



## Ibn Ṭufayl's *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*: An Almohad Reading\*

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### ABSTRACT

Ibn Ṭufayl's (d. 581/1185) connection with Almohad rulers and involvement in the Almohad doctrinal and intellectual project has been addressed by Nemesio Morata and Lawrence Conrad, among others. Conrad argues that Ibn Ṭufayl belonged to the newly created Almohad elites, the *ṭalaba*, the empire's doctrinarians. Morata analyses the famous passage where Ibn Ṭufayl presents Ibn Rushd al-Hafid (Averroes) to the then prince Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf – who would become the second Almohad caliph (r. 558/1163–580/1184) – when the young philosopher was commissioned to write his commentaries on Aristotle. Ibn Ṭufayl's *Risālat Ḥayy b. Yaqzān* has, however, rarely been analysed in the Almohad context in which it was written, despite being one of the earliest works written under Almohad rule. Here I propose precisely such a reading of the text, showing Sufism, philosophy and politics as inextricably linked. This proposal, with its specific identification of the two main characters of the *Risāla*, Ḥayy and Absāl, considers the needs that the new polity had at the time to develop a post-Messianic orientation that would preserve the loyalty of the first followers (Berber-speaking tribesmen from the Maghrib), while attracting the urbanized Andalus and, more importantly, their scholarly elites.

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The Andalusī Ibn Ṭufayl (d. 581/1185) wrote a famous philosophical novel whose central character, Ḥayy b. Yaqzān, is a child who grew up alone on a deserted island initially being taken care of by a gazelle. As years passed, by the power of his intellect and through the contemplation of nature, Ḥayy reached an understanding of God that was both philosophical and mystical. Another character, Absāl (Asāl), whose knowledge had been acquired from others, arrived in the island in search of solitude and enlightenment. Absāl taught Ḥayy human language, and then realized that he who appeared to be a 'savage' in fact possessed the superior knowledge Absāl was striving to achieve. The pair then attempted to teach it to the inhabitants of the neighbouring island from where Absāl had come, but they soon became convinced that their fellow humans were not able to

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understand it as they could only follow rhetorical or dialectical discourses according to their intellectual abilities. Eventually, they returned to the deserted island.

Ibn Ṭufayl lived when al-Andalus was part of the Almoravid and subsequently the Almohad empires. It was in Almohad times that he wrote his novel. While there is no evidence that he had any connection with the Almoravid rulers, Ibn Ṭufayl rose to prominence with the second Almohad caliph, Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf (r. 558/1163–580/1184) – with whom he had already had close contact when the latter was a prince – acting as one of his close advisors and as his doctor. Ibn Ṭufayl’s connection with the Almohads has been dealt with by Nemesio Morata and Lawrence I. Conrad, among other scholars.<sup>1</sup> Conrad has convincingly argued for Ibn Ṭufayl’s membership in the newly created Almohad elites, the *ṭalaba*, who acted as the doctrinarians of the empire.<sup>2</sup> Morata analysed the passage found in ‘Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī’s *Kitāb al-Mu‘jib*,<sup>3</sup> according to which Ibn Ṭufayl presented Ibn Rushd al-Ḥafīd (Averroes) to the then prince Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf and a philosophical discussion between them ensued that put Ibn Rushd at ease when he realized that the prince had knowledge of philosophical matters. This meeting eventually led to Ibn Rushd being charged by Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf with writing his commentaries on Aristotle, a commission Ibn Ṭufayl had rejected because of his advanced age and his many other occupations.<sup>4</sup>

However, the connection with the Almohad context has been overlooked by scholars dealing with Ibn Ṭufayl’s novel *Risālat Ḥayy b. Yaqzān*, with some exceptions,<sup>5</sup> despite its being one of the earliest works written under Almohad rule by a scholar who was at the service of the Mu‘minid caliphs. I use the terms ‘Almohad’ and ‘Mu‘minid’ interchangeably: the first term refers to their doctrinal position of uncompromising belief in God’s unity (*tawḥīd*), while the second refers to their dynastic affiliation, as they were descendants of ‘Abd al-Mu‘min, the successor of the Maḥdī Ibn Tūmart, founder of the Almohad movement. It is in fact generally assumed that Ibn Ṭufayl wrote his novel around the year 555/1160, some thirty years after the death of Ibn Tūmart (d. 524/1130), and during the reign of ‘Abd al-Mu‘min (r. 524/1130–558/1163), who established the Mu‘minid dynasty of Almohad caliphs.<sup>6</sup>

What follows is a proposal that *Risālat Ḥayy b. Yaqzān* be read as a work in which not only mysticism and philosophy, but also contemporary politics, are inextricably linked. In such a reading – in which a specific identification is proposed for the two main

<sup>1</sup>Such as Avner Ben-Zaken, *Reading Hayy Ibn-Yaqzān: A Cross-Cultural History of Autodidacticism* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), who does not fully succeed in providing a historical contextualization. See the review by Nicolai Sinai in *Journal of Islamic Studies* 24, no. 1 (2013): 77–80.

<sup>2</sup>Lawrence I. Conrad, ‘An Andalusian Physician at the Court of the Muwahḥids: Some Notes on the Public Career of Ibn Ṭufayl’, *Al-Qanṭara* 16 (1995): 3–14. I shall come back to the *ṭalaba* below.

<sup>3</sup>See below note 8.

<sup>4</sup>Nemesio Morata, ‘La presentación de Averroes en la corte almohade’, *La Ciudad de Dios* 153 (1941): 101–22.

<sup>5</sup>Such as Dominique Urvoy in his ‘The Rationality of Everyday Life: An Andalusian Tradition? (A propos of Ḥayy’s First Experiences)’, in *The World of Ibn Ṭufayl: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Lawrence I. Conrad (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 39–51: he proposes to see in the novel the attempt to blend Ibn Tūmart’s abstract conception of God with Andalusī empiricism.

<sup>6</sup>Apart from the works attributed to Ibn Tūmart, especially his creeds, and the Almohad letters by ‘Abd al-Mu‘min, in those thirty years the Almohad intellectual production does not seem to have been abundant. As regards the production of Andalusī scholars linked to the Almohad polity, Ibn Ṭufayl’s work was preceded by Ibn Rushd’s first legal work, *al-Ḍarūrī fi al-fiqh* (a summary of al-Ghazālī’s *al-Mustaṣfā*), written in 552/1157. Around the same time, Ibn Rushd started writing his work on medicine *al-Kulliyāt*, which he completed between 556/1162 and 565/1169. I am currently preparing a study of the works written during the Almohad period and the transformations in the Almohad religious and intellectual project that can be deduced from them.

characters of the *Risāla*, Ḥayy and Absāl – I pay attention to the needs that the Almohad caliphs had at the time the novel was written to develop a post-Messianic orientation that would preserve the loyalty of Ibn Tūmart’s first followers (Berber-speaking tribesmen from the mountains in the Maghrib), while also attracting that of the urbanized Andalus and their scholarly elites for whom the Mahdī Ibn Tūmart was an alien figure. I shall start by reviewing Ibn Ṭufayl’s biography in the context of his times and then move on to the issues of why he wrote the philosophical novel that made him famous<sup>7</sup> and how it might have been read by his contemporaries.

### Ibn Ṭufayl’s life and works in their historical context<sup>8</sup>

Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Malik b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Ṭufayl al-Qaysī was born towards the beginning of the sixth/twelfth century<sup>9</sup> in Guadix (the villages of Tījola or Purchena, now in the province of Almería, have also been proposed) and died in Marrakech in 581/1185-6. He lived in Guadix (Wādī Āsh) and Graena (Jilyān) – now in the province of Granada – and thus was known by the *nisbas* al-Wādiāshī

<sup>7</sup>For the afterlife of Ibn Ṭufayl’s work, see Ben Zaken, *Reading Ḥayy Ibn-Yaqzān*; Samar Attar, *The Vital Roots of European Enlightenment: Ibn Tufayl’s Influence on Modern Western Thought* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007); Murad Idris, “Producing Islamic Philosophy: The Life and Afterlives of Ibn Ṭufayl’s *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān* in Global History”, *European History of Political Theory* 15, no. 4 (2016): 382–403.

