

The Intellectual Developments During the Almohad Dynasty (1130-1269)

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Abstract: Much has been written however without specific focus about the acclaimed Mahdi Ibn Tumart (1080-1130), the theological doctrine of Almohads and their tireless efforts to extinct Malikism in the Maghreb. Such a development and Ibn Tumart's claim of Mahdism caused Almohads' contributions to be totally or partially obscured while Almohads shows significantly prosperous intellectual life. This research examines the background of the intellectual developments during AlMohad Dynasty and their influence on advancing learning and scholarship. This inquiry not only helps highlight the effects of earlier dynasties on Almohads intellectual life but also repositions the distinct theological character of Almohads in the process of intellectual and legal development in the Maghreb.

Key words: Almohads • Ibn Tumart • Maghreb • Maliki • Mahdism

INTRODUCTION

Despite its far geographical distance from the capital of the Islamic Empire, the Muslim West (Maghreb) had shown great deal of political and intellectual resonance with the changes in the East (*mashriq*). Such a resonance was made possible through the integration of Berbers' socio-cultural experience and tribal religiosity. Most prominently historical Muslim schools and movements, whether orthodox or heterodox, have made their long voyage to the West to adopt new fertile lands with new cultivators. That was probably because the Muslim West provided a safe haven for persecuted thoughts away from the central power of the caliphate. The new adaptations however, supplied a fresh extension evolving often to a counterbalanced political and intellectual clash with the central authority of Bagdad over religious and political legitimacy and also developed new forms of religious interpretation in search for a locally branded representation of Islam in the Muslim West.

The Almohads Dynasty was established in the Maghreb. Its boundaries extended from Tripoli in the East, Pacific Ocean on the West coast, to contemporary Senegal in the South and had also extended to Muslim Spain. This dynasty was established on Shi'ite

foundations similar to the Zaydites or the Fatimite doctrine, as is evident in the poetry of Almohads which is similar to any other Shi'ites. In the year of (1147AC), under the leadership of Abd al-Mu'min bin 'Ali, the Almohads took control of the entire Far Maghreb as well as all of North Africa and Spain (Andalus); giving birth to one of the greatest empires on the west coast of the Mediterranean sea since the Roman Empire. It was Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Abdullah bin Tumart (485AH-524AH), called the Mahdi, who established the Dynasty of Almohads.

IBN Tumart's Reforms: Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad Ibn Tumart (1080-1130) learned under al-MubÉrak bin al-ÙayyÉrÉ. He took the *UÏÉl* from al-ShÉshÉ [1]. ImÉm DhahabÉ describes Ibn Tumart's early stages of learning as follow: "Most of what Ibn Tumart advocated included the articles of beliefs (*al-I'tiqÉd*) according to ImÉm al-Ash'arÉ. The people of Maghreb despised the discipline of scholastic theology (*'ilm al-kalÉm*). It is reported that on one occasion, the Governor of Fes called upon all local Maliki jurists for debate with Ibn Tumart. They unfortunately failed [2]. Ibn Tumart noticed the incompetence of the jurists in theology and won the debate. As a result, the Governor, in view of the jurists'

recommendation, banned Ibn Tumart altogether from Fes. Ibn Tumart headed toward Murrakesh where Ibn Tashfin confronted him with another group of Maliki jurists. This time, Ibn Wuhayb the Philosopher [2] realized the intelligence of Ibn Tumart and threat and thus advised the governor to assassinate him. TĒj Din SubkĒ (d.771A.H./1369 C.E.) narrates similar account but further argues that the jurists' failure to confront Ibn Tumart in Murrakesh was because of their incompetency in debate and also because of Ibn Tumart's treatise on beliefs (*'AqĒda*) was in Berber language. According to Ibn Khaldun, Maliki Jurists disliked Ibn Tumart because of his Ash'arite beliefs, his critiques of their stagnant observance of the doctrine of the *Salaf* and his condemnation of their anthropomorphism (*tajsĒm*) [3].

