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Jihād and the Sanctification of the Almohad Caliph Ya'qūb Al-Manṣūr

Javier Albarrán

Abstract
The night before the Battle of Alarcos (1195), in which the Almohad army defeated the Castilian King Alfonso VIII, the Caliph Ya'qūb al-Manṣūr saw in a dream that an angel, depicted as a knight riding a white horse and carrying a green banner, announced to the sultan his imminent victory by the grace of God. The successful participation of al-Manṣūr in jihād, one of the legitimizing pillars of the Almohad movement, invested him with a sacred aura that was gradually consolidated after his death. Using chronological, hagiographical and geographical sources, composed between the 13th and 19th centuries and written throughout the Islamic world, we will analyze the process of sanctification of this Almohad caliph based on his participation in the holy war, as well as the memory surrounding this holy warrior. In this regard, one of the most interesting testimonies that we will analyze is a manuscript preserved in the Ibn Yūsuf Library in Marrakech, which contains a protective talisman associated with the memory of this mujāhid-sultan..

Keywords
Jihād; Almohads; al-Andalus; Maghreb; Sufism; Islamic saints.

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JIHĀD AND THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE ALMOHAD CALIPH YA'QŪB AL-MANṢŪR*

Javier Albarrán**

I. *Jihād* – a Salvific and Sanctifying War – and Its Connection with Power

Violence and war, as a phenomenon and institution, have constituted a fundamental feature of medieval societies. In order to justify them, different traditions raised a variety of discourses that were adapted to collective ideals and received significant social recognition. Among them, religious discourse played a leading role from an early stage.[1] The strong symbolic value it carried turned sacralised violence into one of the most powerful discursive and legitimizing tools, and Islam was no exception.[2] From very early on, a series of religious and salvific merits were associated with *jihād*, shaping it as one of the most important means of sanctification.

In this regard, Ibn 'Asākir (d. 1176) included in his treaty of forty hadiths about *jihād* a tradition of the Prophet in which he was asked which aspect of religion was the most important. He answered that it was belief in Allāh. He was

* This chapter is an update, revision, and translation of J. Albarrán, "De ángeles, tumbas, ŷinns y talismanes: el yihad y el proceso de santificación del califa almohade Ya'qub al-Manṣur," in *Hombres de religión y guerra. Cruzada y Guerra Santa en la Edad Media peninsular (siglos X-XV)*, ed. Carlos de Ayala and Santiago Palacios (Madrid: Sílex, 2018), 261-295.

** Departamento de Historia Medieval y CCTTHH, Universidad de Granada, Spain.

[1] See recent works such as Th. Sizgorich, *Violence and belief in late antiquity. Militant devotion in Christianity and Islam* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

[2] See works such as R. Bonney, *Jihad. From Qur'an to bin Laden* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); P. Heck, "Jihad revisited," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 32/1 (2004): 95-128; D. Cook, *Understanding Jihad* (Berkeley-Los Angeles-London: University of California Press, 2005); M. Bonner, *Jihad in Islamic History. Doctrines and Practices* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); A. García Sanjuán, *Yihad. La regulación de la guerra en el islam clásico* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2020).

then asked which was the next most important aspect, and replied without hesitation that it was *jihād* in the way of God. Likewise, the Damascene traditionist transmitted a hadith according to which God has prepared the worst of tortures for those who do not support *jihād*. Concerning the rewards for those who wage war, he included several hadiths, such as one informing that the merits of the *mujāhid* do not remain immutable, but accumulate and multiply, something that will be rewarded on the Day of Judgment.[3] Likewise, in his *Kitāb al-jihād*, written immediately after the Crusader conquest of Jerusalem, al-Sulamī (d. 1106) quotes the following definition from al-Shāfiʿī (d. 820): "the *jihād* is a kind of campaign that is conducted to exalt the word of God, to demonstrate His religion, to suppress His enemies, the polytheists, and to attain the reward that God and His prophet have promised to those who perform it."[4]

Moreover, Muslims who died fighting for Islam became martyrs and secured their entrance to Paradise.[5] Not surprisingly, examples of salvific warfare multiply in the frontier territory of al-Andalus and the Islamic West. For instance, according to Ibn Ḥayyān (d. 1075), in the expedition launched by the Umayyad caliph ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III (d. 961) against the Castilians in the summer of 917, the *qāʿid* Aḥmad b. Muḥammad found martyrdom after desperately seeking it.[6] In this regard, it is interesting to see how Ibn Simāk, the author of *al-Ḥulal al-Mawshiyya*, explains, through the speech of King Alfonso VI (d. 1109) of Castile and Leon, the doctrine of Islamic salvific warfare: in a letter supposedly written before the battle of Zallaca (1086) in which the Christian king challenged the Almoravid emir Yūsuf b. Tāshufīn (d. 1106), he informs the Muslim ruler that he knows the Islamic belief according to which Muslims who die in battle fighting the infidels will go to Paradise.[7]

Leading *jihād* was also one of the duties of the ruler. In this sense, a conception of *jihād* was developed that imposed the burden of war and the obligation to intervene on the frontier onto the ruler, a notion which was complemented by the literary image of the "*ghāzī*-caliph" embodied most

[3] J. E. Lindsay and S. A. Mourad, *The Intensification and Reorientation of Sunni Jihad Ideology in the Crusader Period: Ibn ʿAsākir of Damascus (1105-1176), and His Age, with an Edition and Translation of Ibn Asākir's The Forty Hadiths for Inciting Jihad* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 134, 155, 159, 169 and 171.

[4] Al-Sulamī, *The Book of the Jihād of ʿAlī ibn Ṭāhir al-Sulamī (d. 1106): Text, Translation and Commentary*, ed. Niall Christie (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2015), 208.

[5] D. Cook, *Martyrdom in Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[6] Ibn Ḥayyān, *Crónica del califa ʿAbdarraḥmān III An-Nāṣir entre los años 912 y 942 (al-Muqtabis V)*, trans. María Jesús Viguera and Federico Corriente (Zaragoza: Anubar, 1981), 110-111.

[7] Ibn Simāk, *Al-Ḥulal al-Mawshiyya*, trans. Ambrosio Huici Miranda (Tetuán: Editora Marroquí, 1952), 57.

famously in the figure of the Abbasid Hārūn al-Rashīd (d. 809).[8] The caliph, successor of the Prophet, appeared as the only person suitable to call others to *jihād* in the way of God. Averroes (d. 1198) explains this clearly in the chapter on *jihād* within his legal manual *al-Bidāya*: the caliph was supposed to call to *jihād* once a year and to lead the troops to the most exposed side of the Islamic territories.[9]

Therefore, due to the religious merits of *jihād* and the duty of its leadership by Islamic rulers, it is not surprising that the sources provide us with numerous examples of rulers who attained salvation through its performance. In this regard, it is interesting to recall a passage narrated by Ibn al-Athīr: a pious man saw Zenkī (d. 1146) – the Turkish leader who confronted the Crusaders in the second quarter of the twelfth century – in a dream and asked him what God had decided about him. Zenkī replied that He had spared him exclusively because of the conquest of Edessa. That is, the fight and victory against the Crusaders was a meritorious struggle which helped Zenkī to reach Paradise by erasing all the impious acts that he had committed.[10]

II. Performing *Jihād* in the Time of the Almohad Caliph al-Manṣūr

At the beginning of the twelfth century, in the Maghrebi Atlas, a revolutionary movement arose changing the entire political, social and religious landscape of the Islamic West.[11] Muḥammad Ibn Tūmart (d. 1130), founder of this new trend, together with the Maṣmūda Berber tribes that supported him, gradually preached and imposed his doctrine against the Almoravids, lords of the Maghreb and al-Andalus at that time. The new and puritan doctrine of the *mahdī*, as Ibn Tūmart was thus proclaimed,[12] consisted of a syncretic religious phenomenon of enormous complexity, which proclaimed the radical divine

[8] M. Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence*, 99 ff. On the figure of the "warrior-caliph" in al-Andalus see J. Albarrán, *Ejércitos benditos. Yihad y memoria en al-Andalus (siglos X-XIII),* (Granada: Editorial Universidad de Granada, 2020).

[9] R. Peters, *La yihad en el islam medieval y moderno* (Seville: Universidad de Sevilla, 1998), 19-21.

[10] Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Ta'rīkh al-al-bāhir fī al-Dawla al-Atābakīya*, ed. Tulaymāt (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Kathīra, 1963), 70. See J. Albarrán, *El Sueño de al-Quds: los musulmanes ante la conquista cruzada de Jerusalén* (Madrid, La Ergástula, 2017), 85-86.

[11] On the Almohad movement see A. Huici Miranda, *Historia política del Imperio almohade* (Tetuán: Instituto General Franco,1957); A. J. Fromherz, *The Almohads. The rise of an Islamic Empire* (New York: Tauris, 2010); M. Fierro, *The Almohad Revolution: Politics and Religion in the Islamic West during the Twelfth-Thirteenth Centuries* (London: Routledge, 2012); A. Bennison, *The Almoravid and Almohad Empires* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016).

[12] On Ibn Tūmart see, for example, M. Fierro, "El *Mahdī* Ibn Tūmart: más allá de la biografía oficial," in *Política, sociedad e identidades en el Occidente islámico (siglos XI-XIV)*, eds. Miguel Ángel Manzano and Rachid El Hour (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 2016), 73-97.

unicity, or *tawḥīd*, above all creation. Accordingly, his followers were known as *al-muwaḥḥidūn*, Almohads, that is, the supporters of the unicity.[13]

The appeal to *jihād* was pivotal for the Almohads: it was to be conducted against all those who did not accept their vision of Islam, the only true one.[14] After the flight to Tinmal, a renewed Hijra, they considered themselves as the new *muhājirūn*, emigrants, who had come out of the corrupt society and who would now end it through a *jihād* conducted from Tinmal, the new Medina.[15] In this sense, the Hijra represented the entry into a state of war and the necessity of performing *jihād*. This *hijra-jihād* equivalence was common in the early days of Islam, a time that the Almohads wanted to emulate. Thus, some Qur'anic verses link performing *hijra* with the duty to fight, *qitāl*, alongside the believers.[16] Likewise, the garrison-cities built by the Muslim conquerors and used to control the territory and continue launching campaigns of conquest were called *dār al-hijra* and their inhabitants *muhājirūn*,[17] terms also used by the Almohads.

Jihād was soon extended against the Christians, specifically since the campaign of Ifrīqiya carried out by caliph 'Abd al-Mu'min in the year 1158.[18]

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[13] R. Brunschvig, "Sur la doctrine du Mahdī Ibn Tūmart," *Arabica* 2 (1955): 137-149; M. Fletcher, "The Almohad *Tawḥīd:* Theology which relies on Logic," *Numen* 38 (1991): 110-127.

[14] On the Almohad *jihād* see, for example, M. Fierro, "La palabra y la espada: posturas frente al «otro» en la época almohade," in *La Península Ibérica en tiempos de Las Navas de Tolosa*, eds. María Antonia Carmona and Carlos Estepa (Madrid: Sociedad Española de Estudios Medievales, 2014), 53-77; J. Albarrán, "Ruptura, memoria y guerra santa: una lectura del yihad almohade," in *Órdenes militares y construcción de la sociedad occidental (ss. XII-XV),*, eds. Raquel Torres and Francisco Ruiz Gómez (Madrid: Sílex, 2017), 279-306; A. García Sanjuán, "Violencia, yihad y revolución en los orígenes del movimiento almohade," in *Al-Muwaḥḥidūn. El despertar del califato almohade*, eds. Dolores Villalba Sola (Granada: Patronato de la Alhambra y el Generalife, 2019), 89-113; J. Albarrán, "Arengas de *ŷihād* en época almohade," *Talia Dixit. Revista Interdisciplinar de Retórica e Historiografía* 15 (2020): 33-55; J. Albarrán, "The Almohads and the 'Qur'anization' of War Narrative and Ritual," *Religions* 12/10 (2021): 876.

