Beiträge zur Islamischen Kunst und Archäologie

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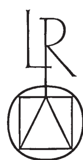

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Encompassing the Sacred in Islamic Art

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Lorenz Korn und Çiğdem İvren

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Abbildung Vorder- und Rückseite:
Mosque of Tinmal. Muqarnas vault in the southeast corner of the qibla nave.
See S. Calvo Capilla, Fig. 6.

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Peregrination and Ceremonial in the Almohad Mosque of Tinmal[1]

Susana Calvo Capilla

Abstract: The Tinmal mosque was built by the first Almohad caliph, ʿAbd al-Muʾmin, around 1148 next to the tomb of the *mahdī* Ibn Tūmart, the founder of the Almohad creed (d. 1130). The official pilgrimages (*ziyāra*) to Tinmal became important ideological actions of the Almohad caliphs. The religious significance and the unique architectural features of the Tinmal mosque (like the minaret's location) but also common features with other Almohad mosques (like the orientation of the *qibla*) can be best explained as related with the Almohad doctrine or ʿ*aqīda,* based on a return to the Prophet's model and to the origins of Islam. It is in this sense that the mosque and the tomb were used to legitimatize the Almohad caliphate as a new Hijaz. Two holy copies of the Qurʾan, one renowned as an ʿUthmān's *muṣḥaf* and another one of Ibn Tūmart, were relics preserved somewhere inside the mosque of Tinmal.

The mosque of Tinmal shares many characteristics with the family of Almohad mosques, such as the qibla's orientation to the south, the muqarnas domes, the decoration, as well as the wide central aisle in the axis of the qibla. But this monument shows also formal and functional features that distinguish it from others. Particularly interesting are the perfect measurements and proportions of the building, the positioning of the minaret above the mihrab, or the fact that it was an important centre for pilgrimage associated with the tomb of the founder of the Almohad movement. Hence, although it is obvious that the main reference for the Almohads was the art of the Umayyad caliphs of Cordoba, their mosques did include novel formal elements. This is why, to the Umayyad political legacy, which they claimed as part of their legitimisation process as caliphs of the Maghreb and al-Andalus, we should add the Almohad main ideological and religious principles, their doctrine or ʿ*aqida*. More specifically, this paper will mainly be focused on the following aspects: the motivation behind the pilgrimage, the architectural features, as well as the minaret and its relics.

The need to return Islam to the purity, austerity and virtues of Mohammed's time was used as a justification for the new Unitarian dogma 'revealed' by Ibn Tūmart, the *mahdī* or messiah. Accordingly, Ibn Tūmart's moral reform was based on a return to the Prophet's model, with the Qurʾan and the Sunna as the only sources for moral inspiration and law. His dogma was founded on the *tawḥīd* or the divine uniqueness and unity, which gave its name to its followers, *al-muwaḥḥidūn* or the Unitarians. As studied by Fletcher and Fromherz, Ibn Tūmart's teaching assigns an important role to reason in theology, so that reason becomes a source of religious doctrine along with the Qurʾan and the *hadith.*[2]

Ibn Khaldūn (1332–1406) says that Muhammad Ibn Tūmart (died ca. 1130), a Berber from the Atlas Mountains, was born "into a family of remarkable piety" and was very eager

1 This study is part of the National Plan for Scientific Research, Project I+D+I ref. HAR2013–45578-R (Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness). A first brief approach to this subject was published in Spanish (Calvo Capilla 2017).

2 Fletcher 1991, 110. She emphasizes this idea: "the Almohad notion of a God known by logical reasoning and definable in abstract philosophical language allows for the mediation of natural laws between God and creation, thereby legitimizing and even mandating the study of these laws through natural science and philosophy", Fletcher 1991, 122–123. For the role of the Andalusi scholars and the influence of the Iberian and the Berber contexts on the Almohad's doctrine and founding myths, see Fromherz 2010, 10–15, 178–180.

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to learn; he read the Qurʾan, visited the mosques and, before setting off for the East, spent some time in Cordoba, one of the great centres of learning. He set sail for Alexandria and, from there, undertook the pilgrimage to Mecca. He later travelled to Baghdad, where he acquired a high level of knowledge from the best wise men and became familiar with the teachings of al-Ghazzālī.[3] In 1121–22, on his return from Mecca, Ibn Tūmart retreated to the Atlas Mountains, first to his birthplace of Ījīlīz, and later to Tinmal, which became the Almohad capital until the conquest of Marrakesh in 1147.

In order to carry out his task of restoring the world to righteousness, Ibn Tūmart proclaimed himself *imām maʿṣūm* (impeccable imam) and *mahdī*, meaning Messiah or guide sent by God. As M. Fierro's studies show, the idea of an *imamate,* or messianic leader who would head the Muslim community, stemmed from the prophetic model and the first caliphate.[4] Almohad mahdism portrayed itself as the end of the ancient era and the start of the new, by returning to the text revealed to the Prophet and to the origins of Islam.[5] ʿAbd al-Muʾmin and his successors built the Almohad Empire on these ideological pillars.

In their writings, chroniclers and ideologues of the Almohad movement laid down clear analogies between the *mahdī* Ibn Tūmart and the prophet Muhammad, thus exalting the proclaimed return to the prophet's original teaching. In al-Baydaq's *Memories*, a rich source for information on the history of the beginnings of the Almohad movement, this parallel is clearly shown according to Bombrun.[6] Al-Baydaq, who was close to ʿAbd al-Muʾmin and therefore well-informed, explained how the return to Islam's roots was achieved. To this end, al-Baydaq makes constant associations between the figure of the *mahdī* and the prophet Muhammad, as well as between ʿAbd al-Muʾmin, his successor and first Almohad caliph, and the Rightly Guided Caliphs (rāshidūn). He also draws links between the actions of the Almohads and the 'founding acts' of Islam, such as between the *hijra* and Ibn Tūmart's journey from Marrakesh to Ījīlīz and on to Tinmal; between the prophet's proclamation and that of Ibn Tūmart as Messiah in Tinmal, with the oath of loyalty from their followers; between the preaching of both; between the unification of the tribes and constitution of the *umma* (community of believers); or between their death and the veneration-peregrination (*ziyāra*) to their tomb.[7] These analogies are also seen in the systematic use of the *taṣliya* and other religious prayers dedicated to the Prophet;[8] and in the hagiographies of the *mahdī*, which closely follow the model of the Life of the Prophet (*sīra*). In this reasoning, and this is important, Tinmal often appears as a new Mecca[9] or, better, a new Medina (*Madīnat al-Nabī*) (Fig. 1).

His successors thought of themselves as continuing Ibn Tūmart's mission, but at the same time, they had to justify the full adoption of the caliphal title (commander of the believers, *amīr al-muʾminīn)* and ensure that it became a dynastic title. ʿAbd al-Muʾmin acceded to power two years after the *mahdī*'s death in 1132, a fact which, for some researchers, certainly shows the difficulties he faced in succeeding Ibn Tūmart as head of the Unitarian movement.[10]

3 Ibn Khaldūn/de Slane 1856, 163–164; Buresi 2008a, 398–399.
4 Fierro 2000, 120–121; Fierro 2014, 129–138.
5 Fierro 2005, 903; Viguera 2005, 705–735.
6 Bombrun 2012, 93–108.
7 Buresi 2008a, 391–392.
8 On the dissemination and value of praying upon the Prophet, called *taṣliya,* see Ibn Bashkuwāl/la Puente 1995.
9 Buresi 2008a, 416.
10 Buresi 2008a, 401–408.

ʿAbd al-Muʾmin and his successors built the Almohad empire on strong ideological foundations: doctrinal reform and the messianic principles of the founder, the *mahdī* Ibn Tūmart.

