The Jihād of the Caliphs and the First Battles of Islam: Memory, Legitimization and Holy War, from Cordoba to Tinmal

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Abstract

This paper analyzes how the memorialization and commemoration of early conflicts in Islamic history influenced the performance and legitimization of jihād, especially on the part of caliphs who ruled in the Islamic West. Jihād is defined here as an ideology, a discursive tool that appealed to accepted and shared sacred elements; created a framework for the justification of specific actions on the part of the caliphs; and generated new authority. The paper also discusses the importance of the maghāzī and futūḥ, as well as its later impact, reception, reinvention, and re-contextualization. The focus of this study, however, is the key role that military expeditions during the founding period of Islam played in the conceptualization of jihād, which turned primitive episodes of war into legitimizing elements by utilizing the image of ideal behavior enjoyed by Muḥammad and the rāshidūn within the Umma. This study considers the Cordoban Umayyad caliphate and the Almohad movement, two periods during which al-Andalus was ruled directly by a caliph. By considering both chronological and geographical contexts, the paper analyzes the commemoration of the first battles of Islam, wherein both caliphates in the Islamic West presented themselves as a renewal of the early “golden age” of Islam. A comparison between the caliphates illuminates their similarities and differences.

In the year 840/1411 Ibn Nuḥās died near Damietta while defending the town of al-Ṭīnah against a crusader attack. Thereby, he died as a martyr in the fulfillment of the jihād. Previously, he had written on the merits of the jihād in his work Mashāriʿ al-ashwāq ilā maṣāriʿ al-ʿushāq, which from chapter 32 on included a brief but interesting history of jihād. The bulk of the text is composed of the Prophet’s campaigns, the maghāzī, followed

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3. The term maghāzī, apparently from the times of al-Wāqidī’s Kitāb al-Maghāzī (3rd/9th century), if not earlier,
by the battles and conquests of the first caliphs, the rāshidūn, as well as of a summary of the most important Islamic victories. Following a traditional narrative that can be found in books devoted to the Prophet’s expeditions and still widely disseminated in the Islamic world today, Ibn Nuḥās describes (prior to discussing the expeditions) how God did not allow the Muslims to fight against the infidels until the hijra. That is to say, the jihād did not begin until Muhammad’s arrival in Medina. Ibn Nuḥās then organizes the Prophet’s battles into two sections: firstly, those that Muḥammad conducted himself and, secondly, the expeditions that he dispatched but did not participate in. Although the author emphasizes that the jihād would not end until Judgment Day and that it was a duty of all Muslims of every age, the outline of this chapter seems to show that the most important fight was the one carried out by the Prophet against the infidels and hypocrites of his time, while the rest were mere derivations of it. That is to say, the maghāzī represented the true and pure spirit of jihād. Following these sections, and also of great interest, were the conquests of the “rightly guided” caliphs.

The memory of the battles of the Prophet and the rāshidūn caliphs is also reflected in al-Shaybānī’s (d. 189/805) theory of the “four swords,” according to which God had given the Prophet four swords to use in his fight against the infidels: the first was brandished by Muḥammad himself and used against the polytheists; the second was used by Abū Bakr against the apostates; the third was raised by ʿUmar against the People of the Book; and the fourth was used by ʿAlī to fight against the rebels. In this sense, Shams al-Dīn al-Sarakhsī (d. 490/1090), one of the great jurists of the classical period, claimed that the actions related referred to the Prophet’s expeditions, and thus not only battles, of the Medina period. The first of the stories in al-Wāqidī concerns the departure of 30 men led by Hamza b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, who in 1/623 intercepted a caravan of Qurayshis heading from Mecca to Syria along the coastal route. The last story in the text concerns an expedition conducted by Usāma b. Zayd along with 3,000 men toward Syria in 11/623, right after the Prophet’s death. See al-Wāqidī, The Life of Muḥammad. Al-Wāqidī’s Kitāb al-Maghāzī, ed. R. Faizer (London/New York, 2011); J. Horovitz, The Earliest Biographies of the Prophet and their Authors (Princeton, 2002; ed. orig. 1927); R. Paret, Die Legendäre Maghāzi-Literatur (Tubinga, 1930); J. Schacht, “On Mūsā b. ʿUqba’s Kitāb al-Maghāzī,” Acta Orientalia 21 (1953), 288-300; J. Jones, ”The Chronology of the Maghāzī-A Textual Survey,” in Uri Rubin (ed.), The Life of Muḥammad (Aldershot, 1998, 1st ed. 1957), 193-228; M. Hinds, “Maghāzī and sira in early Islamic scholarship,” in T. Fahd (ed.), La vie du prophète Mahomet (Paris, 1983), 57-66; M. Hinds, “al-Maghazi,” EI, vol. 5, Leiden, 1986, 1161-1164; H. Mujīb al-Masrī, Ghazawāt al-Rasūl Bayn Shuʿarāʾ al-Shuʿūb al-Islāmiyyah: Dirāsah fī al-Adab al-Islāmi al-Muqāran (Cairo, 2000); M. Hammidullah, The Battlefields of the Prophet Muhammad, with Maps, Illustrations and Sketches: A Continuation to Muslim Military History (New Delhi, 2003), and Maʿmar ibn Rāshid, The expeditions. An Early Biography of Muḥammad, ed. and transl. Sean W. Anthony (New York/London, 2014), xv-xix.

4. Ḥāmid Aḥmad al-Ṭāhir, Ghazawāt al-Rasūl (Cairo, 2010), 7 and 26 ff.

5. The second category is known as the sarāyā (sing. sarīyah). M. S. Tantāwī, Al-Sarāyā al-Ḥarbiyyah fī al-ʿAhd al-Nabawi (Cairo, 1990), 21. Like many other biographers of the Prophet, Ibn Ishāq distinguishes the campaigns conducted in person by Muḥammad from the sarāyā, but, in narrating them, omits the distinction and follows a strictly chronological order. Ibn Ishāq/Ibn Hishām, Sirat Rasūl Allāh, trans. A. Guillaume (Oxford, 1955), 659-660.

to the jihād of the four orthodox caliphs served as a precedent, or as legal justification. The jurist ʿAlī Ibn Tāhir al-Sulamī (d. 499-500/1106) also recounted the memory of the first caliphs’ victories in an attempt to revitalize the jihād he had carried out after the First Crusade with his treatise on holy war. Just as the rāshidūn had done, contemporary rulers had to lead the jihād against the infidels.

Therefore we can see the fundamental relationship between the idea of jihād and the memory of the first battles of Islam. The resignification and recontextualization of the expeditions of the Prophet and the first caliphs’ memory, along with the symbolic capital that these expeditions carried, played a key role in the conceptualization and theorization of jihād, which turned the earliest episodes of war into legitimizing elements due to the image of an ideal behavior enjoyed by Muḥammad and the rāshidūn within the Umma, or, in other words, what Tarif Khalidi calls “social ideality.”

Let me briefly explain what I mean by “memory” of the first expeditions of Islam. In the first place, it is important to take into account the position that the early Islamic times, that is, the time of the Prophet and the rāshidūn caliphs, occupy in the collective imagination. This period is understood as an exemplary “golden age” that must be constantly emulated and referred to. The Prophet and his life experience, followed by the orthodox caliphs, carry a symbolic capital and an absolute charisma. Whenever the memory of this period

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is voiced, it produces an appropriation and reproduction of this symbolic capital along with the charisma and social authority that it confers. In fact, through this memorialization, throughout the resignification and recontextualization, in this case of the expeditions of the Prophet and the memory of the first caliphs, the aforementioned charismatic authority is reactivated. As a consequence, new obligations are simultaneously generated and demanded while evoking the sacred symbols of shared culture and memory and associating them with images that have, again, an enormous symbolic capital. Accordingly, as Sean Anthony says, “magḥāzī are also sites of sacred memory,” events and stories of sacred history that left their mark on the collective memory of the community of believers. Thus, these early expeditions of Islam are part of the cultural memory of the Umma, where we understand “cultural memory” as Jan Assman defined it: as “that body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose ‘cultivation’ serves to stabilize and convey that society’s self-image.”