[15] Al-Baydhaq, *Kitāb Akhbār al-Mahdī Ibn Tūmart* (Algiers: al-Sharika al-Waṭaniyya li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzī', 1975), 71-72; Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Naẓm al-Jumān* (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1990), 78 and Bennison, *The Almoravid*, 67. For the different meanings of *hijra* and its connection to *jihād* see, for example, M. Ebstein, "The Connection between *Hijra* and *Jihād* in Classical Islam," *Jamā'a* 15 (2005-2006): 53-85. The Kharijids, who carried out a policy of *takfīr* and *jihād* similar to the Almohad one, also saw themselves as *muhājirūn*. R. Bonney, *Jihad. From Qur'an to bin Laden* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 56.

[16] See, for example, Q. 3: 195.

[17] See P. Crone, "The First Century Concept of Hiğra," *Arabica* 61 (1994): 352-387; I. Lindstedt, "*Muhājirūn* as a Name for the First/Seventh Century Muslims," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 74/1 (2015): 67-73.

[18] On this expedition see, for example, A. S. Baadj, *Saladin, the Almohads and the Banū Ghāniya* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 55 ff.

Four years later this ruler crossed the Strait of Gibraltar and announced, during the feast of the Sacrifice, the forthcoming *jihād* against the Christians.[19] The figure of the "*ghāzī*-caliph" therefore reappeared: the sovereign who personally leads *jihād* against the enemies of God, a matter that the Almohad state apparatus was to take great care of through tools such as highly planned parades.

During the reign of the caliph al-Manṣūr (d. 1199), *jihād* was also of paramount importance for his ideological construction and legitimization. He was known as a great warrior, an extraordinary "mujāhid fī sabīl Allāh" who was enthusiastic about "the great ideas of *jihād*".[20] Ibn Abī Zar' describes him as a "lover of *jihād* (*muḥibban fī al-jihād*)",[21] while Ibn al-Kardabūs portrays him as a great victorious conqueror, as a destroyer of infidelity, and as a renewer of religion.[22] This reputation spread to the East, where Ibn al-Athīr states that he was a lord of *jihād* against enemies (*kāna dhā jihād li-l-'aduww*) and that he raised the banner (*rāyat al-jihād*).[23]

This reality is confirmed in a letter sent by Saladin to the Almohad caliph in his search for allies to face the new wave of crusaders. Asking for help, Saladin reminded the Maghribi ruler that he was renowned for his performance of *jihād*, so this was a suitable time to prove it. However, the Ayyubid ambassador eventually returned to Alexandria on 11 July 1191, shortly before the fall of Acre, without the required help.[24] Likewise, 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī relates that the caliph al-Manṣūr, being one day discussing with the Maliki jurist Abū Bakr b. al-Jadd about the reasons for diversity of opinion (*ikhtilāf*), told him that only the Qur'an and the tradition of the Prophet, namely the *Sunan* of Abū Dāwud,

[19] 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī: *Kitāb al-Mu'jib fī Taljīṣ Akhbār al-Maghrib* (Tetouan: Editora Marroquí, 1955), 189; Ibn Abī Zar', *Rawd al-Qirṭās*, trans. Ambrosio Huici Miranda (Valencia: Anubar, 1964), vol. 2, 401.

[20] Ibn ʿIdhārī, *Al-Bayān al-mughrib fī akhbār al-Andalus wa-l-Maghrib. Los almohades*, trans. A. Huici Miranda (Tetouan: Instituto General Franco de estudios e investigación Hispano-Árabe, 1953), vol. 2, 159, 205.

[21] Ibn Abī Zar', *Rawd al-Qirṭās*, vol. 2, 426.

[22] Ibn al-Kardabūs, *Kitāb al-iktifāʾ fī akhbār al-khulafāʾ. Historia de al-Andalus*, trans. Felipe Maíllo Salgado (Madrid: Akal, 1986), 148-149.

[23] Ibn al-Athīr, *The Chronicle of Ibn Al-Athir for the Crusading Period from Al-Kamil Fi'l-tarikh*, trans. Donald S. Richards (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2010), vol. 2, 300, vol. 3, 42.

[24] A. Baadj, *Saladin, the Almohads*, 146 ff., and M. Gaudefroy-Demombynes, "Une lettre de Saladin au calife almohade," in *Mélanges René Basset* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1925), vol. 2, 279-304. This account is transmitted by several Arabic sources. See, for example, Ibn Khallikān: *Kitāb Wafayāt al-aʿyān wa anbāʾ abnāʾ al-zamān*, trans. Barón De Slane (Paris: Oriental translation fund of Great Britain and Ireland, 1843-1871), vol. 4, 344, or Ibn 'Idhārī, *Al-Bayān al-mughrib*, vol. 1, 137.

on the one hand, and the sword, *jihād*, on the other, could stand.[25] In this account, two of the great pillars of the Almohad movement merge: the return to the primary sources of Islam and the performance of war against the enemies of Islam.

But, undoubtedly, it was the great victory over the hosts of Alfonso VIII – king of Castile and Leon – in the campaign of Alarcos (1195) that elevated Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb as the caliph-*mujāhid* par excellence and which granted him the epithet of al-Manṣūr, the victorious. The sources call it "the noble expedition (*al-ghazwa al-karīma*),"[26] and claim that "Alarcos is among the most celebrated campaigns of Islam (*al-Arāk min al-ghazawāt al-madhkūra al-mashhūra fī al-islām*), for it was the greatest made by the Almohads."[27]

If there is one account that shows the religiosity with which the sources described this campaign and which begins to suggest how the process of sanctification of al-Manṣūr took place and why it happened, it is that of the oneiric miracle recounted by Ibn Abī Zar': the caliph al-Manṣūr had a dream just before the battle of Alarcos, in which a knight, identified as an angel, riding a white horse and carrying a green banner, announced to the Almohad leader his imminent victory by the grace of God ("I have come from the Lord of the worlds to announce victory to you, to yours and to the warriors who follow your banners in *jihād*, eager to achieve the divine bounties").[28] This narration is undoubtedly based on places of memory such as the victory of the Prophet in the battle of Badr and the presence of angels therein.[29] In this struggle in the early days of Islam, the Muslims did not charge alone against their enemies, for God had promised them (Q. 8: 9 and 12) the help of angels.[30] The presence of these

[25] 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī, *Kitāb al-Mu'jib*, 232. M. Fierro, "The Legal Policies of the Almohad Caliphs and Ibn Rushd's Bidāyat al-Mujtahid," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 10/3 (1999): 226-248.

[26] Ibn Abī Zar', *Rawd al-Qirṭās*, vol. 2, 445.

[27] Ibn Abī Zar', *Rawd al-Qirṭās*, vol. 2, 446.

[28] Ibn Abī Zar', *Rawd al-Qirṭās*, vol. 2, 438.

[29] Within the *maghāzī* accounts, i.e., of the Prophet's expeditions, angels appeared on the day of Uḥud, where Michael and Gabriel made their appearance; at the beginning of the expedition against the Banū Qurayẓa, when Gabriel, dressed in his full panoply, orders Muḥammad to advance against that clan; and in the expedition of Ḥunayn, where angels descended as a black cloud of ants. Ibn Isḥāq/Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*, trans. Alfred Guillaume (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), 404 ff., 461 ff., 566 ff.; Al-Wāqidī, *The Life of Muḥammad. Al-Wāqidī's Kitāb al-Maghāzī* (London-New York: Routledge, 2011), 55, 244 ff., 435 ff.

[30] Al-Manṣūr's dream is not the only case of the appearance of angels in a war context in the Almohad period. For example, in a poem about an Almohad triumph written by the poet Sulaymān al-Muwaḥḥidī, also known as Abū al-Rabī' (d. 1207), reference is made to the

servants of God was felt by all, as a strength for the believers and a fear for the pagans, although they were only visible to a few.[31]

Badr is, without any doubt, the most important and most deeply commemorated battle, with the greatest symbolic capital and prestige, in the history of Islam, at least in terms of religiosity and sacredness.[32] The participants of Badr are the most excellent among Muslims after the *Rāshidūn* and ten of the Prophet's companions, and they are guaranteed entry into Paradise.[33] Already Mūsā b. 'Uqba, an early author of a *maghāzī* work that circulated widely in al-Andalus,[34] compiled lists of participants in Badr,[35] something that would be reproduced in the Islamic West over the centuries.[36] Thus, the Muslims who followed the Almohad caliph at Alarcos, like the ruler himself, were new Badrites, and were guaranteed salvation.

The account of the dream before Alarcos, probably constructed during the thirteenth century and written down at the end of that century, is one of the first steps in the process of sanctification of al-Manṣūr. This phenomenon, mainly of oral tradition and probably generated as a spontaneous popular devotion, will

armies of God (*junūd Allāh*), as well as to the help of Ḥayzūm, the horse of the archangel Gabriel. Abū al-Rabī', *Dīwān al-amīr al-shā'ir Sulaymān al-muwaḥḥidī* (Rabat, Université Mohammed V, n.d.), 32.

[31] Ibn Isḥāq/Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat*, 289 ff., and al-Wāqidī, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 11 ff.

[32] Ka'b b. Mālik claimed that it is the most esteemed battle in the eyes of Muslims. Ma'mar b. Rāshid, *Kitāb al-maghāzī*, ed. and trans. Sean W. Anthony (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 130.

[33] A. Afsaruddin, *The First Muslims: History and Memory* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2008), 57 ff.

[34] J. Schacht, "On Musa b. 'Uqba's Kitab al-Maghazi," *Acta Orientalia* 21 (1953): 288-300.

[35] J. Horovitz, *The Earliest Biographies of the Prophet and Their Authors* (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 2002), 29 and 70.

[36] See, for example, Ms. Khizānat al-Ḥasaniyya (Rabat), n. 52: 15 ff. Copies of these works on the participants in Badr can be found in almost any corner of the Maghrebi geography, such as in the library of the *zāwiya ḥamzawiyya* in Er-Rachidia: Ms. Zāwiya Ḥamzawiyya n. 364. Other texts on the excellences of the people of Badr were also composed, such as poems. Some of these works have been preserved in the Islamic West, such as a *qaṣīda 'alā ahl Badr* ("Poem on the people of Badr"): Ms. BNRM n. 749d. This issue has been addressed by 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Samlālī in his introduction to the edition of Ibn Idrīs al-Sanūsī's *Sayf al-naṣr bi-l-sāda al-kirām ahl Badr* (d. 1886), a versified text on the combatants at Badr and their merits. He describes this battle – and its participants – in the historical imagination of the Islamic West as the one that has contributed most to the defense of Islam, as well as the most important and noble of all expeditions. He also collects a total of 50 manuscripts of works on the *ahl Badr* preserved in different North African libraries. Al-Sanūsī, *Sayf al-naṣr bi-l-sāda al-kirām ahl Badr*, ed. 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Samlālī (Rabat: al-Rābiṭa al-muḥammadiyya li-l-'ulamā', 2014), 37-46. On the memory of the Prophet's battles in the Almohad context see J. Albarrán, *Ejércitos benditos*.

be reflected in the sources until the twentieth century, with the addition of other saintly attributes together with the military element.[37]

In the following pages, this process will be analysed through a chronological commentary on a set of fragments about the Almohad caliph collected in various sources.[38] They will be used, therefore, to reconstruct this process of sanctification. The analysis of these fragments will focus primarily on two aspects: the main virtue that is repeated over and over again about al-Manṣūr and that I consider the cause of his sanctification, namely his leading of *jihād*, although without leaving aside other representations of this caliph; and the accounts of his death and burial, a key issue in the processes of sanctification in the Islamic world.

