

ALMORAVIDS:
A complementary action between
Ibn-Yacin and Ibn-Tashfin (430-500AH/1038-1009AD)

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Abstrac:

This study explores how the Almoravid movement achieved unity in the Maghrib and al-Andalus through the complementary roles of ‘Abd Allāh ibn Yāsīn and Yūsuf ibn Tashfīn. While Ibn Yāsīn laid the ideological and spiritual foundations through his religious teaching, ribāṭ practices, and call to jihād, Ibn Tashfīn transformed these principles into political and military achievements, consolidating a powerful state. Drawing on medieval chronicles and modern scholarship, the paper employs a descriptive-analytical method to trace the evolution of the Almoravids from a small reformist movement to an empire spanning North Africa and Iberia. The findings suggest that the dynasty’s success lay in the synergy between religious conviction and pragmatic statecraft. The study contributes to Maghribi and Islamic historiography by showing how complementary leadership enabled the creation of one of the most influential dynasties of the medieval western Islamic world.

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Keywords: Almoravids; Ibn Yāsīn; Ibn Tashfīn; Maghrib; al-Andalus.

The research:

Covers the following issues:

- This research examines how the Almoravid movement unified the Maghrib and Al-Andalus by combining Ibn Yāsīn's religious framework with Ibn Tashfīn's political leadership, turning reform into empire.
- Drawing on primary chronicles and modern studies, it shows how their synergy of faith and pragmatism built a lasting model of unity in medieval Islamic history.

1. INTRODUCTION

North Africa and the Andalus are supposed to be the furthest territories that Islam reached four centuries after its appearances. However, during this long period of time, this religion could not be truly established in these regions because of the continuous tribal rivalries which were religious at times, and political at other.

It is worth adding that by the end of the tenth century, the "Western world of Islam" - the Maghreb and El Andalus - was definitely divided into two major factions: the Umayyads dominating El Andalus, and the Fatimids prevailing in the eastern and central Maghreb. In the meantime, the Western part of the Maghreb witnessed the rise of the Almoravidis who, in less than a century, could unify the Western World of Islam. Ibn khaldun, the famous historian and sociologist of the Middle Ages, insisted on the importance of the Almoravid movement in the unification of the Maghreb.

“The Almoravids came to unify -the Muslims- who were divided and made them rely on Islam and the Sunna.....”¹

In this respect, the subject matter of this research paper will be the Almoravid movement not as an Islamic revolutionary movement but as the first successful movement to banish divisions and to settle unity in north Africa. more specifically, the idea of this research paper is not just to tell the facts that led the movement to success, but it is more deeply concerned with the complementarity between the two main leaders of the Almoravids: Ibn -Yasin and Ibn -Tashfin how could these two leaders achieve this unitary project?

I’m trying to throw light the features of each of them, skills and circumstances surrounding both the leaders, I intend to look after the secret of the two men’s success, which made them the first two North African leaders to initiate the idea of “EL MAGHREB EL ISLAMI EL KEBIR” (The Great Islamic Maghreb).

Thus, this research paper is composed of two mean parts: the first one will obviously deal with Ibn Yasin Who is to be regarded as the founder of the movement more profoundly, this part will focus on his early convictions that led to the genesis of the movement, in addition to his contribution to the recovery of the Maghreb.

The second part of the research focuses on the Almoravids’ transformation from a movement into an organized state, emphasizing Ibn Tashfīn’s key role in state-building and unifying the western Islamic world. It also examines the broader impact and ultimate results of the movement, highlighting the complementary leadership of IbnYāsīn and Ibn Tashfīn.

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2. IBN YACIN AND THE GENESIS OF THE ALMORAVID MOVEMENT:

2.1. Early life and early convictions necessity for reforms:

Abdullah Ibn Yacin Ibn Mekuk Ibn Syrin Ali El Djazuly was born in the small village of Timamanawt, west of Sahara Desert and on the coasts of the Atlantic Ocean. It might be geographically located western Sahara or in present Mauritania. He was a great man, spiritually strong, intelligent and honest, a man of decision, a religious and a noble one, audacious and pious. he studied religious sciences in situ, in present Mauritania. he was a very competent student when he was studying Islam with his teacher Wajaj Ibn Zulu ².

Ibn Yasin spent seven years in al-Andalus during its era of fragmented princedoms, gaining knowledge and experience. On returning to the Maghreb, he passed through Tamesna, controlled by the Bargwati, and the Masmuda, where internal violence and lack of loyalty to religious leaders prevailed ³.