In order to better comprehend this phenomenon of “memorialization,” I will draw on the idea of “commemoration” as a dynamic process in which stories and reports from the past are recovered, re-narrated, and recontextualized in a given present in order to serve future aims. These narratives, and the beliefs and values they contain, can create cohesion within the group that performs the commemoration while simultaneously conflicting with the collective myths and narratives of other groups. Consequently, collective memorialization is not neutral since it is always linked to issues of identity and power. Therefore, by studying the commemoration of the first battles of Islam through repeated mention and narration, we will carry out an exercise in “mnemohistory.” Coined again by Assmann, this term “is concerned not with the past as such, but only with the past as it is remembered. It surveys the story-lines of tradition, the webs of intertextuality, the diachronic continuities and discontinuities of reading the past.” Thus, the interest is not only the factuality of the magḥāzī and futūḥ, but their later impact, reception, reinvention, and recontextualization.


16. For more on this concept of “commemoration” see, for example, D. Tilles and J. Richardson, “Poland and the Holocaust. A New Law Exposes the Problematic Nature of Holocaust Remembrance,” History Today 68/5 (2018) Published online: https://www.historytoday.com/daniel-tilles-and-john-richardson/poland-and-holocaust

This paper will analyze, then, using several different cases as examples, the process by which memorialization, the commemoration of the first battles of Islam, becomes an important element for the performance and legitimization of jihād. Jihād is here understood as an ideology, a discursive tool that appeals to accepted and shared sacred elements; creates a framework that provides justification for specific actions; and generates powerful doses of authority. Therefore, holy war should be understood, rather than as a concrete action, as a flexible performance setting, centered on a discourse of struggle against the enemies of God. It has a concrete language, can be adapted to different contexts, and is used by a variety of actors in order to legitimate their actions.

Regarding the choice of geographical and chronological context, I will focus on the Cordoban Umayyad caliphate as well as on the Almohad movement, two cases in which al-Andalus was ruled directly by a caliph. Additionally, I consider this framework suitable for the analysis of the commemoration of the first battles of Islam, since both caliphates presented themselves as a recommencement of the early days of Islam, that is, as a return to that “golden age,” by referring to the eschatological times of its appearance—the year 300 in the case of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III and 500 in Ibn Tūmart’s—or the idea that Cordoba was the new Medina and Tinmal the destiny of a new Hijra, issues to which I will return later. Thereby, we can also establish a comparison between the two cases.

The Umayyad Caliphate of Cordoba

In Umayyad al-Andalus, the frontier of the Islamic world for eight centuries, jihād and the memory of the first battles of Islam maintained an intense relationship. The chronicles portrayed the Umayyad sovereign, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III (d. 350/961) in particular, as a


warrior-ruler, as a “ghāzi-caliph” who personally led the expeditions, as the Prophet had on numerous occasions. It was the caliph who incarnated holy war.

The idea that one of the duties of the ruler was to defend Islam and the fight against the enemies of God was fully developed in al-Andalus. In a fragment praising ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III in the Muqtabis, Ibn Ḥayyān (d. 469/1076) says that he was following in the footsteps of the rāshidūn caliphs, “fighting and defending Allāh with the sword of God, making the truth triumph over the false.” This position as defender of Islam and its community, claimed and exercised by the Cordoban caliph, granted him a high level of legitimacy. In fact, it was one of the main reasons that justified the auctoritas that he possessed. Supposedly, it was explained by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III himself at the time of the execution of the culprits of the defeat of Simancas/al-Khandaq in 327/939, when he addressed the prisoners: “Look at these poor people—pointing to the populace that was watching them—have they given us authority (maqāda), becoming our submissive servants, but for us to defend and protect them?.” In addition, the term translated here as “authority,” maqāda, has a direct relationship with the military context, that is, the direction of an army, as they are derived from the same root, as in, for example, the word qāʾid. Therefore, the leadership that the community had given to the caliph was closely linked to his capacity and duty to lead the war. The campaigns launched by the Cordoban state served for the defense of the realm, like many of those carried out by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III in response to different Christian threats. The effort was to consolidate the border or even to expand territory, as with the fortification of Medinaceli in 334/946 or, perhaps, Almanzor’s expeditions. But these efforts also had a strong discursive component directed towards their internal audience: they were a legitimating instrument of extraordinary scope that was renewed year after year with each new campaign. They strengthened the hand of the ruler, particularly when he led the armies in person. Therefore, holy war cannot be considered, in the Cordoban caliphate, as simply a reactive element to external pressures; it must also be thought of as a highly significant political asset.

Thus, it is not surprising that ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III exploited this image as soon as he ascended to power, a moment of fitna in which Cordoban authority was under siege and


25. Ibn Ḥayyān, Al-Muqtabas V, 446.


in which it was necessary to utilize all available legitimating tools: he would be presented as a ghazi-ruler, a sultan who personally led the armies against their enemies.\textsuperscript{28} The chronicles, creators, and bearers of ideology underlined again and again the military events of each year, thus configuring an image of a state that consistently took action against its adversaries.

In Ibn Ḥayyān’s work, in the chapters devoted to the period of caliphal Cordoba, the term \textit{jihād} is mostly associated with the caliph’s capacity for leading the holy war. The term is connected not only to propagandistic passages that concern the person of the sovereign, such as letters encouraging the fight against infidels and heretics, but also to circumstances like the departure of volunteers to “the fight in the path of God.” It is used as a means of dramatizing an exceptional moment of fighting against the enemies of Islam, in a kind of account that is different from a mere military speech.\textsuperscript{29}

For instance, in the anonymous chronicle on ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III the word \textit{jihād} refers to the expeditions and encounters of the caliph against the Christian kingdoms. It occurs in a passage narrating the sovereign’s decision to go out himself on a campaign and send letters ordering the recruitment of troops to fight the enemies of God and inciting them to participate in the \textit{jihād}.\textsuperscript{30} In these sources, the caliphal expeditions follow a narrative model very similar to that used for the Prophet’s \textit{maghāzī}. In the Simancas campaign, for instance, Ibn Ḥayyān, following Ibn Fuṭays’ \textit{Kitāb al-Fatḥ}, recounts how ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III led the Umayyad army against the enemies of God to teach them that the word of Allāh is the truth,\textsuperscript{31} thus calling to mind Muḥammad’s actions against the infidels. The battle, which ended in defeat for the caliphal troops, became known in Arab sources as \textit{al-Khandaq}, the trench, probably alluding to the famous siege of Medina by the Arab pagans during the times of the Prophet.

We might consider it as a two-way discourse: on the one hand, the Cordoba caliph’s actions during war were related to those of the Prophet; on the other hand, no completely covert criticism was being made by remembering that members of his family were defeated that day in the presence of the messenger of God.\textsuperscript{32} But this is not the only example of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III’s use of the memory of the Prophet’s activity as a military leader, that is, in commemorating the \textit{maghāzī}. In the campaign of Osma (322/934), the caliph used the flag

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  \item 30. C. de la Puente, “El Ŷihād en el Califato Omeya de al-Andalus y su culminación bajo Hišām II,” in Fernando Valdés (coord.), \textit{La Península Ibérica y el Mediterráneo en los siglos XI y XII. Almanzor y los terrores del Milenio} (Aguilar de Campoo, 1999), 23-38.
\end{itemize}
known as “the Eagle,” which called to mind one formerly used by Muḥammad in the battles of Badr and Khaybar.33 Also Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih (d. 328/940), on occasion of a Cordoban victory over the Count of Barcelona (324/935–6), composed a poem in which he compared that action to the battles of Badr and Ḥunayn.34

Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih also compared the campaigns of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III with Badr and Ḥunayn in the urjūza devoted to the caliph in the Kitāb al-masjada al-thāniya fi al-khulafa’ wa al-tawārikh wa ayyāmihim, one of the books in his Al-ʿIqd al-Farīd.35 The urjūza is a long poem in which a constant parallelism is created between the Umayyad ruler and the Prophet. The choice of Badr and Ḥunayn was not unintentional and speaks to the importance of both battles for the development of the Islamic idea of holy war, as well as for the very history of the Umayyad dynasty.

