

Dirassat & Abhath
The Arabic Journal of Human
and Social Sciences



مجلة دراسات وأبحاث
المجلة العربية في العلوم الإنسانية
والاجتماعية

EISSN: 2253-0363
ISSN : 1112-9751

**Security-Oriented Urban Foundation and Planning in the Cities of the Islamic
West through Historical Sources: A Study of Genesis and Political
Development**

الاختطاط الأمني لمدن الغرب الإسلامي من خلال المصادر التاريخية:
دراسة في النشأة والتطور السياسي

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تاريخ النشر: 2026/10/15

تاريخ القبول: 2026/09/05

تاريخ الاستلام: 2026/06/26

Abstract:

This article, entitled “Security-Oriented Urban Foundation in the Cities of the Islamic West through Historical Sources: A Study of Genesis and Political Development,” aims to foreground the role of Islamic historical sources and geographical literature in recording the repercussions of sectarian conflict in the Islamic West on geopolitical and urban conditions, and the capacity of ruling authorities to lay out cities founded on defensive systems for diverse geo-strategic and security purposes. It examines Ashīr in the Central Maghreb under the Zirids and Marrakesh in the Far Maghreb under the Almoravids. Through a source-critical study, the article reveals the important historical roles of these defensive cities, in all the dimensions of their security objectives. It shows their ability to adapt despite vast geographical environments and sectarian-political conflict, and their transformation from expressions of defensive-security power into Islamic urban centers marked by urban development and civilizational brilliance in the medieval world.

Keywords: security-oriented planning; cities of the Islamic West; medieval sources; the city of Ashīr; the city of Marrakesh.

المخلص:

يهدف هذا المقال الموسوم "الاختطاط الأمني لمدن الغرب الإسلامي من خلال المصادر التاريخية -دراسة في النشأة والتطور السياسي-" إلى إبراز دور مصادر التاريخ الإسلامي والأدب الجغرافي، في تدوين مظاهر انعكاسات الصراع المذهبي في بلاد الغرب الإسلامي على الأوضاع الجيوسياسية والعمرانية، وقدرة السلطة الحاكمة في اختطاط مدن تحمل أسس أنظمة دفاعية لأغراض جيواستراتيجية أمنية مختلفة المجالات. من نماذج هذه المدن تناولنا: مدينة "أشير" بالمغرب الأوسط، عهد الزييريين، ومدينة "مراكش" بالمغرب الأقصى، عهد المرابطين.

سمحت لنا دراسة هذه المصادر -الحفرية- الكشف عن الأدوار التاريخية الهامة لتلك المدن الدفاعية بكل أبعاد أهدافها الأمنية، حيث استطاعت أن تتكيف وتتأقلم رغم البيئة الجغرافية الواسعة والصراع المذهبي-السياسي. كما كشفنا قدرة هذه المدن على التطور والتعبير الأدائي العمراني فبالرغم من وظيفتها الأمنية التي تأسست من أجلها انصهرت في مكون شخصية المدينة الإسلامية، اكسبها الارتقاء من مظهر القوة الدفاعية -الأمنية-، إلى التمدن والتألق الحضاري في العالم القروسي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التخطيط الأمني، مدن الغرب الإسلامي؛ مصادر العصور الوسطى؛ مدينة آشير؛ مدينة مراكش.

1. INTRODUCTION

2. First Subtitle

An examination of the sites selected for the foundation and layout of cities in the Islamic West between the fourth and fifth centuries AH — the tenth and eleventh centuries CE — through historical sources and geographical literature reveals a living heritage shaped by local geographical environments and sectarian specificities. These factors generated intense political conflicts that strongly influenced the selection of urban sites in the Islamic West. Such cities embodied the requirements of

strategic-security functional performance in its military-defensive, political, social, and economic dimensions.

The significance of this study lies in the way these sources reveal the geopolitical and sectarian conditions of the Islamic West, as well as the ability of ruling authorities to exploit localized natural-geographical environments and harness them for political and doctrinal-sectarian security purposes. These choices had broad repercussions on urban form.

The study aims to highlight the contribution of local Maghrebi and eastern

Islamic historical and geographical sources to documenting the history of the cities of the Islamic West, particularly their foundation and political development during the Middle Ages.

The research problem is structured around the following questions: What were the repercussions of sectarian conflict in the Islamic West on geopolitical and urban conditions? Was the foundation of cities with strategic-security dimensions sufficient to preserve the authority and security of the ruling power? How did security-oriented urban foundation move beyond its original functional purpose to encompass multiple aspects of urban development, including political, social, economic, and civilizational dimensions?