According to DhahabĒ, Ibn Tumart taught members of the tribe of MaĒmĒda, exhorted them to enjoin good and forbid evil and revere the Mahdi (The Messiah). As soon as he acquired power however, he immediately proclaimed himself to be the expected Mahdi and traced his lineage back to Ali bin Abi Talib. The MaĒmĒda pledged allegiance to him. Ibn Tumart provided his disciples with a learning guide entitled "*A'az mĒ YuĒlab*" (*The Most Cherished Wish*) in which he adhered to the opinions of the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites and showed some inclinations to Shi'ism. Ibn Tumart organized his disciples as follows: the first ten recognizing them as Almohads (*al-MuwaĒĒidĒn*) including those who accepted his claim, the second group of fifty called the believers (*al-Mu'minĒn*) who were the assurance that none equals them in faith because of their firm belief, who shall kill the *DajĒl* and who will lead Jesus in prayer [1]. Ibn Tumart's early days in MaĒmĒda began with public allegiance and fight against anthropomorphism. Following MaĒmĒda's allegiance, Ibn Tumart was given the title "Mahdi". Ibn Tumart declared fight on all those who rejected his authority from MaĒmĒda themselves [3].

Ibn Tumart is described as righteous and pious and only revealed his intention in Mahdism (Messianism) upon a growth of support [4]. Ibn Khaldun views Ibn Tumart as man of piety, religion and knowledge. His major problem was nonetheless his inclination to the doctrine of the ImĒmites and his belief in the impeccability of the Imam [3]. SubkĒ argues that Ibn Tumart developed a theological image of Mahdi first and then choose the right time to introduce his personal qualities as a match for the prototype of Mahdi. Ibn Tumart also claimed infallibility [4]. According to Ibn Khaldun's narrative, Ibn Tumart grew up in love with Islamic learning for which he traveled to the East in (500 A.H./1106 C.E.) Ibn Tumart set

his journey in Cordova and then to Alexandria. He performed pilgrimage and traveled to Iraq where he studied under the guidance of famous scholars. It is also reported that Ibn Tumart met AbĒ xĒmid al-GhazĒĒ and some other famous Ash'arite scholars and that he learnt from them and adopted their rational methods of argumentation to support the doctrine of early generations (*'aqa'id al-salaf*). Ibn Tumart is reported to have adopted their method of interpreting allegorical texts in the Quran and Hadith. This was done when scholars in the Maghrib completely rejected religious interpretations (*tawĒĒl*) because of them being strict adherents to the doctrine of the Salaf in their condemnation of religious interpretation (*ta'wĒĒl*) [3]. Many intellectual disciplines greatly flourished during the era of the Almohads as show in the state's approach to scholarship and the learning. We shall highlight some of those achievements to demonstrate the nature of the period.

The Golden ERA of Almohads: The Almohads excelled in most intellectual areas of learning and literary disciplines and have had noteworthy traits that distinguish them from the rest of other dynasties in the Maghreb. They showed a reverent attitude to Islamic learning and scholarship. Their educational reform however, was significantly affected by their unique interpretation of what "right knowledge" that should lead to human salvation (*al-naĒĒt*). It was during the period of the third Almohads' caliph AbĒ Ya'qĒb bin YĒsuf bin Abdul Mu'min bin Ali nicknamed Abu Yusuf who upon appointment to the office underwent through examination of rulers, judges, state servants and others; and organized his state in light of the need of time and context. Abu Yusuf was also known for his zeal for scholarship and for his great respect for religious scholars. Al-TunbuktĒ describes him as being great in learning and scholarship and that his major interest was in the study of the Qur'Ēn and xĒadĒth. Abu Yusuf is reported to have instructed some religious scholars to compile ĒadĒth according to chapters of Islamic law from the major ĒadĒth sources. In fact Abu Yusuf himself taught the public the new ĒadĒth collections and personally followed up on the memorization of ĒadĒth. Abu Yusuf also showed pre-occupation with the comfort of students of Islamic learning, particularly those learning the discipline of ĒadĒth. It is reported that on one day, in the presence of all Almohads, AbĒ YĒsuf said: "Oh Almohads, you are tribes! He who faces a problem will seek assistance from his respective tribe. Those students have no support except myself. I am then their refuge in all of their

problems. To me come their complaints and to me they do refer.” The Dynasty of Almohads, especially during the reign of Abd al-Mu‘min (1130-1163) and AbĒ Ya‘qĒb (1184-1199) witnessed significant number of learning circles of discussion in the various areas of scholarship; these circles were attended by prominent scholars and men of lettres.