Badr, as the most commemorated battle in the history of Islam, is endowed with more symbolic capital and prestige than any other such episode, at least in terms of religiosity and sacredness. The participants in the clash are typically held up as the most exceptional among the Muslims after the rāshidūn and ten of the Prophet’s companions, whose entrance to paradise had already been guaranteed.36 Thus, according to the urjūza, the fighters who followed the Cordoban caliph were new “Badrites.” The text recontextualizes the meaning of the battle, and thus guarantees salvation to these fighters. On the other hand, an important element of the Qurʾānic doctrine of holy war is contained in Sūra 8 (al-Anfāl), and exegetes hold the chapter to have been revealed following the battle of Badr, to which, they argue, the chapter refers.37

The battle of Ḥunayn, also led by the Prophet, is of great importance as well since it is one of the only battles that is directly named in the Qurʾān (Q. 9: 25). God participated in the event through His angels, as He had at Badr, and a huge spoil was obtained. Additionally, Abū Sufyān, ancestor of the Umayyads, having now converted to Islam, participated in the expedition, and, in fact, together with the Prophet, was one of the few who endured the attack of the pagans.38 The battle is thus one of the most important in “Umayyad memory,” since the positive role of Abū Sufyān in Ḥunayn is undeniable. It is also worth remembering that Abū Sufyān, both as a pagan and enemy of the Prophet, was often used by the enemies of the Umayyads, for example the Fatimids, to attack the Cordoban dynasty.39 Moreover, in order to give more

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36. See, for example, Afsaruddin, The First Muslims, 57 ff.
importance to the remembrance of the battle of Badr by the Umayyads, Abū Sufyān did not fight that day against the Prophet.\(^4\)

In the ʿIqd al-Farīd, Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih goes even further with the comparison between ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III and Muḥammad, trying to prove that Cordoba’s mosque was a renewal of Medina’s, thereby linking the new Umayyad capital with the Prophet’s city.\(^5\) In the same sense, as Maribel Fierro has shown, Mundhir b. Saʿīd al-Ballūṭī (d. 355/966), the Cordoban ʿālī, encouraged the adoption of the nisba al-Anṣāri among the Andalusí Muslims without a tribal Arabic filiation. These Andalusis became the new Prophet anṣār, “helpers,” and Cordoba the “new Medina” that had to be defended.\(^6\)

The practice of mixing Umayyad family memory with the commemoration of outstanding battles and the ideology of jihād, as in the case of Abū Sufyān, was a recurrent tool in Umayyad-era texts. A further example occurs in an interesting poem by Muḥammad Ibn Shukhayṣ, in which the poet remembers the battle of Marj Rāhiṭ. The context was the declaration of obedience by the Banū Khazar to al-Ḥakam II in the war against the Fatimids in 360/971.\(^7\) Both dynasties considered the conflict between them,\(^8\) as holy.\(^9\) The battle of Marj Rāhiṭ, in 64/684, pitted the Banū Kalb, supporters of the Umayyad caliph of Damascus, Marwān I, against the Banū Qays. The latter were supporters of ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Zubayr, who had proclaimed himself caliph and who had previously supported the proto-Shiʿi rebellion of al-Ḥusayn.\(^10\) Ibn al-Zubayr was remembered, especially in narratives transmitted by pro-Umayyad circles,\(^11\) as the prototype of an anti-caliph. Following his defeat, according to these accounts, his body faced the same fate as that of apostates: decapitation and crucifixion.\(^12\)

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\(^{47}\) Antoine Borrut (see for example Borrut, “Vanishing Syria,” 37-68; Shoshan, *The Arabic Historical Tradition*, 171 ff.) has shown that, in addition to al-Andalus, there was a “competing historiography” in the tenth-century East that made Umayyad memory very much alive and that also made an uninterrupted chain of succession between Damascus and Cordoba, even prophesying a return of the Arab dynasty to the Mashreq, an idea with which the Cordoban Umayyads flirted. See, for example, Ibn Ḥayyān, *Al-Muqtabas V*, 306-307.

\(^{48}\) Kennedy, *The Armies of the Caliphs*, 92-98.
The texts are very specific in drawing a clear parallel between Marj Rāḥīṭ and its recontextualization: the Banū Khazar were the new Banū Kalb, the original supporters of Marwān I. Al-Ḥakam II thus appears as the latter’s successor, confronting the allies of the apostate anti-caliph, represented by the Fatimid ruler, whose words and deeds acted against the religion of the Prophet. Just as Ibn al-Zubayr had been defeated, the Ismāʿīlī imām—as predicted indirectly by the poem—would be too.

Indeed, the memory of the battle of Marj Rāḥīṭ was widely used in Umayyad memory production circles. Ibn al-Qūṭiyya, for example, compared the confrontation with one that had taken place between ‘Abd al-Raḥmān I (d. 172/788) and Yūsuf al-Fihrī (d. 138/756) when the former entered al-Andalus. Both contests took place on the day of ʿĪd al-Aḍḥā, and in both events, members of the same families fought against each other: ‘Abd al-Raḥmān I, as a descendant of the caliph Marwān, and Yūsuf al-Fihrī, the descendant of al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. al-Qays al-Fihrī, one of Ibn al-Zubayr’s commanders.49

The battle of Marj Rāḥīṭ also appears in Ibn ʿIdhārī’s Bayān, where it is compared with one of the victories of Almanzor.50 He, Ibn Abī ʿĀmir al-Manṣūr (d. 392/1002), known in Christian sources as Almanzor, is, doubtlessly, the best representation of the figure of the warrior-ruler in caliphal Cordoba.51 As ḥājib of the caliph Hishām II, he conducted more than fifty expeditions against Christian territories, including one to Santiago de Compostela.52 He is said to have been buried in his combat clothing.

In contrast with the period of the Umayyad caliph al-Ḥakam II, who did not directly lead any campaign,53 Almanzor incarnated the figure of the military commander. He symbolized the spirit of jihād, which he used as a basis for his legitimacy.54 He also justified his government in front of his subjects by becoming the standard-bearer of the holy war and the defender of orthodoxy. The historian al-Ḥumaydī (d. 488/1095) says that he did not reside in Cordoba because he was concerned with jihād, leading razzias against the

53. Nonetheless, the sources depict him as an active and victorious caliph in the battle. Thus, according to the Muqtabis, in the victory of Ghālib b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān in the year 360/971 against the Normans, it was because of the grace of al-Ḥakam II that they obtained the triumph and it was his zeal to defend Islam that had led his followers to the fight. Ibn Ḥayyān, al-Muqtabas VII, 37.

Christians to such a degree that he would go out to pray on a holy day and instead of returning to his palace would set out to war.\(^{55}\)

The propaganda machine boosted the imagery of Almanzor as a “ghāzi-ruler,” and mujāhid; in these accounts of his role, the memory of the first battles of Islam would grow in importance. For example, in the poem written by Ibn Darrāj honouring Almanzor and his sons, ʿAbd al-Mālik and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, after the expedition against Compostela,\(^{56}\) the campaign (in which, according to the panegyrist, the true religion had defeated infidelity) is compared to the Muslim victory at the battle of Ḥunayn, an expedition led personally by the Prophet and which resulted, much like the Compostela campaign, in substantial booty.\(^ {57}\) Moreover, as the Prophet resisted the pagans in Ḥunayn with only a few warriors, now Almanzor and his sons were defending the Umma alone.