Of the many propaganda tools that the Almohads used to exalt their cause, there are three that should be particularly highlighted. A series of ceremonies and ritual practices based on places, objects and people was established. In some way, they evoked the prophet's actions and the holy cities of Medina and Mecca: first, the regular pilgrimage to the Tinmal mosque and tomb of Ibn Tūmart, source of *baraka;*[11] second, the caliph's travelling ceremonial built around the *muṣḥaf* of the Qurʾan attributed to ʿUthmān, which was transferred from Cordoba to Tinmal. The third tool was the construction of mosques and the new orientation of their *qiblas*. Some of the basic principles of Almohad ideology were expressed in the mosques, such as the return to the purity of early Islam, defence of Sunni orthodoxy and demonstration of the uniqueness and unity of God. Religious buildings and ceremonial thus became the most effective means to spread Almohad dogma.

1. Ibn Tūmart's Tomb in Tinmal: Peregrinations (ziyārāt) *to the new Medina.*

Although Marrakesh replaced Tinmal as the empire's capital in 1147, the city kept its religious significance. Conquests were launched from Tinmal, and Ibn Tūmart was buried there in 1130. The tomb of the *mahdī* and *imām*, termed "impeccable" (*maʿṣūm*), quickly started to become worshipped as a source of *baraka* and Tinmal became a focal point for the pious to visit (*ziyāra*). This was also where the *bayʿa* or proclamation of the new caliphate was made, as happened with ʿAbd al-Muʾmin (1130–1163), and where the caliphal's necropolis was established.

Visits to Ibn Tūmart's tomb must have started early on, probably in the 1140s, according to items contained in the chronicles and documents from the Almohad chancellery. Worshipping at the *mahdī*'s tomb was obligatory, both for the caliph, ʿAbd al-Muʾmin,[12] and for the Maghreb *shaykh*s and the Andalusi envoys who declared obedience to the Almohad movement.[13] However, as Buresi states, a complex ceremonial was developed for official visits.[14] One of ʿAbd al-Muʾmin's first visits described in the texts occurred on 16 *Rabīʿ I* of 543–4/August 1148. In a letter to be read out in the great mosques in the empire, copied by Ibn al-Qaṭṭān in his work *Naẓm al-jumān*, it is said that ʿAbd al-Muʾmin went to Tinmal at that time to worship at the tomb and to "look after the construction of its revered mosque to enjoy its grace (*baraka*), and in the hope of increasing divine reward through each of its

11 For more on the *baraka* see Meri 1999, 46–69.

12 Documented visits by the first Caliph occurred in 543/1148, as we shall see below, in 549/1154–55, in 550/1155–56 and in 552/1157 (last one is perhaps the first with an official ceremony); Lévi-Provençal 1928, 195, 199.

13 In 535/1140–41, according to al-Baydaq, three Berber tribes supported the Almohad side and, once the troops had returned from the campaign, "le Calife convoqua les šaihs de l'armée et les envoya à Tinmallal (…) ils arrivèrent à Tinmallal et y firent une visite pieuse [au tombeau du *mahdī*]", Lévi-Provençal 1928, 141. On 544/11 June, 1149 a deputation from Cordoba arrived in Marrakesh with a message of submission and oath of allegiance (*bayʿa*); the three representatives ended their mission with a "visite pieuse (*ziyâra*) de rigueur" (probably to the *mahdī*'s tomb, according to Lévi-Provençal), Lévi-Provençal 1941, doc. 6, 26–27.

14 Lévi-Provençal 1941, doc. nº 17, 41–42; Buresi 2008a, 398–401.

bricks and for luck and success to multiply".[15] According to Khiara, this item would allow the hitherto accepted date of 548/1153–54, provided by the Marinid chronicler Ibn Abi Zarʿ, to be corrected.[16] Consequently, the Tinmal mosque was started shortly after the conquest of Marrakesh and at the same time as construction of the Kutubiyya.

On 8 Shawwāl 552/13 November 1157, ʿAbd al-Muʾmin sent another circular to all cities in his empire, to be read out in the great mosques, informing people of the peregrination that he and members of his court had made to Ījīlīz, birthplace of the *mahdī* Ibn Tūmart, and to Tinmal, where his tomb and mosque were located. The journey started in Marrakesh and was one of caliph ʿAbd al-Muʾmin's more important ideological and ceremonial acts to strengthen the imperial nature and religious dimension of the Almohad movement. As stated by Buresi, the *mahdī*'s successor needed to legitimize his ascent to power as caliph, as well as to institute a system of dynastic, non-tribal, succession. All the previous references show that the development of Tinmal as a pilgrimage centre was an official decision and had little to do with popular devotion.[17]

Almohad chroniclers record several visits to Tinmal during the ceremonial of the caliphate. It was considered a holy duty. They went there when a military campaign started, to obtain the *baraka* which would ensure victory, and on return from every successful expedition.[18] Another reason for visiting the tomb of the "impeccable imam" was the burial of the caliphs at the side of Ibn Tūmart, a ceremony to be followed by the proclamation (*bayʿa*) of the new sovereign. A central part in this scenario was played by the *muṣḥaf* or codex of the Qurʾan attributed to ʿUthmān, which had belonged to the Umayyads of al-Andalus and was kept in the mosque of Tinmal, as will be seen later.

According to Marín, the travelling ceremonial of the Almohad rulers was a way of showing their presence and linking their power, once more, to the 'perfect' caliphs. The ruler's constant movement (*ḥaraka*) became a source of prosperity and happiness, since *baraka* emanated from his virtue, and equality and justice from his power. In this way, the Almohad caliphs presented themselves as the heirs to the qualities of the Rightly Guided caliphs and compared themselves with ʿUmar (the first to bear the title of *amīr al-muʾminīn*) and with ʿUthmān.[19] In addition, the chroniclers praised the merits of peregrination within the caliph's ritual, as a reference to the prophetic model.[20]

Using this type of religious practice as an instrument of power, a tool for legitimitization and for *jihād*, was not new in Islam; similar events occurred in the area of Syria and Palestine from the end of the 11th century, with many points in common with the Mahgreb. Several authors have pointed out how important it was for the 'Sunni revival' and for facing the threat of the Crusades[21] that relics were transferred (for example, manuscripts of the Qurʾan), that

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15 This is followed by a paraphrase of verse Qurʾan 24: 36. Ibn al-Qaṭṭān 1990, 188–90; Kadhim 1992, 174–175.

16 Khiara/Tuil Leonetti 2014, 282; Sedra 2007, 208. I have used Khiara's translation. Ibn Abī Zarʿ/Huici 1964, 387–388.

17 Buresi 2008a, 407–408.

18 In 1170, for example, this is what Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf did, according to al-Baydaq: Lévi-Provençal 1928, trans. 217, ed. 128. Ibn Khaldūn/De Slane 1854–1856, IV, 82.

19 Marín 2005, 451–476. She also analysed the significance of journeys to control unrest (*miḥalla* or *ḥarka*); also Fierro 2009, 7.

20 Ferhat 2005, 1075–1090.

21 The Crusades made access to Jerusalem very difficult in the 12th century and gave rise to a search for alternatives by promoting other sites for peregrination (such as the tombs of the prophets in Syria) and

visits and worship at sanctuaries (*maqām*) were promoted, as well as mosques, *madrasa*s and *khānqāh*s built by the Zangid and Ayyubid rulers (1127–1181 and 1169–1260 respectively). These studies conclude that the development of peregrinations (*ziyārāt*) and worshipping relics and saints was not even remotely, marginally or popularly practised, but served the interests of power at various times and in different places.[22]

Nothing remains of the necropolis of the caliphs and the *mahdī'*s tomb, which disappeared centuries ago, after it was desecrated and looted in the Marinid period;[23] medieval writings never gave the exact location. Only two writers provide a brief mention of the *mahdī*'s tomb; al-Idrīsī said that there was "a well-tended building (*binā*ʾ) in a high dome shape (*qubba*) but without any decoration".[24] Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih used the word *rawḍa* to describe the tombs of Ibn Tūmart and ʿAbd al-Muʾmin, adding a series of adjectives (*mukarrama* or *muqaddasa, mu*ʿ*aẓẓama*) which are the same ones used to extol the Prophet's tomb in Medina.[25]

If the tombs stood next to the mosque, as some traditions maintain (like al-Zarhūnī[26]), there are facts that allow us to suppose that they probably were near the *qibla*. Actually, the only side where there was a wide flat area is precisely in front of the south façade, the *qibla* wall. There was not enough land for a necropolis on the north, west or eastern sides. In this regard, Andalusi biographical sources from the 11th century on often indicate that someone was buried "*bi-l-qibla*" or "*fī-l-qibla*", most likely referring to the outside of a mosque.[27] The custom of situating tombs behind the *qibla* was maintained in later years. The nearest example in time and space stands in the Marinid caliphs' necropolis in Rabat.[28] In Chella, the tombs and mausoleums of the Marinid dynasty were located to the south of the *qibla* wall of the site's mosque, where the minaret rose in the south-west corner. Moreover, a little further to the south is a spring with a garden called ʿ*Ayn Mdafa'* or ʿ*Ayn al-Janna* (Spring of Paradise).[29] In Tinmal, the *qibla* wall, with its fortress-like appearance, looms impressively over the spectacular view of the mosque from the south, which can be seen as the visitor, arriving from Marrakech, crosses a nearby stream and approaches from the south.