According to al-Mu‘jab, the Almohads established schools, built learning institutions, invited notable scholars, proposed the writing of books, held debates and competitions and held several scholarly meetings. MurrĒkishĒ argues that Almohads pioneered the development of the compulsory education, invented the free learning and developed learning curriculums. Their keen interest in spreading Islamic knowledge was shown through the use of Berber language, hence reviving translation. For example, they have translated many works in philosophy and set for it salaries, gifts, stipends, transportations, estates and positions. This is quoted by al-ZayyĒtĒ in the *al-RawĒa al-SulaymĒniyyah* of al-FatĒ. The Almohads recruited well-known scholars from Andalus, QayrawĒn and other Muslim centers to the degree where Fes was described as the collector of the scholarship of QayrawĒn and Gordova as mentioned by al-MurrĒkishĒ. Murrakesh became the capital city of scholarship and was named the Second Baghdad. Other cities also witnessed similar progress including Tangiers. [5] The emigration of Arabs and residents of Andalus to the Maghreb has significantly increased until the Maghreb was characterized by its Arabic character whereby Arabic language became prevalent. [6]

A.the State and the Learned Men: From the very beginning, Almohads planned their religious reforms within a broad geographical context to include control and sovereignty of the whole Muslim world including the Maghreb. Their start was in Taymnlal and their developing of effective religious nucleus that evolved to a military power defending Ibn Tumart’s ideology, perhaps led them to the secret key for their foreseen Islamic kingdom. Inviting religious and intellectual elites to the new Almohads state was broadly adopted and might have been viewed as effective as waging war against armies and states. This is strongly evident in Almohads’ invitation of scholars and learned men in almost every discipline. Their direct attention was on recruiting experts of *‘Ilm al-NaĒdar* (knowledge of logic) whom they call students of the city (*Ēalabat al-Ēalar*). Al-MannĒnĒ for instance cites the names of some of those scholars like AbĒ al-QĒsim ‘Abdul RaĒmĒn

MalqĒ (509A.H/1115C.E.-581A.H/1185C.E.), Abu ‘Abdullah Mohammad MalqĒ (known by ibn FakhkhĒr) (511A.H./1117C.E.-590A.H./1193 C.E.), Abu ‘AbduAllah MirĒ (505A.H./1111C.E.-591A.H./1194 C.E.), Abul Hassan Nadjbatal-IshbĒĒĒ (521A.H./1127C.E.-595A.H./1198C.E.), Abu Bakr Muhammad bin ‘AbdulAziz al-IshbĒĒĒ, AbĒ Ja‘far Ahmad BulunsĒ (554A.H./1159C.E.-606A.H./1209C.E.), Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn ×adjdjĒm (558A.H./1162C.E.-614A.H./1217C.E.). [6]

The Almohads followed the tradition of their ancestors in their discussion of religious and intellectual issues. This, as described by many chroniclers, engaged the intellectual elites in the presence of the ruler. MurrĒkishĒ himself was attached to the intellectual circle of Amir Abu ZakariyyĒ bin ‘Abdul Mu‘min. Those meetings usually started with introducing new visiting scholars, followed by a discussion of religious issues and sometimes provided a forum for disciplinary actions against heretic people. For MannĒnĒ, those official meetings required certain protocols and in case of failing to abide by those rules, participants may be expelled [6]. Almohads’ students (*Ēalabat al-muwallĒiddĒn*) were privileged to attend the ruler’s meeting. In those special intellectual meetings, the ruler would raise religious questions for discussion. Those students used to recite the Qur’an and ×adĒth and also to read Ibn Tumart’s guide in both Berber and Arabic language [2]. MurrĒkishĒ describes AbĒ Ya‘qĒb (558A.H./1163A.C.-579 A.H./1184A.C.), the caliph as a learned man [2] and a very keen person to collect books from Andalus and Maghrib and who constantly searched for religious scholars especially those with the expertise of *‘ilm al-naĒdar*. He succeeded in gathering around him a significant number of scholars never gathered before him [2].

Those gatherings were usually held in the presence of the Caliph for the sake of discussion, argumentation and debate. Besides scholars and men of lettres from the Maghreb, there were also visiting scholars invited personally by the Caliph like Ibn Tufayl the Philosopher and some other scholars. Guests were well received and hosted. Those gatherings involved the discussion of many disciplines. Each circle was dedicated to a particular discipline and often began with problems subject for examination. They were also highly organized even in their sitting protocol. For example, the Caliph’s order requires the *KhaĒĒb* (preacher), the *QĒĒĒ al-JamĒ‘a* (the Judge of the Community), the head of the physicians, prominent scholars and other scholars according to their ranks and positions. All attendees were serious and discipline [2]. One of the most notable meetings of

scholarship was that of Zakariyyā Yālyā bin Yusuf bin Abd al-Mu'min which attended by 'Abd al-Wēlīd al-Murrēkishī, the author of al-Mu'jab and the poet Abū Isī'eq al-Zuwaylī [2].