In this discursive process of enthronement of the Cordoban ḥājib as a mujāhid, the historiographical-biographical texts also played an important role. Two works stand as examples in this regard: the Kitāb al-maʾāthir al-ʿāmiriyya fī siyar al-Manṣūr Muḥammad b. Abī ʿĀmir wa-ghazawātihi wa-awqātihā of Ibn ʿĀṣim al-Thaqafī (d. 450/1058 or before 461/1069)\(^ {58}\) and the Ghazawāt al-Manṣūr b. Abī ʿĀmir of Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064).\(^ {59}\) Each of the two texts is modelled after the works of the Prophet’s magḥāzī/ghazawāt.\(^ {60}\) Thus, for example, each follows the pattern—evident in Ibn Darrāj’s association of Compostela with Ḥunayn—of comparing Almanzor’s actions with those of the Prophet, thus using Muḥammad’s symbolic capital and memory in his (Almanzor’s) effort to legitimize himself.

### The Expansion of the Almohad Movement: Ibn Ḥubaysh’s Kitāb al-Ghazawāt

Following the collapse of the Umayyad caliphate of Cordoba,\(^ {61}\) it is not until the arrival of the Almohads that we will see a caliph once again ruling directly over the whole of al-Andalus, in this case unified with the Maghreb. The North African dynasty copied many of the legitimation elements of the Umayyads, presenting themselves on some occasions as their successors.\(^ {62}\) The use of jihād and of the commemoration of the first battles of Islam were among these discursive tools.

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55. Al-Ḥumaydī, Jaḏwat al-muqtabis fī taʾrīkh ʿulamāʾ al-Andalus, ed. al-Abyārī (Beirut, 1989), nº 121.
60. See footnote 3.
Indeed, if ever there was a moment in which the relationship between jihād and the memory of early Islam and its battles was more evident in al-Andalus, it was during the Almohad period. As we will see, two key elements of Almohad discourse were the allusion to the beginnings of Islam, viewed during this period as a model to return to, and a strong reliance on jihād as a source of legitimation and justification. It was the memory of the Prophet’s expeditions and the first caliphs that connected both elements.

The first of these two elements, the Almohad reform project, was established in the beginnings of the sixth/twelfth century by Muḥammad Ibn Tūmart in his role as the “restorer” of the original purity of Islam. Almohad discourse made frequent reference to the hadith that claimed: “Islam began as something strange and it will return as strange as it began, so glad tidings for the strangers!” Ibn Tūmart and his followers, the true believers, were identified with strangers, ghurabāʾ, in a world of religious decadence. The “perversion” of religion was most apparent in two forms of intoxication (sakratāni): ignorance, that is, forgetfulness of religious knowledge, and love of the worldly life, which implies forgetfulness of the eternal life and neglect of jihād. The fight against this supposed period of corruption would become one of the objectives of the Almohad project, which consequently strived to remove the two sources of “intoxication.”

To this end, Ibn Tūmart appeared as a mahdī, or saviour, and an imām maʿṣūm, impeccable and infallible in his religious knowledge, someone who wanted to break with the immediate past and return to the first moments of Muḥammad’s community by reverting to the model of moral puritanism and military activism represented by the Prophet and the rāshidūn caliphs. Ibn Tūmart’s own history was narrated with a rhetorical construction that linked his vital experience with that of the Prophet’s career. Thus, for example, he began his mission as a religious reformer in a cave, al-Ghār al-muqaddas, a reference to the cavern in Mount Hira where the Prophet used to retire and where he encountered Gabriel for the first time, thus starting the revelation of the Qurʾān. Similarly, Ibn Tumart’s flight

64. Muslim, Sahīḥ Muslim (Beirut, 1987), n.º 270.
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to Tinmal was remembered as akin to the Hijra of Muḥammad and his first followers. This process can be also observed in the fact that the Almohads neglected their duty to make a pilgrimage to Mecca, considering that they had their own sanctuary in Tinmal, where Ibn Tūmart was buried.

In this context, devotion to the direct study of the revealed sources, the Qurʾān and the Sunna, was undoubtedly, from a doctrinal point of view, one of the Almohads’ main objectives. The founder of the Almohad movement made his own recension of Mālik’s Muwaṭṭa’ and a summary of Muslim’s Ṣaḥīḥ. Under the caliphate of al-Manṣūr the study and teaching of al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s Ṣaḥīḥ, as well as the composition of hadith works, like the so-called Arbaʿūn, the “forty” hadiths, spread. ʿAbd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī reports that, in the course of a discussion between the caliph al-Manṣūr and the Maliki jurist, Abū Bakr b. al-Jadd, about the reasons for diversity in scholarly opinion (ikhtilāf), the caliph replied that, on the one hand, there was only the Qurʾān and the Prophet’s tradition, specifically Abū Dāwūd’s Sunan, and, on the other, the sword, that is, jihād.

The second of the elements that we have pointed out, jihād, turns out to have been fundamental. It was proclaimed from the very beginning against the Almoravids, denying their condition as true believers. The Almohads used the doctrine of takfīr, classifying


believers as infidels, just as the Khārijis had done before them.  

Jihād was to be conducted against all those who did not accept the Almohad vision of Islam, which they considered the only true one. After fleeing to Tinmal (the new hijra), they became the new muhājirūn, emigrants who had escaped from a corrupt society and now had to bring it to an end by means of jihād. The effort was thus conceived of as a holy war against the Almoravid state, which they thought of as unjust and illicit. In this sense, jihād was intertwined with ḥisba, the notion of “commanding right and forbidding wrong.”

The jihād was soon extended to the Christians, especially after the Ifrīqiya campaign had been carried out by ʿAbd al-Muʾmin in the year 552-553/1158. That same year, the caliph directly confronted a Christian power, that of the Normands, by taking Mahdiyya. Two years later, in 554-555/1160, ʿAbd al-Muʾmin crossed the Strait of Gibraltar announcing, during the festival of the Sacrifice, the next jihād against the Christians. This is how the figure of the “ghāzī-caliph” reappeared, something the Almohad state devoted great care to, through, for instance, carefully planned parades.

Official propaganda also emphasized this notion to the point that, for example, letters announcing victories over the infidels (kutub al-fatḥ) were sent to the capitals of the empire in the names of the caliphs and publicly read in the most important mosques. Works on

77. Booney, Jihad, 56. Apparently, the Almoravids may have qualified the Almohads as Khārijis. A. Kadhim, Estudio critico, traducción y análisis de la obra Nazm al-Yuman de Ibn al-Qattan, Tesis Doctoral, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 1991, vol. II, 10-13. The Fatimids also used this discourse to authorize violence against other Muslims, although in their sources only the takfīr is implicit. The terms kāfirūn or kuffār are only recalled to refer to the infidels that opposed Abraham, Moses, or Muḥammad, but, according to the various descriptions of kufr behavior, one can deduce an analogy between the infidels who deny God and those Muslims who deny the ahl al-Bayt and the Ismaelite doctrines. See D. de Smet, ”Kufr et takfīr dans l’ismaélisme fatimide: Le Kitāb Tanbih al-hādī de Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī,” in C. Adang, M. Fierro, H. Ansari and S. Schmidtke (eds.), Accusations of Unbelief in Islam, 82-102. Also the Cordoban Umayyads called some of their Muslim enemies kuffār. See, for example, Ibn Ḥayyān, al-Muqtabas V, 234.