The reason for locating tombs behind the *qibla* has to be searched for in Medina and the Prophet's tomb. As shown in the texts studied by Halevi, at the beginnings of Islam "the principle of egalitarianism" was imposed on tombs so that none could be differentiated from

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the transfer of relics from frontier zones to safe places, like Damascus; Mouton 1993, 245–254; Jalabert 2001/2002, 13–42.

22 According to Talmon-Heller, in Syria of the Zangids and Ayyubids initiatives to sanctify tombs and relics and make them into sites for peregrination arose among both the governing and financial élites, the *ulema*s and the population at large. However, it was the governors who undertook to transfer relics; Talmon-Heller 2007b, 601–620; Khalek 2011; Tabbaa 1997.

23 Ibn ʿIdhārī/Huici 1953, 215.

24 Al-Idrīsī/Dozy and Goeje 1866, 64. Al-Idrīsī/Jaubert-Nef 1999, 138.

25 Ghouirgate 2014a, 436.

26 Al-Zarhuni/Justinard 1940, 20. This writer explains that when he visited the place, some people said that the tomb was in an underground chamber beneath the mosque and others that the *mahdī* was buried in his house, whose ruins lay to the east of the mosque.

27 This adheres to the prohibition on religious grounds of burials taking place inside a mosque; Calvo Capilla 2014, 236–239. Neither did excavations inside the Tinmal mosque find any tombs. See the opinion of Basset/Terrasse 1932, 25, n. 3.

28 Ettahiri/Tuil Leonetti 2014, 502–505. It is interesting to note that there were funeral towers behind the *qibla* of a mosque in Il-Khanid architecture (14th century) in Iran and Central Asia; mausolea are often behind the *qibla* in the Mamluk madrasas in Cairo. Blair/Bloom 1999, 36, 131–133.

29 Tamás Nagy 2014, 140; Basset and Levi-Provençal 1922.

another, and they "would end up uniformly lined up in neat rows in a line perpendicular to the *qibla* axis".[30] Lined up next to the Prophet's tomb were those of the first two *rāshidūn* caliphs, Abu Bakr and ʿUmar (remember that the first two Almohad caliphs were buried in Tinmal next to Ibn Tūmart). When al-Walīd (705–715) rebuilt the Medina mosque, ʿĀʾisha's bedroom, where Muhammad was buried, was constructed as a pentagon enclosure so that it was not in the same shape as the Kaʿba (square) and none of the its sides were parallel to the *qibla*. The aim of this disposition was to stop Muslims from praying to the tomb instead of towards Mecca. Nevertheless, pilgrims continued to pray facing the grave after the transformations, which is why an Andalusi writer like al-Turtūshī (d. 1126) included in his catalogue of reprehensible innovations (*bidʿa*) the fact that in Medina some of the faithful prayed towards the *rawḍa* and touched the Prophet's tomb.[31]

In this context, the allegorical allusion that appears in the previously mentioned description of the *ziyāra* of ʿAbd al-Muʾmin in 1157 is of particular value: "Between his blessed tomb and his revered mosque, a garden from the gardens of paradise...". This is a paraphrasing of a very well-known *ḥadīth* which, once again, establishes a clear link of Tinmal to Medina, and of Ibn Tūmart to the Prophet.[32]

Popular pilgrimages lasted for centuries longer than official ones. Ibn Khaldūn (14th century) states that, in his time, the same rite was held around the *mahdī's* tomb as was held in the Almohad era, with readings from the Qurʾan in the morning and evening.[33] A century later, Leo Africanus still talked about the devotion shown to Ibn Tūmart, someone whom he considered a heretic.[34] In the 18th century, al-Zarhūnī, a marabout of the Tasaft *zāwiya*, was impressed by his visit to the Tinmal sanctuary due to its austere majesty, although he insisted that it was facing the wrong way and that prayers said there were worthless, which is why it was going to be abandoned; he was also of the opinion that the memory of the Almohad *mahdī* awoke scant devotion.[35] In 1901, Edmond Doutté, the modern discoverer of the ruins of the building, still thought that the memory of the *imām al-mahdī* was alive in the region, to the point that the doors and *minbar* of the mosque, a holy place, had become objects of worship; Doutté does not mention the tomb, no longer in existence (Fig. 2).[36]

30 Halevi 2007, 187–190.

31 Halevi 2007, 191–196. Ṭurṭūshī/Fierro 1993, 341, nº 274. Ibn Jubayr explained that the shape of the *rawḍa* was unusual: "its four faces are different from the *qibla* so that no one can take any one of them for his *qibla*"; the *rawḍa* was built like this, he added: "for fear lest the faithful might make the *rawḍa* a mosque for ritual prayers." Ibn Jubayr/Maíllo 1988, 230.

32 This hadith is often used to refer to the disposition of the grave of the Prophet: e.g. Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihi's description of the sanctuary in the 10th century (Shafiʿ 1922, 434).

33 Ibn Khaldūn/De Slane 1854–1856, II, 261–62: "Le tombeau du Mehdi existe encore chez eux, aussi honoré, aussi révéré que jamais; on y récite le Coran matin et soir; les hommes continuent à s'y rendre, et, un corps de gardiens, conservant la même organisation et suivant le même cérémonial que du temps de l'empire almohade, reçoit les aumônes des pèlerins venus des pays éloignés et les introduit dans le sanctuaire avec un ordre et une solennité qui leur inspire un profond respect". Ibn al-Khatīb also visited Tinmal, *Jabal al-Tawḥīd,* and mentions its splendid *minbar* and the remains of a madrasa: Viguera 1994, 656.

34 León el Africano 2004, 176.

35 Montagne 1941, 85–97; Al-Zarhuni/Justinard 1940, 119–137; Sadki 1988–1989, 67–92.

36 Doutté/Clermont-Ganneau 1901, 333–336; Doutté 1914, 117–118: "Ce *menbar* est couvert de haillons, de chiffons, de touffes de laine, de poils de chèvres et de cheveux que viennent y attacher ceux qui demandent aux puissances surnaturelles la guérison de leur corps ou simplement la prospérité dc leurs troupeaux: on se comporte vis-à-vis du *menbar* comme vis-à-vis des marabouts et de tous les objets anciens auxquels on attribue, souvent sans autre raison que leur ancienneté même, un caractère sacré." Doutté

2. Architectural features of the mosque: Perfect geometry and proportions expressing the divine

The Tinmal mosque was built by ʿAbd al-Muʾmin from 543/1148 on, next to the tomb of Ibn Tūmart. It most certainly replaced an older, more modest one frequented by the *mahdī* himself. The mosque quickly turned out to be a sanctuary for official pilgrimages and, symbolically, Tinmal became a place comparable to Medina.

ʿAbd al-Muʾmin also built a mosque in Ījīlīz, Ibn Tūmart's birthplace and the starting point for the official peregrinations to Tinmal.[37] These were not the first mosques constructed by the first Almohad caliph. In the last 1140s he had also ordered the mosque of Tāza and the first Kutubiyya in Marrakesh, which was started after the city was conquered in 1147 (the second Kutubiyya was finished in 1160). The mosques and its ceremonial usage became the most effective means of propaganda for the Almohad dogma.