Because of his pious and audacious nature, Ibn Yasin expressed his dissatisfaction to the Masmuda in these terms: "don't you know Allah your God and Mohamed your prophet – peace be upon him?". they said: "we know Allah our god and Mohamed our prophet." he retorted: "why have you changed then? Is not there an imam to govern you according to the constitution that Islam has brought to you, and by the Sunna of his prophet?" then, some great men of the Masmuda told him: "no one of us would accept to be governed by a foreigner" ⁴.

Rejected by the Masmuda, who saw him as a foreigner, Ibn Yasin left for Sijilmasa, where he met Yahia Ibn Ibrahim al-Gudali. This meeting, later leading to Gudala, marked the first spark of the idea of unity.

Ibn Yasin settled in the Gudala tribe to teach the principals of Islam and to reinforce their efficiency within the society. In reality, the political and social unity that the region ultimately witnessed was mainly due to the meeting of Ibn Yasin and Yahia Ibn Ibrahim and to their deeds, as we shall show further on⁵.

2.2. The choice of Ibn Yasin for tribal leadership:

Ibn Yasin came to the Maghreb with Yahia ibn Ibrahim in 430AH/1038AD. this latter had been to Mecca on pilgrimage. in mecca, Yahia found a great difference between the Muslims there and those in his own country. he realized the extent to which he and the members of his tribe were far from deep knowledge of their religion. he consequently decided to find a scholar in religion in order to take him to Gudala to teach people Islam. Coming back to El Maghreb, Yahia contacted Abu Amran El Fassi in Kairouan, and asked him to send with him a competent man of religion to help him preach Islam among the population of Gudala ⁶.

Abu Amran El Fassi, an outstanding Malki Imam in Kairuan , asked Yahia about his tribe, and Yahia told him that they had no science, because they were in Sahara desert, isolated, nothing reached them , unless some tradesmen who gave importance to nothing but buying and selling. Abu Amran asked the imams to go with him: no one accepted because of the difficulty they would meet during the travel from Kairuan to Guadala. Finally, Abu Amren found a way to respond to this call for help. He suggested to him to go to Sijilmasa and to see one of his prior pupils called: WaJaJ Ibn Zulu Lamati ⁷.

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Once in Sijilmasa, Yahia met with that man who received him first, then advised him to choose one of his best pupils or imams, called Abdullah ibn Yasin, to go with him to Gudala. this latter accepted to confront this tribe regarded as the enemies of Islam, and lead to them back to the proper religion. At that time, he was no more than 25 years old, but his courage, his strong will, his faith in God, Allah, and his belief in him pushed him to accept this mission witch he saw as nothing but duty. It was probably due only to fate that Ibn Yasin was chosen, but it is also admitted that man also contributes to map out his destiny. However, ibn Yasin's intellectual and moral qualities contributed to map out his career and to make him so particular.⁸

When ibn Yasin went to Gudala tribe, he began to gather as many people as possible in order to teach them the principles of Islam. He helped all those who wanted to deepen their knowledge of Islam. in this way, the first stape he made was to gather peoples around Islam just for the aim of convincing them of it first, and then preaching it everywhere.

A short time after his arrival among the the Gudala, ibn Yasin became the first man to whom people went for advice, he was entrusted with the charge of finance and he thus became a remarkable and important member of this community within this tribe, people supported him. the fact is that he sincerely taught them new principle of Islam. he was consequently becoming great interests of the others⁹.

Three years after his arrival in Gudāla, that is, in 433AH/1040 AD, a conflict arose between Ibn Yasin and the tribe's imams, essentially following the death of Yahya ibn Ibrahim. He was accused of excessive zeal, even in minor matters. In reality, once he acquired political influence within the tribe, they came to

regard him as intolerant and overly rigid, attributing to him a political incapacity to lead the community.¹⁰

In fact, ibn Yasin's procedures were somehow strict because he found that the society was based on some inherited customs that were unacceptable in Islam. for that reason, in particular, he decided first and foremost to reform the whole society. this decision proved costly to him, as his opponents put him out of his financial responsibilities. then, they put him out of the tribe, destroyed his house and took all his possessions before they attempted to kill him.¹¹

Ibn Yasin never accepted such a humiliation. he thought of going back to Sijilmassa, but Yahia stopped him and implored him not to leave the country. Yahia ibn Omar from lemtuna was the one who asked him to remain there. he suggested to ibn Yasin to go far from people, to an isolated place, on an Island in the sea there was one nearby, in order to practice the values of Islam freely and deeply, and thus to be "nearer" to God in terms of faith and sincerity.¹²

