

## IBN TŪMART'S TEACHERS: THE RELATIONSHIP WITH AL-GHAZĀLĪ

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The intellectual profile of Almohadism can be established from a large number of texts. The writings of Averroes, Ibn Ṭufayl, Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī and others show the wide spectrum of ideas current in this twelfth century renaissance period in Spain and the Maghreb. Elements common both to this sophisticated cultural flowering and to the teaching of Ibn Tūmart, the Berber jurist who started the Almohad movement in the Atlas mountains at the beginning of the century, show the relationship of the Almohad renaissance to the previous intellectual climate in Spain as well as to the intellectual world of eastern Islam. In establishing this intellectual context of Almohadism, the relationship between Ibn Tūmart and Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī is of great interest. This article focuses on the evidence for this relationship, showing how al-Ghazālī played at least a symbolic, and probably a substantive role in the development of the ideological split between Almoravids and Almohads.

Like most other Muslim religious scholars, Ibn Tūmart traveled for the purpose of study. From 500 to 514 A. H. (1106/7-1120 A. D.), according to various sources, he went to Cordoba and then to the east: Alexandria, Syria, Mecca and Baghdad. For this period in Ibn Tūmart's life, there are discrepancies as to names of teachers, dates and places among the accounts. In the most important example, nine out of ten sources say that Ibn Tūmart met al-Ghazālī, Ibn al-Athīr being the only one to deny it.<sup>1</sup> But Goldziher, crediting Ibn al-Athīr, and relying on early scholarship on al-Ghazālī's itinerary<sup>2</sup> considered such a meeting a «chronological impossibility». His version is that al-Ghazālī was in Nishapur from 499-502 and that he retired in 503 even farther east, to Tūs, close to the Afghan border, where he remained until his death in 505. Since the earliest date given for Ibn Tūmart's

<sup>1</sup> Bourouiba, R. *Ibn Tumart*, Algiers, 1974, p. 27 lists sources.

<sup>2</sup> Based on Macdonald, D. B., «The life of al-Ghazzali», *J. A. O. S.*, XX (1899), 99, 101.

journey to the east is 499 a meeting would be excluded. With the same dates for al-Ghazālī, Le Tourneau and Huici came to the same conclusion.<sup>3</sup> A closer look at the sources shows that this is unnecessarily arbitrary.

In the first place, there is good reason to question the impartiality of the one negative account, that of Ibn al-Athīr, because of his Merinid informants. Ibn al-Athīr himself indicates that some of his material was oral: «I heard a group of distinguished (*fuḍalā'*) men from the Maghrib talking about the *tamyīz* and I heard one of them who said...».<sup>4</sup> These interlocutors of Ibn al-Athīr's would have been supporters of the Merinids whose policy was to systematically denigrate the Almohads whom they had replaced in the Maghrib. Ibn Tūmart's association with al-Ghazālī became an embarrassment to the Merinids as al-Ghazālī's greatness began to be universally appreciated, so they had good reason to cast doubt on the two men's meeting. Goldziher, however, obviously considered that the fact that Ibn al-Athīr was an easterner insured his impartiality; he speaks of «accounts of impartial oriental writers»<sup>5</sup> while Huici noticed the bias: «And this odious biased version of the origins of the Almohad empire, which under the Banū Marīn, their victorious rivals, crystalized into so many black legends or absurd stories such as those collected by the *Rawḍ al-Qirṭās* and those incorporated into the eastern chronicles of Ibn al-Athīr and al-Nuwayrī—this is what has passed to posterity».<sup>6</sup>

Secondly, to state positively that two such peripatetic individuals never met risks error more than to assume they did, not only in contradicting the many accounts of their meeting, but also because an isolated date in a text is intrinsically ambiguous in the sense that if an individual is in Syria in March of a given year, he could still have been in Mecca in January, or be in Alexandria or in Baghdad in September. A final reason for rejecting the aforementioned scholars' opinion is that we can revise Macdonald's earlier version of al-Ghazālī's whereabouts upon which their ideas were based.

Ibn Khallikān, Yāqūt and Subkī all mention the period which al-Ghazālī spent in Alexandria and Ibn Khallikān specifies that it was directly after his period in Syria. We will anticipate our conclusion by saying that the two men could have met in 500 or 501 when Ibn Tūmart first arrived in

<sup>3</sup> Goldziher's introduction to *Le livre d'Ibn Tūmert*, ed. Luciani, Algiers, 1903, 5-12; Le Tourneau, R., *The Almohad Movement in North Africa in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, Princeton, 1969, 6-9; Huici Miranda, A., *Historia del imperio almohade*, Tetuán, 1956, vol. I, 29-32.

<sup>4</sup> *Le livre de Mohammed Ibn Tūmert*, ed. Luciani, appendix p. 22.

<sup>5</sup> *Le livre de Mohammed Ibn Tūmert*, introduction p. 10.

<sup>6</sup> *Historia política del imperio almohade*, vol.II, p. 582.

Alexandria, where, without specifying the year, Ibn Khallikān says that al-Ghazālī was waiting to get an answer from the first Almoravid ruler, Yūsuf ibn Tāshufīn.<sup>7</sup> The date of al-Ghazālī's period in Alexandria, which we have put between 499 when he left Syria and 500 or 501 when he got news of Yūsuf's death, remains a mystery for his biographer Maurice Bouyges, who nevertheless agrees with our chronological order albeit in parenthesis, «(Je ne vois pas quand pourrait avoir eu lieu le prétendu séjour à Alexandrie dont parlent beaucoup de biographes», note 4: As-Subki, *Ṭabaqāt*, IV, pp. 105-8; Ibn Khallikān I p. 587, etc. Mais remarquer l'expression de Yaqut,<sup>8</sup> «et on dit qu'il gagna Alexandrie». En tout cas Algazel ne s'est pas établi a Alexandrie...».<sup>9</sup> The notice from Ibn Khallikān says as follows:

During his residence in that city, he gave lessons in the great mosque situated on the west bank of the Tigris. He then set out for Jerusalem, where he applied himself with ardour to the practises of devotion, and visited the holy monuments and venerated spots of that sacred ground. He next passed into Egypt, and remained for sometime at Alexandria, whence, it is said, he intended to sail to Maghrib, in hopes of having an interview with the emir Yūsuf Ibn Tāshufīn, the sovereign of Morocco; but having received intelligence of that prince's death, he abandoned the project.

In *Al-Munqidh min al-Dalāl*,<sup>10</sup> al-Ghazālī says that he left for Nishapur in the eleventh month of 499, summoned by the *wazīr* of the Seljuk prince Sanjul, Fakhr al-Mulk. But Fakhr al-Mulk was assassinated less than a year later, on 'Āshūrā' (the 10th day of the month of Muḥarram) 500, leaving al-Ghazālī with no patron in Nishapur, supposing he had actually arrived there. The involvement of Fakhr al-Mulk is described by Subkī,<sup>11</sup> the date of Fakhr al-Mulk's assassination as 'Āshūrā' 500 is given by Ibn al-Athīr.<sup>12</sup> At that point al-Ghazālī, might well have gone to Alexandria, where, as Ibn Khallikān tells us, he awaited the response to the letters he sent to Yūsuf Ibn Tāshufīn. Ibn Khallikān says that al-Ghazālī stayed until he heard of Yūsuf's death, so that he would not have left Alexandria until the end of 500 or at

<sup>7</sup> *Ibn Khallikan's Biographical Dictionary*, translated by Baron Mac Guckin de Slane New York: Johnson Reprint, 1961 (originally 1843), vol. II, p. 622.

<sup>8</sup> III, p. 561, 4.

<sup>9</sup> Bouyges, M., *Essai de chronologie des oeuvres d'al-Ghazali*, Beirut, 1959, p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> Translated W. Montgomery Watt, *The Faith and Practise of al-Ghazali*, Chicago: 1982, p. 76. In the edition of the Arabic text and French translation of *Al-Munqidh* by Farid Jabre Beirut, 1953, p. 49 of Arabic, p. 114 of translation.

<sup>11</sup> *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyya al-Kubrā*, ed. Aḥmad Ibn 'Abd al-Karīm, Cairo, vol. 4, p. 108.

<sup>12</sup> Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī l-Tārīkh*, Beirut, 1966, vol. 10, p. 418.

most 501, depending on how long it took the news to reach him. (Since Yūsuf died on the first day of the month of al-Muḥarram, only four months remained of the year 500). Because of the closeness of these dates, there is no way of being sure whether the period in Alexandria came before or after Nishapur on al-Ghazālī's itinerary, but the deaths of two potential patrons within ten days would have been quite a blow to him, even without the painful similarity between Fakhr al-Mulk's death by assassination and the death of the ruler's father, al-Ghazālī's first patron and fellow countryman Nizām al-Mulk, fifteen years before. It only remained for al-Ghazālī to learn of the burning of his book, the *Iḥyā'*, in al-Andalus which occurred right after the death of Yūsuf Ibn Tāshufīn to complete the measure of his disillusionment with politics reflected in the *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk*.