<sup>8</sup>Data on Ibn Ṭufayl’s biography are found in Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt (d. after 594/1197), *al-Mann bi-l-imāma*, ed. ‘Abd al-Hādī al-Tāzī (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1964), 410 (Spanish translation by A. Huici Miranda [Valencia: Anubar, 1969], 163); ‘Abd al-Wāhid al-Marrākushī (d. after 621/1224), *Kitāb al-mu’jib fi talkhiṣ akhbār al-Maghrib*, ed. R. Dozy, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1881), 172–4 (Spanish translation by A. Huici Miranda [Tetouan: Editora Marroquí, 1955], 194–5); al-Shaqundī (d. 629/1232), *Risāla fi faḍl al-Andalus*, trans. E. García Gómez, *Elogio del Islam español* (Madrid: E. Maestre, 1934), 55; Ibn Dihya (d. 633/1235), *al-Muṭrib min ash’ār ahl al-Maghrib*, ed. ‘Abd al-Rahmān Badawī, Ibrāhīm al-Ibyārī and Ḥamid ‘Abd al-Majid (Cairo: Wizārat al-Tarbiya, 1954), 66–7; Ibn al-Abbār (d. 658/1260), *Tuhfat al-qādim*, ed. I. ‘Abbās (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1986), 96–9 n° 43; Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Balaḥīqī (d. 661/1262), *al-Muqtaḍab min Kitāb tuhfat al-qādim*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Ibyārī, 2nd ed. (Cairo/Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya, 1402/1982), 125–6; Ibn Khallikān (d. 681/1282), *Wafayāt al-a’yān wa-anbā’ abnā’ al-zamān*, ed. Iḥsān ‘Abbās, 8 vols (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1971-2), 7: 134, n° 845 [388]; Ibn Sa’id (d. 685/1286), *al-Mughrib fi ḥulā al-Maghrib*, ed. Shawqī Dayf, 2 vols (Cairo: Dār al-Ma’ārif, 1953-55), 2: 85–6, n° 403; Ibn ‘Abd al-Malik al-Marrākushī (d. 702/1302), *al-Dhayl wa-l-Takmila li-kitābay al-Mawṣūl wa-l-Sīla*, 8 vols (Beirut, s.d.-1984), 6: 407, n° 1089; (Rabat: al-Matba’a al-malakiyya, 1974-1983), vol. 4, 117-20, n° 509; Ismā’il Bāshā al-Baghḍādī, *Hadiyyat al-‘arifin: Asmā’ al-mu’allifin wa-āthār al-muṣannifin*, 2 vols (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 1992; repr. Istanbul, 1951), 2: 98, s.v. Ibn Tufayl, and 2: 100, s.v. al-Wādī Āshī. Studies on Ibn Ṭufayl’s life have been carried out by Francisco Pons Boigues, *Ensayo bio-bibliográfico sobre los historiadores y geógrafos árabe-españoles* (Madrid: S. F. de Sales, 1898; facsimile edition: Madrid: Ollero & Ramos, 1993), 252, n° 203; Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur*, 2 vols + 3 vols: Supplementenbänden, 2nd ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1943–1949), 1: 460; *Sl*, 831–2; Ángel González Palencia, *Historia de la literatura árabe-española*, 2nd revised ed. (Barcelona: Labor, 1945), 234–8; Khayr al-Dīn al-Zirikli, *al-A’lām*, 2nd ed. ([s.l.], 1954–1959), 6: 249; ‘Umar Ridā Kahhāla, *Mu’jam al-mu’allifin*, 15 vols (Beirut: Maktabat al-Mutannā, 1957–1961), 10: 259; B. Carra de Vaux, ‘Ibn Ṭufayl’, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1st ed.; B. Carra de Vaux, ‘Ibn Ṭufayl’, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.; León Gauthier, *Ibn Thofail, sa vie, ses oeuvres* (Paris: Leroux, 1909); Conrad, ‘Andalusian Physician’; L.E. Goodman, ‘Ibn Tufayl’, in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. S.H. Nasr and O. Leaman, 2 vols (London: Routledge, 1996), 313–29; Émile Fricaud, ‘Les talaba dans la société almohade (Le temps d’Averroès)’, *Al-Qanṭara* 18 (1997): 385–6; *Ibn Ṭufayl Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdalmalik ibn Muḥammad* (d. 581/1185): *Texts and Studies*, collected and reprinted by Fuat Sezgin in collaboration with Mazen Amawi, Carl Ehrig-Eggert and Echart Neubauer (Frankfurt am Main: Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, 1999); J. M. Puerta Vilchez and J. Lirola Delgado, ‘Ibn Ṭufayl, Abū Bakr’, in *Biblioteca de al-Andalus*, vol. 5: *De Ibn Sa’āda a Ibn Wuhayb*, ed. Jorge Lirola Delgado (Almería: Fundación Ibn Tufayl de Estudios Árabes, 2007), 498-503, n° 1260; Taneli Kukkonen, *Ibn Tufayl* (London: OneWorld, 2014); Taneli Kukkonen, ‘Ibn Tufayl’, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* Three. This information has been taken from *Historia de los Autores y Transmisores de al-Andalus (HATA)*, dir. M. Fierro, available online at <http://kohepocu.cchs.csic.es/>.

<sup>9</sup>The dates that have been proposed are 494/1100-1 and ca. 510/1116, but they remain speculative.

and al-Jiljānī. His tribal *nisba* al-Qaysī is the same as that adopted by the Almohad caliphs. The Almohad/Mu'minid caliphate started with the Zanāta Berber 'Abd al-Mu'min, one of the Mahdī Ibn Tūmart's students, whose claims to the caliphate forced him to acquire a Northern Arab genealogy. The choice fell on Qays 'Aylān, which included the Banū Quraysh as well as the Banū Sulaym and the Banū Hilāl, the Arab tribes that 'Abd al-Mu'min had defeated at the battle of Sétif (now Algeria) in 548/1153 and which he later incorporated into the original Berber Almohad army. As the anonymous author of the *Kitāb al-ansāb* concluded: 'The Qays are people of a lineage chosen for prophecy [a reference to the Arab prophet Khālid b. Sinān], and thus with greater reason are worthy to be people of a lineage chosen for the caliphate', and thus the Qaysī lineage attributed to 'Abd al-Mu'min, combined with genealogical links with Quraysh through cognatic lines, incorporated him into a network of merit and excellence including justice, truth, militancy for God, prophecy, caliphate, conquest, righteousness, religious knowledge, generosity, respect for the pious and those devoted to religious study, and dominion over both Arabs and non-Arabs.<sup>10</sup> Ibn Ṭufayl's father is already known to have had the *nisba* al-Qaysī,<sup>11</sup> which established a kinship link between Ibn Ṭufayl and the first Almohad caliph. One can speculate about the extent to which Ibn Ṭufayl was influential in suggesting to 'Abd al-Mu'min the adoption of this *nisba* or whether it facilitated his entry at the caliph's service if it had already been adopted by 'Abd al-Mu'min.

The Almohad movement had originated in the region south of Marrakech, when that town was the capital of the Almoravid empire. It was headed by a Mašmūda Berber called Ibn Tūmart who was proclaimed Mahdī (he became known as *al-imām al-ma'sūm al-mahdī al-ma'lūm*) which eventually meant that a Prophetic lineage (Quraysh) was attributed to him. Ibn Tūmart started a rebellion against the Almoravids, accusing them of anthropomorphism, and in the name of uncompromising belief in God's unity (*tawhīd*), hence the name of his followers (*al-muwahhīdūn*, from which Almohad derives). In this way, Ibn Tūmart's rebellion was legitimized as a jihad against infidels. Ibn Tūmart was succeeded by his pupil, the same Zanāta Berber 'Abd al-Mu'min, who was from the area of Tlemcen. Ibn Tūmart and 'Abd al-Mu'min had met near Bijaya (Bougie, in present-day Algeria), when 'Abd al-Mu'min was travelling to the East in search of knowledge and Ibn Tūmart is said to have been on his way back from the East to his native village Igiliz, in the extreme Maghrib. There, Ibn Tūmart is said to have studied with al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), but there is no evidence of this contact that is independent from Almohad sources, and its chronological impossibility has

<sup>10</sup>For a more extensive treatment of this complex issue see Maribel Fierro, 'Las genealogías de 'Abd al-Mu'min, primer califa almohade', *Al-Qanṭara* 24 (2003): 77–108. The anonymous pro-Almohad *Kitāb al-ansāb* is included in Ms Escorial 1919. The text has been edited by Évariste Lévi-Provençal in *Textes arabes relatifs à l'histoire de l'Occident musulman*, vol. 1, *Documents inédits d'histoire almohade (Fragments manuscrits du 'legajo' 1919 arabe de l'Escorial)* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1928), 22–4 Arabic text, 33–5 French translation.

