sebka* and divine order itself. This task is somewhat easier when one considers the

⁵²² From the very beginning the Almohads conceived of their movement as a group of spiritual elect that are separate from, and inherently superior to, the rest of the faithful. Intriguingly, their separatism seems to have coincided with a similar movement in Andalusia. See Fierro, "Spiritual Alienation."

elect. That Ḥayy was able to make the connection between a rationally-ordered universe and ultimate, divine order requires no further explanation. Furthermore, both Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Rushd call on the elite classes to exercise their rational faculties in the religious sphere, in order to better understand the nature of God, the universe and religious texts. In this context, it is noteworthy that the *sebka* of the Giralda is more complex on the two sides that directly face the Almohad palaces (Figure 3.8): the doubled *sebka* in both registers echoes the increased religious understanding—whether real or perceived—of the “elect” Almohad patrons.

3 ALMOHAD AESTHETICS UNDER ABŪ YA`QŪB YŪSUF

3.1 *IBN RUSHD AND THE IMAGERY OF AN ORDERED CREATION*

The last section of this chapter argued that the ornamental program in the Mosque of Seville was revised in order to reflect the religious ideas espoused by two of the caliph’s close associates, Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Rushd. Although this kind of semiotic reading of non-figural Islamic ornament is ever-increasing, it continues to be the exception rather than the norm, and its validity is still debated. While I believe that the connection between Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf and these two philosophers is itself strong enough to support my conclusions, aesthetic ideas present in Ibn Rushd’s own works provide them with a twelfth-century theoretical framework.⁵²³ However, before beginning, I wish to define the nature of my inquiry into Rushdian aesthetics, as my intentions here differ from those of Chapter Two’s analysis of `Abd al-Mu`min’s aesthetic system. While the latter aimed at identifying the stylistic hallmarks of the first Almohad monuments and grounding them in specific aspects of their doctrine, this section seeks to

⁵²³ *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān*, as noted by Puerta Vílchez, does not even mention the arts. Ḥayy is able to achieve spiritual perfection without them, and his only creative activities are strictly in the service of his basic necessities, such as building a shelter or sewing clothes. See José Miguel Puerta Vílchez, *Historia del pensamiento estético árabe: Andalucía y la estética árabe clásica*, (Madrid: Ediciones Akal, 1997), 156-8. My discussion of Ibn Rushd’s aesthetics—including the citations of the primary texts—will rely heavily on Puerta Vílchez’ comprehensive and magisterial work, since he is, to my knowledge, the only scholar to have discussed them.

strengthen the tie between my reading of the Mosque of Seville's ornament and the scholars whose ideas defined them. In other words, it will further demonstrate that the semiotics of Ya`qūbian Almohad ornament have a basis in contemporary thought.

Admittedly, Ibn Rushd never explicitly developed an aesthetic theory. He did, however, compose works from which an understanding of his aesthetic ideas can be gleaned. José Miguel Puerta Vílchez, in his classic *Historia del pensamiento estético árabe: Andalucía y la estética árabe clásica*, points us toward Ibn Rushd's commentaries on Plato's *Republic* and his commentaries on Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*, which form the basis of this discussion.⁵²⁴ Specifically, and owing to the nature of the Ancient Greek material for Ibn Rushd's commentaries, Puerta Vílchez culls Rushdian aesthetics from discussions of moral goodness and poetic discourse. For a medieval Muslim like Ibn Rushd, moral rectitude and correct religious belief are similar enough that we can transfer ideas about one to the other. The examples that Ibn Rushd provides to illustrate his points indicate that he viewed all the arts as analogous, allowing his conclusions about poetic discourse to be assigned to the visual arts as well.

One of the first features of Ibn Rushd's aesthetics is that artistic production's worth depends on whether it promotes moral goodness. This idea emerges through his warning that appreciation of beautiful objects can quickly degenerate into the vice of luxury, an admonition appearing both in Plato's *Republic* and in Ibn Rushd's commentary on it. For example, in the third book of the latter Ibn Rushd laments how in a timocracy, "kings use rich vestments, such as ermine and royal purple garments, and they seat themselves on golden thrones. All of these things, according to the opinion of the vulgar, are signs of perfection and wisdom."⁵²⁵ Here, Ibn Rushd sharply criticizes societies in which ostentatious displays of wealth such as jewels, fine

⁵²⁴ See footnote 522 for the full citation.

⁵²⁵ Cited in Puerta Vílchez, *Historia del Pensamiento*, 170.

clothing, riches and ornate thrones are idealized. Indeed, Puerta Vílchez notes that for Ibn Rushd, the arts serve as a sort of “moral barometer” with which the justness of any given society can be measured. If they are used to dominate and enslave the population, as in the case above, then society itself is corrupt. But if the arts help perfect society, justice reigns.⁵²⁶

Puerta Vílchez elaborates by explaining that according to Ibn Rushd, the arts contribute both to the goodness and morality of a society and to its decadence and corruption. This idea proceeds from the philosopher’s insistence that true beauty is not that which is embodied in luxurious objects. Rather, real beauty is found in moral goodness, “which helps the individual to serve both Islam and the perfection of society.”⁵²⁷ In other words, art’s goodness—or its aesthetic value—depends on whether it encourages moral rectitude. To safeguard artisans from creating objects that degenerate into symbols of power, Ibn Rushd insists that they be rigorously trained and acquire the theoretical framework appropriate to their respective arts during a long period of apprenticeship.⁵²⁸ This last point will be particularly important for later discussion of Almohad aesthetics; it signals that for Ibn Rushd, successful artistic production is not governed by the artisan’s subjective fancy or his taste. Rather, specific and objective rules both determine the aesthetic value of the final product and delineate the boundaries within which the artisan is required to work.

A second crucial facet of Ibn Rushd’s aesthetics appears in the context of Aristotle’s discussion of pleasure in his *Rhetoric*. Ibn Rushd’s commentary develops the Aristotelian notion that artistic representation can be used in order to teach virtuous behavior. He begins by echoing Aristotle’s assertion that people like imitation (defined as any kind of artistic representation, be it verbal, visual or audible) because its evocation of actual, physical things delights them. Thus,

⁵²⁶ Ibid.

⁵²⁷ Ibid., 171.

⁵²⁸ Ibid.

people will inevitably prefer contemplating imitations to contemplating the existing things in reality; to illustrate this point Ibn Rushd cites the greater pleasure derived from viewing paintings of animals, as opposed to viewing the animal itself.⁵²⁹ He continues by asserting that poetry and the other imitative arts are therefore effective instruments in education.⁵³⁰ This is because the pleasure that imitation produces is analogous to the pleasure produced by learning. Ibn Rushd explains:

This is what happens in the kind of imitation that is painting and pictures, just as in other actions destined to imitate immediate models, that is to say existing things rather than actions that imitate existing things. The pleasure of imitating existing things is not due to the imitated form itself, be it beautiful or ugly. Rather, the imitation of the form creates a certain analogy to it. Therefore, recognition of the most recondite, or the unknown, is made known through a similarity to the already known. This similarity then replaces the unknown. Thus, the process is actually a type of teaching based in analogy.⁵³¹

The key to this kind of teaching lies in the viewer's (or listener's/reader's in the case of poetry) feelings of delight upon discovering the hidden relationship between that which is imitated, either visually or verbally, and the imitated thing itself. Puerta Vílchez points out that in Ibn Rushd's system, the arts in general and poetry in particular become an "inimitable educative instrument, particularly if they can transmit moral virtues because of the precision and clarity of the word."⁵³² Ibn Rushd's examples of paintings of animals lead me to include images in this statement, but the most important point is that for Ibn Rushd, the noblest and the only justifiable use of any imitation is pedagogical.⁵³³

This in no way suggests that Ibn Rushd gave free reign to the poets (or, by extension, to crafters of visual imitation). He censured what he viewed as the "immoral" content of many

⁵²⁹ "The proof that human beings naturally become joyful happy by the process of comparison is that we are delighted by the imitation of things that, upon perceiving them directly, do not move us at all. But we *are* delighted if we perceive them through a distant imitation, like what happens with the paintings of animals by able painters." (Cited in Puerta Vílchez, *Historia del Pensamiento*, 354.)

⁵³⁰ See *Ibid.*, 353-4.

⁵³¹ *Commentary on Aristotle's Rhetoric*, cited in *Ibid.*, 358.

⁵³² *Ibid.*, 359.

⁵³³ *Ibid.*, 277.

poems, and he also placed specific ethical and aesthetic boundaries around poetic discourse. Specifically, he condemned the literary devices of imitating the impossible, altering the true form of the represented thing even if the change is possible (the example Ibn Rushd provides is a painter who idealizes a portrait), comparing rational to irrational beings (such as women to gazelles), comparing something to its opposite or to something close to its opposite, and using terms that simultaneously indicate two contrary things.⁵³⁴ These boundaries fully ground Ibn Rushd's aesthetics to the realm of the physical, the possible and the natural: essentially, artistic production, be it visual or poetic, is limited to verisimilitude. Puerta Vílchez suggests that this idea has deeper roots than Ibn Rushd's interest in Aristotle; it also responds to the Qur'ānic accusation of poets as falsifiers. He continues by asserting that this position "highlights again the two pillars of Ibn Rushd's thought: the Qur'ānic message and Aristotelian logic, this time at art's expense."⁵³⁵

This section has underlined several salient aspects of Ibn Rushd's aesthetics. First, he insists that artistic production can and must serve an ethical, and ultimately an Islamic, end. Second, with Aristotle's help, Ibn Rushd asserts that art has an objective theoretical framework allowing skillful artisans to disseminate moral virtues through their creations. Next, because the interpretation of artistic representations engages the rational faculty, which is delighted to discover the relationship between what is represented and what is real, art—or, to use the Rushdian term, imitation—is an extremely effective teaching tool.⁵³⁶ Indeed, it is art's didactic aspect that justifies its existence at all. Finally, Ibn Rushd's reduction of the function of art to a

⁵³⁴ Ibid., 350-1.

⁵³⁵ Ibid., 351-2.

⁵³⁶ Ibn Rushd states: "...and since reflection is nothing more than inference and drawing out of the unknown from the known, and since this is reasoning or at any rate done by reasoning, therefore we are under an obligation to carry on our study of beings by intellectual reasoning." (*Decisive Treatise*, Chapter 1) Although this assertion is in the context of the study of *beings* rather than imitation, it still proves that analogy, "the drawing out of the unknown from the known" is a process that takes place in the rational mind.

purely didactic and ethical one has specific aesthetic consequences: namely, imitations must conform to the ideal of verisimilitude to the represented form. The roots for all of these ideas can be found in Ibn Rushd's dependence on both Aristotelian logic and Qur'ānic ideals.

3.2 *RUSHDIAN AESTHETICS AND THE MOSQUE OF SEVILLE*

Ibn Rushd's aesthetic system obtains in the Mosque of Seville in several ways. For example, the idea that artistic production must serve an ethical (Islamic) end is clearly present in the building. As one of the primary disseminators of moral virtue, it is appropriate that the mosque be given awe-inspiring proportions and shimmering and prismatic *sebka*, not to mention the graceful curves of its stucco leaves.⁵³⁷ Of course, I have also argued that the vegetal and geometric designs of the building were meant to signal the ways in which the faithful could be certain that God exists. If this reading is correct, it would be difficult to posit a more morally sound principle for artistic imitation to represent and defend. And while it no longer comes as a surprise that the Mosque of Seville's vegetal ornament is more naturalistic than that found in earlier Almohad structures, Ibn Rushd's aesthetic principle of verisimilitude intersects quite nicely with the idea that reflection upon natural beings leads to certainty about their ultimate Creator.

This last observation raises an important point about the way in which Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf and his architects translated the aesthetic principles of Ibn Rushd into architectural forms. In spite of the philosopher's support of artistic verisimilitude, the stucco leaves and fronds in the Mosque of Seville's prayer hall are not given the same toothy digits as we saw in Almoravid-era ornament, nor are they as carefully realistic as the vegetal ornament during the Umayyad

⁵³⁷ Linda Jones has recently demonstrated the extent to which the Friday sermon featured prominently in the propagation of moralistic Almohad doctrine. Linda G. Jones, "The Preaching of the Almohads: Ideology, Legitimacy, and Contestation" (paper presented at the 42nd annual conference for the Association of Spanish and Portuguese Studies, Lisbon, Portugal, June 30th – July 3rd, 2011).

caliphate (Compare Figures 3.3, 3.9 and 3.10). In other words, the Sevillian mosque's vegetal ornament is more realistic than that of the Mosque of Tinmal (Figure 2.7) but still relatively abstract in comparison to other Maghribī and Andalusian dynasties. A second example of this phenomenon is the Almohads' evocation of both the religious solidarity and the social tension between them and the Sevillans through the mosque's location and proportions; Ibn Rushd's aesthetic system clearly denounces imitation that simultaneously represents two conflicting ideas.

To resolve these apparent contradictions, it is important to remember that while Ibn Rushd's ideas factored significantly in determining the final aesthetic of the Mosque of Seville, nothing obliged Abū Ya`qūb to adopt his aesthetic theory in its entirety. Instead, each of these seeming "contradictions" can be explained through a consideration of their Almohad Sevillian context. For instance, the relativity of the vegetal ornament's realism probably reflects a desire to accommodate not only Ibn Rushd's call for verisimilitude (and, of course, his and Ibn Ṭufayl's theological systems), but also the more abstracted aesthetic system that Abū Ya`qūb inherited from his father. Similarly, the expression of two conflicting ideas in the same imitation may have been unacceptable within a Rushdian aesthetic system, but it did address significant concerns about social stability in twelfth-century Almohad Seville.

In addition to providing insights into the design aspects of the Mosque of Seville's ornament, Rushdian aesthetics also favor the idea that it was intended to have been interpreted semiotically. Puerta Vílchez has shown how Ibn Rushd recognized the power of artistic representation to convey a message; indeed, in his view imitation can and must be used to further collective social morality. It is, however, incumbent upon the viewer to engage the imitation with his or her rational mind in order to interpret its similarities to real things or ideas, although he

is rewarded with the delight that accompanies the deciphering of an analogy. For Ibn Rushd, it would not have been farfetched to expect an average viewer—in whose basic rational capacities he trusted—to notice the similarity between the relatively realistic depiction of the foliage that canopied the mosque’s ceiling and the fragrant jasmine and honeysuckle vines that climbed the walls of Andalusian gardens, provoking further reflection on God’s providence through creation. That same worshipper could be reminded of the inherent rationality of the divinely-ordered universe should his eyes rest upon the rigorously-ordered *sebka* of the minaret. All of these forms would have contained a deeper meaning for the elect among the faithful, who would have been reminded of their scientific inquiries into the nature and usefulness of all existing things or even of their mystical exercises.

4 CONCLUSIONS

To conclude my analysis of the Almohad Mosque of Seville, I offer a summary of this chapter’s main arguments, saving a comparison to my conclusions about the Kutubiyya and Tinmal mosques for Chapter Four’s conclusion. The first reading of the Seville’s Great Mosque was primarily political. Through the monumentality of its portal, the visibility of its minaret, and its close proximity to the new Almohad palaces, the mosque was intended to broadcast the Almohads’ presence and sovereignty to the dissident segments of Sevillian society. This domineering message was somewhat mediated by the mosque’s privileged position between the Almohad palaces and the rest of the city, marking it as a place where the governors and governed came together to practice the faith they had in common.

In the second section, a religious interpretation of the building’s ornament emerged that corresponded to ideas featured in the works of two of Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf’s close associates: the philosophers Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Rushd. I argued that the vegetal ornament in the mosque’s

prayer hall, with its relatively naturalistic forms, were meant to move the viewer to first notice the similarities between the ornament and the plants of the natural world, and then to reflect on how all of Creation testifies to God's existence as the Ultimate Creator. Similarly, the rigorous *sebka* that adorned the mosque's minaret was intended to imitate the divine, rational order of the universe, while the stepped organization of each face of the minaret's *sebka* panels, coupled with the lightness of its double-layered, topmost register, evoked a Sufi-style ascent towards gnosis. The entire building—as well as the philosophical texts used to interpret it—was marked by a conception of the divisions present in Almohad society between the political, intellectual and religious elite and the rest of the Sevillans. Finally, the last section of this chapter provided a contemporary theoretical framework for my semiotic reading of the Mosque of Seville's ornamental program by offering an analysis of Ibn Rushd's aesthetic ideas and a demonstration of how they obtained throughout the building.

Rather than relying on an impersonal “influence” of endemic Andalusian-style vegetal and geometric ornament, this interpretation of the change in Almohad aesthetics gives agency to the caliph—and, indirectly, to his courtiers—in choosing the appearance of the Mosque of Seville's vegetal representations. This is not to say that Andalusian ornament played no part in the process; it could, for example, have provided a model that helped determine how the forms were executed. However, just as Ibn Rushd's theological and aesthetic ideas were not translated into the Mosque of Seville's conception in their entirety, these Andalusian forms would have been passed through an Almohad “filter” before being incorporated into their ornamental repertoire. Significantly, this idea respects Abū Ya`qūb's fidelity to Almohad doctrine, his receptiveness to philosophical ideas, his concerns for the continued security of Andalusia and also the impact of local visual idioms in terms of the development of his own ornamental style.

It also allows for some flexibility in understanding the Almohad style in general; while it has changed since `Abd al-Mu`min`s time, the Mosque of Seville reflects concerns as important to the empire as those that led to the development of its earliest monuments.

FIGURES CHAPTER THREE



Figure 3.1. Aerial View, Courtyard, Mosque of Seville (Author's Photo)

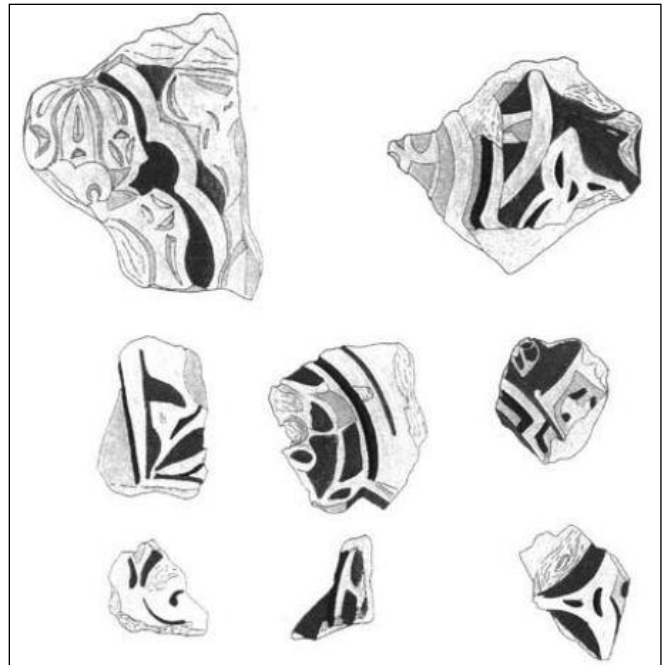
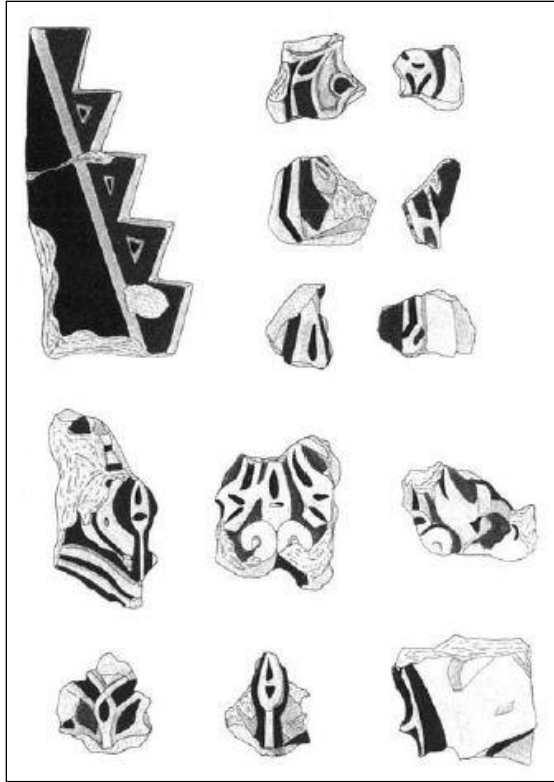


Figure 3.2. Stucco Fragments, Mosque of Seville (Both from Rosario Huarte Cambria, "Fragmentos de yeserías relacionadas con la aljama almohade de Sevilla," *Revista laboratorio de arte* 14 (2001), figs. 1 and 2, respectively.)



Figure 3.4. Minaret, Mosque of Seville (Author's Photo)

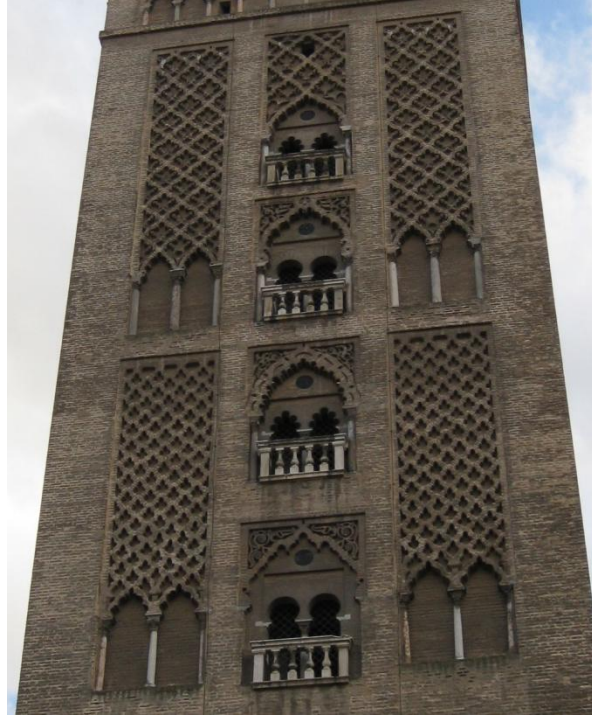


Figure 3.5. Northern Façade, Minaret, Mosque of Seville (Author's Photo)

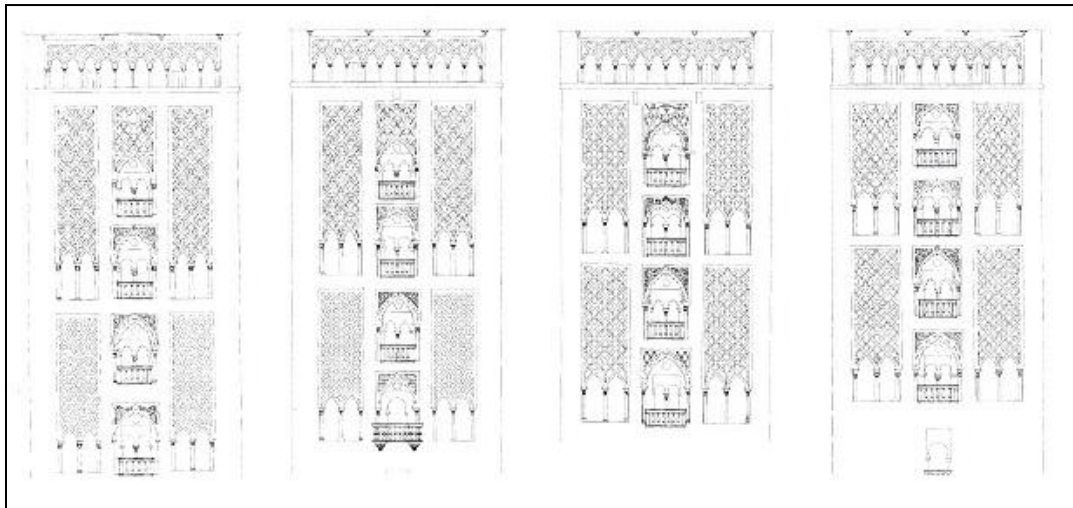


Figure 3.6. Northern, Western, Southern and Eastern Façades, Minaret, Mosque of Seville (“Paños decorativos del alminar de Sevilla a través de sus cuatro caras,” in Rodríguez Estévez, *El alminar de Isbiliya*, fig. 17.)

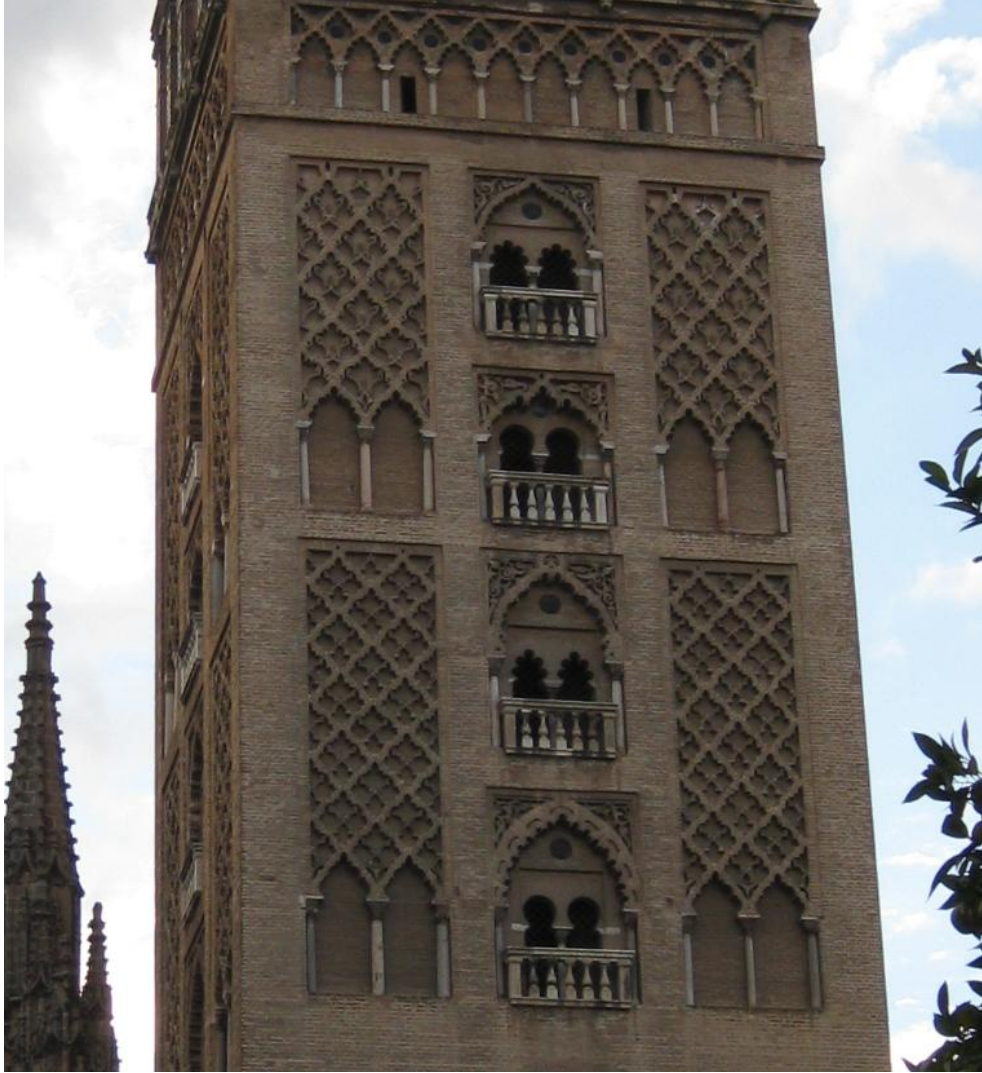


Figure 3.7. Eastern Façade, Minaret, Mosque of Seville (Author's Photo)

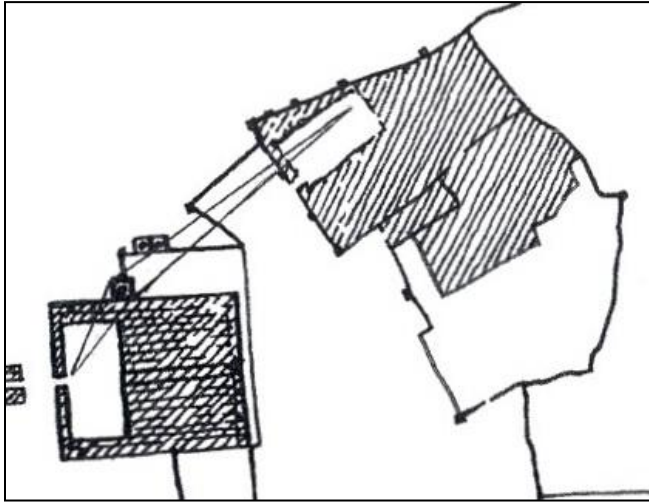


Figure 3.8. Façades, Mosque of Seville (Disposición del alminar en relación con la Mezquita y la Alcazaba de Sevilla,” in Rodríguez Estévez, *El alminar de Isbiliya*, fig. 22)

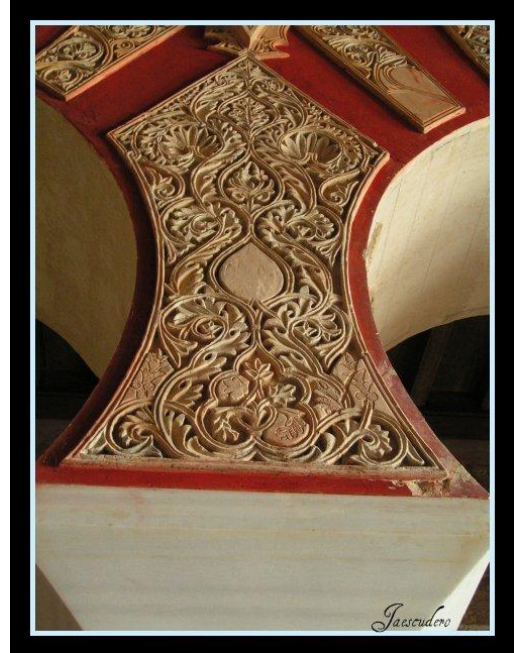


Figure 3.9. Umayyad Vegetal Ornament, Madinat al-Zahra (Image courtesy of Javier Escudero Tejeda)



Figure 3.10. Almoravid Vegetal Ornament, Qubbat al-Bārūdiyyīn, Marrakesh (Author’s Photo)

CHAPTER FOUR: AL-MANŞŪR AND THE HASSAN MOSQUE IN RABAT

“His [*al-Manşūr*’s] objective was, in a word, to destroy Malikism, to drive it out of the Maghrib once and for all, in order to lead the people to the apparent meaning of the *Qur’ān* and hadith.”
–Al-Marrākushī⁵³⁸

In 1184, while riding back to Seville from the disaster that befell his father’s troops in the Portuguese city of Santarem, Abū Yūsuf Ya`qūb took the first step of his journey to becoming the third Almohad caliph: al-Manşūr, “the Victorious.”⁵³⁹ Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf, who had been attacked and wounded in his red battle tent after his guard panicked and fled, died in his litter on July twenty-ninth, 1184, before ever reaching his beloved Andalusian capital. Covering the body with a green shroud, the caliph’s entourage gathered around his son, Abū Yūsuf, to whom they quietly proclaimed their allegiance. At the same time, they hid Abū Ya`qūb’s death from the rest of the troops, whose demoralization after the disastrous siege would suffer even further knowing that the caliph had been killed. Despite the new caliph’s claims that his father had wished him to inherit the caliphal title, Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf had not declared an heir during his lifetime. Nevertheless, al-Manşūr had little difficulty defending his proclamation, at least initially. After installing himself and the court in the Alcazar of Seville, the Almohad elite and the rest of the Andalusian cities officially recognized Abū Yūsuf as Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf’s successor. Between the tenth and eleventh of August, they ceremoniously declared their loyalty to him, although like his father, he initially took only the title of *amīr*.

⁵³⁸ Al-Marrākushī, *The History of the Almohads*, 203. With very few, clearly indicated exceptions, this and all of this chapter’s citations of the text are my own translations from Dozy’s edited version of the Arabic manuscript located in Leyden. Future incarnations of this project will endeavor to replace all citations of al-Marrākushī in this manner.

⁵³⁹ This first paragraph is summarized from Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 313-9.

Not one month later, al-Manṣūr left his father's favored city to return to the Maghrib. Ibn Ḥdharī recounts Abū Yūsuf's departure in detail: After the *majlis* in which he received his pledges of allegiance, drums were beat so that all those assembled knew that the caliph would soon take his leave of the city. The Sicilian admiral Abū al-Ḥabbās arrived with a fleet of thirteen ships, after having already sent two, laden with baggage, ahead to Rabat. Then, an order was given to the Andalusians to gather at the Buhayra palace early the next day. When dawn broke, masses of people stretched as far as the eye could see. The prince's vessel awaited him on the shores of the Guadalquivir river, enveloped in the same precious textiles that adorned his battle tent. The caliph took leave of the Andalusians, was presented with the Qur'ān of Ḥuthmān and sailed to the village of Triana. There, another royal cloth, which separated the sovereign's area of the battlefield from that of the army, had been prepared.

From Triana, the prince and his retinue continued on foot, marching through Jerez and continuing to Sidona, where they encountered the *amīr*'s cousin, Abū Zakariyyā', who had arrived from Tlemcen with gifts for the new sovereign. Finally, al-Manṣūr and his entourage arrived at the coast near Tarifa, where his float waited. Ibn Ḥdharī describes the sense of marvel that affected those gathered as they gazed upon the great baggage trains, and they began to beat drums and ululate as al-Manṣūr descended to the shore. On September ninth, 1184, he bid a final farewell to the Andalusians and his brothers at the water's edge, boarded his flagship preceded by the Qur'ān of Ḥuthmān in its special litter, and set sail. Once in Rabat, al-Manṣūr assumed the title of Amīr al-Mu'minīn, marking his full transformation into Almohad caliph. He also received delegations from several Maghribī cities in Rabat. After divesting Fez's representative of his position—marking the beginning of his strict administrative reforms—he required the rest

to meet him in Marrakesh. He then provisionally buried his father in the coastal city before turning to the capital.⁵⁴⁰

The first section of this chapter focuses on al-Manṣūr's political career, beginning with the events that took place immediately after caliph's first arrival in Marrakesh. Like his grandfather `Abd al-Mu'min, al-Manṣūr was forced to quash several uprisings soon after assuming the caliphal title. The first of these plots was hatched while he was on campaign against the Banī Ghāniyya, descendents of the Almoravids who had controlled the Balearic Islands ever since the Almohads drove them from the Maghrib. Although this campaign faced some initial setbacks, al-Manṣūr managed to bring the islands back under Almohad control. However, upon his return he found that his paternal uncle and two of his brothers had allied against him. The caliph dealt with his rebellious relatives with exemplary violence, ordering their executions in spite of familial ties.

The other rebels who rose up against al-Manṣūr were of an entirely different sort. As I mentioned in the introduction to this study, Abū Yūsuf's caliphate produced several quasi-prophetic figures not unlike the Maḥdī Ibn Tūmart. At least two of them, al-Jazūlī and al-Ashall, attracted large groups of loyal followers, drawn mostly from the lower classes. Al-Manṣūr also clearly felt threatened by the Sufis, whose importance and influence had only grown since his grandfather's time. He interviewed several of them over the course of his rule, including the famous Abū Madyan. In spite of his reservations the caliph also favored the Sufis: before his summons, Abū Madyan himself had declined the sovereign's request to serve as his personal spiritual advisor, nominating the younger al-Qaranjaray in his stead. Both of these threats—one originating from inside the Almohad hierarchy and the other from without—impacted al-Manṣūr's choices for the Hassan mosque.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibn `Idhārī, *Al-bayān al-mughrib*, 242-3.

The second section of this chapter addresses key elements of the caliph's character and religiosity. Like his father and grandfather, al-Manṣūr was a complex ruler whose official stances sometimes contradicted one another in order to serve changing and, in some cases, nebulously defined interests. On the one hand, he seems to have had a penchant for pomp and ceremony coupled with a taste for luxury, richness and ostentation. Ibn `Idhārī's description of his leave-taking in Andalusia illustrates this facet nicely, as do the caliph's massive, grandiose constructions in Rabat and Marrakesh. On the other hand, and especially toward the later years of his life, al-Manṣūr courted the Sufis, self-declared *fuqarā'* (Eng. lit. "poor ones," or "Sufis"). He also reportedly liquidated the royal textile holdings and enacted sumptuary laws early in his career.⁵⁴¹ Further complicating the portrait of this ruler is al-Marrākushī's assertion that al-Manṣūr both rejected Ibn Tūmart's claims to being the Infallible Imām and believed in the exoteric (Ar. *zāhirī*) nature of the Qur'ān. In the chronicler's view, these attitudes translated into the caliph's zealous hatred for the branches of law (Ar. *furū'*) and an accompanying campaign against Malikism.⁵⁴²

The final section of this chapter will return to the Hassan mosque, offering an interpretation of its unique characteristics. Following the work of Moulay Driss Sedra, I argue that the size and position of the building respond to the caliph's desire to make Rabat the new Almohad capital. Continuing this line of thinking, I suggest that the switch of the empire's seat to Rabat served an even larger goal: a sociopolitical renewal of the Almohad caliphate itself. Drawing on sections one and two, I propose that the both the grandeur and the unconventional plan of the Hassan mosque could have symbolized al-Manṣūr's surpassing his father and grandfather's caliphates. I also define the Hassan mosque's new ornamental aesthetic as one that

⁵⁴¹ Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 319.

⁵⁴² Al-Marrākushī, *Histoire*, 250-1.

features a strict typological division between organic and inorganic elements, achieved, in part, by the striking naturalism of its *ataurique*. Finally, I suggest ways that al-Manṣūr's religiosity informed this ornamental shift.

1 AL-MANṢŪR'S POLITICAL WOES

1.1. THE REVOLT OF THE BANĪ GHĀNIYYA AND THE REBELLIONS OF THE SAYYIDS

Once al-Manṣūr took the caliphal title, he travelled to Marrakesh, where he began to tend to the affairs of his kingdom. He reviewed the management of his territories, convened a short-lived court of justice, fiercely prohibited wine-drinking (along with other moral transgressions) and initiated the construction of an addition to the Almohad palace.⁵⁴³ His conflict with the Banī Ghāniyya began shortly after. In 1182, the Banū Ghāniyya had reached an uneasy truce with Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf when their sultan, Ishāq, recognized Almohad sovereignty and gave the Friday sermon in the Almohad caliph's name. After Ishāq's death, Abū Ya`qūb sent a delegation headed by `Alī ibn Reverter—the son of an Almoravid chief who confronted `Abd al-Mu`min during his seven-year campaign—to secure the submission of Ishāq's sons. Ishāq's successor, Muḥammad, renewed allegiance to the Almohads, but his brothers rebelled, capturing and imprisoning `Alī ibn Reverter.⁵⁴⁴

While Muḥammad fled to the north of the island to avoid imprisonment, his brothers chose `Alī ibn Ghāniyya as their leader. In Bougie, the Banū Ḥammād, former rulers of the city who had been deposed by the Almohads, successfully appealed to the Banī Ghāniyya for help in ousting the Almohads. On November thirteenth, 1184, the Banū Ghāniyya entered Bougie on the heels of the fleeing Almohad garrison. Secure behind the city's walls, the victors hunted

⁵⁴³ See Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 316-20; I will expound upon several of these aspects in the next section.

⁵⁴⁴ This section is summarized from *Ibid.*, 320-41. Huici Miranda seems to most closely follow the events as they are described by Ibn Idhārī and al-Marrākushī. Other references will be clearly indicated.

down its former governor, the *sayyid* Abū al-Rabī`, and defeated him near Algiers. Before leaving the region, `Alī ibn Ghāniyya took Algiers, the city of Miliana (located in present-day Algeria) and the Qal`a of the Banī Ḥammād. In the wake of these successes, he returned to Bougie, where he declared allegiance to the `Abbasid caliph and amassed a huge army in order to siege Constantina.

