THE ALMOHAD REVOLUTION

Politics and Religion in the Islamic West during the Twelfth-Thirteenth Centuries

Maribel Fierro

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INTRODUCTION

Although a term seldom used when writing the history of Islamic societies, revolution is the most adequate to convey what the Almohads stood for in the Islamic West – the regions that are now Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, the western part of Libya and al-Andalus (Iberian Peninsula) – during the sixth/twelfth century. The Almohads did what revolutionaries do: they openly and explicitly marked the break between the old and the new times, resorting to the use of violence, but also developing an ambitious propagandistic and pedagogical programme to habituate their subjects to the new Almohad beliefs and ways of doing things.

The silver coins they minted were square instead of round and no date was mentioned in them, thus suggesting that a new era had begun. The mosques of the territories that submitted to their rule were purified. The *dhimma* status was abolished, an almost unprecedented step in Islamic history. In fact, not only Christians and Jews, but also non-Almohad Muslims, were obliged to convert to the Almohad understanding of what truth was. That truth was contained in the profession of faith formulated by Ibn Tūmart, the founder of the Almohad movement. Political and religious authority were united in this founding figure in a combination that evoked the Prophet Muḥammad, but that acquires contemporary meaning when inserted into a framework including Berber prophetism and aspirations to rule, Fatimid memory and the Fatimids' present, Ismā'īlī preaching (the new *da'wa*) and Sunni revival, Sufi claims to religious and political authority such as those of the Andalusī Ibn Qasī (d. 546/1151), the Andalusi Maliki scholars' reaction to such claims together with their internal debates about how to carry out the proper understanding of God's will under the forceful challenge of Ibn Ḥazm's Ẓāhirism, Christian military and commercial advance, and Jewish intense immersion in and contribution to the Islamicate intellectual milieu.

Ibn Tūmart (d. 524/1130) was *al-mahdī al-ma'lūm al-imām al-ma'ṣūm*, "the acknowledged rightly guided one and the impeccable or infallible *imām*". One of Ibn Tūmart's pupils, 'Abd al-Mu'min (r. 527/1130–558/1163), proclaimed himself caliph on the basis of having been chosen by the Mahdī as his successor. Mahdist[1] and caliphal claims transformed two Berbers, the

[1] Mercedes García-Arenal, *Messianism and puritanical reform: Mahdis of the Muslim West*, transl. Martin Beagles, Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2006.

Maṣmūda Ibn Tūmart and the Zanāta ʿAbd al-Muʾmin, into Arabs, the first becoming a descendant of the Prophet and the second a Qaysī (Northern) Arab. The Muʾminid caliphs benefitted from this Arab genealogy in many ways, one of them being the fact that it allowed them to link themselves to the Arab tribes who had been penetrating into what is now Tunisia since the first half of the fifth/eleventh century, and who had taken advantage of the opportunities opened up by the Zirids' abandonment of Fatimid obedience in 440/1048–49. Those Arab tribes were eventually incorporated into the Almohad army after their defeat by ʿAbd al-Muʾmin in 546/1151. Their subsequent displacement westwards set in motion the process of Arabization of what are now Algeria and Morocco.

The Almohad movement had originated among Berber tribes whose allegiance to the Mahdī allowed its expansion out of the High Atlas mountains and made possible the defeat of the Almoravids and the conquest of their capital, Marrakech, in the year 541/1147. After 546/1151, these Berber tribes had to make room not only for the Arab tribes, but also for the new elites (the *ṭalaba* and the *ḥuffāẓ*) recruited by the Muʾminid caliphs to help them carry out their political and cultural programme – but mostly to give them an independent basis of power. Members of those Almohad elites were intellectuals of such importance and lasting influence as Ibn Ṭufayl (d. 581/1185), the author of the philosophical and mystical novel *Ḥayy b. Yaqẓān* (*The Self-Taught Philosopher*), and the philosopher, jurist and doctor Averroes (d. 595/1198), who started to write his commentaries on Aristotle with the backing of the second Almohad caliph, Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf (r. 558/1163–580/1184). Maimonides (d. 1204), the great Jewish thinker whose works in theology and law – among many other disciplines – renovated Judaism, was trained during Almohad times and shared many of their religious and intellectual concerns. The same can be said of the famous Sufi thinker Muḥyī l-dīn Ibn ʿArabī (d. 638/1240).

While Ibn Ṭufayl's close links with Almohadism are generally accepted,[2] the nature of such links in the cases of Averroes and Maimonides has been subject to varied interpretations.[3] Underlying such interpretations there

[2] Lawrence L. Conrad (ed.), *The world of Ibn Tufayl*, Leiden: Brill, 1995 and *idem*, "An Andalusian physician at the court of the Muwaḥḥids: some notes on the public career of Ibn Ṭufayl", *Al-Qanṭara* XVI (1995), pp. 3–14.

[3] For Averroes' case see Sarah Stroumsa, "Philosophes almohades? Averroès, Maïmonide et l'idéologie almohade", in *Los almohades: problemas y perspectivas*, eds P. Cressier, M. Fierro and L. Molina, Madrid: CSIC / Casa de Velázquez, 2005, pp. 1137–62 and Josep Puig, "Ibn Rušd and the Almohad context", in Resianne Fontaine, Ruth Glasner, Reimund Leicht and Giuseppe Veltri (eds), *Studies in the History of Culture and Science. A tribute to Gad Freudenthal*, Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2011, pp. 189–208. For Maimonides' case see Sarah Stroumsa, *Maimonides in his world: portrait of a Mediterranean thinker*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009 and

seems to be a reluctance to accept the connection of two major intellectual figures who greatly influenced Christianity and Judaism to a Berber Muslim dynasty that used to be mostly associated with fanaticism and violence. We are especially indebted to Dominique Urvoy[4] and Madeleine Fletcher[5] for proposing a more nuanced picture, to which Pierre Guichard, Michael Brett and Tilman Nagel, among others, have also greatly contributed.[6] The advances made in our understanding of Almohad coinage and intellectual elites should also be highlighted.[7]

In my case, I owe my dedication to researching different aspects related to the Almohads for the past twenty years to the generous invitation that María Jesús Viguera made for me to contribute a section on religion to the volume she was editing on the Almoravid and Almohad periods as part of the multi-volume *Historia de España Menéndez Pidal*. I very much enjoyed the opportunity to pay attention to an age of which I knew little – my research till

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Carlos Fraenkel, "Legislating truth: Maimonides, the Almohads and the thirteenth century Jewish Enlightenment", in Fontaine et al. (eds), *Studies in the History of Culture and Science*, pp. 209–32.

[4] Dominique Urvoy, *Le monde des ulémas andalous du V/XI au VII/XIII siècles*, Géneve, 1978; "La pensée d'Ibn Tūmart", *Bulletin d'Études Orientales* XXVII (1974), pp. 19–44; "La pensée almohade dans l'oeuvre d'Averroès", *Multiple Averroès: Actes*, Paris, 1978; *Penser l'islam. Les présupposés islamiques de l'"Art" de Lull*, Paris, 1980; *Pensers d'al-Andalus. La vie intellectuelle à Cordoue et Sevilla au temps des Empires Berberes (fin XIe siècle – début XIIIe siècle)*, Toulouse, 1990; *Ibn Rushd (Averroes)*, transl. O. Stewart, London, 1991; "Les divergences théologiques entre Ibn Tūmart et Gazālī", *Mélanges offerts à Mohamed Talbi à l'occasion de son 70e anniversaire*, vol. II, La Manouba, 1993, pp. 203–12, among many others.

[5] Madeleine Fletcher, "The anthropological context of Almohad history", *Hespéris-Tamuda* XXVI–XXVII (1988–89), pp. 25–51; "Vida y teoría política en la España musulmana del siglo XII", in *La voluntad del humanismo*, ed. B. Ciplijanskaité and C. Maurer, Barcelona, 1990, pp. 31–43; "The Almohad Tawḥīd: Theology which relies on Logic", *Numen* 38/1 (1991), pp. 110–27; "Al-Andalus and North Africa in the Almohad ideology", in Salma Kh. Jayyusi (ed.), *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*, Leiden: Brill, 1992, pp. 235–58; "Ibn Tūmart's teachers: the relationship with al-Ghazālī", *Al-Qanṭara* XVIII (1997), pp. 305–30. She has announced a book under the title *Western Islam: the Almohad Renaissance of the twelfth century in Spain and the Maghrib*, that has not yet appeared.