80. Fierro, ”La palabra y la espada,” 53-77.


82. C. Mohamed, ”Notions de guerre et de paix à l’époque almohade,” in P. Cressier and V. Salviatierra (eds.), Las Navas de Tolosa (1212-2012): miradas cruzadas (Jaén, 2014), 53-68. For the importance of the concept of fath as holy war in the Almohad context, see A. García Sanjuán, ”La noción de fath en las fuentes árabes andalusiess y magrebíes (siglos VIII al XIII),” in C. de Ayala, P. Henriet and S. Palacios (eds.), Orígenes y desarrollo de la
jihād were also composed at the express request of the Almohad authorities, as in the case of Ibn al-Munāṣif (d. 620/1223), the qāḍī of Valencia and Murcia. In the introduction to this work, commissioned by the governor of Valencia, who was none other than the youngest son of the caliph ʿAbd al-Muʾmin, the author explained why he had composed it: to fulfill the noblest of duties and express the best way to subordinate oneself to God, namely through jihād against Allāh’s enemies.  

But although Ibn Tūmart never confronted the Christians, since the scope of his action never extended beyond the Atlas, later Almohad rulers tried to highlight the fact that the founder of the Unitarian movement also included in its doctrine the idea of repelling the followers of Jesus through the use of armed force. Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, for instance, offers numerous examples of alleged discourses of the mahdī filled with allusions to the Christians, as well as Qurʾān verses referring to those who, according to the chronicler, were recited by the founder of the Almohad movement. In fact, under the second caliph, Abū Ya’qūb Yūsuf, a specific chapter on jihād was added to the Kitāb attributed to Ibn Tūmart.

Therefore, it is along these two major lines of the Almohad project, the alleged return to the origins of Islam and the revitalization of jihād, where one must situate the reproduction of the memory of the first battles of Islam as a shared element of both pillars.

One of the best examples is Ibn Ḥubaysh’s Kitāb al-Ghazawāt. Ibn Ḥubaysh, born in Almería in 540/1111, was a faqīḥ, qāḍī, khaṭīb: traditionist, genealogist, and lexicographer. Having studied in Cordoba with scholars like Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī, he became a renowned expert in the field of hadith. He witnessed the Christian conquest of Almería in 542/1147 and, in 556/1161, established himself in Murcia, where he took up the post of judge under the Almohad government. He died in 584/1188. Allegedly, the same day he was appointed judge, the Almohad caliph Abū Ya’qūb Yūsuf asked him to write the Kitāb al-Ghazawāt, as is stated in the prologue of the work. The work deals with the wars and conquests that took place under the government of the three first caliphs of Islam, namely Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, and ʿUthmān. For its composition, Ibn Ḥubaysh used eastern sources like Ibn Isḥāq’s Sīra, al-Wāqidī’s Kitāb al-Ridda, al-Ṭabarī’s Kitāb al-Taʾrīkh, Sayf b. ʿUmar’s Kitāb al-Ridda wa guerra santa en la Península Ibérica (Madrid, 2016), 31-50, especially 42-50. See also F. Donner, “Arabic fatḥ as ‘Conquest’ and its Origin in Islamic Tradition,” Al-ʿUṣūr al-Wuṣṭā 24 (2016), 1-14.

84. Mohamed, “Notions de guerre et de paix,” 53-68.

85. For more information about jihād against Christians and about the ideology promoted by the Almohads towards the followers of Christ, see J. Albarrán, “De la conversión y expulsión al mercenariado: la ideología en torno a los cristianos en las crónicas almohades,” in M. A. Carmona and C. Estepa (coords.), La Península Ibérica, 79-91.


88. Huici Miranda, Historia política, 95-100.


al-futūḥ, and a Kitāb futūḥ al-Shām, of which he reports having seen several copies, each attributed to a different author, but which were in fact copies of al-Azdī’s Kitāb.⁹¹

The production, implications, and readings of Ibn Ḥubaysh’s Kitāb al-Ghazawāt must be understood in the context of the Almohad movement and what it sought. Just as Ibn Tūmart’s biography had been constructed similarly to that of the Prophet or the fictitious genealogy that the first Almohad caliph, ‘Abd al-Mu’min, invented for himself, Ibn Ḥubaysh’s work joins a discursive tradition that looks at the past from the present moment⁹³ and seeks to legitimize itself through the production and reproduction of the memory of early Islamic times and the symbolic capital that this historical period contained. It is therefore a link within the social process of construction and the re-reading of history that was started by the Almohads themselves, in which they attempted to connect directly with the origins of Islam and present themselves as its restorers, thereby commemorating this sacred memory.

Ibn Ḥubaysh’s Kitāb al-Ghazawāt also played an important role in regards to the Almohad jihād ideology, which prevailed especially during the government of Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf, a great promoter of the holy war against the Christians of the Iberian Peninsula. Not only did Abū Yaʿqūb die in the midst of a battle at Santarem, but he was also the caliph who added the section on jihād to Ibn Tūmart’s Kitāb and who ordered Ibn Ṭufayl to compose a poem inciting a holy war.⁹⁴ Ibn Ḥubaysh’s work thus acted as a pious exhortation encouraging believers to follow the example of the first Muslims and their victories along the path of God and jihād.

Moreover, this function would not belong exclusively to the futūḥ.⁹⁵ The traditionalist and historian al-Kalāʿī (d. 634/1236), a disciple of Ibn Ḥubaysh, authored his Kitāb al-iktifāʾ.⁹⁶

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⁹⁵. For brief notes on the production of works about the Prophet and the first caliphs of the Almohad period, see Jarrar, Die Prophetenbiographie, 265 ff.
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*fi maghāzi al-muṣṭafā wa al-thalāṭa al-khulafā*? 96 a work describing the battles of the Prophet and the first three caliphs, which was based on Ibn Hubaysh’s text, among others.97 Apart from being the secretary of the Almohad governor of Valencia, he was closely linked to jihād tendencies, whereby his work acted as a stimulus by reviving the memory of the first battles of Islam. Having participated in many campaigns, he died on Dhū l-ḥijja 19th, 643/August 13th, 1237 in the battle of Anisha, north of Valencia, during which he accused fleeing soldiers of, in his words, fleeing from paradise.98

When we consider reformation in this sense, it is not difficult to find examples within the Almohad context that connect the jihād phenomenon with the idea of restoring the purity of early Islam. The repeated return to the direct study of primary Islamic sources is evidenced within the context of war. For example, ‘Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī relates an episode which describes how, while preparing an expedition against the Christians in 574-5/1179, the caliph Abū Yaʿqūb, the patron—it must be noted—of Ibn Hubaysh’s work, ordered the ‘ulamā to dictate the available traditions on jihād to the Almohads which they then copied onto wooden tables and learned by heart. The spirit of warlike religiousness described by the chronicler was such that one of these scholars, Abū al-Qamar, ordered that his tables be kept so that he could be buried with them.99

These same ideas can also be associated with a copy of ‘Uthmān’s Qurān that was used on the battlefield. Four chroniclers reported that the Almohad caliphs carried a copy of the Qurān in military parades and in war expeditions, yet only three of them specified that it was a copy of the Qurān of the third of the rāshidūn caliphs, ‘Uthmān.100 Along with this codex, they also carried another Qurān that had been copied by hand by the mahdī Ibn Tūmart, thus linking the caliphs who carried these copies with the origin of the Almohad movement; their possession of this symbolic capital, which was associated with the memory of the early caliphs, granted them a high degree of legitimization. According to ‘Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī, ‘Uthmān’s Qurān had belonged to the Umayyads;101 it was the copy that, according to some traditions, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III himself carried into battle and that the Umayyad used to commemorate the times of the rāshidūn.102