As for Ibn Tūmart, his presence in Alexandria in 500 or 501 is easily established, since 500 is the date that Ibn Qaṭṭān gives for his trip for study.<sup>13</sup> The date 499<sup>14</sup> is given on the authority of a member of the counsel of the fifty who says he went first to Cordoba. This is not contradictory if we assume he spent a year in al-Andalus before his trip east in 500. Since we are told he spent 15 years away, it also accords with the date 514 for his return home. Makki<sup>15</sup> lists other sources, all of which give 500 or 501 as the date for Ibn Tūmart's trip. Like most travelers from the west, Ibn Tūmart came through Alexandria on his way east and also on his return west. As to the date of his arrival in Alexandria, Ibn Khallikān<sup>16</sup> says that Ibn Tūmart traveled through Ifrīqiya (Tunisia) during the reign of Prince Tamīm ibn Mu'izz who died in 501. But in saying that he was returning rather than setting out on his journey. Ibn Khallikān makes an evident error of which he shows himself to be conscious when he deals with the return journey of Ibn Tūmart in the section he devotes to him<sup>17</sup>:

«In this occupation [Ibn Tūmart] persisted till his arrival at al-Mahdiyya, a city of Ifrīqiya which was then, A.H.505 (A.D.1111-2), under the rule of the emir Yaḥyā Ibn Tamīm Ibn al-Mu'izz Ibn Bādīs as-Sanhājī. So I find it stated in the history of Kairawan; I have mentioned, however, in the life of Tamīm, Yaḥyā's father [vol. I, p. 282], that it was under Tamīm's reign that Ibn Tūmart passed through Ifrīqiya on his return from the East, and so also have I found it written. God best knows».

<sup>13</sup> Ibn Qaṭṭān, *Naẓm al-Jumān*, ed. Maḥmūd 'Alī Makkī, Rabat, N. D., p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> On p. 4.

<sup>15</sup> P. 3, note 1.

<sup>16</sup> *Biographical Dictionary*, vol. I, pp. 282-283.

<sup>17</sup> Vol. III, p. 207.

In view of the instability of human powers of recollection, the memory of who the prince was at the time of a given incident is more likely to be correct than a numerical date, and the memory of having met someone more certain than the knowledge of where he came from. It seems clear that it was under Tamīm's reign that Ibn Tūmart went East and under his son's reign that he returned. Hence the value of Ibn Khallikān's testimony correctly understood: Ibn Tūmart went through Maḥdīy before the death of the ruler Tamīm which occurred 15 Rajab 501 A. H./Feb. 1108 A.D., which, again, would put him in Alexandria around 500 or 501, that is, early enough to coincide with al-Ghazālī in Alexandria according to the dates we have already reviewed.

In view of the foregoing information, it is almost certain that the two men were in the same place at the same time. What remains to be seen is whether they would have had any interest in meeting each other. The explanation of why al-Ghazālī might have been interested in meeting scholars from the west is a long story involving an overview of the political arena where the evident motivations of a number of people comprise a larger context in which to fit the question of Ibn Tūmart's meeting with al-Ghazālī.

Many documents seem to bear out Ibn Khallikān's statement that al-Ghazālī was interested in meeting the Almoravid ruler Yūsuf Ibn Tāshufīn, including al-Ghazālī's ingratiating letter addressed to him and a *fatwā* al-Ghazālī wrote on the subject of the Almoravid ruler and the party kings.<sup>18</sup> This flattering *fatwā* on the Almoravid ruler concludes:

«And he who considers it licit to delay, without good reason, the act of investiture of a prince whose power is manifest and whose conduct is famous, whose justice all praise, without knowledge of any other in that land who acts like him or follows his footsteps maintains a posture which harms the majesty of the caliphate...»

The extent to which this flattery is exaggerated and even disingenuous emerges from the comparison between the *fatwā* and al-Ṭurtūshī's letter to the Almoravid ruler, written on the same subject at the request of the same man a few years later which gives an entirely different picture of the Almoravids. At the end of his letter, al-Ṭurtūshī announces Abū Bakr's trip to visit Yūsuf: «He is bringing you what will please you» = *Huwa warada*

<sup>18</sup> The *fatwa* was edited by Aḥmad Mukhtār al-ʿAbbādī, *Dirāsāt fī Tārīkh al-Maghrib wal-Andalus*, Alexandria, 1967, appendix 3, pp. 481-484. The letter was published by ʿAbd Allāh ʿInān, *ʿAṣr al-Murābiḥīn wal-Muwahḥidīn fīl-Maghrib wal-Andalus*, Cairo, 1964, vol. III, 530-533.

'*alayka bimā yasurruka*'<sup>19</sup> a reference to the packet of documents including al-Ghazālī's *fatwā*.

Al-Ṭurṭūshī speaking directly to Yūsuf Ibn Tāshufin says:<sup>20</sup>

Oh Abū Ya'qūb you have been charged with a matter such that if the heavens were to bear it they would split, if the stars, they would fall, if the earth and the mountains, they would tremble and be flattened; but you are a party to a pact offered to the heavens, the earth and the mountains which they, terrified, refused.

He then quotes passages from the Koran and the ḥadīth in which the unjust ruler is threatened with hell-fire. His expression is rough and straightforward. He mentions specific complaints he has heard against Yūsuf: that 1) he is inaccessible to the people, staying aloof in his palace, 2) that he lives in luxury, 3) that he has people in prison for their debts and 4) that there are many whose property he has appropriated. Al-Ṭurṭūshī concludes by asking God for a martyr's death in holy war for both himself and Yūsuf, and that God grant that Yūsuf see truth and follow it, the possible implication being that up to now Yūsuf has not seen the truth. Al-Ṭurṭūshī was originally from Tortosa in al-Andalus so he may well have been better informed than al-Ghazālī, but al-Ghazālī certainly knew of Abū Muḥammad Ibn al-Arabī's troubles with the Almoravids. The difference in the two documents is really in their intent. While al-Ṭurṭūshī exhorts, al-Ghazālī's flattery in itself suggests an attempt to establish a political foothold by gaining favor with the ruler.

Now al-Ghazālī's *fatwā* was of relatively little use to the Almoravids, who were already the *de facto* rulers of Morocco and most of the Iberian peninsula and functioning as such. It is clearly stated in the documents<sup>21</sup> that al-Ghazālī's letter and *fatwā* and al-Ṭurṭūshī letter were written at the request of an Andalusian, Abū Muḥammad Ibn al-ʿArabī, who had gone on the pilgrimage to Mekka with his son in the month of Dhū l-Hijja 489 the same year as al-Ghazālī. Al-Ghazālī also was the intermediary for the caliph al-Mustaṣhir bi-llāh's letter to Yūsuf dated 491, which grants Yūsuf the right to rule in al-Andalus and to use the title of Prince of the Faithful *Amīr al-Muslimīn* and Defender of the Faith *Nāṣir al-dīn*. The idea was to favor

<sup>19</sup> P. 219 of the edition by ʿAbd al-Wahhāb b. Maṣṣūr, *Al-Wathāʿiq*. Rabat, 1976, vol. I.

<sup>20</sup> *Al-Wathāʿiq*, vol. I, p. 211.

<sup>21</sup> The collection includes a letter requesting the *fatwā* from al-Ghazālī written by Abū Muḥammad Ibn al-ʿArabī. It was published by Aḥmad Mukhtār al-ʿAbbādī, *Dirāsāt fī Tārīkh al-Maghrib wal-Andalus*, appendix 2, p. 478. On this relationship also, Laoust, H., *La Politique de Gazali*, Paris, 1970, p. 108.

Ibn al-ʿArabī and his son who had left Seville under a cloud after the Almoravids took over. Ibn al-ʿArabī had held several high positions in the administration of the kingdom of Seville under the taifa king al-Muʿtamid. The documents were needed as a kind of safeguard to return home to Seville where Ibn ʿArabī was hoping they could gain the favor of the Almoravids and have their confiscated property returned to them.<sup>22</sup>

The considerable political effort al-Ghazālī expended on behalf of these Andalusians also fits with the eclipse of his own prospects in Baghdad at the time he met them. Four years previously, in 485, his protector and fellow-countryman, the *wazīr* Nizām al-Mulk had been murdered, and in the year he met Ibn al-ʿArabī, Sultan Barkiyaruq, whose rival al-Ghazālī had backed,<sup>23</sup> came to power in Baghdad, a fact which must have diminished his hopes for an effective role there. In addition to this he suffered a kind of nervous breakdown probably brought on by stress and overwork which resulted in his move to Damascus in the month of dhū ʿl-qaʿda of 488.<sup>24</sup> Al-Ghazālī's return to Bagdad after spending two years in Damascus is attested by Ibn al-ʿArabī who studied with him there. The alliance with this eminently cultivated Andalusian family in whose interest he had written the *fatwā* and gone to the trouble of arranging for a letter from the caliph to the Almoravid Yūsuf Ibn Tāshufīn was conceivably the corner stone of a political base in Seville. For those who see al-Ghazālī as a completely other-worldly figure it is important to note that these arrangements were made *after* his breakdown and conversion.