[6] Pierre Guichard, 'Les Almohades', in J.-C. Garcin (ed.), *États, sociétés et cultures du monde musulman médiéval, Xe–XVe siècle*, Nouvelle Clio, 3 vols, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1995–2000, I, pp. 205–32; Michael Brett, "The Lamp of the Almohads: Illumination as a Political Idea in Twelfth Century Morocco", in M. Brett, *Ibn Khaldun and the Medieval Maghrib*, Variorum Collected Studies Series CS627, Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate/Variorum, 1999, number VI, pp. 1–27; Tilman Nagel, *Im Offenkundigen das Verborgene. Die Heilszusage des sunnitischen Islams*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2002.

[7] Miguel Vega Martín, Salvador Peña Martín, Manuel C. Feria García, *El mensaje de las monedas almohades: numismática, traducción y pensamiento islámico*, Cuenca: Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 2002; Émile Fricaud, "Les *ṭalaba* dans la société almohade (le temps d'Averroès)", *Al-Qanṭara* 23.2 (1997), pp. 331–88.

then had mostly focused on the early history of Islam and the Umayyad period in al-Andalus –, especially because what I found was an exciting atmosphere of intellectual and religious effervescence that crossed religious boundaries. The enjoyment, however, was not accompanied by satisfaction. After finishing my section that appeared in the volume published in 1997,[8] I knew for sure that what I had produced was good enough, but that I still did not understand what the Almohads had tried to do and why. In 1999 and 2000 I co-edited with my colleague María Luisa Ávila two volumes of the series *Estudios Onomástico-Biográficos de al-Andalus* devoted to different aspects of Almohad history, studied mainly through the material found in the biographical dictionaries.[9] Between 2000 and 2002, in collaboration with Patrice Cressier and Pierre Guichard, three seminars were held in Madrid dedicated to new perspectives on Almohad politics, society, art and culture, the results of which were published in 2005.[10] The contributions included in these and other publications appearing around the same time revealed that the Almohads had to be acknowledged as having set in motion an exceptional and sophisticated political, religious and intellectual experience that mostly affected the Islamic West, but that also influenced Latin Christendom, Judaism and the Islamic East in ways still to be fully explored.

The articles collected in this volume are indebted to such contributions, as well as to the different forums that allowed me to present and debate what I was learning from my readings of Arabic sources, but also from books on the Fatimids, the so-called Sunni revival, Sufism, philosophy, Batinism and Latin Averroism. The articles are not chronologically ordered according to the date of their publication, and some internal cross-references are therefore at odds in the present arrangement. But their present order attempts to shed light on the Almohad experience as it developed and changed through time.

The first two articles explore the political, religious and intellectual developments taking place during Almoravid times in order to contextualize the appearance of the Almohad movement. The third and fourth articles focus

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[8] Maribel Fierro, "La religión", in vol. VIII/2 (*El retroceso territorial de al-Andalus. Almorávides y almohades. Siglos XI al XIII*) of the *Historia de España R. Menéndez Pidal*, coord. M.J. Viguera, Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1997, pp. 435–546. In the same year, a monographic section devoted to the Almohads appeared in the journal *Al-Qanṭara* XVIII/2 (1997), with studies by T. Nagel, M. Fletcher, E. Fricaud, J.-P. Molénat, M. A. Martínez Núñez, S. Fontenla Ballesta, M. Alvira Cabrer.

[9] *Estudios onomástico-biográficos de al-Andalus IX. Biografías almohades. I*, ed. María Luisa Ávila and Maribel Fierro, Madrid: CSIC, 1999; *Estudios onomástico-biográficos de al-Andalus X. Biografías almohades. II*, ed. Maribel Fierro and María Luisa Ávila, Madrid: CSIC, 2000.

[10] *Los almohades: problemas y perspectivas*, ed. P. Cressier, M. Fierro and L. Molina, Madrid: CSIC / Casa de Velázquez, 2005.

on some of the possible sources of influence to which the original Berber Maṣmūda movement was subject, and that contributed towards shaping it in the early period: the contact with al-Andalus, on the one hand, and the Fatimid caliphate, on the other hand. The fifth and sixth articles concentrate on two specific features of the Almohad-Mu'minid caliphate: the adoption of Arab genealogies and the minting of coins. Religious knowledge and scholarship, law and history writing were of crucial importance for the new dynasty, as they served to mark the specificities of the revolution and to give it the legitimacy it needed. They are dealt with in the seventh, eighth and ninth articles. Articles number ten, eleven and twelve follow certain developments in the political and legal construction of the Almohad Mu'minid caliphate, namely the itinerancy of the ruler, jihad and Sufism, and the context in which Averroes wrote his legal work, in close connection with Almohad abhorrence of diversity of legal and religious opinions. Finally, the last two focus on the yearning for universal religion and for the ruler's "sapientialism" that can be detected during Almohad times and that allow a close connection to be established between the Almohad political and cultural project and certain developments in Latin Christendom, such as the appearance of a "wise king", Alphonso X. The thread that runs across all these studies is precisely the intertwining of knowledge and political power, or how knowledge should stand at the foundation of both religion and politics.

In spite of how much we have advanced on the road to a better understanding of "Almohadism", there are still many miles ahead of us. The figure and the work of Ibn Tūmart still have to be subjected to a thorough critical analysis, to be greatly helped by the archaeological excavations carried out by A. Ettahiri, A. Flili and Jean-Pierre van Staevel in the Mahdī's birthplace, Īgīliz.[11] The Almohad political project will become clearer thanks to the study of the "letters" sent by the Almohad caliphs, being carried out by Pascal Buresi.[12] The study of works produced by Almohad scholars still has much to offer.[13] Almohad influences on the Islamic world, and on the Christian and

[11] For some preliminary results, see Jean-Pierre van Staëvel and Abdallah Flili, "*Wa-waṣalnā 'alā barakat Allāh ilā Īgīlīz*: à propos de la localisation d'Īgīlīz-Des-Harġa, le *Ḥiṣn* du Mahdī Ibn Tūmart", *Al-Qanṭara* XXVII (2006), pp. 153–94, and see now Jean-Pierre van Staëvel, "La caverne, refuge de 'l'ami de Dieu': une forme particulière de l'érémitisme au temps des Almoravides et des Almohades (Maghreb extrême, XIe–XIIIe siècles)", *Cuadernos de Madinat al-Zahra* 7 (2010), pp. 311–26.

[12] Pascal Buresi presently directs the project "Imperial government and authority in Medieval Western Islam (IGAMWI)", Advanced Research Grant – European Reseach Council: see http://www.cnrs.fr/inshs/recherche/docs-actualites/erc-buresi.pdf.

[13] As shown, to give just two examples, by Muḥammad b. Šarīfa, *Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi al-Ḥafīd: fuṣūl min sīra mansiyya*, Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-islāmī, 1992 and Ze'ev Maghen, "See No Evil: Morality and Methodology in Ibn al-Qaṭṭān's al-Fāsī's *Aḥkām al-Naẓar bi Ḥassat al-*

Jewish communities and societies still have to be approached with adequate methodologies and contextual analyses. Most especially, the emigration of Andalusi and Maghrebi scholars trained under the Almohads towards other regions of the Islamic world deserves to be analyzed looking at what they brought with them and how they influenced the societies where they settled, a study that I am presently carrying out. I have also recently studied the issues of literacy and education as part of the Almohad revolution[14] and I am preparing a revisionist analysis of the figure of Ibn Tūmart, situating it in the religious and intellectual context of North African Islam in his times.[15] In the not too distant future I hope to publish a monograph with a more detailed analysis of the intellectual and religious policies of the Almohads (*Rethinking Islam in the Muslim West: Almohad Religious and Cultural Policies*) as part of the research project "Knowledge, heresy and political culture in the Islamic West (eighth-fifteenth centuries) = KOHEPOCU" that I am presently directing (Advanced Research Grant-European Research Council, 2009–14). This project has made possible the translation of articles previously published in Spanish and French into English.

I wish to thank all those who have made possible this collected volume and most especially my colleagues at the CSIC María Luisa Ávila, Mercedes García-Arenal, Manuela Marín, Luis Molina, Mayte Penelas and Fernando Rodríguez Mediano. Without the help of Adday Hernández, Omayra Herrero, Mercedes Melchor, Estrella Samba, Diego Solís, Jesús Téllez, Ana Tendero, and Amina Naciri, as well as the staff of the Biblioteca Tomás Navarro Tomás and of the library of the Escuela de Estudios Árabes (CSIC), I would not have found the time nor the energy to finish this book, for which I owe special gratitude to John Smedley.

MARIBEL FIERRO

Madrid
January 2012

Baṣar", *Islamic Law and Society* 14 (2007), pp. 342–90. Jesús Zanón's Ph. D. Thesis on *La vida intelectual en al-Andalus durante la época almohade*, Univ. Complutense, 1991is unfortunately still unpublished.