III. Al-Manṣūr's Sanctification Process Through the Sources (thirteenth-fifteenth c.)

The first preserved account regarding al-Manṣūr is that of 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī (d. 1224), an author very close to the Almohad milieu. This narrative was probably written in the first quarter of the thirteenth century, very close, therefore, to the death of the caliph. To begin with, he depicts the victory of Alarcos as a great triumph achieved by God and the help He gave to al-Manṣūr.[39] Likewise, he represents the caliph as a ruler always ready to help the most deprived, a quality which he emphasises through al-Manṣūr's construction of a magnificent hospital.[40] Thus he portrays al-Manṣūr as combining the two

[37] Following the Islamic tradition, and being aware that the term "saint" do not belongs to it, I equate this concept to that of *wālī Allāh*, i.e., "friend of God," one who is close to God, who can perform miracles (*karāmāt*), and who possessed *baraka*, a kind of divine grace that flows through the nature of people, which can be accumulated, transmitted and lost, and which believers seek in contact with the saints, in visits and pilgrimages to their tombs. In the saint's relationship with the community, he occupies a place of mediation because of his relationship with God. See J. Renard, *Friends of God: Islamic Images of Piety, Commitment and Servanthood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008). On the figures of saints in the medieval Islamic West see, for example, V. Cornell, *Realm of the Saint. Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998); F. Rodríguez Mediano, "Religiosidad en al-Andalus: El hombre santo en el Islam andalusí," *Revista de dialectología y tradiciones populares* 54 (1999): 145-168.

[38] Some of these accounts have been collected in J. Ibn al-Ḥājj al-Sulamī, *al-Usṭūra wa-l-Maghreb al-Aqṣā* (Tetouan: Asociación Tetuán Asmīr, 2013), vol. 1, 158 ff.

[39] "On Wednesday, the 3rd of *sha'bān* of this aforementioned year (13 July 1195), the Muslims and their enemies met and God brought down His help on the Almohads, granted them their resistance and delivered the backs of the Christians to them." 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī, *Kitāb al-Mu'jib,* 235.

[40] 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī, *Kitāb al-Mu'jib,* 236-240.

virtues of *jihād* and charity.[41] On the other hand, and around his death, 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī narrates that it took place early in 595 h. (1198-1199) and that he was buried in Tinmal next to his relatives, something which almost certainly happened.[42] However, another element is introduced in this account: an unfulfilled intention to travel to the East to purify Islam there, a matter that may be the origin of other narratives of a legendary nature that will be discussed later. Thus, three elements must be emphasised in this first fragment, which was written close to the time of al-Manṣūr's death and which, despite showing a certain nature far from mythification, introduces issues that will become fundamental in the process of sanctification of this ruler: *jihād* and charity – where the battle of Alarcos and the construction of a hospital stand out – as the main virtues of the caliph, his burial in Tinmal, and his unfulfilled desire to travel to the East.

The second account closest to the life of al-Manṣūr is the brief note by the eastern historian Ibn al-Athīr, who died in 1233. He places the death of the caliph in Salé, in Jumādā I of 595 h. (March 1199), and claims that the Almohad ruler was a great lord of *jihād* against the enemies (*dhā jihād li-l-'aduww*), thus emphasising, in this totally aseptic note, the element that would remain a constant portrait of al-Manṣūr, which is the waging of war.[43] At the end of the thirteenth century, with the account of Ibn Khallikān (d. 1282) in his biographical dictionary, we already find the first mention of a popular tradition advocating that the caliph had gone to the Mashreq, where he died. That is to say, in less than a century the idea – never accepted, however, by the majority of scholars – that the caliph did not die in the Maghreb but rather went to the East, where he lived as a wanderer, was developed.[44]

[41] "I learned that before his departure for this campaign, namely that of the great battle (Alarcos), he distributed in alms 40000 dinars". 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī, *Kitāb al-Mu'jib,* 236-240.

[42] "I heard from more than one that he announced to the Almohads the journey to the East and that he began to mention the country of Egypt and what was reprehensible in it and said: 'We, God willing, will purify it,' and this did not cease to be his purpose until he died early in the year 595 (November 1198), as has been referred to, and was buried in Tinmal with his parents." 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī, *Kitāb al-Mu'jib,* 236-240.

[43] Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fī-l-Ta'rīkh* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2002), vol. 10, 258 ff.

[44] The tradition of the "wanderer" as a form of asceticism and piety has a long history, appearing in the Qur'an through the term *sā'iḥ* (Q. 9: 112; Q. 66: 5). See also M. Dietz, *Wandering Monks, Virgins, and Pilgrims*: *Ascetic Travel in the Mediterranean* World, A.D. 300–800 (Philadelphia: Penn University Press, 2005); A. Salamah-Qudsi, "Crossing the Desert: Siyāḥa and Safar as Key Concepts in Early Sufi Literature and Life," *Journal of Sufi Studies* 2/2 (2013): 129-147.

Ibn Khallikān's account begins by highlighting the role of al-Manṣūr in *jihād*.[45] Likewise, in the most interesting fragment of Ibn Khallikān's text, the two main virtues of al-Manṣūr are re-emphasised:[46] his zeal for war and his charitable spirit. On the other hand, four different narratives about his death are collected, some of which have already appeared and others which are repeated in later texts. The first of these is his renunciation of power and his journey to the East to die there in anonymity, being buried in a mausoleum near the valley of al-Bikā' in modern-day Lebanon. Ibn Khallikān, the first author to mention this account, does not deny, as other authors will do, this information, which he seems to have received mainly through oral transmissions in Damascus.[47] Perhaps the origin of this account should be connected with al-Manṣūr's unfulfilled desire to travel to the East mentioned by 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī, and even with Saladin's request for help from the Almohad caliph, which was undoubtedly known in the East. Likewise, and probably through the sources previously analysed ('Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī, who wrote his work in Egypt, and Ibn al-Athīr), he also mentions his possible death in Marrakech or Salé. Finally, he introduces a new element that will also be repeated by other authors in the future: al-Manṣūr's desire to be buried near the road, so that his tomb could be visited by travellers who could pray for his soul. Thus, the idea that the Almohad caliph had the hope of his grave being venerated appears.

In the Islamic West, however, the next author in chronological order, Ibn Abī Zar' (d. c. 1320), does not yet collect these accounts about the death of al-Manṣūr, focusing on the most plausible option which is his death in Marrakech on 22 Rabī' I of 595 h. (22 January 1199) and his burial in Tinmal with the rest of the Almohad rulers.[48] He points out elements already commented on here, such as the charity of the caliph, but also introduces some new features such as his good treatment and closeness with the men of religion. He also emphasises his achievements in *jihād*, a quality that he glorifies with the account of the dream before the battle of Alarcos that has already been mentioned.[49]

[45] "He held the banner of *jihad* … his reign was prosperous and his conquests extensive". Ibn Khallikān, *Kitāb Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 4, 335-336.

[46] Ibn Khallikān, *Kitāb Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 4, 341-342.

[47] "Some claim that he abdicated the throne and wandered the earth until he reached the East, where the insignificance of his appearance prevented him from being recognized and where he died in anonymity … I should add that in the year 680 (1281-2), a number of people told me in Damascus of a mausoleum situated near al-Hamāra, which is a village not far from al-Mijdal, a town in the dependencies of al-Bikā' al-Azīzī (Caelosyria). This monument is the tomb of Amir Ya'qūb, king of al-Gharb."

[48] Ibn Abī Zar', *Rawd al-Qirṭās*, vol. 2, 425-431.

[49] Ibn Abī Zar', *Rawd al-Qirṭās*, vol. 2, 438.

This dream is one of the first indications of the sacralization that the figure of al-Manṣūr experienced after his victory at Alarcos against the infidels. In the Islamic context and its sources on dream interpretation, the appearance of angels represents divine aid as well as the ennoblement of the dreamer and his destiny as a martyr.[50] Likewise, the angel is nothing more than a spokesman for God, and the fact that He communicates with the dreamer confirms that his sins will be forgiven. This victory is portrayed as causing the caliph to be forgiven all his previous sins, such as the murder of some family members,[51] something similar to what happened to Zenkī after the capture of Edessa. It is also worth noting the importance of the moment of the dream, since the early morning of Friday is a blessed hour.[52] For example, the battle of Zallaca (1086) between an Almoravid-Andalusi coalition and the Castilian-Leonese army, in which the Almoravid emir Yūsuf b. Tāshufīn emerged victorious against King Alfonso VI, began in the early morning of Friday 23 October 1086. Interestingly, according to the *Rawḍ al-Mi'ṭār*, prior to the battle, the Prophet appeared to a *faqīh* announcing the victory.[53]

Contemporary to Ibn Abī Zar' is the account of Ibn 'Idhārī, who wrote his *al-Bayān al-Mughrib* around the year 1312. He emphasises al-Manṣūr's charity and good relationship with the men of religion as well as his conduct of *jihād*, stating in the battle of Alarcos that "he made all the previous victories of the Muslims be forgotten and remained in their mouths his memory until their death".[54] Ibn 'Idhārī adds an account which had not appeared previously and which is tremendously interesting: the caliph, after seeing his father in a dream asking him the reason why he had his uncle and brother killed, and after seeking

[50] P. Lory, *Le rêve et ses interprétations en Islam* (Paris : Albin Michel, 2003), 145-149. See also Ö. Felek and A. D. Knysh (eds.), *Dreams and Visions in Islamic Societies* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2012). For another example of dreams, miracles and the sanctification of a performer of *jihād*, see J. Albarrán, "*This Is Your Miḥrāb*: Sacred Spaces and Power in Early Islamic North Africa—Al-Qayrawān as a Case Study," *Religions* 14-5 (2023): 674. See also J. Renard, *Friends of God*, 67 ff. This account finds certain parallels within the Christian tradition, such as Constantine's dream prior to the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, in which – according to Eusebius of Caesarea – Christ appeared to him and instructed him to inscribe the *labarum* on his banners. See, for example, W. Harris, "Constantine's dream," *Klio* 87 (2005): 488-494.

[51] Ibn 'Idhārī, *Al-Bayān al-mughrib*, vol. 1, 212-3.

[52] J. Ibn al-Ḥājj al-Sulamī, *al-Usṭūra wa-l-Maghreb*, vol. 1, 161.

[53] A. Huici Miranda, *Historia política del imperio almohade* (Tetouan: Editora Marroquí, 1956-1957), vol. 1, 366.

[54] Ibn 'Idhārī, *Al-Bayān al-mughrib*, vol. 1, 85 ff. and 189-204. On the memory of this battle see J. Albarrán, "Victorias que hacen olvidar éxitos pretéritos: la memoria en torno a las batallas de Zalaca y Alarcos," in *Memoria y fuentes de la guerra santa peninsular (siglos X-XV)*, eds. Carlos de Ayala, Santiago Palacios and Francisco García Fitz (Oviedo: Trea, 2021), 241-261.

forgiveness for these deeds, decides to hand over power to his son and hide himself as penance, notifying the people that he had died.[55] This narrative connects with the account of al-Manṣūr's death written by the Maghribi chronicler. He mentions that, without any doubt, he died in Marrakesh on Friday night, the 12th of Rabī' I of the year 595 h. (12 January 1199) and was buried in Tinmal. Two years later, in 1275-76, Abū 'Alī al-Milyānī, stationed by the Marinids in Aghmat, reportedly desecrated and destroyed the tomb of al-Manṣūr, confusing it with that of the *mahdī* Ibn Tūmart. Likewise, Ibn 'Idhārī comments that the death of the caliph was hidden from the common people, so the crowd, due to the love they had for him, began to propagate tales that placed him performing *ribāṭ* in al-Andalus or as a pilgrim in Mecca. He also gathers, from eastern sources, the idea that his tomb was in Syria.[56]

Etymologically, *ribāṭ* means "binding" and it may consist – at least in one of its manifestations – of moving to frontier areas to carry out a military activity, which could be active and offensive, but which was generally more pious, passive and defensive. The *ribāṭ* was, therefore, a way of performing *jihād*. It was shaped as a recommendation of devotion freely adopted by pious Muslims desiring perfection in their spiritual life: the believer offered his services for defence if required, while developing his spirituality through ascetic practices such as Qur'an reading sessions, meditation, fasting or austerity in clothing.[57] In other words, this realisation of *ribāṭ*, once again, depicted the Almohad caliph as a warrior and pious ruler, an image which contributed to his sanctification.