In this manner, they formed a "ribat" where the idea of isolation got a new reference: ibn Yasin thought of proving his faith to Allah first by praying and sincerely worshipping him. then, by fighting for his sake whenever and wherever it was possible.¹³

2.3. Ibn Yasin's ribat and the foundation of the Almoravid movement:

according to some historians, the term "RIBBĀT" is extracted from AL KORAN. it refers to the fact of gathering the forces of a group to confront any foreign attack Maurice Lombard defined the "ribat" as a signalling post, a fort of coastal defence occupied by pious men or Marabuts. they are engaged in praying to God and in

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defending “Bilad El Islam” from the unfaithful. there are monuments with mixed characteristics: both military and religious, defending by monk- soldiers.¹⁴

The ribat was constituted of a bastion and a small fort the coasts of the Maghreb and El Andalous were full of them a long time before the Almoravids rise. their efficiency had been proved several times. for instance, Ukba ibn nafa’ built a ribat in Kairuan once he settled there in order to defend his followers in the seventh century. Also, an Aghlabid caliph called ibn Ziad Allah founded a ribat in 822 and gathered with his fellows in Sussa in order to resist the Byzantian navy, which was recognized its strength. it was thanks to these ribats that this navy could never really succeed to reach the North Africans shores.¹⁵

Beyond their military role, the ribats became centers of religion, learning, and Arab-Islamic culture. They promoted Islamic practice through communal prayer, preaching to distant tribes, and collecting zakat. The ribats also helped reduce tribal conflicts, like those between the Sanhaja and Zenata, and played a key role in consolidating and strengthening Islam in North Africa.¹⁶

According to al-Marrākushi, the Almoravids were named after Ibn Yasin led the Lamtuna tribe in jihad against neighboring non-Muslim Berber tribes. Despite heavy losses, he encouraged them to persist, and their leader Yahia ibn Umar was given the title *Amir al-Haqq* “Commander of the Truth”.¹⁷

Ibn Yasin’s ribat was set near the Senegal River, in an island in the Atlantic Ocean. Some sources asserted that it was in an island that Ibn Yasin’s followers gathered. the evidence is that when

Yahia ibn Omar Lemtuni suggested to ibn Yasin to go to an isolated place, he said “here, in our country, there is an island, in the sea, we can reach it on foot, if possible, otherwise, we entre it by small liners ..., we enter it, we live lawfully on it and we pray utile we die”.¹⁸

The geographical location of ibn Yasin’s ribat was very important. He chose the Senegal region for two main purposes: the area was not very far from both the kingdom of Ghana and the country of the “Mulathamin” (the veiled people of the Sahara). The beginning of this isolation took place in 431AH /1040AD with only seven persons, among them, we shall mention Yahia ibn Omar from Lemtuna and Abdullah Ibn Yasin from Djazula.

During the first three months, no one joined them, but later, their number started to rise. it reached a thousand despite the strict conditions that Ibn Yasin put in order to join the group. among these restrictions, he ordered everyone to do prayer on time. he asked every new comer to put his former knowledge in Islam aside and to renew it. Besides, he ordered everyone to do all the prayers he missed before.¹⁹

He gave a great importance to the scholars. he collected the Zakat to create a certain equilibrium in financial affairs. these restrictions, presumably, were due to negative previous experiences, highlighted by the failure of the “pacifist” method he previously applied with the Gudala. he was severe, but he showed responsibility and consistency in his deadlines. he dismissed all those who did not respect the law. he used to choose the most pious of his disciples to be reward was a direct teaching by Ibn Yasin of the Koran and the hadith. in this manner, Ibn Yasin was giving a religious nature to his movement, thinking of religion as

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the most important element in the genesis of the movement. When the number and the strength of the ribat became important, ibn Yasin ordered his fellows to go to fight for Islam. he told them to preach Islam through two manners: first, they had to advise people to convert to Islam in practice as in name. if not, they would be converted by force.²⁰

The first tribe he defeated was the Gudala, the tribe which had excluded him. he attacked it with three thousand of his followers in 1042. After that, he reached Lemutuna tribe and Mussufa in the north. He easily put them under his rule.²¹

Year by year, he succeeded to defeat almost all the tribes of the “veiled”. In reality, he did not defeat the tribe themselves; but he unified the previously divided factions of the tribal group, and therein lay his “victories”. he planned to unify all the Senhaja tribes scattered here and there, before moving to further designs. in fact, after the relative unification of Lemtuna, Gudala and Massufa, he decided then to preach Islam out of the Sahara.²² So, the idea of unity was also among the primordial designs of Ibn Yasin.