Madrasas (Institutions of Learning): 'Abd al-Mu'min established madrasas in Murrakesh and assigned Ibn Rushd to the task of their organization to. He also set a school for training civil servants (*madrasat al-muwaḏḏaffīn*) [7], the Royal school, the Marine and the school for scouts (*madrasat al-Kashshāfa*) [3]. According to Ibn Faīl Allah al-'Umarī (d. 749 AH) in his *Mas'elik al-Abbār*, "the most prominent of those schools had contained many shelves of books. There was another school dedicated to Imam Abū al-'Abbās al-Sabtī [1]". Almohads established students' lodges and hostels and dedicated large endowments for their food, drink and cemeteries. There were also the *katēb* (primary schools) and learning in Mosques. The author of *al-ḥulal al-Mēshiyah* mentioned the names of Almohads' schools and describes the memorization of the Muwaḏḏā of Imām Malik as an obligatory part of their curriculum [7]. Al-Mannānī however argues that Almohads built up three different Madrasas. He supports his conclusion by al-Wazzān's description in which he says: "Far from there, there exists another beautiful palace used as a Madrasa for children of the caliph and his family. The Madrasa has wonderful windows with colorful glass and several libraries around the hall. [8]" It appears however, that Leos Africanus (al-Wazzān) might be referring to a certain learning institution serving the royal family offering various learning disciplines. It is not clear however what age groups of students and what was the school's higher learning level. Sources are silent about this question including Africanus himself.

According to Murrēkishī's description of Almohads' governor, Abu Yusuf did not provide any special attention to Madrasa. According to him, Abu Yusuf upon return from Ishbēliyyah, instructed the building of a castle with palaces near the river. Abū Yūsuf was in fact keen in construction and in the restoration of almost all palaces and cities [2]. Assuming the existence of these Madrasas and that they slipped Murrēkishī, we found none of these in the reign of the Merinids. The second school is located in the capital city of Murrakish in the Qasabah. There was a third school located in the old town of Murrakish. This is drawn from Ibn 'Abd al-Barr's statement in the *Tamhīd* in which he indicated that Murtaḏī, one of later Almohads' rulers, endowed the

fourth volume of *Kitāb al-Tamhīd* to all interested to read it for Muslims in *Madrasat al-Ilm*. Muhammad 'Abdul 'Azīz argues that the school of Almohads (*madrasat al-muwaḏḏaffīn*) provided its students with administrative education and training so as to meet the administrative needs of the state [9]. The second, according to Ibn Zar' was the royal school for Almohads Princes so as to isolate them from troubles while the third was in Rabat dedicated to navy studies.

Some scholars however, argue that Almohads never knew the idea of *madrasa*; this is based on the fact that historical sources do not provide us with proper account on madrasas during their period. It is argues that if such madrasas really existed, they would have survived in following periods. The evidence that none of these buildings existed in later time stand as strong argument that they simply did not exist [9]. Almohads' contribution to the Mosque of the Qarawiyyīn, however, represents a strong indication of their interest in religious life and learning. Their contribution focused on expansion and decoration as recorded by 'Adul Hēdī Tēzī in his study of the Mosque of Qarawiyyīn. The opinion that Almohads have indeed built schools (*madrasas*) however appears to be more consistent with their religious doctrine for they achieved significant religious and intellectual reforms, alongside their plan to subjugate their rivals through all means including madrasas. Assuming the hypothetical existence of those schools, they probably operated for strict purposes or were set initially differently.

C. Libraries (Khazō'in al-kutub): It was the common practice of rulers to devote attention in the collection of books, sources and manuscripts. This was a royal tradition in the reign of Almohads. Books represent the backbone of religious learning whether associated with Mosques, palaces or *madrasas*. Building libraries and bookstores was then the common practice of rulers and princes. Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb al-Mansur (579A.H./1184A.C.-595 A.H./1199A.C) for instance is reported to have established an enormous library. Establishing libraries and bookstores was not restricted to rulers only but was also undertaken by generous people from among the Muslim public such as Abu al-Hasan 'Ali bin Mohammad al-Ghēfiqī described in *Jujdhwat al-Iqtibās* (308) and *Qilat al-Qilah* (300) as a lover of books and who collected a large collection of books including the most precious sources. He bequeathed them on people of learning. Libraries represented a principal landmark in Murrēkish where Yusuf established fantastic and large libraries [10].