The image conveyed by the North African chronicler is that, although in fact al-Manṣūr died in Marrakech and was buried in Tinmal, due to the love that people felt for him, his death was hidden, as had happened with that of Ibn

[55] "They report, and God knows best, that from the time of this vision he intended to abdicate the kingdom (*yakhtala' al-mulk*), and remain in the service of God until his death, and that he handed over power to his son al-Nāṣir, made his last recommendations to him, and went into hiding (*ghāba*), informing the people that he had died." Ibn 'Idhārī, *Al-Bayān al-mughrib*, vol. 1, 212 ff.

[56] "He deceived about his death all the mob (*kudhiba al-kāfa min al-'āmma bi-wafāti-hi*), who used to shout, wherever they went, that he lived. Sometimes they placed him in a *ribāṭ* (*murābitan*), in the country of al-Andalus, as a stranger (*'alā istiktām*), and sometimes they placed him as a pilgrim going to the house of God (*ḥājjan ilā bayt Allāh al-ḥaram*), driven by the love to his power and following the inclination of the soul in enjoying the remembrance of him. Al-Ḥājj b. Murīnoh told me: 'I was referred to by some Easterners in their country that the tomb of al-Manṣūr, king of the Maghrib, was in Syria.' But there is no doubt or disagreement that … his tomb is in Tinmal." Ibn 'Idhārī, *Al-Bayān al-mughrib*, vol. 1, 214 ff.

[57] See, for example, J. Albarrán and E. Daza, "Hacia la construcción de una geografía del *ribāṭ* en al-Andalus: práctica y materialidad," *Cuadernos de Arquitectura y Fortificación* 6 (2021): 57-107.

Tūmart,[58] and therefore false news began to be propagated that gave the ruler an important aura of sanctity, such as his life as a *murābiṭ* defending the Andalusi border, a report linked to his always outstanding action as a caliph-*mujāhid*. Thus, the Maghrebi author is already tracing a possible account of the sanctification of al-Manṣūr: a caliph much loved by his people because of his victorious performance of *jihād* and his acts of piety and charity, whose death is concealed from the crowds due to the love they felt for him. Thereupon, as a result of this occultation, people begin to produce glorifying stories about the ruler. To this idea is added, for the first time in the Islamic West, the information originated in an eastern context suggesting that the tomb of al-Manṣūr might be in Syria.

Shortly after, Abū al-Qāsim al-Sharīf al-Sabtī al-Gharnāṭī (d. 1358), a Ceutan based in Granada, would rush – as Ibn 'Idhārī had done in giving credit only to Tinmal's burial – to deny all the information propagated by the population, such as the idea that he was making *ribāṭ* in al-Andalus or that, disinterested in power (*zāhidan fī l-mulk*),[59] he had gone to the Hijaz and was buried in Medina next to the tomb of the Prophet.[60] This will be the general trend to be found around the death of al-Manṣūr: some authors transmit oral information of popular origin to later deny it, or simply point out that his death and burial took place in Marrakech or Tinmal.

The next source worthy of mention has a different nature from the previous ones, since it is a *riḥla*, a travel chronicle. This is the monumental work of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (d. 1369),[61] in which, discussing his visit to Beirut, the Tangier traveller recounts that there was a mausoleum where the people said that Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf, sultan of Morocco, was buried. His tomb, he states, is in the place known by Noah's Karak, in al-Biqā' al-Azīz. In its vicinity, he continues, there is a marabout where they offer food to travellers, financed by Saladin or, according to others, by Nūr al-Dīn.[62] He also says that people relate how the Maghrebi ruler had arrived in Damascus after leaving his royal dignity, and had been living as

[58] Several sources state that Ibn Tūmart's death was hidden for two years, a time that 'Abd al-Mu'min, his successor, used to consolidate his power as caliph. A. Huici Miranda, *Historia política*, vol. 1, 85 ff. and M. Fierro "El *Mahdī* Ibn Tūmart," 73-97.

[59] This is another *topos* usually linked to the piety, spirituality and asceticism of scholars and Sufis. See, for example, M. Marín, "Inqibad 'an al-sultan: 'ulama' and political power in al-Andalus," in *Saber religioso y poder político en el Islam* (Madrid: AECID, 1994), 127-139; C. Melchert, *Before Sufism: Early Islamic renunciant piety* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 125 ff.

[60] Al-Sharīf al-Gharnāṭī, *Rafa' al-ḥayb al-mastūra 'an al-maḥāsin al-maqṣūra* (Rabat: Wizārat al-Awqāf wa-l-shu'ūn al-Islāmiyya, 1997), vol. 2, 155.

[61] Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *A través del Islam*, trans. Serafín Fanjul and Federico Arbós (Madrid: Alianza, 2005), 33 ff.

[62] Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *A través*, 171-173.

an ascetic and working in a garden owned by Sultan Nūr al-Dīn, with whom he established a relationship and who, after the performance of a miracle (the transformation of copper into gold) by al-Manṣūr, had ordered the construction of a magnificent hospital.[63]

Throughout this account, of which several elements are worth highlighting, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa merely develops the popular Eastern tradition first collected by Ibn Khallikān according to which, after renouncing power, al-Manṣūr travelled to the East, lived as a wanderer and was buried in a mausoleum where, according to Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, a notorious cult and pilgrimage took place. Therefore, we must understand the reference to Abu Ya'qūb Yūsuf, father of al-Manṣūr, as a mistake by Ibn Baṭṭūṭa himself or his informants, who would have been referring to Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb, an otherwise normal error due to the resemblance of both names. On the other hand, the chronology also appears already diffused in this popular tradition, since the death of al-Manṣūr (1199) was not contemporary with either Saladin (d. 1193) or with Nūr al-Dīn (d. 1174), although the difference in years is not very significant.[64] What is certain is that these two rulers with whom the Almohad caliph is related were also recognized as *mujāhid*, in addition to the fact that, as we have already said, Saladin contacted al-Manṣūr for military support against the Crusaders. Two more elements are noteworthy in this account. Firstly, the linkage of the Almohad caliph with the construction of a hospital appears again, in this case executed by Nūr al-Dīn.[65] Secondly, it is interesting to consider how al-Manṣūr appears performing a miraculous deed, a further hallmark of the process of sanctification in which his figure was immersed.

Neither Ibn Kathīr (d. 1373), nor Ibn Simāk with his *al-Ḥulal al-Mawshiyya* (c. 1381), nor Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406), offer new elements in their accounts, thus distancing themselves from the popular narratives examined so far. The Syrian Ibn Kathīr follows Ibn al-Athīr closely: he emphasises al-Manṣūr's dedication to *jihād* and places his death in Salé.[66] It is curious that, despite being from the East, this author does not collect information about the burial of the Almohad caliph in Syria. It is very likely that he knew it, since it appears in such an important work as that of Ibn Khallikān, although he possibly did not give any credit to it. Similarly, Ibn Simāk also highlights al-Manṣūr's performance in war and remarks that he died in Marrakesh in Rabī' I of 595 h. (January 1199) and was

[63] Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *A través*, 171-173.

[64] J. Ibn al-Ḥājj al-Sulamī, *al-Usṭūra wa-l-Maghreb*, vol. 1, 169-171.

[65] Nur al-Din was in fact recognized for his foundation of pious buildings, including a hospital. See Y. al-Tabbaa, *The Architectural Patronage of Nur al-Din*, PhD Dissertation (New York: New York University, 1982), 100-102.

[66] Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāya wa-l-Nihāya* (Cairo: Dār Hajar, 1998), vol. 16, 687.

buried in Tinmal next to his father and grandfather.[67] As for Ibn Khaldūn, he only states that he died in Marrakech, also in Rabīʿ I of 595 h. (January 1199).[68]

Much more interesting is the account about al-Manṣūr transmitted by the Maghrebi Ibn al-Sakkāk (d. 1415) in his *Nuṣḥ mulūk al-islām bi-l-taʿarīf bi-mā yajibu ʿalay-him min ḥuqūq Āl bayt al-kirām*, a work halfway between a mirror of princes and a text of veneration of the Prophet's family. Ibn al-Sakkāk was a follower of the Maliki legal school and the Sufi mystical way, a combination of trends that was on the rise in the Maghreb, and defender of the rights and preference of the *ahl al-bayt*,[69] – the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad. He recounts that the Andalusi poet Sufyān Ibn Idrīs al-Mursī, who was famous for his baraka and performed miracles (*karāmāt*), often lamented the misfortunes of al-Ḥusayn, grandson of the Prophet. He describes al-Mursī travelling to Marrakech in the time of al-Manṣūr to propose a judicial consultation. The caliph replied favourably due to having seen the Prophet in dreams (*raʾā rasūl Allāh fī l-nawm*), who told him that Sufyān did great service for them (*Sufyān al-mashghūl bi-khidmati-nā*) feeling severe affliction for his descendants (*al-tafajjuʿ li-waladi-nā*), and that he should therefore give him whatever he needed.[70]

First of all, in this account it is worth noting that Ibn al-Sakkāk has chosen to feature al-Manṣūr in his mirror of princes as an example of a good ruler and a caliph concerned about the rights of the descendants of the Prophet. This concern is not reflected in any other source and will be discussed later on. Thus, this shows the positive memory of the Almohad ruler in the Islamic West. On the other hand, Ibn al-Sakkāk again resorts to a dream in which al-Manṣūr encounters the Prophet, once again a sign of sanctification.

In summary, in these accounts collected so far – going from the beginning of the thirteenth century to the beginning of the fifteenth century –, several issues can be highlighted. Among all of them, the only account to be inserted into the sphere of Almohad production is that of ʿAbd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī. It emphasizes the *mujāhid* nature of al-Manṣūr, something that will be constantly repeated, his piety and charity, highlighting the construction of a hospital and the treatment of orphans, and his presumed desire to go to the East, specifically to Egypt, to purify Islam. It should not be forgotten that this author finished his work in the country of the Nile, so either he himself circulated this information

[67] Ibn Simāk, *Al-Ḥulal*, 189-190.

[68] Ibn Khaldūn, *Histoire des Berbères et des dynasties musulmanes de l'afrique septentrionale*, trans. Baron de Slane (Paris : Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1968-1969), vol. 2, 215.

[69] M. Benchekroun, *La Vie intellectuelle marocaine sous les Mérinides et les Wattasides* (Rabat, 1974), 368-72; S. Sqalli Houssini, *Contribution à l'Étude du discours politico-réligieux sous les derniers Mérinides: les Lettres d'Ibn Abbad de Ronda au Sultan Abu Faris et le Nush Muluk al-Islam d'Ibn As-Sakkak.*, PhD Dissertation (Université d'Aix-Marseille, 1992).

[70] Ibn al-Sakkāk, *Nuṣḥ mulūk al-islām* (n.p. 1898), 2-3.

in those lands, having brought it from the Maghreb, or it is possible that these rumours were already settled in the Mashreq, perhaps due to the contacts that Saladin maintained with al-Manṣūr. As will be seen, some of the Eastern accounts discussed earlier bring us closer to this second possibility.