<sup>11</sup>The biography of Ibn Ṭufayl's father is found in Ibn 'Abd al-Malik al-Marrākushī, *al-Dhayl wa-l-Takmila*, vol. 1/2, 439, n° 654. Given that he is mentioned in a source from Almohad times, we do not know if he has the *nisba* al-Qaysī because of his son. If that was the case, Ibn Ṭufayl may have acquired the *nisba* for his services to the Almohad caliphs. In other words, Ibn Ṭufayl's *nisba* would reflect a process similar to that which took place in the early period of Islam when the clients (*mawālī*) acquired the *nisbas* of their patrons, given that the Almohad caliphs regarded the inhabitants of conquered territories as their slaves. While this possibility remains open, I here consider that the Banū Ṭufayl were Qaysīs before Almohad times. The *nisba* is well attested in al-Andalus throughout the centuries, but especially in Almohad times, as can be ascertained by consulting the *Prosopografía de los Ulemas Andalusies*, directed by María Luisa Ávila and Luis Molina at <https://www.eea.csic.es/pua/>.

been highlighted by many scholars.<sup>12</sup> While al-Ghazālī had a substantive role in the thought of Ibn Tūmart's contemporaries such as the Andalusī al-Ṭurtūshī (d. 520/1126) and Abū Bakr b. al-ʿArabī (d. 543/1148), and Ibn Ḥirzihim (d. 559/1164) in Fez, among others, his connection with the Almohads' movement was established at a later stage, when the drive that had led to their victory and to the conquest of an empire had to be translated into something familiar to the scholars of the Islamic West. In other words, al-Ghazālī's role in the Almohad experience was not original but mostly symbolic and served to rally the support of those who had been attracted by his doctrines (even if they were critical of some aspects) and who felt disappointed when the Almoravids failed to embrace them in depth.<sup>13</sup>

ʿAbd al-Muʿmin abandoned his plan of studying in the East once he realized that the *ʿilm* he sought to acquire was in Ibn Tūmart's possession and that the West (*al-maghrib*) offered him what he wanted and needed. ʿAbd al-Muʿmin then decided to follow his teacher to Igiliz in the anti-Atlas mountains and later to Tinmal in the Atlas Mountains, moving nearer to Marrakech. From Tinmal, the Almohads launched a series of attacks against the Almoravids. Ibn Tūmart died in 524/1130 and ʿAbd al-Muʿmin continued the fight, having been acknowledged as the Mahdī's successor by the Berber Almohad tribes.

ʿAbd al-Muʿmin conquered parts of what are now Morocco and Algeria, and finally, in 541/1147, Marrakech fell into his hands. In that same year, an Almohad army crossed the Straits of Gibraltar and took Jerez, Niebla, Silves, Beja, Badajoz, Mértola and Seville, one after the other. Cordoba was conquered two years later. In 544/1149, ʿAbd al-Muʿmin carried out a great 'purge' (*ī tirāf*) among the Almohad tribes that had shown unrest.<sup>14</sup> Between 546/1151–551/1156, he started naming his own sons as governors in the empire, thereby diminishing the power of the Almohad tribal leaders (*shuyūkh*). In 549/1154, he named one of his sons as heir apparent<sup>15</sup> and Ibn Tūmart's brothers rebelled, but were defeated and executed. By 551/1156, young men from Seville who had been trained as Almohads in Marrakech were sent back to al-Andalus to serve the needs of the empire. Their recruitment had probably been underway since 548/1153, when Ibn Rushd, then 28 years old, is known to have been in Marrakech. In 552/1157, perhaps as a means to check concerns that the decision to create the *ṭalaba* and the execution of Ibn Tūmart's brothers had emerged among the old Almohad elites, the pledge of obedience of the original Almohad tribes to ʿAbd al-Muʿmin was renewed and the caliph paid a ritual visit to Tinmal, where Ibn Tūmart had been buried and which had become a centre of pilgrimage.<sup>16</sup> Between 554/1159 and 555/1160, ʿAbd al-

<sup>12</sup>Ibn Tūmart's biography is very difficult to recover as there are no contemporary sources and those at our disposal are highly dependent on the caliphal needs of his successor ʿAbd al-Muʿmin. Archaeological excavations in Igiliz carried out in recent decades by Abdallah Fili and Jean-Pierre van Staëvel are providing us with new clues regarding the origins of the Almohad movement. On all this, see Maribel Fierro, 'El Mahdī Ibn Tūmart: Más allá de la biografía oficial', in *Política, sociedad e identidades en el Occidente islámico (siglos XI–XIV)*, ed. Miguel Angel Manzano and Rachid El Hour (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2014), 73–98, and Ahmed S. Ettahiri, Abdallah Fili and Jean-Pierre van Staëvel, 'Avant Tinmal: Notes historiques et archéologiques à propos d'Igiliz-des-Hargha, berceau du mouvement almohade', in *30 ans d'archéologie marocaine: Actes des Journées d'hommage à Madame Joudia Benslimane (INSAP, Rabat, 8 et 9 décembre 2005)* (Rabat, 2016), 326–52.

<sup>13</sup>This part is taken from Maribel Fierro, *ʿAbd al-Muʿmin: Mahdism and Caliphate in the Islamic West* [Makers of the Muslim World] (London: Oneworld, forthcoming); all the relevant references can be found there in the bibliography.

<sup>14</sup>On these and other purges among the Almohads, see Yassir Benhima, 'Du *tamyiz* à l'*ī tirāf*: Usages et légitimation du massacre au début de l'époque almohade', *Annales Islamologiques* 43 (2009) : 137–53.

<sup>15</sup>Later, this son called Muḥammad was replaced by his brother Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf.

Mu'min conquered Ifrīqiya (present-day Tunisia), expelling the Normans from al-Mahdiyya, and the first Berber empire that united the whole of the Maghrib was born.<sup>17</sup> *Risālat al-fuṣūl*, a letter sent by 'Abd al-Mu'min in 556/1161 to be read in Almohad territory, states that Ibn Tūmart's creed (*'aqīda*) had to be learned 'from its beginning to its last word on [Prophetic] miracles (*min awwālihi ilā ākhir al-qawl fī al-mu'jizāt*)'. It was around this time that Ibn Ṭufayl wrote his novel.

In its early stages, the Almohad movement had a strong Berber Nativistic character, with Berber being the language used in the call to prayer, in the prayer itself and in the teaching of Ibn Tūmart's professions of faith.<sup>18</sup> Arabic versions of such professions of faith also existed and it is only they that have come down to us. Their focus is on God's unity (*tawḥīd*), with no mention of the Prophet in the shortest version and limited reference to him in the longest.<sup>19</sup> That the way the Almohads understood their religion was different from previous Sunni Islam is made clear in the legends on the coins they minted: *Allāhu rabbunā Muḥammad rasūlunā al-mahdī imāmunā* (God is our Lord, Muhammad is our Prophet, the *mahdī* [i.e. Ibn Tūmart] is our imam), as well as in the reference to the Almohad/Mu'minid polity as *al-amr al-'azīz*, which equated Almohad rule with God's disposition to mankind.<sup>20</sup> The Almohads never claimed to be Shī'is, but in their conception of religious and political authority and in their organization they were close in many ways to the Fatimid precedent, except that they accepted the legitimacy of the first three caliphs of Islam and the Mu'minid caliphs did not claim direct paternal descent from the Prophet.<sup>21</sup>

In the years previous to the Almohad conquest of al-Andalus, around 535/1140, many Andalusī towns had revolted against the Almoravids because of their failure to stop the Christian military advance and their taxation, which was denounced as illegal. The judges, as representatives of the urban elites, came to power in towns such as Córdoba, Jaén, Málaga, Murcia and Valencia; local notables took power in other towns, as Aḥmad Ibn Milḥān – to be mentioned again below – did in Guadix. Military commanders from the frontier areas, such as Sayf al-Dawla Ibn Hūd (d. 540/1146), had also made their bid for power. The Bāṭinī thinker or philosophical mystic Ibn Qasī

<sup>16</sup>Tinnal also became also the burial ground of the caliph and his successors and acted as the main Almohad sanctuary, its pilgrimage even replacing for some time that to Mecca.

<sup>17</sup>For Ibn Tūmart and 'Abd al-Mu'min's trajectories, see Évariste Lévi-Provençal, 'Ibn Toumert et 'Abd al-Mumin: Le "fakih du Sus" et le "flambeau des Almohades"', in *Memorial Henri Basset*. 2 vols (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1928), 2: 21–37; Ambrosio Huici Miranda, *Historia política del imperio almohade*, 2 vols (Tetouan: Instituto General Franco de Estudios e Investigación Hispano-Arabe, 1956-7; repr. with preliminary study by E. Molina López and V. Oltra. 2 vols [Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2000]), 1: 23–108, and 2: 581–611, Apéndice 1: La leyenda y la historia en los orígenes del imperio almohade (previously published in *Al-Andalus* 14 [1949]: 139–76); Rachid Bourouiba, *Ibn Tūmart*, Argel: SNED, 1974; J.F.P. Hopkins, 'Ibn Tūmart', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.; 'Abd al-Majid al-Najjār, *Al-Mahdī Ibn Tūmart* (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1403/1983); Allen J. Fromherz, *The Almohads: The Rise of an Islamic Empire* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010).

<sup>18</sup>Mehdi Ghouirgate, *L'ordre almohade: Une nouvelle lecture anthropologique* (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 2014) and idem, 'Le berbère au moyen âge: Une culture linguistique en voie de reconstitution', *Annales Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 70, no. 3 (2015): 577–605.

<sup>19</sup>Henri Massé, 'La profession de foi (*'aqīda*) et les guides spirituels (*morchida*) du mahdi Ibn Toumert', in *Memorial Henri Basset*. 2 vols (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1928), 2: 105–21; Maribel Fierro, 'The Religious Policy of the Almohads', in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. Sabine Schmidtke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 679–92.

<sup>20</sup>Miguel Vega Martín, Salvador Peña Martín and Manuel C. Feria García, *El mensaje de las monedas almohades: Numismática, traducción y pensamiento* (Cuenca: Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 2002); Émile Fricaud, 'Origine de l'utilisation privilégiée du terme *amr* chez les Mu'minides almohades', *Al-Qanṭara* 23 (2002): 93–122.