Methodologically, the study combines the chronological method, used to arrange events and trace their historical development, with the selective method, used to survey the geopolitical space of the cities of the Islamic West. Accordingly, the study selects Ashīr in the Central Maghreb under the Zirids and Marrakesh in the Far Maghreb under the Almoravids. It also employs the descriptive-geographical method to examine the natural environment and its impact on urban development, alongside the analytical method to assess the influence of the natural environment on the city's character, its strategic-security functional performance, and the development of medieval cities in the Islamic West.

1. The Foundation of Cities in the Central Maghreb: The City of Ashīr as a Model

It is certain that medieval Islamic cities possessed a distinctive organization of space and urban life, shaped by religious and political considerations as well as by prevailing social and economic conditions. These cities embodied a complex array of features and influences whose imprint remained visible across successive historical periods.

Among the most renowned lost cities to have emerged in the Central Maghreb, and one that played a significant role in the history and civilisation of the medieval

Islamic Maghreb, was the city of Ashir.

1.1. The City of Ashir: Location and Meaning of the Name

The city of Ashir, most of whose archaeological remains have now disappeared, is located approximately 150 km south of Algiers, at al-Kaf al-Akhdar, on the south-eastern slope of the Titteri Mountains. This site may correspond to what is known today as Kaf Lakhdar. It lies approximately 2,500 metres to the north-west, near a fortress that later became known as ManzahBint al-Sultan, within the present-day province of Médéa.¹

As for the name Ashir, it is said to mean “claws”; the city is therefore also associated with the expression Ashir, the Claws of Ziri. Ibn Khaldun referred to the city under the name “Washin.”²

1.2. Motives behind the Foundation of the City of Ashir in 324 AH/934 CE

The name of Ashīr appears in Ibn al-Athīr's *sal-Kāmilfī al-Tārīkh* within a concise account of the Zirid state³, its lineage, leading figures, position in the Maghreb, wars against the Zanāta tribe⁴, and loyalty to the Fatimid state. Ibn al-Athīr then turns to the causes, motives, and date of the city's construction under the heading “The Account of Yūsuf ibn Bulukkīn ibn Zīrī ibn Manād⁵ and His Household.” He states:

“He is YūsufBulukkīn ibn Zīrī ibn Manād al-Ṣanhājī al-Ḥimyarī. Ṣanhāja and those who followed it in the Maghreb had already gathered in obedience to him before al-Manṣūr appointed him. He then marched with them to the site of Ashīr; seeing the springs it contained, he admired it, built the city of Ashīr there, and settled in it with his companions. This occurred in the year 364 AH⁶.”

It is worth noting that Ibn al-Athīr did not err in identifying the founder of the city. Historians and geographers agree that it was Zīrī ibn Manād, leader of the Talkāta branch of Ṣanhāja, who built it. Al-Bakrī confirms this, relying on Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Warrāq (270–357 AH / 893–968 CE), from whom he confirms the identity of its founder⁷.

1.3. Historians' Views on the Date of the Foundation of Ashir

Most historical sources agree that Amir Ziri ibn Manad al-Sanhaji was the actual founder of the city of Ashir. The principal disagreement among both early and later historians, however, concerns the date of its foundation. *Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh* places the construction of the city in 364 AH/974 CE.⁸ When considered against the sequence of contemporary historical events, however, this date appears considerably later than the period in which Ashir was actually founded.

In this regard, al-Nuwayri provides a more detailed account of the circumstances surrounding the establishment of the city and the date of its foundation:

"...His followers became numerous, and the available space could no longer accommodate them. They therefore said to him: 'If only you could find a place more spacious than this one.' He then went to the site of Ashir, which at that time was uninhabited but contained springs, and he found it suitable. He said: When Ziri saw the site, he told his companions, 'This is the place suitable for you to settle.' He then resolved to build it. This was in the year 324 AH, during the reign of al-Qa'im bi-Amr Allah ibn al-Mahdi..."⁹

Al-Nuwayri's account is arguably closer to the correct chronology, particularly because his narrative drew upon the account of Ibn Shaddad, a historian of the Zirid dynasty.

The uncertainty surrounding the date of Ashir's foundation may be explained by the fact that the city developed in successive stages and over different periods, as can be inferred from several historical sources. Al-Bakri, for example, describes it as follows:

"It is a great and strongly fortified city. It is said that there is no fortress in those regions more impregnable, more difficult to approach, or harder to reach. No part of it can be gained by force except through a point that ten men would suffice to defend... Its wall was built by Buluggin ibn Ziri ibn Manad al-Sanhaji in the year 367 AH. It was later destroyed by Yusuf ibn Hammad ibn Ziri,

who plundered its wealth and violated its sanctity. This occurred after the year 440 AH. Its inhabitants subsequently returned to it after [the year] fifty-five..."¹⁰

This account suggests that the development of Ashir took place in two principal stages. The first was its initial foundation under Ziri ibn Manad, while the second occurred under his son and successor, Bologhine. During this later phase, the city underwent further urban development, including the construction of its fortifications, palaces, houses, and baths, with its defensive wall being erected in 367 AH/977 CE.