Studies by Ewert and Wisshak prior to the restoration, carried out between 1981 and 1984,[38] highlighted some of the unique features of the Tinmal mosque, such as what they called the "U-shaped ambulatory" – the end aisles are the same width as the transept parallel to the *qibla*, the axial nave being slightly wider (Fig. 3).[39] To emphasize the existence of the ambulatory, there were three *muqarnas* domes over the *qibla* transept at the intersection with the end aisles and the nave, as well as a complex and hierarchical arrangement of various types of arches (horse-shoe, lobed and *muqarnas*) on the approach to the *qibla* wall. Another important innovation was the proportional scheme of the plan and elevation of the building, based on an antique metrological system where the diagonal of the square measured 100 units, with the *miḥrāb* being the unit or module (a 64 cm cubit) (Fig. 5).[40] The projection of the *miḥrāb*, topped by the minaret, is included in the geometric plan, inside the perfect square it formed. Therefore, the original and unique solution of a *miḥrāb*-minaret tower plays an important part in the mathematical scheme of the building. This is an architectural design that, according to Ewert, represents the search for an ideal model by combining two perfect squares and two equilateral triangles.[41] These mathematical schemes do not appear in the other Almohad mosques.[42] In Tinmal, as stated by Terrasse and Basset, "savant et raffiné"[43] art is found.[44]

Lastly, Ewert emphasized another relevant innovation of the mosque of Tinmal, "the self-same geometric principles, indeed schemata, control both plan and elevation; the surface

adds that the small entrance space to the left of the *miḥrāb*, connected to one of the two doors on the west side of the minaret, had also become a shrine where lamps were placed, "cependant personne n'est enterré là."

37 See Van Staëvel, Ettahiri and Fili 2013.

38 Triki et al. 1990. Restoration started in the 1990s and finished in 1997; Prados 1997.

39 The middle or axial nave: 5.64 m wide; the end aisles: 4.82–4.85 m wide; the *qibla* transept: 4.92 m wide; the rest of the side aisles: between 3.85 and 3.95 m wide. The ambulatory was added here to the classic T-shaped layout i. e. wider axial nave and nave parallel to the *qibla*.

40 In the same way, we can see the use of dressed ashlar masonry in some of their buildings, like in the foundations of the Giralda of Seville, the minaret of the *jāmiʿ*; Tabales et al. 2002.

41 Ewert/Wisshak 1984, 80–128; 145–148; Ewert 1986, 122–127.

42 No material from Andalusi *spolia* was used in the Tinmal mosque, unlike other Almohad mosques. Umayyad capitals are located in the *miḥrāb* in the second Kutubiyya mosque and in the mosque of the Qasba, both in Marrakesh: Cressier 2014, 426–27. There are Roman altars and Roman, Visigothic and Umayyad capitals in the minaret of the great mosque of Seville.

43 Basset/Terrasse 1932, 27.

44 Ibid., 27.

decoration proves to be the final phase, directly readable by the beholder, of an all-embracing process. Thus, in Tinmal the monumental *alfiz* of the *miḥrāb* façade repeats the three-sided motif that characterizes the ground plan of the whole mosque" (Fig. 4).[45]

Some specialists have suggested that the ambulatory of Tinmal could be related to its status as a place of pilgrimage.[46] This hypothesis does not totally contradict Ewert's idea on the use of palatial architectural models.[47] Since the peregrinations led by the caliph were official, as we have seen, probably there was a specific caliph's ceremonial clearly alluding to the main peregrination to Mecca and Medina (*ḥajj*), as seen in the 1157 circular letter analysed by Buresi.[48] Unfortunately, sources do not provide more detailed descriptions of the visits and no inscriptions have survived.

In agreement with Tabbaa's approach to Middle Eastern architecture, Ewert attributed great symbolic and religious value to the *muqarnas* domes in Tinmal, in which stars are superimposed in seven levels, clearly alluding to the seven celestial spheres in Islamic eschatology (Figs. 5–6). As Ewert suggested, we should wonder whether a subliminal representation of perfect and unique divinity, as conceived in Ibn Tūmart rational thought, was contained not only in the domes but also in the mathematical scheme of the building. This rational character of Almohad creed probably should be taken into account to better understand the precise geometric conception of this mosque.[49] Its exact geometry seems to embody, in architectural form, the religious purity claimed by the *mahdī*. Going back to Ewert's theory on the use made by Islamic art of "encoded references" or copies of emblematic monuments,[50] in Tinmal the proportions, the U-shaped ambulatory, the decoration, or the *miḥrāb*-minaret tower seem to evoke or project a sacred model, probably relating to the pilgrimage sites in the Holy Cities, Mecca and Medina.

45 Ewert 1986, 146–148.

46 About the rite of the circumambulation (*ṭawāf*) of a sacred place, see Buhl 2000, 376, and Milwright 2016, 258–262.

47 "Islam knows no strict separation of mosque from palace architecture. In two random surveys, in the interior and on the exterior of the Almohad mosque, the possibilities of the interchangeability of elements are clear, in the interior in the scheme of a three-sided ambulatory, on the exterior in the motif of the dominating salient erected on the main axis of the façade. A comparison between high Almohad mosque architecture (Tinmal) and contemporary Norman, i.e. deeply Islam-influenced, palace building (Palermo, La Zisa) showed their similarity." Ewert 1986, 146.

48 Buresi 2008a, 416.

49 There is a passage in the *Book of Ibn Tūmart* entitled 'On the understanding of the manner of proving the knowledge of *tawḥīd'* in which *tawḥīd* is said to be known by reason or logic (*al-ʿaql*). For Fletcher "the Almohad *ʿaqīda* seem to have been edited and new passages written from 1183 when the [text] compilation was written down during the reign of the Almohad Caliph Yusuf (the patron of Averroes)", Fletcher 1991, 112–13. Fromherz disagrees with the idea that Ibn Tūmart doctrine was mainly written by the Andalusi philosophers like Ibn Rushd. "For Ibn Tūmart, *tawḥīd* was an expression of the synthesis of mystical and rational experience", says Fromherz 2010, 10–11; 156–161. For the rationality in Ibn Tūmart's *ʿaqīda*, see Forcada 2011, 315–319.

50 Ewert noticed that the arrangement of the reused capitals and colored shafts of the Great Mosque of Qayrawān (rebuilt in 836), make an octagonal shape in the middle of the prayer hall recreating the plan of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem; also the small mosque of Bāb al-Mardūm in Toledo (999–1000) recall the Great Mosque of Cordoba; Ewert 1986, 141–146. These architectural references, in my opinion, are something more than aesthetic coherence and had nothing to do with an esoteric or magical meaning but with the evocation of a sacred building, as first explained by Ewert.

3. The Orientation of Almohad qiblas

Another element that reinforces the evocation mentioned previously is the orientation of the mosque's *qibla* (Fig. 7). The correct orientation of the *qibla*s was a point of particular concern to the Almohads. The chronicles indicate that one of their first actions after conquering a city was to purify the great mosque (*jāmiʿ*) and, if it had been built by the Almoravids, abandon or reconstruct it, because they accused their predecessors of praying toward the east, as the Christians and Jews did.[51] The most famous case was the abandon or destruction of the *jāmiʿ* of ʿAlī b. Yūsuf in Marrakesh, although it was not the only one.[52] The obsession with orientation reached its peak when, within just ten years, a second mosque was built next to the first Kutubiyya to correct the direction of the *qibla* by five degrees to the south. Paradoxically, the new mosque pointed even farther away from the intended direction of Mecca (at c. 91 degrees in Marrakesh) and increased the supposedly wrong orientation.[53]

All Almohad mosques were oriented to the south, instead of the south-east or east.[54] They used a method based on observing the rise of the star Suhayl (Canopus), at a certain time of the year; this is the brightest star in the southern hemisphere, highly visible at latitudes below 25 degrees north. Therefore, Canopus is not visible from the Peninsula.[55] The rise of Canopus is at 158 degrees in Marrakesh, and around 157 degrees in Tinmal. The first Kutubiyya was oriented at 154 degrees, and the second at 159 degrees, almost exactly coinciding with the rise of Suhayl, and similarly in Tinmal, where the *qibla* is oriented at 157 degrees.[56]

But why did the Almohads, who had intellectuals well versed in mathematical astronomical calculation, and hence capable of orienting the *qibla* exactly,[57] prefer to use a traditional method of astronomy such as observation of the stars? Indeed, what the Almohads were doing by using the rise of Canopus as an indicator was to orient their mosques in the same way as the Kaʿba (and, consequently, align them with the mosques of Medina and Mecca); this means that their *qibla* did not look toward the Kaʿba, but were parallel to its minor axis.[58]

As shown by D. R. King, any believer would understand that, by looking to the south, as did the Prophet, or copying the orientation of the Kaʿba, a *qibla* could be oriented correctly. This is what happened in the Cordoba Mosque (60° S of E), which was oriented in the 8th century, before exact mathematical calculations were available. Thus, the axis defined by the

51 Rius 2000, 123–125, 148–151. Al-Baydaq: Lévi-Provençal 1928, 173–174.

52 Calvo Capilla 2014, 137–146.

53 Inaccuracies in the historiography when assessing the right or wrong orientation of the *qibla*s are highlighted by King 2004, 749–752.