<sup>21</sup>Maribel Fierro, 'The Almohads and the Fatimids', in *Ismaili and Fatimid Studies in Honor of Paul E. Walker*, ed. Bruce D. Craig (Chicago: Middle East Documentation Center, 2010), 161–75.

(d. 546/1151), active in the Algarve (southern Portugal), transformed his *murīdūn* (novices) into an army, fought the Almoravids and founded a polity.<sup>22</sup>

Ibn Qasī claimed to be *imām* and *walī Allāh* (friend of God), to be endowed with impeccability (*iṣma*) and right guidance, calling himself *mahdī* and *al-qā'im bi-amr Allah* (he who undertakes Allah's command, or he who rises by means of Allah's command). These titles appear on the coins he minted, which show many similarities with those minted by the Almohads. Michael Ebstein has shown that Ibn Qasī's doctrines exhibit the influence of the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Safā'* and of Neoplatonic concepts, but have little connection to al-Ghazālī's thought. For Ibn Qasī, as Ebstein explains, the universe is formed of various echelons that originate in God's hidden essence. Creation – a divinely written reality – is the manifestation of God's names and words, which are also contained in the Qur'an. Ibn Qasī views the Divine command as descending through the various echelons of the cosmos to the world of man, where it reaches the prophets and their heirs, the mystics. They are superior to scholars (*'ulamā'*), who have to rely on their own personal opinion, understanding and intellect, whereas mystics derive their knowledge from God via the angelic beings that populate the cosmic hierarchy. Thus, Ibn Qasī explicitly states that his *Kitāb khal' al-na'layn* is the direct product of Divine revelation. 'The light of Muhammad' (*al-nūr al-muḥammadī*) – the element that separates God's chosen ones from all others – travels through the generations and culminates in the figures of Muhammad and his heirs, both his physical and spiritual progeny – 'the strangers' (*ghurabā'*) of his community. Mystics receive 'the prophetic light and the holy spirit' (*al-nūr al-nabawī wa-al-rūḥ al-qudsī*) and through them they become related to the Prophet. Ibn Qasī – who was of *muwallad* origin, that is, a descendant of a local convert to Islam – did not claim a Prophetic genealogy as was eventually the case with Ibn Tūmart, and in his system the *awliyā' Allāh* are not chosen because of their genealogy. There is here a fundamental difference from Isma'īli doctrines, with which those of Ibn Qasī nevertheless have many similarities.<sup>23</sup>

Shortly after his rebellion, Ibn Qasī's teachers, the Sevillian mystics Ibn Barraḡān and Ibn al-ʿArīf, were called to Marrakech by the Almoravid emir and both died in suspicious circumstances in 536-7/1141-2. We have no evidence that Ibn Ṭufayl met any of these mystics, who could have been his teachers. Some of Ibn Qasī's concerns regarding the relation between God and this world can be related to themes in Ibn Ṭufayl's *Risālat Ḥayy b. Yaḡzān* and the same can be said regarding Ibn Barraḡān's exploration of *ītibār*, the crossover into the unseen world (*ghayb*) through signs of God in existence. For Ibn Barraḡān, this world and the other world are parallel and have associative correspondences. The contemplation of God's signs in nature and their reading through the intellect allows one to ascend the ladder of knowledge to grasp the divine unity (*tawḥīd*).<sup>24</sup> Such contemplation and ascent are central themes in *Risālat Ḥayy b. Yaḡzān*.

In spite of the Andalusī rejection of the Almoravids, the Almohads did not find it easy to conquer al-Andalus, as Andalusis were intent on ruling themselves and did not

<sup>22</sup>For the complex political situation of this period, see María Jesús Viguera, ed., *El retroceso territorial de al-Andalus: Almorávides y almohades: Siglos XI al XIII* [Historia de España R. Menéndez Pidal, vol. 8/2] (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1997), and the bibliography there cited.

<sup>23</sup>All that precedes is based on Michael Ebstein, 'Was Ibn Qasī a Sūfi?', *Studia Islamica* 110 (2015): 196–232.

<sup>24</sup>Yousef Casewit, *The Mystics of al-Andalus: Ibn Barraḡān and Islamic Thought in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: University Press, 2017).

welcome the arrival of the new ‘foreign’ invaders who, moreover, and contrary to the Almoravids, could not but be considered deviant because of their Mahdist beliefs and some of their practices that went against the Mālikī way of doing things that had so far prevailed in al-Andalus.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, the Almohads were not immediately successful in stopping the Christian threat. In 542/1147, Almería fell into Christian hands and was not recovered until 552/1157. More tragically, in 543/1148, the Ebro valley was lost to the Christians, never to be recovered. With the king of Portugal conquering Lisbon and Santarem and thus threatening him in his capital Mértola, Ibn Qasī sought the support of the Almohads, but later abandoned obedience to them and allied himself with the Christians, until he was assassinated by his own followers in 546/1151. The Almohads eventually took over in the lands he had controlled. In the Levantine regions, a local military man, Ibn Mardaniš, managed to resist the Almohad conquest until his death in 567/1172, but his sons later joined the Almohads and accepted their doctrines (*tawḥīd*). Many other notables of the towns conquered by the Almohads did the same, as we shall see in the case of Ibn Ṭāhir.

When the Almohad conquest of al-Andalus started, Ibn Ṭufayl was in his forties. He had studied with his father (d. after 539/1144), a scholar who specialized in qur’anic readings,<sup>26</sup> and with other teachers not only Qur’an, but also Hadith and *adab*. One of his teachers was Abū al-Faḍl Ibn Sharaf (d. 534/1140),<sup>27</sup> the son of the famous man of letters and poet Ibn Sharaf al-Qayrawānī (ca. 390/1000–460/1068 or 470/1077),<sup>28</sup> who had been at the service of the Zirids, delegates of the Fatimids in North Africa after the latter moved to Egypt. Ibn Sharaf al-Qayrawānī had emigrated to al-Andalus after the invasion of the Banū Hilāl sent by the Fatimids to punish the Zirids’ abandonment of their obedience in 440/1048-9 (these are the Qaysī Arabs who were later defeated by ‘Abd al-Mu’min at the battle of Sétif). Although regarded as Sunnis, the Banū Sharaf had been exposed to Isma‘īli doctrines and practices in their native lands. Abū al-Faḍl Ibn Sharaf, who lived in Berja (now a province of Almería), is referred to as a *fay-lasūf* (philosopher in the Greek tradition) and doctor and, of Ibn Ṭufayl’s teachers

<sup>25</sup>Maribel Fierro, ‘Doctrina y práctica jurídicas bajo los almohades’, in *Los almohades: problemas y perspectivas*, ed. P. Cressier, M. Fierro and L. Molina (Madrid: CSIC / Casa de Velázquez, 2005), 895–935.

<sup>26</sup>See above note 11.

<sup>27</sup>Ibn Khāqān (d. 535/1140), *Qalā’id al-iqyān* (Tunis: al-Maktaba al-‘Atīqa, 1966?; reprint of the Paris edition of 1277/1861), 290–9; Ibn Bassām (d. 543/1148), *al-Dhakhīra fi mahāsini ahl al-jazīra*, ed. Iḥsān ‘Abbās, 8 vols (Libya/Tunis: al-Dār al-‘Arabiyya li-l-Kitāb, 1975), 3/2: 867–86; Ibn al-Imām (d. ca. 560-9/1164-74), *Kitāb simt al-jumān wa-siqt al-adhḥān*, ed. Ḥayāt Qārra (Casablanca: Maṭba‘at al-Najāh al-Jadīda, 2002), 36–7 (9); Ibn Bashkuwāl (d. 578/1183), *Kitāb al-šīla fi ta’riḥ al-‘immat al-Andalus wa-‘ulamā’ihim*, ed. ‘Izzat al-‘Attār al-Ḥusaynī, 2 vols (Cairo: Maktab Nashr al-Thaqāfa al-Islāmiyya, 1374/1955), n° 298; al-Ḍabbī (d. 599/1203), *Kitāb bughyat al-multamis fi ta’riḥ rijāl ahl al-Andalus*, ed. Francisco Codera and Julián Ribera (Madrid: Josephum de Rojas, 1885), n° 610; Ibn Dihya, *al-Mutrib*, 66–71 (Ibn Ṭufayl is the source for Abū al-Faḍl Ibn Sharaf’s works); Ibn Sa‘īd, *Mughrib*, 2: 230–2 (808); al-Ṣafādī, *al-Wāfi bi-l-wafayāt*, 9: 149 (231); Muḥammad Makhlūf (d. 1340/1921), *Shajarat al-nūr al-zakiyya fi ṭabaqāt al-mālikiyya*, 2 vols (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1950–1952), 1: 126–7 (369); González Palencia, *Literatura*, 89; al-Zirikli, *al-A‘lām*, 2: 128; Kaḥḥāla, *Mu‘jam*, 3: 147; Charles Pellat, ‘Ibn Sharaf al-Kayrawānī’, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 3: 960–1 (Ch. Pellat); Pilar Lirola Delgado, ‘Ibn Šaraf, Abū l-Faḍl’, in *Biblioteca de al-Andalus*, vol. 5: *De Ibn Sa‘āda a Ibn Wuhayb*, ed. Jorge Lirola Delgado and José Miguel Puerta Vilchez (Almería: Fundación Ibn Tufayl de Estudios Árabes, 2007), 256–61, n° 1122. Among Ibn Ṭufayl’s biographers, Ibn Dihya records that he studied with Ibn Sharaf, who by that time was involved in agronomy in the area of Berja and Graena.