Al-Manṣūr took immediate measures to combat the Banū Ghāniyya, offering peaceful surrender to the cities conquered by `Alī, while simultaneously raising a large enough army to regain them by force. While waiting for reinforcements, he sent an advance army to Algiers. The city surrendered, and the favorable terms that the caliph had offered to the other cities occupied by the Almoravids provoked revolts in Miliana. Once they saw the Almohad army before Bougie's gates, its inhabitants also rebelled against the Banī Ghāniyya. After a brief skirmish with `Alī's brothers, it, too was retaken. Without concerning themselves with Bougie's occupation, the Almohad army pressed on to relieve Constantina, where the bulk of `Alī's forces were concentrated. However, the Almohads' superior numbers proved a liability, as `Alī was able to outrun them. While he and his forces took refuge south of the Saharan Atlas mountains, the Almohad army returned to Bougie in order to rest after their six-month campaign.

Meanwhile, in Mallorca, `Alī ibn Reverter took advantage of the absence of most of `Alī ibn Ghāniyya's supporters, making contact with the island's Christian captives. After he promised them their liberty, they formed an alliance and wrested the city's citadel from the Almoravids while Friday prayers were being said. Although the city's army attempted to rally against them, `Alī ibn Reverter and his mercenaries produced the mother, sons and dependents of `Alī ibn Ghāniyya, who had been taken prisoner when the citadel fell, in order to stop the attack.

Once `Alī ibn Reverter received their ransoms, he sent his Christian allies back to their homelands, while he and Muḥammad and sailed for Marrakesh.

`Alī ibn Ghāniyya and his supporters met the successes of the Almohad advance forces and those of `Alī ibn Reverter with renewed aggression. While `Abdallāh ibn Ghāniyya plotted to retake Mallorca's capital, `Alī ibn Ghāniyya took several eastern cities in Jarid, a region surrounding the large oasis in western Tunisia. After moving through the city of Tozeur, he took Gafsa and marched as far east as Tripoli. There, he encountered the Armenian general Qarāqush, who held the area for Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī and who allied with him against the Almohads. The region's Arab tribes, along with some disparate remnants of Lamtūna and Masūfa Berbers, united under their banner, and the entire region of Jarid fell to the new alliance. With Qarāqush settling in the coastal city of Gabes, and with all of Ifriqiyya, save Bougie and Mahdiyya, under his control, `Alī ibn Ghāniyya was returned to the Baleares islands, which his family had retaken for him in his absence.

Back within the Almohad heartland, al-Manṣūr heard of the events in his eastern empire with growing apprehension. In 1186, he was prepared to intervene personally with a second, larger army. He made the traditional pilgrimage to Tinmal, seeking the Mahdī's protection for the coming campaign, and he and the Almohad army marched across the western Maghrib. For his part, `Alī ibn Ghāniyya raided the settlements located in the small peninsula east of Tunis. He also sent his son to the `Abbasid caliph, seeking official recognition for his new state. The `Abbasid caliph complied, and he officially ordered Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn to assist the Banū Ghāniyya in their efforts against the Almohads. The Ayyubid sultan delegated the aforementioned Qarāqush to attend to the Almoravid cause.

Once al-Manṣūr arrived in Tunis, he sent some six thousand cavalry against the Almoravid confederation. They met with `Alī ibn Ghāniyya's forces near the city of `Umra, close to Gafsa, on June twenty-fourth, 1187, but the disorganized Almohad troops quickly lost the upper hand. Although `Alī ibn Reverter, now back in the caliph's service, made a valiant attempt to counterattack, he was surrounded and once again fell prisoner to the Banī Ghāniyya. The survivors fled back to rejoin the defeated army. Al-Manṣūr, clearly perturbed by this setback, prepared his army for a pitched battle. After sending letters to his enemies, inviting their submission, he set out from Tunis and camped near the small city of al-Ḥamma, near Gabes. According to Ibn `Idhārī, the caliph himself rode at the head of the Almohad host, and, after a bloody fight, al-Manṣūr and the Almohads emerged victorious. The next day, the citizens of Gabes requested a peaceful surrender, which the caliph granted. From there, the Almohad army moved to Gafsa, which the Almohads besieged for several months before it, too, fell. By March of 1188, the caliph left Tunis for Marrakesh, troubled by the news of his relatives' actions during his absence.

While al-Manṣūr was proving his military mettle on the battlefields of Ifriqiyya, several of the *sayyids* conspired against him. Because the caliph had not been officially proclaimed by Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf, and, according to al-Marrākushī, because he had been given to certain unnamed vices during his youth, two of his paternal uncles did not recognize his legitimacy. Initially, al-Manṣūr had shown favor to one of them, *sayyid* Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm. However, the caliph later banished him to Tlemcen after he had shown signs of defecting. Following the defeat that al-Manṣūr suffered in `Umra, Abū Ishāq attempted to engender a revolt. As the caliph made his victorious entrance to Tlemcen, however, his uncle changed his tune, taking his rightful place at the caliph's side. Not fooled in the least, al-Manṣūr expelled him from the

majlis, confiscating his horse. He was then accosted and killed by townspeople. Another of al-Manṣūr's uncles, the *sayyid* Abū al-Rabī` Sulaymān, fostered a rebellion in the cities surrounding Tadla, the seat of his Andalusian governorship. However, a loyal *sayyid*, Abū Zakariyyā', captured and brought Abū al-Rabī` to Marrakesh, where he was imprisoned at al-Manṣūr's order.

Perhaps the worst of these familial defections came from the caliph's brother, Abū Ḥafṣ `Umar al-Rashīd, the governor of Murcia. Like Abū Ishāq, Abū Ḥafṣ `Umar seemed to believe that al-Manṣūr would fail in Ifriqiyya after the defeat at `Umra, after which the caliph's brother signed a treaty of alliance with Alfonso VIII, the king of Castile. Thus freed from potential Castilian aggression, he pursued his own political agenda, tyrannizing his subjects and raiding the royal treasury. After al-Manṣūr returned from Ifriqiyya, however, he summoned his brother to Marrakesh. Having been abandoned by his other supporters, Abū Ḥafṣ saw no other alternative but to respond to the summons and trust in his brother's mercy. He was jailed along with his uncle, the *sayyid* Abū al-Rabī` Sulaymān. Al-Manṣūr condemned both Andalusian lords to death as traitors: Rabat's governor publicly beheaded them and those who had supported them, and had their heads displayed on the city's gates.

1.2. *THE REBELLIONS OF THE PROPHET-MAHDĪS*

The second type of rebellion facing al-Manṣūr was of a different, yet familiar, kind. While the *sayyids* could question his legitimacy within their own political hierarchy, especially since his father had never officially proclaimed him heir, they could not challenge the legitimacy of the Almohad caliphate as an institution. In this latter sense, several Sufis rose up against al-Manṣūr, not unlike Ibn Hūd al-Māssī or Ibn Qasī did against `Abd al-Mu'min. The medieval sources mention four of these figureheads: Abū `Abdallāh Muḥammad al-Jazīrī, al-Ashall, `Abd

al-Raḥīm ibn Ibrāhīm Ibn Faras (also known as al-Muhr or al-Gharnāṭī) and Ibn al-`Aḍīd. In this section, I briefly discuss each of them in chronological order, before turning to the impact that they could have made in late twelfth-century Almohad politics.

Al-Jazīrī, an Andalusian and the first *mahdī*-rebel with whom al-Manṣūr contended, was a native of Algeciras.⁵⁴⁵ In 1190, while the caliph campaigned in Portugal, al-Jazīrī preached a messianic mission in and around Marrakesh. Having studied with the *ṭalaba* in Granada, he specialized in predictions and complicated theological issues. Al-Jazīrī claimed to be a divinely-inspired *mahdī*, but rather than promote his own spiritual agenda, he claimed that he wished to restore the purity of Ibn Tūmart’s doctrine. The rebel immediately caught the attention of caliph, but by the time the order to apprehend him was issued, al-Jazīrī had already amassed a considerable following. Abetted by these partisans, he evaded the Almohads for several years. Because of his almost uncanny ability to avoid capture, many believed that he could miraculously transform himself into a dog, cat or donkey. Al-Jazīrī was eventually captured in Andalusia, and al-Manṣūr executed him as a high traitor, displaying his head on the gates of Marrakesh.

Al-Ashall, the second Sufi-rebel of al-Manṣūr’s caliphate, caused disturbances near Zab, located on the eastern coast of present-day Tunisia, in 1194. While Huici Miranda views most of the Almohads’ opponents as rabble-rousers and frauds, he insightfully observes that al-Ashall’s uprising evidences the tenuous hold that the Almohads had over Ifriqiyya, even after al-Manṣūr’s campaign at al-Ḥamma.⁵⁴⁶ Unlike al-Jazīrī, al-Ashall does not seem to have enjoyed any formal education. Huici Miranda characterizes him as “one of so many ambitious illuminated ones,” which calls saintly figures such as Abū Ya`zzā to mind in spite of the historian’s dismissive

⁵⁴⁵ See Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 352-3; García-Arenal, *Messianism*, 201 and Ferhat, *Le Maghreb*, 172-3, from which this paragraph is summarized.

⁵⁴⁶ Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 360-1, is the only secondary source that cites this rebellion.

tone.⁵⁴⁷ Like Ibn Tūmart, al-Ashall professed a messianic mission, earning him the respect and esteem of a large group of devotees. Naturally, once the Almohad caliph learned of this movement, he sent the *sayyid* Abū Zakariyyā', governor of Bougie, to detain its leader.⁵⁴⁸ Al-Ashall was captured and executed, and his head, along with those of several of his followers, was strung up on Bougie's gates.

The Andalusian Ibn Faras is the third Sufi-rebel. García-Arenal notes his similarities with al-Jazīrī: both men lived in Granada and received an Andalusian education.⁵⁴⁹ Unlike al-Jazīrī, who studied with the *ṭalaba*, however, Ibn Faras was well-versed in speculative science and philosophy. Ibn Rushd himself sent the young Ibn Faras to Marrakesh in order to receive Sufi instruction from the followers of Abū al-'Abbās al-Sabī, about whom I shall have more to say in the following section. While in Marrakesh, it seems that Ibn Faras made bold and politically imprudent statements in public, which forced him to go into hiding, rather than face al-Manṣūr's wrath. After the caliph's death in 1199, Ibn Faras rebelled against his successor, the caliph al-Nāṣir, allying with the disaffected Jazūla tribes in the Sus. He commanded his followers as a self-titled *imām* descending from Qaḥṭān. In this way, he invoked the prophet Muḥammad's prediction that a member of the house of Qaḥṭān would "lead the people with his goatherd's crook and fill the world with justice, just as before it had been desolated by tyranny."⁵⁵⁰ In addition to the Jazūla, Ibn Faras commanded members of the Lamṭa tribe and certain of the Masmūda who resided near Marrakesh. Like his companions in this section, he was eventually beheaded and his head displayed on the city's gates.

⁵⁴⁷ Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 360.

⁵⁴⁸ Although the Arab horsemen who accompanied the *sayyid* betrayed him, Abū Zakariyyā' salvaged the situation by holding their families hostage. Thus regaining the upper hand, he ordered them to either return with al-Ashall's head or see their loved ones' own sent to Marrakesh, which had the desired effect.

⁵⁴⁹ García-Arenal, *Messianism*, 200-1; Ferhat, *Le Maghreb*, 173-4 and Benouis El Mostafa, "Les savants mis a l'épreuve a l'époque almohade," in *Biografías almohades II*, ed. María Luisa Ávila and Maribel Fierro (Madrid-Granada: Consejo de Investigaciones Científicas, 2000), 334-5.

⁵⁵⁰ García-Arenal, *Messianism*, 201.

The final enlightened rebel of al-Manṣūr's time based his claim to Mahdism on his familial ties to the Fatimid caliphate.⁵⁵¹ Ibn al-`Aḏīd, a descendent of the eponymous and final Fatimid caliph, rebelled with a group of followers near Fez. He seems to have assumed the given name—as opposed to the title—of “Mahdī” as he led the rebellion. As García-Arenal notes, the details or dates of this rebellion do not coincide in the medieval chronicles. For his part, Ibn Khaldūn recounts that Ibn al-`Aḏīd's followers betrayed him to the caliph al-Manṣūr, who ordered him killed. Al-Marrākushī, however, claims to have met the rebel, whom he describes as a silent and meditative Sufi. He also recounts that Ibn al-`Aḏīd had sought an audience with al-Manṣūr without success, was imprisoned during al-Nāṣir's caliphate, and, upon his release, led the Ṣanhāja in a revolt against the Almohads. Al-Marrākushī tells of the rebels' success in Sijilmasa, where they toppled the Almohad governor.

While the historical implications of these rebellions for medieval Maghribī history lie outside the scope of this study, I do wish to briefly acknowledge the central role that they played in the Almohad empire. Chapter One has already foregrounded the relationship between Almohad authority and Mahdism, asceticism and Sufism. It is a point worth repeating that Almohad political legitimacy was predicated on the divinely-granted authority of the Mahdī Ibn Tūmart, who was recognized as such because he embodied the concepts of correct belief and moral uprightness. Indeed, his assiduous practice of the *ḥisba* won him political support: he was seen to be capable of enforcing correct morality and belief within the wider community. This model of authority, which Ibn Tūmart's successors inherited, led the Almohad caliphs to constantly underline their own moral and religious righteousness, both by emphasizing their personal piety and by distributing their famous circular letters that insisted on upholding the utmost moral uprightness in their territories. It follows that if the Almohad caliphs began to be

⁵⁵¹ See Ibid., 201-2 and Ferhat, *Le Maghreb*, 175.

perceived as corrupt, unjust and impious, and if a Sufi—or worse, a self-titled *mahdī*,—dared to denounce the ruler’s behavior, this could lead to a revolution very much like their own.

In this sense, the general public’s firm belief in the existence of *mahdīs*, coupled with the Almohads’ own past actions, worked against them. For example, Chapter One signaled the widespread belief that a *mahdī* would appear in Ribāṭ Māssa sometime during the years 1202 or 1203 (599 H.). García-Arenal also lists the many groups that `Abd al-Mu`min and the subsequent Almohad caliphs had alienated: the Jazūla in the Sus mountains, who had suffered severely during his *i`tirāf*; the Masmūda sheikhs who had formed the backbone of Ibn Tūmart’s initial system of government, who had been replaced by the caliph’s sons; the tribes occupying the Atlantic coast, who were hostile to the Almohads’ Masmūda origins and, I would add, the Andalusians in general.⁵⁵² Without wishing to fall prey to reductionism, it seems that all that these groups needed in order to spark a revolt was a fighting chance and a figurehead, and who better than a Sufi recalling Ibn Tūmart himself?

The general threat that the Sufis posed to the Almohads led to what Halima Ferhat has characterized as an official, state-sponsored opposition to Sufis during the Almohad period.⁵⁵³ `Abd al-Mu`min, for instance, famously interviewed Abū Ya`zzā in Marrakesh. Two generations later, al-Manṣūr would require the presence of the renowned Sufi master Abū Madyan in Marrakesh because, according to one of the caliph’s advisors, the sheikh’s teachings dangerously approximated those of the Mahdī Ibn Tūmart.⁵⁵⁴ Despite these examples of

⁵⁵² See García-Arenal, *Messianism*, 193, 194 and 196, respectively. García-Arenal goes on to suggest that `Abd al-Mu`min’s importation and settling of the Banī Hillāl confederation on the Atlantic plains only exacerbated this situation.

⁵⁵³ Most recently, see Halima Ferhat, “L’organisation des Soufis et ses limites à l’époque almohade,” vol. 2 of *Los almohades: Problemas y perspectivas*, ed. Patrice Cressier, Ma. Isabel Fierro and Luíś Molina (Madrid: Centro Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2005), 1076-7.

⁵⁵⁴ Vincent Cornell’s introduction to Abū Madyan Shu`ayb ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Anṣārī, *The Way of Abū Madyan*, ed. and trans. Vincent Cornell (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1996) gives a good summary of Abū Madyan’s career and influence. The story of his summons by al-Manṣūr can be found on page 15.

Almohad wariness, the following sections will demonstrate that, as was the case for so many other aspects of Almohad official policy, their attitude toward the Sufis was complex and shifting.

2 SHIFTING MODELS OF ALMOHAD SOVEREIGNTY: OSTENTATION, LITERALISM, SUFISM

More than the other two Almohad caliphs whom I have discussed in this study, the medieval sources depict al-Manṣūr in conflicting ways. Some of this is surely due to the distance between the caliph and his chroniclers: they were neither as contemporary (Ibn ʿIdhārī) nor as personally close to the caliph (al-Marrākushī) as were al-Baydhaq or Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt. Nevertheless, I would argue that the caliph's qualities, as I will describe them, cannot have been completely fabricated, even taking into account the legendary fame he acquired after his death. Reinhart Dozy agrees: in the introduction to his edited volume of al-Marrākushī's chronicle, he argues that because the author wrote from Egypt, he enjoyed a freer license to express the events that he witnessed in the Maghrib as they had appeared to him.⁵⁵⁵ In this section, I use the chroniclers' observations, as well as those of modern historians, to suggest that al-Manṣūr distanced himself from previous models of Almohad authority in subtle, yet significant ways.

Before beginning, however, I must underline that al-Manṣūr's caliphal persona constitutes neither an immediate nor an obvious shift in Almohad royal identity or religious policy. One must remember that the *ṭalaba* and *ḥuffāz* continued to function as both guardians of Ibn Tūmart's doctrine and as administrative functionaries. Furthermore, the caliph would not wish to completely alienate the Almohad sheikhs, at least some of whom can be presumed to revere Ibn Tūmart as the Maḥdī. Nevertheless, I focus on three ways that al-Manṣūr mediated

⁵⁵⁵ *The History of the Almohads*, viii-xi. Dozy perhaps takes al-Marrākushī too much at his word; if the author ever intended to return to the Maghrib, it would have been in his best interest not to write too critically about the Almohad caliphs. Al-Marrākushī also admits to having been part of the caliph al-Nāṣir's inner circle, which would certainly color his characterization of the dynasty. See *Ibid.*, 266 of the Arabic text.

between tradition and innovation: his penchant for ostentation and showmanship, his inclination toward Zahirism and his drawing political legitimacy from the Sufis rather than from Mahdī. All of these characteristics of Abū Yūsuf's reign informed the Hassan mosque in Rabat.

2.1. *OSTENTATION*

The introduction has already highlighted al-Manṣūr's personality trait of showmanship and his fondness for richness and ostentation, and it is with these characteristics that I begin. The chroniclers do not detail the caliph's deeds before he assumed the caliphal title, but Huici Miranda follows al-Marrākushī, mentioning that al-Manṣūr had indulged in "certain vices," in his youth.⁵⁵⁶ Although these vices are impossible to identify with precision, the caliph's enactment of sumptuary laws—strictly prohibiting the consumption of alcohol and eliminating the consumption of rich textiles—soon after assuming the title of Amīr al-Mu'minīn suggests that they could have involved wine and a penchant for finery.⁵⁵⁷ If this were the case, what better way than sumptuary laws to assure critics that he had put the frivolities of his youth behind him?

Fortunately, al-Manṣūr's love of extravagant display is well-documented. The precious textiles, woven into Ibn 'Idhārī's description of the caliph's leave-taking and journey from Andalusia to Rabat, bear witness to this tendency. His flagship, for example, was draped with the same red cloth that distinguished the caliph's personal tent among the sea of lodgings on the battlefield. The chronicler also notes that a second cloth (Ar. *afrāk*, from the Berber *afrāg*) had been prepared for the caliph in the town of Triana, across the Guadalquivir river from Seville, where the caliph disembarked and marched with to Jerez. On the journey, the new cloth served to partition the caliph's area of the encampment from that of the general army. Finally, before leaving the Iberian peninsula altogether, Abū Yūsuf gathered a large crowd near Tarifa. To the

⁵⁵⁶ Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 319. He retrieves this information from al-Marrākushī.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibn 'Idhārī, *Al-bayān*, 245.

sound of beating drums and ululation, the caliph entered his crimson tent, and the people marveled to see the richness and abundance of the goods—textiles almost certainly among them—that were to be brought with him to the Maghrib.⁵⁵⁸

Al-Manṣūr's architectural projects well represent his taste for displays of caliphal wealth and power, some of which he coordinated with larger political events. In Rabat, he repaired the royal residence—which had already been restored in his father's time—finished the city's walls, began building the edifices of its *madina*, and provided gardens and pools to refresh its streets in the summer.⁵⁵⁹ The Hassan mosque must also be added to this list, which Caillé believes to have been begun after al-Manṣūr's decisive victory over the Castilians in the Battle of Alarcos in 1195.⁵⁶⁰ In Seville, the caliph also commemorated the victory of Alarcos with the official completion of the mosque's minaret in 1198. To this end, he commissioned a massive golden finial, the bottom of which was hemispherical and fluted, and which terminated in three golden orbs of decreasing size. This adornment, which, as Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt observes, incorporated enough gold to equal seven thousand large *mizcales*, was then transported to the mosque and threaded upon an enormous iron bar atop the minaret. All this was done in the presence of the caliph, the heir apparent al-Nāṣir, the rest of his sons, the Almohad sheikhs, the leaders of the rest of the tribes, the *ṭalaba al-ḥaḍar* and the principle members of the court. When the protective cotton cloth covering the spheres was whisked away, Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt describes how

⁵⁵⁸ Ibn `Idhārī, *Al-bayān*, 243.

⁵⁵⁹ The caliph's building activity in Rabat is further discussed below.

⁵⁶⁰ Caillé, *La mosquée*, 15. Al-Marrākushī embeds the discussion of this building into his narration of al-Manṣūr's return to Andalusia after his proclamation, but this seems to be more a thematic choice than a chronological one. He gives no dates and implies that the construction process was ongoing, asserting that only the caliph's death prevented him from finishing what he had planned for the city. See Al-Marrākushī, *The History of the Almohads*, 192.

“the resplendent, pure, brilliant gold, combined with the rays of its reflection, almost blinded our eyes.”⁵⁶¹

According to al-Marrākushī, the caliph also built a palace-fortress along Seville’s Guadalquivir river. In late December of 1193, construction began on the fortress of Hisn al-Faraj (Sp. *Aznalfarache*).⁵⁶² Although technically a military structure, al-Marrākushī specifically mentions its palaces (Ar. *qasūr*) and pavilions (Ar. *qubbāt*).⁵⁶³ The author goes on to describe the elaborate *majālis* that the caliph staged in the Hisn al-Faraj, not unlike those of his grandfather, `Abd al-Mu`min, at Gibraltar. After al-Manṣūr’s return from Alarcos, for instance, he celebrated his success with solemn grandeur, holding audience in one of the palace’s *qubbas* overlooking the river. The attendees of this soiree were seated in hierarchical order with respect to the caliph, and the poets lauded his great victory with many *qaṣīdas*.⁵⁶⁴

Finally, al-Manṣūr set about enriching the Almohads’ official capital of Marrakesh. Although his father and grandfather had occupied the palace known as the Qasr al-Hajar, won from their Almoravid predecessors, al-Manṣūr founded an entirely new, caliphal quarter of the city, called al-Saliha (Eng. “the valid”). Construction probably began on this great project in 1184 and was finished six years later, in 1190. The imperial center was annexed to the walls between Marrakesh’s two southern-facing gates, Bab al-Rubb and Bab Aghmat, and its twelve new palaces abutted the city’s walls. A vast expanse of gardens and pools also spread south from the royal lodgings.⁵⁶⁵ Significantly for this study, the complex also included a (completed) mosque, providing another example of al-Manṣūr’s patronage of religious architecture.

⁵⁶¹ Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, *Al-mann*, 202.

⁵⁶² Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 359, identifies this palace-fortress with the enigmatic Spanish place-name.

⁵⁶³ Al-Marrākushī, *The History of the Almohads*, 212.

⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 2

⁵⁶⁵ Deverdun, *Marrakech*, 210-29 discusses al-Manṣūr’s palaces.

Al-Manṣūr's other major architectural intervention in Marrakesh was a great, public hospital (Ar. *bīmāristān*) built during the later years of his caliphate. Here I quote al-Marrākushī's description of the building:

Then he [al-Manṣūr] ordered a hospital built in Marrakesh that, I think, has no equal in the entire world. He first chose a great open space in the flattest part of the city, and he commanded his architects to build the hospital in the most perfect way possible. So they perfected both the building's marvelous carved stucco and its solid ceramic décor [*zillij*-style mosaics?], and their efforts even surpassed what the caliph had requested. He also had many flowering and fruit-bearing trees planted, and water was brought in abundance, circulating through each room. There were also four great reflecting pools situated in the center of the building, some of which were made of white marble. The caliph then ordered the building dressed with luxurious tapestries made from wool, linen, silk, tanned leather, and other materials that go beyond any description and surpass mere adjectives.⁵⁶⁶

In this passage, al-Marrākushī highlights the material richness that al-Manṣūr bestowed upon his pious foundation in Marrakesh; its construction materials included costly white marble and its walls displayed precious textiles woven from expensive materials.

Although he wrote centuries after al-Manṣūr's reign, and is therefore not as trustworthy a source, the famous Andalusian traveler Leo Africanus (d. c. 1554) wrote the sole description of a school founded by the caliph inside Marrakesh's new palace-city. According to this account, it contained thirty chambers, presumably living quarters for students, along with a ground floor dedicated to teaching. Like `Abd al-Mu'min's school for the *ṭalaba* and *ḥuffāz*, this institution waived tuition for its students, to whom it also granted full room and board. Leo Africanus describes it with these words:

This building is ornamented with beautiful mosaics. Where they are absent, the interior walls are covered in varnished, fired, clay tiles, which are cut into the form of small leaves [Ar. *zillij*]. Other materials also replace the mosaic in the lecture hall and covered porticos. All the space that is not covered is entirely paved with green tile, such as is also employed in Spain. In the middle of the building there is a beautiful carved basin, made of white marble, this time built according to Maghribī custom.⁵⁶⁷

⁵⁶⁶ Al-Marrākushī, *The History of the Almohads*, 209.

⁵⁶⁷ Cited in Mohamed Mnouni, "Yacoub El Mansour: Edification et urbanisme," vol. 2 of *Le memorial du Maroc*, ed. Larbi Essakali ([No City Given]: Nord Organisation, 1982), 199.

Of course, it would have been helpful to know what these “other materials” were. Wood, for example, is heavily employed in Merinid *madrasas* in the areas described above, and could indicate that Leo misidentified the building’s patron. Nevertheless, mosaics and especially the white marble basin recall al-Manṣūr’s decorative choices at his hospital in the same city.

These passages and descriptions characterize al-Manṣūr as a builder; indeed, the caliph earned al-Marrākushī’s praise when the chronicler says that Abū Yūsuf “had a penchant and a love of building and construction, and he concerned himself with building to the extent that nary a moment passed without his restoring a palace or founding a city.”⁵⁶⁸ Of course, all of the caliphs that I have discussed took on important building projects. `Abd al-Mu`min built Friday mosques in several cities, including Taza, Tinmal and Marrakesh. He was also involved in civil projects such as Rabat’s foundations and aqueducts, Gibraltar’s fortress or Marrakesh’s gardens and school. He built military and defensive structures as well: notably Rabat’s *qaṣba*, which also included a palace. Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf followed suit, beginning Rabat’s walls and laying the foundations for what would become its city. He also erected Seville’s mosque and the surrounding markets, and for himself and the Almohad elite, he built certain of the palaces near the Mosque of Seville and an idyllic retreat outside the city, called the Buhayra.

So al-Manṣūr certainly continued this building tradition, but I would argue that the quantity and character of his projects changed. First, he seems to have built more than his predecessors, certainly more than his father Abū Ya`qūb. While maintaining the works that they bequeathed to him, the caliph constructed entirely new buildings in several locations. He gave Rabat its *madina*, walls, several of its monumental gates, its gardens and pools, its Friday mosque and its palace complex. In Seville, al-Manṣūr built the palace-fortress of Hisn al-Faraj. Marrakesh received the new palaces, private mosque and sprawling gardens concentrated in the

⁵⁶⁸ Al-Marrākushī, *The History of the Almoahds*, 212-3.

new imperial city, al-Saliha, and it also became home to the caliph's greatest pious building project: the *bīmāristān*. Abū Yūsuf's construction efforts in Rabat and Marrakesh underline a second characteristic of the architecture that he sponsored. If his predecessors had built large mosques and palaces, al-Manṣūr's analogous buildings were absolutely massive. Caillé notes, for example, that had the Hassan mosque been finished, it would have been the largest in the Islamic west; in the east only the Great Mosque of Samarra in present-day Iraq would have surpassed it.⁵⁶⁹ In like kind, the caliph's palatial city nearly doubled the size of Marrakesh.

The other salient feature of al-Manṣūr's patronage, at least as it is described in these texts, is its material richness. Al-Marrākushī explicitly described the caliph's hospital in luxurious terms, mentioning both expensive materials: silk, wool, white marble, etc. and labor intensive, elaborate ornament. Its "marvelous stucco and solid ceramic décor" surpassed the caliph's own request for perfection, and the other materials included in the tapestries were simply beyond words. The caliph's commissions of other extravagant textiles—such as the cloth reserved for his battle tent or the material destined to surround the royal camp-within-a-camp—dovetails with these projects. These silks served to symbolically separate the caliph's person from the rest of the Almohads in two stages: first, the barrier that encircled his private encampment partitioned the army's rank and file from the Almohad elite, and second, the red tent marked the place of the caliph's personal dwelling. In turn, his presence and authority infused these objects with ideas of status and exclusivity: power was inseparably woven among their threads.⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁹ The Samarra mosque measured approximately 38,000 square meters, while the Hassan mosque measures approximately 25,000 square meters. Although the Samarra mosque had been finished, only its minaret and foundations remain today. See Alastair Northedge, *The Historical Topography of Samarra* (London: British School of Archaeology in Iraq, 2005) for more on the mosque and the collected essays in Chase F. Robinson, ed. *A Medieval Islamic City Reconsidered: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Samarra* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) for an interdisciplinary examination of the palace-city of which it formed a part.

⁵⁷⁰ Chapter Five explores this idea further.

Both the enormity of al-Manṣūr's building projects and his penchant for opulent surroundings align with a third characteristic highlighted in Ibn `Idhārī and al-Marrākushī: his showmanship. I have already described the elaborate leave-taking ceremonies that commemorated his travel from the Andalusian capital to Rabat. Like his father and grandfather, he incorporated symbolic objects, such as the aforementioned textiles or Qur'ān of `Uthmān, into these functions in order to increase their visual or religious impact. He was no less attentive to civic and military ceremonies, which were often infused with religious elements. After campaigning in Portugal, for example, he lined up his entourage in the Hisn al-Faraj according to their rank within the Almohad hierarchy as they celebrated the taking of Silves.⁵⁷¹ In Seville, the public ceremony marking the mosque's completion was also utilized to remember the caliph's great victory at Alarcos, itself infused with *jihāding* ideals.

2.2. LITERALISM: AL-MANṢŪR AL-ZĀHIRĪ?

One of the most enduring images from al-Manṣūr's caliphate proceeds from al-Marrākushī's chronicle:

In his [al-Manṣūr's] time, the science of *furū`* was cut off, and the jurists feared to practice it. He ordered books of the *madhhab* [Malikism] to be burned, after any passages of hadith or of the Qur'ān had been excised. This was done, and a great many books were burned throughout the country. [...] I myself witnessed this when I was in Fez: quantities of books arrived, were unloaded, and were lit on fire.⁵⁷²

The author continues by asserting that the caliph's objective in this campaign—and indeed, in others that I will discuss presently—was to destroy Malikism entirely, and to lead people to practice only what was apparent (Ar. *al-zāhir*) in the Qur'ān and hadith. He also asserts that this

⁵⁷¹ As Huici Miranda points out, this “campaign” was less a military than a diplomatic endeavor. Al-Manṣūr did in fact raise a large army and cross the strait, and managed to take the Portuguese stronghold of Torres-Naves. However, rather than besieging Silves, the caliph offered king Sancho I of Portugal a seven year peace treaty in exchange for the city. See *Historia política, primera parte*, 347-53.

⁵⁷² Al-Marrākushī, *History of the Almohads*, 201-2.

had not only been al-Manṣūr's goal, but also that of his two caliphal predecessors, who had kept their designs hidden.⁵⁷³

Citing the Maḥdī Ibn Tūmart's criticism of Malikite jurisprudence, which I outlined in Chapter One, many scholars have understood al-Marrākushī's statement to mean that the Almohad caliphs officially sponsored the Zāhirī school of jurisprudence, and/or that they themselves were Zāhirīs. Ignác Goldziher, for one, has argued that the Maḥdī came very close to being a Zāhirī when it came to questions of *fiqh*.⁵⁷⁴ Nevertheless, the author also acknowledges that Ibn Tūmart clearly distinguished jurisprudence and theology. Thus, any Zāhirī or quasi-Zāhirī principles that he might have applied to interpreting religious law did not necessarily obtain when he interpreted the Qur'ān: this dissertation has shown how Ibn Tūmart insisted that certain passages of the Qur'ān be interpreted allegorically in order to accommodate his conception of *tawḥīd*. Zāhirī exegesis, however, affirms that the only valid understanding of the Qur'ān is its literal, apparent one.

Returning to al-Marrākushī's characterization of al-Manṣūr, then, one must ask in what capacity the caliph could have been a Zāhirī: jurisprudentially or exegetically? The remainder of this section answers this question in the affirmative in both categories. I begin with the simpler task: arguing for al-Manṣūr's Zahirism on a juridical level. Camilla Adang provides a masterful analysis of the known Zāhirīs who lived during the Almohad caliphate, using biographical records of *ulamā'* in order to investigate whether the Almohads officially promoted Zahirism.⁵⁷⁵

Greatly summarized, her findings indicate that the intellectual climate fostered by the Almohad

⁵⁷³ Ibid., 203.

⁵⁷⁴ Ignác Goldziher, "Introduction: Mohammed Ibn Toumert et la Théologie de l'Islam dans le Maghrib, au XIe siècle," in *Le livre de Mohammed Ibn Toumert, Mahdi des Almohades. Texte Arabe accompagné de notices biographiques et d'une introduction par I. Goldziher, professeur à l'université de Budapest* (Alger: Imprimerie Orientale Pierre Fontana, 1903), 51.

⁵⁷⁵ Camilla Adang, "Zāhirīs of Almohad Times," in *Biografías almohades II*, volume 10 of *Estudios onomásticos-biográficos de al-Andalus*, edited by María Luisa Ávila and Maribel Fierro, 413-79 (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2000).

caliphs was generally favorable to the development of Zahirism, due to their emphasis on the Qurʾān and hadith as the sources of both religion (Ar. *uṣūl al- dīn*) and jurisprudence (Ar. *uṣūl al-fīqh*).⁵⁷⁶ While she is unable to identify a “flowering” of the school in the biographical sources, she points to al-Manṣūr’s caliphate as a time when Zāhirīs—or those willing to adapt themselves to Zāhirī principles—rose through the ranks of *fuqahā’* and occupied top positions in the Almohad administration.⁵⁷⁷

Tellingly, Adang’s first instance of direct caliphal patronage of a Zāhirī dates to al-Manṣūr’s time.⁵⁷⁸ The caliph appointed Muḥammad ibn Marwān al-Tilimsānī chief *qāḍī* of Tlemcen in 1187, and his appointment came at the expense of a much more experienced jurist who had previously occupied the position. It also occurred around the same time that al-Manṣūr began his campaign against *furū’*. As Adang remarks, the timing of this appointment of a known Zāhirī replacing an older, respected *qāḍī*—one who has never firmly been identified as a Zāhirī—suggests that al-Manṣūr was promoting the school.⁵⁷⁹ A second Zāhirī jurist, Ibn Ḥawt Allah, was appointed chief *qāḍī* of Mallorca and also the tutor to al-Manṣūr’s children. Finally, the head *qāḍī* of Marrakesh, Ibn Baqī, leaned towards Zāhirī rulings despite his inscription in Malikite biographical dictionaries. As Adang mentions, whether or not he was a “true” Zāhirī, Ibn Baqī seems to have understood that his position—the highest juridical office in the Almohad empire—would be solidified with Zāhirī rulings. It seems, then, that Adang’s biographical study of Zāhirī scholars aligns with al-Marrākushī’s descriptions of both the caliph’s campaign against Malikism and his favor toward Zahirism.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid., 414.

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid., 415-7, 471.

⁵⁷⁸ This paragraph is summarized from Ibid., 428-33.

⁵⁷⁹ Indeed, in a poem dedicated to the caliph, al-Tilimsānī lauds al-Manṣūr’s efforts against the study of *furū’*, although it is impossible to tell whether this was before or after his appointment. Ibid., 429.

My discussion regarding whether al-Manṣūr was also a literalist in an exegetical sense opens by using the caliph's attitude toward the more esoteric components of Ibn Tūmart's doctrine as a springboard. Al-Marrākushī explicitly states that the caliph held deep reservations about Ibn Tūmart's claim of infallibility as the Imām. When the caliph received emissaries from Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, for instance, he had them accompany him on a pilgrimage to Ibn Tūmart's grave.⁵⁸⁰ As the party paused under a carob tree, the women of Tinmal began to beat drums and cry out: "God is great! Our Lord the Maḥdī has spoken the truth and we are its witnesses that truly, he is the Imām!"⁵⁸¹ The reason for their outburst was their belief that one of Ibn Tūmart's predictions—that a group of Egyptians would one day gather under the aforementioned tree—had been fulfilled. Al-Marrākushī continues, "An eye-witness told me that he saw Abū Yūsuf smile upon seeing this spectacle, out of pity for their [the women's] feeble intellects, for he himself did not believe a word of any of it, nor did he hold the same opinions about Ibn Tūmart as they did."⁵⁸²

Al-Marrākushī continues by recounting three other anecdotes that point to al-Manṣūr's rejection of Ibn Tūmart's claims to be the Imām. The first two were told to him by the venerable sheikh Abū al-`Abbās Aḥmed ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Muṭ`arrif of Almeria, as they traveled to Mecca. According to the sheikh: "The caliph Abū Yūsuf said to me, 'Oh Abū al-`Abbās, testify in the presence of God almighty that I do not believe in infallibility—that is, the infallibility of Ibn Tūmart!'"⁵⁸³ The holy man continued by telling al-Marrākushī that "One day, as I was asking

⁵⁸⁰ I do not think that the fact that al-Manṣūr made these pilgrimages or that he continued to reference the Maḥdī in official correspondence preclude any doubts that he might have had about the Maḥdī's veracity on a personal level. Indeed, he also continued to invoke Ibn Tūmart's authority in his official correspondence and minted coins. Even though I argue that al-Manṣūr wished to change the foundations of Almohad authority, he would have been well aware that the outright abandonment of these gestures toward the Almohads' spiritual and political roots would have alienated the Almohad sheikhs and possibly loyal members of the administration.

⁵⁸¹ Al-Marrākushī, *History of the Almohads*, 211-2.

⁵⁸² *Ibid.*, 212.

⁵⁸³ *Ibid.*

that the caliph do something that presupposed the existence of the Imām, he said to me, ‘Oh Abū al-`Abbās, where is the Imām? Where is the Imām?’”⁵⁸⁴

The final anecdote was told to al-Marrākushī by another Sufi sheikh from Jaen, Abū Bakr ibn Hānī, with whom al-Manṣūr frequently studied hadith. As the caliph returned from the battle of Alarcos, he held an audience with Abū Bakr in his capacity as a representative of the city. After the caliph inquired about Jaen’s administration and government, continues the sheikh:

He asked me about my own religious training, saying “What have you studied of religious sciences? I responded, “I have studied the works [Ar. *tawālīf*] of the Imām, I mean to say, Ibn Tūmart.” Then he looked at me angrily and he said “A *ṭālib* should not answer in such a way! You should say that you have studied God’s Holy Book and the Sunna, after which you may add what you please!”⁵⁸⁵

Al-Marrākushī adds that if he were to recount all the stories of this type that he had heard about the caliph, his work would be much lengthened.⁵⁸⁶ In all of these instances, al-Marrākushī highlights the caliph’s disbelief in Ibn Tūmart’s more esoteric doctrine. The author specifically mentions that of the Infallible Imām, and he also mentions the caliph’s preference for the *uṣūl al-dīn* over the *A`azz mā yuṭlab*, in which the Maḥdī goes to great lengths to explain these doctrines.