Our picture of al-Ghazālī as a motivated and persistent politician is at odds with the image to which Western scholars such as Macdonald have accustomed us,<sup>25</sup> basing themselves on his own self-portrait in the *Munqidh*. Other scholars for example, Farid Jabre, see al-Ghazālī as more of a politician. Jabre points out<sup>26</sup> that al-Ghazālī's actual conversion to sufism occurred several years before 488 when he left Baghdad, which weakens al-Ghazālī's explanation of his retirement in the *Munqidh* where he does not mention the political situation. But the idea of al-Ghazālī as a politician with

<sup>22</sup> This is explained with extensive documentary evidence by Maria J. Viguera, «Las cartas de al-Gazālī y al-Ṭurṭūšī al soberano almorávide Yūsuf b. Tāshufīn», *Al-Andalus*, XLII (1977), 341-374. The documents are collected and translated into Spanish.

<sup>23</sup> Details of the political intrigue are given by F. R. C. Bagley in the introduction to his English translation of *Al-Ghazali's book of Counsel for Kings*, London, 1964, pp. xxx-xxxi.

<sup>24</sup> Laoust, *La politique de al-Ghazali*, p. 63.

<sup>25</sup> Shorter edition of the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, *sub nomen*.

<sup>26</sup> In his translation of *Al-Munqidh*, introduction, pp. 20-23.

worldly power in view seems inescapable and is quite in accord with the religious tradition to which he belonged. There is not such a great distance between him and Ibn Khaldūn in this respect. The notion of the mystic as necessarily other-worldly and politically neutral does not seem to apply in the Islamic world; witness the later historical development of the sufi *ṭarīqāt* such as the Naqshbandiyya with their intense political involvement. Similarly, in al-Andalus in 539, the revolution of the sufis or *murīdūn* was led by Ibn Qasī who took the title of al-‘Azīz bi-llāh, clearly with the intention of functioning as a secular ruler.<sup>27</sup> That some of these sufi militants were even capable of sinister acts in their struggle for political power is seen in the tragic story of one of Ibn Qasī’s followers, Ibn Mundhir of Silves, who in 539 was blinded by a jealous rival in the sufi movement according to Ibn al-Abbār.<sup>28</sup> But the sufis of this period were not more ambitious than their contemporaries, the fighting cadis, who sometimes sacrificed all to personal ambition. An example is Ibn al-Abbār’s story of the death of the cadi of Almeria Ibn Aḍḥā, who brought a cup of water to his ally Ibn Hūd who had arrived to help him against the Almoravids at the siege of Granada. When the cadi brought the cup to Ibn Hūd, the common people (*al-‘āmma*) screamed «don’t drink oh sultan» so the cadi had to drink it himself to allay suspicion and he died that night [from his own poison].<sup>29</sup>

Even the scholarly and ascetic al-Ṭurṭūshī probably had something to do with the assassination of the tyrant al-Afḍal in Egypt who had imprisoned him.<sup>30</sup>

Towards the hour of evening prayer, [al-Ṭurṭūshī] said to his attendant: «I have hit him now!» and the very next morning, al-Afḍal was assassinated whilst riding out. On the death of this emir, the government of the country devolved to al-Ma’mūn al-Baṭā’ihī and this vizir treated our Shaikh with the utmost respect.

The historical context for this was that Sunni jurists like al-Ṭurṭūshī were struggling with the Shiite regime of Fatimid Egypt over the control of religious life at this time.

Ibn Qaṭṭān tells us that when the Muslims from Cordoba were besieging the Christians in Talavera, the old cadi Ibn Ḥamdīn was there, inspiring them to fight with his speeches.

<sup>27</sup> Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Ḥulla al-siyarā’*, ed. Ḥusain Mu’nis, Cairo, 1963, vol. II, p. 204.

<sup>28</sup> *Al-Ḥulla, al-Siyarā’*, vol. 2, p. 207.

<sup>29</sup> *Al-Ḥulla al-Siyarā’*, vol. 2, p. 207.

<sup>30</sup> Ibn Khallikān, *Biographical Dictionary*, vol. II, p. 666.



In the post-caliphal period, heads of state acquired their positions by force rather than by depending upon any sense of legitimacy created by dynastic traditions, or consultations or elections among the populace. Lacking this legitimacy, their power was unstable and their energy was used up in putting down rivals and rebellions. In this political context it fell to the religious leaders to express the interests of the community as a whole, a legal aspect the Malikites call «concern for the public interest» or *maṣlaḥa*. The cadis had to protect their community in very concrete ways, such as by promoting the building and repairing of the walls of the city. These practical matters even the most scholarly of them could not ignore. It is from these activities that the Spanish word for the mayor of a city, «alcalde» is derived from the Arabic word «al-Qāḍī», cadi or judge.

In the eastern territories of Islam at this time, the rulers were often tribal leaders who predominated through brute force. We can understand that al-Ghazālī might feel he should try to piece together a state in which Islam could flourish and be protected. If not in Baghdad or Damascus (overrun by the crusaders by 498) or Jerusalem (taken by the crusaders 492) or in Fatimid (Shiite) Egypt, then in Spain. In this project, his allies were educated men like Niẓām al-Mulk and his son Fakhr al-Mulk, and Abū Muḥammad Ibn al-ʿArabī and his son Abū Bakr. His search was for «a pious sovereign who is all powerful»<sup>31</sup> since the political chaos which prevailed in his day made strong centralized power desirable. Given that his tribal circumstances would prevent him from being educated, this «powerful sovereign» would need to be directed by men of the educational elite. Clearly the depoliticization of sufism which might seem natural to Western scholars is not part of Islamic history nor was it part of al-Ghazālī's conception either. His sufism was not to be understood as a quietistic withdrawal from the world, but as solace, relief and renewal of energy depleted in the frustration and despair of his considerable political efforts. His student, Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī, the son of the Andalusian for whom he wrote the *fatwā*, later described his studies in Bagdad with al-Ghazālī:<sup>32</sup>

I carried away what I had imagined and longed for of his truth. Star of luminaries, flawless character, shining intellect whose intelligence makes one forget despair, and leave routine following of authority (*taqlīd*) for analogical reasoning (*qiyās*) and generate the derivative (*farʿ*) from the first principle (*aṣl*). Tomorrow it will be a sword in the hand of Islam. May God

<sup>31</sup> *Faith and Practice (Munqidh)*, p. 74.

<sup>32</sup> In *Qānūn al-taʿwīl*. Quoted by al-Maqqarī in *Nafḥ al-Ṭīb*, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās, Beirut, 1968, vol. II, 33-34.

irrigate al-Andalus with it after what she has suffered from drought of knowledge and extend to her a growing shade and clothe her nobility with glamour and pour her a glistening rain.

In the foregoing passage al-Ghazālī's pupil Abū Bakr characterizes the teaching he received from al-Ghazālī in the period of his retreat as «a sword in the hand of Islam», a phrase which clearly suggests a political motivation, while the statement that al-Andalus «suffered from a drought of knowledge» is a direct criticism of the Malikite jurists empowered by the Almoravids.

Abū Bakr's vocabulary in this passage: *farʿ* and *aṣl* and the criticism of *taqlīd* recall the main points made by Ibn Tūmart. Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī had in fact studied with all the teachers Ibn Tūmart is said to have studied with, and with many more, since he was objectively speaking the best-educated man of his generation in having studied with the most scholars. But it is more than probable that the training offered by al-Ghazālī to Ibn al-ʿArabī was offered to many students in Baghdad at this time. The stature of al-Ghazālī should not blind us to the excellent level of culture in his milieu. For example, al-Ghazālī's teacher al-Juwaynī had other students who in turn, had their students, all reproducing a similar set of issues and problems general to the period. It is no compliment to al-Ghazālī for us to imagine him as absolutely unique. On the contrary, the reason for his influence was that he expressed what many people were thinking in a cogent way.

Al-Ghazālī praised Ibn al-ʿArabī in his letter to Yūsuf Ibn Tāshufīn, saying:<sup>33</sup>

His son, the sheikh and imam Abū Bakr, has treasured up in the time he has been with me a quantity of knowledge that others might not achieve with more time, and considering his intelligence, capacity for assimilation and the brilliance of his talent, he will not leave Iraq without being fulfilled in his worth above his peers.