Ashir's prosperity and continuing urban expansion contributed to its emergence as an important centre of attraction for merchants and craftsmen.¹¹ On the basis of the textual evidence and historical indications discussed above, the more plausible conclusion is therefore that Ashir was founded in 324 AH/935–936 CE, rather than in 364 AH/974 CE, as reported in *al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh*.

It is also worth noting the explanation advanced by some modern historians for this chronological discrepancy. They suggest that the erroneous date may have resulted from a scribal or copying error in the transmission of Ibn al-Athir's text, whereby 364 AH was written instead of 324 AH, owing to the visual similarity between the numerals 2 and 6 in certain forms of Indo-Arabic numeral notation.¹²

It may thus be concluded that the Zirid Sanhaja achieved their objective in founding Ashir and establishing it as the principal seat of their authority and the first regional capital of their emerging polity. The city preserved the memory of their rule and continued to expand during the fourth century AH/tenth century CE, while Zirid authority extended from Tiaret in the west to the Zab region in the east.

1.4. Historians' explain the error on the Date of the Construction of Ashir

It is useful to mention the views of some modern historians who attempted to explain the error in the date of Ashir's

construction.¹³ They argued that Ibn al-Athīr, or his copyist, wrote 364 AH instead of 324 AH because of the similarity between the numerals 2 and 6 in the Indian numeral system. Yet the question remains: can the chronological gap of nearly forty years between the accepted date of Ashīr's construction, 324 AH / 936 CE, and Ibn al-Athīr's date, 364 AH / 974 CE, be reduced merely to a scribal error in the transmission of numbers?

The more probable explanation is that the confusion surrounding the date of Ashīr's construction resulted from the distinction between the initial foundation of the city and the later works added to it in successive stages, such as the construction of walls and fortifications, as was common in Islamic cities. This is suggested by al-Bakrī, who describes Ashīr as follows:

"It is a noble and fortified city. It is said that there is no place in those regions more fortified, less accessible, or harder to reach. Nothing in it can be taken by fighting except from one place, which ten men can defend. The one who built its wall was Buluggīn ibn Zīrī ibn Manād al-Šanhājī in the year 367 AH. Yūsuf ibn Ḥammād ibn Zīrī later destroyed it, plundered its wealth, and violated its sanctities after 440 AH; then people returned to it after 455 AH."¹⁴

This indicates that Ashīr was built in two stages: the stage of foundation under Zīrī, and the stage of wall construction under his son Buluggīn ibn Zīrī in 367 AH / 977 CE.

Ibn Khaldūn agrees with al-Bakrī that the expansion of Ashīr occurred, in his view, during the rule of Zīrī's son and successor, Buluggīn, in 361 AH / 972 CE. This expansion took place in several stages: foundation, wall construction, and the building of palaces, houses, and baths¹⁵. Its prosperity and urban growth also made it an attractive center for merchants and craftsmen¹⁶.

On the basis of the historical texts and evidence presented, it is therefore more likely that Ashīr was founded in 324 AH / 936 CE, not in 364 AH / 974 CE as stated in *al-Kāmilfī al-Tārīkh*.

We may conclude that the ZiridŠanhājids achieved their objective when they founded Ashīr and made it the base of their state and the first regional capital of their rule, thereby immortalizing their name. During the fourth century AH / tenth century CE, its influence expanded from Tiaret in the west to the Zāb in the east. It also played a major role in the establishment of centers and cities such as Algiers, Miliana, Médéa, and Madyūna¹⁷. These cities would, in turn, develop and prosper over time until they

became among the most important cities and major urban centers of the Central Maghreb.

Figure1. Maximum territorial extent reached by the Zirids in 980 CE



Figure 2. The Archaeological Site of Ashir, Capital of the Zirid State, Founded in 324 AH/936 CE

Source: Wikimedia Commons, *Achir*

2. The Construction of Marrakesh in the Far Maghreb in 462 AH / 1069 CE

The city of Marrakesh, or the "Red City," is considered one of the most important historical cities and capitals of the Far Maghreb.

2.1. Meaning of the Name Marrakesh

Marrakesh is an ancient Berber place-name. It has been suggested that the name may derive from Urkush, meaning "son of Kush," with *Kush* in Berber being associated with the meaning "black." Regarding the origin of the name, 'Abd al-Wahid al-Marrakushi (d. 625 AH/1228 CE) states:

"It was so named after a black slave who lived there and used to terrify travellers on the road; he was called Marrakesh."