The first of the oriental accounts, that of Ibn al-Athīr, is very aseptic and only highlights al-Manṣūr's performance of *jihād*. However, the next one analysed, that of Ibn Khallikān, besides reinforcing the idea of the Almohad caliph as a *mujāhid*, pious and charitable ruler, adds two interesting features: the first is al-Manṣūr's possible desire to be buried beside a road so that travellers could pray for him there. The second is that al-Manṣūr may not have died in the Maghreb but rather was buried in a mausoleum in al-Bikā'. Thus, already at the end of the thirteenth century, and perhaps because of those contacts between al-Manṣūr and Saladin, and due to the rumour recorded by 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī about the desire of the Almohad caliph to go to the East, it is clear that in the Mashreq there was a popular oral tradition describing the Almohad ruler as having been buried there. This popular tradition would continue its development in the Mashreq, as evidenced by the *Riḥla* of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa. It is also interesting to note how al-Manṣūr is depicted as performing a miraculous deed, yet another element of the sanctification process. The fact that later on, Ibn Kathīr, in his passages on the Almohad caliph, returned to Ibn al-Athīr's account, again emphasizing his effort in *jihād* and placing his death in the Maghreb, proves that these traditions around the supposed burial of al-Manṣūr were of popular origin.

In the Islamic West, several points can be noted regarding the accounts of Ibn Abī Zar', Ibn 'Idhārī, Abū al-Qāsim al-Sharīf, Ibn Simāk and Ibn Khaldūn. The first is their shared focus on two main virtues of al-Manṣūr, which may have been the origin of his popularity and sanctification. These are his realization of *jihād*, which gives the caliph a clear aura of sanctity through the dream prior to the battle of Alarcos, and his piety and charity, underlined by the construction of the hospital in Marrakech. Also added to this repertoire of virtues is the caliph's kind treatment towards men of religion. For the first time, in some of these sources the account according to which the caliph could be buried in the East also appears, a rumour that seems to have come from the Mashreq itself. Likewise, and especially through Ibn 'Idhārī, mention is also made to the idea that the Almohad caliph might have abandoned power or that his death might have been concealed from the population, which is why the people, due to their

love for this ruler, began to circulate stories marked with sanctity, traditions such as that he might actually be in al-Andalus performing *ribāṭ*.[71]

Thus, the process of sanctification traced by Ibn 'Idhārī seems to fit: faced with the concealment of his death and the rumours that al-Manṣūr might have abandoned power, moved by their love for this caliph and the popularity he enjoyed, people began to spread tales of a legendary nature that would mystify and sanctify his figure. This idea could have been consolidated with the disappearance of his tomb in Tinmal at the end of the thirteenth century due to the destruction caused by the Merinid troops. In any case, it should not be forgotten that most authors would deny the veracity of these legendary accounts of popular origin, something that is very clearly seen in the text of Abū al-Qāsim al-Sharīf al-Gharnāṭī.

Among all these works composed in the Islamic West between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, those which have provided the most information and different accounts are Ibn Abī Zar''s *Rawḍ al-Qirṭās* and Ibn 'Idhārī al-Marrākushī's *Bayān*. And both have something in common that should not be overlooked when trying to understand the portrait of al-Manṣūr that they show: they are written in a context of Merinid production, in the case of Ibn Abī Zar' even directly related to the power of this North African dynasty that ruled the Maghreb between the years 1244-1465.

In the Merinid context, several processes took place through which the passages about al-Manṣūr must be understood. First, during the thirteenth-fifteenth centuries "corporate" Sufism, Sufism organized in *ṭarīqas* – religious orders within the Sufi mystical path –, became institutionalized, as well as Maghrebi sanctity, which began to be another agent in power relations.[72] From the time of Abū Yūsuf al-Marīnī (d. 1286) an official version of the Maliki legal school was promoted as a major ideological element of the Marinid regime alongside this institutionalization of Sufism, which caused it to proliferate among the scholars. For example, the famous courtier Ibn Marzūq al-Tilimsānī (d. 1379) was a member of the *ṭarīqa* Suhrawardiyya.[73] Another good example is

[71] This phenomenon of hiding his death from the masses is very interesting and cannot be dismissed completely, since it was already put into practice with Ibn Tūmart and was not uncommon in the medieval Christian world. An example is that of Henry I of Castile (d. 1217), whose death took a long time to be revealed in order to favor the enthronement of Ferdinand III over the interests of the kingdom of León. See *Chronica latina regum castellae* in *Chronica hispana saeculi XIII*, eds. Luis Charlo Brea, Juan Antonio Estévez Sola and Rocío Carande Herrero (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), 7-118.

[72] V. Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 123.

[73] M. Kably, *Societe, pouvoir et religion au Maroc a la fin du «Moyen-Age» (XIVe-XVe)*, (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1986), 279; V. Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 124-130. See also Benchekroun, *La Vie intellectuelle marocaine*.

Ibn ʻAbbād al-Rundī (d. 1390), preacher of the great mosque of al-Qarawiyyin between 1374 and 1390 and promoter of *shādhilism*, another Sufi trend.[74] A similar process is evident among the *awliyāʼ Allāh*, the saints, and the rulers. The sultans recognized the spiritual authority of the saint and regulated (and politically neutralized) it through, for example, the granting of certificates of distinction (*ẓāhir al-tawqīr wa-l-iḥtirām*). Meanwhile, the saints supported the political power with their influence over the people, in return for that recognition and the prerogatives it entailed.[75] Likewise, the Marinid rulers included numerous mystical-Sufi elements in their discourse. For example, in the monetary reform introduced by Sultan Abū Yūsuf Yaʻqūb, a Qur'anic verse (Q. 57: 3) of important mystical connotations appears, since it speaks of God being the *ẓāhir* and the *bāṭin*, the external and the internal, the exoteric and the esoteric.[76]

It is not surprising, therefore, that, as their biographies developed a discourse of power and social legitimization, some accounts of Merinid sultans with certain saintly attributes began to appear.[77] Such is the case of several of the biographical accounts of ʻAbd al-Ḥaqq (d. 1217), founder of the dynasty, where he is represented as a wise ruler, just and concerned about the weak and helpless, as an uncorrupted, pious and ascetic Muslim, a sultan reputed for his scruples, his sanctity and his *baraka*.[78] In fact, some of the biographical works of

[74] H. Ferhat and H. Triki, "Hagiographie et religion au Maroc médiéval," *Hespéris-Tamuda* 25 (1986): 17-51; H. Ferhat, *Le soufisme et les zaouias au Maghreb* (Casablanca: Toubkal, 2003); É. Geoffroy, *Le Soufisme en Egypte et Syrie sous les derniers Mameloucs et les premiers Ottomans: Orientations spirituelles et enjeur culturels* (Damascus: Institut Francais de Damas, 1995), 149-152 and 207-208.

[75] M. El Mansour, "Saints and Sultans: Religious Authority and Temporal Power in Pre-Colonial Morocco", in *Popular Movements and Democratization in the Islamic World*, ed. Kisaichi Masatoshi (London: Routledge, 2006), 1-32.

[76] S. Gubert, "Les Mérinides. Cheminements symboliques et retour à Fès," in *Le Maroc Médiéval. Un empire de l'Afrique à l'Espagne* (Paris: Musée du Louvre-Hazan, 2014), 424-429; P. Nwiya, *Exégèse coranique et langage mystique: Nouvel essai sur le lexique technique des mystiques musulmans* (Beirut: Université Saint-Joseph, Institut de lettres orientales, 1970), 170-176; S. Gubert, "Pouvoir, sacré et pensée mystique: les écritures emblématiques mérinides," *al-Qantara* 17/2 (1996): 391-427; S. Gubert, *Le Maître dans tous ses états: sujétion, théologie, politique et royauté (dynastie mérinide)*,, PhD Dissertation (Paris: EHESS, 2004), vol. 2, 443.

[77] In this sense, see M. Á. Manzano, "De ulemas y santos magrebíes en la guerra santa contra los cristianos de la península durante la baja Edad Media," in *Hombres de religión y guerra. Cruzada y Guerra Santa en la Edad Media peninsular (siglos X-XV)*, eds. Carlos de Ayala and Santiago Palacios (Madrid: Sílex, 2018), 297-313.

[78] M. Á. Manzano, "Biografías y poder político: la imagen de los sultanes magrebíes en la Baja Edad Media," in *Biografías y género biográfico en el Occidente islámico*, eds. María Luisa Ávila and Manuela Marín (Madrid: CSIC, 1997), 249-265.

Marinid sultans, such as those of Ibn al-Aḥmar (*Al-Nafḥa al-nisrīniyya wa-l-lamḥa al-marīniyya* and *Rawḍat al-nisrīn fī dawlat Banī Marīn*, which were composed in 1387 and 1404 respectively), follow the model of the biographies of *awliyā' Allāh*.[79] Another example is the glorification of sultan Abū al-Ḥasan (d. 1351) in the *Musnad* of Ibn Marzūq, who depicts this sovereign as an exemplary figure in terms of spiritual values. Among other qualities, Ibn Marzūq emphasises the Sultan's solicitude for people consecrated to God and how precious his faith in them was, the consideration he kept for whoever had a saintly ancestor, his preference for those who were wise, his effort in building hospitals, and his compassion and affection for orphans. He also emphasises that "it is to be known that our Imam was the ruler on earth who best fulfilled the obligation of *jihād*". In other words, he portrays Abū al-Ḥasan as pious, charitable, close to the men of religion, and a leader of the war against the enemies of Islam, qualities that led him to be described in terms resembling those of a saint.[80] Undoubtedly, this portrait is very similar to the one about al-Manṣūr transmitted by the sources, a fact that should lead us to consider that these passages are strongly influenced by the conception of kingship and sanctity that was dominant in the Merinid context.

Due to his victories in *jihād*, particularly at Alarcos, his charitable and pious status, and the vicissitudes of his death, several popular traditions emerged that contributed to the sanctification of al-Manṣūr. This image, in turn, was consolidated due to the Marinid production context, a framework in which the link between sultans and saints was growing and the boundary dividing kingship from sainthood was dissipating.

This socio-cultural process of interconnection between power, Sufism and sainthood was to be reinforced and culminated with the progressive institutionalisation of *sharīfism*, i.e., the authority and prestige granted to the descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad. With the officialization of the celebration of the *mawlid*, the anniversary of the Prophet's birth, in the year 1292 by Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf,[81] the Marinids thus inaugurated the *sharīfian* policy,

[79] Shatzmiller, *L'historiographie mérinide*, 104.

[80] Mª J. Viguera, "La exaltación biográfica de Abū l-Ḥasan, sultán de los benimerines," in *Biografías y género biográfico en el Occidente islámico*, eds. María Luisa Ávila and Manuela Marín (Madrid: CSIC, 1997), 403-423.