According to Ibn Farḥūn (d. 1397), Abū Bakr returned to al-Andalus in 495 after the death of his father in 493<sup>34</sup>. He undoubtedly carried al-Ghazālī's letter and *fatwā* and the other documents. But al-Ḍabbī (d. 1203) who lived close enough in time and place to the events to have gotten information directly from contemporaries gives the date 512 for Ibn al-ʿArabī's return from the East from a trip which was started «around 500» *fī aḥwāz al-*

<sup>33</sup> Viguera, «Cartas de al-Gazālī y al-Ṭurṭuṣī», p. 360.

<sup>34</sup> Ibn Farḥūn al-Madanī, *al-Dībāj* (Widner library copy), no date, no publisher, p. 282. Ibn Farḥūn was born in Medina about 1358 into a scholarly family of Andalusian origin.

*khamṣ mi'a*,<sup>35</sup> so if we assume he made two trips, he may have returned to al-Ghazālī in Alexandria in 500, to give him news from Al-Andalus. This would mean that he and al-Ghazālī continued to cooperate very closely.

Two things alert us to a peculiar situation. First, that there is no record of the Almoravid ruler's having received the documents, and secondly, the persecution to which Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī was subjected in al-Andalus further corroborates his political activity, at least to the extent that it proves that other people judged that he had a political motive in spreading the teaching of al-Ghazālī. As we shall see, the cađi of Cordoba, Abū ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Ḥamdīn who died in 508<sup>36</sup> opposed the sufis on his home ground. He could not help but be alarmed at the thought of having one of their major apologists on the scene in al-Andalus, since it would be very clear that he would be a magnet for the sufi faction. Speaking of the persecution of Ibn al-ʿArabī in his book, *Kitāb al-Madkhal li-Ṣināʿat al-Manṭiq*, or an *Introduction to Logic*, Ibn Ṭumlūs of Alcira (died 1223 A. D.= 620 H.) says:<sup>37</sup>

«This edict [to burn al-Ghazālī's books] was read in the pulpits and the situation which was created was extremely hateful because all who possessed one of these books were subjected to an inquisition and everyone feared that he could be accused of reading or acquiring one of them, and the punishments could not have been more grave. The most famous of those persecuted in this public commotion was Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī whom the aroused passion of the jurists almost destroyed, although God got him out of danger so than in his case were fulfilled the words of he who said «If Abū Naṣr escaped, it was only because God had so decreed». Not much time passed after this when Imām the Mahdī [Ibn Tūmart] arrived, who clarified the questions which bothered people and invited them to study the books of al-Ghazālī, making them see that his doctrines were in agreement with his own.»

Hints of this controversy can be found in the biographies where the detractors and supporters of Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī also happen to conserve similar position in the ideological split between the Almoravids and the Almohads. The question of why Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī was removed from his judgeship in Seville brings out these biases. Ibn Bashkuwāl (d. 1183), studied with Abū Bakr, as did Ibn al-Abbār, who says of the Almohads

<sup>35</sup> Al-Ḍabbī (d. 1203), *Bughyat al-Multamīs*, ed. Codera and Ribera, BAH III, p. 82.

<sup>36</sup> And whose son, Abū l-Qāsim Ibn Ḥamdīn, became cađi in Cordoba after him. Cf. Ibn ʿIdhārī, *al-Bayān al-Mugrib*, ed. A. Huici, Valencia, 1963, p. 143.

<sup>37</sup> Asín Palacios, M., ed. trans. *Introducción al arte de la lógica por Abentomlūs de Alcira*, Madrid, 1916, transl. pp. 16-18, text pp. 11-12.

«may God strengthen them».<sup>38</sup> Both these historians say or imply that Abū Bakr was removed because he was just. Ibn Bashkuwāl says the following:<sup>39</sup>)

Having been appointed *cadi* in his home he rendered the highest service to the inhabitants by the firmness with which he discharged his duties and the severity which made him an object of terror for the wicked.

Ibn al-Abbār says:

He was a *cadi* for the first time in Rajab of the year 528 and God benefitted from his severity and efficiency in *amr bi-l-ma'rūf*, so much so that he was harmed with the loss of his books and his wealth. And he showed great patience with all that.

Al-Maqqarī says Ibn al-ʿArabī made the people contribute the hides of the animals sacrificed for the *ʿīd* to build one side of the wall around Seville and that this occasioned a popular revolt. «Then the blind mob got together and they rose up against him and pillaged his house and he left for Cordoba.» Al-Maqqarī says further «and I say he (may God have mercy on him) had a wall of stone and another of lime made at Seville with his own money».<sup>40</sup>

On the other hand, the *Cadi* ʿIyād of Ceuta, who rebelled against the Almohads, claims that the weirdly harsh judgements Ibn al-ʿArabī handed down were the cause of his removal from office. *Cadi* ʿIyād distills all possible negative aspects of that situation and others, making an implication of homosexuality in quoting his poetry and saying that his *ḥadīths* were not accepted by some.

What the material on Ibn al-ʿArabī seems to indicate is that the ideological split between the reactionary Malikites and the progressive Malikites whom Ibn al-ʿArabī represented pre-dates the Almohad conquest of the peninsula and is played out within the learned elite during the interregnum period, independently of the Almohad military presence. Ibn al-Abbar dates the disappearance of the Almoravid state in the peninsula as 539 when a number of cities followed Cordoba in revolt<sup>41</sup>. It is only as an old man that Ibn al-ʿArabī had direct contact with the Almohads when he

<sup>38</sup> Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Ḥulla al-siyarāʾ*, II, p. 207.

<sup>39</sup> Ibn Bashkuwāl, *Ṣila*, 2 vol., Cairo, 1966, vol. 2, p. 591. This passage is translated in Ibn Khallikān, III, p. 13.

<sup>40</sup> *Nafḥ al-Ṭīb*, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās, 1968, vol. II, p. 27.

<sup>41</sup> «And when the state of the veiled ones came to an end in the year 539 and Ibn Ḥamdīn spoke in his own name in Cordoba», *Al-Ḥulla al-siyarāʾ*, 1963, vol. II, pp. 211-212.

headed a delegation bringing the news of the Almohad victory at Seville to the Caliph ‘Abd al-Mu‘min, whom he told that he had heard of Ibn Tūmart when he was in the East.<sup>42</sup>

The possibility of Ibn Tūmart's meeting al-Ghazālī can now be considered in the context of al-Ghazālī's pursuit of a western project in which the interview with Yūsuf would have been a first step. Since he needed information and local networks, al-Ghazālī would have made himself available to Maghribi students in Alexandria while he was waiting to hear from Yūsuf. Thus it is to be expected that he would have been accessible and attentive to Ibn Tūmart or to any other student from the Maghrib, whatever his degree of wealth or education. In addition, the Sunni clerics in Fatimid (Shiite) Egypt at that time were in a politically disadvantaged situation and thus were a unusually tight-knit group with a practical interest in facilitating contacts among their co-religionists.

Al-Ghazālī's subsequent loss of interest in this project and his departure from Alexandria would correspond not only to the death of Yūsuf in the year 500, but even more conclusively to the news of the burning of his book, the *Iḥyāʾ* or *The Revival of the Religious Sciences*. There is a question as to when this took place in al-Andalus. Subkī records a statement by Abū ‘Abd Allah Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā b. ‘Abd al-Mun‘im al-‘Abdalī the muezzin:<sup>43</sup>

I saw in Alexandria the year 500, in one of two months, either al-Muḥarram or Ṣafar, as a sleeping person seeing the sun rising from the place it sets, what various people considered heresy (*bid‘a*) that occurred in them. In a number of [different] days ships arrived with the [news of] the burning of the books of the Imam Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī in Almeria.

This would make it appear that less than a month elapsed between the death of Yūsuf Ibn Tāshufīn on the first day of al-Muḥarram 500 and the burning of the books of al-Ghazālī on the order of his son and successor, ‘Alī Ibn Yūsuf. Ibn Qaṭṭān gives 503 as a date for the burning; in any case, it occurred in many different locations between 500 and 510 A. H. Thus, nine years after the *fatwā* and the granting of the title by the caliph in Baghdad to his father, ‘Alī Ibn Yūsuf ordered the books burned. The explanation of this act in view of al-Ghazālī's favorable and generous *fatwā*

<sup>42</sup> *Al-Ḥulal al-Mawshiyya*, trans. Huici, pp. 122-123; al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-Tīb*, vol. II, p. 27, note 1. Of course if he had made only the one trip with his father from 485 to 495, he would have returned before Ibn Tūmart arrived in the East in 500. So either this was a polite invention on his part or he made two trips corroborating the dates given by al-Ḍabbī and al-Marrākushī.