To realize such a project, the leader had to carry more responsibilities. Not only did he have to deal with the internal affairs, but also with the external ones. the responsibility of the movement was actually divided into two parts: Ibn Yasin remained the spiritual and religious leader, whereas Yahia became the military leader of the movement. the territories they decided to conquer were those of the North. they came to the conclusion that the unification of the whole Senhaja would not be accomplished if the tribes of the North were not joined to them.

For that reason, the Almoravid movement went north. But adverse climatic conditions thwarted their enterprise. they were faced with a terrible drought during a year. they ultimately called this year “Dirhem Ukia year” nothing was saved. As result, their conquests were brought to a halt. but on the other hand, this impediment reinforced the application and sharpened the efficiency of their principles. this reinforcement can be observed in the improvement of the collection of the Zakat to help the poor. Purposefully, ibn Yasin sent about 900 men to Sijilimassa to get this Zakat, this financial help.²³

To some extent, this drouth proved that the Almoravids could overcome the problems they faced, whatever their importance. it had also proved that Ibn Yasin’s and Yahia’s will was huge and capable of overcoming all obstacles. Famine became no longer an obstacle for them to speared Northwards. the will of the Almoravids was important, and led by faith. they knew quite well that in the North, they had to confront the zenata tribe, but they were not deterred. the zenata was a tribe dominating the north, In areas corresponding with the present Moroccan territory. the relationships between the Senhaja and the zenata had never been good or peaceful. friendship or good neighbourhood had never linked them.²⁴

The Zenata and the Senhaja embraced Islam early on, though each followed a different sect, which fueled hostility between them. The Almoravids, driven by their reformist mission, overcame fear, marched north to confront the Zenata, and gathered their forces with trust in God to achieve victory.

The clashes between the Almoravids and the Zenata were fierce and prolonged. Their conquest will be addressed later, but

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first is necessary to examine the origins of both groups, the roots of their conflicts, and their role in the fall of the Almoravids.

2.3. THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE ALMORAVID'S IN NORTHWEST AFRICA:

-The Almoravid's struggle with the Zenata:

The Senhaja and Zenata were two main groups of Berber tribes dominating the north western part of Africa. Between them, there was a marked hostility. Before dealing with their conflicts, it would be adequate to make a brief presentation of each.

The Zenata people were making an important group of small tribes such as: The Maghrawa, Ghmara, Meknassa, and Beni Yermen. they were geographically prevailing in very strategic areas because they seized the collapse of the Idrissids in 930AD to settle in Fes, and to conquer the purlieus of this town. In terms of politics and organization, many historians insist on saying that Zenata ruling producers had always been far from being organized. According to Hussin Mu'nis the areas and the areas in which the Zenata ruled were notorious for their anarchy and disorder. The social groups constituting that tribe were not satisfied with their so-called administration. they used to pay heavy taxes in exchange for security²⁵.

the tribes of this group terrorized each other. Meghrawa, for instance, created a terror in Meknassa town and Taza, north of Wed-Um-Erabi'e just while Beni Yermen created unrest among the people of Rif Tamesna. they even reached Sus and Taghilalt (Sijilmasa) where they massacred people and proved their

unorthodox way of life by plundering to survive and by killing to dominate.²⁶

Despite this cynical behaviour, the Zenata were successful and dominating tradesmen. They formed a very important commercial circuit in North Africa. Wherever they were, trade flourished. As a matter of fact, when Meghrawa and Beni Yefren were occupying some regions in Central Maghrib, Telemcen and Tahert witnessed the emergency of many new markets, with a high food and goods production. Driven way by the Senhaja, these two tribes went westwards and definitely settled in Fes, Sella and Sejelmassa. Trade consequently weakened in the central Maghrib and simultaneously flourished in the west.²⁷

It was important to briefly introduce the Zeneta because of their great contribution to the events which developed afterwards, especially those concerning the Almoravids.

Similarly, the Senhaja was a berber group, including approximately seventy tribes. they formed en extension to Senhadja of the north (in Ifriqia)²⁸. the senhadja of the south were called senhadja Touaregs to distingish them from those of the north. The outstanding tribes of this group were: LEMUTUNA south of the Sahara, Massufa south of it and Gudala near the Senegal river and the Niger.

Senhadja population were converted to Islam early in the Ninth century, and they were eager to conquer new territories south, in the western Sudan. thus, they contributed to the consolidation of Islam despite their hard living conditions they were indeed occupying some harsh lands in the desert and they basically relied on cattle breeding and basic agriculture²⁹.