[81] It seems clear that the celebration of the *mawlid* in the Islamic West was first introduced in Ceuta by al-'Azafī (d. 1236), judge of the city. Some Almohad rulers, such as al-Murtaḍā, may have also celebrated it. J. D. Latham, "The rise of the 'Azafids of Ceuta," *Israel Oriental Studies* 2 (1972): 263-287; Benchekroun, *La Vie intellectuelle marocaine*, 101; H. Ferhat, "Le culte du prophète au Maroc au XIIIe siècle: organisation du pèlerinage et célébration du Mawlid," in *La religion civique à l'époque médiévale et moderne*, ed. André Vauchez (Rome: Ecole

which would reward and protect the descendants of the Prophet through the line of Idrīs II (d. 828), whom Ibn Abī Zar', in his *Rawḍ al-Qirṭās*, made the founder of Fez.[82] This phenomenon of sanctification and resignification of Fez, the Merinid capital, would culminate in 1437, when the alleged tomb of Idrīs II, Mulay Idrīs, was found in the mosque of the *shurafā'*.[83] A century earlier, in 1318, an uncorrupted corpse had been discovered in Volubilis and identified as Idrīs I (d. c. 791).[84] Progressively, the historians of the dynasty would carry out a complete translation of this ideology by giving a *sharīf*, and therefore Arab, ancestry to the founder of the dynasty, 'Abd al-Ḥaqq. This idea came to flourish with Abū 'Inān (d. 1358), who would call his state *al-dawla al-sharīfa*.[85]

This new *sharīfian* affiliation, realised mainly through marriage alliances, is clearly seen in the works of Ibn al-Aḥmar, especially in his *Rawḍat al-nisrīn*.[86] The sultan's authority thus enabled him to act as a regulator of *sharīfism* and sanctity, whether he himself was or not a *sharīf*. His prophetic ancestry, already fully recognised in the Sa'adi and 'Alawid dynasties,[87] reinforced, rather than

Française de Rome, 1995), 89-97; Z. Benramdane, *Ceuta du XIIIè au XIVè: siècles des lumières d'une ville marocaine* (Mohammedia: Université Hassan II-Mohammédia. Publications de la Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines, 2003), 302 ff., and B. Boloix, "Las primeras celebraciones del Mawlid en al-Andalus y Ceuta, según la Tuḥfat al-mugtarib de al-Qaštālī y el Maqṣad al-šarīf de al-Bādisī," *Anaquel de Estudios Árabes* 22 (2011): 79-96. See also N. Kaptein, *Muḥammad's Birthday Festival. Early History in the Central Muslim Lands and Development in the Muslim West until 10th/16th Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), and M. Katz, *The birth of the Prophet Muhammad: devotional piety in Sunni Islam* (London-New York: Routledge, 2007).

[82] H. Ferhat, "Le culte du prophète au Maroc", 89-97. See H. Beck, *L'Image d'Idris II, ses Descendants de Fas et la Politique Sharifienne des Sultans Marinides (656-869/1258-1465),* (Leiden: Brill, 1989).

[83] M. Kably, *Societe, pouvoir et religion au Maroc*, 291-302 and 324-330; Beck, *L'Image d'Idris II*, 198-251; S. Gubert, *Le Maître dans tous ses états*, vol. 1, 35; A. Khaneboubi, *Les Institutions gouvernementales sous les Mérinides* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008), 181-185. On Idrīs II as patron saint of Fez see A. Sebti, "Hagiographie et enjeux urbains au Maroc. Une biographie d'Idrîs II," in *La religion civique à l'époque médiévale et moderne*, ed. André Vauchez (Rome : Ecole Française de Rome, 1995), 77-88.

[84] B. Tuil, *Inhumation et baraka. La tombe du saint dans la ville de l'Occident musulman au Moyen-Âge (XIIe-XVe siècle),* doctoral dissertation (Paris: Université Paris IV Sorbonne, 2011), vol. 2, 11-12.

[85] M. Kably, *Societe, pouvoir et religion au Maroc*, 261-262.

[86] B. Tuil, "Reformer le royaume idrisside: Fès et l'historiographie officielle mérinide," in *Le Maroc Médiéval. Un empire de l'Afrique à l'Espagne* (Paris: Musée du Louvre-Hazan, 2014), 432-435.

[87] M. García-Arenal, "Mahdi, murabit, sharif: l'avènement de la dynastie sa'dienne," *Studia Islamica* 71 (1990): 77-114; See also A. Cour, *L'établissement des dynasties des chérifs au Maroc:*

generated, this attribution, since these two charismatic powers were combined under him. This pro-*sharīfian* policy of the Marinids was launched to take advantage of the growing popularity of the Sufis, who had incorporated the principle of the *shurafā'* into their doctrine.[88] The portrait of Abū al-Ḥasan in the *Musnad* provides another good example. According to Ibn Marzūq, one of the features that this Merinid sultan took most care of was his relationship with the members of the "House of the Prophet of God", and the protection he granted to this noble lineage.[89]

It is in this context of consolidation of *sharīfism* within Merinid and North African politics where the account of Ibn al-Sakkāk quoted above should be inserted. As we have seen, this Maghrebi author, a strong defender of the rights of the *shurafā'*, transformed al-Manṣūr into a firm supporter of the protectors of the Prophet's descendants, the members of the *ahl al-Bayt*, in addition to his sanctification through his vision of the Prophet in a dream. Beyond anticipating by a few decades, the process of institutionalisation of the influence of the *shurafā'* in the Maghreb, Ibn al-Sakkāk chose the Almohad caliph as a symbol of a sultan who protected the descendants of the Prophet, a matter that illustrates the importance that this ruler, who had become a sacralised sovereign, had in the collective Maghrebi imaginary. Thus, the victory of Alarcos and his *mujāhid* status had been the origin of this sanctifying process that had been enriched by the different contexts of production through which it had passed.

IV. Al-Manṣūr's Sanctification Process Through the Sources (sixteenth – twentieth c.)

From the sixteenth to the twentieth century, the accounts concerning al-Manṣūr continued these tendencies, consolidating and intensifying them. The soldier and historian Luis del Mármol Carvajal (d. 1600), who lived for years in North Africa first as a prisoner and then as a traveller, mentions in his *Descripción General de África*[90] that, after a dispute with a marabout, al-Manṣūr decided, as a penitence, to abandon all his dignities and leave in 1206 to be "a pilgrim around

et leur rivalité avec les turcs de la régence d'Alger, 1509-1830 (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1904), and A. Sebti, "Au Maroc: sharifisme citadin, charisme et historiographie," *Annales E.S.C.* 41 (1986): 433-457.

[88] M. El Mansour, "Saints and Sultans: Religious Authority," 1-32.

[89] M. J. Viguera, "La exaltación biográfica de Abū l-Ḥasan," 403-423.

[90] F. Rodríguez Mediano, "Luis de Mármol Carvajal. Veintidós años en África," in *Exploradores españoles olvidados de África* (Madrid: Fundación Airtel, 2001), 49-80, and J. Castillo, *Entre Granada y el Magreb. Vida y obra del cronista Luis del Mármol Carvajal (1524-1600),* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2016).

the world," dying in Alexandria where he worked as a baker.[91] This portrayal emphasised the image of al-Manṣūr's respect for the men of religion and the saints, as well as his journey and death in the East, dispossessed of his wealth and power. Likewise, the idea that people thought he had disappeared to perform the pilgrimage, from which he would never have returned, is repeated. It is interesting to point out that most of the information that Luis del Mármol includes in his work was obtained through oral sources during his stays in North Africa. Therefore, these accounts about the Almohad ruler must have been deeply rooted in the popular Maghrebi imaginary.

In the *Nafḥ al-Ṭīb*, the North African historian al-Maqqarī (d. 1632) is once again very sceptical. Despite mentioning the various accounts (abdication, journey to the East, burial in al-Biqā'...), he denies their veracity – with the exception of the burial in Tinmal – following the line of al-Sharīf al-Gharnāṭī, whom he also quotes explicitly.[92] Likewise, he again stresses two issues already emphasised: the importance of al-Manṣūr's *jihād* and the transmission of popular narratives about his last days.

In the East, no significant change occurs. For example, the Syrian Ibn al-'Imād al-Ḥanbalī (d. 1679), in his *Shadharāt al-dhahab fī akhbār man dhahab*, a biographical dictionary by way of a compilation of obituaries, again emphasises al-Manṣūr's *jihād* as well as his asceticism, characterised by his woollen clothing, something common to Sufis and holy men (*yalbas al-ṣūf* [...]). On the other hand, he collects two of the accounts about his death that were in circulation in the East and had already been collected by Ibn Khallikān, whom he quotes.[93] He does not contribute, therefore, anything new, limiting himself to reproducing the narratives that were already in circulation through the Mashreq.

In the Maghreb, however, new popular traditions were introduced, intensifying the degree of sanctity which had been built up since the thirteenth century around the figure of the Almohad caliph. Two works from the late nineteenth century reflect this trend. The first of these, the *Kitāb al-Istiqṣā li-Akhbār duwal al-Maghrib al-Aqṣā*, was written at the end of the nineteenth century

[91] Luis del Mármol Carvajal, *Descripción General de África, 1º parte* (Granada: René Rabut, 1573), f. 185v. It seems that al-Manṣūr had been concerned, at least in some cases such as those of Abū al-'Abbās al-Sabtī (d. 1204), or Abū Madyan (d. 1198), to establish contact with important mystics. In fact, it seems that he even came to be considered a disciple of Abū al-'Abbās al-Sabtī himself, who resided in Marrakech. See H. Ferhat, "Abu l-'Abbas: contestation et sainteté," *al-Qantara* 13/1 (1992): 185-204; H. Ferhat, *Sabta des origines au XIVème siècle* (Rabat: Ministère des Affaires Culturelles, 1993), and V. Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 79 ff.

[92] Al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-ṭīb* (Beirut: Dār al-Ṣādir, 1988), vol. 1, 104.

[93] Ibn al-'Imād al-Ḥanbalī, *Shadharāt al-dhahab fī akhbār man dhahab* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1986), vol. 6, 525-526.

by Aḥmad b. Khālid al-Nāṣirī (d. 1897). Considered the greatest of nineteenth century Moroccan historians, al-Nāṣirī was a prominent scholar, a member of the family that had founded the Nāṣiriyya Sufi brotherhood in the seventeenth century. His work is a general history of the Maghreb and the Islamic West from the Arab conquest to his own time, finishing it shortly before he died.[94] In the passages concerning al-Manṣūr, in addition to collecting earlier traditions by quoting authors such as Ibn Abī Zar' or Ibn Khallikān, he adds: "the people of the Maghreb claim (*wa mā taza'umu-hu 'āmmat al-Maghrib*) that the hot springs (*ḥamma*) of Abī Ya'qūb, which are near the city of Fez, are attributed (*mansūba*) to Ya'qūb al-Manṣūr, who had two demons (*'ifrītīn*) there emitting flames eternally, heating their waters. The healing (*al-shifā'*) achieved by those who bathe was due to the *baraka* of Ya'qūb al-Manṣūr".[95] Immediately afterwards he hastens to deny this popular information by explaining that, in fact, the heat of the water and the healing it causes is due to the sulphur (*al-kibrītiyya*) it contains, something that – he claims – occurs in other natural springs as well.[96]

Almost simultaneously, these popular traditions are confirmed by the scholar from Fez Muḥammad b. Ja'far b. Idrīs al-Kattānī (d. 1927) in his monumental work on the saints and scholars of Fez, *Salwat al-Anfās*, the first lithographed edition of which appeared in 1898.[97] About the baths of Ya'qūb, he states: "Many people (*kathīr min al-nās*) believe that this place was a private compound of Sultan Abī Ya'qūb, who had the *laqab* of al-Manṣūr, known to the people (*al-'āmma*) as Sultan al-Akḥal (the black sultan), to whom is attributed the shrine (*mazāra*, place of pilgrimage) known in the East, where there was already worship before his move there, and he was the first disciple of the shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī."[98] That is, he adds that the Almohad caliph was known as the black sultan and had a shrine in the East where there was a cult prior to his

[94] D. Robinson and J-L. Triaud, *Le temps des marabouts: itinéraires et stratégies islamiques en Afrique occidentale francaise v. 1880-1960* (Paris: Karthala, 1997), and R. C. Pennell, *Morocco Since 1830: A History* (New York: New York University Press), 109 ff.

[95] Al-Nāṣirī, *Kitāb al-Istiqṣā li-Akhbār duwal al-Maghrib al-Aqṣā* (Casablanca: Dār al-Kitāb, 1997), vol. 2, 203 ff.

[96] Al-Nāṣirī, *Kitāb al-Istiqṣā*, vol. 2, 205.