Ibn Khallikan, however, offers a different explanation. According to him,

Marrakesh meant “walk quickly” in the language of the Berber Masmuda tribes. The area was reportedly dangerous for travellers because of thieves and highwaymen. Thus, when passers-by reached the place, they would warn one another by saying “Marrakesh,” meaning “walk quickly” in the local Berber dialect. The locality consequently came to be known by that name.¹⁸

2.2. Causes and Circumstances of the Foundation of Marrakesh

Ibn al-Athīr mentions Marrakesh in *al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*. Before discussing the reason for its foundation, he provides a brief account entitled “The Beginning of the State of the Veiled People¹⁹,” placed among the events of the year 448 AH. The causes and circumstances of the city’s foundation appear in his section entitled “The Rule of Yūsuf ibn Tāshfīn²⁰,” where he states:

“When Abū Bakr ibn ‘Umar took possession of Sijilmāsa, he appointed over it Yūsuf ibn Tāshfīn al-Lamtūnī, one of his close cousins, and returned to the desert. Yūsuf governed the subjects well and took from them nothing except zakāt. He remained in the desert for some time. Then Abū Bakr ibn ‘Umar returned to Sijilmāsa and stayed there for a year, while the sermon, command, and authority belonged to him. He appointed his nephew Abū Bakr ibn Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Umar over it and sent an army of Almoravids with Yūsuf ibn Tāshfīn to the Sūs²¹, which was conquered through him. Yūsuf was a pious, virtuous, resolute, astute, and experienced man. They remained thus until the year 462 AH. Abū Bakr ibn ‘Umar died in the desert, and the Almoravid groups gathered around Yūsuf ibn Tāshfīn, made him their ruler, and gave him the title Commander of the Muslims. The Commander of the Muslims and his group followed the Sunna and the law. The people of the Maghreb sought his aid, so he marched to them and conquered its fortresses and towns one by one with relative ease. The subjects loved him, and their conditions improved. He then went to the site of Marrakesh, a flat and empty plain with no habitation, centrally located in the lands of

the Maghreb, like Qayrawān in Ifrīqiya. Marrakesh lies beneath the mountains of the Maṣmūda,²² who are the fiercest people of the Maghreb, so that he might be able to suppress the people of those mountains should they attempt rebellion. He made it his residence; no one then moved in rebellion. He also took possession of cities such as Ceuta, Tangier, Salé, and others, and his armies increased²³.”

As can be observed, Ibn al-Athīr’s information from which one may understand that Yūsuf ibn Tāshfīn built the city. Thus, he does not clearly mention the real causes and circumstances that led the Almoravids to found Marrakesh, unlike later local Moroccan historical sources.

The book *al-Ḥulal al-Mawshiyya* is among the foremost historical works to provide detailed information on the circumstances and causes of Marrakesh’s construction, in a section entitled “Marrakesh, Its Construction, and the Selection of Its Site and Location — May God Guard It by His Grace.” It states:

“The reason for the foundation of Marrakesh, as reported by the scholars of history, is that the amir Abū Bakr ibn ‘Umar ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Tūrfī al-Lamtūnī, when he came out of the desert with the Lamtūnids and settled in Aghmāt-Warīka²⁴, found that the population there had increased and had crowded its inhabitants, placing them in difficult circumstances. The elders of Warīka and Haylāna complained to the amir Abū Bakr ibn ‘Umar about the hardship and difficulty they suffered because of this, and they raised the matter to him repeatedly until he said to them: ‘Choose for me a place where we may build a city, God willing.’ They agreed that it should be built between the lands of Haylāna and the lands of Mazmīra. They informed the amir Abū Bakr ibn ‘Umar and said to him: ‘We have found for you, O amir, a desert site, spacious in area and broad in extent, suitable for your purpose.’ They said to him: ‘Its surroundings are excellent; the lands of Dukkāla are its fields, and the reins of Mount Daran are in the hand of its ruler.’ The amir Abū Bakr ibn ‘Umar rode out with his veiled people, the

elders of the Maṣmūda, and the notables, and they went with him to the plain of Marrakesh. It was empty, inhabited only by gazelles and ostriches, and nothing grew there except lote trees and colocynth. This was in the year 462 AH. He therefore appointed his cousin Yūsuf ibn Tāshfīn over the Maghreb. In the year 475 AH, Yūsuf ibn Tāshfīn began the construction of Marrakesh.²⁵

It is worth noting that Ibn 'Idhārī's account does not differ from that of *al-Ḥulal al-Mawshiyya* in terms of causes, circumstances, or the date of Marrakesh's foundation. He states:

"In the year 462 AH, on the twenty-third of Rajab, the foundation of Marrakesh began, namely the Stone Palace, and the people began building houses without a wall²⁶."