<sup>43</sup> Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘iyya al-Kubrā*, IV, p. 113.

is that both rulers, but especially ‘Alī, as al-Marrākushī and Ibn al-Athīr remark,<sup>44</sup> appear to have been totally under the influence of the *cadi* of Cordoba, Ibn Ḥamdīn, who was fundamentally concerned about his own personal position which the *fatwā* jeopardized as we shall see. The account in the *Ḥulal al-Mawshiyya* says:<sup>45</sup>

[al-Ghazālī’s book] *The Revival* got to North Africa and to al-Andalus and the jurists examined it and censured some things. Ibn Qaṭṭān says «And above all Ibn Ḥamdīn, who overstepped due bounds in this, to the point of declaring everyone who read it to be an infidel and acting accordingly. He made the Sultan upset about it and asked the advice of the jurists who were in accord with burning them [copies of the book]. ‘Alī ibn Yūsuf accepted their findings and ordered them to be burned and the burning spread to the copies of it which had appeared in Morocco at this time, and they say that the burning was the cause of the loss of their kingdom and the dissolution of their empire.

In corroboration of Ibn Qaṭṭān’s opinion that Ibn Ḥamdīn was the source of the action against al-Ghazālī, the Almoravid ruler ‘Alī Ibn Yūsuf in his decree which was read from all the mosques, took care to say that such had been the decision of the learned men.

Ibn Ḥamdīn’s excessive hunger for power was satirized in poems, a most explicit one being:<sup>46</sup>

On Dajjāl [Antichrist]! this is the time to appear and  
Oh Sun! Dawn from the west!  
Ibn Ḥamdīn wants to be petitioned and his gifts are more distant than the stars.  
If one consults him, he rubs his hind quarters to assure his pretension concerning Taghlib.

Thus the momentarily successful effort to discredit al-Ghazālī in al-Andalus can be identified as a political move on the part of Abū ‘Abd Allāh

<sup>44</sup> «And [Alī] honored the ulema even more and took stands on their advice»: Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fī l-Tārīkh*, vol. 10, pp. 417-418; «He could be numbered among the ascetics and hermits more than among the kings and conquerors. He was very attached to the jurists and the religious leaders and decided nothing in his kingdom without consulting them. If he named a *cadi* he made him promise not to decide anything large or small except in the presence of four jurists»: al-Marrākushī, *Kitāb al-Mu‘jib fī talkhīṣ akhbār al-Maghrib*, ed. Dozy, Amsterdam, 1968, p. 122; Huici transl. vol. 4, *Colección de crónicas árabes de la reconquista*, Tetuán, 1955, pp. 127-128.

<sup>45</sup> *Al-Ḥulal al-Mawshiyya*, translation Huici, pp. 124-5; Also Ibn Qaṭṭān, *Naẓm al-Jumān*, pp. 14-15; Ibn Qaṭṭān mentions that Ibn al-‘Arabī carried it himself to Algeciras and then ordered that it be carried into the water.

<sup>46</sup> Al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu‘jib*, ed. Dozy, p. 133; Huici transl. p. 129.

Ibn Ḥamdīn. It is clear that al-Ghazālī sent some sort of messenger (probably Ibn al-ʿArabī himself, since the date for his return is given as 495 in the *Dībāj*, and the year 500 is given by al-Ḍabbī for a trip to the East, as we have said)<sup>47</sup> or letter to Yūsuf and was waiting in Alexandria for a reply before his journey.

The powerful *cadi* of Cordoba must necessarily have found out about al-Ghazālī's plan to visit the Almoravid ruler through the chancellor since the primitive Yūsuf was not educated enough to read his own correspondence. Ibn Ḥamdīn would have realized that the easterner's extraordinary qualifications made him a likely candidate for the position of chief counsellor of the Almoravid ruler, should the two men meet. He would also have been familiar with Ibn al-ʿArabī, and would have feared that he could use his father's connections to the previous ruling hierarchy of Seville, the prestige of al-Ghazālī, and an alliance with the *sufi* militants to create the three elements necessary for political effectiveness: a ruling elite, an ideology and a popular following. That would have interfered drastically with Ibn Ḥamdīn's own goals. Furthermore, al-Ghazālī's book, the *Iḥyāʾ*, outlines the defects and shortcomings of jurists, giving advance notice of a possible reform which would certainly have removed some of the Andalusians from their seats of power.

Forewarned is forearmed; in the rather small world of the Islamic religious scholars of the sixth/twelfth century, all these aspects would have been understood. Thus Ibn Ḥamdīn's reaction to this perceived threat was to anathematize al-Ghazālī and burn his writings, because the action he could take against Ibn ʿArabī himself was circumscribed by the genuine respect his selfless teaching and personal qualities inspired in the scholars of al-Andalus, almost all of whom knew him and had studied with him upon his return from the East.

There are many indications in the biographical collections of how small and how interrelated this community of jurists was.<sup>48</sup> For example, Abū

<sup>47</sup> Ibn al-ʿArabī and son had been traveling in Iraq, Syria and Egypt since 485 (1092). Abū Muḥammad died in 493. There are two dates of return to Spain for his son Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī, 493 and 512. Al-Ḍabbī (died 1203), *Bughyat al-Multamis*, n.º 179, p. 83, has the date of his return trip as 512 and he has named sources of information, so it is possible that Ibn ʿArabī made two trips. In any case his first trip was ten years, from 485-495, and al-Ḍabbī records that he told a student he was away on his *riḥla* for ten years. Ibn Farḥūn, *Dībāj*, p. 281; Ibn Qaṭṭān says Ibn al-ʿArabī took the *Iḥyāʾ* to Algeciras to throw it into the sea. This could possibly have been a pretext so send a message to al-Ghazālī.

<sup>48</sup> A somewhat similar world of Muslim theologians and jurists in Iran today is well portrayed by Roy Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet*, New York: 1985. Reading this

Bakr Ibn al-‘Arabī studied with the father of the Cadi ‘Iyāḍ and with al-Ṭurṭūshī, as did Ibn Tūmart.<sup>49</sup> The Cadi ‘Iyāḍ also studied with al-Ṭurṭūshī, as did Ibn Tūmart.<sup>50</sup> This closeness causes the Cadi ‘Iyāḍ to hide his hand somewhat when criticising Ibn al-‘Arabī. The historian al-Zarkashī even claims that Ibn Tūmart studied with Ibn Ḥamdīn in Cordoba although this is dubious according to Huici.<sup>51</sup>

However, we can see the underlying political situation in later events since the son of Cadi Abū ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Ḥamdīn, the Cadi Abū l-Qāsim Ibn Ḥamdīn, undoubtedly had a hand in inciting the mob (seen in other instances to be the Ḥamdīn power base) against Ibn al-‘Arabī. This rioting included an invasion of Ibn ‘Arabī’s home and probably put an end to Ibn al-‘Arabī’s short tenure as Chief Justice of Seville. This event, which Ibn ‘Arabī mentions in 536 at the time of writing his book *Al-‘Awāṣim min al-Qawāsim* occurred between his investiture as chief justice in 528 and the date of writing.<sup>52</sup> Ibn al-‘Arabī himself says of his judgeship:<sup>53</sup>

I judged the people and obliged them to prayer and ‘ordering to the good and to refraining from evil’ until hardly any evil remained in the land. And I spoke strongly against the people of illegal seizure and extortion and against those of importance in distressing disoluteness, and they plotted and banded together and revolted against me and I left the affair to God, and I instructed all who were with me not to defend my house and I left by the roofs by myself and they raged at me, and I gave up my house to their plundering and if it hadn’t been for my good luck in this, I would have been killed in the house.

book it is possible to get an idea of the subtle interface between politics and doctrine in this kind of milieu.

<sup>49</sup> E. I. 2nd ed. *sub nomen*, article by M. Talbi.

<sup>50</sup> *Dibāj*, p. 289.

<sup>51</sup> *Historia política del imperio almohade*, vol. I, p. 28.

<sup>52</sup> The introduction of Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Al-‘Awāṣim min al-Qawāsim* (Cairo 1371 H.p 26-7) speaks of the incident: «And Ibn al-‘Arabī became aware while he was chief judge that the walls of Seville could not resist the misfortunes of fate and thus visited a calamitous weakness on the city, and he resolved to restore them and fill several fissures which had occurred in them. And he agreed that that would take place in the time the government usually used for such things but the necessary money was not sufficient in the government budget. So Ibn al-‘Arabī brought out all funds available to him of his private fortune and provided it to fulfill that financial obligation which was generally incumbent upon all, and he called the people to spend for it. And during those days the first of Dhū l-Ḥijja was approaching and Ibn al-‘Arabī was the first to whom it occurred to make use for the general good of the skins of the animals slaughtered, and he encouraged people to contribute the skins of their slaughtered animals to build the wall [around Seville]. And they were agreed to this except that his enemies and those who were angry with his ideological school who incited the mob against him in their malicious ways until they invaded his home...»: Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb’s introduction.