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96. Al-Kalā’i, Kitāb al-iktifā’ fī maghāzi al-muṣṭafā wa al-thalāṭa al-khulafā (Beirut, 2000).
101. Most likely brought by ‘Abd al-Muʾmin from Cordoba.
102. According to these traditions, this exemplar of the Qurān, copied by hand by ‘Uthmān himself, would be the same one the caliph was praying with when he was assassinated, as evidenced by the blood stains that could be visible in its pages. Zadeh, “From Drops of Blood,” 321-346. See also A. D. Lamare, “Le musḥaf de la mosquée de Cordoue et son mobilier mécanique,” Journal asiatique 230 (1938), 551-575; Bennisson, “The Almohads and the Qur’an of ‘Uthman,” 131-154, P. Buresi, “Une relique almohade: l’utilisation du Coran (attribué à ‘Uṯmān b. ‘Affān) de la Grande Mosquée de Cordoue,” Oriente Moderno 88/2 (2008), 297-309 and P. Buresi, “D’une Péninsule
Another episode that directly reminds us of the first battles of Islam, specifically the Prophet’s campaigns against the Meccans (something which further strengthens the possible context of production that I propose for Ibn Ḥubaysh’s work), is narrated by Ibn Abī Zarʿ, and is no doubt based on the memory of the battle of Badr, and in particular the appearance of angels during the fighting. The episode describes how, prior to the Alarcos battle, the Almohad caliph al-Manṣūr had a dream in which a knight, described as an angel, riding a white horse and carrying a green standard, announced the imminent victory of the Unitarian leader by the grace of God. Interestingly, Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih’s urjūza also says that ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III’s armies were preceded by angels, like those of the Prophet at Badr and Ḥunayn.

Let’s return to Ibn Ḥubaysh: If we keep in mind the ideas we have set forth about the Almohad movement, its continued desire to restore the past, and its commitment to jihād, the reading that I propose for his introduction to his Kitāb al-Ghazawāt appears to be fully coherent. Indeed, Ibn Ḥubaysh expresses that, having been commissioned by the Almohad caliph Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf to compose it, he will set out to describe the battles and conquests that took place during the stable and peaceful times of the first three caliphs: Abū Bakr, ʿUmar and ʿUthmān. Ibn Ḥubaysh also points out that the baraka associated with the caliphs and linked to the Prophet’s campaigns, was “destructive of the enduring foundations of polytheism” and, at the same time, fundamental for the consolidation of tawḥīd and the pillars of Islam.

According to his introduction, it is certainly reasonable to argue that Ibn Ḥubaysh establishes a parallelism between nascent Islam and his own times, just as Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih had done with ʿAbd al-Raḥmān’s campaigns and the maghāzī. The Prophet thus equates Ibn Tūmart—an idea that was already being circulated, as we have seen—and the rāshidūn parallel the first Almohad caliphs. By focusing on the caliphs rather than on the Prophet, Ibn Ḥubaysh aims to legitimize the institutionalization and the routinization—in the Weberian sense—of Almohad authority. The Almohad rulers are presented as the embodiment and continuation of Ibn Tūmart’s charismatic domination and of the rupturist movement he led, perhaps echoing what possibly occurred after the Prophet’s death. The Almohad caliphs are responsible for continuing the mahdī’s work, just as the rāshidūn were responsible


104. An example of this is the following hadith transmitted by al-Bukhārī: “The Prophet, to whom Allāh may give His grace and peace, said on the day of Badr: There is Jibrīl grabbing the head of his horse and equipped for war.” Al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī (Granada, 2008), 380.


108. Al-hādima limā istiṭāl min mabānī al-shirk.

for continuing the Prophet’s, and therefore the prophetic baraka (or Ibn Tūmart’s, if we focus on the parallelism we have established) was associated with them. Moreover, the Rāshidūn caliphs had acted just as the Almohad caliphs were now trying to act in their role as restorers of that alleged golden past. With their battles and conquests, which the jihād conducted first against the apostates and later against the infidels, they were undermining polytheism and strengthening the tawḥīd and the pillars of Islam. In this context, we must not forget how essential the insistence on radical divine unity (tawḥīd) was to Almohad thought, as seen, of course, in the adoption of the name al-muwaḥḥidūn. Tawḥīd was conceived of as the key element of Revelation. The Almohads were thus fulfilling the mandate of God (Amr Allāh) just as the Prophet and the first caliphs had done, and it was acknowledged as such, for instance, in one of the Unitary rulers’ titles: al-qāʾim bi-amr Allāh. In fact, the chronicles often show the conversion to tawḥīd of entire populations, either infidels or Muslims, after being conquered by the Almohads.

The occurrence of the term, tawḥīd, in the introduction of Ibn Ḥubaysh’s work in connection with the first campaigns of Islam cannot be due to chance. As had occurred during the times of the rāshidūn, the war on the infidels was a fundamental part of the attempt to restore the purity of the first period of Islam, a process which would result in a period of stability similar to the one supposedly enjoyed by Muslims under the government of the first caliphs. This is how both caliphates, the Rāshidūn and Almohads, are presented: as the restorers of order for the Umma, in contrast to the disorder that was represented by the period of the Ridda and the government of the Almoravid hypocrites, and the establishers of tawḥīd.

Neither is it by chance that the expression, “let God extend the overflowing of their lights,” was used for the Almohad caliphs and their legacy. According to Almohad thought, the knowledge (ʿilm) created by God revealed itself inside the believer as a lamp. As a mahdī, Ibn Tūmart believed that his mission was to again reveal the light that had dimmed

110. Equating caliphs (and even emirs) to the rāshidūn is not new. It had already been done, for instance, by Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih in his Kitāb al-masjada al-thaniya fī l-khulafāʾ wa al-tawārīkh wa-ayyāmihim of his al-ʿIqd al-farīd. Toral-Niehoff, “History in Adab Context,” 61-85.
111. One of the chapters of Ibn al-Munāṣif’s work defined the notion of jihād as war against the apostates. We can also detect here a clear parallelism between the ridda, the apostasy wars that took place after the Prophet’s death, and the war that the Almohads declared on the Almoravids, whom they considered to be hypocrites and false Muslims.
113. According to some sources, the original name of the movement may have been that of al-Muʾminūn, “the believers,” thus indicating that the remaining Muslims had lost the path of Allah, sabīl Allāh, and had to be led back to the right track. Fierro, “Revolución y tradición,” 131-165.

after the Prophet’s death. Ibn Tūmart is clearly identified with the principle of “illumination” in the appellative Asafū, apparently meaning in Berber “light” or “lamp,” a nickname which some of his disciples called him during his youth. Such an identification may also be extended to ʿAbd al-Muʾmin, “the lamp of the Almohads,” sirāj al-muwahḥidīn.

The association of the Almohad caliphs, especially the first ones, with the Rāshidūn caliphs may also be noted in other testimonies like the inscription on the axis of the Almohad lamp kept at the Qarawiyyin of Fez, made between 598-609/1202-1213 which identified Abū Yusuf Yaʿqūb al-Manṣūr as the son of the rāshidūn caliphs, or in documents such as the letter sent from Iriqiya by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, son of the Almohad caliph al-Nāṣir, to the authorities of Pisa, Girardo Visconti, in April 1202. At the beginning of the letter, where he includes various Almohad titularies, he refers to the Rāshidūn imam caliphs, as well as the imam caliph al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh, prince of the believers and son of the immaculate imam caliphs (ṭāhirīn).

Therefore, the restoration of true Islam and jihād, as pillars of the Almohad project, are legitimized in this work through the commemoration of the Rāshidūn caliphs’ futūḥ and the symbolic capital they carried. They are justified by the remembrance of the origins they wish to return to, which had been established by Ibn Ḥubaysh as a mirror-image of his own time. However, memory involves not simply remembrance, but also selective forgetting. And omissions often reveal the anxieties of a given discourse. Since we have already explained the absence of the Prophet, it is more relevant to shed light upon what had happened—and was still happening for the Almohads—after the death of the founder, be he the Prophet or the mahdī.