[14] Maribel Fierro, "Education for the people? The case of the Almohad revolution", lecture given on February 7, 2011, at the Near and Middle East History Seminar, SOAS (London).

[15] Maribel Fierro, "Ibn Tūmart más allá de la biografía oficial", in Miguel Ángel Manzano and Rachid El Hour (eds), *Identidades, arabismo y dinastías bereberes (siglos XI–XIV)*, forthcoming.

I

Spiritual Alienation and Political Activism: The *Ġurabā'* in al-Andalus During the Sixth/Twelfth Century[1]

[230] The Almohad caliphs ruled the Islamic West and al-Andalus during the sixth/twelfth century and the first half of the seventh/thirteenth century. They were the heirs of the political and religious activity of Ibn Tūmart (d. 524/1130) and his companions. At the beginning, the Almohads made an explicit effort to differentiate their reign from the preceding one, the Almoravid state and society. The immediate past was depicted as an age of general corruption, in which everything that had characterized the early Muslim community had been abandoned and the traditions of the Prophet and his Companions had fallen into disuse. The way in which the Almohads showed their break with the past was by introducing substantial changes in political institutions, coins, mosques, religious practices, law, changes that allow us to speak of an Almohad revolution with a specific visual and auditory presentation.

Whereas the Almoravids had acknowledged the 'Abbāsid caliphate, the Almohads proclaimed a new caliphate in the line of the Berber 'Abd al-Mu'min. He gave himself an Arab genealogy (Qaysī) and legitimized his caliphal title by the fact that he was the heir of Ibn Tūmart, the founder of the Almohad movement. Ibn Tūmart was called "the sinless *imām* and the acknowledged *mahdī*" (*al-imām al-ma'ṣūm al-mahdī al-ma'lūm*): his role was similar to that of the Prophet in the sense that he had the capacity to show the right path that believers had to follow. Almohad coins were minted square instead of circular, and no date **[231]** was registered on them, as if indicating that a new age, which renewed the one started with the *hiğra*, had commenced, thus becoming a new starting point for dating. The

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[1] This paper was read at the Workshop on Individual piety and society that took place in Istanbul (3–5 July 1998), organized by the European Science Foundation, Program on Individual and Society in the Mediterranean Muslim World, Team 6: Religious activity and experience (teamleader: M. García-Arenal), and at the Conference "Elites in the Medieval Islamic World", University of Tel Aviv, 12–17 December 1998. I wish to thank M. Cook for his remarks on a previous version.

new age was symbolized in the formulas that appeared on them, reminding Muslims that "God is our Lord, Muḥammad is our Prophet, the Mahdī is our *imām*" (*Allāhu rabbunā Muḥammad rasūlunā al-mahdī imāmunā*) and that 'Abd al-Mu'min and his descendants were the new caliphs. The cursive script was adopted in epigraphy, in preference to the kufic, to propagate almost exclusively Koranic verses (a change both in form and in content from Almoravid epigraphy). Almoravid mosques were purified and their decoration destroyed or hidden under the more severe and puritan style of Almohad decoration, the aim of which was to go back to the simplicity of the mosques in the times of the Prophet. There were attempts at correcting the *qibla* of the mosques.

The call to prayer was performed according to new formulas, and a special group of muezzins was trained to carry out this reform. Other minor changes were introduced into the prayer itself. These changes were justified as the restoration of Prophetic practices that had been abandoned. The creeds attributed to Ibn Tūmart were supposed to be learnt by the "new" Muslims.

Jews and Christians were forced to convert to Islam, for reasons that have not been preserved (probably because of the process of "de-Almohadization" to which the sources at our disposal were subject). But if we take into account that the Almohads' aim was to ensure the return of the community to the times of the Prophet, the idea might have arisen that Almohad territory was a sacred land like the Ḥiğāz and therefore only Islam should be allowed in it.* Legal differences of opinion were rejected, because truth should be unique, as contained in the Qur'ān and the *sunna*. Mālikites were therefore regarded with suspicion and the Almohad caliphs tried to replace the jurists and judges with a new personnel adept in the new doctrines. Actually, the Almohad caliphs created new elites, the *ṭalaba*, to whom a special training was given both in matters religious and military. Under Almohad rule there was a flourishing of the study of Prophetic *ḥadīṯ*

* On forced conversion under the Almohads, see now Maribel Fierro, "A Muslim land without Jews or Christians: Almohad policies regarding the 'protected people'", *Christlicher Norden – Muslimischer Süden. Ansprüche und Wirklichkeiten von Christen, Juden und Muslimen auf der Iberischen Halbinsel im Hoch- und Spätmittelalter*, eds Matthias M. Tischler and Alexander Fidora. Aschendorff Verlaf, 2011, 231-47.

and of sufism, but also of medicine and philosophy, which reminds us that Ibn Tūmart's thought was described by the earliest non-Almohad extant source as a *maḏhab fikr*.[2]

[232] All these changes were presented as a return to the early Muslim community and therefore as a reform, but they really represented a revolution for those who lived through them, in the sense that they meant a complete disruption of much that had been considered normal and correct before the arrival of the Almohads and, as I have mentioned before, a visual and auditory break with the past. The name of the Almohad movement itself, *al-muwaḥḥidūn*, is to be considered part of the revolutionary propaganda and ideology: they were the true believers, those who believed in the One and only God, those who embodied the true message of Islam. In fact, some sources inform us that the original name of the movement was not "the unitarians" (*al-muwaḥḥidūn*), but simply "the believers" (*al-mu'minūn*),[3] which implied that the rest of Muslims had departed from true belief and needed therefore to be returned to the right path. The Almohad movement was able to seize power because its ideologues could secure military support among a Berber tribe, the Maṣmūda, to which the founder, Ibn Tūmart, belonged, as well as attract members of other Berber tribes, especially the Ṣinhāğa, to which the displaced ruling elite, the Almoravids, belonged.

The aim of this paper is to explore the extent to which Almohad ideology, with its combination of spiritual alienation from non-Almohad society and of political activism, was something new in Western Islam or part of a deeper and more extended state of mind found among different groups and individuals. The aspect that will be dealt with here is the use of the *ḥadīṯ* "Islam began as a stranger and shall return to being a stranger

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[2] The details of what I have summarized here can be found in M. Fierro, "La religión", in vol. VIII/2 (*El retroceso territorial de al-Andalus. Almorávides y almohades. Siglos XI al XIII*) of the *Historia de España fundada por R. Menéndez Pidal y dirigida por J.Mª Jover*, Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1997, 435–546, as well as in my articles "The legal policies of the Almohads and Ibn Rushd's *Bidāyat al-mujtahid*", *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 1999, forthcoming [published in vol. 10/3 (1999), 226–48] and "Le *mahdī* Ibn Tūmart et al-Andalus: l'élaboration de la legitimité almohade", *R.E.M.M.M.* 87–8 (2000), forthcoming [published in vols 91–4 (2001), 107–24]. The monographic section on Almohad ideology and propaganda published in the issue of the journal *Al-Qanṭara* XVIII/2 (1997) includes new and important insights into the matter by T. Nagel, M. Fletcher, E. Fricaud, S. Fontenla, A. Martínez Núñez and J.-P. Molénat.

[3] See 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākušī, *Kitāb al-mu'ğib fī talḫīṣ aḫbār al-Maġrib*, ed. R. Dozy, 2nd ed., Leiden, 1881, 137.

just as it began" (*bada'a l-islām ġarīban wa-saya'ūdu ġarīban kamā bada'a*) by members of different groups: the scholars, the philosophers and the Sufis. To consider oneself a *ġarīb*, and *ġurabā'* those who shared one's own dissatisfaction with the present was a way of expressing the opposition of a minority against the beliefs and ideas of the majority and of ensuring legitimacy for the transformation of **[233]** minoritarian views into those of a new majority. In other words, the *ḥadīṯ* offered a way of expressing opposition within the Islamic tradition.

*The Prophet and the strangers (*al-ġurabā'*)*

> Islam began as a stranger and shall return to being a stranger just as it began. Thus, blessed be the strangers! (*bada'a l-islām ġarīban wa-sa-ya'ūdu ġarīban kamā bada'a fa-ṭūbā li-l-ġurabā'i*).