<sup>53</sup> *Al-‘Awāṣim min al-Qawāsim*, pp. 137-138.



A western Maliki jurist, Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Māzarī<sup>54</sup> (d. 536/1141) has left us his strong written objections to doctrinal aspects of al-Ghazālī's writing. He was a native of the town of Mazara in Sicily and was teaching in Mahdiyya. Al-Māzarī's partisan attitude is openly revealed, since he criticizes al-Ghazālī by his own admission on the reports of others without having read him personally. He did not undertake this criticism without prompting from some external source: Subkī says «he was answering someone who asked him about the state of the book, *Iḥyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn*.» Furthermore, he takes such a cheap shot against al-Ghazālī [referring to al-Ghazālī's absolutely traditional statement that some things should be divulged only to a specially prepared public; he says if they are true, they can be said, if they are false they should be left out of the book] that it causes Subkī to suspect his good faith. What he transmits to his readers may be the Almoravid point of view on the conflict between the Almoravids and the Almohads. Al-Māzarī says:<sup>55</sup>

Although I have not read the book of this man, that is, of al-Ghazālī, nevertheless I have seen students and companions of his, each one of whom has told me some kind of information about his condition and method and from them I have gotten an understanding of his doctrine and his conduct as if I had witnessed it with my own eyes. I will limit myself to mentioning the condition of the man and the condition of his book, and to pointing out sentences from the doctrines of the *al-muwahḥidūn* and the philosophers, the false sufis, and those who use allegorical interpretations. His book, in fact, shows a certain sympathy for the doctrines of one and another of these schools, preferring them to others, and this is all followed by the charges and countercharges of the partisans of each school.

Asín understands al-Māzarī's term *al-muwahḥidūn* as meaning «the partisans of the absolute unity», that is, the Islamic followers of Alexandrine pantheism. Subkī in his refutation of al-Māzarī points out the ambiguity of *al-muwahḥidūn*. He takes «pantheists» as one of the possible meanings of the word, another meaning being «those who believe in the oneness of God», hence, all Muslims. Subkī further argues that since the four terms are given in the list as if they were different things, al-Māzarī is either saying that the Sufis and the Muslims (believers in God's Oneness) are two separate groups which is outlandish and absurd, or accusing al-Ghazālī of pantheism, which

<sup>54</sup> Studied by M. Asín Palacios, «Un faqih siciliano contradictor de al-Gazzālī - Abu ‘Abd Allah de Mazara», in *Centenario della nascita de Michele Amari*, Palermo, 1910.

<sup>55</sup> Al-Subkī, *Tabaqat al-Shafi‘iyya al-Kubrā*, ed. Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Maghribī al-Fāsī, Cairo, 1906 = 1324 H., vol. 4, p. 122. Asín, Sp. transl. «Un faqih», pp. 225-226.

is also absurd, since al-Ghazālī specifically refuted the doctrine in his writings. It is from Subkī's choice of meanings that Asín quite logically picks the negative meaning «pantheist» for *al-muwahhīdūn*.

Because I agree with Subkī's point that these four terms are given as different things, I think that al-Māzarī did not use *al-muwahhīdūn* as meaning pantheist, which was an accusation which would tend to merge into the category of «false sufis», i.e. those who said heretical, pantheistic things like «I am the Truth (God)». Subkī was writing in Egypt more than 200 years after the period of al-Māzarī. By that time the Almohads, or the followers of the Mahdī Ibn Tūmart, had been forgotten, so that meaning of *al-muwahhīdūn* did not occur to Subkī. But al-Māzarī was writing at a time when the Almoravids were seeking to discredit the Almohad ideology, so it is logical that he would be referring to them.

When al-Māzarī died in 536 he was over eighty years old and this was three years before 539 when the younger Ibn Ḥamdīn rebelled against the Almoravids. It is likely that the text was written after the Almohad rebellion became a serious threat, around 525-535 at the request of the Almoravid faqīhs. Al-Māzarī mentions the Almohads first and groups them with other elements of the anti-Ibn Ḥamdīn and anti-Almoravid coalition in al-Andalus: the philosophers, the false sufis and those who use allegorical interpretation. That this was the Almohad coalition in ideological terms is evident both from Ibn Tūmart's doctrine and from the famous works produced under the patronage of the dynasty. Al-Māzarī's disclaimer about not having read the *Iḥyā'* might even mean that he had a practical political obligation to discredit al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā'* but no personal desire to do so. He confines his criticism of al-Ghazālī to «sentences» which coincide with the doctrines of the Almohads and the other three groups, praising al-Ghazālī's work on law. Thus the four mentioned groups are probably the real targets of criticism and this may be the point of the document. He says he has talked to students of al-Ghazālī of whom the most well known in the west was Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī. The negative mention of allegorical interpretation could be aimed at Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī, since he wrote a work entitled *Qānūn al-ta'wīl* or the laws of allegorical interpretation.<sup>56</sup>

Goldziher's explanation of the book burning as motivated by the *Iḥyā'*'s attack on the jurists as a class could be misleading. We must remember that al-Ghazālī, like Ibn Tūmart or Ibn al-ʿArabī, was himself a jurist and a very eminent one. In fact, what the Andalusian jurists feared was being

<sup>56</sup> Of which the manuscript is in Dār al-Kutub in Cairo.

replaced within the ruling 'ulamā' by another reform faction, rather than any threat to the institution of 'ulamā' rule itself. The Cadi Ibn Ḥamdīn acted forcefully to suppress opposition to his decree on al-Ghazālī, his aggressiveness again suggesting a political motivation, especially since he had consistently opposed the sufis locally<sup>57</sup> and they protested the decree. After the promulgation of the decree, partisans of al-Ghazālī such as the jurist al-Barjī of Almería<sup>58</sup> dared to write a *fatwā* co-signed by other jurists condemning the burning of al-Ghazālī's books. Ibn Ḥamdīn then forced the cadi of Almería to relieve al-Barjī of his post.

The personal political ambition to which we attribute Ibn Ḥamdīn's early campaign against al-Ghazālī and Ibn al-ʿArabī came to fruition for his son, the Cadi Abū l-Qāsim Ibn Ḥamdīn, in 539, when Cordoba rebelled against the Almoravids. Ibn Ḥamdīn *fi*ls assumed the leadership of Cordoba, taking the title *al-Manṣūr bi-llāh* and also *Imām al-Muslimīn*.<sup>59</sup> The implication of the title explains his opposition to other charismatic religious leaders. He remained as ruler (with a short interim period of rule by Ibn Hūd) until the city was conquered by the Almoravid leader Ibn Ghāniya in 541. Although he used the army of Cordoba under the direction of the son of his maternal uncle, Ibn Umm ʿImād to help Granada, it was no match for Ibn Hūd.<sup>60</sup> Ibn Ḥamdīn's power base was the street mob in Cordoba which brought him to power after the incident which sparked the rebellion of 539: the rape of a Cordoban woman by a member of the Almoravid's negro guard. Thus he is in contrast to his rivals, Ibn Hūd and Ibn Ghāniya, whose armies conquered the city by force. The fact that the Cordoba mob favored Ibn Ḥamdīn, as distinct from the people of the villages in the area of Cordoba who supported Ibn Hūd, is clear from the following passage from the historian Ibn al-Abbār which also clearly indicates the alliance between the Aragonese prince Ibn Hūd and the Sufi Ibn Qasī, who were both rivals of Ibn Ḥamdīn:<sup>61</sup>

When Ibn Qasī heard that Ibn Ḥamdīn had revolted he called for Ibn Mundhir to get up an army and go to Cordoba with Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā

<sup>57</sup> There was a marked fear of the political power of sufis in this period. Miguel Asín Palacios (ed. Ibn al-ʿArīf, *Mahāsīn al-Majālis*, Paris, 1933. Introduction, p. 5) quotes Shaʿrānī in his *Ṭabaqāt* saying that the sufi mystic Ibn Barrajān was condemned to death by the ruler because three hundred villages recognized him as *imām*. Asín says that the sufi Ibn al-ʿArīf may have been poisoned (in 536) by the Almoravids for a similar political motive.

<sup>58</sup> Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Muʿjam*, ed. Francisco Codera, IV, p. 271, biogr. 253; Asín, *Ibn Tumlus*, p. 17, note 2.

<sup>59</sup> Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Ḥulla al-siyarāʾ*, II, p. 229.

<sup>60</sup> Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Ḥulla al-siyarāʾ*, II, p. 212.