Although I have cast doubt on the extent to which al-Manṣūr believed in the Maḥdī’s infallibility, he does seem to have relied on him in at least one capacity: a hadith collector. According to al-Marrākushī, after the caliph’s campaign of book-burning he “ordered a group of his *‘ulamā’*, who specialized in hadith, to collect the traditions concerning prayer from the ten [best-known] authors [...] and [to also collect] what was related to this subject from among the

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁶ Although Ibn `Idhārī does not recount any anecdotes about al-Manṣūr’s opinions of the Maḥdī’s other doctrines, he does record what he and later historians have called the caliph’s “testament” (Ar. *waṣīyya*). It is difficult to confirm its historical accuracy, especially because al-Marrākushī does not mention it at all. Nevertheless, it could be significant that Abū Yūsuf’s will does not mention the Maḥdī’s name or invoke his blessings and protection at the crucial moment of the caliph’s death, or, that he was not thought to have done so by a later author. Ibn `Idhārī, *Al-bayān*, 301-4 for the text of this document and both Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 382-5 and Ferhat, *Le Maghreb*, 98-9 for a discussion of its content.

hadith collected by Ibn Tūmart concerning [ritual] purification (Ar. *ṭahāra*).⁵⁸⁷ After this was done, the author continues, the caliph himself used to dictate his collection to the people, whom he encouraged to memorize it. The collection spread throughout the Maghrib, and both the elite (Ar. *khāṣṣa*) and the common people (Ar. *ʿawāmm*) committed it to memory. Those who did so were rewarded with garments (Ar. *kus*) and other things of value (Ar. *amwāl*).⁵⁸⁸ In this way, the chronicler contextualizes his assertion that al-Manṣūr desired “to lead people to the apparent (Ar. *ẓāhir*) meaning of both the Qurʾān and the hadith.”⁵⁸⁹

2.3. *SUFISM: AL-MANṢŪR AL-ṢŪFĪ?*

In Chapter One, I showed how Ibn Tūmart embodied many of the same qualities as did the Sufis of his own day: both capitalized on their chastity, piety and material austerity in order to preach virtuous behavior in a society filled, in their minds, with luxury and vice. As faithful Almohads, his successors `Abd al-Mu`min and Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf also emphasized these characteristics, legitimizing their own rule by depicting themselves as pious believers who upheld Ibn Tūmart’s doctrine and his teachings. Here, however, I will suggest that the caliph al-Manṣūr mirrored the lifestyles and customs of the Sufis. In part, this idea proceeds from the doubt cast on the degree to which al-Manṣūr believed in Ibn Tūmart’s doctrine of the Infallible Imām. Building on this foundation, I begin with a discussion of the Sufis who participated in al-Manṣūr’s administration. I then examine one of the Maghrib’s preeminent Sufis and a contemporary of al-Manṣūr, Abū Madyan, in order to compare the sheikh’s values and practices with those of the caliph. Finally, I will address the postmortem legends surrounding al-Manṣūr, which claim that he was a great Sufi himself.

⁵⁸⁷ Al-Marrākushī, *History of the Almohads*, 202. This collection is the aforementioned text ostensibly stored in Rabat’s National Library, which I have been unable to consult.

⁵⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 203.

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

I have suggested that the third Almohad caliph had privately rejected the fundamental doctrine upon which his religious movement—and the legitimacy of the Almohad caliphs—rested. In their stead, I argue that al-Manṣūr favored late twelfth-century Sufis. Before attempting to define Sufism during al-Manṣūr’s reign through a close consideration of one of its quintessential practitioners, the sheikh Abū Madyan, I will briefly address the role of the Sufis within the Almohad hierarchy. Halima Ferhat has argued that under al-Manṣūr’s vigilant eye, the Sufis were co-opted into the Almohad administration in order to neutralize their potential political power.⁵⁹⁰ Indeed, the Sufi master Abū al-`Abbās al-Qanjaray, described by al-Marrākushī as the head of the Sufi “party” (Ar. *tā’ifa*), enjoyed a close rapport with both al-Manṣūr and his successor, al-Nāṣir.⁵⁹¹ Al-Qanjaray also represented the Almohad caliphate to the holy sites in the Islamic East, distributing alms and paying tribute to the cities of Mecca and Medina.⁵⁹²

Another enlisted Sufi, Ibn Yallabakht, began his career as an impoverished teacher of grammar and religion in Marrakesh.⁵⁹³ Al-Manṣūr soon summoned him to the palace for an interview, commanding two high-ranking officials to either return with Ibn Yallabakht intact or with only his head. Despite this violent overtone, the meeting between sovereign and saint proved beneficial to both. The caliph defanged the teacher by incorporating him into the Almohad hierarchy. The Sufi benefitted both socially and materially; he abandoned his initial self-imposed poverty and received a beautiful mansion, rich vestments and elaborate harnesses for his mule from al-Manṣūr. Eventually appointed as head of the *ṭalaba*, Ibn Yallabakht interacted frequently with the caliph, and he often traveled with the army on campaign.

⁵⁹⁰ Halima Ferhat, “L’organisation,” 1075.

⁵⁹¹ Cited in *Ibid.*, 1079. It was even he who successfully petitioned Abū Yūsuf to have Seville’s first Friday mosque, the Ibn `Adābas mosque, restored.

⁵⁹² *Ibid.*

⁵⁹³ This paragraph is summarized from *Ibid.*, 1080.

In addition to these associations, al-Manṣūr is said to have been devoted to a particular Sufi, the sheikh Abū al-`Abbās al-Sabtī (d. 1204). Unlike other saints that I have discussed throughout this dissertation, al-Sabtī supplemented his spiritual practice, based on the ideas of charity, service, with rigorous self-blame (Ar. *malāma*).⁵⁹⁴ As a young man, al-Sabtī traveled to Marrakesh in the aftermath of `Abd al-Mu`min’s conquest of the city in spite of the political turmoil it experienced. While there, he advocated for the Almoravid elite that remained behind, and he was eventually incorporated into the *ṭalaba al-ḥaḍar*, although it is unclear under which Almohad caliph this nomination occurred.⁵⁹⁵ Al-Sabtī’s ministry to the Almoravid elite, whose poverty moved him to compassion, attracted the attention of the Almohad religious scholars, although they did not move directly against him. In Marrakesh, these and other charitable activities won him such renown that he took measures in order to guard against pride or excessive public veneration, including performing unspecified “vulgar” acts and preaching cryptic doctrines.⁵⁹⁶ Despite the controversy generated by his behavior, Abū al-`Abbās became widely venerated shortly after his death.

With the exception of Abū al-`Abbās al-Sabtī, these Sufis’ spiritual practices remain enigmatic, in spite of their prominent positions within the Almohad administration. The better-documented biography and teachings of the sheikh Abū Madyan (d. 1198) can offer a case study of Sufism during al-Manṣūr’s caliphate.⁵⁹⁷ Abū Madyan was born into an Andalusian family

⁵⁹⁴ See Halima Ferhat, “Abū l-`Abbās: Contestation et saintete,” *Al-Qantara* 13.1 (1992): 181-199 and Adolphe Faure, “Abu-l-`Abbas as-Sabti (1130-1204): La Justice et la Charite,” *Hesperis* 3-4 (1956): 448-456 for more on al-Sabtī’s life and practices.

⁵⁹⁵ Ferhat, “Abū l-`Abbās,” 187-93 discusses the saint’s tenure in the Almohad capital.

⁵⁹⁶ Ferhat, “Abū al-`Abbās,” 189.

⁵⁹⁷ I have mentioned that al-Manṣūr had appealed to Abū Madyan for spiritual guidance, which both connects the two figures and indicates that the caliph was aware of the sheikh’s sanctity and possibly the broader points of his spiritual teaching. Cornell also notes that Abū Madyan both “transcends” and “synthesizes” the Sufi traditions of his age, which supports my presentation of the sheikh as an ideal late twelfth-century Sufi. See Cornell, *The Way of Abū Madyan*, 16.

near Seville around 1116.⁵⁹⁸ By his own account, his brothers forced him to herd their flocks, until he eventually escaped. He then dedicated himself to religious study, first with a hermit who lived near the Mediterranean coast, and then with several Maghribī sheikhs. Abū Madyan also received instruction from `Alī ibn Ḥirzihim in Fez and even from Abū Ya`zzā himself. After he completed his training, he settled in Bougie, at the time governed by sympathizers of the Banī Ghāniyya, until al-Manṣūr regained the city and executed its leaders. Abū Madyan founded the Rābiṭa al-Zayyat in Bougie, and he intended to spend the rest of his life there. However, al-Manṣūr summoned him to Marrakesh, and the venerable sheikh did not survive the trip. He is buried in Tlemcen.⁵⁹⁹

Vincent Cornell provides an excellent summary of Abū Madyan’s teachings, situated in the context of Sufism’s rise in the Maghrib and Andalusia. For the sake of subsequent comparison to al-Manṣūr, I have divided them into five overarching themes. The first involves an idea familiar from Chapter One: that of a believer’s inner piety being judged on the basis of his or her outward actions. It follows that Abū Madyan detested hypocrisy and corruption in all of its forms. Especially important to the sheikh was the notion that an incorruptible believer did good not only for himself, but also for society. Indeed, one of his so-called “aphorisms” reads, “With the corruption of the masses appears the rule of tyranny; with the corruption of the elite appear false prophets who seduce [the masses] away from religion.”⁶⁰⁰ Clearly, the idea that the Sufi sheikh must remain engaged with the world for the benefit of ordinary believers, first encountered while discussing early twelfth-century Sufism, continues to form a part of Sufi ideology in the late twelfth century.

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid., 2-15 outlines the sheikh’s biography.

⁵⁹⁹ Cornell notes the irony of Abū Madyan’s burial and subsequent fame as Tlemcen’s patron saint, given that the sheikh never lived there or played a direct role in its spiritual life. See Ibid., 15, footnote 34.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid., 16.

Abū Madyan’s frequent celebrations of “sessions of admonition” (Ar. *majālis al-wa`z*) in the Rābiṭa al-Zayyat constitute the second aspect of his activities. In these gatherings, the sheikh would receive visitors and solicitors from all strata of society, including his own adepts, local townspeople, pilgrims and religious scholars, who would consult with him about personal, legal or political problems.⁶⁰¹ When asked about complex doctrinal or theological issues by fellow Sufis, the sheikh often answered with quotations of al-Ghazālī’s *Ihyā’* or al-Qurayshī’s *Risāla*, an eleventh-century Sufi treatise. Because Abū Madyan studied with Ibn Ḥirzihim’s circle in Fez, his respect for and reliance on al-Ghazālī comes as no surprise. Nor should the third element of his teaching: an emphasis on *uṣūl al-dīn*, the Qur’ān and hadith.⁶⁰² It follows that Abū Madyan greatly respected and voluntarily associated with the *‘ulamā’* and *fuqahā’* who were guardians of *uṣūl al-dīn* and practitioners of *uṣūl al-fiqh*. He wrote in his guide for Sufi adepts, “Among the signs of a true *faqīr* [Pl. *fuqarā’*, Eng. “Sufi,” lit. “poor one”] are his love for scholars, his service to the jurists, and his transformation [of the self] by fasting and standing [in prayer.]”⁶⁰³

Strict asceticism and bodily mortification are the fourth theme of Abū Madyan’s spiritual system. Because of the visceral and immediate way that the discomfort of hunger demonstrates the body’s physical weakness, the sheikh relied on fasting to weaken his students’ egos.⁶⁰⁴ In this way, they fostered their attainment of *tawwākil* (Eng. “reliance on God”), the mastery of which earned Abū Madyan praise and renown both in his own day and among future generations.⁶⁰⁵ Other ways that Abū Madyan encouraged his adepts to deny their egos included

⁶⁰¹ Ibid., 13.

⁶⁰² Ibid., 12, 32.

⁶⁰³ Ibid., 32.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid., 29.

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid., 31.

asceticism and rejection of simple comforts, principles that had been commonly practiced among Sufis for centuries.

The fifth aspect of Abū Madyan's path followed the student's successful abolition of the ego: the maintenance of a perpetually quiescent state of mind. In this way, the adept could remain ready to receive God, like an empty husk that would ignite with the fiery light of the divine presence. However, it bears repeating that detachment from worldly desires did not translate into apathy toward one's fellow believer, and Abū Madyan considered his most important vocation to be the instruction of others.⁶⁰⁶ In his role as a teacher, he reminds his students that:

Sufism is not the [mere] observance of rules, nor does it consist of degrees or stages. Instead, Sufism consists of personal integrity, generosity of spirit, the emulation of what has been revealed, knowledge of the Message, and following the Way of the Prophets. He who deviates from these sources finds himself grazing in the gardens of Satan, submerged in the ocean of lust, and wandering in the darkness of ignorance.⁶⁰⁷

As Cornell observes, this idea places him firmly within the mystical tradition of the Western Islamic world.⁶⁰⁸

Not unlike the image of early twelfth-century Sufism that emerged in Chapter One, Abū Madyan's Sufi path emphasized moral incorruptibility and the strict performance of the external obligations of Islam. Although Abū Madyan is somewhat more forthcoming about the ultimate goal of his spiritual way, that is, union with God, it cannot preclude the Sufi's engagement with the world. Indeed, Abū Madyan perceived his own role as that of a teacher, as someone who could directly benefit the earthly world through his spiritual insights. The sheikh's sessions of admonition, in which he exercised justice and advised others should be understood in this light. Again, like the Sufis of Chapter One, his theological advice was often based on al-Ghazālī. For

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid., 13.

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid., 33.

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid.

his adepts, Abū Madyan prescribed bodily mortification and mental quiescence, although never to the extent that would hinder their five daily prayers.

As caliph, al-Manṣūr conforms to almost all of the points into which I have divided Abū Madyan's life and teachings. First, the caliph took a firm—even draconian—stance against corruption, although in al-Manṣūr's case, these efforts were directed against his administration rather than spiritual adepts. From the very beginning of his reign, he personally evaluated the various governors and administrators who controlled territory and funds in the Almohad hierarchy. His dismissal of Fez's governor in Rabat exemplifies this tendency. Furthermore, as the caliph marched toward Ifriqiyya in order to combat the Banū Ghāniyya, he took the opportunity to inspect the seat of Taza's local government and redress the complaints of the people.⁶⁰⁹ And after retaking Gafsa, the caliph stayed for an additional two months in order to organize and assure the good functioning of his administration there. Upon returning from his Portuguese campaign in 1191-2, al-Manṣūr stayed in Seville in order to “submit the conduct of its functionaries to the most rigorous investigation.”⁶¹⁰ He acted similarly after the battle of Alarcos in 1195, this time conducting a major investigation into Seville's treasury. When he found grievous instances of embezzlement, he purged the corrupt officials and named several new functionaries to fill the vacancies.⁶¹¹

Like Abū Madyan, al-Manṣūr also personally exercised justice. Soon after his return to Marrakesh after being named and confirmed as the caliph, he began to hold tribunal court in the mosque adjacent to the Almohad palace.⁶¹² On certain days of the week, any of his subjects could seek the caliph's aid in redressing perceived wrongs. Although al-Manṣūr showed

⁶⁰⁹ Huici Miranda, *Historia política, primera parte*, 332-3.

⁶¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 350.

⁶¹¹ *Ibid.*, 376.

⁶¹² Huici Miranda cites Ibn 'Idhārī, who notes that this was the Almohads' first palace in Marrakesh, the repurposed Almoravid Qasr al-Hajar. If he is correct, Ibn 'Idhārī speaks of the Kutubiyya mosque. See *Ibid.*, 318.

enthusiasm for these meetings, they were soon abandoned: the people would not behave appropriately in the caliph's presence, insulting and attacking the high members of the court and shoving one another aside in order to get a glimpse of the sovereign. Even as this effort was frustrated, al-Manṣūr found other ways to promote justice. Some of them dovetailed with his efforts to end corruption; for example, after crossing to Andalusia in 1191, he held an audience with local delegations who complained of mistreatment and mismanagement on the part of the Almohad governors.⁶¹³ Additionally, Abū Yūsuf carefully inspected the Sevillian penal system in order to ensure that no sentenced criminal deserving of capital punishment escaped his fate.⁶¹⁴

While acknowledging the ontological difference between al-Manṣūr as sovereign and Abū Madyan as saint, their attitudes toward Islamic practice and its sources also appear to have aligned in several ways. Both the caliph and the sheikh concerned themselves with scrupulously upholding the external tenets of Islam, based in the Qur'ān and Sunna. As shown above, the sheikh insisted that his adepts meticulously observe the basic tenets of Islam. For Abū Madyan, this went hand-in-hand with his firm stance against corruption as a marker of impiety, something that also assumed great importance for al-Manṣūr, as his campaigns against administrative abuses demonstrate. The caliph's collection of hadith concerning ritual prayer, and his rewards for those who memorized this work, also point to his deep commitment to ensure that the faithful correctly performed these fundamental acts.

Furthermore, both men—sovereign and saint—emphasized the sources of Islamic belief and practice, the *uṣūl al-dīn*. Abū Madyan himself studied hadith with masters like Ibn Ḥirzihim and he often answered theological questions by citing al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā'*, a work steeped in the traditions of the Sunna. In like kind, al-Manṣūr emphasized the *uṣūl al-dīn* above

⁶¹³ Ibid., 346.

⁶¹⁴ Ibid., 350.

all other sources for religious or legal knowledge. In a juridical sense, this translated into his fostering of the *Zāhirī* school of jurisprudence at the expense of Malikism. The caliph also displayed extreme disapproval and even anger over the *ṭalaba*'s curriculum when the *ṭālib* Abū Bakr of Jaen mentioned that Ibn Tūmart's works comprised the fundamental texts of his study. Rather than the *A`azz mā yuṭlab*, the caliph wanted a member of the *ṭalaba* to possess intimate knowledge of the Qur'ān and a good understanding of the Sunna before adding "what he pleases:" not the works of the Maḥdī specifically, but works of the *ṭālib*'s choosing.

Popular legends surrounding al-Manṣūr's sanctity underline the extent to which believers drew parallels between the caliph and the Sufis. For example, in an essay dedicated to al-Manṣūr and Sufism, Halima Ferhat notes that the caliph acquired great renown for being a saintly figure himself; she cites reports in which al-Manṣūr renounces his earthly authority and installs himself in an Andalusian *ribāṭ*. Once the caliph is established therein, he spends the rest of his life anonymously waging *jihād* on the Christian north. Other stories involve his becoming a wandering ascetic and traveling across Islamdom before dying in Damascus. Ferhat points out that al-Manṣūr's reputation for sanctity was not cultivated by a later dynasty interested in promoting their ties—and therefore political legitimacy—to the caliph-turned-saint. Rather, his "cult" sprang up from the bottom and could therefore be characterized as a grassroots project.⁶¹⁵ In this way, she suggests that many of the faithful genuinely revered the third Almohad caliph.

In Ferhat's estimation, part of al-Manṣūr's mystical mystique, so to speak, stems from his religious and cultural environs. The late twelfth century experienced an intensification of an already-vibrant Sufi tradition, both in Andalusia and the Maghrib. Indeed, one of Abū Yūsuf's ministers had left the caliph's service to become an ascetic. Of course, al-Manṣūr was sensitive to the growing power of widely-venerated mystics, honoring some of them himself, which

⁶¹⁵ Halima Ferhat, *Le Maghreb*, 92.

endeared him to his subjects.⁶¹⁶ However intense the social environment, Ferhat does not discount al-Manṣūr's biography and his personality as a factor contributing to the aureole of sanctity that infuse legends about and descriptions of the caliph. She cites several chroniclers who indicate the deep regret and emotional crisis that al-Manṣūr experienced after finding himself obligated to order the deaths of his brother and uncles. Ibn `Idhārī in particular observes that the caliph was not well equipped to handle the intrigues and betrayals that often accompanied a life lived in the imperial court. Despite his severity and even cruelty, however, she observes that the most lasting impression of al-Manṣūr is as an ideal, saintly ruler.⁶¹⁷

I began this section with a disclaimer: the medieval sources depict Abū Yūsuf Ya`qūb al-Manṣūr in conflicting ways, making it difficult to assess his character and the religious issues that most concerned him. Before refocusing on the Hassan mosque, it is important to resolve these inconsistencies—as much as possible—and arrive at a nuanced understanding of the caliph's private and public personae. That the caliph mobilized traditional visual representations of Almohad authority, such the richly-decorated Qur'ān of `Uthmān, public parades, poetry recitals in *majālis*, royal textiles, etc., in the face of the more ascetic ideals of austerity promoted by the Maḥdī—or even by the more contemporary Sufis—ought not to come as a surprise. As did his father and grandfather, al-Manṣūr understood the contributions that these symbols made to successfully maintaining an empire.

It is somewhat more difficult to resolve al-Manṣūr's support of exotericism with his veneration of Sufis. How could the caliph favor both when the Sufis, by definition, performed at least some esoteric rituals in order to achieve gnosis? Again, I think it helpful to consider al-Manṣūr's goals in a wider context rather than focusing too narrowly on the internal

⁶¹⁶ Ibid., 93.

⁶¹⁷ Ibid., 93-4.

inconsistencies of his religious views. Because he rejected Ibn Tūmart as Infallible Imām on a private level (the caliph continued to invoke him publicly and to visit his grave), one might consider excluding this idea from the discussion altogether. Nevertheless, his crisis regarding this article of Almohad faith reveals an anxiety that also affected other twelfth-century Maghribīs and Andalusians. His contemporaries had found an answer in the Sufis, on whom they relied for spiritual guidance. By including them both literally, in the Almohad administration, and figuratively, in his caliphal persona, al-Manṣūr capitalized on their broad appeal. But this does not preclude the idea that he also turned to them out of sincere devotion, as guides in a time when the Mahdī's charisma had long since faded.

A pattern begins to emerge when the idea of “broad appeal” is extended to the caliph's exotericism. In the first quarter of the twelfth century, Ibn Tūmart had conceived an essentially unifying doctrine. The esoteric elements of Almohad *tawḥīd*, and the Mahdī's connection to the divine, provided the early Almohad community with rallying points, and *all* the Almohad faithful affirmed both his doctrine and his unquestionable authority. During Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf's caliphate, Ibn Tūmart's *tawḥīd* became more divisive, as it was parsed into elements that could be understood by everyone and those that must be kept hidden from the masses. By the late twelfth century, al-Manṣūr could no longer afford this kind of ideological stratification, but the work of his father's philosophers and the temporal gulf separating him and the Mahdī prevented a return to the uncomplicated acknowledgement of Ibn Tūmart's mission and *tawḥīd*.

Instead, the caliph went back to the sources: the Qur'ān, the hadith and external piety embodied by the Sufis. As noted by Adang, the very idea of returning to an origin is quintessentially Almohad. However, al-Manṣūr's definition of “roots” had changed. In an effort to appeal to as many of his subjects as possible, al-Manṣūr urged them to embrace both a literal

reading of Holy Scripture and a faithful performance of prayer, following the prophet's example. His destruction of the books of *furū`* and his collection of the hadith surrounding prayer and purity testify to the latter idea. In a roundabout way, his devotion to the Sufis does as well. As manifestations of extreme piety—assiduously complying with Islam's fundamental exigencies—the Sufis represented the ideal for normative, exoteric practice even if they ultimately attained a higher spiritual awareness than did most believers. In this way, al-Manṣūr's exotericism and his dedication to Sufi ideals allowed the caliph to promote an inclusive spirituality that could appeal to as broad a demographic as possible. What remains to be seen is how it also informed the Hassan mosque in Rabat.

3 THE HASSAN MOSQUE IN RABAT

3.1. THE IMPERIAL CITY OF RABAT

One of the first questions that arises when thinking about the Hassan mosque is its location: why Rabat? Al-Manṣūr's oratory dwarfs the other Almohad Friday mosques in Marrakesh and Seville, and these cities were the empire's capitals. Moulay Dress Sedra notes a similar incongruity in al-Manṣūr's early actions in Rabat: Why would he assume the caliphal title anywhere other than Marrakesh, the capital of the Almohad empire?⁶¹⁸ The third Almohad caliph favored the coastal city in other ways as well: I have already mentioned his renovations the palaces attached to its fortress, his construction of monumental city gates and gardens, and, of course, his sponsorship of the Hassan mosque.⁶¹⁹ In fact, Sedra believes that the Almohad caliphs, beginning with `Abd al-Mu'min, had meant for Rabat to eventually replace Marrakesh as the empire's capital city. Because my interpretation of the Hassan Mosque rests, in part, on

⁶¹⁸ Sedra, "La ville de Rabat," 276.

⁶¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 300.

Sedra's hypothesis, an examination of the city's history and an exposition of his argument is an essential first step toward discussing the building.

The French historian Jacques Caillé has studied Rabat's history most broadly, and his 1949 monograph remains the primary scholarly work dedicated to the medieval city. As he points out, even before the Almohad construction began, the area had been used for centuries as a base from which to fight the Barghwāta heresy. It was a defensible site, located on the mouth of the difficult-to-navigate Bou Regreg river, but once on the open sea it also provided convenient access to Andalusia via Morocco's Atlantic coast. In 1150, `Abd al-Mu'min began laying the foundations that would transform the site into a permanent city. The caliph's first constructions included a mosque, reservoirs of water and fortress, and he thought them important enough to remain on site and supervise the building process.⁶²⁰

`Abd al-Mu'min's motivations for his building activity in Rabat are not entirely clear, but he was invested in its future. Caillé characterizes `Abd al-Mu'min's Rabat as a military encampment, noting that letters refer to the city as "Ribāṭ al-Faṭḥ" and extrapolating from the second word's associated ideas of holy war (Ar. *fath* → Eng. "conquest").⁶²¹ Of course, Chapter Two has shown that *ribāṭs* need not necessarily be linked to waging *jihād*, but medieval descriptions of the city indicate that Rabat was. To my knowledge, Rabat housed neither any sort of religious leader analogous to the Banī Amghār of Ribāṭ Tīṭ-n-Fiṭr nor a group of adepts, but it consistently served as a place for the Almohad army to amass before sailing to Andalusia. In addition to this important military function, the city hosted important civil events. It was there that `Abd al-Mu'min received the delegation of Andalusians who came to complain about the abuses that the Mahdī's brothers perpetrated upon Seville in 1151. He also proclaimed his son

⁶²⁰ Jacques Caillé, *La ville de Rabat jusqu'au Protectorat Français: Histoire et archéologie* (Paris: Vanoest, Éditions d'art et d'histoire, 1949), 57-9.

⁶²¹ *Ibid.*, 60. See also Sedra, "La ville de Rabat," 293-5.

Muhammad as his successor and assigned the important cities of the empire to his other sons from Rabat. He even died within its walls, while waiting for his army to gather for an expedition to Andalusia.⁶²²

The second and third Almohad caliphs also provided for and maintained Rabat. Although Caillé does not mention many of Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf's building efforts or sojourns in the city, Sedra has since uncovered evidence that he visited Rabat in 1171. It had fallen into ruin in a very short time, so the caliph ordered that its fortress (Ar. *qaṣaba*) be restored, its walls begun and the foundations of its *madina* to be laid.⁶²³ Al-Manṣūr dedicated even more resources to building projects in Rabat. Along with a second renovation of the *qaṣaba*, the caliph finished its walls and ordered the residential and commercial buildings, whose foundations had been laid by his father, to be built. He also beautified Rabat with gardens and large pools (Ar. *buḥayra*), and it became one of his favored places of residence.⁶²⁴

Thus, by the late twelfth century, Rabat was no longer simply a place for the Almohad troops to gather before setting sail for Andalusia, although it continued to fill that need. The city covered an impressive 418 hectares, and Caillé has collected several medieval descriptions of its extensive urban framework.⁶²⁵ Both the author of the *Kitāb al-Istibṣār* and Ibn Khallikān describe Rabat's wide streets, solid buildings, well-distributed quarters, numerous and varied types of dwellings, vast covered markets and its "various installations destined for the passage of troops through the city, because it is located in a place that they must cross in order to reach Marrakesh, the capital of the Empire."⁶²⁶ The *Kitāb al-Istibṣār* continues:

⁶²² Ibid., 62-4.

⁶²³ Sedra, "La ville de Rabat," 299.

⁶²⁴ See Ibid., 299-301; and Caillé, *La ville de Rabat*, 67-9.

⁶²⁵ Because of their chronological proximity to the twelfth century, I follow those of the anonymous, twelfth-century *Kitāb al-Istibṣār* and those of the early thirteenth-century Ibn Khallikān.

⁶²⁶ Ibid., 71-2. The quote is cited in Ibid., 72, and it proceeds from the *Kitāb al-Istibṣār*.

Our glorious prince [al-Manṣūr] has honored and glorified this city through beautiful constructions and the remarkable minaret that he raised up. When the troops move through, the city is truly a pleasurable place—among the most marvelous in the world—above all during fertile years and temperate seasons. We recall a place where the coastline (with a length of two miles and a breadth of almost one) is crowded with people, while boats take on passengers along the river. It is a place where the minaret rises to the sky, and the fruit trees spread out their riches; where the olive tree is tied and the vine buds, and the audience halls of the *sayyids* burst up in front of the eyes. All the while, on the other side [of the river?], the *qibla* of the Great Mosque and the majority of the minaret of the prince's palace are visible throughout the entire city. In these moments, the spectacle surpasses that of Cairo's palaces or those of the Tigris and Euphrates.⁶²⁷

As Caillé observes, Rabat's massive surface area, imposing walls and gates and the hugeness of its mosque, plus the medieval descriptions of its infrastructure, testify to al-Manṣūr's faith that the city would remain permanently inhabited.

These examples show that Rabat clearly enjoyed the favor of the Almohad caliphs, which leads to the question posed by Sedra: why Rabat? Caillé fails to explain the attention and resources lavished upon the city, whose role he perceives as military.⁶²⁸ Sedra resolves this conundrum by proposing that the Almohad caliphs, beginning with `Abd al-Mu'min, had intended to make Rabat the new capital city of their empire. In his view, had they—and their resources—not been distracted by continual revolts and waging *jihād*, they would have finished this project. In this light, the installation of a major Friday mosque, royal palace and royal gardens into the Rabat's infrastructure—structures that only their other imperial cities of Marrakesh and Seville received—begin to make sense.⁶²⁹ Sedra's theory also explains the proclamations that `Abd al-Mu'min made from Rabat, such as the declaration of his and his assigning the other *sayyids* to their regional capitals. As activities that normally take place in a capital, the caliph likely performed them in Rabat in preparation for an eventual switch to the littoral city.⁶³⁰

⁶²⁷ Cited in *Ibid.*, 74-5.

⁶²⁸ Sedra, "La ville de Rabat," 276.

⁶²⁹ *Ibid.*, 301-2.

⁶³⁰ *Ibid.*, 293.

In order to fully understand the Almohads' desire to replace Marrakesh and to found a new imperial capital, Sedra reexamines the caliphs' relationship with certain Almohad tribes and the Almohad sheikhs. As I have done in earlier chapters, Sedra emphasizes that even after `Abd al-Mu'min conquered the entire Maghrib and won the allegiance of the Masmūda sheikhs, he still faced considerable opposition. It came from both the tribes, who could be forgiven for holding a grudge against the Almohad caliph for the blood and violence in the name of conquest and the *i`tirāf*, and from the sheikhs, with whom the idea of being governed by an outside authority had never sat particularly well.⁶³¹ For the new caliph, these groups, who resided principally in the mountains to the southwest of Marrakesh, constituted a very real threat, evidenced by the revolt at Māssa and that of the Mahdī's brothers. In this context, Sedra does not believe it coincidence that `Abd al-Mu'min founded Rabat soon after he had quashed this first round of rebellions. Marrakesh, upon which these potential rebels looked down from the Atlas, was probably too close for comfort.⁶³²

Sedra furthers his case by examining the city's evolution between the caliphates of `Abd al-Mu'min, who, he argues, built the first constructions at Rabat in preparation for a later move, and of Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf. He cites Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, who describes the second caliph's visit to the city and his disappointment upon viewing its ramshackle buildings, which had crumbled since his father's time. Because this visit took place in 1171, Sedra wonders how Rabat could have fallen into ruin in the eight years that had passed since the first caliph died there in 1163. Abū Ya`qūb immediately ordered that the fortress be restored and a *madina*, with strong walls to defend it, be built, so the site's dilapidation cannot have been a product of caliphal disinterest in

⁶³¹ Ibid., 281.

⁶³² This paragraph is summarized from Ibid., 280-5.

maintaining it. Furthermore, Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt mentions the city's inhabitants and its verdant, productive fields; neither complete abandonment nor military activity is invoked.⁶³³

Sedra looks to the Almohad sheikhs, who understood `Abd al-Mu'min's strategy of divesting them of any real political power in the Almohad hierarchy, for an answer. After the first caliph's death, the sheikhs attempted to reintroduce themselves into the political scene: hence Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf's delay in taking the caliphal title. Sedra believes that the sheikhs would have stalled and interrupted the building at Rabat whenever possible, having realized that the caliph planned to move the seat of the Almohad caliphate even further from their ancestral home and familial support. Citing Mohamed Kably, Sedra also opines that when `Abd al-Mu'min settled the Arab Banū Hillāl tribes onto Morocco's Atlantic plain, he further alienated the sheikhs. While the author realizes that there is no documentary evidence to support his hypothesis that they would have worked against the caliphs to prolong Rabat's construction, he also observes that work on the site ground to a halt whenever the caliphs found themselves in a weakened position. This was the case before Abū Ya`qūb took the caliphal title and also when the Hassan mosque was abandoned after al-Manṣūr's death.⁶³⁴

If Sedra is correct, the caliphs' actions in Rabat are consistent with its being conceived as a new capital city. `Abd al-Mu'min declared his heir and divvied up his territory from Rabat, distanced as it was from the heartland of the Masmūda and their powerful Almohad sheikhs. In keeping with his desire to promote Rabat as his new dynastic center, he also received delegates from Andalusia in its palace. Additionally, the caliph resettled the Arab tribes in the surrounding plains, both in order for them to more quickly assemble for campaigns in Andalusia and in order to provide a buffer between him and the Atlas. His sons, who fully understood the threat of

⁶³³ Here I summarize *Ibid.*, 286-7.

⁶³⁴ *Ibid.*, 288-93.

rebellion, continued their father's project when they were financially able to do so. Al-Manṣūr in particular seems to have taken to the city, and Sedra cites two thirteenth-century authors that outright state his intention to transfer his court to Rabat.⁶³⁵ A new capital city would, of course, require a new Friday mosque; this is one of the functions that the Hassan mosque was to fulfill.

3.2. *THE HASSAN MOSQUE'S POLITICAL DIMENSION*

As with the Kutubiyya, Tinmal and Sevillan mosques, identifying the Hassan mosque's audience helps to identify the political messages that it sends. Because al-Manṣūr planned to transfer the capital of his Maghribī empire from Marrakesh to Rabat, it follows that the caliph anticipated a diverse audience, including the Almohad sheikhs; the *ṭalaba* and *ḥuffāz*; visitors related to state functions, such as the governors of major cities or foreign dignitaries; rebels who had been brought in to receive their punishment and a healthy, thriving body of merchants, craftsmen, religious scholars, civil servants, etc. In short, the caliph must have known that a wide range of viewers—with equally ranging support for the Almohad caliphate—would view and use the principle place of worship in a new capital city.

Some of the Hassan mosque's most salient features respond to this issue. First, its absolutely massive proportions—it would have been the largest mosque in the twelfth-century Islamic west, over 150% larger than the Mosque of Seville—lent added prestige to a new capital (Figure 4.1). Its location did as well: the Hassan mosque's enormous minaret, built on a natural hill that commands a powerful view of the Bou Regreg River, towered above surrounding buildings (Figure 4.2). It is difficult to overstate the building's effect, as it would have been

⁶³⁵ These are the Andalusian polymath and geographer Ibn Sa'īd al-Maghribī (d. 1286) and Ibn 'Idhārī. See *Ibid.*, 299-300.

visible from nearly every point of the medieval city and far into the countryside.⁶³⁶ The Hassan mosque's rich materials also foreground its grandeur. Unlike previous Almohad structures, the Hassan mosque employs cut stone and marble instead of brick. The stone of the minaret originally had a soft, pink hue, which, as Caillé observes, would have acquired a rosy glow in the light of the afternoon sun.⁶³⁷

These same features also align with al-Manṣūr's other construction and aesthetic choices. His renovations of Rabat's *qaṣba*—a palace-city not unlike al-Saliha in Marrakesh—plus his building of royal gardens, pools and city infrastructure, all indicate his intention to elevate the city. Previous sections have emphasized al-Manṣūr's taste for luxury: both the rich textiles that the caliph commissioned, for use on the battlefield or to adorn the walls of his hospital, and the marble pools of the hospital and school fit in well with his use of dressed stone and marble in the Hassan mosque. Finally, the dimensions of the Hassan mosque compare favorably with those of his other constructions, and I have already noted that the Marrakesh's al-Saliha nearly doubled the city's footprint. It seems, then, that al-Manṣūr wanted the Hassan mosque to be the biggest and best Almohad mosque to date, one that would represent the strength and majesty of the caliphate to any visitor to the new capital city.

3.3. *THE HASSAN MOSQUE: A RENEWED ALMOHAD AESTHETIC?*

Of course, the size, location and materials of the Hassan mosque are not its only unique features. For example, its plan, which maintains a T-configuration yet features three *qibla* transepts and two small, lateral courtyards, is unprecedented (Figure 4.3). Furthermore, its stone columns depart from the Almohad tradition of using brick piers to organize its prayer hall

⁶³⁶ Even today, travelers approaching Rabat see the solid mass of the tower—and the funerary *qubba* of the current ḤAlawite dynasty located just north of where its *mihrāb* would have been—well before they can make out the rest of the city.

⁶³⁷ Caillé, *La Mosquée de Hassan*, 41.

(Figure 4.1). Both Jacque Caillé and Christian Ewert have attempted to explain these aspects of the building. The first author believes that its original plan probably consisted of eleven aisles and eighteen transepts surrounded on three sides by large courtyards. These would have been bordered by porticos, while another portico would have separated the *qibla* wall from the main prayer hall. Caillé notes that this plan would have echoed the eastern tradition of courtyard-mosques, leading him to suggest that al-Manṣūr might have wanted to evoke these monuments before later deciding to modify this plan.⁶³⁸ The two lateral courtyards would have reflected this change, as a consequence of uniting the mosque's side walls to porticoes outside the great courtyards.⁶³⁹

Ewert provides a different explanation for the building's plan, one that also addresses its use of columns. He observes that such a large building would undoubtedly have needed interior lighting, a need met by the small lateral courtyards. Their location, near the *qibla* transepts, would have allowed light to reach the areas situated furthest from the horizontally-oriented patio centered in front of the minaret (Figure 4.3).⁶⁴⁰ His hypothesis also explains the small size of this northernmost patio: the mosque conserves the same proportion of courtyard-to-prayer hall of other Almohad buildings, but several smaller courtyards brings light to what would otherwise have been a vast, unbroken interior. As for the oratory's columns, Ewert proposes that they might have been intended to recall the Mosque of Cordoba's "hall of columns." The Hassan mosque was the first building to trump the Cordoban structure's size, and by evoking it here, he suggests that al-Manṣūr was signaling that the Almohads had surpassed the Umayyads.⁶⁴¹

⁶³⁸ Although al-Manṣūr was in contact with Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, who asked the caliph for help against the Crusaders in the Holy Land (in spite of sending his general Qarāqush against the Almohads in Ifriqiyya), I have not been able to identify specific Ayyubid buildings that could have impacted the disposition of these courtyards. Ewert's reading thus seems the more likely of the two.

⁶³⁹ Ibid., 70-1.

⁶⁴⁰ Ewert, "Architectural Heritage," 94.

⁶⁴¹ Ibid., 95.

Notably, the Hassan mosque incorporates a sprinkling of Umayyad capitals and the caliph continued to use the Qurʾān of ʿUthmān in ceremonies. It seems that recalling, and in some cases, surpassing, the Cordoban Umayyads still made political sense in the late twelfth century.