2.3. Errors in Determining the Date of Marrakesh's Foundation

Some historians nevertheless erred in determining the date of Marrakesh's foundation. Among them was the author of *al-Qirṭās*, who states:

"The year 454 AH began, and in it the power of Yūsuf ibn Tāshfīn in the Maghreb grew stronger and his fame increased. In that year, he purchased the site on which Marrakesh was to be founded from those among the Maṣmūda who owned it. He settled there in hair tents, built a mosque for prayer and a small fortress to store his wealth and weapons, but did not build a wall around it.²⁷"

Among the historical arguments and proofs is the conclusion reached by the modern historian Aḥmad Mukhtār al-'Abbādī concerning the date of Marrakesh's construction. Relying on Moroccan sources, he states that Abū 'Ubayd al-Bakrī, who completed his book in 460 AH / 1067 CE, made no mention whatsoever of Marrakesh or Yūsuf ibn Tāshfīn. He only stated briefly: "The amir of the Almoravids to this day, namely the year 460 AH, is Abū Bakr ibn 'Umar; their affairs are scattered and not united, and their residence is in the desert."²⁸

This means that the city had not yet been built before 460 AH, for al-Bakrī would

not have neglected to mention a city of the stature of Marrakesh, nor would he have overlooked a figure of the stature of Yūsuf ibn Tāshfīn. Al-Bakrī's silence therefore supports the account of Ibn 'Idhārī and the author of *al-Ḥulal al-Mawshiyya*, according to which Marrakesh was built in 462 AH / 1069 CE, two years after al-Bakrī had completed his book. Had the account of the author of *al-Qirṭās* been correct, al-Bakrī would not have omitted it, especially given that the matter concerned the capital of the Almoravids. The accounts of Ibn 'Idhārī and *al-Ḥulal al-Mawshiyya* are therefore the more accurate, since they are derived from the most reliable local sources contemporary with the Almoravid period²⁹.

In the same context, we may add an important observation made by Professor 'Abd al-Qādir Būbāya, the editor of the manuscript *Mafākhīr al-Barbar*. He also noted the error made by the author of the manuscript, stating:

"Among the errors found in the manuscript is the date of the construction of Marrakesh, for the author says: 'In the year 475 AH, Yūsuf ibn Tāshfīn began the construction of Marrakesh'³⁰."

The editor, relying on the account of the author of *al-Bayān*, states that "he began building it in 462 AH."³¹ He adds that the same date is given by the author of *al-Ḥulal al-Mawshiyya*, who writes: "Its construction began in 462 AH at the hands of the amir Abū Bakr ibn 'Umar, and Yūsuf ibn Tāshfīn later completed the project."³²

Finally, on the basis of the texts presented, we may conclude that when Yaḥyā ibn 'Umar began the construction of Marrakesh in 462 AH / 1070 CE, he did not complete it, since he soon left after receiving news of the conflict that had broken out in the desert. He appointed Yūsuf ibn Tāshfīn over the lands of the Maghreb, and Yūsuf later completed the city in successive stages³³.

The city wall was built during the reign of the amir 'Alī ibn Yūsuf ibn Tāshfīn in 522 AH, on the advice of the consulting jurist Abū al-Walīd ibn Rushd. 'Alī ibn Yūsuf had summoned him from Córdoba to conclude

the pledge of allegiance for his son Tāshfīn ibn 'Alī. The jurist Abū al-Walīd said to him: "It is not permissible for you to reside in this city without a wall while the enemy is near," by which he meant, God knows best, al-Mahdī and 'Abd al-Mu'min. Expenditure on the wall reached nearly seventy thousand dinars, and on the mosque nearly sixty thousand dinars. Before that, the city had been built of mudbrick³⁴. This explains that Marrakesh, like other Islamic cities, was built in stages in accordance with political, military, and security circumstances.

2.4. The Political Development of Marrakesh during the Almohads Period

The city of Marrakesh underwent significant political, urban, and cultural development after it came under the rule of the Almohad state³⁵. Important details concerning this transition are provided by Ibn al-Athir in *al-Kamil fī al-Tarikh*, where he describes the circumstances in which Marrakesh passed into Almohad hands. In a lengthy account of the events of 541 AH/1147 CE, entitled "'Abd al-Mu'min's Conquest of the City of Marrakesh"³⁶

"When 'Abd al-Mu'min had finished with Fez and its surrounding regions, he marched to Marrakesh, which was the seat of the kingdom of the Veiled People and one of the largest and greatest cities. Its ruler at that time was Ishāq ibn 'Alī ibn Yūsuf ibn Tāshfīn, who was a young boy. He besieged it. His encampment around it took place in the year 541 AH. He pitched his tents to its west on a small mountain, built upon it a city for himself and his army, built a mosque there, and constructed for himself a high building."