54 Bonine 1990, 50–72. According to this author: "The Almohad period (mid-twelfth-thirteenth century) is particularly uniform, with almost all of the *qibla* orientations in the 150's range." For al-Andalus: Jiménez 1991 (particularly 196–198).

55 In Rius' opinion the fact that the star Suhayl was not visible in al-Andalus was considered by the Almohads to be a serious problem, and even Ibn Rušd includes the matter in one of his works on cosmology; Rius 2000, 241–243.

56 Tinmal is at c. 31 degrees north of the equator, meaning that Canopus can only be seen for two months of the year, very close to the horizon. Mecca lies at 22 degrees of latitude north, so Canopus can be seen there for 5 months of the year and rises almost 20 degrees above the horizon, making it more easily visible. I thank Azucena Hernández for her generous help with these facts.

57 For mathematical astronomy in the Almohad era, see Samsó 2001, 307–356.

58 King 2004, 753–755.

sunrise in the summer solstice and the sunset in the winter solstice was used as an indicator to fix the east-west axis of the building, which agrees with that of the Kaʿba.[59]

It is unlikely that the Almohads chose the orientation of their mosques only to imitate the mosque of Cordoba, or, as sometimes said, that they rejected mathematical astronomy for religious reasons. It seems more logical to think that the indicator owed more to a conscious choice motivated, yet again, by the wish of the *Unitarians* to return religion to the time of the Revelation. The *qibla*s of Tinmal and the Kutubiyya of Marrakesh enabled the Mahgribi Muslims to pray in the same direction as the Prophet and his Companions had; it was the best way to return to the Prophet's model.

4. The Umayyad muṣḥaf *in Tinmal*

After the official pilgrimage to the tomb of the *mahdī* as mentioned above, another event of great symbolic importance took place. One year later, about 558/1158 (although this date is not certain), sources indicate that the two sons of ʿAbd al-Muʾmin, who were governors of al-Andalus at the time, were in charge of taking a revered codex of the Qurʾan from the Cordoba mosque to Marrakesh and shortly after to Tinmal. This *muṣḥaf* was, according to sources, one of the copies attributed to the prophet's companion and third of the *rāshidūn* caliphs, ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān (d. 644). Arab writers do not agree on the true origin of the manuscript; some say it was one of those sent by ʿUthmān to the provinces,[60] while others state it contained pages from ʿUthmān's own Qurʾan, stained with his blood.[61]

The history of this Cordoban Qurʾan, attributed to ʿUthmān, has been analysed in four recently published articles. For Bennison and Buresi, ʿUthmān's *muṣḥaf* was probably the product of an *inventio*, a construction by ʿAbd al-Muʾmin, who wanted to use this symbol of Sunni Islam to lend legitimacy to the Almohad caliphate, by exhibiting a relic that dated back to the orthodox caliphs and that had belonged to the Umayyads. For Bennison, "the Umayyads place a Qurʾan of symbolic weight in the great mosque but there is little evidence to suggest that it had any direct function to play in caliphal ceremonial."[62]

However, sources carefully studied by Zadeh seem to confirm that the Qurʾan existed and had an important role in the Cordoba of the Umayyads, although the literary and symbolic construction of the relic and its worship by the people arose in the Almohad era. The ceremonial described by al-Idrīsī (before 1154) most likely corresponds to the one developed during

59 "At the latitude of Mecca the axis defined by the rising of Canopus just happens to be perpendicular to the axis defined by the summer sunrise / winter sunset direction", and "for the latitude of Córdoba the major 'Canopus' axis of the Great Mosque can still be defined by the perpendicular solstitial minor axis". To this King adds that the original orientation of the Great Mosque also coincides with the Roman street plan of the Colonia Patricia, where "the *cardo* is solstitially aligned", see King 2018–19, 56; King 2004, 753; King 1995, 253–274. This knowledge contained in the Holy Geography manuals helped believers to find the right direction in which to pray. Rius 2000, 201–210, 104–122.

60 Al-Bukhārī (d. 870) credits ʿUthmān with the task of establishing the canonical text of the Qurʾan and the order to make several copies to be sent to the main capital cities in the caliphate, Prémare 2010, 70–77.

61 Most sources say that ʿUthmān read sura 2:137, also 7:77. Dessus Lamare 1938, 551–575. Déroche 2014; Déroche 1992. These large codices were deposited in mosques or given to governors. When the authors talk about copies (*maṣāḥif* or *ṣuḥuf*) of the Qurʾan in the early centuries of Islam, they are mostly not referring to codices with the full text, but to parts of it or fascicles, which made it easier to transport and read. Al-Azmeh 2014, 460–64. Déroche 2004. Cortese 2010, 41–65.

62 Bennison 2007, 141, 131–154. Buresi 2010, note 14, 11. Buresi 2008b.

the 12th century.[63] However, previous sources indicate that the Cordoban *muṣḥaf*, whatever its origin, had been used by the caliphs of al-Andalus not only in the Great Mosque of Cordoba but also as an apotropaic object in battles against the infidels.[64]

The ritual use of the sacred book is documented in the Abbasid caliphate from an early date. To the known sources about the ceremonial use of the ʿUthmānic *muṣḥaf* in Bagdad in the 10th century, should be added the descriptions in the Prophet's Mosque in Medina gathered by George. According to Ibn Zabāla (2nd/8th century), who heard it from his teacher Mālik ibn Anas (d. 179/796), the caliph al-Mahdī sent precious Qurʾans (*maṣāḥif*) to Medina, that were placed in a box (*ṣundūq*) near the Prophet's tomb; "pulpits (*manābir*) were installed on which they would be read." Another early writer, Ibn Shabba (d. 262/878), added that the older Qurʾan of al-Ḥajjāj was then kept in a box by the *minbar*; according to Ibn Zabāla that box was "opened on Friday and Thursday, and people would recite from it for the morning prayer."[65]

As Zadeh says, "While the traffic of relics has often been a commerce of forgeries, the issue of authenticity, for our purposes, is not as significant as the value attached to the codex itself."[66] I also agree with him in that, in the case of the Cordoban *muṣḥaf*, it might have been not an *inventio* but a *translatio,* as happened in the *Mashriq*. Copies of the so-called Qurʾan of ʿUthmān reappeared in the 11th and 12th centuries in frontier areas or zones of conflict and were transferred when faced with the risk of falling into the hands of the infidel, as occurred in Cordoba.[67]

The Almohad caliphs were highly reverent of the codex, according to the chroniclers.[68] It was not just another text from the Revelation, it was a Qurʾan copied in the Medina canon or tradition and linked to a caliph of the *rāshidūn*. Therefore, their intention of taking it to Marrakesh and then to Tinmal, the cradle of the movement, was to establish a new link between their actions and doctrine, and Muḥammad and Medina. In Buresi's opinion, at the same time, with this act of assertiveness, ʿAbd al-Muʾmin showed his distancing from Shiism and his support for Sunni orthodoxy.[69]