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The extension of the area they occupied was about a thousand kilometres long. there, oasis and small towns were used as trading points, including Taghilalt, Udagasht and Sijilmassa³⁰.

At the start of the Eleventh century, the Umayyad state faced a major political crisis that led to its decline and division in 1066. As a result, it abandoned concerns over the Maghreb, leaving the conflict between the Umayyad–Zenata and the Fatimid–Sanhadja unchecked³¹.

The ongoing conflicts among the communities led to the rise of the Almoravid movement, which began by radically transforming the political organization of north-western Africa.

The spiritual and political situation of the tribes was critical, as heresies spread widely. In Tamesna, Salah Ibn Tarif falsely claimed prophethood and altered core Islamic practices, such as shifting Ramadan fasting to Rajab, permitting female polygamy, and forbidding the eating of cocks³². Moreover, the presence of Jews, pagans, and animists in some regions deepened the social and religious disorder.

The spread of heresies in the Maghreb drove Ibn Yasin's reforms. Strict in upholding Islamic values, he tolerated no deviations, dealing firmly with unbelievers and opponents of Islam. He saw it as vital to stop such heresies, which threatened Muslim unity through false beliefs and claims.

The political situation was as serious as the spiritual one³³. Ibn Udrara al-Marrakshi described Maghreb's life as full of divisions and mutual raids among its people. For example, the Bargwatta, a powerful non-Muslim group in Tamesma, were major enemies of

the Zenata simply due to differences, while the Zenata were known to fight even for trivial reasons³⁴. These political conditions reinforced Ibn Yasin's determination to reform society, and through his conquests he proved that his actions truly matched his words.

-the Almoravids and the conquest of the north:

Ibn Yasin and Yahia Ibn Omar were essential leaders of the movement. Their growing reputation in the north led the imams of Sijilmassa and Der'a to seek Ibn Yasin's help in establishing justice and resisting the Zenata³⁵.

In443AH/1053AD, Ibn Yasin and Ibn Omar led the Almoravids against the Zenata, winning a series of battles and recapturing Der'a. before moving on to Sijilmassa, they appointed Yahia's brother, Abu-Bakr, as governor of Der'a. then In Taghilalt, near Sijilmassa, the Almoravids confronted Meghrawa in 445 AH/1054 AD. They vanquished them and they even killed their Amir Mas'ud ibn Wan'dn Sijilmassa became then an almoravid town recovered by both yahia and Ibn Yacin, courageously indeed³⁶.

The Almoravids' first double victory over the Zenata attracted many new followers, boosting their fame, numbers, and military strength; Through this victory, Ibn Yasin demonstrated the power and discipline of the Almoravid army, proving that his religious ideals were backed by action and gaining people's trust in his leadership.

Yahia gained less fame than Ibn Yasin because he led the movement for a shorter time retiring due to illness and dying the same year³⁷. Meanwhile, Ibn Yasin remained active in Tamdult, organizing and reinforcing the army for further conquests³⁸.

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When he learnt Yahia's death (447H)³⁹, he went to Sijilmasa to appoint his brother Abu Bakr as ruler, demonstrating his idealism and lack of personal ambition. Preferring spiritual leadership and *jihad* over kingship, he valued fighting for Islam above political power. Between 1056 and 1059, the complementary efforts of Ibn Yasin and Abu Bakr, who shared faith and self-sacrifice, enabled the Almoravids to conquer new territories⁴⁰.

In 448–449 AH, Abu Bakr conquered Sus and defeated the pagans and Jews in Taroudant, while Ibn Yasin reached Sus El Aqsa and defeated the Masmuda⁴¹.

In 1057, both Almoravid leaders went together to the atlas. They victoriously entered Neffis and Ighmet. they vanquished the Meghrawa there and killed their Emir Lekot ben Yousef. The Almoravid then settled in Ighmet which became a new contemporary military and political basis of the almoravid state. It became so because of its proximity with the Sahare Desert⁴². Purposefully, they chose it because they planned to prepare themselves therefrom to attack both the Ghmara and the Barghwatta

Their policy changed somehow. ibn yacin and Abu Bakr thought of gathering their efforts first, and then recovering Udagasht which was under the domination of Ghana's kingdom. They admitted that Udagasht was a real threat for the almoravids because it would destroy what they had already built⁴³. they immediatly decided to go eastward Niger to recover Udagasht first, and to convert the population of Ghana afterwards.