The Umayyad evocation notwithstanding, the Hassan mosque's plan, columns and materials clearly depart from previous Almohad religious architecture. Marrakesh's Qasba mosque provides a second example of how al-Manṣūr's mosques move away from ancestral models. When discussing this building, Ewert asserts that it does not respond to any known typological category. Instead, it features a distinctive grouping of five shallow patios, with two small transepts that abut the *qibla* wall, in lieu of a hypostyle prayer hall (Figure 4.4). The effect is almost akin to that of an Eastern mosque with four *iwans*, but Ewert believes that the building's prototype is to be found in palace rather than mosque architecture.⁶⁴² When considering the Qasba mosque alongside the Hassan mosque, Ewert characterizes their plans as having "such unusual designs that the classical Almohad type is only apparent as a substratum."⁶⁴³

The typological uniqueness of these two buildings dovetails with ornamental changes also effected in al-Manṣūr's mosques. The Hassan mosque's ornament can be roughly divided into two categories: geometric/architectural and vegetal, with the former found principally in the building's minaret. Similar to the Kutubiyya and Sevillan towers, the Tour Hassan (as it is known in present-day Morocco) houses a series of interior chambers, around which its ramp would have ascended to the minaret's apex, had it been finished. Its third chamber conserves the remains of a *muqarnas* dome (Figure 4.5). Unlike the Tinmal and Kutubiyya mosques, none of

⁶⁴² Ibid., 93-4.

⁶⁴³ Ibid., 93. Fortunately, the restorations that later affected this building's ornamental program did not alter this building's footprint.

these forms receives vegetal-esque fluting. Instead, the *muqarnas* cells resemble those in the Giralda's plain, stacked domes.

If the Tour Hassan's *muqarnas* cells recall those of the Giralda, its *sebka* contrasts markedly with that of the Sevillian tower. From façade to façade its composition remains static: the *sebka* in the Tour Hassan—as in the Qasba mosque's minaret—fills a single panel beginning at the same height on each of the tower's façades (Figure 4.2). In other words, the Tour Hassan's planners made no attempt to mirror the ramp's internal ascent, with no implied upward motion. The forms of the *sebka*'s rhomboids are also extremely regular. Whether they represent extensions of lambrequin arches on the northern and southern faces, or polylobed arches on the eastern and western faces, the typological ambiguities that defined the Tinmal and Giralda's *sebka* are gone. Instead, the viewer finds a rigid web of static, regular rhomboids (Figure 4.6). Even the twists and turns of the lines that compose the Tour Hassan's *sebka* are controlled and clear: one can trace their paths from genesis to conclusion.

The Hassan mosque's vegetal ornament also departs from that found in `Abd al-Mu'min and Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf's oratories. As was the case for the Mosque of Seville, fragments of stucco ornament, discovered through archeological interventions near the building's *qibla* wall, help piece together its interior aesthetic (Figures 4.7 and 4.8). The ornament of the first group of fragments was likely intended to serve as a border design, as it is composed of two narrow bands encasing vegetal motifs (Figure 4.7). Surprisingly naturalistic leaves characterize these fragments, even when one compares them to the Mosque of Seville's *ataurique*. Indeed, the attenuated fronds and twisting vines lead Caillé to call them “acanthus leaves.”⁶⁴⁴ Still more shocking are the fragments from the second group, whose vegetation displays unequivocal ties to Almoravid vegetal ornament (Figure 4.8). One of the largest stucco remnants, for example,

⁶⁴⁴ Caillé, *La Mosquée Hassan*, plate XLII.

features several examples of digitized palmettes surrounding a pinecone motif, both readily found in the Almoravid vegetal repertoire.

When taken as a whole, then, the Hassan mosque has several principle features—its impressive size and location, its rich materials, its new plan type and the typological clarity of its ornament—all of which break from previous Almohad buildings. Given the similarities of its minaret and that of the Qasba mosque, I wonder whether these buildings participate in a larger plan to renew the Almohad caliphate in general. Al-Manṣūr certainly would have had good reasons for attempting such a renewal. Despite the relative calm in Andalusia, he faced more continuous opposition in the Maghrib and Ifriqiyya than did either of his predecessors. Some of his opponents, such as the Banū Ghāniyya, were squarely political, but others, like the Sufis and *mahdīs*, founded their political ambitions on religious bases.⁶⁴⁵ Sufi challengers to Almohad authority had always endangered their sovereignty, but, once again, the social and religious landscape had changed since `Abd al-Mu`min's days. Their continued success indicates that the general population—a *disaffected* population, as García-Arenal reminds us—sought a physical, embodied connection to the divine. Instead of the Mahdī Ibn Tūmart, Sufis and the occasional *mahdī* filled the societal roles of spiritual guide, instructor and moral compass. Not even al-Manṣūr himself resisted their magnetic pull.

When viewed in this light, the Hassan mosque's unique characteristics served specific purposes as al-Manṣūr attempted to redefine the Almohad caliphate. In addition to representing Almohad strength in a new capital city, an activity in itself tied to the empire's renewal, we can understand the Hassan mosque's massive dimensions, commanding location, new typology and rich materials as efforts to dwarf and eclipse previous Almohad architecture. Al-Manṣūr's

⁶⁴⁵ The Banū Ghāniyya did eventually pledge allegiance to the `Abbasid caliphate, whose religious authority the Almohads rejected, but I would characterize this more as a play for political legitimacy than a unifying doctrine on which to base a rebellion.

reputation as a tireless builder dovetails with this idea: he built bigger palaces where palaces already existed, he built a new capital when a capital already existed, and he provided his subjects with bigger, better public works such as his hospital in Marrakesh or Rabat's gardens and pools.

If grandeur characterizes the Hassan mosque when seen at a distance, then typological clarity characterizes its ornamental details. In the building's minaret, the compositional regularity of *sebka* panels, which all begin at the same height, the easily-traceable lines of the *sebka* itself and the unambiguous architectural forms of its *muqaranas* illustrate this point. Indeed, I might even say that from a Mansurian perspective, the "inconsistencies" of the Giralda registers have been "normalized" in the Hassan minaret. As for the prayer hall, the clear naturalism of the vegetal ornament typifies typological clarity. It even seems that the caliph and his artisans had no difficulty employing Almoravid-like vegetal forms in order to ensure that the difference between a leaf and an architectural element remained crystal-clear.

The Hassan mosque's ornamental clarity also contributed to al-Manṣūr's plans to renew the Almohad empire, but they did so by referencing the caliph's religious, rather than his political, project. The idea of exotericism, that the clear and *external* meaning of the Qur'ān is the correct one, that the clearly-defined and *external* obligations of religion must be rigorously performed, finds visual articulation in the Hassan mosque's *sebka* and its *ataurique*. No longer separating viewers into categories based on their intellectual capacities, nor including cryptic ontological puzzles for the fully initiate to mediate between, the Hassan presents displays a single, clearly developed and delivered message that obtains for all viewers. For al-Manṣūr, leaves are leaves and arcades are arcades, just as the word of God is literal and self-evident.

4 CONCLUSIONS

To conclude this chapter, I will both summarize its main points and compare them to my conclusions regarding `Abd al-Mu`min and Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf`'s mosques. I have argued that the Hassan mosque formed part of the caliph's strategy to renew the Almohad empire. Its first section outlined al-Manṣūr's political career, focusing on the rebellions that shook the Maghrib and Ifriqiyya from the beginning of his reign to its end. The earlier of these was provoked by the Banī Ghāniyya clan in Mallorca, and although al-Manṣūr temporarily reversed the rebels' successes, they eventually regrouped and continued to wreak havoc in the eastern Almohad territories. Al-Manṣūr also faced opposition from inside the Almohad ranks: several of the *sayyids*, including his own brother, took advantage of the political difficulties in Ifriqiyya to stage their own rebellions.

Section two focused on al-Manṣūr's somewhat contradictory public and religious personae. On the one hand, he ostentatiously displayed his caliphal power. His public ceremonies, marked by processions, hierarchy and precious, symbolic objects, manifest his showmanship, while the sheer quantity and richness of his artistic commissions demonstrate his love of luxurious materials. On the other hand, the caliph passed sumptuary laws, cultivated relationships with the Sufis and is even said to have occasionally worn the simple robes of a mystic. These two facets of his personality are further complicated by his *Zāhirī* tendencies, which, I have suggested, obtained on both theological and jurisprudential levels. I attempted to synthesize all of these facets of al-Manṣūr's persona with, first, a reminder that the Almohad caliphs consistently favored furthering their religious and political agendas over providing an internally consistent identity. Second, I suggested that neither the caliph's rejection of Ibn Tūmart's doctrine nor his *Zahirism* necessarily preclude his sincere devotion to the Sufis.

Section three re-focused on the Hassan mosque. As an initial step, I accepted and defended Moulay Driss Sedra's argument that the Almohad caliphs had intended for Rabat to replace Marrakesh as capital city. Viewed through this lens, the Hassan mosque constitutes an effort to endow the new capital with a Friday mosque, and its audience would range from foreign dignitaries to faithful administrators to rebels fit to be strung up on the city's walls. The two most immediately appreciable aspects of the Hassan mosque, its colossal size and its impressive location, satisfied the caliph's penchant for ostentation at the same time that it proclaimed Almohad greatness to all who beheld it. When coupled with its new typology and aesthetic, these same features also furthered al-Manṣūr's great project of renewing the Almohad caliphate's legitimacy and authority. While the size and the newness of the building visually eclipsed those of the caliph's predecessors, its aesthetic of clearly defined organic and inorganic ornament declared the caliph's allegiance to an egalitarian spirituality accessible to all.

Because my reading of the Hassan mosque depends on an understanding of previous Almohad Friday mosques, both a reminder and a comparison of their principle features are in order. In a general sense, the kind of messages transmitted by the all four buildings—the Tinmal and Kutubiyya mosques, the mosque of Seville and the Hassan mosque—conform to one another. For example, all of the oratories in the empire's capital cities emphasized the Almohad sovereign's authority as he confronted different groups of subjects, disaffected or otherwise. Similarly, all Almohad mosques attempted to create a space in which various demographics could find common ground through shared aspects of their faith. Finally, all four buildings bolstered Almohad political legitimacy even as their ornamental programs conveyed their patrons' religious ideas.

In spite of these similarities, each new generation's adoption of previous architectural models was far from wholesale. `Abd al-Mu'min's structures defined his dynasty's relationship to past rulers: the Umayyad caliphs of Cordoba and the Almoravids. The Mosque of Seville, however, is more focused on defining the relationships between contemporary social groups. On the one hand, the Andalusian building fostered a sense of community among all members of twelfth-century Sevillian society. On the other, the building makes the power dynamic between the Almohad elite and the rest of the city's denizens abundantly clear. This shift in focus signals that by Abū Ya`qūb's time, his father's concern for empire-building had been replaced by the task of empire-maintaining. In other words, emphasizing the difference or the continuity between his dynasty and its predecessors was less important to Abū Ya`qūb than was engendering harmony among all his subjects. Of course, this final idea only obtains as long as these subjects continued to recognize Almohad sovereignty, and it is borne out by the Mosque of Seville's role as a social mediator.

Similar ideas obtain when considering al-Manṣūr and the Hassan mosque. While his grandfather and father looked to the past and the present, respectively, this chapter has argued that al-Manṣūr set his sights on the future as he conceived his great oratory in Rabat. Again, this marks a transition in the caliph's political concerns, which moved from maintaining a strong empire to providing a secure future. As the political instability of the late twelfth century demonstrates, al-Manṣūr had very real concerns regarding the continued viability of an Almohad authority predicated on the caliph's inheritance of the Mahdī's spiritual mission. This led the caliph to seek alternative theological, pious, political and, ultimately, architectural models. The idea that the Hassan mosque represents both a self-conscious departure from the other Almohad

Friday mosques and also the caliph's vision for the future of the caliphate illustrates this principle.

Other major changes can be seen in the architectural places from which each caliph chose to proclaim his message of political hegemony: differences that can be explained by considering the audiences toward whom each building was directed. In the Kutubiyya mosque, `Abd al-Mu'min represented his authority to the citizens of Marrakesh and the Almohads through a selected reuse of objects in the building's most exclusive area, where both his most dangerous political rivals and his most fervent supporters were most likely to have worshipped. At Tinmal, the caliph provided an Almohad alternative to competing models of religious authority by appropriating architectural typologies associated with them; these were already familiar to its audience of Almohad faithful and pilgrims. For his part, Abū Ya`qūb found it expedient to utilize his mosque's exterior because his own message of authority was directed toward a cosmopolitan audience comprised of Almohads, hostile Andalusian Muslims and minority converts; in this way, he was assured that his point was taken by all three groups. Not unlike his father, al-Manṣūr deftly used the Hassan mosque's gigantic dimensions, and also its command over the surrounding landscape, to project Almohad strength to a diverse audience in a (future) capital city. Of course, his vision of the doctrinal future of the Almohad caliphate, based on Sufi piety and Zāhirī principles, made him particularly eager to "outbuild" his predecessors.

A final artistic change during the Almohad period is an aesthetic one, and it obtains in multiple ways. Beginning with `Abd al-Mu'min and Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf's oratories, I have argued that the amount of ornamented spaces increased drastically in the mosque of Seville. While one can be less certain about the prayer hall, the Giralda is decidedly more ornamented than the minarets of the Tinmal and Kutubiyya mosques. Second, the ornament's forms have

changed. For example, the Giralda's *sebka* have taken on both a more complex, double-layered aesthetic and also a greater rigor when compared to the truncated panels of the Kutubiyya's minaret or the quasi-organic shapes of the *sebka* panels found in both the Tinmal mosque's interior. These shifts notwithstanding, the aesthetic difference between the first and second Almohad caliph's architecture is most appreciable in the Mosque of Seville's more naturalistic vegetal ornament.

Like the changes in the place from which the mosques' political message was transmitted, part of the Mosque of Seville's aesthetic shift can be explained by a change in geographic location. For example, the prolific and rigorous ornament on the Mosque of Seville's minaret urges the faithful to understand that the world responds to the rationally-ordered system that God has imposed upon it. While it is quite different from the austerity that `Abd al-Mu'min adopted in the Kutubiyya and Tinmal mosques—which Chapter One argued to reflect the simple religious truths that he required all Muslims to affirm—it makes sense for a “pensive,” Andalusian audience—described by Urvoy—who understood the world to be inherently rational. Similarly, the Mosque of Seville moves away from the idea of an essential disconnect between God and creation, a fundamental tenet of Ibn Tūmart's doctrine that was manifested in the Tinmal and Kutubiyya mosques' highly abstracted and infrequent examples of vegetal ornament. Instead, the Andalusian building offers the viewer a way to connect with God through an examination of His creation, reasonably naturalistic representations of which adorned its prayer hall. This path to knowledge of God's existence was promoted by two Andalusian philosophers that were close to the caliph, and the vegetal forms that it inspired was not quite as radically different from other Andalusian Islamic ornament as were the Maghribī examples.⁶⁴⁶

⁶⁴⁶ For other ways in which the discrepancies between Andalusian and Maghribī viewpoints are manifested in the Almohad period, see Madeleine Fletcher, “Andalusia and North Africa.”

Ornamental changes continued under al-Manṣūr. Judging from the Hassan mosque's minaret and the stucco pieces recovered from its prayer hall, he does seem to conserve the amount of ornamented-to-bare spaces increased by his father. Of course, the fragmentary nature of the stucco—not to mention that the building was never completed—complicates this assessment. The transformation of the ornament's forms, however, stands on firmer ground. First, the Hassan mosque's *sebka* is far more static than that of the mosque of Seville's minaret. Indeed, I would characterize the Hassan mosque's rhomboids as rigid, rather than rigorous, and its exterior betrays no hint of upward motion akin to the Sevillian tower. The building's vegetal forms have undergone an even more drastic revision. While the mosque of Seville's *ataurique* was more naturalistic than that of the Tinmal or Kutubiyya mosque, the Hassan mosque's vegetal designs feature both a clear separation of its fronds into slender digits and a naturalistic, careful handling of pinecone motifs.

Like I have argued for the aesthetic innovations in `Abd al-Mu'min and Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf's oratories, I believe that the new typological clarity in the Hassan mosque takes its cues from the caliph's religiosity. But rather than viewing the latter as the result of a shift from Maghribī to Andalusian environs, as was the case for Abū Ya`qūb, al-Manṣūr's spirituality reflects a crisis affecting both sides of the Straits of Gibraltar. As a result, his aesthetic is one of absolute egalitarianism: no viewer is asked to mediate between contrasting organic and inorganic forms, nor is he required to ponder whether or not God is similar or dissimilar to his Creation. And no one is divided into categories based on intellectual capacities. In this way, the Hassan mosque transcends even Ibn Tūmart's message, as embodied in the Kutubiyya and Tinmal mosques. Because interpreting away God's anthropomorphic attributes is no longer necessary, even the simple affirmation of Almohad *tawḥīd* required by the Maḥdī becomes irrelevant.

These ideas respond to late twelfth-century issues: with two generations between believers and Ibn Tūmart, but with the same societal desire to connect with the divine, al-Manṣūr chose to emphasize theological and spiritual ideas, based on exotericism and Sufism, with the most potential to be broadly supported.

Chapters Two through Four have thus identified and explained a changing Almohad aesthetic, one that met each patron's needs while still maintaining certain ornamental and typological building blocks. In both Chapter Five and the conclusion to this study, I will broaden the lens to consider the impact that this shifting Almohad aesthetics could have had on art and architecture beyond the Almohad empire's borders. My point of departure is the court of king Alfonso VIII of Castile, to whom al-Manṣūr dealt a devastating blow in the battle of Alarcos. Although the third Almohad caliph contended with internal spiritual and political strife, to the extent that he considered overhauling the Almohad system of legitimacy, from Alfonso VIII's perspective the Almohad empire was still an extraordinarily strong rival. As we shall see, it was one worthy of emulation.

FIGURES CHAPTER FOUR



Figure 4.1. General View, Hassan Mosque (Author's Photo)



Figure 4.2. Minaret, Hassan Mosque (Author's Photo)

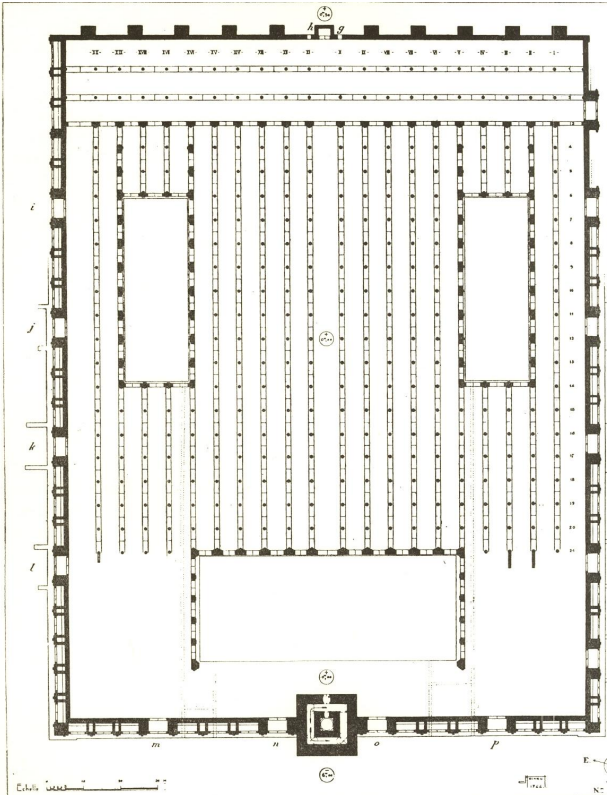


Figure 4.3. Plan, Hassan Mosque (Caillé, *La mosquée*, fig. 5.)

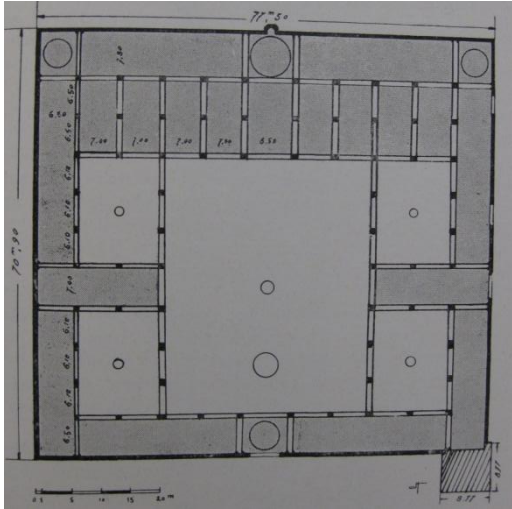


Figure 4.4. Plan, Qasba Mosque, Marrakesh (Henri Basset and Henri Terrasse, "La mosquée de la Qasba," *Hesperis* (1926), fig. 99.)



Figure 4.5. *Muqarnas* Dome, Minaret, Hassan Mosque (Caillé, *La mosquée*, pl. 40 b.)

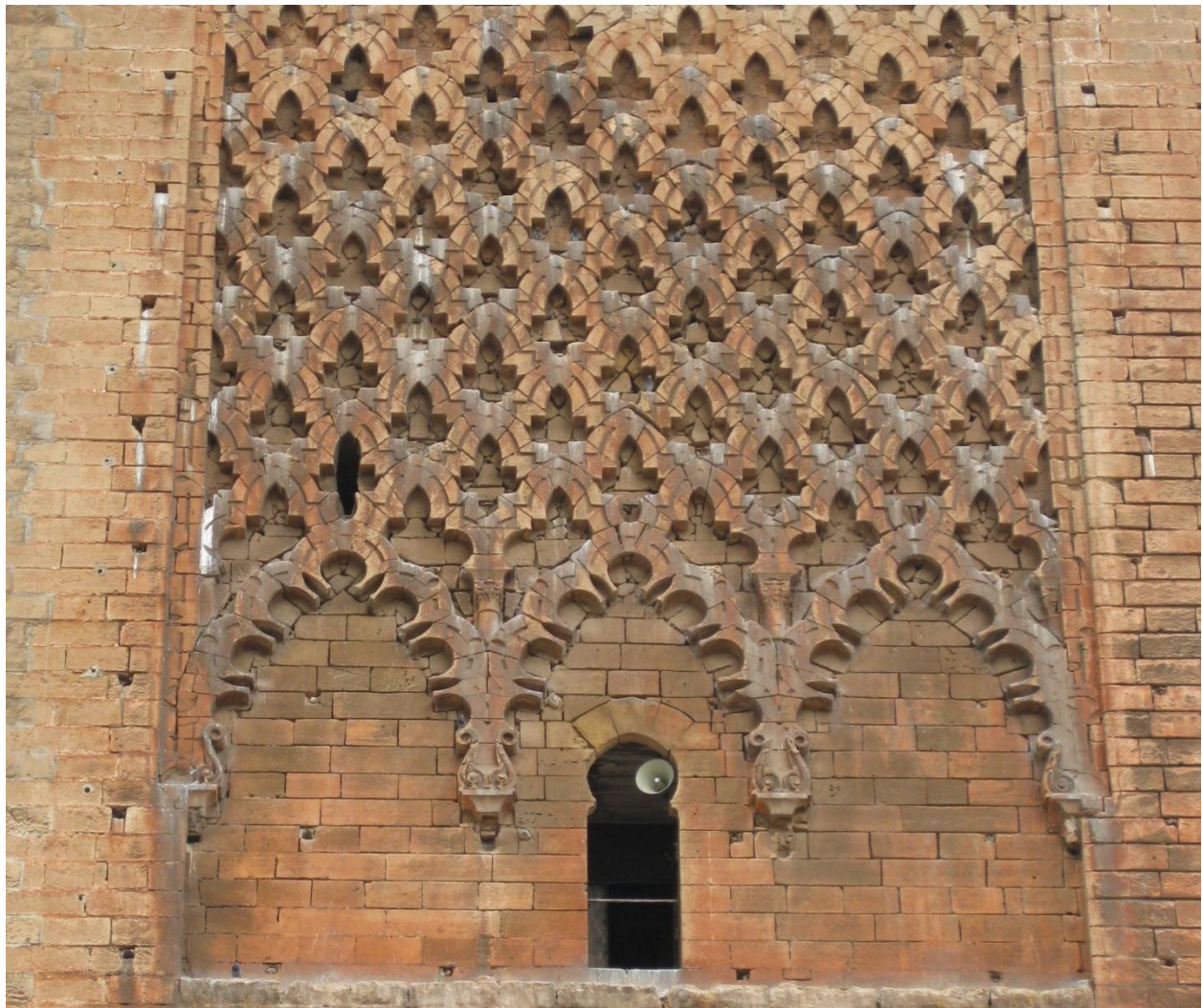


Figure 4.6. Detail of *Sebka*, Minaret, Hassan Mosque (Author's Photo)

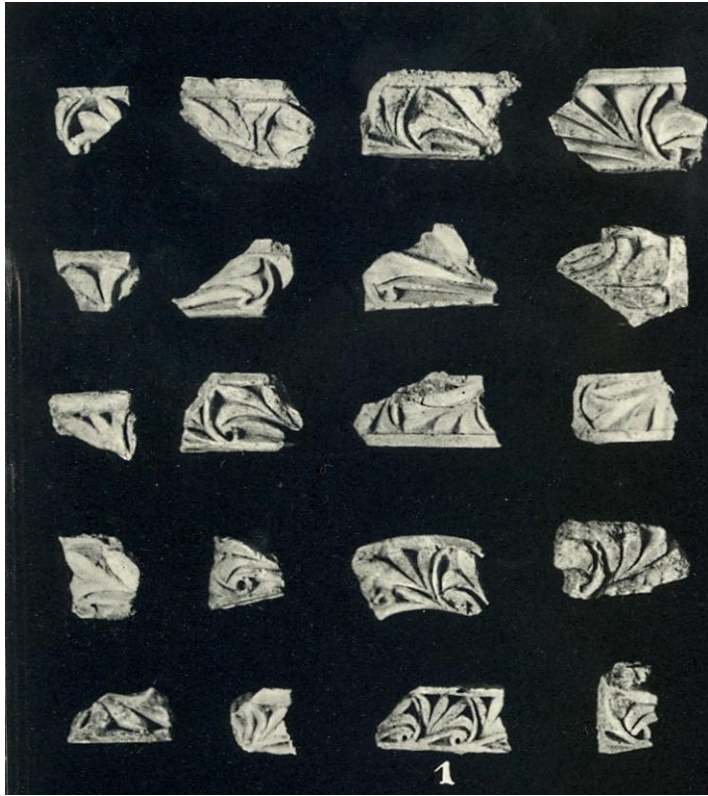


Figure 4.7. “Border”-style Vegetal Ornament, Prayer Hall, Hassan mosque (Caillé, *La mosquée*, fig. 42 b.)

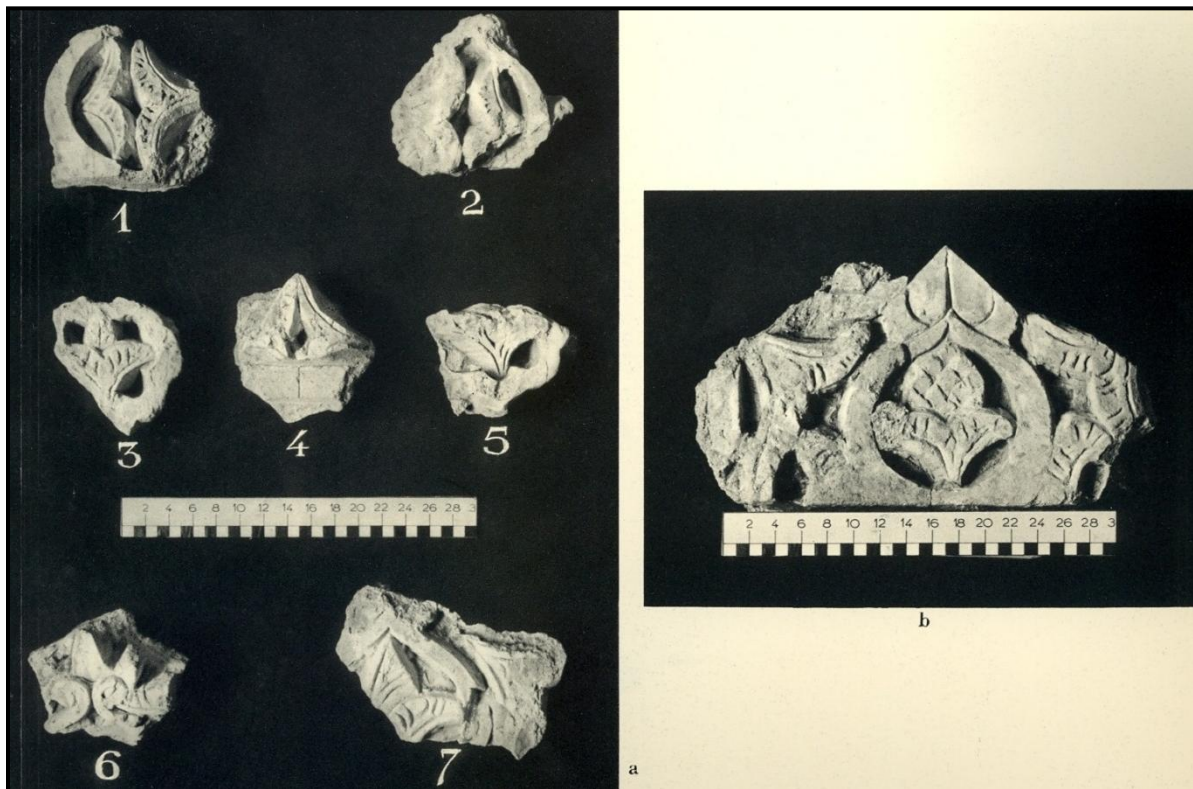


Figure 4.8. Vegetal Ornament, Prayer Hall, Hassan Mosque (Caillé, *La mosquée*, fig. 47 a&b.)

CHAPTER FIVE: ALMOHAD MOSQUES AND THE CONVENT OF SANTA MARIA DE LAS HUELGAS, BURGOS⁶⁴⁷

*“The court of Alfonso is a wife still in her succulent days,
Take off your shoes in honor of its soil for it is holy.”* –Ibrāhīm al-Fakhkhār⁶⁴⁸

According to an eighteenth-century monastic tradition, in 1214, king Alfonso VIII of Castile and his English queen, Leonor of Aquitaine, laid their royal heads to rest in a funerary chapel deep within the Cistercian convent of Las Huelgas (Burgos, founded 1180). This space—today called the Assumption Chapel (Figure 5.1)—would have made `Abd al-Mu`min feel entirely at home.⁶⁴⁹ A portal in the shape of a lambrequin arch leads to a small, rectangular vestibule vaulted with three *muqarnas* domes (Figure 5.2). Each of the vestibule’s narrow lateral walls features a blind, polylobed arch with a rising a panel of *sebka*, whose lower lozenges are filled with vegetal designs (Figure 5.3). A second lambrequin arch separates this vestibule from the inner chapel: a centrally-planned, brick construction crowned with a dome. The chapel’s walls are divided into two horizontal registers. The lowest features a square plan with two small niches, framed by polylobed arches, receding into its eastern wall. A system of two pendentives, topped with a platform, occupies each corner, and this arrangement transitions to the chapel’s second register, which is octagonal in plan. A frieze of blind, polylobed arches spans this upper level, and its eastern wall houses two windows above the lower register’s niches. These

⁶⁴⁷ I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to Professor Juan Carlos Ruiz Souza of Madrid’s Complutense University for contributing to this chapter, both through his inimitable scholarship and through his most collegial willingness to share personal photographs and digital off-prints.

⁶⁴⁸ Cited in Jonathan P. Decter, “Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Fakhkhār al-Yahūdī: An Arabic Poet and Diplomat in Castile and the Maghrib,” in *Beyond Religious Borders: Interaction and Intellectual Exchange in the Medieval Islamic World*, ed. David M. Freidenrich and Miriam Goldstein (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 96.

⁶⁴⁹ The king and queen’s great-grandson, King Alfonso X, transferred their sepulchers to the convent’s church in 1279.

openings are encased in a blind stucco arch, whose lobed terminus recalls the apex of a lambrequin arch.

Because the Assumption Chapel so clearly features an Almohad aesthetic, it is often classified as an example of *mudéjar* architecture, a category that, loosely defined, describes any Iberian Christian or Jewish building that shares formal traits or construction techniques with Hispano-Islamic architecture. However, *mudéjar* is a complex term fraught with a complicated historiography. Accordingly, the first of this chapter's six sections provides critical evaluations of both the term and the methodologies developed in order to understand *mudéjar* architecture. The second section opens with a brief introduction to the convent of Las Huelgas, recounting its foundational information and describing its various spaces. Principally, though, this section focuses on the Assumption Chapel's chronology and function, both of which are hotly debated among specialists and yet crucial to its interpretation. I examine the two prevalent theories to conclude that the chapel dates to the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, and that it was built in order to serve as Alfonso and Leonor's royal pantheon.

Sections three and four center on the chapel's patron, Alfonso VIII. Section three identifies both the characteristics of his royal identity and their alignment with the social, religious and political ambitions of one of the king's contemporaries: Archbishop Rodrigo Jiménez de la Rada (d.1247). In section four, I draw a careful parallel between the religious, social and political activities of the Almohad caliphs, on the one hand, and those of Alfonso VIII and don Rodrigo on the other. When coupled with the king's emulation of certain other Almohad visual markers of authority, which I detail in the first part of section five, these comparisons resolve the Castilian king's seemingly anomalous choice to use the architectural style of his political enemies in his burial chapel.

Section five also considers the use of Almohad ornamental motifs and austerity in the Assumption Chapel. Although I argue that the Castilians wished to emulate the general “look” of Almohad architecture, and not the theology embedded into early Almohad ornament, the Assumption Chapel’s spare austerity aligns with Cistercian aesthetics. The final part of this section turns to the differences between the Assumption Chapel and Almohad religious architecture, which I suggest are due to the different needs of the buildings’ patrons. Finally, section six identifies several ways that Almohad architectural ideas and aesthetics could have passed from the Maghrib to Castile.

1 MUDÉJAR HISTORIOGRAPHY AND METHODOLOGY

Despite its widespread use, the term *mudéjar* is highly ambiguous and problematic when applied to architecture as a stylistic designator. It derives from the Arabic word “*mudajjan*,” meaning “those who remain behind,” and it originally referred to Muslims who “remained behind” in newly conquered Christian territories instead of relocating to Andalusia. In the nineteenth century, however, the Spanish art historian José Amador de los Ríos used it to define an artistic style that “looks Islamic,” but was made for Iberian Christian or Jewish patrons.⁶⁵⁰ As Juan Carlos Ruiz Souza observes, Amador de los Ríos’ christening of the *mudéjar* style dovetailed with nineteenth-century Romanticism, which, in part, sought to define emerging nation states according to their respective histories, with a special emphasis on the medieval

⁶⁵⁰ José Amador de los Ríos, “Discurso de Ingreso en la Real Academia de San Fernando, June 1859,” cited in Vicente Lámpez y Romea, *Historia de la Arquitectura Cristiana Española* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, s.a., 1930), 483. The question of exactly to whom—modern scholars or medieval patrons—this style would have “looked Islamic” will be discussed below.

past.⁶⁵¹ Effectively, *mudéjar* architecture granted Spain its own national architectural style, a product of sustained, medieval contact with “Islam.”⁶⁵²

Subsequent scholars have attempted to define the *mudéjar* style according to more specific criteria. One tactic involves identifying its construction materials, often defined as brick, stucco, and wood. However, because the style is still seen as a nationalistic “marker of Spanish otherness,” the *mudéjar* label has been applied to virtually any medieval building that employs these materials.⁶⁵³ Furthermore, in many cases a layer of smooth plaster formerly covered stone and brick buildings alike, thus erasing the easy differentiation of the monuments’ construction materials for a medieval audience.⁶⁵⁴ Gonzalo Borrás has defined the *mudéjar* style through what he sees as a discrete model of *mudéjar* craftsmanship. It involves a highly specialized and skilled labor force, whose competency, Borrás asserts, would have allowed the *mudéjar* model to compete with the “European” system of stone masonry.⁶⁵⁵ However, Ruiz points out that Borrás’ purportedly discrete model of skilled workers with specialize tasks is essentially the same masonry system used by workshops in contemporary Europe, which renders his definition of the style meaningless.⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁵¹ See Juan Carlos Ruiz Souza, “Architectural Languages, Functions and Spaces: The Crown of Castile and al-Andalus,” *Medieval Encounters* 12.3 (2006), 360-1.

⁶⁵² Of course, my larger dissertation ought to indicate that a the idea of a monolithic “Spanish Islam,” implied here as being universal and static, is not one that I share.

⁶⁵³ Ruiz Souza, “Architectural Languages,” 361. See also Juan Carlos Ruiz Souza, “Toledo entre Europa y al-Andalus en el siglo XIII. Revolución, tradición y asimilación de las formas artísticas en la Corona de Castilla,” *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 1.2 (2009), 234-5.

⁶⁵⁴ Ruiz Souza, “Architectural Languages,” 363. One cannot help but share his frustration when he notes that this layer of plaster is often intentionally removed in order to give the buildings a more clearly *mudéjar* aesthetic. In my view, Spanish nationalism and the burgeoning, profitable industry of *mudéjar* tourism (complete with its own *mudéjar* theme park in Olmedo, Spain) underlie these decisions to essentially *mudéjar*-ify the medieval parts of modern Spanish cities.

⁶⁵⁵ Gonzalo M. Borrás Gualis, “Introducción: El arte mudéjar, un fenómeno hispánico,” in *El arte mudéjar* (Zaragoza: Diputación Provincial de Zaragoza, 1996), 22. I follow Ruiz Souza’s exposition of Borrás’ ideas outlined in “Architectural Languages,” 361-2.

⁶⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 362.

Beyond its construction materials and techniques, scholars define the *mudéjar* in terms of its borrowing, reinterpreting, appropriating or assimilating forms that they associate with Islamic architecture. These elements can be structural, such as horseshoe arches or domes, or ornamental, such as panels of *ataurique* or *sebka*. When present, interpretive efforts often rest on the “exoticism” that these forms are perceived to have connoted to their Christian or Jewish patrons. A critique of this approach has led Robinson to identify two common explanations of the *mudéjar* as either a representation of Christian triumphalism or as a naïve “fascination” with Islamic ornament.⁶⁵⁷ Frequently, these views result in comparisons between *mudéjar* forms and those of a particular Andalusian dynasty.⁶⁵⁸ While no one would deny the formal similarities between, for example, the Assumption Chapel and the Mosque of Tinmal, the major monuments of Andalusia and North Africa are just beginning to enjoy fully contextualized, interpretive studies.⁶⁵⁹ Therefore, merely identifying the parallels between *mudéjar* and Islamic architecture leaves much to be explained.⁶⁶⁰

Christian or Jewish buildings often do refer to specific Andalusian monuments or typologies; Ruiz, for example, discusses both architectural citations of the Great Mosque of Cordoba and the use of funerary *qubbas* in Christian architecture.⁶⁶¹ Nevertheless, it is worth

⁶⁵⁷ Cynthia Robinson, “Mudéjar revisited: A prologoména to the reconstruction of perception, devotion, and experience at the mudéjar convent of Clarisas, Tordesillas, Spain (fourteenth century A.D.),” *Res* 43 (2003), 51.

⁶⁵⁸ Robinson laments this tendency in *Ibid.*, 52.

⁶⁵⁹ On the Great Mosque of Cordoba, see Nuha Khoury, “The Meaning of the Great Mosque of Cordoba in the Tenth Century,” *Muqarnas* 13 (1996): 80-98; Susana Calvo Capilla, “La ampliación califal de la Mezquita de Córdoba: Mensajes, formas y funciones,” *Goya: Revista de arte* 323 (2008): 89-106; and Susana Calvo Capilla, “Justicia, misericordia y cristianismo: una relectura de las inscripciones coránicas de la mezquita de Córdoba en el siglo X,” *Al-qantara: Revista de estudios árabes* 31.1 (2010): 149-87. For Taifa architecture, see Cynthia Robinson, *In Praise of Song: the making of courtly culture in Al-Andalus and Provence, 1005-1134 A.D.* (Boston, MA : Brill, 2002). My dissertation, of course, attempts to fulfill this gap for Almohad architecture. Finally, on the Alhambra see Juan Carlos Ruiz Souza, “El palacio de los Leones de la Alhambra: ¿Madrassa, zawiya y tumba de Muhammad V? Estudio para un debate,” *Al-qantara: Revista de estudios árabes* 22.1 (2001): 77-120 and Cynthia Robinson, “Toward a Poetics of Ornament in Granada’s Alhambra: Allegorizing Metaphor,” *Muqarnas* 25 (2008): 185-214.