<sup>28</sup>Muhammad Tāḥā al-Ḥājirī, *Ibn Sharaf al-Qayrawānī* (Beirut: Dār al-Nahḍa al-rabiyya, 1983); Ḥilmī Ibrāhīm Kīlānī, *Ibn Sharaf al-Qayrawānī: Ḥayātuhi wa-adabuhu* (Amman: Mu‘assasat al-Balsam, 1998); Pilar Lirola Delgado, ‘Ibn Šaraf al-Qayrawānī, Abū ‘Abd Allāh’, in *Biblioteca de al-Andalus*, vol. 5: *De Ibn Sa‘āda a Ibn Wuhayb*, ed. Jorge Lirola Delgado and José Miguel Puerta Vilchez (Almería: Fundación Ibn Tufayl de Estudios Árabes, 2007), 247–56, n° 1120; Pilar Lirola, ‘Los Banū Šaraf: Una noble familia de literatos virgitanos emigrados de Cairauān’, *Estudios sobre el Patrimonio, Cultura y Ciencias Medievales* 18, no. 2 (2016): 685–708.



mentioned in the sources, he seems to be the only scholar who was knowledgeable in philosophy and medicine. (Ibn Ṭufayl may have visited Zaragoza with his father, but he explicitly recorded that he did not meet Ibn Bājja – Avempace – although he was familiar with his writings.)<sup>29</sup>

365 Among the works written by Abū al-Faḍl Ibn Sharaf there is one entitled ‘*Aqīl wa-‘alīm*, a title that appears to refer to two contrasting figures, one engaged in rational thinking and another in knowledge received from others, thus suggesting that its contents may have been related to those of Ibn Ṭufayl’s *Ḥayy b. Yaqzān*. This possible connection remains speculative, however, as Abū al-Faḍl Ibn Sharaf’s ‘*Aqīl wa-‘alīm* is lost  
370 and thus we cannot ascertain its contents.

Abū al-Faḍl Ibn Sharaf could have heard from his father a story similar to that of *Ḥayy b. Yaqzān* that circulated among Isma‘ilis in Qayrawān. Attention has been paid to Ibn Ṭufayl’s indebtedness to previous works such as those by Ibn Sīna (d. 428/1037), but the main topic of Ibn Ṭufayl’s *Ḥayy b. Yaqzān* can also be found elsewhere. David Hollenberg, in his analysis of the Isma‘ili text *Sarā’ir al-nuṭaqā’* by Ja‘far b. Manṣūr al-Yaman (fourth/tenth century), has shown that Adam was represented in it as a boy whose life was threatened by a king when his astrologers predicted that Adam would rule the entire earth. The king attempted to kill the child and then Adam’s parents fled to the island of al-Būrān (near Ceylon), leaving the child there to be raised by wild animals.  
375 A lionesses suckled Adam and took charge of his upbringing. With time, Adam’s state (*amr*) was perfected until he merited spiritual deputyship (*khilāfa rūḥāniyya*). Later, a servant of the king of al-Būrān found Adam and, astonished by his perfect and luminous visage, he decided to bring Adam to the king. Adam could not speak, but once he learned the language of the people, the king found that Adam had more knowledge than the angel who had been acting as his *ḥujja*, and declared that Adam would replace this angel as his deputy. Some of the angels refused to recognize Adam, but when God imparted to Adam secret knowledge of *ta’wīl*, they recognized Adam’s superiority.<sup>30</sup>  
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Ibn Ṭufayl could have also learned philosophy from the ruler of Guadix, who belonged to the family of the Banū Milḥān, of Berber origins. Their ancestor, who was already Arabized, had been a tutor to the Umayyad caliphs in Cordoba and it is said of him that he was involved in the study of philosophy.<sup>31</sup> Aḥmad Ibn Milḥān, who ruled in Guadix at the time of the collapse of Almoravid rule, was knowledgeable in agricultural techniques. Guadix was conquered by the Almohads in 546/1151-2, during the reign of ‘Abd al-Mu‘min, and after that year Ibn Milḥān is recorded to have been in Marrakech – together with Ibn Ṭufayl – having been charged by the Almohad caliph ‘Abd al-Mu‘min with constructing the irrigation system for his royal gardens.<sup>32</sup>  
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Around that time, Ibn Ṭufayl became the secretary of the Almohad governor of Granada, and later (549/1154-5) of the Almohad governor of Ceuta and Tangiers, who

<sup>29</sup>Ibn Ṭufayl, *Ḥayy ben Yaqdhan: Roman philosophique d’Ibn Thofail*, ed. and trans. L. Gauthier, 2nd ed. (Beirut, 1936; 1st ed. [Algiers, 1900]), 11 (Arabic text), 10 (French translation); idem, *Ibn Tufayl’s Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzan: A Philosophical Tale*, trans. with introduction and notes by Lenn Evan Goodman (New York: Twayne, 1972), 100.

<sup>30</sup>David Hollenberg, *Beyond the Qur’an: Early Ismā‘īlī ta’wīl and the Secrets of the Prophets* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2016), 85.

<sup>31</sup>The Banū Milḥān were descendants of a Berber captive (Nafza), who became the tutor of the sons of ‘Abd al-Rahmān III, and had knowledge of philosophy. During the collapse of the Umayyad caliphate (*fitna*), they moved to Játiva and later to the area of Baza: Helena de Felipe, *Identidad y onomástica de los beréberes de al-Andalus* (Madrid: CSIC, 1997), 174–5.

<sup>32</sup>Huici Miranda, *Historia política*, 1: 180, quoting Ibn al-Khaṭīb’s *A‘māl al-a‘lām*.

was one of ‘Abd al-Mu‘min’s sons (Abū Sa‘īd ‘Uthmān). Eventually, Ibn Ṭufayl moved to the service of the Mu‘minid prince, Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf, who later became the second Almohad caliph and who, according to the historian ‘Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī, had ‘a strong infatuation and love for him. I was informed that he would stay with [the Commander of the Faithful] in the palace, day and night, and not appear for days at a time’.<sup>33</sup>

Although some Andalusis had joined the Almohads before the conquest of Marrakech and al-Andalus, it is mostly from their arrival in the Iberian Peninsula in 541/1147 onwards that we see the number of Andalusis increase in the entourage of the Almohad caliph ‘Abd al-Mu‘min as secretaries, poets and men of letters, among others. For ‘Abd al-Mu‘min, it was crucial to enlarge his support base in order to ensure that the leadership of the Almohad movement would remain within his family against other possible contenders from within the Almohad ranks. The Almohad movement had relied until then on the military power of the Maṣmūda tribes of the Atlas Mountains, Berber speakers. Their *shuyūkh* (tribal leaders) had accepted ‘Abd al-Mu‘min’s leadership, but they were not willing to renounce their share of power without violence. ‘Abd al-Mu‘min was a skilful politician who, through a combination of coercion (the purges already mentioned) and conviction, managed to have the Almohad *shuyūkh* eventually accept two main innovations.

The first was the incorporation of Arabs into the original Berber Almohad army. As already mentioned, in the year 548/1153, the caliph ‘Abd al-Mu‘min had defeated the Arab Banū Hilāl and Banū Sulaym at the battle of Sétif. Soon afterwards, he started to incorporate them into the Almohad army, thus reducing his dependence on the original Berber troops. In the long run, especially after such tribes were transferred to the extreme Maghrib, this incorporation also meant the beginning of the process of Arabization in areas so far untouched by it.

The second innovation was the creation of the Almohad religious and intellectual elites, the *ṭalaba*, salaried scholars in the service of the Almohad caliphs and directly dependent on them to serve as doctrinarians of the empire, a process that started around 548/1153. This was another way in which ‘Abd al-Mu‘min gained autonomy from the original tribal Maṣmūda base. The *ṭalabat al-ḥaḍar* were a special group within the *ṭalaba*: they formed the caliph’s entourage, accompanied him on his travels and held sessions of debate with him. Ibn Ṭufayl was one of them,<sup>34</sup> and he was rewarded accordingly: ‘... he took a salary from the state, along with a number of those who performed occupations of service, such as doctors, architects, secretaries, poets, archers, and the military, including those of other groups’.<sup>35</sup> Another member of the *ṭalabat al-ḥaḍar* was Ibn Rushd. He was twenty years old when the Almohad conquest of al-Andalus started in 541/1147. Between then and the year 548/1153, when the Arabs were defeated at Sétif, Ibn Rushd is known to have been in the caliphal court in Marrakech. By then, he must already have joined the Almohad movement. He wrote a work (now lost) in which he explained why and when he entered the Almohad ‘doctrinal corporation’ to serve the

<sup>33</sup>Translation by Vincent Cornell, ‘Hayy in the land of Absāl: Ibn Ṭufayl and Sūfism in the Western Maghrib during the Muwahḥid Era’, in *The World of Ibn Ṭufayl: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Lawrence I. Conrad (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 133–164, p. 134.