These are the words of the Prophet Muḥammad preserved in a famous *ḥadīṯ* which forms part of the canonical collections of Muslim (d. 261/875), al-Tirmiḏī (d. 279/892) and Ibn Māğa (d. 273/887), and which is quoted in many other sources.[4] Al-Āğurrī (d. 360/970) wrote a whole book on the subject[5] and al-Ġazālī dealt with it in his *Iḥyā'* (*kitāb al-'ilm*), mainly to point that the *ġurabā'* are those who will preserve in the future the conditions in which the Companions of the Prophet lived.[6] Later authors, such as Ibn Qayyim al-Ğawziyya (d. 751/1350) and Ibn Rağab al-Ḥanbalī (d. 795/1393), also dealt with the *ḥadīṯ*, its much debated interpretation and the people it refered to.[7]

The *ḥadīṯ* is usually accompanied by additions, introduced by a Companion asking the Prophet: "Who are the *ġurabā'*?", with the Prophet

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[4] It was collected also by Ibn al-Mubārak (d. 181/797), al-Dārimī (d. 255/869), Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/955). Al-Buḫārī (d. 256/870) does not include it.

[5] Ed. by Badr b. 'Abd Allāh al-Badr, Ḥūlā (Kuwait): Dār al-ḫulafā' li-l-kitāb al-islāmī, 1403/1983, 2nd ed. 1407/1987 (I wish to thank A. Hakim for providing me with a copy of this book). I. 'Abbās offered an analysis of it in *Mélanges de l'Université St. Joseph* 50 (1984), 91–101 (Arabic section).

[6] See F. Rosenthal, "The stranger in Medieval Islam", *Arabica* XLIV (1997), 35–75, at 61.

[7] See of the former his *Madāriğ al-sālikīn*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Fīqī, 3 vols, Beirut: Dār al-kitāb al-'arabī, 1956, III, 194–205; of the latter *Kašf al-kurba fī waṣf ḥāl ahl al-ġurba*, ed. Muḥammad Aḥmad 'Abd al-'Azīz, Egypt/Sudan: al-Maktaba al-qayyima, 1403/1982. I owe these references to A. Hakim.

giving answers such as: "Those who escaped from the tribes (*al-nuzzā' min al-qabā'il*)", or "Those who restore good (*yuṣliḥūna*) when people become bad", or "Pious people in small number among bad people in great numbers; those who disobey them are more than those who obey them". As F. Rosenthal has pointed out, these additions may indicate a tribal or an eschatological context for the appearance of the *ḥadīṯ*.[8] **[234]** For his part, J.L. Kraemer has indicated that the "stranger", "alien" or "exiled" is a gnostic theme "which entered Islamic mysticism, and is prominent in the mystical works of thinkers such as Avicenna [d. 428/1037] and Suhrawardī [d. 587/1191]".[9] It is in fact among Sufis that the *ḥadīṯ* found a more congenial atmosphere to indicate that Sufis were an elite among Muslims and that "it could be the dearth of true ascetics and pious mystics that at any time makes Islam again a stranger".[10]

The *ḥadīṯ* enjoyed wide diffusion in al-Andalus. It is found in one of the earliest Andalusī sources, the *Kitāb al-bida'* by Ibn Waḍḍāḥ al-Qurṭubī (d. 287/900),[11] quoted in the chapters devoted to showing that, after the Prophet's death, the Muslim community was condemned to undergo a process of corruption and degradation, the same process that happened earlier to Jews and Christians. This is a process that cannot be avoided because deterioration occurs in religion as it occurs in the dye of a cloth or in the fat of an animal: it wears out through use. After all, when a people move away from their prophet, they become better in what they say but worse in what they do.[12] The inevitable process of religious degradation entails that innovations will increase and traditions will decrease, religion will be buried and forgotten, ignorance will prevail and truth will be abandoned, evil will predominate and good will disappear. Even worse, good will be considered evil and evil will be considered good. The two

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[8] "The stranger", 60–61. Rosenthal explains that the *ġurabā'* "were interpreted as the good Muslims. They are stated to be 'of my nation'. They are those 'who will reverse the corruption of my *sunna* that was caused by people after my death', and 'they will revive my dead *sunna*'. Or 'they are the ones who are continuing the conditions in which you (i.e., the Prophet's contemporaries) are today'".

[9] See *Humanism in the renaissance of Islam. The cultural revival during the Buyid Age*, Leiden, 1986, 25, note 44, quoting H. Jonas, *The gnostic religion*, Boston, 1958, 75–80 and H. Corbin, *Avicenna and the visionary recital*, transl. W.R. Trask, New York, 1960, 16–28.

[10] Rosenthal, "The stranger", 63.

[11] Ed. and transl. M. Fierro, Madrid, 1987, numbers XI, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 and XII, 36, 37a.

[12] See Ibn Waḍḍāḥ, *Kitāb al-bida'*, XII, 20, XI, 33, 46.

intoxications (*sakratāni*) will appear: the *sakra* of ignorance, which implies forgetting religious knowledge (*'ilm*), and the *sakra* of love for this life,[13] which implies forgetting the other life and abandoning *ğihād*.[14] During this period of decay, the true believer will be considered a liar and will be punished for obeying God. There will be men who will maintain the appearance of being Muslims (they will reject politheism or *širk*, they will fast and they will pray the five prescribed **[235]** prayers), but they will not be true believers. In this context of degradation and corruption that will end in the Last Hour, the true believers are those who stick to religious knowledge (*'ilm*) and behave accordingly, even if they do it only in private, fearing for their lives were they to do it in public.[15] When asked by his Companions who the *ġurabā'* were, the Prophet answered that they are a small number of virtuous people among a great number of evil people. That small number of persons are generally hated and only a few will pay obedience to them. Their faces will shine like the light of the sun. The Prophet also added that they are not to be identified with his Companions, but will belong to later generations and thanks to them religion will be safe. They are those who will stick to the Book of God when it is abandoned and those who will practice the *sunna* when it is extinguished. They are those who are virtuous when people around them are corrupt. They are those who stick to their religion even if by doing so they resemble a person who holds a burning ember (*ğamr*) in his hand.[16] They will have a special reward in the other life.

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[13] There is a famous *ḥadīṯ* in which the Prophet said to Ibn 'Umar: "Servant of God! Be in this world as if you were a stranger in it or an *'ābir al-sabīl* and think that you are already among the dead". It is quoted for example by al-Ṭurṭūšī in his *Sirāğ al-mulūk*, transl. M. Alarcón, *Lámpara de príncipes*, 2 vols, Madrid, 1930–31, I, 15. See on this *ḥadīṯ* Rosenthal, "The stranger", 37.

[14] See Ibn Waḍḍāḥ, *Kitāb al-bida'*, XI, 38; XII, 13.

[15] In *Kitāb al-bida'*, XI, 10, Ibn Waḍḍāḥ mentions a tradition in which 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib predicts that the only believer who will be saved will be *al-nawma*. When asked about the significance of this term, he answered: "the man who is silent during the period of trial and who does not attract attention". This tradition clearly upholds dissimulation or *taqiyya*. See also XI, 13, 14. See E. Kohlberg, "*Taqiyya* in Shī'ī theology and religion", *Secrecy and concealment. Studies in the history of the Mediterranean and Near Eastern religions*, ed. H.G. Kippenberg and G.G. Stroumsa, Leiden: Brill, 1995, 345–80.

[16] See Ibn Waḍḍāḥ, *Kitāb al-bida'*, XI, 39 (*al-mutamassik bi-dīni-hi ka-l-qābiḍ 'alā l-ğamr*). In the sources consulted, this *ḥadīṯ* appears in every discussion of the *ġurabā'* and is quoted together with the *ḥadīṯ* "*bada'a l-islām ġarīban*".

Another Andalusī, al-Ṭurṭūšī (d. 520/1126) explained the *ḥadīṯ* saying that when God revealed Islam, the man who became a Muslim became a stranger in his tribe, because their members rejected, humiliated and despised him,[17] so that he sometimes was even forced to hide his faith. Later on, the good Muslim continued being a *ġarīb* when different schools and sects started to proliferate within the Islamic community. Al-Ṭurṭūšī ends by saying that true Muslims (*ahl al-ḥaqq*) continue being strangers among the believers because of their sparse number and their fear for their souls. The *ḥadīṯ* was clearly of paramount importance for al-Ṭurṭūšī, because he chose it to begin the chapter devoted to the condemnation by the Prophet of religious innovations.[18]

[236] Al-Šāṭibī (d. 790/1388) in his treatise against innovations entitled *al-I'tiṣām* includes a detailed explanation of how the Prophet Muḥammad and his preaching were received as something "strange, odd" in his time, because it meant a breaking with the state of *ğāhiliyya*. Al-Šāṭibī then proceeds to show how, after the Prophet's death, the process of corruption began and to describe its causes. That corruption has been increasing till his own age, so that he finds himself a stranger among his contemporaries (*waǧadtu nafsī ġarīban fī ğumhūr ahl al-waqt*), that being the reason he decided to write his book against innovations. After all, the reason people abandon the tradition is their ignorance of it (*sabab al-hurūǧ 'an al-sunna al-ǧahl bihā*) and therefore scholars are needed to explain, clarify and revive that tradition for the Muslims.[19]

An extended use of the *ḥadīṯ* "*bada'a l-islām ġarīban*" is found in the religious literature of the Mudéjares and Moriscos, whose life as Muslims in Christian Spain makes them "strangers".[20]

The *ḥadīṯ* "*bada'a l-islām ġarīban*" has therefore been used in Andalusī religious writings through the centuries to express feelings of religious

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[17] This is reflected in the addition to the aforementioned *ḥadīṯ*: "The Prophet was asked: 'And who are the strangers?' His answer was: 'Those who have abandonded their clans'" (*qīla wa-man al-ġurabā' qāla al-nuzzā' min al-qabā'il*).