The *muṣḥaf* was embellished with covers in goldwork, precious stones and enamels, and had a luxurious brocade case (*kiswa*, *dībāj*). An inlaid desk (*maḥmil*) was ordered to be made and a coffer (*tābūt*) to protect it during journeys. It was placed together with Ibn Tūmart's *muṣḥaf* on a lectern which rose automatically from a mechanical cabinet built *ad hoc* to house them. In Marrakesh, the Qurʾan was kept in the first Kutubiyya mosque, perhaps in one of the chambers opened in the *qibla* wall on either side of the *miḥrāb*.[70] Later, when the Qurʾan was taken from Marrakesh to the Tinmal mosque in 1158, al-Maqqarī adds that a chamber

63 Al-Idrisi/Dessus Lamare 1949, 8–11.

64 Zadeh 2008, 323–333. Zadeh 2009, 443–445, 466. Al-Azmeh 2014, 460–461. See more details in Calvo 2017, 608–616.

65 George 2009, 98–101. For George, "these Qur'ans appear to have been part of an orchestration of mosque ritual which used architectural ornament, particularly mosaic, as a foil"; an idea that I defended for the Mosque of Cordoba in Calvo Capilla 2008, 98–99. About the ceremonial around an ʿUthmānī Qurʾan in Bagdad, see Sourdel l960, 135–136, note 103. On the ceremonial developed in the 11th–12th centuries around the ʿUthmānic *muṣḥaf* kept in the Damascus mosque, see Mouton 1993, 246–247 and Ibn Jubayr/Maíllo 1988, 313.

66 Zadeh 2008, 345.

67 Ibid., 344–346.

68 Buresi, 2008b, 273–280.

69 Buresi 2010, 407–408.

70 Meunié/Terrasse/Deverdun 1952, 41, 47.

(*ghurfa*) was made in the top part of the mosque to hold the piece of furniture (*ṣanaʿa lahu al-ghurfa fī aʿlī-hi*).[71]

Almohad sources give a very precise and detailed description of the ritual held around the *muṣḥaf* of ʿUthmān in the context of *jihād*, given that, together with the Qurʾan that had belonged to Ibn Tūmart, it accompanied the caliph and his troops when they went on a military campaign.[72] In the description of the public appearance of the two manuscripts, Almohad writers mention a whole series of symbols rooted in the origins of Islam, such as the red palanquin (*qubba, bayt, maḥmal, haudaj, killa*) on the back of a camel. Therefore, it is difficult to establish whether all the paraphernalia displayed in Almohad processions was real, or whether some aspects of these accounts were made up by the chroniclers to provide reminiscent parallels with early Islam.[73]

5. The Qurʾan, the Minaret and the Tomb

Therefore, in the light of the above, it should be asked: Where was the Qurʾan placed in the Tinmal mosque, what was the "chamber" mentioned by al-Maqqari? Why was the tower-minaret built over the *miḥrāb*? Did the pilgrimages to Ibn Tūmart's tomb and the ceremonial nature of the place have an impact on the architectural design of the building?

Two doors open on either side of the *miḥrāb* niche of Tinmal mosque. The one on the rights leads to the rectangular chamber housing the *minbar* or pulpit (one pulpit survived up to the early 20th century), and the one on the left-hand provides access to the *maqṣūra* from the outside, through the tower (Fig. 4). The mosque lacks a 'treasure chamber' like the one in the Cordoba mosque, and so one wonders where the cabinet with the two holy Qurʾans was, and where books donated to the mosque library[74] and the other liturgical objects were kept. Its library was still mentioned in the 18th century by al-Zarhūnī.[75]

As already stated, the minaret of the Tinmal mosque was unusual in that it was built in the wall of the *qibla*, above the *miḥrāb*. The tower has two doors on the east side and two large windows on the south face. It has already been said that one of the doors leads to the mosque, while the second provides access to the steps leading to the minaret terrace. The two windows are similar, horse-shoe arches enclosed by rectangular frames (*alfiz*); The lower one lights the staircase, while the upper one lights an internal room (restored in the last conservation

71 Dessus-Lamare 1938, 556–560. Al-Maqqarī used sources like the books of Ibn Bashkuwāl (m. 1183), Ibn Marzūq (m. 1379), and others.

72 Molina 2006, 56; Ibn Simāk [14th cent.]/Huici 1952, 182–83 (trans.) and 126–28 (ed.); al-Marrākushī [m. 1224]/Huici 1955, 206–207 (trans.) and 182 (ed.); Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāh [d. after 1198] 1987, 350–51; Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāh /Huici 1969, 178–180; Ibn Abī Zarʿ [d. ca. 1340]/Huici 1964, II, 433; Ghouirgate 2014b, 167.

73 Lammens 1920, 58–59.

74 We know at least one of these manuscripts deposited in the Tinmal mosque as *waqf* in 1251: one of the two parts (*juzʾ*) of the Qurʾan made in Seville in 1234–35 (it contains the founding act) from the Ben Yusuf library in Marrakesh (inv. 429). Paper, 35cm (high) by 22cm (wide). See Lintz/Déléry/Tuil 2014, 359.

75 "…Qui voit le travail de construction de la mosquée antique qui est à Tinmal, et les livres de la bibliothèque qui a été constitué pour l'enseignement des sciences et la lecture des hadiths, c'est pour lui une manifestation de ce que j'ai dit. J'ai vu une copie de la *Muwata* de l'imam Malik, d'une belle main royale dont le lexique était en lettres d'or…"; al-Zarhuni/Justinard 1940, 24–25; Ferhat 2000.

intervention).[76] Entry to the latter is through a half-round arch opening from the last section of the staircase. There is a wooden lintel on the inner face of the arch, indicating the probable presence of a door. The room consists of two areas arranged in a T-shape; a long one running parallel to the south wall, above the staircase, and the other, almost square, is located in the centre of the tower (Figs. 8–9).[77]

On the other hand, the main Almohad minarets built after Tinmal included an innovation: the inner core had a series of superimposed rooms with vaulted or domed ceilings (i. e. *qubbas*). They can be seen in the Kutubiyya of Marrakech (six rooms), the Giralda of Sevilla (seven chambers) (Fig. 10) and in the great mosque of Rabat (six rooms).[78] As Terrasse and Basset stated on the Kutubiyya chambers, these "sont couvertes de voûtes et coupoles qui révèlent un double souci de richesse et de variété décorative".[79] The rooms are square (cruciform in some cases) and have similar dimensions of approximately 3.5 m width.[80] Some of these rooms are quite well-lit, as the door is opposite one of the openings in the façade. The utility of these chambers is not very clear, but it seems obvious to me that they did not have only a structural purpose, but must have had several uses.[81]

My suggestion is that they may have been used as places for spiritual retreat, accommodation or study.[82] This use of minarets has been documented in the Middle East in the same era. Ibn Jubayr says in his *Riḥla* (1183–1185) that the west minaret of the Umayyad Mosque of Damascus "encloses vast rooms and spacious cells (*zawāyā*) which all have locks and where strangers (*ghurabāʾ*), respectable people, live".[83] Ibn Jubayr adds that the highest room in the minaret was a place for the spiritual retreat of al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) and that when he visited Damascus there was a *faqīh* and ascetic from Alcalá la Real staying there.[84] Talmon-Heller includes several items on Sufis and ascetics who spent long periods of retreat at the top of

76 Triki et al. 1990, 237; Doutté 1914, fig. 35, 118–119; Ewert/Wisshak 1984, Beilage 19.

77 Ewert/Wisshak 1984, 17–18. The first room mentioned is 0.95 cm wide, 5.6 m long and 4m high. The second room, the entrance, is 1.10 m wide, 1.4 m long and 3.25 high.

78 The ramp is built around this core. The minarets of the Taza mosque and Qasba Mosque in Marrakesh are smaller and lack the chambers. Basset/Terrasse 1932, 172–182; Caillé 1954, 94–101, 150 (pl. 38–40, fig. 17–18, 42); Golvin 1979, 275–293; Jiménez 1996 and 2000.