Traditional and Rational Sciences (*Ulēm 'aqliyyah Wa-naqliyyah*)

Maliki Doctrine of Law: From the very beginning, Ibn Tumart declared a religious revolution undermining the position of Maliki scholars on allegorical verses and the dogmatic approach of the Maliki doctors of law to legal reasoning. These principals have led Almohads rulers to clearly set their objectives: banishing Maliki legal sources and replacing them with Ibn Tumart's methodology and the direct and authentic reference to the Quran and the Sunnah. The devastating historical discard of Maliki textbooks was eye-witnessed by Murrakishî who reports this event as follow: "During Ibn Tumart's time, knowledge of the law (*'ilm al-Furî*) became extinct and the jurists were scared. Ibn Tumart has even gone to the extreme when he ordered some of books of Maliki jurisprudence to be set to fire. Some of those books included the *Mudawannah* of Saîñn, *Kitâb Ibn YËnus* and the *NawËdir* of Ibn AbË Zayd and its abridge, *al-TahdhËb* of al-BarËdhË and *al-WËîîa* of Ibn ×abËb. MurrËkeshî argues that loads of Maliki books were put to fire. People were cautioned against indulging in *'ilm al-Ray'* (reasoning) and punishment was set against its people [2].

Abu Ya'qËb exhorted residents to disregard all of Ibn Tumart's books and to preoccupy themselves rather with the direct study of texts of the Qur'Ën and ÌadËth, to keep away the books of the MËliki legal doctrine. Ibn Tumart also instructed scholars of ÌadËth to collect traditions of the Prophet Mohammed from major hadith collections like ØaîËh of BukhËrË, Muslim, TirmidhË, Muwaîîa, Sunan AbË DËwËd, NasË'i, al-BazzËr, Musnad Ibn AbË Shaybah, Sunan al-DËraqûñË and Sunan al-BayhaqË. Such a selective approach to ÌadËth essentially intended to cover the various chapters of Fiqh. Hadith experts had no choice but to comply with the instruction. Ibn Tumart urged citizens of the Maghreb to memorize the new Hadith collection, with the hope, as stated by Murrakishî, to abolish the legal doctrine of Malikism altogether from the Maghrib and the exclusive adherence to the literal interpretation of the Quran and Sunnah. [2] This would be viewed as a state compulsory religious education to execute Almohads' religious reform agenda at various social levels [6]. The study of these compilations in both Berber and Arabic languages also represents a further bilingual instruction during Almohads.

It was apparent that the religious learning during Almohads highly favored scholars and students of ÌadËth. This was the agenda of the state on order to reinforce their ideology through dissemination of fear

including extinguishing of Maliki textbooks and threatening Maliki jurists. Those reforms could not win over because Malikism was already deeply rooted during Almoravids and if totally abolished, that would mean to the residents of the Maghrib a serious violation of a basic constituent of religious and historical identity[11]. The Almohads' intellectual reform did not proceed in a vacuum; it rather carried AlMoravids' legacy yet at a larger scale, (i.e.) they built on AlMoravids' intellectual heritage while keeping their loyal adherence to Ibn Tumart's principal philosophy. The overall assessment of both Le Tourneau and Terrasse of Almohads' contributions is that Almohads took over and on a large scale have completed the work of AlMoravids, by prolonging and accentuating the symbiosis between Spain and Barbary, they gave time for the institutions, the arts and crafts of Moorish Spain to take root in the town of the Maghrib. [11]. Ibn Tumart realized the need for an alternative that satisfy the requirements of legal reasoning and hence re-formulated the interpretation of the law on the basis of traditions, which may viewed as a close position to the Ûahirites. The efforts of Almohads to neutralize the Maliki doctrine of law and to revive free reasoning based on revelation however, was doomed to failure. This was apparent in later developments associated with the Almohads where Ibn Tumart's religious doctrine was left out and where Islamic law during their reign did not make significant developments.