[18] See *Kitāb al-ḥawādiṯ wa-l-bida'*, ed. by 'A.M. Turki, Beirut, 1410/1990, nº 16; transl. and study by M. Fierro, Madrid, 1993, 195.

[19] *Al-I'tiṣām*, 2 vols, Beirut, n.d., I, 18–35.

[20] See M. Sánchez Alvarez (ed.), *El Manuscrito misceláneo 774 de la Biblioteca Nacional de París (Leyendas, itinerarios, profecías sobre la destrucción de España y otros relatos moriscos)*, Madrid, 1982, ff. 305v and 308r; J. Cantineau, "Lettre du Moufti d'Oran aux Musulmans d'Andalousie", *Journal Asiatique* 210 (1927), 1–17 (Cantineau did not understand the meaning and the background of *ġarīb*, as shown in his translation); the same text in P. Longás, *Vida religiosa de los Moriscos*, Madrid, 1915, 305–7.

alienation. This alienation can lead to withdrawal from society to care for one's inner self and the salvation of one's soul, disregarding what happens to other Muslims. But it can also be combined with the desire to reform society to make it less alien and therefore to put an end to the feeling of being a "stranger". The step to move away from censorship in the heart to a more active behaviour can lead to censorship by the tongue or even by the hand, to follow the traditional Islamic description.[21] It is this step towards activism that we shall now explore in the use made of the *ḥadīṯ* in al-Andalus during the sixth/twelfth century.

Andalusī scholars ('ulamā'*) as strangers in the sixth/twelfth century*

The scholars ('ulamā'*) as strangers in the Mālikite tradition.*

Ibn Waḍḍāḥ, al-Ṭurṭūšī and al-Šāṭibī, all of them Mālikite scholars, quote the *ḥadīṯ* on Islam being a stranger when writing about their **[237]** concern with innovations in religion and their fight against them; in other words, in the context of complaining that innovations have ended up being regarded as good practices and that people ignore that they are novelties either objectionable or forbidden.[22] Within this general framework, each of those authors was also reflecting his own age.

In Ibn Waḍḍāḥ's case, his quotations take place in the chapters that reflect the values and the eschatological expectations of an ascetic milieu. As regards the activity of the *ġurabā'* in corrupt society, Ibn Waḍḍāḥ does not seem to envisage an engagement in political activism nor a declaration of infidelity (*takfīr*) against those who are corrupted, as long as they pray. He quotes three traditions[23] that recommend to follow Qur'ān 5: 105, which says:

> Believers, you are accountable for none but yourselves; he that goes astray cannot harm you if you are on the right path,

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[21] See below, note 23.

[22] See another example of the same context in N.J.G. Kaptein, *Muḥammad's birthday festival. Early history in the Central Muslim lands and development in the Muslim West until the 10th/16th century*, Leiden: Brill, 1993, 53, quoting the Egyptian Mālikī al-Fākihānī (d. 731/1331 or 734/1334). The context is of course the same in the treatises against innovations: see M. Fierro, "The treatises against innovations (*kutub al-bida'*)", *Der Islam* 69 (1992), 204–46.

[23] See *Kitāb al-bida'*, XII, 9–11.

when the corruption of the community reaches a certain level. This verse is understood as inviting quietism. For Ibn Waḍḍāḥ, his own age corresponded to a *fitna* of error (*fitnat ḍalāla*) but not of infidelity (*fitnat kufr*), and therefore the sword cannot be used. Reproval must be exercised, although it can be limited to avoiding contact with the innovators. On the other hand, it is licit to be silent if life could be endangered by speaking. Finally, action can be undertaken if one is sure that he is on the right path and if one has the power to stop what is wrong. In other words, the practice of ordering good and forbidding evil should be practiced within the heart, exercised prudently by the word, but only rarely by the hand.[24] The quietism of Ibn Waḍḍāḥ's implied position is paralelled by his own life: attracted by asceticism and retirement from public life, he eventually chose to devote his life to scholarship **[238]** and to teach the religious knowledge he had acquired in his travels, never abandoning his loyalty to the Umayyad rulers of whom he was a *mawlā* by family.

In al-Šāṭibī's case, his concern was mainly against innovations introduced by heretical Sufis. As Hallaq has put it, his aim was to restore what he "perceived to be the true law of Islam, a law which he thought was adulterated by two extreme practices in his day, namely, the lax attitudes of the jurisconsults and, far more importantly, the excessive legal demands imposed by what seems to have been the majority of contemporary Ṣūfīs, in whose ranks there must have been a certain population of legal scholars".[25] As in the case of Ibn Waḍḍāḥ, al-Šāṭibī's activism was limited to writing books in which he expounded the doctrine he thought was correct. He also decided to act according to that doctrine, even if that meant going against common practice and being accused of innovation and heresy.[26]

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[24] See *Kitāb al-bida'*, XI, 31; XII, 9, 10, 11, 50, 56–60, 62–6, 68, 70–73, 76–7, 82. The example given of active censorhip refers to a case in which young men were inflicting suffering to animals and were ordered to stop their activity; their action takes place in a public space. Quite a harmless example of active censorship.

For an analysis of the individual practice of *ḥisba* see M. Cook, *The Voice of Honest Indignation: al-amr bi-l-ma'rūf wa-l-nahy 'an al-munkar in Islamic thought and practice*, forthcoming [published with the title *Commanding right and forbidding wrong in Islamic thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000].

[25] W.B. Hallaq, *A history of Islamic legal theories. An introduction to Sunnī* uṣūl al-fiqh, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, 162–206. See also M. Fierro, "Opposition to Ṣūfism in al-Andalus", *Islamic Mysticism contested. Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics*, Leiden: Brill, 174–206.

[26] See his biography in M. Kh. Masud, *Shatibi's philosophy of Islamic Law*, Islamabad, 1995, especially 71–4.

Ibn 'Abd al-Barr al-Qurṭubī (d. 463/1071) quoted the *ḥadīṯ bada' al-islām ġarīban* in his work devoted to religious knowledge or *'ilm*,[27] substituting *islām* by *'ilm* (*bada'a l-'ilm ġarīban*). He describes the *ġurabā'* as those who will revive the *sunna* and teach it to mankind, adding that "religious scholars are strangers (and rare) because there are so many ignoramuses". Religious scholars liked to see themselves counted among the *ġurabā'*, as that condition explained by itself the need the community had for them, and therefore the need to ensure their existence and reproduction. They were entitled to enjoy an exceptional position, since true religious knowledge (*'ilm*) was possessed only by a very small minority: "believers are few among people, and scholars are few among believers". In Ibn 'Abd al-Barr's case, his intellectual production was directed to the "normalization" of Andalusī Mālikism within Sunnism, in the sense of harmonizing its doctrine, based on the *ra'y* of Mālik and his pupils and on the *'amal* of Medina, with the classical doctrine of *uṣūl al-fiqh* as formulated by the Šāfi'ites; in other words, a sort of "re-islamization" of the Andalusī legal tradition. It is in this context that **[239]** his quotation of the *ḥadīṯ* has to be understood: Mālikite scholars like him were considered strangers by those other scholars of the same school who practiced *taqlīd*, contented themselves with following antiquated legal thinking and were not willing to renovate Mālikism.[28]

Ibn 'Abd al-Barr's contemporary and friend, Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064) was concerned with the same epistemological problems, although in his case his dissatisfaction did not focus on the reform of the Mālikite legal school. He took a further step by moving from Mālikism to another school of law, Ẓāhirism. Ibn Ḥazm quoted the *ḥadīṯ* in his work on *uṣūl al-fiqh*, when discussing consensus (*iğmā'*).[29] He says that in this world pious persons and the *'ulamā'* are fewer in number than the impious or ignorant. In fact, the latter constitute the majority, the *ğumhūr* among men. Moreover, the pure among the *'ulamā'* are even rarer, as shown by the Prophetic tradition *bada'a l-islām ġarīban*. Islam condemns those who do

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[27] See *Ğāmi' bayān al-'ilm wa-faḍlihi wa-mā yanbaġī fī riwāyatihi wa-ḥamlihi*, 2 vols, Cairo, 1398/1978, II, 119–120. See also Rosenthal, "The stranger", 61–2.