But another absence is worth noting: that of the fourth of the Rāshidūn caliphs, ʿAlī. This omission may have to do with what a given discourse suggests about the government of the figure being discussed. According to Donner’s classification, the narrative on ʿAlī more closely resembles a narrative of fitna, that is, civil war or conflict within the Islamic

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community, a discourse which is more closely related to the struggle for the leadership of the *Umma*. However, the discourse of the Almohad movement was not one of internal struggle between two Islamic models, but of a return to the pure form of Islam to face external enemies. Therefore, it was not the discourse of *fitna* that was of interest, but that of *ridda* and *futūḥ*, the discourse of war against apostasy and infidelity. Besides, the caliphate of ‘Alī and the *fitna* represent the end of stability and unity in the *Umma* and, therefore, of that alleged golden period that the Almohads wished to restore.

Additionally, ‘Alī did not fit well in the discourse that the Unitarians had constructed and even inscribed in the line of the Damascus and Cordoba Umayyads through symbolic acts such as designating Cordoba as the capital of al-Andalus in 557-8/1162 or restoring the dynasty’s emblematic color to white rather than using black like the Abbasids, who had legitimized the Almoravids. In this sense, this re-elaboration of the classical historiographic periodization in regard to the *Rāshidūn* caliphs, imposed especially by the Abbasids, reminds us of certain pro-Umayyad testimonies studied by Antoine Borrut that also “forgot” ‘Alī and that had now perhaps been restored by the first Almohad caliphs, especially through the Andalusi historiographical memory. In fact, in the pro-Almohad chronicle, *Naẓm al-jumān*, one can see how ‘Abd al-Muʾmin’s caliphate is legitimized. He is described as the “lord of the conquests” through a prophecy which was supposedly included in Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih’s pro-Umayyad work, *al-ʾIqd al-farīd*. That is to say, there is apparently a search for Umayyad sources to support and justify the Almohad project.

**The Dusk of Almohad Power: Ibn al-Qaṭṭān’s *Ghazawāt***

Ibn Ḥubaysh’s work was written in a moment when the Almohad movement was expanding rapidly and reaching its climax. As the caliphate extended its power, conquests were made one after another both in the Maghreb and in al-Andalus. Consequently, the commemoration of the conquests of the first caliphs as well as the expansion of Islam in what was considered a golden period fit perfectly within the discourse that the Almohads were trying to promote. However, the recourse to the memory of early Islam and its recontextualization also became rhetorical tools in moments of crisis and decadence, when the message was no longer that of expansion, but rather of recovering the initial impulse of Islam.

In 625/1228, al-Maʾmūn, who had proclaimed himself caliph in al-Andalus in 624/1227, and upon entering Marrakech, renounced the doctrinal core of “Almohadism.” He abjured not only central Almohad doctrines, but also the figure of Ibn Tūmart himself, noting that Jesus was the only *mahdī*. Among other things, he ordered the removal of Ibn Tūmart’s


name from the *khutba* and also from coins. This doctrinal change clearly reflects the crisis the Almohad power was experiencing. The caliphs that succeeded al-Maʾmūn tried to recover the splendor of the *tawḥīd* movement, but it was already too late.

Among those who devoted considerable effort to the cause, at least in framing Almohad discourse, was the new caliph, al-Murtada (r. 646-665/1248-1266). Appointed during his provincial rule in Sale, he stood out, according to the sources, for his intelligence, piety, and modesty. The onset of his reign coincided with the Merinid seizure of Taza, which clearly indicates the degree of unrest the government he headed was experiencing. Although he led numerous campaigns in an effort to re-activate the image of the ghāzī-caliph and thus prevent Almohad collapse, almost all of them failed. Likewise, the chronicles show how, from the very beginning of his reign, he tried to model his rule on the practices of previous Almohad caliphs. Immediately after his acknowledgment as caliph, he began to put into practice the *ḥisba* and, when he arrived to Marrakech from Sale, Almohad notables received him in full, beautifully adorned dress as well as horses, drums, flags, and regular soldiers. On Ramaḍān 1st 649/November 171st 1251 he went to Tinmal to visit and honor Ibn Tūmart’s sepulchre and receive his *baraka* by kissing and touching his remains. The new caliph also ordered the immediate punishment of anyone that raised doubts about the doctrine of infallibility of the founder of the Almohads. In this sense, before each expedition, he visited the *mahdī*’s tomb in the custom of his forefathers and applied their standards to it. He also marched to combat in the same formation his predecessors had, and carried the famous *afrāj*, a linen rim that isolated the ruler’s tent from the rest of the encampment.

Sources also portray him as a literate ruler and poet. He liked to read books attentively and also compose them. He asked the *faqīh* Abū Muḥammad Ibn al-Qaṭṭān to compose several books for him, paying him in great positions and significant goods. These works were, according to Ibn ʿIdhārī: the *Naẓm al-jumān*, the *Kitāb shifāʾ al-ghilal fī akhbār al-anbiyāʾ wa al-rusul*, the *Kitāb al-iḥkām li-bayān ayātihi*, the *Kitāb al-munājāt* and the *Kitāb al-masmūʿāt*. In this list, however, another work commissioned by al-Murtada to Ibn al-Qaṭṭān is missing: the *Kitāb al-Rawḍāt al-bahiya al-wasīma fī ghazawāt al-nabawiyya al-karīma*.

131. Fa-min haynihi nahā wa amara
Little is known about Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, who was probably born in Fez or Marrakech around the year 579-580/1185. Son of Abū al-Ḥasan Ibn al-Qaṭṭān (d. 628/1231) and known for his work as a historian, most notably as the author of the \textit{Naẓm al-jumān}, it seems obvious that he was raised according to the principles of the Almohad movement and that he inherited from his father his belief in these doctrines. The latter served as one of the ʿtalaba for the caliphs al-Manṣūr, al-Nāṣir, and al-Mustanṣir and became a principal apologist of the regime through such works as the \textit{Risāla fi al-Imāma al-Kubrā}, whose main objective was to legitimize the Almohad empire. Abū Muḥammad followed in his father’s footsteps and entered the service of the caliph al-Murtaḍā, for whom, as we have seen, he composed many works. The \textit{Naẓm al-jumān}, his most famous work, evinces his enthusiasm for the Almohad movement. Apparently, it was a huge encyclopedia on the geography and history of the entire Maghreb, although the manuscript in which it is preserved only comprises a very short time span of the years 500-533 of the Hegira (1107-1138).

Of key interest is another of the works that al-Murtaḍā ordered Ibn al-Qaṭṭān to write and that, as already mentioned, Ibn ʿIdhārī did not include in his list, which was perhaps the reason why it has gone unnoticed by researchers. The \textit{Kitāb al-Rawḍāt al-bahiya al-wasīma fi ghazawāt al-nabawiyya al-karīma} is a \textit{maghāzī} work which still remains unpublished; a manuscript of the work is housed in the Qarawiyyin library in Fez. At the beginning of the manuscript, it is said that al-Murtaḍā ordered him to compile and write the work just before the end of al-Murtaḍā’s government in 665/1266. Likewise, in a note added later in the margin of one of the first pages, it is said that the manuscript entered the Qarawiyyin library in the month of Rajab of 1009 (January-February 1601) during the regency of the sultan Aḥmad al-Manṣūr.

Just as we saw in Ibn Nuḥās’ treatise on \textit{jihād}, Ibn al-Qaṭṭān divided his work into two unusual parts in \textit{maghāzī} books: the first is dedicated to the expeditions directly conducted by the Prophet, whereas the second deals with those that Muḥammad sent, but did not

141. Mss. 296. My dissertation (\textit{La memoria de las primeras batallas del islam y el yihad en el Occidente islámico}. Ss. XII-XIII, directed by Carlos de Ayala and Mercedes García-Arenal) will include a study of this work and of this manuscript. For a paleographical edition of the introduction see J. Albarrán, “Memoria y \textit{jihād} en el ocaso del poder almohade: el \textit{Kitāb al-Rawḍāt al-bahiya al-wasīma fi ghazawāt al-nabawiyya al-karīma},” \textit{Al-Qanṭara} 38/2 (2017), 387-406.
142. We follow the numbering of the manuscript. Mss. Qarawiyyin 296, f. 3.
143. Mss. Qarawiyyin 296, f. 252.
144. Mss. Qarawiyyin 296, f. 3.
145. Mss. Qarawiyyin 296, ff. 11-173.
participate in. Ibn al-Qaṭṭān announces that he will mainly follow Ibn Isḥāq, but will also attend to discrepancies with other authors, like al-Wāqidī.