Islamic law prospered and grew in two dimensions: AlMohad's rulers, especially Ya'qËb al-ManîËr, admired the Ûahirite School of law. Ya'qËb for instance used to describe great scholars as being dependent on Ibn Hazm. It was Ya'qËb who set the Maliki books to fire and made Ijtihad a strict requirement in the deduction of legal rulings from the sources of the Quran and the Sunnah, consensus and analogy. Among the prominent and original Ûahirite jurist AbË al-Hasan al-BulunsË al-FËsË (d. 605AH). This period also witnessed many critical writings such as Ibn QaîËn who wrote about a book entitled "*al-wahm wa al-IhËm al-wËqi'yan fË kutub al-IîkËm*". [12] Most Maliki jurists were strict adherents to the Maliki Madhhab. Some of those who could not compromise their legal position included the most learned jurists like the judge of Fes Ishaq bin Ibrahim al-GhumarË al-ØaydË al-MujËbirË (d. 609) and ×arrËË al-MurrËkishË (d. 637AH) and many others. According to MurrËkishË, Yusuf and Abul Mu'min both inclined to the use of opinion in Islamic jurisprudence and that the idea of opinion goes back to Ibn Tumart as stated by MurrËkishË. In his explanation of the ×ulal, al-KhaîËb

reports that Ibn Tumart rejected the books of legal opinions and *taqlîd* and instead adhered to the Ūahirite School of law as cited in *al-Mi'yâr* of al-Wansharîsî. Ya'qûb threatened all those engaged with the Madhhab of Malik. Many were subjected to harsh punishment, killing, lashings and other disciplinary measures just to prevent them from reading sources of Maliki law (*kutub al-fur*). [7]

B. Quran Exegesis and Adôth: Almohads showed a great interest and dedication to Tafsîr and the invitation of Quran exegetes. During their time, Tafsîr prospered. There were some famous Quran exegists such as 'Abd al-Jalîl al-Anîrî (d. 608) who wrote sixty volumes on *Mushkil al-Quran wa al-Sunnah*, Abdullah bin Ali bin Abi al-Anîrî al-Fîsî (d. 662) who abridged the *Kashshâf* of Zamakhsharî while disposing off some Mu'tazilite notions. Yusuf was a master of Quran recitation. Al-Mansur himself certified some scholars in areas of good versifications (*arjîz*) and the art of recitation of the Quran (*tajwîd*) and points of articulation (*makhârîj al-îrîf*) [12].

Almohads hosted a number of Îadîth experts from Andalus to teach in the Maghreb with local *mulâddiths*. Students of Îadîth gained unparalleled status during the reign of Abî Ya'qûb. [2] Many of Almohads' rulers were themselves *mulâddiths* and memorizers of Îadîth. For instance, Yusuf ibn Abd al-Mu'min committed the collection of Bukhârî and Muslim to memory. Ya'qûb memorized many Îadîth texts. Prince Ibrahim bin Yusuf bin Abdul Mu'min also memorized and narrated Îadîth. [2]

Among the most famous *mulâddiths* during the time was Abu 'Abdullah al-Oîqillî al-Fîsî who was described in the *Takmilah* as a narrator of Îadîth and one who memorized the texts of Îadîth with an understanding of Îadîth defects (*'ilal*) and a knowledge about the narrators of Îadîth and their biographies. [1]

Philosophy: Philosophy and philosophers flourished during Almohads. The King of Italy Frederick II, used to send his questions on philosophy to Ibn Sab'î (d. 669) in Sebta. The Caliph al-Mansur also admired philosophy and invited Ibn Tufayl and treated him highly [2]. Ibn Tufayl also invited Ibn Rushd and other philosophers to revive the philosophical writings and to make the texts of philosophy readable and simple. The Almohads' reign witnessed a flourished era of philosophy and distinguished philosophers. Governor Ya'qûb for instance is described in al-Mu'jab as wholeheartedly interested in

learning and collecting books and treatises on philosophy. According to Murrakishî, Ya'qûb collected many philosophical works, learnt medicine (*al-îbb*) and collected a library similar to that of the Ummayyad Caliph al-Mustanîr bi-Allah [2].

Abî Bakr Muhammad Ibn Tufayl, a student of Abu Bakr Ibn al-Ōîgh (Ibn Bajjah) and the author of several philosophical treatises on nature (*al-îbbiyyat*) and divinity (*al-îlhiyyat*) was a close friend of Abî Ya'qûb the ruler with whom he stay days in his palace [2]. It is reported that Abî Ya'qûb once complained from one of Aristotle' philosophical passage, probably for its ambiguity or poor translation and urged Ibn Rushd to summarize those books to render them simple and readable by the public. It was then when Ibn Rushd decided to abridge the woks of Aristotle [2].