<sup>61</sup> Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Ḥulla al-siyarāʾ*, II, pp. 206-207.

known as Ibn al-Qābila, aspiring to take possession of it. And with the two of them he addressed its people, awakening in them a desire for his rule and instigating them to rise up with his propaganda. And they honored Aḥmad Ibn ‘Abd al-Mālik Ibn Hūd, Saif al-Dawla. The people from some of the neighboring outlying districts of Cordoba (*Ahl Qurṭuba min ba‘d thughrihā al-mujāwara lahā*) brought Ibn Hūd and made him king over them and expelled Ibn Ḥamdīn who withdrew to the fort known as Hornachuelos. The city mob (*al-‘amma*) brought Ibn Ḥamdīn back from there when they rose up against Ibn Hūd and killed his wazīr, Ibn Shammākh, and [Ibn Hūd] fled, 12 days from the day he entered the city, and did not go back after that. And the friends of Ibn Qasī went away disappointed.

Ibn al-Abbār mentions that some of the inhabitants of the eastern suburb of Cordoba sympathized with Ibn Qasī, the sufi militant. Ibn Qasī’s opposition to Ibn Ḥamdīn even in their common rebellion against the Almoravids shows that Ibn Ḥamdīn had inherited his father’s enmity with the sufis, while the existence of sufi partisans in the eastern suburb of Cordoba shows how close to his own stronghold their influence made itself felt.

The importance the elder Cadi Ibn Ḥamdīn attached to preventing al-Ghazālī from making contact with Yūsuf Ibn Tāshufīn has now been made clear, along with his motives and the concrete steps he took to frustrate this plan. The following is the account of al-Ghazālī’s learning of the burning of the *Iḥyā’* and the meeting between Ibn Tūmart and al-Ghazālī from *al-Ḥulal al-Mawshiyya* which has been excerpted from a lost volume of *al-Mann bi’l-imāma* of Ibn Šāḥib al-Šalā.<sup>62</sup>

Ibn Šāḥib al-Šalā tells the following story on the authority of ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-‘Irāqī, an old sheikh living in Fez who said:

In Baghdad in the school of the sheikh the Imam Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī, there was a man with a thick beard and a woolen turban on his head. He entered the school and introduced himself to the sheikh Abū Ḥamid and greeted him.

«Where are you from?», asked al-Ghazālī, «From the far Maghrib (Morocco)» he answered. «Have you been in Cordoba?» «Yes.» «How are the jurists?» «Fine.» «Has the book *al-Iḥyā’* reached them?» «Yes.» «And what do they say about it?» The man was silent and ashamed. [Al-Ghazālī] insisted that he tell him what had happened; he hung his head and told him of the burning of the book and what had happened. Al-Ghazālī’s face changed and

<sup>62</sup> *Al-Ḥulal al-Mawshiyya*, translated A. Huici Miranda, Tetuán, 1951, 125-125. The part of Ibn Šāḥib al-Šalā’s history this was taken from is lost, but the story appears in *al-Bayān al-Mughrib* of Ibn ‘Idhārī and *Naẓm al-Jumān* of Ibn Qaṭṭān.

he extended his hands to call upon God and his students said «Amen» to his words. He said: «Oh God, destroy their kingdom as they destroyed my book and end their empire as they burned it.» Then Abū 'Abd Allāh b. Tūmart from the Sūs called al-Mahdī, said to him, «Oh imam! Ask God to put it in my hands!» but he paid no attention to him. Days after that another sheikh of the same type came to the meeting and Abū Ḥāmid asked him and he answered the same as before. He made the same invocation as the other time and the Mahdī said to him: «By my hand if God wills.» He said: «Oh God let it happen by his hand.» God answered his prayer and Abū 'Abd Allāh b. Tūmart left Baghdad; he went back to the Maghrib and found out that the prayer of the sheikh [al-Ghazālī] would not be unheard and there happened to him what we will recount.

Suppose the first burning of the *Iḥyā'* to have occurred in 500, this story has no feature that suggests the exaggeration of the story teller. Because of al-Ghazālī's well-known association with Baghdad this setting might have taken the place of Alexandria as the story was told. It might well have been Moroccans as well as Andalusians who gave al-Ghazālī the news about the burning of the book, which took place also in the cities of North Africa controlled by the Almoravids. We know that al-Ghazālī learned of this public event, which would have made him extremely angry, especially in view of the *fatwā* and his previous hopes with regard to the Almoravids, along with the cumulative effect of his other disappointments: the murder of his protector in Nishapur, the unsatisfactory political situation in Baghdad and Damascus etc. Ibn Tūmart, generously endowed with the «combative stubbornness» said to be typical of the Berber temperament,<sup>63</sup> could have made the same fearless and immediate step into action at that point, as on other occasions. The only thing left to doubt is the possibility of Ibn Tūmart's coinciding with al-Ghazālī in the same place after he had learned the news, which could have been possible in Alexandria in 500 rather than Baghdad although it would be extremely difficult to discount the possibility that they might have seen each other in Bagdad as well.

Some writers<sup>64</sup> have suggested that there was a great difference between Ibn Tūmart and al-Ghazālī with respect to doctrine. Setting aside mahdism

<sup>63</sup> «Entrettement combatif» according to M. Ghazi, «Evolution de la sensibilité andalouse», *Etudes d'orientalisme dédiées à la mémoire d'E. Lévi-Provençal*, Paris, 1962, vol. II, p. 532.

<sup>64</sup> For example Huici Miranda says: «[The Mahdī] who never saw al-Ghazālī, and who differed so much from his spirituality is presented as a fervent disciple of his.», from «La leyenda y la historia en los orígenes del imperio almohade» in *Historia política del imperio almohade*, vol. II, p. 584. In vol. I, p. 30. Huici says «It is evident that Ibn Tūmart did not follow in the least thing the orientation that al-Ghazālī offered to his disciples». Huici also denies Ibn Tūmart's evident mystical experience, *Historia política*, vol. I, p. 31. In the same

and magic<sup>65</sup> which can be considered modes of political communication within a traditional Berber milieu, the kind of reforms Ibn Tūmart advocated on the juridical plane, his attitude towards sufism, his abstract theology and his interest in reforming mores are very much characteristics that he shared with al-Ghazālī.<sup>66</sup>

Far more important than the question of whether the interview between Ibn Tūmart and al-Ghazālī took place once, twice, or not at all, is this constellation of ideas represented by al-Ghazālī with which the Almohads were clearly associated. The consideration of the evidence of Ibn Tūmart's written legacy reveals that the major elements: rational theology, religious reform and sufism were principles he shared with al-Ghazālī, while the opposition of the conservatives among the Andalusian Malikites to al-Ghazālī and to each of these three common elements is independently attested in numerous documents of which a final example is the letter sent by the last Almoravid ruler, Tāshufīn b. 'Alī b. Yūsuf, to all his judges and officials in Valencia in 538 /1143 just before the definitive eclipse of the Almoravid rule and years after the death of Ibn Tūmart. The letter gives compelling evidence that, in the minds of the Almoravid ruling group, the Almohads were doctrinally associated with al-Ghazālī.

At this late stage in the conflict, the Almoravids seem to be concerned about the reform of justice which the Almohads were urging. The concern for equal treatment of the subjects is noticeable. In paragraph three, «on justice and equity», the letter cautions about officials abusing their positions.<sup>67</sup>

Justice encourages subjects to good works, while tyranny enrages them, and the lack of equity in treatment divides them and drives them to despair. Thus no government office should be given to anyone who does not enjoy good fame or who is not concerned for the good of the public. And if there be

vein, Goldziher, *Le litre*, introduction, p. 82. This seems typical of the tendency to argue *a silentio* in such a way that if something is not mentioned in a written text which has survived to be read by the writer, then it doesn't exist or did not happen. This can be corrected only by some familiarity with what is customary in the milieu. On the evidence for mystical experience Fletcher, M., «The Almohad Tawhīd: Theology which relies on logic», *Numen* (The Journal for the International Association for the History of Religions), XXXVIII (1991), 110-127.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Fletcher, M., «Al-Andalus and North Africa in the Almohad Ideology», in *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*, Leiden, New York, Köln, 1992, 235-258.

<sup>66</sup> For example, on the question of reforming mores, al-Ghazālī was concerned like Ibn Tūmart with both city and country since he notes that the religious law is ignored not only in cities but also even more in the villages and country particularly among the bedouin Arabs, Kurds and Turkomans: Laoust, *La Politique d'al-Ghazālī*, p. 131.

<sup>67</sup> Published with commentary by Darío Cabanelas, «Notas para la historia de Algazel en España», *Al-Andalus*, XVII (1952), 223-232.

one who behaves in a dubious manner, let him be discharged and punished instantly, loyally fulfilling what we order here.

The implied censure of the conduct of Almoravid judges and government officials on the part of the Almoravid prince himself, echoes both Ibn Tūmart's criticisms and the admonitions of the earlier Almoravid ruler 'Alī Ibn Yūsuf whose letter written from Marrākes̄h twenty eight years before in the year 510 goes over the same points:<sup>68</sup>

Any of your functionaries making excessive demands or changing accepted practice or justice, or unjustly taking a dirhem for himself, you should dismiss from office, punish corporally, and make give back what he has taken by fooling his people and make his punishment an example to dissuade others from doing the same as he, God willing.