<sup>34</sup>See above note 2. On the Almohad religious and intellectual elites, see Fricaud, ‘Les *ṭalaba*’.

<sup>35</sup>Cornell, ‘Hayy in the Land of Absāl’, 134, translating ‘Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī’s *Mu‘jib*.

Mu'minid caliphs. This work is referred to as the *Maqāla fī kayfiyyat dukhūlihi fī al-amr al-ʿazīz wa-taʿallumihi fīhi wa-mā fuḍḍila min ʿilm al-Mahdī*: as already noted, *al-amr al-ʿazīz* was the standard way for Almohad sources to refer to the Almohads' conviction that God's disposition to mankind and the Almohad/Mu'minid polity were the same.<sup>36</sup>

Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Rushd were not the only Andalusis who joined the ranks of the *ṭalaba* or converted to Almohad *tawhīd*, i.e. joined the Almohad cause.<sup>37</sup> They did so for a variety of reasons: fear, adaptation to the new context, conviction, and also because, for some of them, Almohad rule opened the possibility to change what they disliked in the societies in which they lived. These were those who saw themselves as strangers (*ghurabāʾ*) and the new regime as an opportunity to implement their ideas and practices.<sup>38</sup> Another Andalusī bearing the *nisba* al-Qaysī, Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn Ṭāhir (d. 574/1178),<sup>39</sup> from a family of notables in Murcia, joined the Almohads after his town was conquered by them in 567/1172, although he had shown his inclination towards them before. He in fact had written a tract directed to ʿAbd al-Muʿmin in which he defended Ibn Tūmart's Mahdism and imamate,<sup>40</sup> and equated the Almohad caliph's polity with the 'virtuous or perfect city' (*al-madīna al-fāḍila*) of the philosophers.<sup>41</sup> Ibn Ṭāhir explained that he had felt a 'stranger' (*gharīb*) among his contemporaries, but when he was informed of what the caliph ʿAbd al-Muʿmin stood for, he realized that the end had come for the cities of ignorance thanks to the Mahdī and his successor, the Muʿminid caliph, who illuminated the lawful path in this life and also the path to the afterlife.

Ibn Ṭāhir's understanding of Almohad rule in philosophical terms reflects a development taking place in ʿAbd al-Mumin's times (r. 524/1130–558/1163), when one of his sons, Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf, the future caliph, received education in philosophy, undoubtedly under the guidance of Ibn Ṭufayl.<sup>42</sup> This education of the prince and the institution of the *ṭalabat al-ḥaḍar*, which included philosophers and doctors, went together: the

<sup>36</sup>I have dealt with Ibn Rushd al-Ḥafīd's links to the Mu'minid caliphs and their political and intellectual project(s) in "Averroes' 'disgrace' and his relations with the Almohads", in Mirabel Fierro, 'Averroes' "disgrace" and his relations with the Almohads', in *Islamic Philosophy from the 12th till the 14th Century*, ed. Abdelkader Al Ghouz (Bonn: V&R Unipress, 2018), 73–118.

<sup>37</sup>Information on the recruitment of Andalusis, including scholars and men of letters, by the first Almohad caliph and his successors can be found in Huici Miranda, *Historia política del imperio almohade*, 1: 109–217; Fricaud, 'Les *talaba*', and idem, 'La place des *ṭalaba* dans la société almohade mu'minide', in *Los almohades: Problemas y perspectivas*, ed. Patrice Cressier, Maribel Fierro, and Luis Molina, 2 vols (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2005), 2: 525–45. See also María Jesús Viguera Molins, 'Las reacciones de los andalusíes ante los almohades', in *ibid.*, 2: 705–35. A specific case has been addressed by Amira Bennison, 'Tribal Identities and the Formation of the Almohad Élite: The Salutary Tale of Ibn ʿAtiyya', in *Biografías magrebíes: Identidades y grupos religiosos, sociales y políticos en el Magreb medieval*, ed. Mohamed Méouak [Estudios onomástico-biográficos de Al-Andalus 17] (Madrid: CSIC, 2012), 245–71.

<sup>38</sup>On these group, see Maribel Fierro, 'Spiritual Alienation and Political Activism: The *ghurabāʾ* in al-Andalus during the Sixth/Twelfth Century', *Arabica* 47 (2000): 230–60.

<sup>39</sup>On Ibn Ṭāhir, see Josep Puig Montada, 'Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn Ṭāhir: Addenda a "Averroes, vida y persecución de un filósofo"', *Revista Española de Filosofía Medieval* 7 (2000): 181–6; Antonio Javier Martín Castellanos and Miquel Forcada, 'Ibn Ṭāhir al-Qaysī, Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (nieto)', *Biblioteca de al-Andalus*, vol. 5: *De Ibn Sāʿāda a Ibn Wuhayb*, ed. Jorge Lirola Delgado and José Miguel Puerta Vilchez (Almería: Fundación Ibn Tufayl de Estudios Árabes, 2007), 461–3, n° 1235.

<sup>40</sup>His work is referred to as *Maqāla ʿilmiyya yuqarrir fīhā shīḥat amr al-mahdī al-qāʾim bi-amr Allāh or al-Kāfiya fī barāḥin al-imām al-mahdī*. It has been preserved in Ibn al-Qattān (ca. 580/1184–d. after 650/1252), *Nazm al-jumān fī akhbār al-zamān*, ed. Maḥmūd ʿAlī Makki, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmi, 1990), 101–22. I have dated this work after 567/1172, when Murcia was conquered by the Almohads (see Fierro, 'Almohads: Mahdism and Philosophy'). However, Ibn Ṭāhir must have written it between 540/1146 (when he briefly took power in Murcia) and 558/1163, when ʿAbd al-Muʿmin died, as the *Maqāla* was directed to the first Almohad caliph.

<sup>41</sup>Ibn Rushd's commentary on Plato's *Republic* can also be read against the Almohad political project, with, for example, the *ṭalaba* reflecting the Guardians. I am preparing a study on this.

existence of the Almohad ‘doctrinal corporation’ required that the caliph to whom they were attached and whom they were meant to serve shared with them their knowledge, at least to some degree. At the same time, Ibn Tūmart’s charisma – represented as Mahdism – that had worked with the Berber tribes of southern Morocco, was of limited appeal outside its original context, especially in the most urbanized areas of the empire and among its learned elites. This made it necessary to find both a complement and an alternative to Mahdism to attract at least part of those elites and bond them to ‘Abd al-Mu’min and his successors. Traditional Mālikīs – those who were not willing to abandon the *taqlīd* of the early Mālikīs and continued using the *kutub al-furū’* such as Saḥnūn’s (d. 240/854) *Mudawwana*, and were still resistant to al-Shāfi’ī’s methodology with its reliance on Hadith – were not acceptable because of their support for the previous Almoravid rulers and because Almohad Mahdism, at least in its earliest stages, necessarily involved rejection of the pluralistic understanding of Islamic law and a trend towards codification.<sup>43</sup> Against this background, philosophy had much to offer to the Mu’minids in their search for a way to both preserve and counterbalance Ibn Tūmart’s Mahdism, a search in which Ibn Ṭufayl’s influence must have been decisive. The move towards philosophy and the creation of the *ṭalaba* with whom the tribal *shuyūkh* now had to share their power did not initially imply the abandonment of what was still the basis of the Almohad movement, that is, Ibn Tūmart’s Mahdism. After all, ‘Abd al-Mu’min could be caliph because Ibn Tūmart was a Mahdī and thus Ibn Tūmart’s Mahdism was declared and acknowledged in all official Almohad writings and on the Almohad coins. It started to be questioned and eroded during the times of the third caliph, al-Manṣūr, but it was not renounced until the caliphate of al-Ma’mūn (624/1227–629/1232), to be recovered again when the Almohads saw their rule progressively reduced to southern Morocco.

‘Abd al-Mu’min died in 558/1163 and was succeeded by his son Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf (r. 558/1163–580/1184). Ibn Ṭufayl continued in the service of the second Almohad caliph, whose doctor he was, writing for him in 566-7/1170-2 a poem inciting the Arab tribes to fight in the Iberian peninsula against the local ruler Ibn Mardaniš. Ibn Ṭufayl authored other poems (the elegy for a friend, a poem on the Almohad conquest of Qafsa in 576/1180, verses on the ‘Uthmanic copy of the Qur’an in the possession of the Almohads).<sup>44</sup> He also wrote an *Urjūza fī al-ṭibb*<sup>45</sup> and a *Risāla fī al-naḥs* (lost) and was involved in astronomical observations as mentioned by al-Biṭrūjī, but does not seem to have written

<sup>42</sup>See above note 4 on the episode recorded by ‘Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī regarding the meeting between Ibn Rushd, Ibn Ṭufayl and the Mu’minid prince. Morata (*La presentación de Averroes*) dates it to 550–558/1155–1163, while Cornell, who is unaware of Morata’s study, gives the date 566/1169 (*Ḥayy in the Land of Absāl*, 135).