The approach of Almohads to philosophy seems to be inconsistent as it includes a wide array of irreconcilable standpoints. This is demonstrated in Maqarrî's account of Ibn 'abîb, a philosopher from Ishbîliyyah murdered by al-Ma'mîn for indulging in philosophy. Maqarrî also notes that the discipline of philosophy was unpopular in Andalus and that philosophers were incapable to reveal it in open and choose rather to conceal their works. [10,13]

Le Tourneau however, confirms Almohads negative attitude to philosophy and argues that unlike historians or philosophers, jurists and theologians were abundant and acclaimed [14]. There was also another group from Cordova that complained to Abu Yusuf and accused Ibn Rushd in his abridges of quoting ancient statements implying Jupiter was one of their Gods. Following a public hearing, Ibn Rushd was humiliated and expelled from Cordova. Abu Yusuf then ordered philosophy to be abandoned and all books of philosophy other than medicine, mathematics and astrology to be burned. But when Abu Yusuf returned to Murrîkish he however left all that and began to learn philosophy. [2]

Scholastic Theology ('Ilm Al-kalam): As mentioned earlier, both Mu'tazilim and Shi'ism have had an impact on Ibn Tumart's theological and intellectual shaping. Al-Imâm Abî al-Sallîjî wrote *al-'Aqâda al-Burhâniyya*, an exposition of Ibn Tumart's "*al-Murshida*". [15] '*Ilm al-Kalâm*' was first restricted in the Maghreb but later appears to be strongly endorsed especially in the time of Ibn Tumart. Ibn Tumart adhered to the school of Ash'arism except on questions of the divine attributes (*al-îfî al-îlhiyyah*). He adopted the opinion of Mu'tazilah on this issue. Theology was given due attention because of the question of Mahdism which was

later forced upon Muslims and reached a point where some wrote about the Almohads' guidance (*al-hidāyah al-muwāḥiddiyah*) supported by corroboration of the texts of the Quran. Ibn Tumart's theological position reached a high status during Almohads; it soon started to fall because of the dissemination of learning and the rejection of caliphs and princes of Ibn Tumart's infallibility (*ʿilma*). Idrīs al-Ma'mūn for instance cursed Ibn Tumart from on the pulpit of Al-Mansur Mosque and wrote to the rest of the country to immediately abolish the conduct and heresies of the Mahdi. [1]

Mysticism (Taoawwuf): According to MurrĖkeshĖ, there were many pious and ascetic people in Ibn Tumart's time. This might have enhanced the spiritual and religious life in the Maghreb. MurrĖkeshĖ states: "During Ibn Tumart's time, pious, ascetics and hadith experts were notable and celebrated. Ibn Tumart himself used to invite people of piety and seek their supplications and was very generous to them." Similarly, Almohads' spiritual life was manifested in the preservation to a copy of the Quran claimed to be complied by the third Muslim caliph, UthmĖn Ibn 'AffĖn. The Almohads used to carry this copy of the Quran in their voyages. Interestingly enough, Ibn Tumart wrote his own copy of the Quran, which was integrated later in Almohads' Quran tradition. [2]

History and Geography: Both history and historiography (*al-siyar*) flourished during the Almohads. Abu al AbbĖs Ahmad bin Muhammad Al-'AzĖ al-LakhmĖ (d. 633) and AbĖ Al-KhaĖĖb al-KalbĖ known as Ibn JamĖl (d. 633) were among the first to write on the Sirah. Al-LakhmĖ wrote *al-Durar al-MunaDDam fĖ Mawlid al-NabĖ al-Mu'aDDam* while Ibn JamĖl wrote the *TanwĖr fĖ-SĖrat al-SĖrĖj al-MunĖr*. There were other writings on the siyar. [6] There was also significant increase in writing about genealogy, biographies, indexes and history of kings and places. These include *al-Mu'jab fĖ TĖrĖkh al-Maghrib*. Al-IdrĖsĖ represents the prominent geographer of the time (d. 562). He began his explorations and travels when he was a child. He studied the characteristics of countries. The King of Sicily Roger asked him to draw a world map. Al-IdrĖsĖ carved countries with their names on a silver plate of three meters and a half length and a width of one meter and a half. He also authored the *Nuzhat al-MushtĖq fĖ-IkhtirĖq al-AĖĖq* and some other works. [6]

- This era also witnessed a number of geographers and travelers.