⁶⁶⁰ Robinson makes this point in “Mudéjar revisited,” 52.

⁶⁶¹ See Juan Carlos Ruiz Souza, “Al-Andalus y Cultura Visual: Santa María la Real de las Huelgas y Santa Clara de Tordesillas. Dos hitos en la asimilación de al-Andalus en la reinteriorización de la Corona de Castilla,” in *Simposio*

pausing to ask, as he does, how long a local building tradition must incorporate an architectural form before it simply becomes part of the style?⁶⁶² To cite one example, the horseshoe arch was employed in Visigothic buildings such as San Pedro de la Nave (c. 700) and then again in Mozarabic churches such as San Miguel de la Escalada (c. 950) or Santiago de Peñalba (before 950). As their descriptors indicate, neither Visigothic nor Mozarabic architecture are considered *mudéjar*, the first because it predates Islam's debut on the Iberian Peninsula, and the second presumably because it was built by "Arabized" Christians (Eng. "Mozarabic," from Ar. *musta`rib*, Eng. "Arabized"). Yet the horseshoe arch became one of the identifying features of *mudéjar* architecture, beginning with the twelfth century. The long-lived and geographically-diffuse employment of horseshoe arches in medieval Iberian architecture suggests that although modern scholars might readily associate the form with the Islamic world, it might have simply appeared "Iberian" to medieval audiences.⁶⁶³ This idea can apply to other "Islamic-looking" forms, such as *sebka* or polylobed arches, as well.

This complicated and problematic historiography leads me to reject the term *mudéjar*, as it obfuscates more than it clarifies.⁶⁶⁴ However, I firmly believe that in order for methodological

internacional: el legado de al-Andalus el arte andalusí en los reinos de León y Castilla durante la Edad Media : [actas], ed. Manuel Valdés Fernández, 206-242 (Valladolid: Fundación del Patrimonio Histórico de Castilla y León, 2007) and Juan Carlos Ruiz Souza, "La planta centralizada en la Castilla bajomedieval: entre la tradición martirial y la qubba islámica. Un nuevo capítulo del particularismo hispano," *Anuario del Departamento de Historia y Teoría del Arte (U.A.M.)* (2001): 9-36.

⁶⁶² Juan Carlos Ruiz Souza, "Castilla y al-Andalus, Arquitecturas aljamiadas y otros grados de asimilación," *Anuario del Departamento de Historia y Teoría del Arte (U.A.M.)* (2004), 38.

⁶⁶³ As Ruiz Souza indicates, after centuries of contact between the Iberian Peninsula's three religious groups, these design elements were probably not viewed as having a particular confessional genealogy. See Ruiz Souza, "Architectural Languages," 364.

⁶⁶⁴ The ample references to Ruiz Souza's fundamental works on *mudéjar* architecture also evidence that I am not alone in this assessment. Other scholars also urge a careful reconsideration—and, ultimately, a rejection—of the term *mudéjar*. I have already mentioned Robinson's work on Tordesillas. She criticizes the term in Robinson, "Mudéjar Revisited," 51. María Feliciano and Leyla Rouhi, in a jointly-authored introduction to a special issue of *Medieval Encounters*, highlight that *mudéjar* studies in general are typically predicated on an "insoluble conundrum" of Islamic forms in Christian or Jewish art. See María J. Feliciano and Leyla Rouhi, "Introduction," *Medieval Encounters*, 12.3 (2006), 318. The authors observe that *mudéjar* is often paradoxically understood alongside another model of characterizing the interactions between medieval Iberia's three confessional groups: the idea of *convivencia*. Loosely translated as "living together," *convivencia* can be understood as "as the perceived

paradigms to change, alternatives must be provided. Fortunately, several scholars offer excellent models. For example, Ruiz Souza argues for an abandonment of what he terms the “theory of styles,” that is, the idea one can classify all buildings according to formalistic categories.⁶⁶⁵ Instead, he urges scholars to study buildings as spaces that served defined functions, which, in turn, dictated much of their formal conception.⁶⁶⁶ He also proposes that researchers approach combinations of distinct architectural idioms in terms of local traditions, assimilations and importations, all of which serve the building’s ultimate function.⁶⁶⁷ I would caution against viewing “Christian” and “Islamic” architectural traditions as necessarily “distinct:” while “Islamic” elements may have appeared unique or distinctive within the first few years of their employment, after a generation or two they were probably assimilated into a local tradition. Nevertheless, Ruiz’s methods encourage the full consideration of the formal richness characterizing any given period.⁶⁶⁸

Other researchers complement Ruiz’s functionalist methodology by using documentary evidence in order to understand the reasons behind patrons’ aesthetic choices.⁶⁶⁹ For example, Jerrilyn D. Dodds employs this method in order to investigate the early thirteenth-century

coexistence and commingling of the three religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—with varying ranges of hostility and entente.” (Ibid.) As they make clear, the conference from which the papers in the *Medieval Encounters* special issues were culled invited its participants to question the idea of the *mudéjar* alongside that of *convivencia*.

⁶⁶⁵ This idea is developed most clearly in Juan Carlos Ruiz Souza, “Castilla y al-Andalus,” 17-8.

⁶⁶⁶ Ruiz Souza, “Architectural languages,” 365.

⁶⁶⁷ Ruiz Souza, “Castilla y al-Andalus,” 18.

⁶⁶⁸ When combined with his keen sense of how spaces are structured and organized, Ruiz Souza’s approach allows him to see beyond the ornamental style of spaces in order to interpret their functions. For example, his comparisons of fifteenth-century façades of Islamic and Christian institutions of learning establish that although the Islamic buildings feature Arabic inscriptions and *ataurique*, and the Christian buildings employ Latin inscriptions and Gothic ornament, their similar compositions immediately revealed their pedagogical function to contemporary viewers of either confession. See Ruiz Souza, “Architectural languages,” 368-70. Similarly, understanding of Islamic *qubbas* enables him to place the fifteenth-century Condestables Chapel in Burgos Cathedral into a longstanding tradition of Christian use of the *qubba* typology for their funerary structures, an interpretation that had been obscured by its Gothic features. (Ibid., 368.)

⁶⁶⁹ I have already outlined Robinson’s methodology in the Introduction. In addition to her “Mudéjar revisited” article, cited throughout this section, the interested reader can consult Cynthia Robinson, “Trees of Love, Trees of Knowledge: Toward the Definition of a Cross-Confessional Current in Late Medieval Iberian Spirituality,” *Medieval Encounters* 12.3 (2006): 388-435; and Cynthia Robinson, “Towers, Birds and Divine Light: The Contested Territory of Nasrid and ‘Mudéjar’ Ornament,” *Medieval Encounters* 17.3 (2011): 27-79.

Toledan Church of San Roman, probably built by Archbishop Rodrigo Jiménez de la Rada.⁶⁷⁰ She argues that Rodrigo's politics of integrating the various demographics of Toledo—Roman Catholic, Mozarabic, Jewish, and Muslim—led him to use an “inclusive,” or in some cases, *mudéjar*, aesthetic that could speak to all of the groups under his episcopal protection.⁶⁷¹ For her part, María Judith Feliciano uses Christian sumptuary laws in order to suggest that Christian patrons wore garments sewn from Hispanomuslim textiles due to their value as luxurious commodities.⁶⁷² As opposed to more strictly formalistic studies, these articles support their claims with concrete evidence, they assert that patrons largely understood what Andalusian aesthetics meant in an Islamic context, and they give the patrons agency in determining how to adopt, manipulate, adapt, appropriate or otherwise use this aesthetic.⁶⁷³ With these models in mind, I turn to the Assumption Chapel in Las Huelgas.

2 LAS HUELGAS AND ITS ASSUMPTION CHAPEL

2.1. THE BUILDING AND ITS PATRONS

From its inception, Las Huelgas benefitted from the patronage of the Castilian kings: it owes its very existence to the crown. In 1180, Alfonso VIII and Queen Eleanor signed a foundation charter formalizing their plans for building the Cistercian convent in Burgos.⁶⁷⁴ In following years, they granted considerable privileges and donated much property to the

⁶⁷⁰ Jerrilyn D. Dodds, “Rodrigo, reconquest, and San Roman: some preliminary thoughts,” in *Spanish Medieval Art: Recent Studies*, ed. Colum Hourihane (Tempe, Ariz.: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2007), 232.

⁶⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 233-4.

⁶⁷² María Judith Feliciano, “Muslim Shrouds and Christian Saints: the Ecclesiastical Appropriation of Hispanomuslim Textiles in Thirteenth-Century Iberia,” in *Under the Influence: Questioning the Comparative in Medieval Castile*, ed. Cynthia Robinson and Layla Rouhi, 101-31 (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2005).

⁶⁷³ For an example of the formalistic study of *mudéjar* architecture, see Rafael J. López Guzmán, *Arquitectura mudéjar: del sincretismo medieval a las alternativas hispanoamericanas* (Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 2000). For textiles, see Museo de Telas Medievales (Burgos, Spain) and Concha Herrero Carretero, *Museo de Telas Medievales, Monasterio de Santa María la Real de Huelgas* (Madrid: Patrimonio Nacional, 1988).

⁶⁷⁴ José Manuel Lizoain Garrido, *Documentación del Monasterio de Las Huelgas de Burgos (1116-1230)* (Burgos: J.M. Garrido Garrido, 1985), 10. As Lizoain notes, the document is published in S. Sebastian, “Nuevas fechas sobre la erección del famoso cenobio de Las Huelgas,” *Boletín de la Institución Fernán González* 34 (1948): 199-200.

monastery.⁶⁷⁵ In return, Las Huelgas served the royalty as a ceremonial center, the preferred place of spiritual retirement for Castilian noble women and a means by which to consolidate property. The royal couple documented their intent to be buried on site, along with their children, in 1199.⁶⁷⁶ Adjacent to the convent-pantheon, Alfonso VIII and Leonor also built a palace, where the queen and her children resided when the king was on campaign. Finally, the Castilian kings endowed Las Huelgas with a hospital that served local residents of Burgos and pilgrims *en route* to Santiago de Compostela.⁶⁷⁷

Las Huelgas' variety of architectural languages has rendered it resistant to conventional stylistic pigeonholing.⁶⁷⁸ On the one hand, the stone masonry, pointed arches and ribbed vaults of both the church, which occupies much of the monastery's northern area, and the chapterhouse, located just south of the church's crossing, clearly recall Angevin Gothic churches built by Leonor's parents, King Henry II of England and Eleanor of Aquitaine (Figure 5.4).⁶⁷⁹ On the other, vaults adorned with elaborate stucco cover the larger of the convent's two cloisters—misleadingly referred to as the Cloister of Saint Ferdinand, as Alfonso VIII's successor had little to do with its construction⁶⁸⁰—which lies directly south of the church's nave. Some of the stucco motifs feature roundels of symbolic animals such as peacocks or griffins, and other vaults contain fields of *sebka* or *ataurique* (Figure 5.5). The convent's smaller cloister is situated to the southeast of the large cloister. Its measured, rounded arcades and vegetal capitals can be described as late Romanesque (Figure 5.6).

⁶⁷⁵ Lizaín Garrido, *Documentación*, 10-92, documents this period.

⁶⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 92-4.

⁶⁷⁷ In 1212, Alfonso VIII ceded the hospital and its privileges to the jurisdiction of Las Huelgas' abbess with the condition that its income not be redirected to serve the monastery. *Ibid.*, 177-9.

⁶⁷⁸ This is not the place to weigh in on the debate surrounding other art historical stylistic designators such as "Gothic" or "Romanesque." I believe that they suffer many of the same flaws as do terms like *mudéjar*, but they adequately serve the purposes of this paragraph, which underscores how the convent defies traditional categories.

⁶⁷⁹ See Ruiz Sousa and Palomo Fernández, "Nuevas hipótesis," 24-31.

⁶⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 35, 37.

Las Huelgas also houses three small sanctuaries in its eastern and western extremities: the San Salvador, Santiago and Assumption chapels. The first lies to the west of the large cloister's southernmost arm. Although not open to public visits, photographs and descriptions reveal a small, centrally-planned space spanned by an impressive *muqarnas* dome. The Santiago Chapel borders the convent's eastern wall. Accessed through a pointed horseshoe arch, itself supported by Umayyad capitals, a short nave with a wooden roof leads to a second pointed horseshoe arch, taller and wider than the first (Figure 5.7). On its surface, dense, protruding vines wind across a more shallowly-carved vegetal background. A wooden effigy of Saint James (Sp. *Santiago*) mounted on the chapel's back wall dominates the sanctuary. This statue's jointed arms would have allowed nobles to have been symbolically knighted by Santiago, the patron saint of the Reconquest. A stucco frieze of interlacing stars, housing castles and more *ataurique*, transitions from the chapel's walls to its polychrome, latticed, wooden ceiling.

Although I favor a holistic interpretation of Las Huelgas that accounts for all of its styles, my present inquiry focuses on the Assumption Chapel's formal similarities to Almohad mosques. Structurally speaking, its *qubba* typology clearly parallels that of the Mahdī's tomb at Tinmal. The most religiously-significant architectural units of these buildings are also bordered by double-lambrequin arches. In the chapel, they divide the vestibule from its sanctuary, while in the Tinmal and Kutubiyya mosques, they surround the *mihrāb* bays. Stylistically, the chapel's spare aesthetic, with limited vegetal ornament, echoes that of the early Almohad mosques (Compare Figures 5.1 and 1.7). This austerity would have been even more striking in the twelfth century, when the chapel's brick walls were coated with a layer of plaster.⁶⁸¹ The parallels extend to decorative motifs as well: *muqarnas* domes fill the lambrequin arches'

⁶⁸¹ Rocío Sánchez Ameijeiras "El 'cementerio real' de Alfonso VIII en Las Huelgas de Burgos," *Semata* 10 (1998), 79.

undersides, while *sebka* occupies both the corners between the lambrequin arch and the frame of its *alfiz*. It is also found on the vestibule's lateral walls. Finally, the tracery of ribbed dome draws an eight-pointed star in its center, which recalls the dome housed in the sixth chamber of the Kutubiyya mosque's minaret (Compare Figures 5.8 and 5.9).

Beyond these stylistic features, the Assumption Chapel and Las Huelgas share certain of Ribāt Tinmal's functions. For instance, because Alfonso VIII and Queen Eleanor built the chapel in order to contain their tombs, its *qubba* plan type mirrors use of this typology for Ibn Tūmart's grave. And like the first three Almohad caliphs, who chose to be buried at Tinmal, Alfonso VIII and his wife intended that their descendents be laid to rest alongside their own graves. In other words, each site included a royal pantheon. Furthermore, the Almohads used Tinmal as a *ribāt*, or a place for spiritual retreat and training. As a Cistercian convent, home to a number of royal nuns, Las Huelgas performed a similar function. Finally, both sites were associated with major pilgrimage routes. Alfonso and Leonor's hospital at Las Huelgas served pilgrims traveling to Santiago de Compostela, and the Maḥdī's tomb bestowed his *baraka* upon pilgrims from throughout the Maghrib.

Although the Assumption Chapel's strongest ties are to Almohad architecture, Ruiz Souza has identified several features that reference the Umayyad Mosque of Cordoba. These include the dome spanning its sanctuary, which bears some similarity to one of the Mosque of Cordoba's cupolas (Compare Figures 5.8 and 5.10).⁶⁸² The three *muqarnas* domes that cover the chapel's vestibule offer a stronger parallel. While the Kutubiyya mosque uses *muqarnas* in the intrados of its lambrequin arches, they follow the contours of the arches' staggered height. In other words, the Kutubiyya's multi-leveled *muqarnas* descends from the apex of the arch down to its springing. However, Ruiz observes that in the Assumption Chapel, all three *muqarnas*

⁶⁸² Ruiz Souza, "Al-Andalus y cultura visual," 213.

domes remain very near the ceiling, replicating the arrangement of the three domes housed in the Mosque of Cordoba's *maqṣūra*. Indeed, the central dome of each arrangement is actually physically lower than the flanking domes: a unique distribution that visually binds the two buildings (Figure 5.2).⁶⁸³

2.2. *THE ASSUMPTION CHAPEL'S FUNCTION AND CHRONOLOGY*

In order to explain these citations of the Mosque of Cordoba, Ruiz examines both Las Huelgas' chronology and the Mosque of Cordoba's significance to medieval Castilians. The latter is a point to which I shall return, after discussing the chapel's crucial, but contested, function. Interpretations range from a throne room to a burial chamber to a repurposed palatine alcove-turned-oratory, and much the debate is predicated on the chapel's complicated chronology.⁶⁸⁴ Both Ruiz Souza and Rocío Sánchez Ameijeiras observe that the Assumption Chapel owes its current appearance to a second construction phase.⁶⁸⁵ The former convincingly argues that it first served as the apse of the monastery's provisional church, until the completion of the Gothic church in the latter years of Alfonso VIII's reign.⁶⁸⁶ Therefore, the Assumption Chapel's first incarnation, as the preliminary church's apse, dates to the late twelfth century.⁶⁸⁷ The principle chronological difficulty involves determining when this apse was destroyed and the extant, Almohad-style chapel erected. Ruiz dates it to the late thirteenth century, assigning

⁶⁸³ *Ibid.*, 213-4.

⁶⁸⁴ For an excellent summary of the historiography of this debate, see Ruiz Souza and Palomo Fernández, "Nuevas hipótesis," 22-23.

⁶⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 33-4 and Sánchez Ameijeiras, "El cementerio real," 79.

⁶⁸⁶ Ruiz Souza and Palomo Fernández, "Nuevas hipótesis," 33. I find this argument convincing, given that the provisional church occupied the same position relative to the small, provisional cloister that the permanent Gothic church and large cloister do today. It also explains the convent's inclusion of two cloisters. For his discussion of the Gothic church's chronology, with which I agree, see *Ibid.*, 27.

⁶⁸⁷ Although Alfonso VIII did not die until 1214, his donations to artisans such as "Maestro Ricardo" in 1204 indicate that the Gothic church was well on its way to being completed at this date. For a satisfying discussion on the ways in which Alfonso VIII and Leonor contributed to the development of Gothic architecture in Spain, see *Ibid.*, 24-30.

Alfonso X as its patron.⁶⁸⁸ Because my argument rests on an early thirteenth-century date for the chapel, it is worth pausing to examine his argument in detail.

In a magisterial article jointly authored with Gema Palomo Fernández, Ruiz studies Las Huelgas' composite parts and its range of styles. One of the authors' principle observations concerns the convent's structural incongruities. For example, the expensive dressed stone of Gothic vaults in the chapterhouse differ markedly from the large cloister's brick vaults, which, although covered with rich stucco designs, cost far less to produce. Ruiz and Palomo explain this inconsistency by arguing that Alfonso VIII died after having funded most of the Gothic church and chapterhouse, but before the large cloister's vaults were completed. Then, Ferdinand III, Alfonso VIII's grandson and successor, essentially abandoned the project. This hypothesis makes political and historical sense: as the son of the Leonese king Fernando II, Ferdinand III could be forgiven for focusing his attention on other projects rather than on finishing the dynastic project of his Castilian grandfather.⁶⁸⁹ It also makes art historical sense, since the authors point out several other places where Las Huelgas' architectural infrastructure appears to be either hastily and cheaply done or halted before it was finished.⁶⁹⁰

After Ferdinand III died in 1252, his son Alfonso X acceded to the throne. Ruiz and Palomo argue that the new king renewed royal interest in Las Huelgas around 1275. Together with his sister Berenguela, Las Huelgas' abbess, he planned to move the tombs of his great-grandfather Alfonso VIII, Queen Leonor and the other members of the royal family from an as-yet unidentified space near the small cloister to the Gothic church. As the authors note, the large cloister and the so-called "locutorio," which connected the small cloister area to the large cloister and church, had been left unfinished. Because the procession of the royal sepulchers would

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid., 34-5.

⁶⁸⁹ Ibid., 37.

⁶⁹⁰ For examples, see Ibid., 30-2.

necessarily pass through both of these areas, Alfonso X needed to ensure that they were worthy of the solemn event. However, covering them with costly Gothic vaults—which Alfonso X used in both the Cathedral of Leon and the Alcazares of Seville—was impossible, given that the king suffered both financial and political crises during these years.⁶⁹¹

Ruiz and Palomo argue that Alfonso X wisely solved this problem by opting for a ceiling of inexpensive brick vaults. For their ornament, the king ordered stucco roundels that clearly echo motifs found in Hispanomuslim textiles, some of which conserve polychrome that echoes textilic color schemes (Compare Figures 5.5 and Figure 5.11). The authors observe that this textilic aesthetic is absent in other thirteenth-century carved stucco. Because the stucco roundels were intended to enhance the processional path through the cloister, however, the textilic references were fitting: Hispanomuslim silks were highly valued among the Castilian royalty, and monastic cloisters were commonly dressed up with rich tapestries for special events.⁶⁹² Alfonso X also commissioned a monumental entrance that led from the locutorio to the Gothic part of the monastery, including inscriptions that bear the date of 1275. In this way, Ruiz and Palomo also resolve the otherwise strange monumentality of this doorway, given that it was subsequently sealed off.⁶⁹³

While the authors masterfully explain the patronage and use of decorative stucco carvings in Las Huelgas' locutorio and large cloister, their discussion of the second, Almohad-style Assumption Chapel falls somewhat short of this success. To be sure, their assertion that the chapel first served as a provisional apse to the convent's temporary church is convincing.⁶⁹⁴ Less so is the idea that

⁶⁹¹ Ibid., 36.

⁶⁹² Ibid.

⁶⁹³ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁴ Ibid., 34.

It is very difficult to accept that such a markedly Islamic space—as is the case of the Assumption oratory with *muqarnas* domes in the vestibule, lambrequin arches, panels of *sebka*, etc.—could have been constructed at the end of the twelfth century in a place like Las Huelgas, which is an idea that has been defended elsewhere. This is not because there were no Almohad spaces with a similar architectural language [to serve as models], but rather because one still has to wait almost a century to find a complete and self-consciously Andalusian religious space—in terms of its design, forms and function—built by Christian patrons.⁶⁹⁵

The authors continue by explaining how Christian patrons first had to assimilate the architectural landscape of Andalusia, most of which Ferdinand III won in the second quarter of the thirteenth century, before such a complete incorporation of Andalusian structures would be possible.

Therefore, they conclude that in spite of the Assumption Chapel's clear stylistic parallels to twelfth-century Almohad architecture, it must date to after Cordoba's fall in 1236: specifically, they believe that it was built in the last quarter of the thirteenth century. In turn, this date would explain the chapel's aforementioned citations of the Mosque of Cordoba.⁶⁹⁶

A late thirteenth-century date for the Assumption Chapel, however, proves problematic in several ways. First, the authors “do not doubt” that the chapel had a funerary function, but with such a late date, who would have been buried there?⁶⁹⁷ Alfonso X's plans to transfer Alfonso VIII's, Queen Eleanor's and the royal family's bodies to the Gothic church preclude the idea that he intended the chapel to house their tombs. In 1252, Ferdinand III had already been laid to rest in the Cathedral of Seville (the rededicated Almohad Great Mosque), and Alfonso X himself would choose to be buried there as well.⁶⁹⁸ Alfonso X's heir apparent, Fernando de la Cerda, died in 1276 and is buried at Las Huelgas, but his death corresponds with the date of the locutorio's stucco, which suggests that his tomb was placed alongside his progenitors in the

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid. It is important to distinguish between what the authors refer to as the “completely Andalusian religious space” of the Assumption Chapel and other spaces that reference Islamic architecture less faithfully. For example, Ruiz Souza has no trouble accepting an early thirteenth-century date for the nearby Toledan Church of San Román, which echoes the Mosque of Cordoba's red and white voissiors. See Ruiz Souza, “Toledo entre Europa y al-Andalus,” 237.

⁶⁹⁶ Ruiz Souza and Palomo Fernández, “Nuevas hipótesis,” 35.

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid., 34.

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid.

convent's church. Even if one posits that Ferdinand III, the conqueror of Cordoba and Seville, could have built the chapel to house his grandparents' tombs, his disinterest in continuing the royal project at Las Huelgas makes him an unlikely candidate for this kind of patronage.

A second problem with the date that Ruiz and Palomo propose for the Assumption Chapel is simply stylistic. I have demonstrated above, and the authors agree, that the chapel exhibits clear ties to twelfth-century Almohad mosques.⁶⁹⁹ However, Ruiz and Palomo compare the locutorio's stucco, which does date to the late thirteenth century, to Nasrid ornament. If Alfonso X built the Assumption Chapel, then, he used an Almohad style that he did not employ anywhere else in Las Huelgas. One could counter that the stucco roundels draw on Almohad-era textiles, but even so, the rich, material aesthetic of both textiles and the stucco roundels contrasts markedly with the austere aesthetic of the Assumption Chapel. Furthermore, Ruiz himself has argued that Almohad architecture took on a new, formal richness in the thirteenth century (a development that would dovetail nicely with my suggestions in the previous chapter).⁷⁰⁰ He points to recent discoveries of elaborate Almohad stucco in their palace of Silves, whose design, he suggests, was emulated by Jewish patrons in the thirteenth-century Toledan synagogue of Santa Maria la Blanca (Figure 5.12).⁷⁰¹ With these developments in mind, why would Alfonso X have chosen to build in an "archaizing" Almohad aesthetic, especially given that his contemporaries did not?

Rocío Sánchez Ameijeiras' proposal of an early thirteenth-century date for the Assumption Chapel, with Alfonso VIII and Leonor as its patrons, resolves these issues.⁷⁰² Like Ruiz, she observes that its second incarnation was "monumentalized" by three additions: the

⁶⁹⁹ Ruiz Souza, "Al-Andalus y la cultura visual," 214 and Sánchez Ameijeiras, "El 'çementerio real,'" 80.

⁷⁰⁰ Ruiz Souza, "Toledo," 256-61.

⁷⁰¹ See *Ibid.*, 256-62, and *Ibid.*, 253-5, respectively.

⁷⁰² Sánchez Ameijeiras, "El 'çementerio real,'" 80.

squines supporting the second register's octagonal drum, the dome, and the Almohad-style stucco.⁷⁰³ Sánchez's basic argument asserts that Alfonso VIII and Queen Leonor remodeled the first Assumption Chapel into a royal pantheon in the early thirteenth century. In order to arrive at this conclusion, Sánchez Ameijeiras focuses on Las Huelgas' royal sarcophagi.

She begins with Manuel Gómez Moreno's discovery of an architectural baldachin, or tomb-canopy, in an area adjacent to the Assumption Chapel. Gómez Moreno reasoned that if this one baldachin—which he suggested belonged to the infante Fernando, Alfonso VIII's heir apparent who died unexpectedly in 1211—was found outside the chapel, the royal tombs must not have been housed within. However, Sánchez points out that the documentation surrounding the commission of the infante Fernando's tomb refers to not one, but two royal sepulchers: one for the infante Fernando and the other for Alfonso VIII. Furthermore, the premature deaths of four of Alfonso VIII's children required several other tombs, one of which bears the date of 1194.⁷⁰⁴ All of these sarcophagi would have needed a late twelfth- or early thirteenth-century funerary space befitting the royal status of their occupants.

Sánchez Ameijeiras continues with a close analysis of Gómez Moreno's baldachin. Its decorative motifs—including harpies, also present on the 1194 sarcophagus—share key stylistic features with the carved capitals of Las Huelgas' small cloister. This allows her to date the canopy to the late twelfth century, perhaps around 1194. Given that the infante Fernando died in the early thirteenth century, it seems unlikely that the royal couple would have commissioned his tomb canopy so far in advance of his death, especially because he died at the young age of twenty-two. Rather than belonging to the infante Fernando, then, Sánchez asserts that the baldachin would have been placed in the earliest incarnation of the Assumption Chapel in order

⁷⁰³ Ibid., 89.

⁷⁰⁴ Ibid.

to host Las Huelgas' first royal tombs, made for the four princely children who had died in infancy or early childhood.⁷⁰⁵

This assertion is borne out by both the structure of the original Assumption Chapel and Ruiz's identification of its function. The small sarcophagus dating to 1194 was clearly intended to fit into a wall niche, as it is carved on only three sides. Moreover, the chapel's foundation level strongly suggests that it was meant to host the sarcophagus. First, the niches in its eastern wall correspond to the diminutive sarcophagus' dimensions. Second, the baldachin, whose narrow openings would only have been able to accommodate the smallest tombs, also fits into these niches. The lobes of the baldachin's canopy also neatly conform to the polylobed arches spanning the niches' recessions.⁷⁰⁶ Furthermore, Sánchez Ameijeiras points to a medieval Iberian tradition of placing royal burials inside churches, monastic and otherwise.⁷⁰⁷ In this way, if the earliest version of the Assumption chapel contained Las Huelgas' first royal tombs, Sánchez's theory aligns with Ruiz's proposal that the space served as the apse of Las Huelgas' preliminary monastic church.

It thus seems likely that the first Assumption Chapel also housed Las Huelgas' first royal tombs, but what of the chapel's second, Almohad-style incarnation? According to Sánchez, Alfonso VIII renovated the Assumption Chapel after he decided to be buried in it. This decision, she continues, was probably due to queen Leonor, to whom scholars have increasingly attributed the impetus for founding the convent. After all, the queen's father, King Henry II, founded the monastery of Fontevault, which served the crown as an occasional place of residence and a royal pantheon. Sánchez even suggests that Queen Eleanor and Las Huelgas' first abbess María Gutiérrez, the widow of the queen's *mayordomo*, buried the four royal children at Las Huelgas in

⁷⁰⁵ Ibid., 90.

⁷⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁷ Ibid., 85-6.

order to pressure Alfonso VIII to commit to be buried there himself. In any case, Sánchez argues that either after the king made this decision in 1199, or perhaps upon the death of the infante Fernando in 1211, the first baldachins were torn down and the chapel was “significantly enriched, as befitted a cemetery for kings.”⁷⁰⁸

Sánchez Ameijeiras’ early thirteenth-century date for the extant Assumption Chapel also aligns with events transpiring in the larger Christian world. Both Sánchez and Ruiz have noted stylistic connections between the Assumption Chapel’s dome and other cupolas of Iberian churches dedicated to the Holy Sepulcher.⁷⁰⁹ Jerusalem’s Church of the Holy Sepulcher had been lost to Christendom in 1187, when Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn conquered the city from the crusaders. As Peter Linehan observes, twelfth-century Christian European authors connected this tremendous loss to the decisive defeat that Alfonso VIII had suffered in the 1195 battle of Alarcos.⁷¹⁰ Both Linehan and Lucy Pick emphasize Alfonso VIII’s subsequent reluctance to retake the offensive against the Almohads, observing that the infante Fernando responded most enthusiastically to Pope Innocent III’s urging for an Iberian crusade.⁷¹¹ If the Assumption Chapel’s monumentalization postdates the infante’s death, evocations of the Holy Sepulcher—which, via its location in Jerusalem and its commemoration of Christ’s tomb, were intimately linked to the idea of Crusade—would have particularly suited his final resting place. A date near 1211, during the preparatory phases of what would become the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa, would also tie

⁷⁰⁸ Sánchez Ameijeiras, “El ‘çementerio real,”” 91.

⁷⁰⁹ Ibid., 94 and Ruiz Souza, “Al-Andalus y cultura visual,” 210.

⁷¹⁰ Peter Linehan, *Spain, 1157-1300: A Partible Inheritance* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2008), 37.

⁷¹¹ Ibid., 45 and Lucy Pick, *Conflict and Coexistence: Archbishop Rodrigo and the Muslims and Jews of Medieval Spain* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2004), 38. Although the authors disagree slightly regarding the extent of Infante Fernando’s crusading zeal, with Pick believing that Archbishop Jiménez de la Rada was pulling the strings and Linehan asserting that the archbishop and Infante’s bellicose desires are not necessarily mutually exclusive, both authors agree that Alfonso VIII was not all that interested.

this imagery to the moment when Alfonso VIII finally accepted leading a crusade against the Almohads.⁷¹²

While Ruiz Souza and Sánchez Ameijeiras' theories regarding the function and chronology of the Assumption Chapel and its ties to Church of the Holy Sepulcher greatly further its interpretation, they do not explain Alfonso VIII's choice of the Almohad aesthetic for his royal pantheon, nor do they fully explain its formal ties to the Mosque of Cordoba. Beginning with the latter, Ruiz has argued that medieval Iberian Christian patrons had long considered the Mosque of Cordoba a holy place.⁷¹³ As such, replicas or references to its domes frequently occur in areas where Christian patrons wish to evoke "the holiest of holy spaces," including the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.⁷¹⁴ In fact, Ruiz affirms that certain of these ribbed domes do predate Cordoba's fall.⁷¹⁵ Viewed from this perspective, Alfonso VIII's military conflicts with the Almohads help to resolve the chapel's citations of the Mosque of Cordoba, which have more to do with evoking crusade-associated sites like the Church of the Holy Sepulcher than Islamic architecture *per se*. However, the Castilian king's wars against the Almohads obfuscate his choice to emulate their architectural aesthetic. In order to resolve this issue, the following section delves more deeply into the reign of Alfonso VIII and his relationship to Archbishop Jiménez de la Rada.

⁷¹² For the preparations leading to the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa, see Pick, *Conflict and Coexistence*, 34-43.

⁷¹³ See Juan Carlos Ruiz Souza, "Paisajes arquitectónicos del reinado de Alfonso X. Las Cantigas, Sevilla y el proyecto integrador del Rey Sabio," vol. 2 of *Las Cantigas de Santa María. Códice Rico, M.S. T-1-1, Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial*, ed. Laura Fernández Fernández and Juan Carlos Ruiz Souza (Madrid: Colección Scriptorium, 2011), 573. Vincent Lagardère has observed that Alfonso VI, the Castilian king, sent his pregnant wife to live at the palace of Madinat al-Zahra' and to visit the Mosque of Cordoba in order to benefit from the building's powers, which stemmed from its origins as a Christian church. See Vincent Lagardère, *Les Almoravides jusqu'au règne de Yūsuf b. Tāshfīn (1039-1106)* (Paris: Éditions L'Harmattan, 1989), 103.

⁷¹⁴ Ruiz Souza, "Al-Andalus y cultural visual," 211.

⁷¹⁵ *Ibid.*

3 ALFONSO VIII, RODRIGO JIMÉNEZ DE LA RADA, AND CASTILE

3.1. POLITICAL HISTORY

In 1158, King Sancho III of Castile died, bequeathing the throne to his son Alfonso VIII. Alfonso was three years old. Although no one directly challenged the young king's right to rule, the twelve years of his minority were fraught with political difficulty. By Archbishop Rodrigo Jiménez de la Rada's account, Sancho III had granted custodianship to the Castilian noble Gutierre Fernández de Castro with his dying breath, but in the late 1150s, the Castro's ancient rivals, the Lara family, assumed guardianship of the child king.⁷¹⁶ The Castro family then allied with King Fernando II of Leon, and together they managed to wrest Toledo from Castile and install Fernando Rodríguez de Castro as its governor. In 1166, however, with the help of Manrique Pérez de Lara and Toledo's Mozarab minority, Alfonso VIII reclaimed the city and secured his future. Beholden to no one, Alfonso VIII knighted himself in the monastery of San Zoilo de Carrion on November 11th, 1169, and his minority ended after he turned fifteen several days later.⁷¹⁷

Alfonso's most sustained and conflictive political interactions involved the kingdom of Leon and the Almohad caliphate. While not integral to this study, Alfonso VIII's contest with Leon for hegemony over Christian Iberia merits a brief mention. The hostilities began during his minority, when Fernando II had assumed control over Toledo. For a brief time, he also held the young king—who was also his nephew—in his sway, although he later released the child to Manrique Pérez de Lara, with whose aid the monarch would eventually regain the city.⁷¹⁸ After Alfonso VIII came of age, Fernando II constantly advanced into Castilian territory, often allying

⁷¹⁶ Linehan, *Partible Inheritance*, 25-6.

⁷¹⁷ This short sketch has been largely summarized from *Ibid.*, 24-31. For an extensive analysis of Castile under Alfonso VIII, see Julio González, *El Reino de Castilla en la época de Alfonso VIII* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Escuela de Estudios Medievales, 1960).

⁷¹⁸ Linehan, *Partible Inheritance*, 26.

with the Almohads in this struggle.⁷¹⁹ The contentious relationship continued under Fernando's successor, Alfonso IX, who acceded to the throne in 1188. Adding insult to decades of injury, a ceremony in which Alfonso VIII knighted the new Leonese sovereign, the latter kissing the Castilian monarch's hand as a sign of vassalage and respect, humiliated Alfonso IX in front of his court.⁷²⁰

Although Alfonso VIII frequently raided Almohad territory, his first major victory took place in 1177.⁷²¹ After concluding a treaty with Fernando II, thus ensuring that no Castilian castles would fall into Leonese hands while he was on campaign, Alfonso VIII traveled to Cuenca, where he besieged the city for nine months before it fell. These actions established the king's military credentials against the Almohads, and he went on to lead a raid of territories surrounding Cordoba in 1182. Two years later, Alfonso VIII conquered the city of Alarcon, some eighty kilometers south of Cuenca, while 1189 saw Castilian raiding campaigns against the Almohads in three locales: the countryside around Cordoba and Seville, the mountains north of the Almohad capital, and the territory around Murcia. In spite of these offensives, the caliph al-Manṣūr secured a treaty with Castile in order to fight the Portuguese, in whom he perceived a more immediate danger, in 1190.

After this truce expired in 1194, the Archbishop of Toledo, Martín López de Pisuegra (d. 1208), led a massive raid into Almohad territory alongside the Knights of Calatrava, one of the military orders charged with protecting and maintaining the frontier. Alfonso VIII, who

⁷¹⁹ Miguel Ángel Ladero Quesada, "Amenaza almohade y guerras entre reinos," in *La reconquista y el proceso de diferenciación política (1035-1217)*, ed. Miguel Ángel Ladero Quesada and José Mattoso (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1998), 481-5; Linehan, *Partible Inheritance*, 33.

⁷²⁰ Ladero Quesada, "Amenaza almohade," 490-1; Linehan, *Partible Inheritance*, 39-40;

⁷²¹ This section on the Almohads is largely summarized from Ladero Quesada, "Amenaza almohade," 478-507. Information from other sources will be clearly indicated. For more on the Christian expansion leading to the expulsion of the Muslims from Iberia, see Ambrosio Huici Miranda, *Las grandes batallas de la Reconquista durante las invasiones africanas (almoravides, almohades y benimerines)* (Madrid: Instituto de Estudios Africanos, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1956) and Joseph F. O'Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

supported the archbishop, paid dearly for his incursion the next year, when al-Manṣūr marshaled his troops for what would become known as the battle of Alarcos.⁷²² Alfonso VIII's army suffered a humiliating defeat, and although the kingdom lost little territory, save the countryside surrounding the fortress of Calatrava, it was left vulnerable. Both Alfonso's Christian rivals and the Almohads took advantage of Castile's weakened state. Alfonso IX, buoyed by Almohad gold and auxiliary soldiers, ravaged the western part of the kingdom. Not to be left behind, King Sancho VII of Navarre raided near Logroño, about 100 kilometers east of Burgos. In 1196, al-Manṣūr raided the Tagus valley, west of Toledo, and in 1197 the caliph swept through the Tagus valley to Cuenca, after which he agreed to a ten-year truce.

If Alfonso VIII is remembered for the devastating defeat at Alarcos, he is equally recalled for his shining victory in the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa. The king and Archbishop Rodrigo Jiménez de la Rada expended extraordinary efforts to draw knights and soldiers to participate in the campaign. In addition to leading the battle, Alfonso VIII appealed to the pope for a legate and also to the French king, Phillip Augustus, for military support, although he achieved neither aim. The king made enormous financial contributions, even subsidizing the participation of forces led by Pedro II of Aragon, who found himself in financial straits.⁷²³ Ecclesiastical tithes, ordered by Jiménez de la Rada, also helped fill the coffers dedicated to the campaign. Perhaps most significantly, Pick argues that Jiménez de la Rada was responsible for enveloping the campaign with an epic, good-versus-evil mantle of righteousness; she describes his letters urging Christendom to take up arms against an ever-increasing Muslim host, as well as his own preaching tour in France, by which he hoped to drum up international support.⁷²⁴ Pick also

⁷²² The remainder of this paragraph is summarized from O'Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade*, 62-3.