[97] See E. Burke III, "The Moroccan Ulama, 1860-1912: An Introduction," in *Scholars, Saints, and Sufis: Muslim Religious Institutions Since 1500*, ed. Nikki R. Keddie (Berkeley-Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1972), 93-125; B. Dennerlein, "Asserting Religious Authority in late Nineteenth/Early Twentieth Century Morocco: Muhammad b. Ja'far al-Kattânî and His Kitâb Salwat al-Anfâs," in *Speaking for Islam: Religious Authorities in Middle Eastern Islam*, eds. Gudrun Krämer and Sabine Schmidtke (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 128-152, and S. Bazzaz, "Reading reform beyond the State: Salwat al-Anfas, Islamic Revival and Moroccan National History," *The Journal of North African Studies* 13/1 (2008): 1-13.

[98] Al-Kattānī, *Salwat al-Anfās* (Fes: al-Maṭba'a al-Ḥajariyya, 1898), vol. 3, 216.

alleged arrival, as well as linking him, as the first disciple, to one of the greatest actors in the history of Sufism: ʻAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 1166).

These late nineteenth-century accounts reflect a series of popular traditions that have probably been developing for some time before, and which grant al-Manṣūr an undisputed degree of sanctity. The Almohad ruler appears as the builder of the thermal baths of Mulay Yaʻqūb, near Fez, where he controlled genies who permanently heated the water, and where people went to receive the *baraka* of the Almohad caliph to be cured. Likewise, he also appears as the black sultan, Sultan al-Akḥal, and as the first disciple of ʻAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, eponym of the Sufi *ṭarīqa* Qādiriyya who lived in the mid-twelve century. In these traditions there are several issues to be analysed.

The first of these is the control over the *jinns* that the saints could exercise, as well as the protection they granted against them. Al-Manṣūr is thus represented as commander of an army of *ʻifrīt*, beings whom he uses for the benefit of humanity, specifically the healing of the sick through the *baraka* of the caliph-saint himself. These types of *jinn*-demons, who appear in chapter 27 of the Qur'an, are considered the most powerful of the *jinns*.[99] God granted the Prophet power over them, an ability now attributed to al-Manṣūr. The account also enhances the comparison of the Almohad caliph with another prophet, in this case Solomon. The figure of Solomon appears in the Qur'an as an example of a ruler who excelled in the performance of his responsibilities because of his wisdom. Solomon is the prototype of a wise king and a clear predecessor of Muḥammad, and the protection of the people is among his duties. One of his virtues is the mastery and control of evil forces: God granted Solomon the ability to subdue evil creatures and use them for the benefit of mankind. In the Qur'an, the son of David controls, as does al-Manṣūr, an army of *jinns*. It is also narrated how the queen of Sheba was brought in the presence of Solomon by the *ʻafārīt*, so that he also had control of the most powerful jinn. Likewise, Q. 34 narrates that the *jinns* built for Solomon various structures.[100]

These ideas also circulated in the oral tradition and popular Maghrebi religiosity. For instance, for the Ghzawa tribe Solomon is the king of the animals and of the *jinns*, and he roams the earth with his army of *jinn*. He is thus considered sultan of the *jinns*, as is Mulay ʻAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī,[101] another figure who, as mentioned above, appears in the account of al-Manṣūr provided by the *Salwat al-Anfās*. It is clear that al-Jīlānī – who will be discussed later –

[99] A. González Vázquez, *Mujeres, islam y alteridades en el norte de Marruecos* (Barcelona: Bellaterra, 2015), 46.

[100] R. Tottoli, *Biblical Prophets in the Qur'ān and Muslim Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 35 ff. See Q. 2: 102; Q. 21: 81-82; Q. 34: 12-14, and Q. 38: 36-38.

[101] A. González Vázquez, *Mujeres, islam*, 56 ff.

could not have been a teacher of the Almohad ruler since they never met and his teachings had not even reached the Maghreb when the caliph died, but the fact that the Almohad ruler is related to this great Sufi master is further evidence that the sanctification of al-Manṣūr was already absolute and had overflowed the boundaries that had been established between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Likewise, another ruler who was also known, at least in Salé, as the sultan of the *jinns*, was the Marinid Abū al-Ḥasan ʻAlī (d. 1351).[102] Interestingly, this ruler was also known as the black sultan, Sultan al-Akḥal,[103] a denomination that al-Manṣūr also receives in al-Kattānī's narrative. There is a certain parallel of this identification of the Almohad caliph with the black sultan in the oral traditions collected by Raymond Jamous in his work *Honneur et Baraka*: Sultan Mulay Yaʻqūb witnesses the prodigies of a *sharīf,* decides to abdicate in favour of his son, who is known as Sultan al-Kḥol, the black sultan, and sets off across the country to meet prestigious *shurafāʼ* and benefit from their *baraka*. He thus arrives in *iqarʼiyen* territory, where he is humiliated and forced to dance. Then, enraged, he writes to his son, the black sultan, who sends an army and kills all the tribesmen.[104]

According to other oral traditions concerning the Chellah of Rabat, collected in this case by Basset, people believed that one of the sultans buried there, again Abū al-Ḥasan ʻAlī, was the black sultan.[105] The fact is that this Merinid ruler was occasionally referred to as such because of the Abyssinian origin of his mother.[106] In this sense, according to Ibn Abī Zarʻ al-Manṣūr's mother was also black.[107] Other traditions identify, however, the ʻAlawid sultan Mulay Ismāʻīl (d. 1727), also the son of a black slave, with Sultan al-Akḥal.[108] For example, the black sultan of the oral tradition analysed by the anthropologist Zakaria Rhani in *Le pouvoir de guérir* is a mythical figure superimposed on the image of Mulay

[102] A. S. Ettahiri and B. Tuil, "Chella, de la nécropole mérinide au royaume des djinns," in *Le Maroc Médiéval. Un empire de l'Afrique à l'Espagne* (Paris: Musée du Louvre-Hazan, 2014), 502-505.

[103] Al-Nāṣirī, *Kitāb al-Istiqṣā*, vol. 3, 118. For more information on the black sultan, see D. Eickelman and B. Draioui, "Islamic myths from western Morocco: three texts," *Hesperis-Tamuda* 14 (1973): 195-225; Kh. Naamouni, *Le culte de Bouya Omar* (Casablanca: EDDIF, 1993), and M. Maarouf, *Jinn Eviction as a Discourse of Power: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Moroccan Magical Beliefs and Practices* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

[104] R. Jamous, *Honneur et Baraka. Les structures sociales traditionneles dans le Rif* Cambridge-Paris: Cambridge University Press-Maison des sciences de l'homme, 1981), 231 and 232.

[105] H. Basset, *Le Culte des Grotes au Maroc* (Algiers: Ancienne Maison Bastide-Jourdan, Jules Carbonel, 1920), 92, and A. Ettahiri and B. Tuil, "Chella, de la nécropole mérinide," 502-505.

[106] Z. Rhani, *Le pouvoir de guérir. Mythe, mystique et politique au Maroc* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 80.

[107] Ibn Abī Zarʻ, *Rawd al-Qirṭās*, vol. 2, 425.

[108] Z. Rhani, *Le pouvoir de guérir*, 13.

Ismā'īl. That is, Rhani's informants identify the black sultan with the 'Alawid ruler, especially in legends such as that of the saint 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Yeffu of the Doukkala region.[109]

The idea emerging in the background of all these popular narratives is that the figure of the black sultan represents the enormous, sometimes unstoppable, power of the ruler, of the *makhzen* – the Maghrebi government – a power that has an ambiguous and shifting relationship with the saints and *shurafā'*. While in the account collected by Jamous this power is attracted by that of the *shurafā'*, in the narratives studied by Rhani, identifying Sultan al-Akḥal with Mulay Ismā'īl, the ruler appears mostly confronted with the power of the saints and even defeated by it, thus serving his figure to legitimise and recognise the attributions of the marabouts.

Another remarkable issue and one that returns us to the victorious leadership of *jihād* at the origin of al-Manṣūr's sanctification process is the fact that these other two sovereigns identified as black sultans were also remembered as great *mujāhidūn*. Concerning the Merinid Abū al-Ḥasan, Ibn Marzūq's portrait of him shows this perfectly.[110] Mulay Ismā'īl, on the other hand, led numerous victorious campaigns against infidels, such as the conquest of Larache from the Spanish or Tangier from the English.[111] War, therefore, was also at the root of the legendary imaginary surrounding these sultans.

VI. Manuscript 3/164 from the Ibn Yūsuf Library in Marrakech: the Talisman of al-Manṣūr

An unpublished miscellaneous manuscript, preserved in the Ibn Yūsuf library in Marrakech, contains a hitherto unknown text confirming al-Manṣūr's sanctification process.[112] Entitled *Ḥijāb Mawlā-nā Ya'qūb al-Manṣūr*, i.e., "the talisman of our lord Ya'qūb al-Manṣūr," this text of nine folios and Maghrebi script is probably a copy of the statements to be written on a protective amulet, which consisted of a piece of paper to be carried on the body folded and tucked into a cover.[113] The manuscript mentions al-Manṣūr as the blessed one, al-

[109] Z. Rhani, *Le pouvoir de guérir*, 64 and 81.

[110] M. J. Viguera, "La exaltación biográfica de Abū l-Ḥasan," 403-423.

[111] J. M. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 230 ff.

[112] The Ibn Yūsuf library in Marrakech was founded by the Almoravid Amir 'Alī b. Yūsuf b. Tāshufīn (d. 1143). See J. Hendrickson, "A Guide to Arabic Manuscripts Libraries in Morocco, with Notes on Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt and Spain," *MELA Notes* 81 (2008): 15-88.

[113] On talismans, see, for example, E. Doutté, *Magie et Religion dans l'Afrique du Nord* (Algiers: Typographie Adolphe Jourdan, 1909), 143 ff., and C. Hamès (ed.), *Coran et talismans: textes et pratiques magiques en milieu musulman* (Paris: Karthala, 2007).

Mubārak, and it is the *baraka* bestowed by God on him, along with that of the Prophet and the power of the prayers written on it, that protects its bearer. The text begins by saying that whoever possesses this *ḥijāb* will know no harm or pain, and God will protect him from a considerable number of problems, of which, significantly, those of a warlike and violent nature (iron, arrows, projectiles, spears, stones, lead...) stand out.

It then goes on to list the different Qur'anic verses that must be written and that will protect the bearer. Two of the most important chapters are included in full: the first, the *fātiḥa*, and number 112, which according to Islamic religiosity comprise the entire Qur'an. Surahs 113 and 114, chapters clearly linked to protection, are also included. According to the *Tafsīr* – Qur'anic exegesis – of al-Qurṭubī (d. 1273), Muḥammad asked through them for God's protection on behalf of his grandchildren, and even the companion of the Prophet Ibn Mas'ūd (d. c. 653) went so far as to say that they were not part of the Qur'an, but were invocations of protection. Likewise, in al-Qurṭubī's *Tafsīr*, the fourth verse of Surah 114 is used to discuss the lawfulness of the use of talismans. That is, these are Qur'anic fragments closely linked to these objects and to safeguarding. The rest of the verses that are included suggest the idea according to which man can only seek protection in God, who is the only refuge, and that everything is predetermined.[114]

Up to this point the content of the manuscript does not offer many clues as to the context in which it may have been written, since it follows the basic outline of this type of writing and includes the Qur'anic passages common to them: chapters 1, 112, 113 and 114, as well as the verse of the throne (Q. 2: 255-6).[115] One of the best examples of this genre is the famous treatise *Shams al-Ma'ārif wa Latā'if al-'awārif*, by the North African al-Būnī (d. 1225).[116] In this work, al-Būnī outlines all the magical and esoteric practices known in his time concerning astrology, talismans, magic squares, invocations, the occult science of letters, and white magic. Among the forty chapters that make up this encyclopaedia of esotericism, some rituals based on the power of the Qur'anic text are described, including a series of surahs and verses for magical and protective purposes coinciding with those of the manuscript.