Regarding the social, economic, and urban conditions that Marrakesh experienced after its fall into Almohad hands, al-Marrākushī reports:

"'Abd al-Mu'min, may God have mercy on him, remained in Marrakesh, organizing matters related to kingship: building houses, establishing palaces, preparing weapons, bringing down those who resisted, showing kindness to the subjects, and other such matters³⁷."

When the traveler Ibn Baṭṭūṭa visited Marrakesh at the beginning of the eighth century AH / fourteenth century CE, he described it as:

"One of the most beautiful cities, spacious in its quarters, wide in its regions, and abundant in goods. It contains great mosques, including its grand mosque known as the Mosque of the Kutubiyyīn, with its immense and wondrous minaret. I climbed it, and from it the city appeared before me. Marrakesh also contains the remarkable madrasa distinguished by its fine layout and masterful craftsmanship, built by our master, the Commander of the Muslims Abū al-Ḥasan, may God be pleased with him."

Thus, Marrakesh entered a new period of construction and prosperity after passing into the hands of the Almohads. They gave it great attention, made it the capital of the Far Maghreb, and transformed it into one of the most important urban centers of the Islamic West, until it came to be described as the "Baghdad of the Maghreb."³⁸

CONCLUSION

The historical evidence examined in this study indicates that Ibn al-Athir's accounts concerning the foundation of both Ashir and Marrakesh are brief and incomplete and, in certain respects, lack sufficient chronological precision. This is particularly evident in relation to the dates assigned to the foundation of the two cities. Some later historians who followed his account, including the author of *Rawd al-Qirtas*, consequently reproduced interpretations that do not fully accord with the broader body of historical evidence.

By comparing the available historical indications and examining the narratives preserved in the works of early historians alongside the views of modern scholars, it has been possible to identify the dates that appear most consistent with the historical circumstances surrounding the establishment of Ashir and Marrakesh.

Although Ashir is now largely an archaeological ruin, it once occupied an important place in the political and urban history of the Central Maghreb. Historically,

it contributed to the development of a wider network of urban centres, including Algiers, Miliana, Médéa, and Madiouna. These cities subsequently experienced their own processes of political development and urban and cultural prosperity, eventually becoming important centres within the Central Maghreb.

Marrakesh, for its part, passed through several major phases in its urban and political history. Under the Almoravids, it was founded and acquired its identity as an Islamic city and political centre. Under the Almohads, it entered a new phase of construction and prosperity. The Almohad rulers devoted considerable attention to its development and maintained it as a major capital and one of the principal urban centres

of the Far Maghreb.

In conclusion, the sources of medieval Islamic history provide invaluable evidence for reconstructing the development of cities in the Islamic West. The textual examples examined here demonstrate how security considerations, religious and ideological factors, and economic and social conditions influenced the foundation, planning, and spatial organisation of urban centres. These factors, in turn, contributed to their subsequent political development and cultural prosperity. Over time, cities such as Ashir and Marrakesh emerged as major urban centres whose political and cultural importance gave them a significant place in the history and civilisation of the medieval Islamic Maghreb.

Referrals and References

many people search for the basis and derivation of this word, though it is not known among the Arabs. It is said that the Arabs applied it to this group, and it is also said that this group gave it to themselves and agreed upon it. It is also said that it derives from Zānā ibn Jānā..." *al-Ibar*, vol. 7, p. 7. The name was altered until it came to be pronounced Zanāta. See *al-Ibar*, vol. 7, p. 7 and following pages.

⁵Zirī ibn Manād (d. 335 AH / 946 CE) was one of the sons of Manād, chief of the Talkāta branch of the great Ṣanhāja confederation. He was killed by Ja'far ibn 'Alī, ruler of M'sila and the Zāb, in 360 AH. He was succeeded by his son Bulukkīn ibn Zirī ibn Manād. See Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, vol. 2, p. 242; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, vol. 24, p. 90; Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Ibar*, vol. 6, p. 205.

⁶*al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 333.

⁷See the poem cited by al-Bakri, in which Zirī, the founder of Ashir, is mentioned by name: *al-Maghrib fī Dhikr Ifriqiyya wa-l-Maghrib*, p. 60.

⁸Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 333.

⁹Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, vol. 24, p. 88

¹⁰Al-Bakri, previously cited work, p. 60.

¹¹For further details on the history of archaeological research on Ashir, see Rachid Bourouiba, *Mudun Mundathira* [Lost Cities], previously cited work, pp. 89–94. See also: G. Marçais, *L'Architecture musulmane d'Occident*, Paris, 1957; L. Golvin, *Le Maghreb central à l'époque des Zirides*; and S. Gsell, *Atlas archéologique de l'Algérie*, 1911.