⁷²³ Miguel Ángel Ladero Quesada, "El lento final de una época," in *La reconquista y el proceso de diferenciación política (1035-1217)*, ed. Miguel Ángel Ladero Quesada and José Mattoso (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1998), 536-8.

⁷²⁴ Pick, *Conflict and Coexistence*, 39-40.

suggests that Archbishop Rodrigo played an instrumental role in winning papal approval for the effort:⁷²⁵ Pope Innocent III did, in fact, order ecclesiastics to preach the Iberian Crusade in France, granting them the same spiritual benefits given to crusaders to the Holy Land.⁷²⁶

These long and arduous preparations bore fruit in the summer of 1212, when a great Iberian and French host gathered in Toledo.⁷²⁷ The French troops were lodged in the city as the king's guests, not without some difficulty: Toledo's citizens complained that they did not respect the local economy and customs, transgressions that pale in comparison to the Frenchmen's Pentecostal assault on the city's Jews. In late June, the army left the city for a hot and difficult march south. They recovered several castles lost to the Almohads, including Malagon and Calatrava, but by the third of July the French abandoned ship, citing fatigue, poor marching conditions and the lack of booty. The Castilians continued south and took Alarcos, at which point Sancho VII of Navarre and his army joined the host. The army halted near Salvatierra, as the Muslim forces had positioned themselves on the opposite side of a narrow mountain pass in order to impede Christian advance.

Rather than risk traversing the natural bottleneck through the mountains, the Christians used an alternative route to cross the sierra and arrive on the mesa of Las Navas. Their chroniclers lend a supernatural aura to this event by describing how a humble shepherd showed Alfonso VIII and his nobles to the other pass through the mountains, after which he mysteriously—or miraculously—disappeared. Divinely-aided or not, the Christians camped on the plain, and after several skirmishes they engaged the Almohads in a pitched battle on July 16,

⁷²⁵ She notes that it was at the time of Rodrigo's 1210 consecration in Rome that the pope began to write to the kings of Iberian, urging them to make peace with one another in order to fight the Muslims, like the Aragonese king Pedro II had already done. *Ibid.*, 38.

⁷²⁶ O'Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade*, 68-9.

⁷²⁷ My summary of the battle procedes from Ladero Quesada, "El lento final," 535-43. See also Huici Miranda, *Las grandes batallas*, 253-72 and O'Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade*, 70-4.

1212. The fighting lasted the entire day, but the efforts of the Christian cavalry, coupled with the strategy of introducing fresh Navarran and Aragonese troops once the battle had already advanced, resulted in a sound defeat for the Almohad caliph al-Nāṣir.

Modern historians have long designated Alfonso VIII's great victory at Las Navas as the beginning of the end for Islamic political presence in Andalusia.⁷²⁸ For Alfonso himself, the victory atoned for his role in the disaster of Alarcos,⁷²⁹ and it won him the esteem of the ecclesiastical and political powers in western Europe.⁷³⁰ However, as Pick and Linehan point out, Alfonso VIII, Jiménez de la Rada and their medieval contemporaries could not have known that they had broken the back of Almohad strength in the peninsula. Pick observes that the Castilians "remembered the reverses of earlier days," and describes Archbishop Rodrigo's pressing anxiety to fortify the southern march and to keep its Castilian defenders fed during the famine of 1213-4.⁷³¹ Linehan describes apprehension of a similar kind, albeit relying on sources from a later date: thirteenth-century authors focus on the threat that an expansionist, twelfth-century Islam posed to Christianity, rather than on celebrating Alfonso VIII's victory.⁷³² Nevertheless, Alfonso VIII's crusading efforts dovetailed with his—and Archbishop Rodrigo's—social and political projects, the details of which fill the following section.

3.2. ALFONSO VIII'S ROYAL IDENTITIES AND DON RODRIGO'S INTELLECTUAL PROJECTS

Like any ruler, Alfonso VIII carefully crafted his public royal identity to reflect his—and his subjects'—values and concerns. And like many other sovereigns, his royal persona was complex, multifaceted and dynamic. In this section, I identify the three qualities that Alfonso cultivated and projected: majesty, sanctity and wisdom. Peter Linehan, whose work has already

⁷²⁸ See, for example, O'Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade*, 76 or Pick, *Conflict and Coexistence*, 17.

⁷²⁹ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁷³⁰ Peter Linehan, *History and the Historians of Medieval Spain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 318.

⁷³¹ Pick, *Conflict and Coexistence*, 50.

⁷³² Linehan, *Partible Inheritance*, 37.

played a critical role in this chapter, has identified and described the first two of these royal aspects. To my knowledge, the argument that Alfonso VIII's royal persona included efforts to depict him as a wise king has not been explored prior to this study. Nevertheless, I will argue that the king did wish to be seen as such, by examining both the monarch's own intellectual projects and those of his close associate Archbishop Jiménez de la Rada.

As Linehan observes, monarchical *magistas* formed an integral part of both Castilian and Leonese royal identity even before Alfonso VIII assumed the throne.⁷³³ Both his grandfather, Alfonso VII, and his father, Sancho III, emphasized their royal majesty and dignity in their titles and letters. During Alfonso VIII's troubled minority, these titles slipped from the royal register, which is hardly surprising given that he began his reign as a small child of three. However, once the Castilian king turned fifteen, he too began to insist upon his royal majesty; the documentary references to *magistas* returned, as Linehan puts it, "with a vengeance."⁷³⁴ Beginning in 1168, the title *regia magistas* outstrips all others, including *potestas*, *dignitas*, *pietas*, *benignitas*, *liberalitas* and *clemencia*. This titular foregrounding culminated in 1177, when king Alfonso conquered Cuenca and renamed it "Alphonsopolis," a name with a particularly civic character that aligns with the king's emphasis on his secular dignity.

Linehan suggests that this sudden flowering of *magistas* in royal titlature represents Alfonso VIII's attempt to cultivate a royal image similar to that of his forbearers. However, he observes that after 1180, the title fades from its former paramount position. How odd, he muses, that Alfonso VIII abandoned this title, which his father and grandfather both used in order to "invoke the majesty of the old world to redress the uncertain [political] balance of the new," at a time when Fernando II increasingly threatened Castilian ascendancy. One would expect that in

⁷³³ I have summarized this section of royal majesty from Linehan, *History and Historians*, 290-2.

⁷³⁴ *Ibid.*, 290.

this context, Alfonso VIII's *magistas* could have come in quite handy. Linehan solves this mystery by identifying a shift in Alfonso VIII's royal persona, at least as it reflected in his titles. After 1180, the Castilian king emphasized his Christianity.

As he discusses Alfonso VIII's transition from embodying *magistas* to *christianitas*, Linehan underlines the king's efforts to cultivate a pan-Christian identity, presenting himself as the defender of Christendom in general. Part of this change stems from Almohad raids in the 1170s, which forced Alfonso to take military action. Significantly, the king framed his actions in religious terms, rather than invoking the defense of Castilian territory. Linehan also points to Alfonso VIII's famous gold *maravedís* that resembled Almoravid *dinars*, whose frontal Arabic inscriptions laud him as "the Prince of the Catholics, Alfonso son of Sancho," while their inverses call upon "the Imām of the Christian Church: the Pope of Rome."⁷³⁵ As Linehan observes, the words for Castile and Hispania are absent, which underscores the king's universal Christian pretensions. Furthermore, beginning in the 1180s, Alfonso's chancery began to use the title "*defensio Christianitatis*" in letters addressed to ecclesiastics, and he assumes responsibility for "*Christiana religio*" in charters.⁷³⁶

Alfonso VIII's newly-formulated public commitment to Christianity manifested itself in other ways as well. Linehan signals the favor that the king bestowed on the military orders, whose traditional duty to defend Christians fused with the new idea of defending Christendom in the late twelfth century.⁷³⁷ In other words, the military orders were now charged both with defending people and with defending territory. I would also add that the king's wars with the Almohads, especially the two campaigns of Cuenca and Las Navas, underline Alfonso's role as a Christian ruler who acts in the best interests of Christendom. In Cuenca, Alfonso encouraged the

⁷³⁵ These coins will be further discussed in a subsequent section.

⁷³⁶ *Ibid.*, 292-3.

⁷³⁷ *Ibid.*, 294.

resettlement and colonization of the formerly Almohad city, providing it with one of the first detailed medieval Iberian *fueros*, or legal charters, which was later used as a model for other reconquered cities.⁷³⁸ At Las Navas, of course, the king headed a massive, international crusade designed to defend and expand Christendom. Both of these campaigns represent, in part, his strategy to promote his image as a champion of Christianity.⁷³⁹

Alfonso VIII's architectural patronage also identifies him as an ideal Christian monarch. After its conquest, Alfonso endowed Cuenca with a new cathedral reminiscent of the Angevin Gothic style promoted by Queen Leonor's parents.⁷⁴⁰ Could this building have served as a visual marker of Alfonso VIII's role in protecting the newly Christian city, built in a style associated with the English and French royal houses? If nothing else, the Cathedral of Cuenca indicates Alfonso VIII's concern to provide the city's Christians with an appropriate house of worship.⁷⁴¹ Finally, while the monarch's patronage activity at Las Huelgas does not resound with the same frontier-securing tones as does his involvement with Cuenca, it does suggest a devotion to the Cistercian order. Indeed, Lizoain and García argue that Alfonso VIII actively sought to increase

⁷³⁸ Gregory B. Milton, "The Code of Cuenca. Municipal Law on the Twelfth-Century Castilian Frontier (review)," review of *The Code of Cuenca: Municipal Law on the Twelfth-Century Castilian Frontier*, by James F. Powers, *Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 32.1 (2001), 185. The full citation for the *fuero*'s recent translation into English is James F. Powers, trans. *The Code of Cuenca: Municipal Law on the Twelfth-Century Castilian Frontier* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000).

⁷³⁹ To be sure, I do not wish to characterize Alfonso VIII as an idealized crusading king. His reluctance to lead Las Huelgas suggests that he also considered pragmatic and logistical factors before vowing to fight the infidel. What I do suggest here is that he found it useful to portray himself as seeking to constantly expand Christianity's borders through conquest and defend them in battle.

⁷⁴⁰ See Ruiz Souza and Palomo Fernández, "Nueva Hipótesis," 27-9. The authors describe Las Huelgas' Gothic church as part of a series of Gothic monuments sponsored by Alfonso VIII and Leonor, with clear ties to Angevin structures in France. For the Cathedral of Cuenca itself, see Gema Palomo Fernández, *La Catedral de Cuenca en el contexto de las grandes canterías catedralicias castellanas en la Baja Edad Media* (Cuenca: Diputación Provincial de Cuenca, 2002).

⁷⁴¹ In this sense, it could also be significant that he did not simply appropriate Cuenca's mosque for Christian use. Rather, he built a new church from the ground-up.

Cistercian presence in Castile, as the order had earned a reputation of piety and religious reform.⁷⁴² In this way, Las Huelgas aligns with the king's self portrait as a pious ruler.

Although the texts citing Alfonso VIII's *magistas* and his *Christianitas* remain silent regarding the monarch's wisdom, I believe that he also wished to be considered an enlightened king.⁷⁴³ Linehan's investigation of the increased presence of Roman lawyers in Alfonso VIII's Castile has implications for this view. He first draws attention to two Castilian texts, written in the vernacular in 1207. The first is the well-known *Cantar del Mio Cid*, an epic poem that creatively re-imagines the life and career of Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar (d. 1099). The second vernacular document, the Treaty of Cabreros, contracts a truce between the ever-feuding Castile and Leon.

The 1207 date for these texts leads Linehan to wonder whether they might have originated in the newly-founded University of Palencia. This *studium* enjoyed royal sponsorship, and it employed French and Italian masters in addition to Iberian ones. Archbishop Jiménez de la Rada claims that the king imported these foreign scholars "so that the discipline of knowledge should never be absent from his kingdom."⁷⁴⁴ The *studium* also provided Alfonso VIII with needed administrative experts, hence its recruitment of respected Roman canonists. Furthermore, Alfonso VIII valued the general education, based on grammar, rhetoric and logic, that the university at Palencia could provide. The king's provisions for general education dovetailed with the Fourth Lateran Council's desire to redress clergy's lack of knowledge about

⁷⁴² José Manuel Lizoain Garrido and Juan José García González, *El Monasterio de Las Huelgas de Burgos: historia de un señorío cisterciense burgalés (siglos XII y XIII)* (Burgos: Ediciones J.M. Garrido Garrido, 1988), 15.

⁷⁴³ Linehan, *History and Historians*, 306-7. What follows is largely paraphrased from Linehan, *Partible Inheritance*, 47-9.

⁷⁴⁴ Quoted in Linehan *Partible Inheritance*, 48.

even basic spiritual questions. In Iberia, this was clearly an urgent need: as late as 1218, Diego García wrote a scathing condemnation of the episcopate's ignorance.⁷⁴⁵

Alfonso VIII's efforts to promote education align with Archbishop Rodrigo Jiménez de la Rada's own intellectual project, which aimed at the acquisition of encyclopedic knowledge. His most famous activity concerns the so-called school of Toledan translators: a group of scholars who appear to have begun translation work in the middle of the twelfth century, and whom the archbishop continued to sponsor.⁷⁴⁶ In the early thirteenth century, these men worked under Jiménez de la Rada's watchful eye, translating scientific, medical, astronomical and philosophical texts from Arabic into Latin.⁷⁴⁷ Many of these scholars remain anonymous, but several of the Latin translators' names have been recorded, including one Marc of Toledo, who translated the Almohad Creed in 1213.⁷⁴⁸ While it is tempting to regard this desire for Arabic learning as evidence of religious tolerance and scientific collaboration, Pick argues that the Christian translators "understood their work to be contributing to a process of incorporation within Christendom of all knowledge that because it was true was the rightful possession of Christians."⁷⁴⁹ In effect, don Rodrigo's translators labored in order to produce a comprehensive body of knowledge for Christendom.

⁷⁴⁵ Cited in Linehan, *Partible Inheritance*, 49. Diego's criticism formed part of the introduction to his *Planeta*, which was dedicated to Archbishop Rodrigo. See Diego García and Manuel Alonso, *Planeta, obra ascética del siglo XIII* (Madrid: Instituto Francisco Suárez, 1943).

⁷⁴⁶ Marie-Thérèse d'Alverney, "Translations and Translators," in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, ed. Robert Louis Benson, Giles Constable and Carol Dana Lanham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 444-6 discusses this early period.

⁷⁴⁷ This was often effected through a Jewish, *mudéjar* or Mozarabic intermediary. On the translation process in Spain, see d'Alverney, "Translations and Translators," 444-57. Pick, *Conflict and Coexistence*, 113-24, describes both the texts translated and what is known about the translators.

⁷⁴⁸ See Marie-Thérèse d'Alverney, "Marc de Tolède: Traducteur d'Ibn Tūmart," *Al-Andalus* 16.2 (1951): 99-140 for more.

⁷⁴⁹ Pick, *Conflict and Coexistence*, 103. On the same page, she also points to the well-known treatise of Ibn `Abdūn, an early twelfth-century Sevillian market inspector, who prohibits bookshops from selling Arabic works to Christians or Jews, on the basis that these latter would then translate them and grant authorship to one of their coreligionists. His treatise, she suggests, indicates that the Muslims were well aware that the Christians' translations were not politically neutral.

Linehan has wondered why Alfonso VIII did not found his university alongside Toledo's "school," which he characterizes as an "institute of advanced study" as opposed to Palencia's college of law and liberal arts.⁷⁵⁰ Certainly, part of the reason stems from Toledo's location on the southernmost frontier of Castile. But does the different nature and location of these two sites indicate that they were fundamentally different enterprises, one promoted by a churchman and the other by a king? I believe that they respond to a common goal of advancing education and knowledge in Castile. A brief reminder of Archbishop Rodrigo's and Alfonso VIII's political collaboration, which supported the expansion of Christendom, bolsters this idea. Pick devotes several pages to Jiménez de la Rada's purchase and consolidation of properties south of the Tajo even before Las Navas. As she observes, before don Rodrigo's tenure, most of the Toledan See's lands lay securely north of the river, but the archbishop seemed to have expansion on his mind.⁷⁵¹ I suggest that this activity parallels the more overtly bellicose nature of Alfonso VIII's expansion into the territory surrounding Cuenca, land that he intended to maintain.

The Archbishop was optimistically expansive as he prepared for the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa. In this case, the bishop and king clearly worked together: Jiménez de la Rada by endowing the campaign with all of the trappings of a full-blown crusade, and Alfonso by providing his leadership, drumming up support among his vassals, requesting papal legates and pleading for assistance from his royal counterparts in France. Furthermore, both the Archbishop and the king dipped into their respective coffers to finance the expedition. Once the battle was won, and even after Alfonso VIII had been laid to rest in the Assumption Chapel, don Rodrigo used the king as a sort of "mirror for princes" in his history, depicting him as the idealized

⁷⁵⁰ Linehan, *Partible Inheritance*, 53.

⁷⁵¹ Pick, *Conflict and Coexistence*, 32-4.

Christian ruler in a chronicle dedicated to Ferdinand III.⁷⁵² I do not maintain that Jiménez de la Rada describes Alfonso VIII exactly as he viewed the ruler, nor that the two men were never at odds. Rather, I suggest that their shared political and ideological goals regarding Christian conquest could be extended to a cultural project promoting the acquisition of knowledge and education of the elite. In this way, the king was fully deserving of Lucas of Tuy's description as "the Solomon of our times."⁷⁵³

4 THE ALMOHAD CONNECTION

In an illuminating article, Maribel Fierro details the close similarities between the sociopolitical policies and cultural projects of the Almohad caliphs and those pursued by Alfonso X of Castile. The title of her study is both provoking and appropriate: "Alfonso X 'The Wise': The Last Almohad Caliph?"⁷⁵⁴ In it, Fierro convincingly argues that Alfonso X closely resembles the Almohad caliphs in his revolutionary approach toward established sociopolitical and religious institutions. In this section, I suggest that the shared paradigm of Almohad-Castilian sovereignty began to emerge in Alfonso VIII's time, although Fierro is certainly correct that it reached its zenith under Alfonso X. I begin with a comparison of their "political and cultural projects," to use Fierro's words. Next, I examine parallels in Almohad and Castilian theology, relying heavily on Pick's analysis of Archbishop Jiménez de la Rada's religious writing.

⁷⁵² Ibid., 15-6.

⁷⁵³ Cited in María Teresa Pérez Higuera, "El mudéjar, una opción artística en Castilla y León," in *El arte mudéjar*, vol. 4 of *Historia del arte de Castilla y León*, ed. Francisco Javier de la Plaza Santiago and Simón Marchán Fiz (Valladolid: Ámbito, 1994), 165.

⁷⁵⁴ The full citation is Maribel Fierro, "Alfonso X 'The Wise': The Last Almohad Caliph?" *Medieval Encounters* 15 (2009): 175-198.

After a scathing criticism of scholars' tendency to ignore the Almohads when writing Castilian history, Fierro sums up the overarching characteristics of the Almohad caliphate. Her concise, accurate sketch merits a full citation:

- a) A theocratic government founded by a quasi-prophetic figure, Ibn Tūmart, and carried on by his successors, the caliphs of the Mu'minid dynasty. The Almohad caliph is the vicar of God on earth who promotes and guarantees all knowledge.
- b) The creation of new religious and political elites, educated in the Almohad doctrine under the direct control of the caliph.
- c) Legislative unification, political and administrative centralization and reforms of weights and measures.
- d) The Almohad caliphs' encouragement of encyclopedic knowledge. Development of philosophy, natural sciences and magical and Kabbalistic knowledge.
- e) An interest in extending Almohad doctrine to the common people: use of the Berber language, the teaching of Arabic and the fostering of the production of educational works.⁷⁵⁵

To these characteristics, I wish to add a major facet of Almohad political policy: the caliph seeks to expand Almohad territory, and he provides for and defends all Muslims within his empire's borders.

Several similarities obtain between these aspects of the Almohad Empire and Alfonso VIII's Castile. I begin with Fierro's first three points: the theocratic state, the creation of a new religious elite, and administrative unification. While Castile was clearly not a theocratic state, the previous section has shown how Alfonso VIII did cultivate a sanctified image, both in writing and in deed. His provision for the education of churchmen at Palencia's *studium* attempted to redress their dire need for standardized instruction, an effort that mirrors the Almohad caliphs' creation of a new religious elite, the *ṭalaba*. In both cases, this activity reinforced each ruler's carefully crafted pious persona. Finally, Alfonso VIII seems to have been concerned with consolidating or reforming his administration and legal systems, if his recruitment of Roman lawyers to the University of Palencia gives any indication. This compares

⁷⁵⁵ Ibid., 177-8.

favorably to the role of the Almohad *ḥuffāz* and also to the caliph al-Manṣūr's obsession over the correct functioning of his administration.

In both the Almohad empire and Castile, sovereigns and their associates also sponsored the pursuit of knowledge. On the one hand, Alfonso worked through Palencia, ensuring that his kingdom benefited from a well-funded institution that could provide basic education in the *trivium*, religion and law. On the other, Archbishop Rodrigo continued to patronize the translation activity taking place in Toledo, the goal of which was to accrue a body of scientific knowledge for the benefit of Christendom. To my mind, this division of pedagogical and investigative labor, so to speak, is not unlike the Almohad caliphs' public sponsorship of both the Marrakeshi school of *ṭalaba*, who were trained in Ibn Tūmart's doctrine as well as general subjects, and also their private subsidizing of scholars like Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Rushd.

Almohad and Castilian attempts to provide for their subjects constitutes a final shared characteristic of their governments. Public education was perhaps more direct under the Almohads, whose aggressive tactics of forced memorization of the Almohad *murshidas* were discussed in Chapter One. The Castilian masses can only be thought to have indirectly benefited from the changes in ecclesiastical education. This difference may be due to the respective Almohad and Castilian policies toward the vernacular: the Almohads used Berber to a greater extent and at an earlier date than the Castilians did Romance, of which only two documents survive from Alfonso VIII's time.⁷⁵⁶ The parallels are closer when turning to civic and religious responsibilities. The Almohads' upholding of justice and their building of Friday mosques aligns with Alfonso VIII's *fuero* for Cuenca, accompanied by a new cathedral. Last, but certainly not least, each state incorporated the defense of their respective coreligionists into their royal duties.

⁷⁵⁶ Here I base myself exclusively on Linehan's observations; future work on this project would necessitate a deeper investigation of Castilian documents in the second half of the twelfth century.

Although Fierro does not discuss religious doctrine, the Almohads' and Archbishop Rodrigo's theological interests also compare favorably in several respects. For example, in the *Dialogus libri uite*, an anti-Jewish polemic, the archbishop indicates two prerequisites for studying the secrets of theology: true information and a suitable vocabulary.⁷⁵⁷ This immediately brings to mind one premise underlying Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Rushd's theological systems: the "true" nature of religion is something hidden, a "secret" that must be unraveled by the intellectual elite. Jiménez de la Rada's assertion also foregrounds his preoccupation with determining the truth as a basis for further speculation. This thirst for the truth affects Ibn Tūmart as well: the opening sections of his *A`azz mā yuṭlab* explain the only process that leads to certain knowledge.

Another similarity rests on the archbishop's use of logic and his appeal to readers' reason when discussing dogma. Borrowing from Augustine in the *Dialogus*, Don Rodrigo argues that the ancient philosophers recognized the Creator's existence because they understood logic. In Pick's words, the archbishop believed that the philosophers "knew that created, changeable, composed, mortal beings must have an uncreated, inalterable, simple, immortal origin."⁷⁵⁸ Similarly, Archbishop Jiménez asserted that humankind can learn of the existence of the unmoved mover—that is, God—through reason: they need only observe that the constant motion in a created world requires an immobile source.⁷⁵⁹ In spite of its Christian source, the idea that the all created, mutable beings require an unchangeable creator closely parallels Ibn Tūmart's proof for the existence of God in the Almohad Creed. The way that the churchman uses logical arguments to bolster his theological system also echoes both Ibn Tūmart's and Ibn Rushd's strategies for discussing God's nature and existence.

⁷⁵⁷ Cited in Pick, *Conflict and Coexistence*, 81.

⁷⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 88. She also notes his Augustinian source.

⁷⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 96.

More striking still are don Rodrigo's views about the applicability of human language to describe God. Pick foregrounds his relationship with the Frenchman Alan of Lille (d. 1203), with whom, she argues, the archbishop studied in Paris. Alan believed that terms developed in discrete scientific fields could be interchanged among the disciplines. In this way, grammatical and logical terms could also describe theological concepts. However, Lille signals one important caveat: because of God's unity, "these terms often take on different meanings from those they hold when used to describe created things."⁷⁶⁰ Archbishop Rodrigo weighs in on this issue in the *Dialogus*, affirming that words used to describe God must be taken metaphorically, due to His lack of form.⁷⁶¹ Of course, in Chapter One, I identified Ibn Tūmart's conviction concerning the inadequacy of human language—designed to describe and identify created things—to describe the Divine, an incorporeal being ontologically distinct from creation.

A final similarity between twelfth-century Iberian Christian and Muslim theology lies in their respective emphases on God's unity. Previous citations have drawn attention to Jiménez de la Rada's conception of God as "single" and "formless," both of which, barring the Christian notion of Trinity, hold true in an Almohad context as well. The implications of Jiménez de la Rada's concept of divine unity also compare favorably with Almohad theology. According to don Rodrigo, who again follows Alan of Lille, the plurality of the natural world proceeds from God's absolute unity. In the creative act, God generated a hierarchy of being, beginning with himself as the most simple and perfect, and continuing through the celestial bodies. The latter are greater in number and lesser in perfection than God, but far more unified and perfect than the earthly beings occupying the lowest rungs of creation's echelons. Although the Almohads did

⁷⁶⁰ Ibid., 82.

⁷⁶¹ Cited in Ibid., 96.

not necessarily share this hierarchical worldview, Ibn Tūmart, Ibn Rushd and Ibn Ṭufayl all believed that God ordered creation in a logical way, according to His divine wisdom.

Although the Almohads' and Archbishop Rodrigo's theological systems overlap, they do differ in crucial elements. Some of the disparities respond to dogmatic distinctions; for example, Rodrigo spills much ink resolving the ever-present difficulty of a single God who also constitutes one-third of the Trinity.⁷⁶² The differences between the Almohad and Rodrigan views on religious minorities, however, are not attributable to confessional difference. As Pick observes, Jiménez de la Rada's divine hierarchy of beings justifies an analogous social hierarchy on earth, which he understands as the submission of the secular world to the church's authority.⁷⁶³ Thus, the archbishop makes a "place" for religious minorities—some of whom he employed—as long as they were under ecclesiastical control.⁷⁶⁴ This position contrasts sharply with Almohad policy as outlined in Chapter Three; Bennison convincingly argues that Almohad political and religious hegemony did not include provisions for religious minorities, even though they may have been tolerated for pragmatic reasons. Don Rodrigo's views were probably shaped by his social and political reality as the archbishop of a city that included minorities.⁷⁶⁵

5 THE ASSUMPTION CHAPEL, THE ALMOHADS, THE CISTERCIANS, AND ALFONSO VIII

I have just argued that Alfonso VIII and Archbishop Rodrigo pursued a cultural, political and religious project not unlike that of the Almohads. It included a royal identity based on sanctity and wisdom, a policy of religious defense and expansion and a theological framework predicated on logic and divine unity. In this section, I extend the comparison to the two polities'

⁷⁶² See *Ibid.*, 87-92 for these efforts.

⁷⁶³ *Ibid.*, 99-101. This, of course, is one of the ways that the archbishop's grander plans did not dovetail with the Alfonso VIII's, who can hardly have been receptive to the idea that all secular power would be submitted to the church. However, I would argue that it was not necessary for the two leaders to agree on every detail of the other's agenda, or, in the king's case, to have even been aware of don Rodrigo's political ambition, for them to have mutually supported one another to achieve their shared, concrete objective of Christian expansion.

⁷⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁷⁶⁵ Pick, *Conflict and Coexistence*, 92.

incorporation of visual symbols of authority, in order to suggest that there was nothing incongruous about Alfonso VIII's adoption of an Almohad aesthetic in the Assumption Chapel. Next, I explain the chapel's use of Almohad ornament and austerity, and finally, I explain the ways that Alfonso VIII adapted Almohad architecture and aesthetics to fit into his plans for Las Huelgas as a whole.

Just as Alfonso VIII emulated the Almohads' cultural and political projects, he also deployed visual markers of Islamic sovereignty. I have already mentioned Alfonso VIII's Almoravid-style *maravedís*, complete with Arabic inscriptions. Linehan explains that the king minted these coins in order to replace the steady northward flow of Almoravid gold *dinars*, which was interrupted after the Almohad conquest.⁷⁶⁶ This highlights the value that Andalusian currency enjoyed in Christian Iberia: rather than minting gold coins in a new format, Alfonso VIII emulated the Almoravid *dinars* because of their established worth. A similar idea obtains with the Castilian crown's use of Hispanomuslim textiles. Previous chapters have explained that the caliphs used rich, distinctive textiles to mark their royal status, such as the banners that al-Manṣūr ordered to adorn his flagship, or the crimson material of the royal battle tent. The prestige connoted by these cloths was not lost on the Christians. Archbishop Rodrigo himself recounts the imminent encounter between the Almohad and Christian armies at Las Navas with these words, "Since the Muslims' army came ever closer to our own, and even the red tent [of the Almohad sovereign] could be distinguished, each began to share his opinion about the advancing host."⁷⁶⁷

In this light, it is telling that Alfonso VIII, Queen Leonor, infante Fernando, infante Enrique I and even Archbishop Rodrigo were all buried wearing garments made from

⁷⁶⁶ Linehan, *Partible Inheritance*, 37.

⁷⁶⁷ Rodrigo Jiménez de la Rada, *Historia de los hechos de España*, trans. Juan Fernández Valverde (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, S.A., 1989), 317.

Hispanomuslim textiles (See Figure 5.13).⁷⁶⁸ That the political and spiritual elite wore these silks to their graves suggests that they saw no contradiction in using these cloths in a religiously-charged context.⁷⁶⁹ Indeed, Feliciano has convincingly argued that the immense value of the raw materials employed in the manufacture of Hispanomuslim textiles, which included gold, silk, and costly dyes, completely subsumed their religious pedigree.⁷⁷⁰ Instead, the prestige and exclusivity associated with these garments—due to their association with the Almohad caliphs and their steep price—ensured that they were worthy attire for a kingly burial. The idea that the Castilians valued Hispanomuslim textiles to a degree that trumped their “Islamicness”—if qualms regarding the latter had existed in the first place—can also be applied to their use of Islamic architectural typologies. Just as the Almohad caliphs buried Ibn Tūmart in a *qubba*, alongside which they themselves were buried, so Alfonso VIII crowned his burial chamber with “a perfect and high dome,” thereby identifying it as a most holy space in both Almohad and Castilian terms.

Of course, the Assumption Chapel’s austerity and its use of twelfth-century Almohad ornamental features extend its ties to Almohad architecture beyond the typological and into the aesthetic. In their details, however, they seem less alike. The Assumption Chapel’s *sebka* does receive incising, noticeable in the panels filling the space between its portal’s lambrequin arch and *alfiz*. However, the organically-shaped incising characteristic of the Tinmal mosque is replaced by simple lines following the *sebka*’s curves (Compare Figures 2.16 and 5.14).

⁷⁶⁸ For the contents of Las Huelgas’ tombs, see Manuel Gómez-Moreno, *El panteón real de las Huelgas de Burgos* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Instituto Diego Velázquez, 1946). For a descriptive catalog of the textiles found therein, see Museo de Telas Medievales and Concha Herrero Carretero, *Museo de Telas Medievales*.

⁷⁶⁹ María Judith Feliciano argues for a similar familiarity in the thirteenth century. See Feliciano, “Muslim Shrouds,” 102-3. As was the case for Fierro’s provoking parallels between the Almohads’ and Alfonso X’s thirteenth-century political and cultural agenda, I believe that Feliciano’s article accurately describes the solidifying of a cultural construct that began in the late twelfth century.

⁷⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 105, 117-8.

Similarly, the chapel's *muqarnas* domes do not display seams between their cells, nor do the latter contain flutes, both of which are characteristic of the Tinmal and Kutubiyya mosques (Compare Figures 5.2 and 1.15). The Assumption Chapel's vegetal ornament also differs quite radically from the early Almohad oratories: its curling vines and demarcated fronds display a naturalism more akin to Almoravid *ataurique* (Compare Figures 5.3 and 1.2). In Chapter Two, I argued that the particular features of early Almohad ornament reflect key doctrinal aspects of Ibn Tūmart's theology. Because visually manifesting the Mahdī's doctrine was not a concern for Alfonso VIII, the Assumption Chapel evokes Almohad architecture more generally, as opposed to replicating its fine details.

Of course, one of the most salient general characteristics of Almohad religious architecture is its austerity, a design principle that Alfonso VIII did emulate faithfully in the Assumption chapel. In order to explain it, a short detour through Cistercian aesthetics is necessary. Very briefly, the Cistercian order began as a small reform movement that desired to return to a faithful application of the monastic Rule of Saint Benedict.⁷⁷¹ Ideally, Cistercian monks were to live simply, renouncing their possessions and material comfort.⁷⁷² Georges Duby argues that the writings of Saint Bernard—the Cistercians' vocal advocate and a theologian in his own right—defined a specifically Cistercian aesthetic.⁷⁷³ Duby postulates that Bernard favored balanced and proportionate architectural designs, which would aid the reflective monk to

⁷⁷¹ Good starting points for the Cistercians include Janet E. Burton and Julie Kerr, *The Cistercians in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: Boydell Press, 2011); Constance Hoffman Berman, *The Cistercian Evolution: The Invention of a Religious Order in Twelfth-Century Europe* (Philadelphia: University Of Pennsylvania Press, 2010); and Martha G. Newman, *The Boundaries of Charity: Cistercian Culture and Ecclesiastical Reform, 1098-1180* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996). For Iberia, see José Angel García de Cortázar y Ruiz de Aguirre and Ramón Teja Casuso, *Monasterios cistercienses en la España medieval* (Aguilar de Campoo: Fundación Santa María La Real/Centro Estudios del Románico, 2008) and Vincente A. Alvarez Palenzuela, *Monasterios cistercienses en Castilla: (Siglo XII-XIII)* (Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 1978).

⁷⁷² Alvarez Palenzuela, *Monasterios Cistercienses*, 33.

⁷⁷³ Georges Duby, *San Bernardo y el arte cisterciense: el nacimiento del gótico* (Madrid: Taurus, 1981), 11.

recognize the divinely-ordered balance in the world around him.⁷⁷⁴ Images and decoration are to be avoided, both because of their expense and because Cistercian art ought to voluntarily reject superficial adornment in favor of the truer beauty inherent in bare walls and measured lines.⁷⁷⁵

In Duby's words, Saint Bernard preferred Cistercian monasteries to be "contained, repressed, severe, hard and simple; beautiful, because there is no discord between aesthetics and ethics."⁷⁷⁶

This definition of Cistercian aesthetics is no more universally applicable to all Cistercian structures than is Gómez Moreno's definition of Almohad architectural traits to all Almohad mosques. However, even my own work—which attempts to treat Almohad mosques monographically and contextually—acknowledges the shared commonalities in Almohad religious architecture. These allow the buildings to be identified as a group, and the same idea applies to Cistercian architecture. In buildings as geographically disparate as the abbey church of Fontenay in France (founded in 1118 by Saint Bernard himself), the Portuguese Alçobaca Monastery (begun 1178), or Las Huelgas's church and chapterhouse, Duby's paradigm of a spare, measured, proportioned Cistercian Gothic does obtain (Compare Figures 5.4 and 5.15). Although I have suggested that Las Huelgas' church and chapterhouse could have served to align the monarch with his Angevin in-laws, these ties do not preclude the idea that the Gothic parts of the convent also aesthetically befit a Cistercian institution.

In order to show how Cistercian austerity transforms into Almohad austerity in the Assumption Chapel, I first return to its evocation of the Mosque of Cordoba. The presence of the Cordoban building, most strongly felt in the vestibule's three *muqarnas* domes, permitted Alfonso VIII and Leonor to visually mark the Assumption Chapel both as "the holiest of holy spaces" and as an analogue to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. However, Alfonso VIII's

⁷⁷⁴ Ibid., 79.

⁷⁷⁵ Ibid., 124.

⁷⁷⁶ Ibid., 107.

agency as Las Huelgas' patron enabled him to adapt these architectural references to suit his needs. Structurally, the Mosque of Cordoba's lateral domes are quite elaborate, with ribbed divisions encasing smaller sub-domes, but they feature little ornament. In contrast, gold, green, blue and black mosaics encrust the central dome, resulting in a shimmering texture and rich aesthetic. In the Assumption Chapel, Alfonso VIII ran the Mosque of Cordoba's scintillating dome through a filter of austerity. Rather than being visually dissolved by glittering mosaics, their *muqarnas* cells fragment their physical structure.⁷⁷⁷ In this way, the chapel's twelfth-century Almohad aesthetic complemented both the Cistercians' commitment to a spare, linear design and the burial chamber's *qubba* typology.

Before closing this section on the Assumption Chapel, I will consider its placement and purpose within Las Huelgas, relative to the analogous Almohad buildings of Ribāṭ Tinmal. In spite of their general similarities, they differ in specific ways. First, according to al-Idrīsī's description, and in accordance with medieval Maghribī tomb typologies, the Maḥdī's tomb was a free-standing structure, rather than being nestled into surrounding buildings. And while *ribāṭs* and monasteries share the broad goals of spiritual retreat and instruction, Tinmal served an entire community of believers, as opposed to Las Huelgas' ministry to Castilian royal women. Finally, Tinmal was the destination for pilgrims who traversed the Maghrib seeking Ibn Tūmart's *baraka*. However, there is no indication that pilgrims visited Alfonso VIII's tomb, which is not surprising given its location deep within a cloistered convent. Instead, its audience likely consisted of Las Huelgas' nuns, other members of the royal family and ecclesiastics.

⁷⁷⁷ Although it would have been nearly impossible to replicate mosaics at this late date, had the Castilians desired a more ornamented aesthetic, they could have employed a perforated stucco dome. For more on these structures, see Cynthia Robinson, "Power, Light, Intra-Confessional Discontent and the Almoravids," in *Essays in Honor of Prof. Renata Holod*, ed. David L. Roxburgh (forthcoming).

All of these differences stem from the respective religious traditions and requirements of the Castilian kings and the Almohad caliphs. The structural disparity probably simply reflects the different burial practices that typified twelfth-century Iberian Christianity and Islam: while the typologies of the burial space echo one another, royal Iberian Christians did not usually bury themselves in independent tombs.⁷⁷⁸ The buildings' respective missions of spiritual retreat and education also respond to each patron's needs. The convent provided the crown with a place of safe retirement or an alternative to marriage for royal women. In the incipient period of Almohad history, however, Ibn Tūmart and the caliphs required a public space in which to indoctrinate all believers. The limited access to the chapel also ensured that the exclusive, royal nature of the "Islamicizing" aesthetic was maintained, which parallels their use of Hispanomuslim textiles to mark their elite status.

As `Abd al-Mu'min built Ribāṭ Tinmal, he desperately needed to underline his legitimacy in the faces of the holy figures who tried to usurp it. In this context, fostering a pilgrimage-based cult around Ibn Tūmart made political sense. Alfonso VIII had no such succession woes; even after the infante Fernando died in 1211, his underage son Enrique I succeeded him with little difficulty. Rather than a pilgrimage cult, the Castilian king sought a way to consolidate property while still maintaining his image of pious religiosity: an achievable goal because of his involvement with Las Huelgas.⁷⁷⁹ And while part of the Almohad caliphs' efforts to broadcast their personal piety included sponsoring local Sufi saints, in the Assumption Chapel, it seems

⁷⁷⁸ Sánchez Ameijeiras cites the Leonese tradition of monastic burial in "El 'çementerio real,'" 94. Both Alfonso VII and Sancho III of Castile, Alfonso's grandfather and father, are buried in the Cathedral of Toledo.