79 Basset/Terrasse 1932, 174.

80 Almagro 2011, 46–47, figs. 1–3.

81 The presence of chambers in the central core can usually be explained as a way of helping construction, given the dimensions of Almohad towers. However, the layout of storeys or internal chambers in the towers had already been seen in the Damascus mosque minarets, the minaret of the great mosque of Qayrawān in the mid-10th century, and the mosque of Qalʿat Banī Ḥammād (11th century). Often mentioned as parallels for this internal layout are the towers of Syrian churches (Hillenbrand 2000, 139–140) and the Alexandria lighthouse (Creswell 1926; El Sayed 1991, 151–153). For the origin and typology of minarets, also see Hillenbrand 2000, 129–142; and Bloom 2013, 168–177. We know of another two cases of internal chambers with unknown functions: one is in the ground floor of the San Sebastián minaret in Ronda, 13th century (Calvo Capilla 2014, 635–638); another one is in the southern minaret of the mosque of the caliph al-Ḥākim in Cairo, founded in 990–1010; this last room is between the staircase and the door open to the roof of the mosque, and for Behrens: "it may have been reserved for the use of the muezzin, but may equally have had a more esoteric purpose", without specifying what (Behrens-Abouseif 2010, 120–122, fig. 70–72); for Barrucand this was a small prayer room (Barrucand 2000, 158).

82 As I defended in my PhD thesis (2001) and Calvo Capilla 2014, 160–162.

83 Just like the Christian monks did three centuries before in one tower of the same Roman Damascene *temenos*. Khalek 2011, 47–55.

84 Ibn Jubayr/Maíllo 1988, 311. Al-Harawī (d. 611/1215) said that the western minaret of the great mosque of Damascus housed both al-Ghazālī and Ibn Tūmart, al-Harawī/Sourdel-Thomine 1957, 38–39. In his biography, al-Ghazālī mentions his retreat in the Damascus mosque; al-Ghazālī/Tornero 1989, 78.

minarets and in mosques, both appropriate places for study and contemplation. Minarets of mosques in cities famous for their holiness, such as Jerusalem, Mecca and Damascus, were very often chosen for that purpose.[85] According to al-Baydaq, Ibn Tūmart stayed in mosques on his way back to the Maghreb and stayed for a time in a room in the minaret of Ṭaryāna, a place described as "impregnable" (*maʿṣūm*).[86] Therefore, it is no surprise that ascetics and Sufis often acted as muezzins in the mosques, as stated in various biographies of the 11th–13th centuries.[87] It must also be remembered that the Almohads established a body of muezzins (*muʾadhdhinūn*) as separate category in their hierarchy.[88]

It was also common for the mosques to have a library (or *khizānat kutub*), such as the one mentioned by al-Zarhūnī in Tinmal, although this did not have a fixed location in the building. They were most often located next to the *miḥrāb*, although they could also be found in the courtyard galleries and above or next to one of its doors.[89] For example, we know that the rooms (*qubba*s) over both doors of the al-Aqṣā (Jerusalem) and al-Azhar (Cairo) mosques were used as a place of study and isolation.[90]

All this leads us to wonder if the reasons that made the architects of the Tinmal mosque put the minaret in the *qibla* wall were strictly mathematical or religious (forced by the *fuqahāʾ* who considered the minarets to be a reprehensible innovation) as suggested by Ewert and Bloom respectively, or else the pilgrimage ritual and the presence of Ibn Tūmart's tomb played a substantial role in the design of the architectural project. Was the tower designed to house the library and the two celebrated Qurʾans of Tinmal in its sacred and well-protected (*maʿṣūm*) high room over the *miḥrāb*? Did this chamber have another purpose relating to the muezzin, to the spiritual retreat and the ascetic practices near the grave of Ibn Tūmart or to the pilgrimage ceremonies around the *mahdī*'s tomb, which may have lain at the foot of the tower?

The orientation of the *qibla*, the "rational" proportions of the building, the Qurʾan of ʿUthmān kept there and the peregrination ritual around the nearby tomb of Ibn Tūmart, made the Tinmal mosque a unique building within Almohad religious architecture, carrying strong symbolism. Tinmal was not a 'funerary' or 'commemorative' mosque, but a shrine for pilgrimage within the religious and political context of the Almohad's caliphate. In some way, Tinmal harked back to the Holy Mosques, which enabled the Unitarians to return to the Prophet's model, through the *mahdī*, and to the times of the Rightly Guided Caliphs.

85 Talmon-Heller 2007, 111–113, 76–79. We also find inhabited chambers in the towers of the city walls and citadels: Aleppo: Ibn Jubayr/Maíllo 1988, 296; the mystic al-Shādhilī (d. 1258) in Alexandria, Ibn al-Sabbagh 1993, 27.

86 Ṭaryāna was the name of a district of Fes. Al-Baydaq, in Lévi-Provençal 1928, 63–64, 99.

87 Some of the people appear in: Lirola/Puerta 2004–2013: v. 1, nº 196, 638; v. 3, nº 577, 339; v. 3, nº 709, 710; v. 7, nº 1853, 637. For the practices of Sufis and ascetics see Arcas Campoy 2006, 37–48.

88 *Kitāb al-Ansāb fī maʿrifat al-aṣḥāb*, by an anonymous author: see in Lévi-Provençal 1928, 71–72; Hopkins 1954, 106–107; Calvo Capilla 2014, 136–137, 157–165. The muezzin at Tinmal stayed there as a guardian of the mausoleum (*ḍarīḥ*), according to Ghouirgate 2014a, 445–446.

89 Sibai 1987, 54–83; as for its location see: 84–87. Talmon-Heller 2007, 76. According to Terrasse, the rooms of the *muwaqqit* (astronomer and mosque official responsible for regulating the time and the direction of prayers) in the minaret, or near it, such as in the Taza mosque, appeared in the Maghreb in the 13th century (Terrasse 1943, 31), a similar date as that put forward by King 1996.

90 Sibai 1987, 87, 90. In the Taza and Marrakesh mosques, the libraries were behind the *qibla* wall: see Terrasse 1943, 24 and Golvin 1979, 256, note 18, respectively. For the type of books in the libraries of Moroccan mosques and their chance destiny see: La Veronne 1975, 57 (nº 77).

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Figs. 1. 4–7: Photo by the author. – Fig. 2: Doutté 1914, f. 35, pl. XVIII. – Fig. 3. 8: Ewert and Wisshak 1984, II nos. 1. 2. 19). – Fig. 9: Photo by Victor Rabasco. Fig. 10: Axonometric section by A. Jiménez.

Fig. 1: Mosque of Tinmal. General view from the south

Fig. 2: Mosque of Tinmal in 1914, as published by Doutté (1914, f. 35, pl. 18)