[28] See for the context M. Fierro, "Religión", in vol. VIII/1 *Los Reinos de Taifas* in the *Historia de España fundada por R. Menéndez Pidal y dirigida por J.Mª Jover*, Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1994, 399–496.

[29] See his *al-Iḥkām fī uṣūl al-aḥkām*, 8 vols in 2, Cairo, 1345, IV, 199–200, 229, and A.M. Turki, *Polémiques entre Ibn Ḥazm et Bāğī sur les principes de la loi musulmane. Essai sur le littéralisme ẓāhirite et la finalité mālikite*, Alger, 1973, 153, 170, 329.

not practice what is contained in the Qur'ān and the Prophetic Tradition. Those who follow these two religious sources will experience that state of exile described in the *ḥadīṯ* even while living in the abode of Islam. Therefore, truth cannot be identified with consensus (as some Mālikites would contend) and error is not a deviation from consensus: error is still error even when the number of its followers increase. What to do then with the Prophetic tradition according to which God will not allow his community to agree on an error? How can this coexist with the fact that deviants and sectarians are members of the Community? Ibn Ḥazm finds the answer in the *ḥadīṯ* that reveals the condition of true Muslims, i.e. the Ẓāhirītes, who will be like strangers within the Islamic community.

Ibn Ḥazm's opponent, the Andalusī Abū l-Walīd al-Bāǧī (d. 474/1081), who had received training in *uṣūl al-fiqh* during his stay in the East and who pushed further the renovation of Western Mālikism, defended the doctrine favourable to consensus, counterattacking against Ibn Ḥazm's criticism by saying that the *ḥadīṯ bada'a l-islām ġarīban* had the value of an historical datum, not a doctrinal one. In other words, it cannot be used to support those who are against the legal validity of consensus, **[240]** because its aim is only to inform of the existence of a vanguard of people who receive the truth and then try to guide the rest. Al-Bāǧī, contrary to Ibn Ḥazm, did not abandon Mālikism.

Andalusī scholars had therefore been using the *ḥadīṯ bada'a l-islām ġarīban* for different agendas. Let us now see what agendas were underlying its use by scholars in the first half of the sixth/twelfth century.

The case of al-Ṭurṭūšī

Al-Ṭurṭūšī, a pupil of al-Bāǧī, had travelled to the East from al-Andalus in the year 476/1083. In the year 478/1085, while residing in Baġdad, he witnessed a solar eclipse that was interpreted as one of the signs of the Last Hour and which moved him to think on the vanity of this world, the brevity of life and the reality of death. In Jerusalem, where he met al-Ġazālī, a voice spoke to him in dreams in the mosque, reproaching him for having fallen asleep during prayer and alerting him of his lack of fear of God and sincerity. These combined experiences, expressing his fear for the salvation of his soul, moved him to retire to an ascetic life in the mountains of Lebanon, living together with a saint called 'Abd Allāh al-Sā'iḥ (*min awliyā' Allāh al-munqaṭi'īn ilā Allāh*). The Crusades, coinciding with al-Ṭurṭūšī's stay in the East, may have also influenced his spiritual crisis,

especially since he must have heard of the fall of Toledo into Christian hands while in the East. The abode of Islam was in danger not only from outside, but also from inside, a danger represented by heretics, innovators, and by Muslims who thought they behaved correctly whereas in fact they had departed from correct belief and practice. Like Ibn Waḍḍāḥ, al-Ṭurṭūšī could not endure for long a life of retirement. He persuaded his companion to move to Egypt. This move was provoked by his dissatisfaction with their isolated life and by his wish to devote himself to the spread of religious knowledge (*'ilm*) and to be able to attend the Friday prayer. Al-Sā'iḥ objected that in the mountains of Lebanon they could obtain licit food, something that would be nearly impossible in any other place. But al-Ṭurṭūšī replied that in the Egyptian locality to which he proposed to move (al-Rašīd) there was plenty of salt and wood, both licit products and that by selling them they would be able to live. So they did, but soon, as foreseen by al-Sā'iḥ, the people of Alexandria sent a delegation to invite al-Ṭurṭūšī to settle in their town, where the Fatimid caliph had recently executed a number of Sunnī jurists, probably in connection with the rebellion of the Fatimid pretender Nizār. Al-Ṭurṭūšī **[241]** finally accepted the invitation, especially once licit food was secured for his companion al-Sā'iḥ.

Al-Ṭurṭūšī would later explain that the reason he decided to settle in Alexandria in spite of its being under Fatimid rule which had introduced many reprehensible things, was precisely the opportunity of leading people in error back to the right path. Al-Ṭurṭūšī became a very popular teacher, founding a *madrasa*. His popularity made him suspect to the authorities of Alexandria, with whom he had some clashes, having opposed in an outspoken way certain unjust acts and the imposition of illicit taxes. The accusations formulated by the judge of Alexandria finally led to al-Ṭurṭūšī's being ordered to Cairo in 514/1120; there he could be controlled directly by the Fatimid vizir al-Afḍal, for whom he had started to write a "mirror for princes", the *Sirāğ al-mulūk*, and from whom he received a daily monetary allowance. With the death of al-Afḍal and the vizirate of al-Baṭā'iḥī (to whom the *Sirāğ* was finally dedicated), al-Ṭurṭūšī moved back to Alexandria, where he obtained some important victories for the Sunnīs, namely, that the Fatimid law of inheritance would not be imposed upon the Sunnī population and that the government would not seize possession of properties without legal heirs. Al-Ṭurṭūšī's activism, however, never went so far as to preach open rebellion against the unjust sultan, as it is made clear in his political writings such as the *Sirāğ al-mulūk*. Al-Ṭurṭūšī's Sufism was moderate: attracted at the beginning by

al-Ġazālī and his *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, he later rejected and refuted it for its contamination by the doctrines of the philosophers, al-Ḥallāğ and the Iḫwān al-Ṣafā', stating that al-Ġazālī's attempt to protect Islam with the philosophers' doctrines and logical argument was comparable to cleaning clothes with urine. Al-Ṭurṭūšī's life is an example of a scholar who did not avoid critical involvement with contemporary society but at the same time avoided radicalism, and in whom the spread of *'ilm* prevailed against commitment to extreme asceticism and sufism. His activism centered on teaching and the writing of books, and although he never preached open rebellion, the reactions against him from political circles give us an insight into the extent of his authority and influence in communal matters.[30]

His contemporary Abū 'Alī al-Ṣadafī (d. 514/1120), one the major figures in the renovation of *ḥadīṯ* literature and asceticism in al-Andalus, **[242]** offers another example of engagement with society: he died fighting as a volunteer in the battle of Cutanda, when the Almoravids were trying to stop the Christian advance on the Northeastern frontier in the Peninsula.[31] The same concern for active *ğihād* can be detected in al-Ṭurṭūšī's writings. The Maghrebi Abū l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. 'Abd Allāh b. Ḥammūd al-Fāsī al-Miknāsī (d. in Mecca in 573/1177)[32] met al-Ṭurṭūšī during his pilgrimage begun in the year 512/1118 and studied with him several *ḥadīṯ* compilations. He then visited al-Andalus in order to perform *ribāṭ*. He is described as ascetic, *wari'*, humble, generous, given to weeping, full of piety towards the *ġurabā'*, the weak and the poor.

Al-Ṭurṭūšī's disciples.

Although he never returned to al-Andalus, al-Ṭurṭūšī had many Andalusī students, and some of them display the same characteristics of spiritual alienation from their age and an impulse towards religious activism in society. Al-Ṭurṭūšī's pupils must have discussed the *ḥadīṯ bada'a l-islām ġarīban*, as in the case of Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ (d. 544/1149), whose concern for the revival of Prophetic *sunna* is clearly stated in the work he devoted

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[30] This section is based on Fierro, "Estudio", in al-Ṭurṭūšī's *Kitāb al-ḥawādiṯ wa-l-bida'*, transl., 30–107.

[31] See C. de la Puente, "Vivre et mourir pour Dieu. Vie, oeuvre et héritage d'Abū 'Alī al-Ṣadafī (m. 514/1120)", *Studia Islamica* 88 (1998), 77–102.

[32] Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Takmila li-kitāb al-Ṣila*, ed. F. Codera, 2 vols, Madrid, 1887–89 (*B.A.H.*, t. V–VI), nº 1914.

to the prerogatives of the Prophet Muḥammad[33] and who wrote the *Ikmāl al-Mu'lim fī šarḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*,[34] where he briefly deals with the *ḥadīṯ* (we have seen that Muslim included the *ḥadīṯ* in his collection). Two of al-Ṭurṭūšī's pupils are especially important in this respect.