⁷⁷⁹ For Las Huelgas' economic roles, see Lizoain and García González, *El Monasterio de Las Huelgas*, 110-14. To my mind, one of the most fascinating aspects of Las Huelgas' history is the tension between the Cistercian ruling body and the convent's royal nuns, to whom the pope granted special permission to break several of the orders regulations regarding dress and possession of property. While the Cistercian hierarchy remained generally unimpressed with the pope's permissive attitude toward the convent, the nuns typically sought and received support from their relatives in the royal house.

that Alfonso VIII modified this practice slightly to look after his financial interests while simultaneously promoting his *own* image of saintliness.

6 A MISSED CONNECTION IN SEVILLE

The preceding section explained why and how Alfonso VIII emulated a site like Tinmal, but an important question remains unanswered. Over 1,500 kilometers—including a sea and several mountain ranges—separate the two sites. Alfonso VIII never personally traveled to the Maghrib, and even when taking diplomatic relations and exchanges into account, it seems unlikely that the Almohads would have brought Castilian emissaries to the most sacred site dedicated to Ibn Tūmart. How would the idea of an austere funerary *qubba*, housing a saintly figure, located on a pilgrimage route, associated with a royal pantheon and attached to a place of spiritual retreat have transferred to northern Castile? Perhaps Ribāṭ Tinmal did not directly impact the royal patronage at Las Huelgas. Then again, Tinmal was not the only such site in Almohad territory. Unfortunately, most analogous Iberian structures have either been buried under centuries of civil infrastructure or completely remodeled by later generations. Even in Seville, the Almohads' capital, only parts of the Great Mosque, certain palaces or stucco proceeding from them and a few defensive structures remain.

Ruiz Souza urges scholars not to allow this dearth of extant monuments to cloud—or erase—perceptions of domed Almohad cityscapes.⁷⁸⁰ A funerary complex discovered in Lorca, on the peninsula's southeast coast, provides an instructive example for approximating these cities' twelfth-century appearances. Here, archeological excavations have revealed both a necropolis that abutted the exterior side of city's walls, and the foundations of a twelfth-century,

⁷⁸⁰ Ruiz Souza, "Toledo," 233-5.

Almoravid-period burial *qubba* rest near one of its gates.⁷⁸¹ Because saints' bodies were believed to possess apotropaic qualities, they were frequently buried at cities' entrances. This led researchers to interpret the Lorcan *qubba* as a saint's tomb.⁷⁸² The study also cites other examples of saintly funerary *qubbās* near the gates of Almeria.⁷⁸³ Although these buildings date to the Almoravid period, Chapter Two has shown that the practice of burying saints under *qubbās* continued in the Almohad era. These funerary domes would have comprised an important part of the now-lost Andalusian architectural landscape, and it is also likely that their apotropaic associations would have made them—like the Mahdī's *qubba* and those studied in Chapter Two—pilgrimage sites.

It thus seems likely that domed pilgrimage tombs peppered the Andalusian cities and countryside, but I have yet to explain how their forms were transmitted to Castile. One could argue, based on the political and economic relationship between Castile and Andalusia, that an awareness of these *qubbās* could have traveled north with diplomats and merchants. However, two well-documented cases of inter-frontier travelers render such general associations unnecessary. The first involves the noble Castro family: Castilians who sold their services and their swords to whichever patron—Leonese, Castilian or Almohad—paid the highest salary. The second case is that of Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Fakhkhār al-Yahūdī, who, as his name suggests, was a Jewish diplomat in Alfonso VIII's service. Both cases will demonstrate the ample opportunities for architectural ideas to have crossed the late twelfth- and early thirteenth-century Castilian-Almohad frontier.

⁷⁸¹ Andrés Martínez Rodríguez and Juan Luis Montero Fenollos, "La qubba islámica de la calle Cava n.º 11, Lorca," *Memorias de arqueología* 11 (1996), 627.

⁷⁸² *Ibid.*

⁷⁸³ *Ibid.*

As one of the most powerful Castilian noble houses, several generations of the Castro family enjoyed prominent political careers.⁷⁸⁴ After a period of ascendancy in the first half of the twelfth century, however, a rival family hedged them out of Castile, and Fernando Rodríguez de Castro (d. 1198) moved to the Leonese court. Throughout the 1160s, Fernando flourished as Fernando II's *mayordomo*, but subsequently quarreled with the king and entered Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf's service in 1174.⁷⁸⁵ A year later, he had rebuilt his bridges with Fernando II, remaining a major player in his court until 1185. Fernando's son, Pedro Fernández de Castro (d. 1214), followed his father's footsteps. Pedro initially served Leon, but his loyalty soon wavered, and he shifted his allegiance between the Leonese and the Castilians until 1194, when he abandoned both in order to serve the Almohads.⁷⁸⁶ He fought in the caliph's army against Alfonso VIII in the battle of Alarcos, and he later played a crucial role in securing an alliance between the Almohads and King Alfonso IX of Leon.⁷⁸⁷ Pedro returned north in the early years of the thirteenth century, when he briefly reunited with both the Leonese and the Castilians. Shortly thereafter both Christian rulers finally banished him from their realms.⁷⁸⁸

The Castro family's flip-flopping between Leonese, Castilian and Almohad patrons provides an important link between the Alfonsine and Andalusian courts. Having participated in the Battle of Alarcos and negotiated treaties between the Almohads and Leon, Pedro Fernández de Castro would have almost certainly spent time in Seville during the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. As a negotiator for the Almohad caliph, one wonders if he had a working

⁷⁸⁴ No monograph dedicated to the Castro has yet been undertaken; Barton signals Margarita Torres Sevilla's *Linajes nobiliarios de León y Castilla (siglos IX-XIII)* (León: Junta de Castilla y León, Consejería de Educación y Cultura, 1999), 78-94 as a good introduction.

⁷⁸⁵ Simon Barton, "From Mercenary to Crusader: the Career of Álvaro Pérez de Castro (d. 1239) reconsidered," in *Church, State, Vellum and Stone: Essays on Medieval Spain in Honor of John Williams*, ed. Julie Harris and Therese Martin (Leiden: Brill Academic Press, 2005), 114.

⁷⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 115.

⁷⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

knowledge of Arabic. Even if he spoke through an interpreter, Pedro must have understood the political goals of his patrons and the proper ways in which to express himself in their presence. From there, one could surmise that Pedro de Castro's knowledge of Almohad society extended to the Sevillian built environment, including the domed funerary *qubbas* sprinkled throughout the city. Because he later returned to Alfonso VIII at the Castilian court, he was well-placed to recount what he had observed about Almohad customs, etiquette, politics and visual culture to his once-again lord.

The Castro family's checkered political career is unique, but not because of its protagonists' vacillating loyalties. Rather, they stand apart because their noble status caused chroniclers and documents to record their activities. Scores of anonymous, twelfth-century Christian mercenaries sold their services to their Muslim neighbors: as Simon Barton notes, keeping Christian knights from defecting to the Almohads became the chief preoccupation in the aftermath of Las Navas.⁷⁸⁹ Indeed, Iberian Christians consistently served the Almohads, mostly in the Maghrib to avoid conflicts of loyalty, in spite of Pope Innocent III's efforts to rein them in.⁷⁹⁰ Many of these mercenaries lived in a relatively autonomous city outside of Marrakesh, in which Pedro Fernández died, whose inhabitants were exclusively Christian.⁷⁹¹ While the anonymity of these soldiers can frustrate modern scholars, they evidence that the border was a permeable boundary, and they provide another potential avenue for Almohad culture to pass into Castile.

In a recent article, Jonathan P. Decter discusses Ibn al-Fakhkhār's high profile career as Alfonso VIII's diplomat, his literary efforts and the cultural implications of his mediation between Castile and Almohad Andalusia. Ibn al-Fakhkhār maintained this position during the

⁷⁸⁹ Ibid., 117-8.

⁷⁹⁰ Ibid., 119.

⁷⁹¹ Ibid., 121.

entirety of Alfonso VIII's reign: from its initial point of weakness, epitomized by the battle of Alarcos in 1195, to his greatest moment of strength after Las Navas in 1212.⁷⁹² The first documented interaction between Ibn al-Fakhkhār and the Almohads occurred in 1204, when the diplomat was present at al-Nāṣir's court in Marrakesh. His task was to negotiate renewals of peace treaties between Castile and the Almohads, while also securing a deferral of Alfonso's tribute payments to the latter.⁷⁹³ Notably, this chronology places al-Fakhkhār in Almohad territory around the early thirteenth-century date that I support for the Assumption Chapel.

Although I argue that a member of the Castro family would have been able to understand Almohad funerary architecture well enough to have explained it to Alfonso VIII, with al-Fakhkhār there can be little doubt. Alfonso's selection of al-Fakhkhār to be his emissary indicates the "ease with which he [al-Fakhkhār] moved between Islamic and Christian domains and modes of cultural discourse."⁷⁹⁴ Decter's analysis of al-Fakhkhār's poetry further evidences the diplomat's familiarity with Andalusian society.⁷⁹⁵ He focuses on one of al-Fakhkhār's couplets:

The court of Alfonso is a wife still in her succulent days,
Take off your shoes in honor of its soil for it is holy.⁷⁹⁶

In addition to its liberal, religiously-couched praise of the Castilian king's court, the verse's second line refers to the event in which God commands Moses to remove his shoes before

⁷⁹² Decter, "Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Fakhkhār al-Yahūdī," 97.

⁷⁹³ *Ibid.*, 97-8.

⁷⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 101. One of the purposes of this chapter is, of course, to examine the degree to which distinct ideas of Islamic and Christian "modes of cultural discourse" are a product of modern scholars rather than indicative of a social reality in twelfth-century Iberia. That a figure from outside both religious traditions was chosen could indicate that he was seen as a more "neutral" party than a representative from either side, but it can also be viewed as evidence of the real fluidity between these "cultural discourses."

⁷⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 101. For al-Fakhkhār's poetry to have made it into al-Maqqarī's anthology, it must have been composed in Arabic, which, as Decter notes, is unsurprising given the large number of well-educated Jews who composed Arabic verse.

⁷⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 103.

drawing near to the burning bush.⁷⁹⁷ According to Decter, this scene would have resonated with all three Abrahamic traditions, since each describes Moses approaching the burning bush barefooted.⁷⁹⁸ The couplet also employs the literary technique of embedding Qur'ānic references into Arabic poetry.⁷⁹⁹ In this case, Decter argues that this device was also political, as it likens “appearing in Alfonso’s court with holding audience before God himself in a moment charged with religious significance.”⁸⁰⁰

Decter also analyses the verse’s political and cultural implications for Castile. Were it to have been recited in Alfonso VIII’s presence, it would testify to the esteem in which the Castilians held the Arabic language, without necessarily implying that Alfonso VIII and his court understood it themselves.⁸⁰¹ This idea resonates with Alfonso VIII’s relationship to Andalusian culture. For example, a high regard for Arabic poetry echoes the king’s minting of Almoravid-style *maravedís*, which feature Arabic inscriptions that maintain the structure of the formulaic messages used in the *dinars*. Similarly, Alfonso’s likely approval of the Toledan “school” of translators suggests a belief that something valuable can be learned from the Arabic written word. There are broader implications as well; if Alfonso VIII valued a laudatory poem in Arabic, this would also align with his emulation of Almohad models of kingship.⁸⁰² In addition

⁷⁹⁷ The Qur'ānic citation is 20:12: "إني أنا ربك فأخلع نعليك انك بالواد المقدس طوى", which translates to “Truly I am your God, so remove your shoes, for you are in the sacred valley of Ṭūwā.”

⁷⁹⁸ Ibid., 104.

⁷⁹⁹ Ibid., 103.

⁸⁰⁰ Ibid., 103-4.

⁸⁰¹ Ibid., 103.

⁸⁰² Decter agrees, saying that “Being praised in Arabic presented Alfonso VIII as a king with all the pomp characteristic of his Almohad foes, thus promoting an essential image of royalty within the culture of Christian expansionism.” Ibid., 105.

to the examples cited above, previous chapters have shown how the Almohad caliphs famously held public recitations of praise-poetry as part of their projections of royal identity.⁸⁰³

Finally, given al-Fakhkhār's use of Qur'ānic imagery in his couplet, Decter wonders to what degree Iberian Jews knew and understood the Qur'ān?⁸⁰⁴ Hava Lazarus-Yafeh has argued that certain Qur'ānic verses would have been familiar to Arabic-speakers, due to their incorporation into daily speech.⁸⁰⁵ However, Decter maintains that al-Fakhkhār's poem shows more than just general knowledge of Islam's holy book, because of "the close mimicry of Qur'ānic language in the panegyric for Alfonso VIII, whose meaning is contingent upon mediation through the Qur'ānic verse as the words evoke an entire scenario."⁸⁰⁶ This idea contributes to the high likelihood that al-Fakhkhār would have understood the meaning and function of Almohad funerary architecture, given the degree to which he was versed in Arabic literature and the language of the Qur'ān. Like the members of the Castro family, al-Fakhkhār's closeness to Alfonso VIII would have allowed him to communicate these ideas to the king.

7 CONCLUSIONS

My interpretation of the Assumption Chapel in Las Huelgas argues that Alfonso VIII and Leonor chose to be buried in a space that mirrored Almohad funerary *qubbās* and displayed an austere, twelfth-century Almohad design. This aesthetic aligned with its patrons' goals in two principle ways. First, its typology provided them with an immediately-identifiable funerary space in which to house their royal pantheon. Second, the chapel's austerity conformed to

⁸⁰³ Of course, it is also possible that these verses were intended to circulate among Iberia's Arabic-speaking population. Even if this were the case, it still indicates Alfonso VIII's desire to be seen as of the same caliber as the Almohad caliphs.

⁸⁰⁴ In this discussion, I will be largely ignoring the author's comments about this being an example of "Mudejarism," defined according to the Homi Bhabha's theory of "hybridism," which he sees as extending beyond architectural and into linguistic or cultural phenomena, as I find that the actual points raised by the author do not benefit from this discussion. The interested reader can consult *Ibid.*, 104-5.

⁸⁰⁵ Cited in *Ibid.*, 106.

⁸⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 107.

Cistercian aesthetic ideals while simultaneously supplying a filter through which to translate the Mosque of Cordoba's rich aesthetic into a more sober decorative program. The same agency that allowed Alfonso VIII to reformulate the chapel's references to the Cordoban landmark also permitted him to occasionally depart from his Almohad models. The buildings' differences respond to the divergent requirements of their patrons, indicating that Alfonso freely adapted the Almohad model to his own needs.

Alfonso VIII's many references to the political, ideological and visual aspects of Almohad sovereignty firmly put to rest the notion that the Assumption Chapel's Almohad aesthetic is somehow inconsistent with the king's Christianity. Indeed, the idea that a Jewish, Christian or Islamic use of one another's visual aesthetic constitutes a conundrum proves entirely unhelpful when attempting to truly understand patrons' choices. The identification of certain artistic forms as inherently "Islamic" or "Christian" imposes similar conceptual limitations on interpreting these phenomena: as the Assumption Chapel shows, the same forms can communicate ideas of both Islamic-style burial and Christian monastic austerity. Of course, this conclusion would have been impossible to reach were it not for Ruiz, Robinson and Feliciano's approaches, which emphasize buildings' functions and interpret them within their historical contexts. Finally, not once in my discussion of Las Huelgas was it necessary to use the term *mudéjar*.

CHAPTER FIVE FIGURES



Figure 5.1. Sanctuary, Assumption Chapel, Las Huelgas (Author's Photo)



Figure 5.2 Vestibule, Assumption Chapel, Las Huelgas (John Robinette, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/26262281@N08/4723320822/> (Accessed April 11, 2013).)



Figure 5.3. Vestibule Wall, Assumption Chapel, Las Huelgas (Author's Photo)



Figure 5.4. Church, Las Huelgas (Author's Photo)



Figure 5.5. Stucco, Large Cloister, Las Huelgas (Author's Photo)



Figure 5.6. Small Cloister, Las Huelgas (Author's Photo)



Figure 5.7. Santiago Chapel, Las Huelgas (Author's Photo)



Figure 5.8. Dome, Assumption Chapel, Las Huelgas (John Robinette, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/26262281@N08/4723318630/> (Accessed April 11, 2013).)

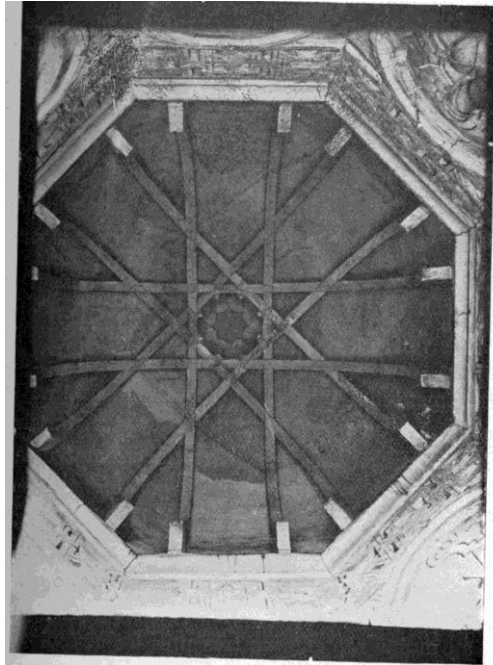


Fig. 63. — Coupole à nervures (sixième salle du minaret).

Figure 5.9. Dome, Minaret, Kutubiyya Mosque (Basset and Terrasse, “Sanctuaires et forteresses almohades. II.,” fig. 65.)

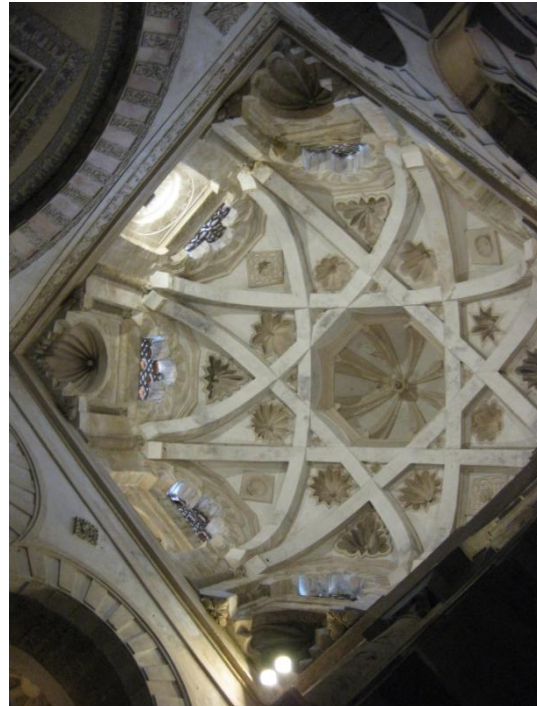


Figure 5.10. Dome, Mosque of Cordoba (Author’s Photo)



Figure 5.11. Almohad Textile Motif (Detail from the ‘Coffin Cover of María de Almenar’ nAlmohad period, ca. 1200. Silk and gold thread. Æ 62 cm ca. Patrimonio Nacional, Museo de Telas Medievales, Monasteria de Santa Maria Real de Huelgas, Burgos 00650542.)

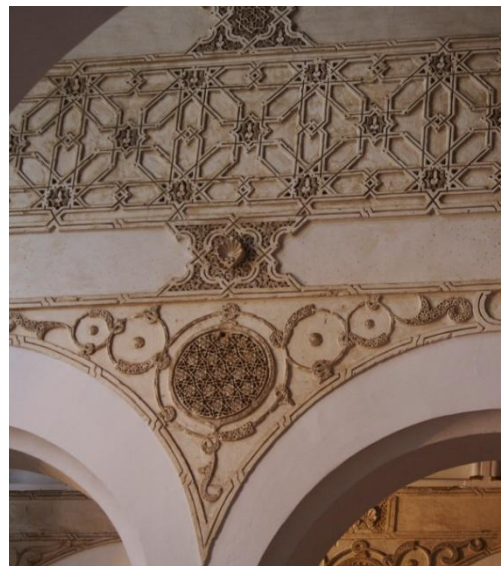


Figure 5.12. Synagogue of Santa Maria la Blanca (Nic McPhee, http://www.flickr.com/photos/nics_events/2554476586/ (Accessed April 4, 2013).)



Figure 5.13. Coif of Infante Fernando (“Coif of Infante Fernando of Kastilia (1189-1211,” http://www.kostym.cz/Anglicky/2-Detaily/01_Dopluky/II_01_18.htm), Accessed May 14, 2013.)



Figure 5.14. Detail of *Sebka*, Assumption Chapel (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/elcamino2006/303147428/> (Accessed April 11, 2013).)



5.15. Abbey Church of Fontenay (Image courtesy of Curtis Jirsa)

CONCLUSIONS

While the principle aim of this study has been to provide a contextualized interpretation of Almohad Friday mosques, recent methodological trends emphasize studying the medieval world in a wider, Mediterranean context.⁸⁰⁷ Therefore, in lieu of a traditional conclusion, I will offer some preliminary considerations of the implications of Almohad religious architecture beyond the empire's borders. After a brief, critical methodological sketch of the emerging field of "Mediterranean Studies," I turn to two arenas that lend themselves to comparison with the Almohad empire. First, following Christian Ewert's lead, I explore the connection between the mosque of Tinmal and Norman Sicilian architecture, particularly the Zisa palace in Palermo. Second, I discuss religious architecture in the twelfth-century eastern Mediterranean, which Yasser Tabbaa has aligned with the so-called "Sunni Revival." The closing sections reexamine the usefulness of the Mediterranean Studies paradigm as it pertains to Almohad Friday mosques, widening the lens to include Las Huelgas before offering concluding thoughts for the dissertation as a whole.

⁸⁰⁷ See, for example, Eva R. Hoffman, "Pathways of Portability: Islamic and Christian Interchange from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century," in *Late Antique and Medieval Art of the Mediterranean World*, ed. Eva R. Hoffman, 317-49 (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007); Eva R. Hoffman, "Translations in Ivory: Interactions across Cultures and Media in the Mediterranean during the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," in *Siculo-Arabic Ivories and Islamic Painting, 1100-1300, Proceedings from the International Conference, Berlin, 6-8 July 2007*, ed. David Knipp, 99-119 (München: Hirmer Verlag GmbH, 2011); Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford, U.K.; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2000); the collected essays in David Abulafia, ed., *The Mediterranean in History* (Los Angeles, CA: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2003) and Karla Mallette, *European Modernity and the Arab Mediterranean: Toward a New Philology and a Counter-Orientalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

1 MEDITERRANEAN METHODOLOGIES

Rather than attempt the Herculean task of reviewing the entire body of scholarship regarding the medieval Mediterranean, I have chosen to focus on two articles by Eva Hoffman. These pieces both represent her evolving approach to studying the region and encapsulate the field's larger methodological issues. In a way, Hoffman's seminal article "Pathways of Portability: Islamic and Christian Interchange from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century," published in 2007, constitutes the first "manifesto" for art historians who advocate a Mediterranean approach.⁸⁰⁸ As its title suggests, Hoffman's article challenges scholars to examine both the ways that portable objects traveled throughout the Mediterranean world and the impact that these objects would have made on the regions through which they moved. Leading by example, Hoffman then reexamines a body of portable objects—such as ivories, textiles, ceramics, metalwork, etc.—arguing that they all feature a luxurious, courtly aesthetic that transcended sociopolitical and geographical boundaries.

Hoffman's "Pathways of Portability" also urges researchers to abandon fruitless, futile searches for the provenance of portable objects, many of which have defied geographical categorization for generations. While not denying the utility of provenance information, Hoffman argues that it often reveals very little about how portable pieces were used and understood by their contemporaries. Furthermore, when judged solely on stylistic grounds, many of the objects that she considers could easily have proceeded from several geographic locations, and sometimes these included both Christian and Islamic polities. In order to reconsider and truly understand these objects, then, Hoffman asserts that they should be defined with their portability in mind.⁸⁰⁹ In her own words, she states that "the parameters of localization

⁸⁰⁸ See footnote 1. It is widely cited in other works that center on the region.

⁸⁰⁹ This paragraph is summarized from Hoffman, "Pathways," 318-20.

for these objects were defined along a network of portability extending well beyond fixed geographical sites of production to include the geographic and cultural arenas in which the works were circulated and viewed.”⁸¹⁰

As developed in her “Pathways” article, Hoffman’s methodology has several advantages. First, it challenges disciplinary notions of cultural capitals and hinterlands, replacing them with “a ‘pluritopic’ model which allows for the existence of multiple sites and greater fluidity between various centers and peripheries.”⁸¹¹ It also helps to erase constructed, conceptual boundaries between regions such as Norman Sicily and North Africa, or Islamic and Christian Iberia, whose borders were neither as fixed nor as impermeable as they might seem. Additionally, Hoffman’s approach grants a crucial role to the Islamic world as a creative force in dialogue with their Christian neighbors, abandoning the notion of “cross-cultural exchange in the traditional sense of the transmission of individual objects and ideas among disparate cultures” in favor of “a discourse of portability that mapped a common visual language across cultural and religious boundaries.”⁸¹² Finally, her methodology makes a place for objects with unspecified provenance. Hoffman encourages scholars to define these objects according to their broad appeal and their ability to be bought, transported and sold throughout the medieval Mediterranean world.⁸¹³ In shifting the investigative question from “Where was this object made?” to “How does it fit into multiple contexts?”, she argues that researchers gain a better understanding about how objects were used and why they were valued.

⁸¹⁰ Ibid., 320.

⁸¹¹ Ibid.

⁸¹² Ibid., 321.

⁸¹³ While this concept is useful because of its reimagining of the concept of provenance, I might add that portable objects can travel far beyond the lands that border that Mediterranean basin. I will also evaluate the usefulness of the idea of the “Mediterranean world” as a geographical region in subsequent pages.

While Hoffman's revisionary efforts deserve praise, her "Pathways of Portability" article also reveals some of the problems endemic to Mediterranean Studies. Perhaps the most dangerous is the temptation to approach the material more intuitively, with less rigor or empiricism, if objects or buildings are categorized dynamically. Hoffman's "discourse of portability that mapped a common visual language across cultural and religious boundaries" could easily lead to establishing a *new* category in which to casually toss unidentified objects traceable to the Mediterranean basin. In other words, simply assigning the label "Mediterranean"—with associated ideas of portability, a shared luxurious aesthetic and an appeal to a broad audience—to an ivory or textile of unclear provenance only goes so far in interpreting it.⁸¹⁴ In this sense, a "Mediterranean" category has the potential to obfuscate rather than clarify. Hoffman herself falls into this trap when she considers Andalusian ivories. While she claims that they reflect a broader Mediterranean visual culture of portability, students of Andalusian art will know that many of these objects were *not* intended to travel and that they remained in the Iberian peninsula during their entire medieval lives.⁸¹⁵

Hoffman refines both her argument and her approach in a second article that examines carved ivory oliphants.⁸¹⁶ Its introduction delivers a careful and convincing call to investigate the interaction and reception of these objects' motifs, media and style over poorly-defined "influences" that may or may not have determined their appearance.⁸¹⁷ One of Hoffman's principle points argues that mass-produced ivory oliphants, those destined to be sold to a wide

⁸¹⁴ Hoffman attempts to eschew this difficulty, claiming that she does "not wish to suggest a monolithic Mediterranean culture with an undifferentiated collective visual identity for all its objects." See "Pathways," 322-3 for the full discussion of this theme.

⁸¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 332. On Spanish ivories, see Cynthia Robinson, "Love in the Time of Fitna: 'Courtliness' and the Pamplona Casket," in *Revisiting al-Andalus: Perspectives on the Material Culture of Islamic Iberia and Beyond*, ed. Glaire D. Anderson and Mariam Rosser-Owen, 99-112 (Boston: Brill, 2007); and Francisco Prado-Vilar, "Circular Visions of Fertility and Punishment: Caliphal Ivory Caskets from al-Andalus," *Muqarnas* 14 (1997): 19-41.

⁸¹⁶ See footnote 1 for the full citation.

⁸¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 101.

audience, featured different motifs than those made to circulate near their centers of production. In order to support this idea, she traces specific crusader and mercantile travel routes linking northern Europe and the Holy Land.⁸¹⁸ Here, Hoffman avoids the trap of simply terming objects “Mediterranean” and assuming that they circulated throughout the region at large, because she defines precise vectors by which they moved. She also nuances her initial assessment of the Andalusian ivories. While correctly observing the ties between their courtly scenes, which evoke contemporary Andalusian poetic themes, and a group of Norman ivory caskets whose motifs recall Sicilian court poetry, Hoffman also explains how each group of boxes responds to local circumstances.⁸¹⁹

In this second article, Hoffman pursues her Mediterranean connections fully and contextually, and therefore more successfully. If Mediterranean Studies is to have a productive future—one that does not degenerate into the establishment of another stylistic category with a fixed “canon” of works—its comparative studies must function within this kind of rigorous scholarly framework. To my mind, there is a crucial difference between carefully selecting comparanda relevant to a given object or building and asserting that commonalities exist in a *de facto* way. Successful studies of the relationships between Mediterranean phenomena will therefore clarify both the connections and the disconnections between a shared style, poetic device or political philosophy. They will also allow for broader ideas to be exchanged between differing polities, ethnic groups or religions, while still maintaining a degree of local specificity.

Having defined a productive way for scholars to participate in the burgeoning field of Mediterranean Studies, it is worth pausing to raise a few questions related to the genre’s

⁸¹⁸ Ibid., 104-9.

⁸¹⁹ Ibid., 112-7. For example, she notes the Andalusian ivories’ high technical accomplishment given that they were made in exclusive royal workshops. Their Norman counterparts, on the other hand, utilize the more modest medium of paint to depict their hunters and drinkers, reflecting both the tastes and means of their local patrons.

parameters. First, how does one define the Mediterranean? Does it simply include any region that possesses a Mediterranean coast? If so, how does one discuss a region such as modern-day Portugal? During the twelfth century, Portugal was partially incorporated into Almohad territory, which included a great swath of the Mediterranean coast. However, later Portuguese polities have had access only to the Atlantic. So, is post-Almohad Portugal still Mediterranean? Does it merely have a Mediterranean “heritage?” Neither of these ways of thinking about Portugal seems particularly meaningful or explanatory. Byzantium, with ties to both Asia, through Georgia or Armenia, and the Mediterranean Sea, presents a similar case.⁸²⁰ Can one talk about a “Mediterranean” Armenia via Byzantium? These questions may seem facetious, but they speak to the difficulties in defining a geographic boundary within which to impose a set of parameters. They also call into question one of the chief advantages of Mediterranean Studies, which is to shake up notions of center and periphery. Mediterranean Studies makes the Mediterranean the “new” center.

A final set of problems surrounds the media most easily studied from a Mediterranean perspective, however it is defined. Hoffman’s articles focus on objects rather than buildings—the latter, by definition, are not portable—and they also involve courtly settings rather than a religious milieu.⁸²¹ Both the objects (textiles, ivory boxes, metalwork) and their iconography (hunting, drinking, mirrored images of mythical or heraldic beasts) are associated with the secular sphere. In a way, this makes sense: a shared visual language could effectively communicate projections of earthly power among the highest echelons of government, which, in turn, would become desirable to those of lesser means.⁸²² But religious architecture seems to

⁸²⁰ See Averil Cameron, “Thinking with Byzantium,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 21 (2011): 39-57.

⁸²¹ Hoffman blurs this line when she considers crusader attachment to the *religious* significance of any object or building understood to have a pedigree from the Holy Land. See Hoffman, “Translations,” 105-7.

⁸²² Hoffman’s Sicilo-ivories are a good example of the latter.

mark difference, as opposed to continuity.⁸²³ Were an Almohad palace housing a figural program of hunters, merrymakers and symbolic animals to miraculously be discovered tomorrow, I would not bat an eyelid. But previous chapters have shown how the Almohad caliphs self-consciously distinguished themselves from the Almoravids through their austere mosques. With these reservations, I turn to Norman Sicilian architecture.

2 NORMAN SICILY

Because of the parallels between Norman Sicily and Castile, one imagines that it would also make a fruitful comparison to the Almohad Empire. Like Alfonso VIII, the Norman kings were territorial expansionists who ruled over a subject Muslim population.⁸²⁴ Moreover, both Alfonso VIII and his Norman counterparts Roger II (d. 1154), William I (d. 1166) and William II (d. 1189) incorporated Islamic objects and architectural citations into their projections of royal status. The well-known example of Roger II's mantle evidences that, like the king of Castile, he valued the elite symbolism woven into Islamic textiles.⁸²⁵ Roger also built the famous Cappella Palatina (c. 1140) at the heart of his royal palace in Palermo.⁸²⁶ As a palatine chapel-cum-throne room, the "apse" of this building features Byzantine-style mosaics depicting Christian religious scenes. Its "nave," however, displays a remarkable wooden *muqarnas* ceiling, structurally similar to those found in Almohad buildings or the Assumption Chapel and carved from cedar

⁸²³ Religious objects, of course, are a far different story, and the bibliography for this phenomenon is extensive. For the Iberian peninsula, a good introduction is Julie Harris, "Muslim Ivories in Christian Hands: The Leire Casket in Context," *Art History* 18.2 (1995): 213-221. For a much more general approach, see Avinoam Shalem, "Histories of Belonging and George Kubler's Prime Object," *Getty Research Journal* 3 (2011): 1-14 and Avinoam Shalem, *Islam Christianized: Islamic Portable Objects in the Medieval Church Treasuries of the Latin West* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1996).

⁸²⁴ For a concise history of Norman Sicily, see the Introduction to William Tronzo, *The Cultures of His Kingdom: Roger II and the Cappella Palatina in Palermo* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997). On Roger II, see Hubert Houben, *Roger II of Sicily: A Ruler between East and West* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2002). For Sicily's Muslims, see Alex Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

⁸²⁵ Hoffman discusses this textile in "Pathways of Portability," 326-330.

⁸²⁶ The definitive monograph of this building is still Tronzo, *The Cultures of His Kingdom*. See footnote 828 for the full citation.

(Figure 6.1). The Sicilian *muqarnas* vault also retains much of its original program of painted courtly scenes: dancers, drinkers and musicians revel alongside depictions of seated royal figures enveloped in costly robes.⁸²⁷

Roger II's successors, William I and William II, also built palaces with stylistic ties to Almohad mosques. For instance, William I ordered the construction of the Zisa palace around 1163, although it was finished by William II. In a short monograph dedicated to the Tinmal mosque, Christian Ewert notices that the proportions of Tinmal's plan replicate those of the Zisa, were the palace to be bisected on its short axis.⁸²⁸ This connection leads him to suggest both structural and semiotic connections between palace architecture and early Almohad structures: specifically, he wonders if the Almohads had intended to create an earthly version of a Qur'ānic palace.⁸²⁹ Second, like `Abd al-Mu'min's mosques and Roger II's Capella Palatina, the Zisa palace and William III's Cuba palace (c. 1180) feature *muqarnas* vaults in key areas of the buildings. In the Zisa palace, they appear in their most concentrated and monumental forms in the central courtyard of the ground floor, called the "Hall of the Fountain" (Figure 6.2), although they also feature in small corners, window vaults and vestibules. In the Cuba, they occur in niches distributed throughout the building.

As was the case for Castile, the Almohads had an enduring political and economic relationship with the Norman Sicilian kingdom. It began as early as 1159, when `Abd al-Mu'min led the Almohad army against the Normans in Mahdiyya, a city located on the eastern coast of present-day Tunisia.⁸³⁰ During the Almohad siege, William I sent a fleet to relieve the

⁸²⁷ Tronzo, *Cultures of His Kingdom*, 57-60.

⁸²⁸ Ewert, *The Mosque of Tinmal*, 129-32.

⁸²⁹ *Ibid.*, 135.

⁸³⁰ Huici Miranda seems to follow Ibn al-Athīr closely in his description of the events. See Huici Miranda, *Historia política*, 188-90.

city, but the Almohad navy managed to repel this attack.⁸³¹ Mahdiyya surrendered shortly thereafter. According to Ibn al-Athīr, the defeated Christians requested a guarantee of safe-passing in order to return to their lands, and these “soft words” won the caliph over.⁸³² However, divine justice was eventually meted out, as most of them drowned before reaching their destinations. Ibn al-Athīr ends the story of the defeated Normans thus: “The king of Sicily had said, ‘If `Abd al-Mu`min kills our men in Mahdiyya, we shall kill the Muslims who are in the island of Sicily and seize their womenfolk and their property.’ However, God destroyed the Franks by drowning.”⁸³³

The antagonistic relationship between the Almohads and Norman Sicilians—aided or not by the supernatural powers described by Ibn al-Athīr—lasted well into Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf’s caliphate. The winds of change started to blow around 1180, when a trading agreement was contracted between the two Mediterranean powers.⁸³⁴ As with many economic treaties, pragmatic concerns fueled the contract: the Almohads wanted to reap the benefits of Sicilian grain, the production of which had declined in their own territories, and the Sicilians appreciated the new market.⁸³⁵ Although the Almohads already benefitted from grain trading agreements with the Genoese and Pisans, adding the Sicilians could have been designed to decrease prices or generate more tax revenue from imported goods.⁸³⁶ It seems that these economic advantages eventually fully trumped the Almohads’ political differences with the Normans, as the two parties signed ten-year peace treaty in Palermo in August of 1181.⁸³⁷

⁸³¹ Ibid., 189.

⁸³² Ibn al-Athīr, *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athir*, Part 1, 105-6.

⁸³³ Ibid., 106.

⁸³⁴ Abulafia, “Christian merchants,” 255.

⁸³⁵ Ibid., 253-4.

⁸³⁶ Ibid., 255-6.

⁸³⁷ Ibid., 256.

In spite of the ties that bound the Normans and the Almohads, I have not found a comparison between Sicilian and Almohad architecture to be particularly productive. First, as mentioned in Chapter One, Ewert's connection between the Zisa and Tinmal plans amounts to nothing more than an interesting technical observation. By definition, religious spaces serve very different needs than do palaces, and despite any similarities in their proportions, the Tinmal and Zisa palaces' internal structures reflect their respective functions: the Tinmal mosque conforms to the typology of a T-planned hypostyle prayer hall, whereas the Zisa palace offers a series of rooms organized around a centralized courtyard. It is certainly possible—especially given the political and economic ties between the two polities—that Almohad engineers or architects could have drawn on secular structures like the Zisa in order to formulate the proportions of the Tinmal mosque. However, as I argued in Chapter Two, the Almohads were less concerned with evoking heavenly palaces at Tinmal than they were with providing an alternative model of pilgrimage and piety to politically threatening Sufi saints lodged in *ribāṭs*, or even with solidifying their group identity around Ibn Tūmart's doctrine.

Similar arguments obtain with Almohad and Norman *muqarnas*. Tronzo observes that the Capella Palatina, the Fatimid baths of Abū al-Su`ud in Fustat, the Qal`a palace of the Banī Ḥammād in Tunisia and the Qarawiyyin mosque in Fez form a corpus of early buildings that all utilize *muqarnas* vaulting.⁸³⁸ While the Almohads could have potentially drawn from any of these buildings, the palatine environments of the Capella Palatina, Fatimid bathhouse and Qal`a palace suggests a far different reading of their *muqarnas*. Tronzo has argued that the Capella Palatina's *muqarnas*, with its richly painted surfaces featuring courtly scenes, were meant to evoke the pleasurable, secular activities associated with the sovereign.⁸³⁹ Nothing could be

⁸³⁸ Tronzo, *Cultures of his Kingdom*, 60.

⁸³⁹ *Ibid.*

further from the Almohads' deployment of *muqarnas* domes over the most religiously significant areas of their mosques.⁸⁴⁰ Indeed, even if the Almohads drew on these vaults for technical inspiration, their fluted, seamed versions of *muqarnas* vaults differed radically, and, I would argue, self-consciously, from their sources.