In 1059, the Almoravids fought fierce battles against Ghana's army, determined to resist despite the risk of defeat, knowing their

state's survival depended on victory. Their success, marked by the recovery of Udagasht, enhanced their power and army, which became so large it was divided to extend conquests and improve governance.

The Almoravid forces split into two: Yusuf ibn Tashfin led the northern campaign against Ghamara, gaining renowned for his courage, while Abu Bakr and Ibn Yasin fought the Barghwata near Tamesna (Rabat) in 1059, achieving victory but losing Ibn Yasin in the battle⁴⁴.

Ibn Yasin died in 450/451H (1059AD) during battles with the Barghwata, after urging the Senhadja chiefs to uphold unity, justice, and brotherhood. While many sought to follow his counsel, it was ultimately one leader who truly fulfilled his vision⁴⁵. through what he said, Ibn Yasin mapped out the new policy of the Almoravids. In his last words, he insisted on unity and solidarity, on the banishment of rivalries. the Almoravids dynasty thus lost its founder; his moral qualities had made him famous and, indeed able to lead a dynasty and to mark history⁴⁶.

Ibn Yasin was buried on a hill not very far from present Rabat, known nowadays as "Sidi Abdullah mul El Ghara", On his tomb, a mosque had been built⁴⁷.

Ibn Yasin was respected as a strict yet just believer devoted to Islam, though some historians, like Hussain, highlight contradictions in his character—such as a weakness for pleasure and errors in jurisprudence. Nevertheless, he is remembered for his rare intelligence, deep faith, loyalty, and courage⁴⁸.

3.IBN TASHFIN'S RISE TO POWER

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By 453AH/1061AD, the Almoravid movement had grown into a powerful state with organized politics, a strong army, and expanding territories. When Abu Bakr went south to fight the Berghwatta, he entrusted Yusuf with half the army and leadership of the state in the North⁴⁹.

Yusuf ibn Tashfin was chosen for his courage and leadership skills, and he proved worthy through his rare moral qualities, which soon established him as one of the great leaders of North African movements.

3.1. Ibn Tashfin : An Exceptional Berber Leader :

Originating from the Senhadja tribes, Abu Yacoub Yusuf Ibn Tashfin was from the Lemtuna tribe. He was born in the Sahara Desert around 400AH and died 500AH in Marrakesh a century later⁵⁰. According to ibn Abi zar Yusuf ibn Tashfin was dark-skinned, of medium height, slender in build, with thin sideburns, soft voice, kohl-like eyes, an aquiline nose, joined eyebrows, and curly hair. In addition, he was a brave and resolute hero, commanding respect, generous, and ascetic in worldly matters, He was well known for his courage, his severity and his seriousness⁵¹.

Yusuf ibn Tashfin was a fair, generous, and astute leader, combining political skill with military courage. Devoted to jihad and indifferent to worldly pleasures, he lived modestly in dress and food throughout his life. His moral virtues justified his leadership, while his actions earned him lasting fame and renown.⁵².

3.2. His Appointment:

In 1068, Yusuf defeated the Ghamara emir Muansar Ibn Hammad and seized Fes, gaining great renown. After Muansar's son Temym recaptured the city and massacred the Almoravids, Yusuf swiftly retaliated, retook Fes by force, overcame the Maghrawa, and brought all its factions under his control⁵³.

By the recovery of Fes and many other parts of the Western Maghrib, Ighmet, which was the headquarters of the Almoravids, witnessed the arrival of a great number of new settlers. In 1069, Abu Bakr founded Marrakesh (in berber it means stone Castle) near Ighmet to accommodate the growing population. Initially a camp of tents and houses, it later developed with walls and monuments, evolving like Fes from a Berber settlement into an oriental-style city.⁵⁴

While Abu Bakr was attending to its construction, he learnt about a dangerous conflict in the desert. It was a bloody massacre that Gudala made over Lemtuna⁵⁵. When Abu Bakr left Ighmet to resolve tribal rivalries and pursue jihad in the Ghana kingdom, he took two-thirds of the army after appointing Yusuf as leader with the support of the Senhadja chiefs. This situation pushed Yusuf to undertake reforms in both the state and the army.

I. IBN TASHFIN'S ACHIEVEMENTS:

a) . The Internal Socio-political Achievements:

After becoming leader in 463AH/1070AD, Ibn Tashfin prioritized strengthening the army, continued the foundation and fortification of Marrakesh begun in 454AH/1062AD, and introduced several reforms that reshaped the administration of the state⁵⁶.