[243] *Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī (d. 543/1148).*

Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī continued the renovation of Western Mālikism initiated in the fifth/eleventh century by Ibn 'Abd al-Barr and Abū l-Walīd al-Bāǧī, and to which his teacher al-Ṭurṭūšī had also contributed. In his works written during the Almoravid period, the influence of Aš'arite theology, the doctrines of *uṣūl al-fiqh* and *uṣūl al-dīn* and Sufism is evident. In this, Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī would fit into the process described by T. Nagel as "die neue Frömmlichkeit" or "new religiosity" that can be detected in the fifth/eleventh century and in which Sufi and Aš'arite trends came together:[35] blind acceptance of doctrine was to be rejected; in order to reach salvation, Muslims had to take into consideration the proofs of God's unicity, through reason in the case of the Aš'arites, through intuition of God's presence everywhere in the case of the Sufis. Both ways allowed Muslims to know God with certitude, stressing individual effort against knowledge and salvation attained merely through membership of a community. Both ways represented a threat against the established order, as they removed man from human authority, be it that of the jurists or

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[33] *al-Šifā' bi-ta'rīf ḥuqūq al-Muṣṭafā*, 2 vols in 1, Beirut, 1399/1979. This book, which enjoyed a wide diffusion in all the Islamic world, deserves a detailed study for both the religious and political consequences of its doctrine. By stressing the supernatural features of the Prophet, it represents the dangers of putting him too far away from the common man: see on this topic E. Chaumont, "La problématique classique de l'*iǧtihād* et la question de l'*iǧtihād* du prophète: *iǧtihād*, *waḥy* et *'iṣma*", *Studia Islamica* LXXV (1992), 105–140. A new interpretation of this work is proposed in Maribel Fierro, "El tratado sobre el Profeta del cadí 'Iyāḍ y el contexto almohade", *Legendaria Medievalia en honor de Concepción Castillo Castillo*, Córdoba, 2011, 19–34.

[34] This work is yet unpublished. I have been able to consult the Chester Beatty ms. nº 3836 (see A.J. Arberry, *The Chester Beatty Library. A handlist of the Arabic manuscripts*, vol. I–VII, Dublin, 1955–64, IV, 25), f. 76a. I wish to thank M. Cook for providing me with a xerox of the relevant page. In it, Mālik is quoted interpreting the *ḥadīṯ* as refering specifically to Medina as the place of *ġurba*.

[35] T. Nagel, *Die Festung des Glaubens. Triumph und Scheitern des islamischen Rationalismus in 11. Jahrhundert*, Munich, 1998. He gives various examples that show how Aš'arites and Sufis gave identical answers to a number of questions.

the sultan, stressing individual responsibility and discipline of the inner self in order to reach a complete agreement with God's will. At the same time, a new kind of authority was being proposed to facilitate this path, that of spiritual personalities, be it theologians or Sufi masters, all of this happening in the context of the desintegration of caliphal authority.

In his *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī quoted the *ḥadīṯ* "*bada'a l-islām ġarīban*" while discussing the Qur'ānic verse 5:105 ("Believers, you are accountable for none but yourselves; he that goes astray cannot harm you if you are on the right path") which we have seen apparently discourages people from performing *al-amr bi-l-ma'rūf wa-l-nahy 'an l-munkar*. Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī's own position was that the performance of enjoining good and forbidding evil was a duty for every Muslim, and even if he acknowledged the difficulties of putting it into practice against the sulṭān, he insisted on the dangers for Islam and faith (*īmān*) if it were abandoned.[36] If we look now at his behaviour, we see that **[244]** he, like al-Ṭurṭūšī, was not a radical. Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī was in favour of certain practices rejected by his contemporaries and against others which were considered sound by the Mālikite tradition in al-Andalus. For example, he defended a Qur'ānic precept which had been abandoned among Andalusī Mālikites since the times of Yaḥyā b. Yaḥyā (d. 234/848), the precept of sending two arbiters to reconcile a broken marriage. Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī also defended Prophetic traditions such as those regarding *al-qaḍā' bi-l-yamīn ma'a l-šāhid* or the raising of hands during prayer.[37] In all these cases, his position went against the established practice in al-Andalus. In so far as his interests were alien to some of the scholars of his age and his doctrine contrary to practice, Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī expressed the feeling that he had become a stranger among his people (*wa-ṣirtu ġarīban bayna qawmī*).[38] However, he enjoyed the support of the Almoravids, whose

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[36] *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, ed. 'Alī Muḥammad al-Biğawī, Cairo, 1376/1957–1378/1958, II, 702–5. Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī specifies that he discussed this verse with his teacher al-Ṭurṭūšī in Jerusalem. He deals with the same *ḥadīṯ* in his commentary of al-Tirmiḏī's work, *Kitāb 'Āriḍat al-aḥwāḏī fī šarḥ al-Tirmiḏī*, ed. 13 vols, Cairo, 1350/1931–1353/1934, vol. X, 96 (I thank M. Cook for providing me with a copy of this text). For a detailed analysis of Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī's position regarding *al-amr bi-l-ma'rūf*, see Cook's study mentioned in note 24.

[37] See M.I. Fierro, "Los mālikíes de al-Andalus y los dos árbitros (*al-ḥakamān*)", *Al-Qanṭara* VI (1985), 79–102, especially 96 and "La polémique à propos de *raf' al-yadayn fī l-ṣalāt* dans al-Andalus", *Studia Islamica* LXV (1987), 69–90, especially 83–6.

[38] S. A'rāb, *Ma'a l-qāḍī Abī Bakr b. al-'Arabī*, Beirut, 1987, 114. Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī's contemporary, Ibn Rušd al-Ğadd (d. 520/1126), observed, in connection to Qur'ān

legitimacy as rulers he had helped to establish,[39] and who named him *qāḍī* of Seville. If we now look at his behaviour as a judge, Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī seems to have tried to act according to his doctrinal convinctions. He tried to impose the Qur'ānic precept of the two arbiters that was not followed in the judicial practice of al-Andalus. The most "radical" act that is recorded of his judgeship is that he ordered the perforation of the cheeks of a flute player.[40] But another example given by the sources shows that in the issue of the triple oath of divorce, he judged according to the established practice, although he was aware of the doctrinal difficulties.[41] This indicates that his behaviour could yield to practical **[245]** conformism. In any case, Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī's inability to impose socially what he thought was correct, might have influenced his retirement from the position of *qāḍī* to devote himself to *'ilm*. Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī's teachings, heard by a huge number of Andalusīs,[42] must have helped create an atmosphere receptive to certain tendencies in the Almohad movement, as the Almohads were in favour of most of the same practices that he had supported.[43] Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī seems to have welcomed the arrival of the Almohads,[44] with

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5:105, that the time when believers should look to their own souls and ignore the misdeeds of others might have arrived. He also held the unusual view that the duty of *al-amr bi-l-ma'rūf wa-l-nahy 'an al-munkar* is primarily an individual one: see Cook's study mentioned in note 24.

[39] See Mª J. Viguera, "Las cartas de al-Gazālī y al-Ṭurṭūšī al soberano almorávid Yūsuf b. Tāšufīn", *Al-Andalus* XLII (1977), 341–74.

[40] See on his activities, apart from the study mentioned in note 37, V. Lagardère, "Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī, grand cadi de Séville", *Revue de l'Occident Musulman et de la Méditerranée* 40 (1985), 91–102, reproduced in idem, "La haute judicature à l'époque almoravide en al-Andalus", *Al-Qanṭara* VII (1986), 134–228, especially 190, 195–215.

[41] See Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ, *Maḏāhib al-ḥukkām fī nawāzil al-aḥkām*, ed. M. b. Šarīfa, Beirut, 1990, 288.

[42] Mª M. Lucini has counted 250 students: see her article, "Discípulos de Abū Bakr Ibn al-'Arabī en *al-Ḏayl wa-l-Takmila* de al-Marrākušī", *Estudios Onomástico-Biográficos de al-Andalus. VII*, ed. M. Marín and H. de Felipe, Madrid, 1995, 191–202.

[43] Except in the case of the pilgrimage: Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī stated clearly that Andalusīs were obliged to perform it, contradicting other scholars who had denied the obligation for different reasons. At the beginning of the Almohad period, the pilgrimage seems to have been discouraged: Ibn Rušd, for example, did not include the chapter on *ḥağğ* in the first redaction of his legal treatise *Bidāyat al-muğtahid*. See on this issue Fierro, "Religión", 503–4.