The *muqarnas* used in later Norman Palaces of the Zisa and Cuba, which date within ten years of those found in the first two Almohad mosques, offer a slightly more nuanced angle from which to approach the ties between Norman and Almohad architecture. While lacking any flutes or seams, their vaults do not feature any of the courtly scenes or motifs painted onto the Capella Palatina's *muqarnas*. The chapel associated with the Zisa palace most closely parallels the use of *muqarnas* in Almohad mosques. This small church, known today as the Chapel of the Holy Trinity, is located approximately fifty meters north of the palace proper. Its single nave, preceded by a rectangular vestibule, was formerly connected on its western side to surrounding dependent buildings. *Muqarnas* fittings transition from the two shorter walls of the church's rectangular apse to an intermediary, square-shaped "drum." More *muqarnas* then transition from this "drum" to a smooth, hemispherical cupola.

Giuseppe Bellafiore observes that the Zisa chapel's plan recalls that of Palermo's Favara palace chapel, which dates to Roger II's time.⁸⁴¹ Its location, however, does not: while the Favara chapel is incorporated into the palace's internal structure (as was, for example, the Assumption Chapel into Las Huelgas), the Zisa chapel is completely detached from the palace.⁸⁴² According to Bellafiore, this kind of arrangement was "not uncommon in Islamic architecture."⁸⁴³ His footnote for this observation cites Oleg Grabar's description of early

⁸⁴⁰ The exception to this is, of course, the *muqarnas* vaults in the Qarawiyyin Mosque, discussed in Chapter Two.

⁸⁴¹ Giuseppe Bellafiore, *La Zisa di Palermo* (Palermo: Flaccovio Editore, 1994), 76.

⁸⁴² Ibid.

⁸⁴³ Ibid.

Umayyad Islamic palaces, which do not directly connect to Almohad or Norman structures.⁸⁴⁴ However, at least one extant Almohad palace, the Qasba in Marrakesh, does contain a separated mosque.⁸⁴⁵ Furthermore, the practice of covering the most sacred space of a religious building with *muqarnas* vaulting aligns with Almohad practice, even if the dome itself takes a smooth, hemispherical form more characteristic of other domed apses in Palermo such as the Capella Palatina. Although I am still disinclined to believe that any semiotic parallels will be found, this structural and typological connection between the two architectural traditions could merit further study.

3 THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN AND THE SUNNI REVIVAL

3.1. THE SUNNI REVIVAL AND THE ALMOHADS

My second Almohad-Mediterranean comparison focuses on the twelfth-century Islamic Levant, where the religious, political and architectural changes of the Sunni Revival compare favorably with those of the Almohad revolution. In its broadest sense, scholars understand the Sunni Revival as an effort to revitalize and consolidate Sunni Islam. This agenda was largely promoted by the Saljuq dynasty, a loose confederation of Turkish tribes from central Asia. Although they nominally represented the political authority of the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad, the Saljuq sultans controlled a vast expanse of territory that extended from the southwestern steppes of Asia to the eastern Mediterranean. The religious and political programs of the Sunni Revival first aimed to eliminate or greatly reduce Shī'ite presence, including the Fatimids in Egypt and communities throughout modern-day Syria, Iraq and Iran.⁸⁴⁶ After the crusaders stormed Jerusalem in 1099, fighting Shī'ite heresy was coupled with defending Islamdom from

⁸⁴⁴ Oleg Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 145-6.

⁸⁴⁵ See Ewert, "The Architectural Heritage," 93-4.

⁸⁴⁶ See Tabbaa, *Transformation*, 14-18; George Makdisi, "The Sunni Revival," in *Islamic Civilization, 950-1150*, ed. Donald S. Richards (Oxford: Cassirer, 1973), 157 and Daniella Talmon-Heller, *Islamic Piety in Medieval Syria Mosques, Cemeteries and Sermons Under the Zangids and Ayyūbids (1146-1260)* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 8.

Christian attacks. From a traditional standpoint, Nūr al-Dīn Zangī (d. 1174) and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī (d. 1193), are considered the heroes of the Sunni Revival, and the medieval sources laud their efforts to promote Muslim unity and to combat the crusaders.⁸⁴⁷

This traditional definition of the Sunni Revival has not gone unchallenged. George Makdisi disputes the idea that it originated with the Saljuqs in the eleventh century, arguing instead that the Revival was well underway at least half a century before the Turks assailed and entered Baghdad in 1055.⁸⁴⁸ Furthermore, he believes the Sunni Revival is better characterized as a resurgence of Islamic “traditionalism,” which began in the tenth century as a reaction against the rationalistic theological tendencies of the Mu`tazilite and Ash`arite schools of theology.⁸⁴⁹ For his part, Yaacov Lev questions whether Nūr al-Dīn espoused a self-conscious policy of *jihād* against the Shī`ites and the Christians, suggesting instead that the sultan’s most pressing concern was to consolidate his own political power.⁸⁵⁰ Because this involved eliminating both internecine Muslim conflict and crusader presence in medieval Syria, Lev argues that Nūr al-Dīn’s role as a staunch *mujāhid* was simply assigned to him by his chroniclers.⁸⁵¹ For the purposes of this brief study, though, I see no need to split hairs over whether Nūr al-Dīn or Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn were “true” *mujāhidūn* or whether their identities as such were constructed, in part because I do not view these characterizations as mutually exclusive. Not unlike the Almohad

⁸⁴⁷ I identify the principle sources for Nūr al-Dīn below. For Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, see especially Hamilton Alexander Rosskeen Gibb, `Imād al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Kātib al-Iṣfahānī and Bahā` al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Rāfi` ibn Shaddād, *The Life of Saladin: from the Works of `Imād Ad-Dīn and Bahā` Ad-Dīn* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973).

⁸⁴⁸ Makdisi, “Sunni Revival,” 155.

⁸⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 168. Tabbaa seems to agree, outlining tenth-century rationalist trends in *Transformation*, 11-14. He addresses Makdisi’s charge that the Saljuqs had little to do with the rise of *madrāsas* by underlining Saljuq support for these institutions. See *Ibid.*, 18 for more.

⁸⁵⁰ Yaacov Lev, “The *Jihād* of Sultan Nūr al-Dīn of Syria (1146-1174): History and Discourse,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 35 (2008), 252-7.

⁸⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 233-40.

caliphs, Nūr al-Dīn may have both truly wished to defend Islam and also capitalized on the approval that this was sure to win for him.⁸⁵²

However one describes this period, it shares important features with the twelfth-century Maghrib. First among them is the idea of state-sponsored religious change. In the Levant, this partly involved eliminating the Fatimids, a challenge to a heretical regime not unlike the Almohads' demonization of and wars against the Almoravids. An even stronger comparison obtains between Sunni Revivalist and Almohad efforts to homogenize and disseminate official doctrine. The Almohads, of course, developed the *ṭalaba*: a body of religious scholars specially trained in state schools and financially dependent upon the caliph. The caliphs' eastern contemporaries sponsored the *madrasa*, a Sunni institution that had developed in the eleventh century to train religious scholars and jurists. Although the origins of the *madrasa* predate the Sunni Revival,⁸⁵³ the schools were soon co-opted as a means to combat Shī'ism and to train "a loyal body of state officials, including notaries, judges, and other *madrasa* professors."⁸⁵⁴ For example, both Nūr al-Dīn and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn formed "symbiotic relationships" with *madrasa*-

⁸⁵² It also occurs to me that part of the trouble may lie in the application of an artificial label, the "Sunni Revival," to this period. Viewing the Almohad caliphs as separate leaders who pursued different projects has helped me to unpack a monolithic "Almohadism," and a similar process for the leaders associated with the Sunni Revival could prove useful.

⁸⁵³ For a detailed exposition of the early development of the *madrasa*, including a historiographical summary and critique, see George Makdisi, *The Rise of the Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981). Tabbāa offers a rebuttal to Makdisi's opinion that *madrasas* were not official institutions in Yasser Tabbāa, *Constructions of Power and Piety in Medieval Aleppo* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 125. Briefly, he argues that even though *madrasas* might have first been conceived as independent educational centers, they were in fact monumentalized, standardized and institutionalized when Nizām al-Mulk (d. 1092), vizier to three Saljuq sultans, sponsored the Nizāmiyya *madrasa* in Baghdad. He draws a fruitful parallel between this monumentalization and what the Umayyad caliph al-Walīd "accomplished for the congregational mosque. Both pulled an important religious institution out of its vernacular beginnings, re-created it in an imperial image and in the capital city, and duplicated it in the major cities of the realm." (Ibid., 125.)

⁸⁵⁴ Tabbāa, *Transformation*, 18-9.

trained *fuqahā'* and *'ulamā'*, who, in return for their patronage, supported them politically and lent them religious credibility.⁸⁵⁵

This credibility seems to have been as important for Nūr al-Dīn and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn as it was for the Almohad caliphs. The latter cultivated their image as pious rulers through various means. Their knowledge of Ibn Tūmart's doctrine, their *majālis* with the *ṭalaba* and their interest in studying the Qur'ān and hadith lent them an aura of religious wisdom, while pious visits to the Mahdī's grave and their respect for other saintly personages manifested their humility and devotion. Nūr al-Dīn and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn pursued similar activities. Both rulers sponsored and attended public preaching events, also termed *majālis*, in an effort to cultivate a pious image and possibly also because of genuine interest.⁸⁵⁶ Daniella Talmon-Heller also highlights Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's avid dedication to studying hadith and the well-rounded religious education enjoyed by his Ayyubid successors.⁸⁵⁷ As for honoring the burial sites of holy men, Tabbaa has detailed Nūr al-Dīn's involvement in the construction of several monumental saints' tombs.⁸⁵⁸

A second way that the Almohad, Zengid and Ayyubid rulers projected their royal legitimacy was by portraying themselves as defenders of Islam. In the Almohad period, this took the form of ensuring correct beliefs and morality (eradicating Almoravid "heretics," instituting the *ṭalaba*, distributing circular letters throughout their territories, upholding justice, etc.), providing for their subjects' spiritual well-being (building mosques, fountains, markets, etc.), and waging *jihād* against the Iberian Christians. Again, their Levantine counterparts employed

⁸⁵⁵ See Talmon-Heller, *Islamic Piety*, 11-2 and Daniella Talmon-Heller, "Religion in the Public Sphere: Rulers, Scholars, and Commoners in Syria under Zangid and Ayyubid Rule (1150-1260)," in *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*, ed. Miriam Hoexter, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt and Nehemia Levtzion (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 54. Makdisi, "Sunni Revival," 165-6 addresses the *'ulamā'*'s usefulness to rulers in general.

⁸⁵⁶ Talmon-Heller, *Islamic Piety*, 127-8.

⁸⁵⁷ See *Islamic Piety*, 10 and "Religion in the Public Sphere," 50; respectively.

⁸⁵⁸ Talmon-Heller, *Islamic Piety*, 196. For a short description of Nūr al-Dīn's patronage of shrines in Aleppo, see Tabbaa, *Constructions of Power*, 106-8.

analogous strategies. First, they simultaneously attempted to ensure correct belief and provide for their subjects by combating Shī`ism, both on the battlefield and in the *madrasa*. Nūr al-Dīn alone built fourteen of the latter in the Jazira and Syria, and Damascus saw eighty-five built in the ninety years of Ayyubid rule.⁸⁵⁹ Second, both Nūr al-Dīn and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn are eulogized as models of righteous morality, and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's successor "opted for the strict enforcement of Muslim prohibition of liquor, moral laxity and non-*shar`ī* taxes."⁸⁶⁰

Finally, both Nūr al-Dīn and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn defended the Levant and the Holy Land against the crusader threat. As mentioned above, Lev de-emphasizes Nūr al-Dīn's image as a pious *mujāhid*, arguing that he gained far more territory by consolidating the territories of his coreligionists.⁸⁶¹ The author provides convincing evidence, but the efforts of sultan's chroniclers to cast him in the mold of a *mujāhid* matters more here than do actual territorial gains.⁸⁶² In this light, Lev's descriptions of the sources for Nūr al-Dīn's period prove instructive. He first recounts the ruler's *jihāding* goals described by twelfth-century court poets as "the conquest of Jerusalem and the coastal plain."⁸⁶³ Lev then turns to the works of Ibn al-Qalānisī (d. 1160), Ibn `Asākir (d. 1176), and Ibn al-Athīr (d. 1233). While the first author only sporadically refers to Nūr al-Dīn's *jihād*,⁸⁶⁴ the second and third underline his zeal in fighting the crusaders.⁸⁶⁵ Lev's point that Ibn al-Athīr's work "is typified by grafting the ideology of *jihād* onto the first half of the twelfth century" is well-taken; nevertheless, all three twelfth-century sources describe the

⁸⁵⁹ Talmon-Heller, *Islamic Piety*, 12. For a discussion of those located in Aleppo, see Tabbaa, *Constructions of Piety*, 123-61.

⁸⁶⁰ Talmon-Heller, "Religion in the Public Sphere," 50.

⁸⁶¹ Lev, "The *jihād* of Nūr al-Dīn," 252-7.

⁸⁶² See Talmon-Heller, *Islamic Piety*, 5, footnote 5 for an assessment of the usefulness of attempting to determine the motivations of Nūr al-Dīn and other *jihāding* figures.

⁸⁶³ Lev, "The *jihād* of Nūr al-Dīn," 229.

⁸⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 237.

⁸⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pages 236 and 239-40, respectively.

sultan in *jihāding* terms.⁸⁶⁶ This could suggest that he was seen as a *mujāhid* by his contemporaries. At the least, it indicates that these authors understood the usefulness of casting the sovereign in the mold of a pious *mujāhid*, and that their audience understood what it meant to be one.

Although Nūr al-Dīn's successor, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, famously re-took Jerusalem from the crusaders in 1187, his most recent biographer, Anne-Marie Eddé, warns against viewing the sultan as an "eternal jihad warrior."⁸⁶⁷ Like Nūr al-Dīn, wars against the crusaders did not always occupy the central place in Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's politics.⁸⁶⁸ This caveat notwithstanding, Eddé acknowledges that Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn received the highest praise from his contemporaries regarding his fervor for *jihād*, again, not unlike what I have argued to be the case for Nūr al-Dīn.⁸⁶⁹ Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn also recognized the value of describing himself in *jihāding* terms. In 1175, for example, the sultan addressed a letter to the Abbasid caliph, writing, "The Franks know that, in us, they have an adversary that no calamity can take down before that day when they become discouraged, a leader who will not lay down his sword until they disarm."⁸⁷⁰ Although Jerusalem would not fall for another twelve years, in this letter Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn depicts himself as an active *mujāhid*, and, as Eddé observes, his "entourage" also carefully crafted an image of their sultan as the only leader powerful enough to beat back the Frankish forces.⁸⁷¹

It seems, then, that the Almohad caliphate and the sultanates of these two sovereigns intersect in meaningful ways. Before broadening the comparison to include architecture, it is important to note that frequent travel between the twelfth-century eastern and western

⁸⁶⁶ Ibid., 240.

⁸⁶⁷ Anne-Marie Eddé, *Saladin*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Cambridge, MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), 13.

⁸⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁶⁹ Ibid., 21.

⁸⁷⁰ Cited in Ibid., 169.

⁸⁷¹ Ibid. She also characterizes this practice as a "perfect continuity with Nūr al-Dīn's work."

Mediterranean regions provided a vector through which religious, political and artistic ideas could be exchanged. I have already cited Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's emissaries to the Almohad caliph al-Manṣūr in the late twelfth century; according to al-Marrākushī, the Almohads even brought them to Tinmal to view the Mahdī's tomb. Talmon-Heller also points to two specific Maghribī preachers working in the East. The first, a native of Fez, served as both *khaṭīb* (Eng. "preacher") and *imām* in one of the mosques in Hebron. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn installed the second, who hailed from Malaga, as the preacher in Jerusalem's Aqsa mosque after his triumph over the crusaders.⁸⁷² Indeed, Ibn Jubayr (d. 1217), an Andalusian geographer, encouraged his educated compatriots to travel east, writing that they were easily employable as *imāms*, Qur'ān reciters or door-keepers at shrines even if they could not benefit from an endowment for scholars.⁸⁷³

3.2. MADRASAS AND MOSQUES

Because the Almohad caliphs and their twelfth-century Levantine counterparts promoted a similar program of royal religiosity and territorial defense, and because of the demonstrated contact between the two regions, I have wondered whether their respective architectural traditions also compare favorably. In *The Transformation of Islamic Art during the Sunni Revival*, Yasser Tabbāa analyzes the significant artistic changes prompted by the Sunni Revival in the twelfth- and thirteenth-century Levant. He summarizes his conclusions thus:

I have proposed that the Ash`arī view concerning the eternity of the Qur'ān and the exoteric (*ẓāhirī*) nature of the word of God directly contributed to the application of a more easily legible cursive scripts to the Qur'ān and the proliferation of these scripts in public inscriptions. I have also argued that the widespread acceptance of occasionalism among the theologians of the eleventh century would have contributed to the creation and proliferation of arabesque ornament, particularly in its most distilled and potent form, the *muqarnas* dome.⁸⁷⁴

⁸⁷² Talmon-Heller, *Islamic Piety*, 92.

⁸⁷³ *Ibid.*, 111. Other notable immigrants to the Eastern Mediterranean include the great Andalusian mystic Ibn al-`Arabī and the Andalusian poet, al-Shāṭibī (d. 1193).

⁸⁷⁴ Tabbāa, *Transformation*, 163-4.

Although I do not wish to delve too far into the intricacies of Tabbaa's research, his arguments concerning ornament and *muqarnas* are not as easily understood from this quote as are his views on cursive scripts. In Chapter Four of his book, Tabbaa traces the origins of the *giriḥ* ornamental mode, familiar to students of Islamic art as a geometric style composed of "overlaid strapwork and complete star patterns," to the late eleventh century.⁸⁷⁵ He also describes the development of what he terms "vegetal arabesque," which is distinguishable by an "advanced degree of abstraction and interconnection."⁸⁷⁶ (Figure 6.3) Because of the high technical accomplishment of the earliest extant examples of both these modes, which are located on the fringes of Islamdom, Tabbaa suggests that these designs were modeled on earlier ornamental developments, perhaps from Baghdad.⁸⁷⁷

After describing several key monuments or objects that feature the *giriḥ* mode and stylized vegetal ornament, Tabbaa notes the almost complete absence of these two modes in the Fatimid capital of Cairo. This, in turn, allows him to explain the significance of the forms.⁸⁷⁸ Attributing their widespread adoption, "rationalization," and "monumentalization" to the patrons Nūr al-Dīn and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, Tabbaa notices that they are concentrated in places closely related to the Sunni Revival: "middle Abbasid Baghdad, Ghaznavid and Seljuq Iran, Zangid and Ayyubid Syria, Seljuq Anatolia, and North Africa under the Almoravids and Almohads."⁸⁷⁹ He also observes that patrons applied the *giriḥ* mode to objects of intense religious significance, and that its use often paralleled the object's function. For example, vegetal ornament seems to have

⁸⁷⁵ Ibid., 78.

⁸⁷⁶ Ibid., 79. I prefer to term stylized vegetal ornament "*ataurique*," but this nomenclature is perhaps less appropriate for the eastern Mediterranean. Nevertheless, I will avoid using the word "arabesque" in this discussion.

⁸⁷⁷ Ibid. Here, I cannot help but think of Hoffman's call to abandon these notions of "center and periphery," which, I believe, lead Tabbaa to make unsupportable statements about Almohad architecture. I address this concern more directly in the concluding paragraphs.

⁸⁷⁸ Ibid., pages 80-4 describe the few instances where these modes occur. Tabbaa explains this by underlining that the cities in which the *giriḥ* mode and stylized vegetal ornament were used lay outside the capital's sphere of influence.

⁸⁷⁹ Ibid., 100-1.

been reserved for cenotaphs or *miḥrābs*, where, Tabbāa argues, it could refer to paradisiacal gardens awaiting the believer. Geometric ornament, however, features more prominently on doors, doorways, *minbars* and minarets, where the visual rigor of these geometric patterns aligned with the “image of power and authority” projected by the *minbars*, minarets and portals attached to institutions of learning or prayer.⁸⁸⁰

Tabbāa proposes a more specific symbolic meaning for the *muqarnas* dome, which often features in the same monuments that utilize the *giriḥ* mode in their ornamental repertoire. He begins his analysis by tracing the dome’s genesis.⁸⁸¹ Like the *giriḥ* ornamental mode, Tabbāa suggests that *muqarnas* originated in Baghdad, perhaps in the early eleventh century.⁸⁸² From there, they took hold in Iran, in Syria and Egypt under Nūr al-Dīn and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, and in the Maghrib under the Almoravids and Almohads.⁸⁸³ The fragmented, dissolved and insubstantial appearance of *muqarnas* domes, he continues, visually represents Ash`arite occasionalistic theology. This worldview insists that the universe is composed of atoms, the most basic fragments of matter, and accidents, the particular forms created by the conjoining of atoms. Any observable consistency in matter’s accidents—for example, a chair remains a chair and neither disintegrates nor transfigures into a loaf of bread—is due to God’s continual intervention. In other words, He alone can maintain the order in the universe, order that humankind takes for granted. In the light of Ash`arite occasionalism, Tabbāa believes that the cells of the *muqarnas*

⁸⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸⁸¹ Yasser Tabbāa, “The Muqarnas Dome: Its Origin and Meaning,” *Muqarnas* 3 (1985): 61-74.

⁸⁸² Tabbāa, *Transformation*, 112-4; Tabbāa, “The Muqarnas Dome,” 63. His argument is familiar: although little survives from early medieval Baghdad, early and fully developed provincial examples coupled with medieval illustrations suggest that *muqarnas* domes were commonly found in Baghdad by the middle of the eleventh century.

⁸⁸³ Tabbāa, *Transformation*, 114-24; Tabbāa, “The Muqarnas Dome,” 63-5.

represent ever-changing atoms, while the dome itself, solid and yet seemingly insubstantial, manifests God's constant upkeep of matter's accidents (Figure 6.4).⁸⁸⁴

Neither the *muqarnas* domes' Baghdadi roots nor the places where they sprouted up most densely, Tabbaa continues, are coincidental. In early eleventh-century Baghdad, Ash`arite occasionalism triumphed after an intense period of theological disagreement, both within Sunni Islam and between Sunnis and Shī'ite rationalists. This is also the precise time and place where Tabbaa argues that the first *muqarnas* domes appeared. Because of Ash`arism's ties to prominent scholars like al-Bāqillānī (d. 1013), who, in turn, was connected to the Abbasid caliph's court, Tabbaa suggests that the “*muqarnas* dome might thus have been created during this time of heated debate as a symbolic manifestation of an occasionalist universe and a distinctive emblem of the resurgent Abbasid state, the safeguard of the Muslim community.”⁸⁸⁵ Because the domes signified an adherence to Sunni orthodoxy, they were rapidly adopted by Sunni Revivalists such as Nūr al-Dīn and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, and also, he argues, by the two Sunni Berber dynasties, the Almoravids and Almohads.⁸⁸⁶

Although more research is needed before determining to what degree the Almoravids espoused Sunni Revivalist ideology, several ideas suggest that they could have done so. For example, various Almoravid buildings and objects share features with those of the contemporary Levant. Tabbaa points to the Qubbat al-Bārūdiyyīn in Marrakesh, built in 1117 by `Alī ibn Yūsuf in order to commemorate his success in bringing water to the city (Figure 6.5).⁸⁸⁷ This *qubba* employs small *muqarnas* domes in the corners of its central dome, it features the first

⁸⁸⁴ Tabbaa, *Transformation*, 132-3; Tabbaa, “The Muqarnas Dome,” 68-71. Tabbaa also suggests that the ordered, rational patterns of geometric *girih* ornament could have evoked “the ordered universe, whose atomistic and occasionalistic structure was created and sustained by divine intervention.” (Ibid., 101.)

⁸⁸⁵ Tabbaa, *Transformation*, 133.

⁸⁸⁶ Ibid., 127.

⁸⁸⁷ Yasser Tabbaa, “Andalusian Roots and Abbasid Homage in the Qubbat al-Barudiyyin in Marrakesh,” *Muqarnas* 25 (2008), 143.

known monumental cursive inscriptions, and it also displays geometric, *giriḥ*-like ornament in certain of its arches' intrados (Figures 6.6 and 6.7). Although Tabbāa focuses solely on this *qubba*, I would also highlight the geometric framework, filled with *ataurique*, adorning the Almoravid-made Kutubiyya minbar. Its star-based strapwork and densely intertwined vegetal ornament echo both the wooden *miḥrāb* of Aleppo's shrine to Abraham (Figure 6.3), commissioned by Nūr al-Dīn in 1165, and the wooden tomb of Imām al-Shāfi'ī, sponsored by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn in 1178. Because *muqarnas*, *giriḥ* and "vegetal arabesque" are all ornamental hallmarks of Tabbāa's Sunni Revival, he suggests that the Almoravids used them in order to further their ties with eastern Sunni Islam. After all, they paid homage to the Abbasid caliph and received official Abbasid confirmation of their territorial possessions in return.⁸⁸⁸

It is telling that Tabbāa has not attempted to develop the ties between the Sunni Revival and Almohad architecture, as he did with the Qubbat al-Barūdiyyīn. Certain visual similarities do exist, such as the use of cursive script, *muqarnas* domes, geometric ornament and, to a limited extent, stylized vegetal ornament. However, I would argue that their use in Almohad architecture differs from their employment in the eastern Mediterranean. Cursive writing, for example, builds on the previous Almoravid tradition and seems to have more to do with legibility than it does with a statement about the exoteric nature of the Qur'ān. Chapter One has shown how the Almohads used cursive epigraphy as a tool in their eternal quest for political legitimacy; if few could decipher the inscriptions, this strategy would have been far less effective.

Furthermore, Ibn Tūmart did not believe that the Qur'ān was entirely exoteric, and this view held

⁸⁸⁸ Ibid., 142. Tabbāa does not preclude the idea of local input into the building. He acknowledges its clear ties to Iberian Umayyad architecture and the desire of the Almoravids to portray themselves as the Umayyads' successors. For more on Almoravid architecture, including a reading that considers interpretations beyond connections to the Sunni Revival, see Cynthia Robinson, "The Great Mosque of Tlemcen," in *The Cambridge History of World Religious Architecture*, forthcoming.

firm into Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf's caliphate, when Ibn Rushd developed his theories about which Qur'ānic verses were open to interpretation.

Similar ideas apply to the Almohads' use of *muqarnas* domes and vegetal and geometric ornament, again, both of which had been developed during the Almoravid period. On a formal level, the Almohad *muqarnas* domes do compare reasonably well with those of the Almoravids, but again, given their bellicose rapport with the latter, it is difficult to argue that they would wish to echo any potential political or theological ideals encoded into Almoravid structures. Instead, Almohad *muqarnas*, along with Almohad vegetal ornament, contained highly sophisticated messages relevant to *Almohad* doctrine, even as it changed over time. And while geometric, *girih*-style patterns do appear on the doors of the Mosque of Seville, certain panels of the Kutubiyya's minaret and around the frames of the Tinmal and Kutubiyya mosques' *mihrābs*, the Almohads relied much more heavily on architecturally-derived ornament, such as blind arches or panels of *sebka*.

Although this analysis has been necessarily brief, it has shown that the artistic ties between Almohad and Levantine religious architecture are not as strong as Tabbaa suggests. Despite the best efforts of each regions' leaders to unite the Muslim community, foster correct belief and root out heresy, and even in spite of certain formal artistic similarities, I argue that the connection remains superficial. The reasons for these parallels could be tied to the spread of artistic ideas through travelers, borne out in this case by the demonstrable ties that linked the twelfth-century Eastern and Western Mediterranean regions. It is also possible that the Almoravids did in fact self-consciously emulate Baghdadi architectural and ornamental styles in order to underscore their legitimacy as representatives of the Abbasid caliphs. From there, the

forms could easily have made it into an Almohad repertoire but not, as Tabbaa suggested, in order to manifest an Almohad allegiance to Baghdad.

Maribel Fierro has accurately described the Almohad movement as a revolution, something ontologically distinct from a revival, no matter how Sunni the latter aspires to be. Ibn Tūmart may have espoused certain doctrines that aligned with Ash`arism, which he would have learned as a student in Baghdad. However, Chapter One has shown that Ibn Tūmart's doctrine also features elements from Mu`tazilism and even Shī`ism, and the whole of this dogmatic combination is truly greater than a sum of its parts. Ibn Tūmart and the first Almohad caliphs were not attempting to eliminate internecine Sunni differences by promoting harmony between the four schools of jurisprudence. They wished to eliminate all religious difference by completely supplanting the established—and for them, incorrect—juridical and theological systems with Ibn Tūmart's teachings. It is no wonder, then, that forms that “meant” one thing to Nūr al-Dīn or even `Alī ibn Yūsuf take on very different meanings for `Abd al-Mu`min or Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf. Rather than identifying themselves as Sunni Muslims, with the accompanying permissiveness toward differences of opinion (Ar. *ikhtilāf*), the Almohads believed that their belief system constituted “true” Islam. The Almohads made no room for deviance.

4 THE ALMOHADS AND THE MEDITERRANEAN

In order to fully contextualize Almohad Friday mosques, I have widened my analytical lens to include three polities whose demonstrable ties to the Almohads suggested the possibility of architectural connections as well. For Castile, I argued that Alfonso VIII emulated the cultural and political hallmarks of the Almohad caliphate. Although the monarch viewed the Almohads as a threat and a rival state, he mirrored Almohad efforts to promote knowledge and culture, training scholars in elite, state-funded schools. He, along with his progeny, also valued

the visual signs of Almohad authority, such as garments made from elaborate Hispanomuslim textiles. Finally, the king and his wife underlined their personal piety, a marker of royal legitimacy for the Almohads as well, founding an institution not unlike Almohad *ribāts*, although they tailored the Cistercian convent of Las Huelgas to suit their own needs. In this context, one sees how the founders' choice to be buried in an Almohad-style *qubba*, sparsely decorated with lambrequin arches, *sebka* and *ataurique*, conforms to a general pattern of Castilian-Almohad similitude.

Such strong links to the Almohad Empire did not obtain in the other two areas that I examined: Norman Sicily and the Levant. Although Sicily's *muqarnas* compares well with Almohad *muqarnas*, their lack of flutes or seams notwithstanding, the differences inherent in palatine and religious structures led me to reject a transfer of semiotic ideas from one site to the other. This reading was tempered somewhat by the *muqarnas* in the dome of the Zisa palace's chapel, which could benefit from a more studied comparison to al-Manṣūr's palatine mosque in Marrakesh than I am able to offer here. In the eastern Mediterranean, the reforming ideals of rulers such as Nūr al-Dīn and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, which Tabbāa links to artistic change, promised a greater degree of compatibility with Almohad mosques. But again, the comparison fell short. While his argument concerning shifting aesthetics during the Sunni Revival is generally successful, Tabbāa's attempt to extend it to Almohad architecture breaks down once the Maghribī buildings are understood on their own terms.⁸⁸⁹

My analysis here has only strengthened the ideas that closed my critical assessment of the emerging field of Mediterranean Studies: religious built environments are fundamentally

⁸⁸⁹ Tabbāa's argument also occasionally shows cracks when single monuments receive monographic treatment. Stephennie Mulder's article concerning the Mausoleum of Imām Shāfi'ī, built by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn in Cairo is a good example. While Tabbāa includes this monument's cenotaph among those that typify the Sunni Revival (see *Transformation*, 68 and 96), Mulder demonstrates that the building in fact speaks to the internecine struggles of contemporary Sunni sects. See Stephennie Mulder, "The Mausoleum of Imam al-Shafi'i," 41-2.

different from palatine ones. Rather than displaying a commonly-understood set of cultural references to power and authority, religious architecture showcases the distinctive spiritual ideas through which sovereigns set themselves apart from rival polities. In this way, the striking formal differences between Norman and Almohad religious architecture and the semiotic disparities between twelfth-century Levantine and Almohad forms make sense. In the first case, the difference extends to religion itself, although interestingly, the closest connections to Almohad structures happened in a palatine religious milieu. The second case manifests the disconnections between two self-titled champions of Islamic orthodoxy. Finally, even in the Assumption Chapel, the features of Almohad ornament that transmitted doctrinal ideas are conspicuously absent.

Nevertheless, the Assumption Chapel most clearly represents Almohad religious architecture on an international scale, so to speak. But how “Mediterranean” is this comparison? Although Castile certainly had ties to important Mediterranean powers such as Norman Sicily or the Almohads themselves, it did not control a Mediterranean coast in the twelfth century.⁸⁹⁰ Nor was it necessary for the Castilians to cross the Mediterranean in order to experience Almohad architecture firsthand. Pedro Fernádez de Castro and Ibn al-Fakhhār both visited Marrakesh, but the monuments in Seville provided ample exposure to the kind of architectural style that Alfonso VIII would later emulate. In this case, it is more accurate to speak of an “Iberian” set of aesthetics or mode of transmission than it does to call the ties between the Almohads and Castilians “Mediterranean.”

As I ruminate upon Las Huelgas and twelfth-century Mediterranean religious architecture, one final thought strikes me. I began to study Las Huelgas in 2002, as an undergraduate. Fortunately, Chapter Five refines and corrects various ideas accumulated

⁸⁹⁰ In 1177, William II of Sicily married Eleanor’s sister, which reinforces the ties between the two kingdoms.

through ten years of thinking about the Assumption Chapel, but this is certainly not the first time that I have considered its ties to Almohad architecture, to Norman Sicily or to the eastern Mediterranean. Furthermore, in 2002 Tabbaa had just published *The Transformation of Islamic Art*, and María Teresa Pérez Higuera had underlined the formal similarities between Las Huelgas' *muqarnas* and that of the Capella Palatina as early as 1994.⁸⁹¹ Neither I nor these scholars benefitted from the new Mediterranean Studies paradigm; in 2002, my comparative work was simply inspired by theirs.⁸⁹² It thus seems that the best Mediterranean scholarship will not substantially differ from the best comparative scholarship related to the region, however one chooses to define it.

5 FINAL CONCLUSIONS

I ended the introduction to this study with a question that Tabbaa posed as he worked through a set of problems similar to my own: “Can we, by problematizing instead of glossing over ruptures, disjunctions, and discontinuities, arrive at a better understanding of the meaning of change in Islamic architecture?”⁸⁹³ While I have endeavored to acknowledge the continuity of official Almohad religious architecture—from its inception under `Abd al-Mu`min, to its near-end two generations later under Abū Yūsuf Ya`qūb al-Manṣūr,—I have, like Tabbaa, focused on difference. Instead of invoking a static, fundamentalist doctrine, rude Berber tempers or the lack of an indigenous artistic tradition in order to explain the Almohad mosques' typologies and austerity, I paused to consider whether or not the buildings are as alike as they appear.

⁸⁹¹ Pérez Higuera, “El mudéjar, una opción artística,” 171.

⁸⁹² Albeit, of course, with varying degrees of success. My own initial work on Las Huelgas hardly merits a citation, and I have already discussed Tabbaa's endeavors above. Pérez Higuera signals stylistic parallels between Sicilian *muqarnas* in the Zisa palace and the Assumption Chapel's vestibule. However, her comparison between the two buildings is taken no further than the suggestion that the kings would have felt the “presence” of the Norman kings' architectural projects in their own enterprises. See *Ibid.*, 170-2.

⁸⁹³ Tabbaa, *Transformation*, 10.

This approach rejects the misrepresentation of artistic difference, which, as Juan Carlos Ruiz so aptly observed, would support an artificial “theory of styles.” It has also yielded a litany of features particular to individual Almohad mosques: Ribāṭ Tinmal’s singular function; the Kutubiyya mosque’s Umayyad capitals and mobile *maqṣūra* and both buildings’ spare, abstract vegetal ornament; the mosque of Seville’s huge dimensions, its proliferate, naturalistic vegetal ornament and its rigorous *sebka* and the Hassan mosque’s even greater dimensions, unique plan and static, stately ornament. How can all of these elements, which often contrast markedly, be explained by a monolithic “Almohad doctrine?” They cannot, of course, and I have argued that they respond to the different needs and shifting theological alliances of their patrons. Because these patrons formed political alliances as well, both the previous chapter and this conclusion have placed Almohad religious architecture into a wider geographical context. At the end of it all, I raise my own voice to answer Tabbāa’s question with a resounding “yes.”

CONCLUSION FIGURES

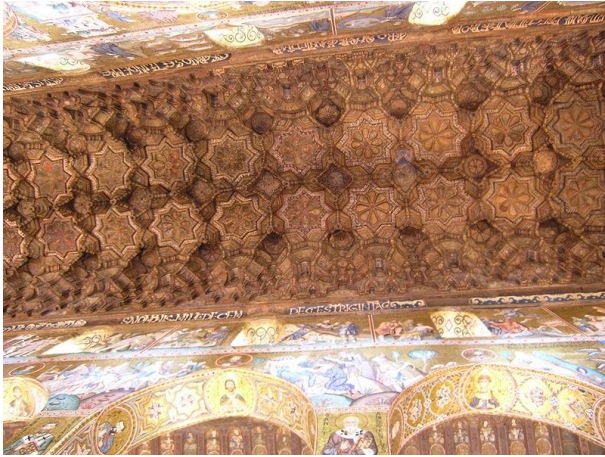


Figure 6.1. *Muqarnas*, Cappella Palatina (Image courtesy of Kristen Strehle)



Figure 6.2. *Muqarnas*, Zisa Palace (Image Courtesy of Kristen Strehle)

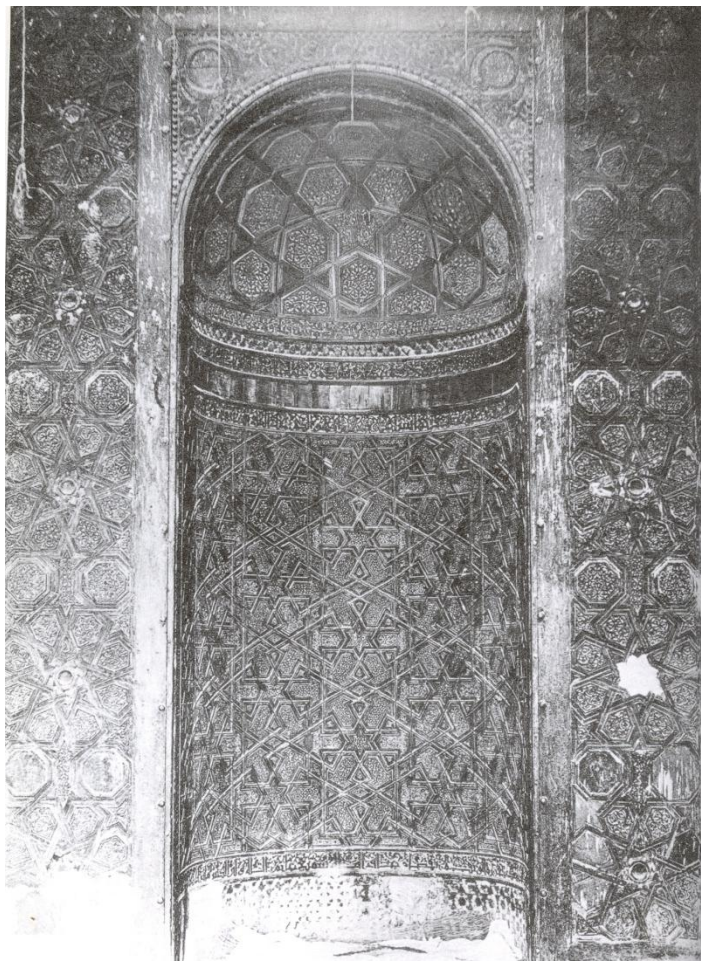


Figure 6.3. *Garih Stars and Vegetal Arabesque, Mihrāb*, Maqam Ibrāhīm, Aleppo (Ernst Herzfeld, vol. 3 of *Inscriptions et monuments d'Alep* (Le Caire: Imprimerie de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1956), pl. XLVI.)



Figure 6.4. *Muqarnas*, Mausoleum Imām Dur (1085) (Nassar Rabat, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/mitopencourseware/2987603686/> (accessed April 11, 2013))



Figure 6.5. Almoravid Qubbat al-Barūdiyyīn (Author's Photo)



Figure 6.6. *Muqarnas* Corner, Qubbat al-Barūdiyyīn (Author's Photo)



Figure 6.7. *Girih* Ornament, Qubbat al-Barūdiyyīn (Author's Photo)

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