The text must be understood and read within the framework of the revitalization project of the Almohad movement that al-Murtaḍā started without success. Ibn al-Qaṭṭān’s text emphasizes the link between jihād and the first battles of Islam and, as in Ibn Ḥubaysh’s work, that between the Rāshidūn caliphs and the early Almohad rulers. It also creates a clear link between the Prophet and Ibn Tūmart, and, ultimately, between the latter and al-Murtaḍā in his efforts to recover Almohad doctrine and tradition. The author, commissioned by the caliph, commemorates the difficult beginnings of the Almohad movement as well as the fight of the mahdī and his followers against their enemies through the recontextualization of the arduous beginnings of Islam and of the encounters of the Prophet and his companions with the pagans.

In his introduction, Ibn al-Qaṭṭān states that God sent the Prophet guidance and “true religion” in order to reveal it. Curiously enough, in the Naẓm al-jumān he also speaks in these terms in regard to Ibn Tūmart’s role. That is to say, the mission of the mahdī is likened to Muḥammad’s. He then introduces a series of images of fighting, war, and jihād, with direct allusions not only to infidels in a general manner, but also to Christians: the Prophet was sent to “raise the sun of faith over the infidels and vanquish its enemies, in order to destroy the source of infidelity, its lighthouses and its temples, and to wipe out and break their crosses.” Likewise, as in Ibn Ḥubaysh’s introduction, the metaphor of the “lights” is shown again, on this occasion to illustrate the triumph of faith and of the Prophet. Looking back at the Naẓm al-jumān, one notes how the mahdī is represented as the carrier of light against injustice.

In the Kitāb al-Rawḍāt, God had promised victory to the Prophet and fulfilled his word by giving him triumphs in his expeditions until he could establish his religion and punish the hypocrites, a term used by the mahdī and the Almohads to qualify the Almoravids in their practice of takfīr, as we have seen. Muḥammad’s objective was to lead jihād until his religion prevailed over the world, since salvation was achieved by testifying that there was no other god than God. This claim in the introduction of the Kitāb al-Rawḍāt takes us back to the Naẓm al-jumān, to a passage in which Ibn al-Qaṭṭān mentions the duty to fight against the infidels already pointed out by Ibn Tūmart by using the verse Q. 9:123, as well

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147. Mss. Qarawiyyin 296, ff. 11.
149. Mss. Qarawiyyin 296, f. 4.
151. Mss. Qarawiyyin 296, f. 4.
153. Mss. Qarawiyyin 296, f. 5.
as a hadith according to which the Prophet said: “It has been ordered to fight against the people until they say ‘There is no other god than God.’” The use of this hadith in both Ibn al-Qaṭṭān’s works emphasizes again the parallelism Muḥammad/Ibn Tūmart.

Moreover, in the Kitāb al-Rawḍāt Ibn al-Qaṭṭān establishes a chronology for the beginning of the Prophet’s jihād. In citing a narrative of Abū ʿUbayd (d. 224/838) he says that jihād was forbidden before the Hijra and that until that moment Allāh had ordered the predication of Islam without fighting. However, that prohibition was lifted after the emigration to Medina, where the permission to fight the polytheists was obtained until there remained no more fitna. That is to say, he is following the traditional outline of the evolution of jihād. During the first period, that of the beginning of revelation in Mecca, the Muslims were forbidden to participate in battle, according to the interpretation of several Qurʾānic verses (Q. 5:13; 23:96; 73:10; 88:22). The second one, as seen in Ibn al-Qaṭṭān’s work, begins after the Hijra, when Muḥammad received the authorization to fight.

What is interesting is that the outline articulated around the Hijra can also be seen in the case of the Almohad movement and their own “Hijra” to Timnal. After this flight, the companions of the mahdī, just like those of Muḥammad, are also called muhājirūn, a theme that also occurs in the Naẓm al-jumān. Thus, from this point of view, both emigrations not only meant a change in space, but also a shift in relations with the enemies of Muḥammad/Ibn Tūmart. In this sense, the Hijra signifies the entry into a state of war and demonstrates the necessity of carrying out jihād.

Therefore, through the Kitāb al-Rawḍāt (and other works with which the Naẓm al-jumān dialogued) the caliph al-Murtaḍā and Ibn al-Qaṭṭān created a rhetorical framework that commemorated, by employing the memory of the Prophet’s jihād, the beginnings of the Almohad movement as well as the figure of the mahdī Ibn Tūmart, in order to discursively legitimize their attempted recovery of their doctrine, legacy, and glory during times of decadence and crisis for the Almohad caliphate, a project that would eventually fail. Although the Almohad empire did not obtain the revitalization that al-Murtaḍā was after and in the end disappeared, one must not underestimate the effort, especially on an intellectual level, that this ruler made in his attempts to return the Almohad movement to the space it had occupied decades prior.

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Concluding Remarks

Throughout this study we have seen how the Islamic discursive tradition\(^{159}\) (in this case around *jihād*) is dominated by the memory of the Prophet and of early Islamic times, and vice-versa, how this memory has been limited and molded by this discursive tradition. The remembrance of the first battles of Islam and their recontextualization has proven to be a fundamental tool for the conceptualization and legitimization of *jihād*. The most important war was the one carried out by the Prophet against the infidels and hypocrites of his time, and after it the conquests of the *rāshidūn* took place. All other *jihads* within Islamic history are simply derivations of the initial one. Ergo, the *maghāzī* and *futūḥ* represented the true and pure spirit of *jihād*. Theories like that of al-Shaybāni’s “four swords” further underpinned this reality. The first expeditions of Islam functioned as a “social ideality” in times when *jihād* had to be conceptualized and justified.

During the period of the Cordoban caliphate, the ruler's consolidation of power and authority was sought through the figure of the “ghāzī-caliph,” a figure that in turn was legitimized through the commemoration of the first expeditions of Islam in a dynamic process whereby these battles were recovered, re-narrated and recontextualized. However, except in the case of Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, there does not seem to be a systematic program of memorialization of *maghāzī* and *futūḥ*: no one wrote, for example, a work on these topics. Rather, together with other legitimation tools such as the recourse to the own memory of the Umayyad dynasty, they were used as punctual discursive mechanisms.

On the other hand, in a project like that of the Almohads, which attempted to restore the alleged purity of the times of the Prophet and the *rāshidūn* and which had a marked emphasis on *jihād*, the commemoration of *maghāzī* and *futūḥ* became the perfect link between holy war and the origins of Islam. The recontextualization of the Prophet and the first caliphs’ charisma and the symbolic capital they had acquired due to the establishment of contemporaneous parallelisms, became the perfect legitimization tool. In this case, we do find a systematic program of remembrance with which the Almohad rulers, through the commission of *maghāzī* and *futūḥ* works, legitimized their actions. In this exercise of “mnemohistory” we have seen how, in different contexts, the Unitarian caliphs reformulated and appropriated the first battles of Islam as sites of sacred memory, to shape Ibn Tūmart as a new Muḥammad and themselves as the new *rāshidūn*, thus unifying a revival of Islam and their ideology of *jihād*.

\(^{159}\) Asad, “The Idea of an Anthropology,” 1-22.

*Al-ʿUṣūr al-Wuṣţā* 26 (2018)
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