[44] He formed part of the Sevillan delegation sent to Marrakech to give allegiance to the first Almohad caliph 'Abd al-Mu'min, who asked him whether he had met Ibn Tūmart in al-Ġazālī's *maǧlis*. Ibn al-'Arabī's answer was negative, although he said that he had heard that Ibn Tūmart was expected. Now, Ibn Tūmart's encounter with al-Ġazālī does not seem to

whom he shared some concerns. Like his contemporary Ibn Tūmart, he was interested in *uṣūl al-fiqh* and *uṣūl al-dīn*, concentrated his writings on the study of Qur'ān and *ḥadīṯ*, and investigated the reasons for the appearance of *iḫtilāf*.[45] At the same time, Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī was the most important among the Andalusī scholars responsible for the introduction of al-Ġazālī's *Iḥyā'* into al-Andalus, but he criticized its excesses and accepted its rejection by certain sectors of the Almoravid ruling and scholarly establishment. Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī's interest and involvement with Sufism parallels that of many other Andalusīs contemporaries, such as Ibn Barrağān (d. 536/1141 or 537/1142), Ibn al-'Arīf (481/1088–536/1141) and Ibn Qasī (d. 546/1151), with whose activism I will deal below. Like all of them, Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī had a wide following, but contrary to Ibn Tūmart and Ibn Qasī, those followers never became an army.

[246] *Ibn Tūmart (d. 524/1130).*

Al-Ṭurṭūšī's (alleged) disciple most clearly associated with activism was Ibn Tūmart, the founder of the Almohad movement that put an end to the Almoravid empire. Although it is difficult to disentangle what is legendary and what is historical in his biography,[46] the portrayal of Ibn Tūmart stresses his commitment to the performance of *al-amr bi-l-ma'rūf wa-l-nahy 'an al-munkar*.[47] The examples of these activities extend from Alexandria where

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have ever taken place, so that this anecdote must be understood as part of the Almohad effort to capitalize in their favour the resentment created by the Almoravid failure to fully accept al-Ġazālī's legacy.

[45] Ibn al-'Arabī wrote a work entitled *al-Ḫilāfiyyāt* or *Kitāb al-inṣāf fī masā'il al-ḫilāf*, still unpublished. The religious policy of the Almohad caliphs shows that one of their major concerns was the existence of legal *iḫtilāf*: see Fierro, "The legal policies of the Almohads and Ibn Rushd's *Bidāyat al-mujtahid*", *Journal of Islamic Studies*, forthcoming [published in vol. 10/3 (1999), 226–48].

[46] In my unpublished paper "Tres modelos de activistas religiosos y políticos en el Occidente Occidente islámico: Ibn Yāsīn, Ibn Qasī e Ibn Tūmart", presented at the Seminar Political language and action, and religion (Madrid, 21 May 1997), within the project Individual and society in the Mediterranean Muslim World, sponsored by the European Science Foundation (Workshop nº 6, Religious activity and experience, teamleader: Prof. M. García-Arenal), I argue for a complete revision of Ibn Tūmart's biography by taking into account how the needs of the Almohad caliphate, especially in the first stages, influenced the presentation of the founder's figure. The "de-Almohadization" of the sources at our disposal, as shown by E. Fricaud, needs also to be taken into account.

[47] See M. García-Arenal, "La conjonction du ṣūfisme et du sharīfisme au Maroc: le Mahdī comme sauveur", *R.E.M.M.M.* 55–6 (1990), 233–56 and "La práctica del precepto

he studied with al-Ṭurṭūšī to Marrakech, the Almoravid capital, and other Maghrebi towns where he criticised practices he considered reprehensible and where he engaged in polemics with Almoravid scholars. Fearing for his life, Ibn Tūmart retired to Aġmat and when ordered to come back to Marrakech, he refused, seeking refuge with his own Berber tribe and thus starting his career as a rebel against the Almoravids. The *ḥadīṯ* "*bada'a l-islāmu ġarīban*" is quoted in Ibn Tūmart's writings,[48] as would be expected: those who aim at changing things and are therefore likely to be accused of innovation, will employ the *ḥadīṯ* to show that the innovators are the others and they themselves the true believers. The *ḥadīṯ* appears in a very similar context to that in which al-Ṭurṭūšī quoted it: the corruption and degradation of the community because of the appearance of innovations and deviant practices and doctrines. What is peculiar to Ibn Tūmart's citations when compared to those of al-Ṭurṭūšī are the eschatological references, although this is not something new, as those references are also present, for example, in Ibn Waḍḍāḥ's book, where Islam's becoming *ġarīb* is connected with the arrival of the Last Hour. What really **[247]** is a novel element is the figure of *al-mahdī*: *fa-ǧā'a l-mahdī fī zamān al-ġurba*, as it is said in the chapter of Ibn Tūmart's *Kitāb* devoted to *'ilm*.[49] Within the context of the "new religiosity" discussed by Nagel, under the impulse from both Aš'arism and Sufism, one of the consequences was the "desacralization" of the community leadership and therefore, the loss of religious certitude, which meant the increased threat that Šī'ism represented for Sunnism.[50] A new spiritual authority was needed that would fill the gap left both by the desintegration of the Sunnī caliphate and by the rejection of the traditional scholars.[51] The *mahdī* is the one who guarantees the certainty that man strives to achieve in his search for knowledge and truth.

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de *al-amr bi-l-ma'rūf wa-l-nahy 'an al-munkar* en la hagiografía magrebí", *Al-Qanṭara* XIII (1992), 147–70.

[48] Ed. D. Luciani, *Le livre de Mohammed Ibn Toumert, Mahdi des Almohades*, with an introduction by I. Goldziher, Alger, 1903, 251, 266–7, 267–70, 289, 310. There is another edition by 'Ammār Ṭālibī, Alger, 1985.

[49] Ed. Luciani, *Le livre de Mohammed Ibn Toumert*, 245–54, especially 251. For the expression *zamān al-ġurba*, see a poem by Ibn Daqīq al-'Īd al-Qušayrī (d. 702/1302) quoted in Kaptein, op. cit., 53.

[50] The Almohad experience can be seen as a "sunnization" of Šī'ism: see my article mentioned in note 45.

[51] See Nagel, *Die Festung des Glaubens*, 299 and ss., and for the specific place occupied by Ibn Tūmart in this process T. Nagel, "La destrucción de la ciencia de la *šarī'a* por Muḥammad b. Tūmart", *Al-Qanṭara* XVIII (1997), 295–304.

What really is "revolutionary" in Ibn Tūmart's career and what makes his experience different from the alienation and activism found in other contemporary *'ulamā'* is the combination of spiritual alienation and a doctrine of political activism (involving *takfīr*, the accusation of infidelity against those who refused to follow the *mahdī*), together with physical retirement from the corrupt society and further, that during retirement he gathered among his fellow tribesmen the military strength necessary to conquer the Almoravid state and put an end to its corruption.[52] But his followers were not limited to Berber Maṣmūda. Although the information is dispersed in the sources, I have been able to collect data that show how a number of Andalusīs migrated to Tīnmall to follow Ibn Tūmart, nor should it be forgotten that 'Abd al-Mu'min, the first Almohad caliph, was not Maṣmūdī, but Zanātī.

Another *ḥadīṯ* included in Muslim's collection and widely quoted in Ibn Tūmart's writings provided the link between his Maghrebi followers and the veracity claimed for their movement: "the people of the Maghreb will not cease manifesting the truth (*al-ḥaqq*) until the coming of the Hour".[53] The Almohads presented themselves as the restorers of the original ideals and values of the Prophet's community against **[248]** all the innovations and distortions brought about by the centuries that had led Muslims astray from the Prophetic message.

Ibn Bāğğa and the philosophers as ġurabā'.

A contemporary of Ibn Tūmart and Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī, the philosopher Ibn Bāğğa (d. 533/1139) explains in his *Tadbīr al-mutawaḥḥid* how in the ignorant cities it is possible that some men, either spontaneously or through the teachings of another man, arrive at an understanding of true doctrines, non-existent in those cities, or realize the falsity of certain doctrines spread among the people who hold them to be true. These men are called "sprouts" (*nawābit*), a name that can be also applied in a more general sense to those who profess a doctrine contrary to that common in the city, be it true or false. The name *nawābit* is applied to them by analogy with the weeds that

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[52] His career obviously provides the model for E. Gellner's "urban-preacher cum militant-tribe" combination: see his *Muslim society*, Cambridge, 1983, 55.

[53] Ed. Luciani, *Le Livre de Mohammed Ibn Toumert*, 269. The original version of this *ḥadīṯ* (*lā tazāl ṭā'ifa min ummatī ẓāhirīn 'alā l-ḥaqq ḥattā ya'tī amr Allāh*) did not include the specification that the group will be from the Maghreb.