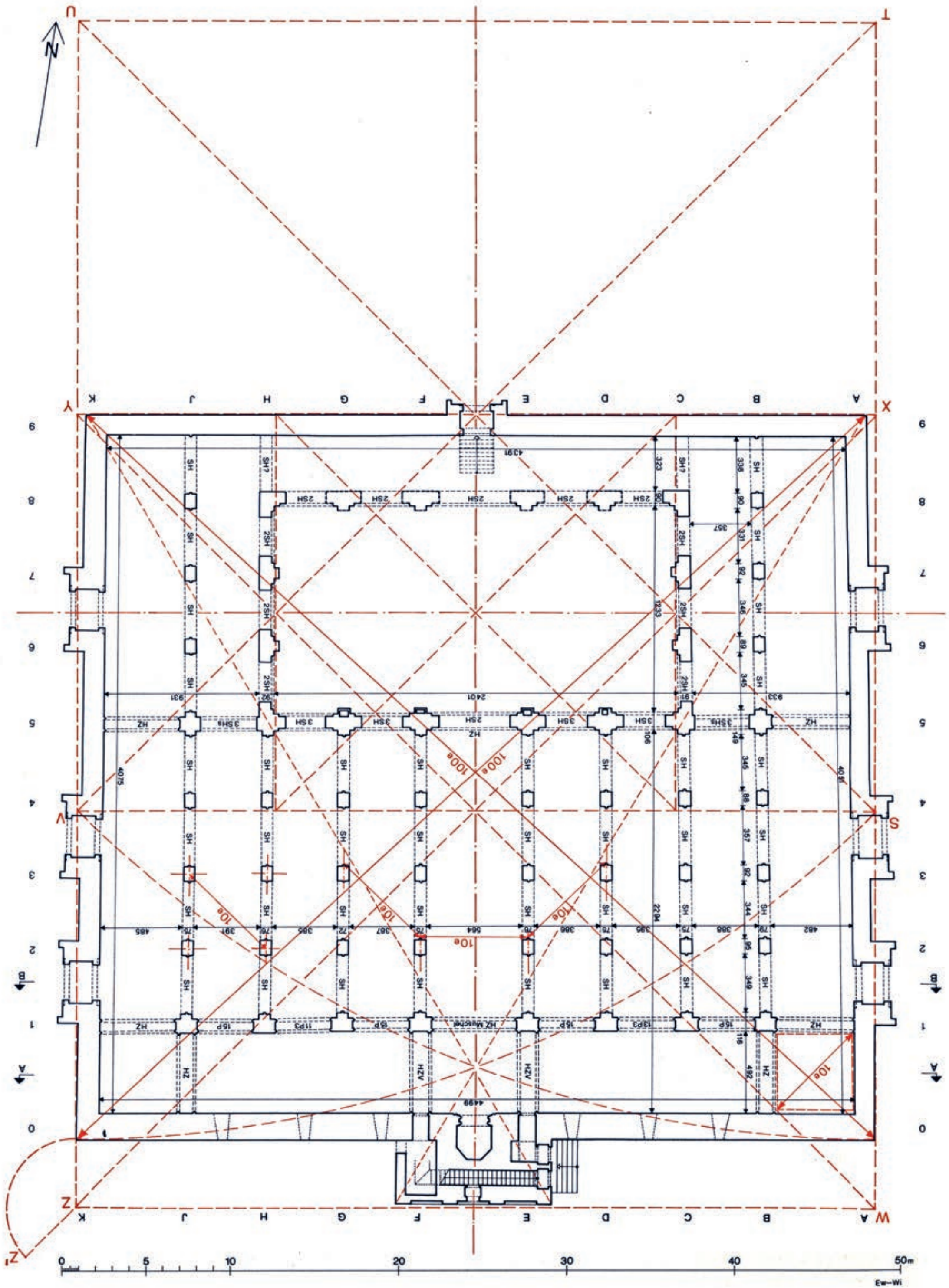

Fig. 3: Mosque of Tinmal. Plan with geometrical frames by Ewert-Wisshak (1984, vol. II fig. 2)

Fig. 4: Mosque of Tinmal. Mihrab façade

Fig. 5: Mosque of Tinmal. Muqarnas vault of the mihrab

Fig. 6: Mosque of Tinmal. Muqarnas vault in the southeastern corner of the qibla nave

Fig. 7: Mosque of Tinmal. Qibla wall and minaret from the south

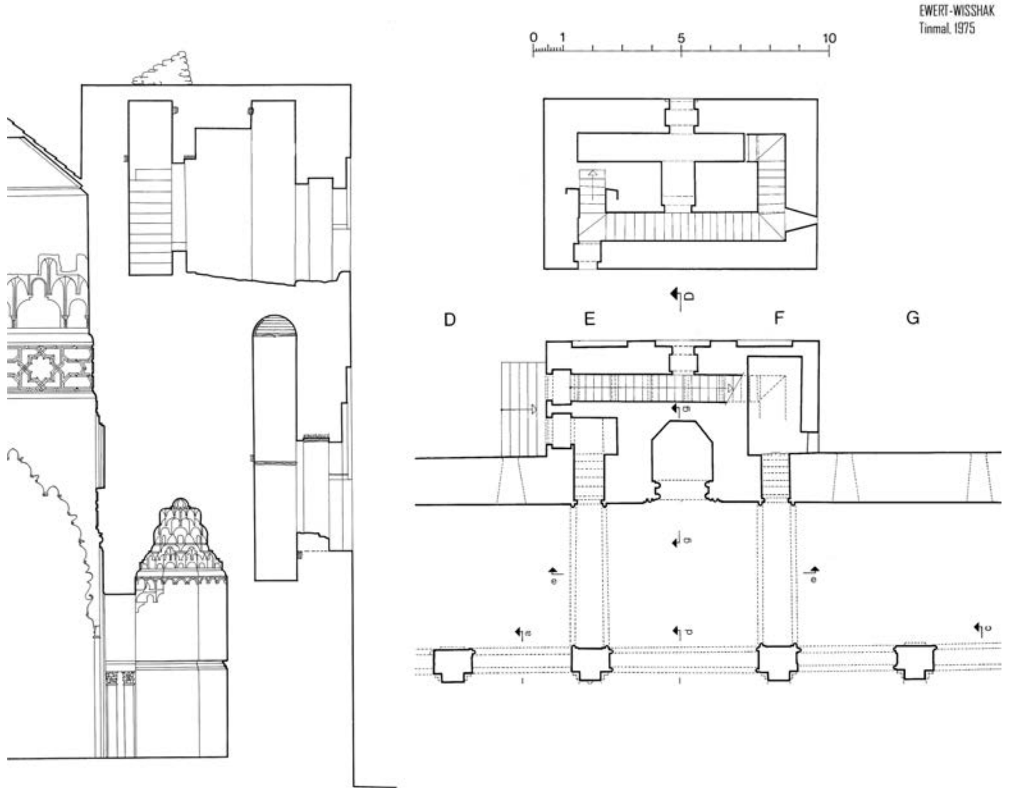

Fig. 8: Mosque of Tinmal. Section and plan of the minaret by Ewert-Wisshak (1984, vol. II, Fig. 1 and 19)

Fig. 9: Mosque of Tinmal. Entrance to the upper room in the minaret (Photo: Victor Rabasco)

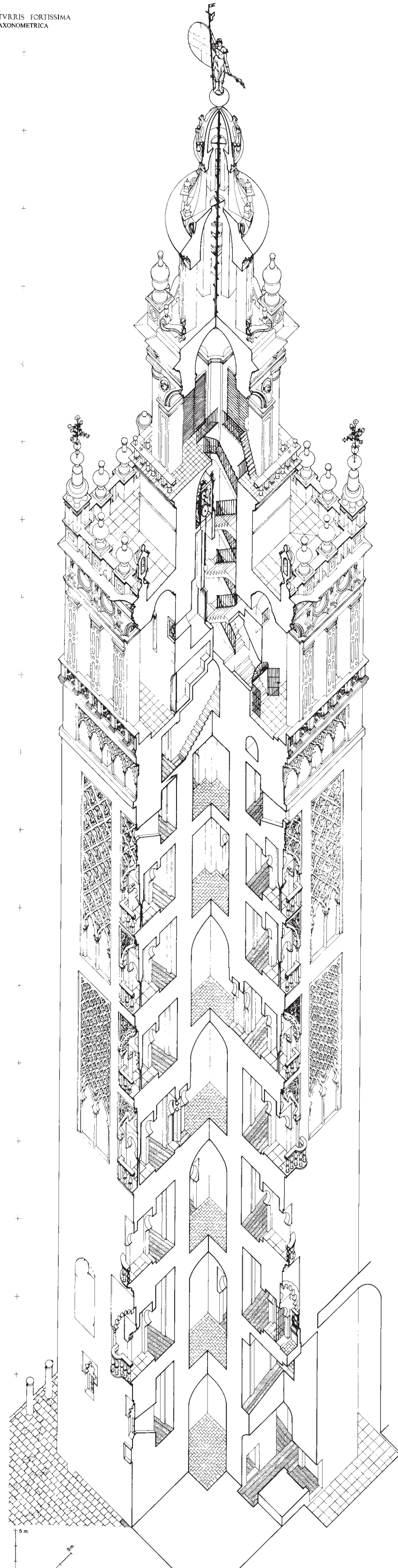

Fig. 10: Minaret of the Great mosque of Sevilla (1184–1198). Axonometric section by A. Jiménez