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When Yusuf was left with only a third of the army, he prioritized strengthening the state's military by recruiting new forces, including 2,000 soldiers from the south and 240 Andalusian knights, to reinforce his guard⁵⁷. Yusuf reinforced his forces with skilled archers and a growing navy, which enabled him in 464 AH/1071 to defeat his rivals at Melwiya and bring local tribes under his control⁵⁸. Under Yusuf's leadership, the army grew stronger after Abu Bakr's departure, gaining fame for its courage and skill; this reflected his strategy of state-building before conquest, echoing Ibn Yasin's vision.⁵⁹

Ibn Tashfin aimed to build a just and harmonious society where rights were respected and basic needs met, combining fairness with firmness, while his own modesty served as a model for his people⁶⁰.

In finance, Ibn Tashfin established the mint *Dār al-Sikka* to strike gold dinars, abolished traditional tax collection, and instead relied on zakat and legal fines. In 464AH, he also imposed a heavy tax on the Jews to support the state treasury (Beyt-El-Mell)⁶¹.

By abolishing tax collection, Ibn Tashfin distinguished Almoravid rule from the Zenata, projected government strength and wealth, and ensured that the state never faced bankruptcy.

The Almoravid state strictly adhered to Islamic principles, with laws requiring approval from religious scholars, reflecting Ibn Tashfin's deep commitment to religion and justice, widely praised in more than two thousands of mosque sermons.⁶²

The Almoravid judicial system, separate from the administrative apparatus, followed the Maliki school of law, reflecting the movement's origins under Ibn Yasin. To strengthen justice and reinforce the religious character of society, Ibn Tashfin appointed in each district a wālī for governance, a qādī for judicial matters, and ascholar to promote Islamic values across the community.⁶³

For the Almoravids, culture was an essential complement to politics and administration. They preserved customs that conformed to Islamic values and gave special importance to science, particularly fiqh. Scholars and philosophers enjoyed high esteem under Yusuf ibn Tashfin, who even married his daughter to the Andalusian philosopher Ibn Bajja. Literature also flourished in the Maghrib, driven by rivalry with the poets of the East.⁶⁴

Supposedly, Ibn Tashfin did not speak Arabic quite well and he used to have a translator with him. When he knew how important Arabic was in teaching Islam, he built new cultural centres like mosques and “Zawiya” where he insisted on teaching people Arabic just to facilitate religious education.⁶⁵

Almoravid transformation was gradual, but within three years of his election Ibn Tashfin proved his strong leadership. This was evident when Abu Bakr returned in 465H/1073, recognized his cousin's success in strengthening the movement, and resumed his campaigns against the Ghana kingdom in West Africa (present Mali). By the final and official departure of Abu Bakr, Yusuf became for the first time sure that he was the unique and supreme leader of the movement in the North. This fact made of his will more powerful to enjoy this supremacy not wrongly, but in the right way and sincerely⁶⁶.

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From 465AH/1073AD onward, Ibn Tashfin expanded his policy eastward toward the Central Maghrib and northward to support Andalus, aiming to unify the Western Islamic world and link it with the powerful Abbasid Empire in the East.⁶⁷

According to al-Jilali, the Abbasids honoured the Almoravids not merely for allegiance, but because Ibn Tashfin represented a power that could counter both the Fatimids in the Eastern Maghrib and the Umayyads of al-Andalus.⁶⁸

This recognition was historically significant: while many Maghrib dynasties declared independence, Ibn Tashfin affirmed loyalty to the Abbasid caliph and styled himself *Amīr al-Muslimīn* instead *Amīr al-Mu'minīn*, a pragmatic choice that reinforced his legitimacy through symbolic connection to Abbasid authority.

a) The joining of Central Maghrib And El Andalous :

Ibn Tashfin's chief aim was jihād for God, beginning with unifying the Maghrib and then aiding al-Andalus against the Christians. In his zeal for conquest, he followed Ibn Yāsīn's path, and would likely have continued it had he lived longer.

In 1076, Yūsuf set out to recover the Central Maghrib from the Zanāta and Maghrāwa, advancing through Tlemcen, Wahrān (Oran), Ténès, and the Chelif valley, until he reached Jazā'ir Banī Mazghanna (Algiers), and by 474AH/1080AD his expansion extended to the frontier of Bijāya, where he encountered the formidable Ḥammādid army⁶⁹.