Mahdism in Crisis: Decay of Almohads: Had Ibn Tumart not condemned AlMoravids, MaĖmĖda might not have adopted his doctrine favorably. Once the AlMoravids departed, new ingredients should have nurtured Ibn Tumart's doctrine instead. Both Maliki jurists and Muslim scholars in the Mashriq condemned Ibn Tumart's heresy. Ibn Tumart probably never anticipated revolt would arise from his own supporters. Le Tourneau argues that all sources agree that Ma'mĖn abolished AlMohad's doctrine; in here he quotes Ma'mĖn official letter: "You know that we have suppressed error and published truth, that there is no other Mahdi other than Jesus the Son of Mary, who alone is entitled the right of Mahdi. That is why we have abolished Almohads' innovation and have dropped out the word "infallibility." Our lord Mansur intended to announce these facts but did not find the occasion to do so." He further states: "All chroniclers argue that, by virtue of his order, the name of *the Mahdi Ibn Tumart* and title "*The Infallible*" were censored on Friday prayer as well as on coins. Likewise some Berber words which used during Friday prayer were eliminated. [16] Le Tourneau continues "What then remained of the spirit of Almohads movement? Nothing. Since it was around the idea of the Mahdi and his impeccability that the Almohads' movement had been founded." [16] As an example of these developments, it is reported that soon after the return of the ruler from the Battle of Alarcos 1195 C.E; Shaykh Abu Bakr HĖnĖ from Andalus led a delegation to his welcome. The ruler after inquiring about the general conditions of the country, its judges and state representatives; asked Abu Bakr about his conditions and then asked him what knowledge he has learned. Abu Bakr replied that he read Ibn Tumart's writings. The ruler then starred at him angrily and said that student of knowledge should not answer likewise and should have said instead he read the Book of Allah, some of the Sunnah, then he could say what he wanted to say. [2]

According to Le Tourneau, few reasons led to the decline of Almohads. One of them is Yusuf al-MustanĖr, the fifth Almohads caliph who was neither a strong nor a talented leader. He almost never left Murrakesh either because he was not aware of his responsibilities and of the various threats beginning to rise." [16] Muslims' failure in the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa was also another detriment to Almohads' power. This according to Le Tourneau brought Almohads to ruin [16]. Another important reason was the inability of the MaĖmĖda tribes

to keep the conquered population in a state of compliance and never engaged them in the administration of the dynasty empire [16]. Terrasse believes that the tribe of MaġmĒda underwent a triple decadence, military, political and moral. Anarchy reigned in the office (*makhzan*), factions appointed, divested and often murdered the Sultans. While the empire was all over scattering to pieces and required devotedness of all, unworthy descendents of the great Almohads leaders quarrel like mean, greedy peasants over what remained of the state and the revenues of the last provinces still under their rule” [11].

Le Tourneau argues that the Mustanġir’s reign is characterized by two series of events that show the deep transformation the Almohads Empire had already undergone. First, the young caliph who was under the influence of his viziers. Second, the rise of Merinids. There on the border, BanĒ MerĒn led an unusual existence, grazing their cattle between the Figig region and the middle valley of the MĒluya River: an obscure tribe of medium size, very jealous of its freedom [11]. According to most chroniclers, the Battle of *al-UqĒb* (610H/1213C.E) represented a turning point in the history of Almohads. It was in this battle that al-NĒġir died and was succeeded by Yusuf, a young son immature to understand the duties and responsibilities of the state. This was a disadvantage to Almohads’ Makhzan, added to the irresponsible attitude of the ruling members at that particular time. All these resulted in a serious and manifest weakness of Almohads [3]. Terrasse Henri sees the crisis of Almohads yet from another angle, he states: “The religious actions of the Almohads led to a dead end; the Almohads reform, despite all the efforts of the dynasty, had failed. Malikism rapidly took over control of the official Islam while the devotion of masses was for the saints, alive or dead. The Almohads did nothing to arrest this impulsion of Sufism which, in Morocco, already assumed three aspect of Maraboutism.” [11]

CONCLUSION

It was the Almohads’ great contribution to the revival of sciences and the building of learning institutions that caused the city of Murrakish to acquire the title of the second capital of learning in Morocco. The history of Almohads dynasty shows how learning and scholarship flourished and how the intellectual freedom attracted an increased number of scholars despite the heterodox

beliefs of the founder Ibn Tumart who not only resisted Malikism but claimed Mahdism, Imamship and impeccability. Yet while this study has shown the cultivated nature of Almohads, particularly in learning and scholarship, it has also indicated that it was the Asha’arite dogma and the Malikite school of law that the Maghreb was continually fond of and that irrespective of the unfavorable political conditions, it continually strived to re-install them in the body of religious and cultural body of the nation.

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