¹Muhammad 'Abd al-Rahman al-Jilali, *Tarikh al-Jaza'ir al-'Amm* [General History of Algeria], vol. 1, Sharikat Dar al-Umma, Algiers, 8th ed., p. 292; Rachid Bourouiba, *Mudun Mundathira: Tahert, Sedrata, Ashir wa Qal'at Bani Hammad* [Lost Cities: Tahert, Sedrata, Ashir and Qal'at Bani Hammad], Algerian Ministry of Culture, 2nd ed., 2013, pp. 75–76.

²Ibn Khaldun, *Kitab al-Ibar*, vol. 6, p. 203.

³The Banū Zirī belonged to Ṣanhāja. Historians agree that they were Arabs from the Ḥimyarites of Yemen, not Berbers. See the poem included by al-Nuwayrī, quoting Ibn Shaddād, author of *al-Jam' bayna al-Uṣūl wa-l-Bayān fī Akhbār al-Maghrib wa-l-Qayrawān*, in *Nihāyat al-Arab*, vol. 24, pp. 85–88.

⁴The name Zanāta goes back to the Roman period. It was borne by a person named Claudius Zenatus. See Muḥammad ibn 'Amīra, *Dawr Zanāta fī al-Ḥaraka al-Madhabīyya bi-l-Maghrib al-Islāmī*, National Book Foundation, Algeria, 1984, p. 15. The name may also derive from Zāna, the ruins of a city southeast of Constantine.

See: Gsell, S., *Atlas historique de l'Algérie*, special ed., Paris, 1911. Cauvet, C. T., "L'origine des Zénata," *Bulletin provisoire de la Société de Géographie d'Alger et de l'Afrique du Nord*, 2nd quarter, 1942, p. 10.

During the Islamic period, Zanāta became a large tribe; see the previous source, pp. 54–57. As for Ibn Khaldūn's discussion of the name Zanāta and the structure of the word, he states: "Know that

¹²Rachid Bourouiba, *Mudun Mundathira* [Lost Cities], p. 81.

¹³Rashīd Būrūwība, *Mudun Mundathira*, p. 81.

¹⁴Al-Bakrī, *ibid*, p. 60.

¹⁵*al-ʿIbar*, vol. 6, p. 204.

¹⁶For further information on the historical, political, and urban development of Ashīr, see the remaining volumes of *al-Kāmilfī al-Tārīkh*, for example vol. 8, pp. 8-9. For a brief history of archaeological research, see Rashīd Būrūwība, *Mudun Mundathira*, previous reference, pp. 89-94.

See also: G. Marçais, *L'architecture musulmane de l'Occident*, Paris, 1957. L. Golvin, *Le Maghreb central à l'époque des Zirides*.

S. Gsell, *Atlas archéologique*, 1911

¹⁷Ibn Khaldūn, *al-ʿIbar*, vol. 6, pp. 204, 206, and vol. 7, p. 27.

¹⁸Ibn Khallikan, *Wafayat al-Aʿyan*, vol. 7, p. 113; SaʿdunʿAbbas Nasr Allah, *Dawlat al-Murabitin fi al-Maghrib wa-l-Andalus: ʿAhd Yūsuf ibn Tashfīn Amir al-Murabitin* [The Almoravid State in the Maghreb and al-Andalus during the Reign of Yūsuf ibn Tashfīn, Amir of the Almoravids], Dar al-Nahda al-ʿArabiyya, Beirut, 1st ed., 1405 AH/1985 CE, pp. 173-174.

¹⁹These tribes belonged to Lamtūna. They were the descendants of Lamt, Judāla, Lamt, and Mastūf, and belonged to branches of the great Ṣanhāja confederation. See Anonymous, *al-Ḥulal al-Mawshiyyaḥfī Dhikr al-Akhbār al-Marrākushiyya*, ed. Suhayl Zakkār and ʿAbd al-Qādir Zamāma, Dār al-Rashād al-Ḥadītha, Casablanca, 1st ed., 1399 AH / 1979 CE, p. 17 and following pages. On the Almoravid state of the veiled people, see *al-Kāmilfī al-Tārīkh*, under the heading "The Beginning of the State of the Veiled People," *ibid*, vol. 8, pp. 327-329.

²⁰Yūsuf ibn Tāshfīn (400-500 AH / 1009-1106 CE) was Yūsuf ibn Tāshfīn ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Tūrquṭ ibn Wartāqaṭan al-Ṣanhājī al-Ḥimyarī. He assumed authority over the Maghreb from 463 AH, administered affairs, and established royal power. He is considered one of the greatest leaders in Islamic history. See Anonymous, *al-Ḥulal al-Mawshiyya*, pp. 24-28.