Ibn Tashfin rose to fame after receiving the blessing of the Eastern Imams, which marked the movement's shift into a political phase resembling modern politics. By the early eleventh century, the the weakening Umayyad state had left al-Andalus divided into small princedoms (ṭawā'if), unable to resist Christian advances from the north. In 1085, facing the growing threat of Alfonso of Toledo, the ṭawā'if kings—led by al-Mu'tamid of Seville—called upon Ibn Tashfīn as the savior of Islam. Though aware of the risks to his own rule, al-Mu'tamid considered Ibn Tashfīn the lesser evil compared to Christian conquest. when he declared: ***"If we are destined to suffer from the interference of outsiders, then the Berbers are the lesser of two evils. For our sons to herd their camels is dearer to them than to herd the pigs of the Franks."*** Subsequently, al-Mu'tamid wrote to Yūsuf ibn Tashfīn: ***"If you are truly devoted to jihad, now is the time, for Alfonso has advanced into the land. Cross over without delay, for we, the people of the Peninsula, are at your service"*** Yūsuf ibn Tashfīn, already in full readiness, immediately crossed over to al-Andalus⁷⁰

Ibn Tashfin moved to El Andalus three times. The first time, he defeated Alfonso VI in the battle of Zallaqa (Sacrajas in Spain) on Friday 15 Rajab 479AH⁷¹/ 23 rd October 1086AD, and recovered Toledo from the Christians. In 1087, he moved up to the east of el Andalus to confront El Cid Campeador, but this time, he was given no help by the Tawa'if princes who distrusted him, thinking that he came to take power over their own territories. This fact infuriated him. That is the reason why he moved up a third time to El Andalus in 1090 just to take revenge. He worthily vanquished both the Christians and the Tawa'if. with force and with no

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exception, he dismissed the Emirs, and by this dismissal he declared El Andalus a new adjoined part to the Almoravids state⁷².

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Historians unanimously emphasize Ibn Yāsīn's moral qualities and his decisive role in founding the Almoravid movement, consolidating Islam in the Maghrib, and uniting Muslims against their enemies. He organized a strong state, unified the Sanhāja under jihād, and achieved victories over the Zanāta in the north and the Black tribes in the south.

Ibn Yāsīn transformed divided tribes into a united community, defined the movement's political and religious aims with clear methods, and infused it with spiritual strength that secured broad Muslim support.⁷³

Men like Ibn Yāsīn are rare in history. He was the true pillar of the Almoravid movement, without whom it could not have endured or expanded. His successors sought to follow his path, some successfully continuing his vision, while others hastened the dynasty's decline. The focus here will not be on that decline, but rather on the role and achievements of the renowned Almoravid leader, Yūsuf Ibn Tashfin.

Yūsuf Ibn Tashfin's intervention in Al-Andalus safeguarded Islamic civilization from Christian domination. His bravery and commitment to jihād affirmed his greatness. With the Almoravid state established, he assumed new responsibilities and divided the kingdom into four major districts:

- Tlemcem: to govern the Central Maghrib
- Sijilmasa: the capital city of the south

- Sevilla: to rule El Andalus
- Merrakesh: the headquarters of the whole Empire

Ibn Tashfin (1007–1107) died in 500H/1107AD, after ruling for 36 years (1071–1107). Though brief compared to his lifespan, his reign was enough to reinforce the Almoravid state and expand it into an empire spanning two continents, making him an emperor and the first Muslim leader to officially introduce this idea “El Maghreb El Arabi El kabir”⁷⁴. Ibn Tashfin built a vast empire stretching from Castile in the Iberian Peninsula to tropical Africa, and from Algiers to the Atlantic, uniting not only geography but also religion, society, and culture—qualities that made him truly remarkable.

4. CONCLUSION

The Almoravid dynasty is supposed to be the symbol of the North African leaders’ success to unify the Maghreban communities fundamentally, it was a religious movement that brought back to the Maghreb its historical role that was lost by the decline of the Idrissids in 930AD.

The Almoravid movement owed its success not to religion alone but to Ibn Yāsīn, whocombined preaching, Djihād, and state-building. His groundwork enabled Ibn Tashfin to rise as a leading figure in the western Islamic world, and even his intervention in al-Andalus and the end of the ṭawā’if continued Ibn Yāsīn’s vision of Maghrib unification⁷⁵.

The Almoravid movement advanced from a religious mission under Ibn Yasin into a structured state, and then into a powerful empire under Ibn Tashfin. Though they did not act together

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directly, their complementary roles made them central figures in North African history. Ibn Yasin provided the religious vision and framework, while Ibn Tashfin upheld these principles and built upon them politically and militarily. Their combined legacy represents the true strength of the Almoravid movement.

It is hoped that the countries of today's Maghrib will one day emulate this rare historical model of unity, overcoming regional and religious divisions.

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