<sup>43</sup>Maribel Fierro, ‘The Legal Policies of the Almohad Caliphs and Ibn Rushd’s *Bidāyat al-mujtahid*’, *Journal of Islamic Studies* 10, no. 3 (1999): 226–48 (repr. in Carool Kersten, ed., *The Caliphate and Islamic Statehood. Formation, Fragmentation and Modern Interpretations*, 3 vols [Berlin: Gerlach Press, 2015], 3: 252–71), and eadem, ‘Codifying the Law: The Case of the Medieval Islamic West’, in *Diverging Paths? The Shapes of Power and Institutions in Medieval Christendom and Islam*, ed. John Hudson and Ana Rodríguez (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 98–118.

<sup>44</sup>On Ibn Ṭufayl’s poems, see Emilio García Gómez, ‘Una *qasida* política inédita de Ibn Ṭufayl’, *Revista del Instituto Egipcio de Estudios Islámicos* 1 (1958): 21–8; M. Ṣāliḥ, ‘Ma’a Ibn Ṭufayl al-shā’ir: Baḥṭh naqḍī wa-taḥqīq wa-dirāsa adabiyya falsafiyya muqārana’, *Mawrid* 8, no. 3 (1979): 47–64; Jorge Lirola Delgado and Ildelfonso Garijo Galán, ‘Claves para interpretar unos poemas de Ibn Ṭufayl’, in *Homenaje al profesor José María Fórneas Besteiro*, 2 vols (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 1995), 1: 201–15.

<sup>45</sup>Muhammad ‘Abd al-‘Aziz al-Dabbāgh, ‘Al-Urjūza al-tibbiyya li-Abi Bakr Ibn Ṭufayl’, *Da’wat al-Haqq* 239 (1984): 58–64. There are partial editions by Maḥmūd al-Ḥājj Qāsim Muḥammad, ‘Amrād al-‘ayn fī Urjūzat Ibn Ṭufayl’, *Al-Mawrid* 14 (1985): 153–68, and idem, ‘Qirā’a fī Urjūzat Ibn Ṭufayl fī l-ṭibb’, *Revue de l’Institut des Manuscrits Arabs* (Kuwait) 30 (1986): 47–95. The *Urjūza* is currently being edited and studied by Regula Foster.

anything on them.<sup>46</sup> Ibn Ṭufayl ceded his position as doctor of the caliph to Ibn Rushd ca. 578/1182. He died in Marrakech in 581/1185 and his funeral was attended by the new caliph Abū Yūsuf Ya‘qūb, known as al-Manṣūr for his great victory over the Christians at the battle of Alarcos.

### Why did Ibn Ṭufayl write his *Ḥayy b. Yaqzān*?

Ibn Ṭufayl’s reason for writing *Ḥayy b. Yaqzān* has been primarily understood within the framework of the relationship that philosophy bears to revealed religion, or the relationship between mysticism (or what Ibn Ṭufayl refers as ‘Eastern wisdom’) and the Greek philosophical tradition. Without excluding such concerns, I am interested here in trying to recover how Ibn Ṭufayl’s work may have been read at the time of its composition.

Taking into account the context that I have described in the previous section, what is striking in *Ḥayy b. Yaqzān* is the apparent absence of any reference to the Mahdī Ibn Tūmart by someone who was in the service of the Almohad caliphs and was dealing with topics that were at the centre of the Almohad polity, i.e. how can believers be sure of holding a correct belief regarding God.

In the early stages of the Almohad movement, when Ibn Tūmart had won the allegiance of the mountain Berber tribes, the answer had been clear: knowledge of God and His will for mankind was ensured by the teachings and actions of their Mahdī Ibn Tūmart. As noted above, the sources at our disposal on Ibn Tūmart’s life and trajectory are highly problematic and make it very difficult to recover the historical Ibn Tūmart and the Berber context of his preaching and political activism. If we attempt to avoid being guided by how he was represented in ‘Abd al-Mu‘min’s times in order to meet contemporary needs that were not necessarily those of the origins of the movement, the figure of Ibn Tūmart makes more sense if analysed within the Berber tradition of Nativistic prophets, some of them receptors of God’s revelation in scriptures that were in the Berber language, or within the tradition of saintly figures of the rural regions of the Maghreb *al-aqṣā*, many of whom were illiterate and most often only Berber speakers.<sup>47</sup>

When ‘Abd al-Mu‘min expanded the territory under Almohad control, incorporating urban centres with Arabized literate elites less willing to believe in a Berber Mahdī, Ibn Tūmart still kept his centrality among the Almohads under Mu‘minid rule, as he was a crucial element in the legitimization of ‘Abd al-Mu‘min and his successors. ‘Abd al-Mu‘min, after all, was the *khalīfa* of the Mahdī (*khalīfat al-mahdī ilā sabīl al-muwahḥidīn*, i.e. ‘the vicar of the Rightly guided one along the path of the Unitarians’), as stated in one of the earliest non-Almohad sources that mentions the Almohads,<sup>48</sup> this being an idea repeated in various forms in Almohad writings. But the figure of the Mahdī inevitably had to be adapted to the new context created by ‘Abd al-Mu‘min. Increasing numbers of religious scholars (*‘ulamā’*) were incorporated into the Almohad polity,

<sup>46</sup>Abdelhamid Ibrahim Sabra, ‘The Andalusian Revolt against Ptolemaic Astronomy: Averroes and al-Bitrūjī’, in *Transformation and Tradition in the Sciences*, ed. E. Mendelsohn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 133–53.

<sup>47</sup>See Fierro, ‘El Mahdī Ibn Tūmart’.

<sup>48</sup>Francesco Gabrieli, ‘Le origini del movimento almohade in una fonte storica d’Oriente’, *Arabica* 3 (1956): 1–7 (the expression quoted is found in Ibn al-Qalānīsī, *Dhayl Ta’rikh Dimashq*, ed. H.F. Amedroz (Leiden: Brill, 1908), 291–3).

especially with the conquest of al-Andalus, and for those scholars the figure of Ibn Tūmart could be rendered less alien if he could be shown to have been a scholar himself, one who had studied in the East having as one of his teachers the famous al-Ghazālī, and if there could be attributed to him a *Kitāb* that included a combination of legal and theological materials. The connection with al-Ghazālī (which it has been proved cannot be accepted) was a way to attract those scholars who had been won by the Ghazalian programme of religious renewal, some of whom had suffered persecution under the Almoravids, and was probably even more a move on the part of such scholars to win the Almohads to their side. There were other connected attempts of ‘aggiornamento’ of the figure of Ibn Tūmart and his successor to the new imperial needs, as when the Andalusī Ibn Ṭāhir al-Qaysī presented the Almohad Muʾminid polity as ‘*al-madīna al-fāḍila*’. By the time of the second caliph Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf, the Almohads’ original uncompromising *tawhīd*, which condemned any acceptance of what they had rejected as Almoravid anthropomorphism, had started to be challenged by Ibn Rushd, who pointed out that it could lead to disaffection on the part of the masses. This is what he argued in a first version of *al-Kaṣf ʿan manāhiġ al-adilla*, written around 575/1179–576/1180, being forced to recant his position in order not to threaten Ibn Tūmart’s Mahdism, as shown by Marc Geoffroy.<sup>49</sup>

It is within this context of evolving needs on the part of the Almohads to adapt Ibn Tūmart’s significance to new audiences and circumstances that I believe Ibn Ṭufayl’s work should be understood. And if so, taking into account the date when the work was written – *ca.* 555/1160, in the time of ‘Abd al-Muʾmin – it necessarily had to include a reflection on the person of Ibn Tūmart.

At this point, just a brief reminder about the contents of Ibn Ṭufayl’s work. As already mentioned, it relates the tale of a boy who grew up on a deserted island without any human contact, but who, thanks to his intelligence and spiritual capability, managed to reach an understanding of God, the world and himself. Ḥayy learned how to speak and to communicate with other human beings thanks to the arrival on his island of a learned man, Absāl, who was dissatisfied with the society in which he lived and was searching for ways to improve himself and acquire a better understanding of God and His creation. Absāl soon found out that Ḥayy had reached the superior understanding for which he was striving. When they tried to bring this understanding to the people living on the nearby island from which Absāl came – who were ruled by Salāmān and were instructed by religious scholars – they realized that they were not prepared and decided to return to Ḥayy’s island.