²¹Al-Sūs: The land of al-Sūs lies south of Marrakesh. It contains flourishing villages, rivers, and cultivated lands. See Ibn Khaldūn, *al-ʿIbar*, vol. 6, p. 131.

²²Al-Maṣmūda: A tribe inhabiting the mountains of the Far Maghreb. See the same source, vol. 6, p. 133.

²³*al-Kāmilfī al-Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 330.

²⁴Aghmāt: A city in the Maghreb. According to *al-Rawḍ al-Miʿtār*, Aghmāt consisted of two cities whose inhabitants were Berbers. One was called AghmātWarīka, and the other AghmātHaylāna. The distance between them was about eight miles. In AghmātWarīka lived the notables, and merchants lodged there. See al-Ḥimyarī, *al-Rawḍ al-Miʿtār*, p. 46.

²⁵Anonymous, *al-Ḥulal al-Mawshiyyaḥfī Dhikr al-Akhbār al-Marrākushiyya*, pp. 15-16.

²⁶*al-Bayān al-Mughrib* (The Almohad State), ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās, Dār al-Thaqāfa, Beirut, 3rd ed., 1983, vol. 3, p. 16.

²⁷Ibn Abī Zarʿ, ʿAlī al-Fāsī (d. 741 AH / 1340 CE), *al-Anīs al-Muṭrib bi-Rawḍ al-Qirṭāsfi Akhbār Mulūk al-Maghrib wa-TārīkhMadīnatFās*, reviewed by ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ibn Manṣūr, Historian of the Kingdom, 1st ed., Royal Press, Rabat, 1420 AH / 1999 CE, p. 175.

²⁸*Kitāb al-Maghrib fī Dhikr Bilād Ifrīqiya wa-l-Maghrib*, p. 170.

²⁹AḥmadMukhtār al-ʿAbbādī, *FīTārīkh al-Maghrib wa-l-Andalus*, p. 323.

³⁰Al-Īlānī, Ṣāliḥ ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm al-Maṣmūdī, *Mafākhīr al-Barbar*, study and edition by ʿAbd al-Qādir Būbāya, Muʿassasat al-Balāgh li-l-Nashr wa-l-Dirāsātwa-l-Abḥāth, Algeria, 2013 ed., p. 90.

³¹Ibn ʿIdhārī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, vol. 3, p. 16; *Mafākhīr al-Barbar*, p. 90.

³²Anonymous, *al-Ḥulal al-Mawshiyya*, pp. 15-16; *Mafākhīr al-Barbar*, p. 90.

³³Muḥammad al-Amīn Balghīth, *NazarātftTārīkh al-Gharb al-Islāmī*, Dār al-Khaldūniyya, Algeria, 1428 AH / 2007 CE, p. 62. See footnote no. 1 on the same page: E. Lévi-Provençal, "La Fondation de Marrakech (462/1070)," *Mélanges d'Histoire et d'Archéologie de l'Occident Musulman*, vol. 2, Imprimerie Officielle, Algiers, p. 118. Gaston Deverdun, *Marrakech des origines à 1912*, Édition Technique Nord-Africaine, Rabat, 1992, pp. 51-70.

³⁴*Mafākhīr al-Barbar*, pp. 176-177.

Anonymous, *al-Ḥulal al-Mawshiyya*, p. 16.

³⁵The Almohad state was established in 541-642 AH / 1147-1244 CE after the political revolt led by al-Mahdī ibn Tūmart, who received the pledge of allegiance in 515 AH / 1120 CE. See ʿAbd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī, *al-Muʿjib*, p. 254 and following pages; Anonymous, *al-Ḥulal al-Mawshiyya*, pp. 106-108. The state lasted for a

century and a half and reached such territorial expansion, prosperity, and power that it became one of the greatest states in Islamic history. See ‘Abd al-Majīd al-Najjār, *al-Mahdī ibn Tūmart: Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Maghribī al-Sūsī, al-Mutawaffāsanat 524 AH / 1129 CE, Ḥayātuhu wa-Ārā’uhuwa-Thawratuhu al-Fikriyya wa-l-Ijtimā’iyyawa-Atharuhu bi-l-Maghrib*, Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1st ed., 1403 AH / 1984 CE, pp. 377-378.

³⁶Abd al-Mu’min ibn ‘Ali al-Kumi (487–558 AH) assumed leadership of the Almohads after Ibn Tumart and received the allegiance of the Masmuda tribes. On the conquest of Marrakesh, see ‘Abd al-Wahid al-Marrakushi, previously cited work, vol. 2, pp. 265–276.

³⁷*al-Mu’jibfiTalkhīṣAkhbār al-Maghrib*, p. 276.

³⁸*al-Ḥulal al-Mawshiyya*, p. 4.