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[114] *Ḥijāb Mawlā-nā Ya'qūb al-Manṣūr*, Khizānat Ibn Yūsuf bi-Marrūkush, manuscript 3/164, f. 1-8 (folios are counted as if they were pages, since this is how they are numbered in the manuscript itself). Al-Qurṭubī: *Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān. Compendio del Tafsir del Corán "Al-Qurtubi"*, trans. Zakariya Maza Abu Mubarak (Granada: Cdad. Musulmana Española, 2005-2013), vol. 10, 325-331.

[115] See A. Labarta, *Libro de dichos maravillosos. Misceláneo morisco de magia y adivinación* (Madrid: CSIC, 1993), 35.

[116] P. Lory, "Magie et religión dans l'oeuvre de Muhyi al-Dîn al-Bûnî," *Horizons Maghrébins* 7/8 (1986): 4-15.

At the end of the manuscript a series of names appears to attest the power of the talisman, and which provide further context for the production of this text. These names include those of the four *rāshidūn* caliphs (Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān and 'Alī), those of various companions of the Prophet, daughters of the Prophet (Fāṭima or Umm Kulthūm, for example), or the most prominent wives of the Prophet, Khadīja and 'Ā'isha.[117] Two other names are included which bring us closer to a mystical, Sufi context. These are Uways al-Qarnī (d. 657) and Ma'rūf al-Karkhī (d. 815-820), two alleged "proto-Sufis," the former a companion of the Prophet.[118]

Nevertheless, the name mentioned in the text and which can undoubtedly help the most in providing a correct dating of the writing and, therefore, in understanding the circumstances in which it was composed, is that of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, or al-Kīlānī, as it appears in the manuscript.[119] It is clear that the name of this great Sufi master, the inspirer if not founder of the *ṭarīqa* Qādiriyya, brings us back to a mystical context. The first thing to be considered is when this master, or his teachings, began to have influence in the Maghreb. It seems that knowledge about his thought may have reached the Islamic West early through the Sufi 'Abd al-Laṭīf b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Hibat Allāh al-Hāshimī al-Baghdādī, who is said to have written a work on al-Jīlānī entitled *Nuzhat al-Nāẓir fī Manāqib al-Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī*, and travelled to al-Andalus where he received numerous pupils, dying there in 1226.[120] Nevertheless, the *ṭarīqa* Qādiriyya and its spread did not reach the Maghreb until the fifteenth century, driven by the descendants of two sons of al-Jīlānī, who, departing from al-Andalus, introduced the brotherhood in Fez and founded the great family of the *shurafā'* Jīlāniyūn or Qudiriyūn.[121]

Being a text of a popular character, it seems more accurate to place the *terminus post quem* in those dates and not in the thirteenth century, where the knowledge of the Persian *shaykh* would have been reduced to much smaller circles. As for the *terminus ante quem*, nothing can be stated for certain, since the production of this text could reach the twentieth century where, it should be

[117] *Ḥijāb Mawlā-nā Ya'qūb al-Manṣūr*, f. 9.

[118] *Ḥijāb Mawlā-nā Ya'qūb al-Manṣūr*, f. 9. From Uways derives a form of mysticism that consists of the transmission of spiritual knowledge between two individuals without the need for physical interaction between them. As for Ma'rūf al-Karkhī, he constitutes the penultimate step in the so-called golden chain of Sufism, before reaching the Prophet himself.

[119] *Ḥijāb Mawlā-nā Ya'qūb al-Manṣūr*, f. 9.

[120] His biography can be found at Ismā'īl Pāshā Al-Bābānī, *Īḍāḥ al-maknūn* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1992), vol. 2, 642.

[121] Th. Zarcone, "La Qadiriya," in *Las sendas de Allah. Las cofradías musulmanas desde sus orígenes hasta la actualidad*, eds. Alexandre Popovic and Gilles Veinstein (Barcelona: Bellaterra, 1997), 567-575.

remembered, al-Manṣūr was related to al-Jīlānī in al-Kattānī's *Salwat al-Anfās*. In any case, the fact that the name of the *shaykh* appears in its oriental form (al-Kīlānī instead of al-Jīlānī) suggests that the text is from the 15th-16th centuries, a time when the fame of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī was reaching the Maghreb precisely from the East. In a later period, the name of the *shaykh* appears in the Maghreb fully fixed as al-Jīlānī. Likewise, mentioning al-Jīlānī just after the Prophet's companions and family, ahead of Uways al-Qarnī and Ma'rūf al-Karkhī, indicates the pre-eminence of the latter and that, therefore, the *Ḥijāb* was composed in the milieu of the *ṭarīqa* Qādiriyya.

The fact that the protection of the *Ḥijāb* includes primarily bladed weapons, but also [projectiles of] lead,[122] i.e., firearms, also suggests that it was composed at a time of transition between the two types of weaponry, where firearms did not yet dominate the battlefield. This chronology coincides with the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries.

Similarly, the other texts accompanying the *Ḥijāb* in the miscellaneous manuscript do not suggest a later date: the *Talkhīṣ al-shams wa-l-qamar wa-l-shuhūr wa-l-zallāzil* by the astronomer and mathematician Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Bannā' (d. 1321),[123] i.e., a work of the early 14th century; a text on paradise and hell by 'Abd al-Raḥīm b. Aḥmad al-Qāḍī (ca. eleventh c.),[124] a work popularized by al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505) in the fifteenth century;[125] and several hadith.[126] Therefore, if it is accepted, at least provisionally, the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries as those of the creation of the *Ḥijāb Mawlā-nā Ya'qūb al-Manṣūr*, this text confirms the degree of sanctification reached by al-Manṣūr from his death until that period, a sanctity also clearly including his intermediation between God and the believers. Likewise, this talisman also certifies the socio-cultural process of interrelation between power, Sufism and sanctity, a phenomenon which was taking place since Merinid times, and which affected the figure and memory of the Almohad caliph. The talisman is, moreover, deeply associated with a key feature of the memory of al-Manṣūr: the protection of believers, a matter that he had carried out through charitable works such as the construction of a hospital

[122] *Ḥijāb Mawlā-nā Ya'qūb al-Manṣūr*, f. 1, 3.

[123] H-P-J. Rénaud, "Sur les dates de la vie du mathématicien arabe marocain Ibn al-Bannā' (XIIe-XIIIe s. J.C.)," *Isis. A Journal of the History of Science Society* 27/2 (1937): 216-218.

[124] *Daqā'iq al-akhbār fī dhikr al-janna wa al-nār* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al'Ilmiyya, 1984).

[125] See Sh. Tamari, *Iconotextual Studies in the Muslim Vision of Paradise* (Wiesbaden-Ramat-Gan: Harrassowitz Verlag-Bar-Ilan University, 1999); N. Rustomji, *The Garden and the Fire. Heaven and Hell in Islamic Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), and S. R. Burge, *Angels in Islam. Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī's al-Ḥabā'ik fī akhbār al-malā'ik* (London-New York: Routledge, 2012).

[126] Khizānat Ibn Yūsuf bi-Marrūkush, manuscripts 1/164, 4/164, 5/164 y 6/164.

or, above all, his leadership of *jihād* and his successful defence of the borders against the infidels.

VII. Final Remarks: from Warrior-Caliph to Saint

The earliest sources create the image of al-Manṣūr as a leader of *jihād*, as a victorious warrior-caliph, who surrounded himself with men of religion and who also stood out for his piety and his charitable acts. It is this depiction as *mujāhid*, the only one that is repeated over the centuries, which is the basis of his memory and of his "sacralization". That is to say, it is the victorious *jihād* materialised in the battle of Alarcos, which prevented al-Manṣūr from the *damnatio memoriae* that, however, did occur in other Almohad rulers or in the Almohad movement in general, and even allowed this caliph to be used as an example of a good sultan.

On the other hand, the first accounts of a "legendary" nature, and thus the first traces of the sanctification of al-Manṣūr, appear in Eastern sources, due perhaps to his image of *mujāhid* there and which is clearly presented in the letter sent by Saladin, or to the idea of him having a desire to travel to the East, a notion that may have been popularised there by ʿAbd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī, who finished his work in Egypt. Curiously, it is in the East where a popular cult existed in his mausoleum, since it is the only place where a tomb of al-Manṣūr has "existed" for a prolonged period of time. In this sense, one might wonder if the early disappearance of his tomb in the Maghreb due to the Merinid destruction of the Almohad burial places may have contributed to the appearance of all those narratives that we have seen.

In the Islamic West, from the fourteenth century onwards, narratives of a legendary and sanctifying nature also began to appear, closely linked in these early centuries to *jihād*, such as the dream recounted by Ibn Abī Zarʿ or the alleged departure of the caliph to carry out *ribāṭ* at the Andalusi frontier. In most cases, the testimonies of the sources seem to indicate, or at least discursively construct, that this process of sanctification was from "bottom to top": it began from the sphere of popular religiosity rather than from the scholars and men of letters who wrote these sources, who always keep a certain distance from these accounts and even on many occasions deny their veracity. Again, it is possible that the early destruction of the caliph's tomb due to Merinid action, and even the plausible occultation of his death mentioned by Ibn ʿIdhārī, may have helped the emergence of these traditions in the popular substratum. Likewise, the strong influence that the conceptions of kingship and sanctity hegemonic in the Merinid ideological context had on these accounts and on this first evidence of

sanctification in the sources of the Islamic West, from the fourteenth century onwards, must also be emphasised.

Gradually elements belonging to other great saints, such as the dominion of the *jinns* or the protection and healing power of his *baraka*, were added to this sanctification derived from his activity as a *mujāhid*, a motif of sacralization that gradually faded. Although this last phase of sanctification has been dated through al-Kattānī and al-Nāṣirī at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, we cannot discard its creation much earlier in contexts of popular religiosity, a hypothesis that the Marrakech manuscript helps to concretise. From this process, it is noteworthy that the Almohad ruler came to be included in such prestigious Sufi circles as that of ʻAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, or his identification as sultan al-Akḥal, a certainly ambiguous figure that, although sometimes having a pejorative character, represented the almost unlimited power of the sovereign.

Thus, war – along with other elements linked to piety and religiosity – became a means of sanctification in medieval Islam, just as it had been in other traditions such as Christianity.[127] And, of course, the case of al-Manṣūr was not the only one. A very widespread and significant example is the veneration surrounding the burial places of the Prophet's companions, or their successors, who participated in the expansion of the frontiers of Islam, a phenomenon encompassing the entire geography of medieval Islam. For example, in Sind, the veneration of a series of tombs belonging to companions of the Prophet who participated in its conquest was carried out.[128] Similarly, on the other side of the Islamic realm, in Saragossa, the geographer al-ʻUdhrī (d. 1085), in his *Niẓām al-murkhān fī-l-masālik wa-l-mamālik*, reported the existence of the graves – and their veneration – of Ḥanash b. ʻAbd Allāh al-Ṣanʻānī and ʻAlī b. Rabāḥ al-Lakhmī, two *tābiʻūn*, i.e., successors of the Prophet's companions, who allegedly were part of the conquering armies of al-Andalus.[129] In these cases, as in that of the Almohad caliph, the memory of active participation in *jihād* was intermingled with other elements of sanctification, such as closeness to the Prophet.

[127] See, for example, the cases of St. Canute – Canute IV of Denmark (d. 1086), – or the crusader king St. Louis – Louis IX of France (d. 1270).

[128] M. A. Asif, *A Book of Conquest. The Chachnama and Muslim Origins in South Asia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 150 ff.

[129] Al-ʿUdhrī, *Tarsīʿ al-akhbār wa tanwīʿ al-āthār*, in F. de la Granja, "La Marca Superior en la obra de al-ʿUḏrī," *Estudios de Edad Media de la Corona de Aragón* 8 (1966): 447-545.

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