What I am proposing is to read Ḥayy as standing for Ibn Tūmart and perhaps also for ‘Abd al-Muʾmin, Berber-speakers who, in spite of growing up in areas of the extreme Maghreb, where urban life was limited and religious scholars were scarce and even unheard of, had the natural intelligence and spiritual drive that allowed them to grasp God’s unity and understand the world.<sup>50</sup> On his part, Absāl would stand for the enlightened Andalusis (such as Ibn Ṭufayl, Ibn Ṭāhir and Ibn Rushd)<sup>51</sup> who had mastery of

<sup>49</sup>Marc Geoffroy, ‘À propos de l’almohadisme d’Averroès: L’anthropomorphisme (*taġšm*) dans la seconde version du *Kitāb kaṣf ʿan manāhiġ al-adilla*’, in *Los almohades: Problemas y perspectivas*, ed. Patrice Cressier, Maribel Fierro and Luis Molina, 2 vols (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2005), 2: 853–94.

<sup>50</sup>After returning to his birth place in Iḡiliz, Ibn Tūmart went into a cave from which he reappeared to guide his followers in the true understanding of *tawhīd*. Ḥayy also went into a cave to meditate and there he reached his understanding of the first Being, the true necessary existent.

Arabic, the only language capable of giving proper expression to the rational and spiritual discoveries made by the founders of the Almohad movement. Those Andalusis (who lived on an 'island' near Ḥayy's abode) were attracted by Ḥayy's (= Ibn Ṭumart/'Abd al-Mu'min's) direct approach to the Truth un-mediated by Revelation, as it echoed some of their own intellectual and religious concerns, which had made them feel like strangers (*ghurabā'*) in the society in which they lived. Salāmān and his people would represent al-Andalus, a thoroughly Islamized society in which pure *tawḥīd* could not be followed because the needs of the masses required rhetorical and dialectical means. Ḥayy (= Ibn Ṭumart/'Abd al-Mu'min) and Absāl (the *ghurabā'*) also realized that it was dangerous to bring the right knowledge they now possessed to people unable to grasp it because, in the process, their true teachings were bound to become distorted. Isolation from the rest of the people was the solution. The message is clear: the Truth acquired by Ḥayy and Absāl needed to be kept within a closed circle where only those who possessed the required intellectual abilities could discuss it – a situation that reflects the Mu'minid caliphs with their *ṭalabat al-ḥaḍar* engaging in debates and sessions of study in which others were not allowed to participate.<sup>52</sup> Nowhere in the novel is it said that other outsiders like Absāl could not eventually also be admitted and that then Ḥayy, Absāl and like-minded scholars could continue their search for the Truth, the improvement of their education and their personal improvement. Ḥayy and Absāl's retirement from society represents the place eventually given to Aristotelian philosophy (more or less tinted by Neoplatonism according to each scholar) in the Almohad system: the caliph – with the philosopher at his side – engaged in the study of philosophy together with a few selected people trained in the correct understanding of philosophical thought, all this happening in close circles of study outside the reach of the world outside.<sup>53</sup>

According to the interpretation proposed here, what Ibn Ṭufayl's novel is transmitting are the limits of the Almohad revolutionary experiment, but also its continuity in a restricted context.<sup>54</sup> If this understanding is correct, with his novel, Ibn Ṭufayl was also proposing an interpretation of the founder of Almohadism that put him above and outside his original Berber context, likening him to the *walī Allāh*, the philosophical mystic and the philosopher, figures that were closer to the Andalusī context, as shown by the examples of Ibn Qasī, Ibn Barrajjān, Ibn al-ʿArīf and Ibn Bājja, among others.

This interpretation allows us to approach in a novel way some elements in the novel that some have found puzzling.

<sup>51</sup>In my earlier study (Fierro, 'El Mahdī Ibn Ṭumart'), I linked Ḥayy to Ibn Ṭumart and Absāl to 'Abd al-Mu'min and the *ghurabā'*. But now I believe that 'Abd al-Mu'min's rank as the Mahdī's successor implies that he would have been coupled with Ibn Ṭumart more than with the rest of the *ghurabā'*.

<sup>52</sup>This 'isolation' was, however, combined with an ambitious educational programme and this was not as paradoxical as it may seem. I am preparing a study on the Almohad educational policies.

<sup>53</sup>When Shihāb al-Dīn Yahyā al-Suhrawardī (d. 587/1191) in his *Qiṣṣat al-ghurba al-gharbiyya* (The Story of the Occidental Exile) depicts the Maghreb as the land of shadows (because discursive philosophy prevails in it) while the East is the domain of intuitive philosophy (Illuminationism) (Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila, 'Suhrawardī's *Western Exile* as Artistic Prose', *Ishraq: Islamic Philosophy Yearbook* 2 (2011): 105–18), he seems to be reflecting the moment when the strict Aristotelian Ibn Rushd had replaced Ibn Ṭufayl as the main 'intellectual' of the Mu'minid caliphs. See also Alfred L. Ivry, 'Averroes' Understanding of the Philosopher's Role in Society', in *Islamic Thought in the Middle Ages: Studies in Text, Transmission and Translation in Honour of Hans Daiber*, ed. Anna Akasoy and Wim Raven (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 113–22. The interplay between *al-ḥikma al-mashriqiyya* in Ibn Ṭufayl's work and al-Suhrawardī's *al-ghurba al-gharbiyya* deserves further attention.

<sup>54</sup>As I have already suggested in 'The Islamic West in the Time of Maimonides: The Almohad revolution', in *Höre die Wahrheit, wer sie auch spricht: Stationen des Werks von Moses Maimonides vom islamischen Spanien bis ins moderne Berlin*, ed. Lukas Muehlethaler (Berlin: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 21–31.

One such element is the discussion about Ḥayy ibn Yaḡẓān's origins. Ibn Ṭufayl Q1 records two possibilities: Ḥayy was either born out of spontaneous generation<sup>55</sup> or he was a child of royal descent abandoned by his mother (what can be called the Moses model). If we accept that Ibn Ṭufayl was reflecting through the figure of Ḥayy on the Mahdī Ibn Tūmart and his successor 'Abd al-Mu'min, he had no choice but to include the possibility of royal origins, even if he seems to have been more inclined towards the other, as Ibn Sīna was. The content of Ibn Ṭufayl's work points to his belief in the equality of human beings by birth, their differences being based not on lineage but on their differing rational and spiritual capabilities.<sup>56</sup> But if Ḥayy is meant to reflect both Ibn Tūmart, whose representation as Mahdī entailed his being a descendant of the Prophet, and 'Abd al-Mu'min, who had adopted a Qaysī genealogy to legitimize his caliphate, they could not but be represented as endowed with a special genealogy and thus Ibn Ṭufayl had necessarily to include the possibility of royal descent.

Another element is the way Ibn Ṭufayl refers to the person who was responsible for urging him to write his work. In the context of their *majālis* and meetings, the *ṭalabat al-ḥaḍar* referred to each other as 'brothers' including the Mu'minid caliphs.<sup>57</sup> But in the latter's case, the *ṭalabat al-ḥaḍar* also considered them a source of inspiration that guided them to find the right answers to the questions they asked. In other words, the Mu'minid caliphs, successors of the Mahdī, had superior understanding and intellect but at the same time they needed the *ṭalabat al-ḥaḍar* to put into words what they, somehow, already knew.<sup>58</sup> And finally, no attempt is made to transform Ḥayy into a prophet, one able to put his intellectual and religious insights in a language accessible to common folk.<sup>59</sup> Ibn Tūmart may have been close to the Berber Nativistic prophets in the Mašmūda context, but in al-Andalus the possibility of a Berber prophet could not be accepted.

## Disclosure statement

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<sup>55</sup>On this, see Remke Kruk, 'A Frothy Bubble: Spontaneous Generation in the Medieval Islamic Tradition', *Journal of Semitic Studies* 35, no. 3 (1990): 265–82. Ibn Sīna had supported this possibility, while Ibn Rushd in his Commentary on Book VIII of the *Physics*, pronounced himself against it: Marwan Rashed, 'L'averroïsme de Lauro Quirini', in *Averroès et l'averroïsme (XIIe-XVe siècle): Un itinéraire historique du Haut Atlas à Paris et à Padoue*, ed. André Bazzana, Nicole Bériou and Pierre Guichard (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 2005), 316–17.

<sup>56</sup>Still, Ibn Ṭufayl does not deal with the possibility of Ḥayy having low origins. As regards Ibn Tūmart, while Jean-Pierre van Staëvel in 'La foi peut-elle soulever les montagnes? Révolution almohade, morphologie sociale et formes de domination dans l'Anti-Atlas et le Haut-Atlas (début XIIe s.)', *Revue des Mondes Musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 135 (2014): 49–76, thinks he may have belonged to a family of local notables, Mehdi Ghouirgate proposes that he was of slave origin: 'Réflexions autour du nom Ibn Tūmart', in *Al-Muwahhidūn: El despertar del califato almohade*, ed. Dolores Villalba Sola (Granada: Patronato de la Alhambra y el Generalife, 2019), 60–75 (French), 279–91 (Spanish).

<sup>57</sup>Fierro, 'Averroes' "Disgrace", 93.

<sup>58</sup>Kukkonen's references (*Ibn Tufayl*, 29–30) to Ibn Ṭufayl's didacticism and his choice of the level of instruction can be fruitfully read in this sense.

<sup>59</sup>Kukkonen, *Ibn Tufayl*, 110–13, 123.



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