In the 538/1143 letter by Tāshufīn b. 'Alī b. Yūsuf, paragraph five on «heretical books», contains a special anathema directed against al-Ghazālī:

When you come across a heretical book or a person inciting to heresy, be wary of them, and especially (God grant you success!) of the books of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī. Track them down and let their memory be erased through uninterrupted burning; investigate about them and question under oath those suspected of hiding them.

The Almoravid attitude towards al-Ghazālī has remained implacably inimical for forty years. The letter proves that the polarization over al-Ghazālī's ideology, which started with the Cadi Ibn Ḥamdīn and Abū Bakr Ibn al-'Arabī in about 500, has persisted to the very end of the conflict, suggesting that the ideology associated with al-Ghazālī continued throughout this period to present itself in learned circles as Almohad.

In conclusion, it is clear that by the time Ibn Tūmart returned from his student's journey to the East in 514, political contacts had already been made and issues defined in the incipient ideological conflict in al-Andalus. If in Morocco the conflictive issue was tribal friction and oppression, which Ibn Tūmart immediately channeled into his religious reform; in al-Andalus, conflicts among many selfish power-seekers were dividing the Muslim community in the same sort of chaos which had characterized the taifa period. The urban jurists who had engineered the overthrow of the party kings and their advisors in the name of Yūsuf the Almoravid, had already

<sup>68</sup> Ibn 'Idhārī, *Al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, Huici transl., Valencia, 1963, pp. 149-150.

rebelled against the Almoravids before the Almohad intervention in the peninsula. The proponents of the new ideology, epitomized by Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī were the sufis and the educated class of the period of the taifa kings, and their champion was al-Ghazālī, hence they could challenge the jurists on their own ground, namely, from within the institution of the ruling *ulamāʾ*; since al-Ghazālī was at once a jurist, a member of the educational elite and a sufi. In the course of the long struggle, the new ideology became Almohad ideology. After the installation of the Almohad dynasty in al-Andalus, al-Ghazālī's philosophical-analytical mentality and mystical inclination find varied parallels in the works of Almohad intellectuals like Ibn Rushd, Ibn Ṭufayl and Muhyī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī.

The relationship of al-Ghazālī and Ibn Tūmart can not be dismissed. We have tried to show how and why it has reason to be historical fact. In spite of their different backgrounds, they held common attitudes towards religious reform, mysticism and philosophical theology. But even if their meeting were to be considered a myth, and one were to explain their parallel ideas through their common participation in the intellectual world of Baghdad, it remains the founding myth of the Almohad political system, linking Spain to North Africa through a common ideology accepting: 1) Sufism, 2) theology based upon rational principles and 3) judicial reform.

### ABSTRACT

A joint political project between al-Ghazālī and his Andalusian pupil, Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī concerning the government of Spain can be uncovered from the documentary evidence and some reasoning about the chronology. The idea was apparently to gain a foothold for al-Ghazālī with the Almoravid ruler Yūsuf Ibn Tāshufin.

Our conclusions about the existence of a political project are supported by documents which have been available for some time: the *fatwā* al-Ghazālī wrote in support of Yūsuf, the letter he wrote to Yūsuf praising Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī and the letter he obtained from the caliph, all of which can be compared with al-Turtushī's letter to Yūsuf on the same subjects. The connecting idea is that this is part of a political project which would rely on a power base in the peninsula, most notably the Sufi militants and the previous ruling elite of the Taifa kings (Ibn ʿArabī's father had served Al-Muʿtamid, Prince of Seville). Al-Ghazālī's writings provide an ideological cement for this political alliance in that they praise sufism and criticize *taqlīd*, which was the standard approach to law used by the jurists who staffed the Almoravid hierarchy. Because al-Ghazālī's discourse is far above the intellectual level of the ordinary jurist, either because they provided no immediate profit or because of the practical difficulty for simple people to get books and teachers on these subjects. Hence al-Ghazālī's discourse remains the property of an intellectual elite which is at the same time a social and economic elite, fluent in literary Classical Arabic and dis-



tilling the intellectual gains of many generations of educated Andalusians. To confront this group, the Almoravid jurists represented the urban middle class and could arouse the urban mob in their favor. Motivated by fear that the combination of Ibn al-ʿArabī and al-Ghazālī could replace him in power, the most prominent among them, Ibn Ḥamdīn of Córdoba, was able to orchestrate the official burning of Al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyāʾ* throughout the realm. Thus we find that the conflict between these two groups was well defined even before Almohad rebellion in North Africa provided the intellectual elite a military champion. The intellectual elite in turn provided the North African Almohads with administrators and an ideology. Al-Ghazālī was identified as an enemy of the Almoravid regime even before Ibn Tūmart, the founder of the Almohad movement, returned from the East to launch his rebellion against the Almoravids from the Atlas mountains.

We propose some changes in the previous picture of Al-Ghazālī's whereabouts at different times. Scholars have already accepted a basic modification of the idea that he left Baghdad definitively after he stopped giving his lectures to huge audiences at the Nizāmiyya school because they noticed that Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī says he was tutored by al-Ghazālī for two years in Baghdad after that period. Now we would like to draw attention to the fact that Ibn Khallikān says that Al-Ghazālī stayed in Alexandria, Egypt waiting for an answer from Yūsuf Ibn Tāshufīn. In the context of a shifting picture of the chronology of Al-Ghazālī's travels, the notion that Ibn Tūmart might have seen the famous scholar seems possible and even probable.

## RESUMEN

A través de la documentación conservada y de una reflexión sobre la cronología, es posible descubrir la existencia de un proyecto político de al-Gazālī y su discípulo andalusí, Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī, con el propósito de ganar para al-Gazālī el favor del príncipe almorávide Yūsuf b. Tāshufīn.

Los documentos que prueban la existencia de este proyecto se conocían desde hace algún tiempo: la *fatwā* que al-Gazālī escribió en apoyo de Yūsuf, la carta que le escribió en alabanza de Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī y la carta que obtuvo del califa, todo lo cual puede compararse con la carta de al-Ṭurṭūṣī a Yūsuf sobre los mismos asuntos. La idea que pone todo esto en conexión es que se trataba de un proyecto político con apoyo en la Península, sobre todo de los sufíes y de la elite de los reyes de Taifas (el padre de Ibn ʿArabī había servido a al-Muʿtamid de Sevilla). Los escritos de al-Gazālī suministraron una base ideológica a esta alianza política, puesto que alaban el sufismo y critican el *taqlīd*, la forma usual de interpretar la ley entre los juristas de la jerarquía almorávide. El discurso de al-Gazālī, muy por encima del nivel intelectual del jurista medio, se aceptó finalmente por la elite de los periodos califal y taifa que tenía interés en las ciencias naturales, la filosofía griega y la lógica. Estos temas eran innacesibles para el jurista medio, bien porque no procuraban un provecho inmediato, bien por la dificultad práctica de encontrar libros y profesores expertos en ellos. Por tanto, fue una elite intelectual (también social y económica) conocedora del árabe clásico y heredera de las adquisiciones intelectuales de muchas generaciones de andalusíes la que se apropió del discurso gazaliano. Frente a ese grupo, los juristas almorávides representaban a las clases medias urbanas y podían movilizar a su favor a

las masas urbanas. El más importante de esos juristas, Ibn Ḥamdīn de Córdoba, temeroso de que la combinación de Ibn al-ʿArabī y al-Gazālī le expulsara del poder, orquestó la quema oficial del *Ihyāʾ* de al-Gazālī por todo el país. Así es posible observar que el conflicto entre esos dos grupos estaba bien definido incluso antes de que la rebelión almohade en el Norte de África proporcionase a la elite intelectual un adalid militar. A cambio, esa elite suministró a los Almohades una ideología y una clase administrativa. Al-Gazālī fue identificado como un enemigo del régimen almorávide incluso antes de que Ibn Tūmart, el fundador del movimiento almohade, volviese de Oriente para lanzar su rebelión contra los almorávides desde el Atlas.

Proponemos algunos cambios en el panorama de las estancias de al-Gazālī en diferentes momentos. Se ha aceptado ya una modificación básica de la idea de que abandonó Bagdad definitivamente tras dejar de dar clases a gran número de personas en la Nizāmīya, al observarse que Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī afirma haber estudiado con él en Bagdad dos años después. Aquí querríamos llamar la atención sobre el hecho de que Ibn Jallikān dice que al-Gazālī estuvo en Alejandría esperando una respuesta de Yūsuf b. Tāšufīn. En el contexto de un panorama cambiante de la cronología de los viajes de al-Gazālī, la posibilidad de que Ibn Tūmart estuviera en contacto con él se convierte en una probabilidad.