

# ALBORÁN.

Poblamiento e intercambios  
en las zonas costeras  
de al-Andalus y el Magreb

Bilal Sarr [Ed.]



Alborão  
ALHULIA



C. 1634



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**Dirección**

BILAL SARR



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Plaza de Rafael Alberti, 1

Tel./fax: 958 82 83 01

[www.alhulia.com](http://www.alhulia.com) • eMail: [alhulia@alhulia.com](mailto:alhulia@alhulia.com)

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The Medieval Settlement on the Rif Coast.  
Problems of Historical and Archaeological Reconstruction<sup>1</sup>

AHMED TAHIRI

PROFESSOR OF MEDIEVAL HISTORY (AL-MAGREB AND AL-ANDALUS)  
UNIVERSITY OF MOHAMMED AND TETOUAN. DIRECTOR OF AL-IDRISI FONDATION

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<sup>1</sup> Transl. with the collaboration of Luis F. Bravo (luisbravomoraes@gmail.com).

## **Abstract**

The first settlement that has been built in the Medieval Rif dates back to 80 AD (699 AD). From that moment, the urban activity has been growing in all the Rif coast until reaching its maximum degree in 9<sup>th</sup> Century. Arab sources provide us with data on cities such as: Tamsamān, Nakūr, Bādis, Al-Mazamma, Malīla, Ġrāwa, Marṡāna, Abrīdā, Tawrīrt. We are also informed about the farms of Iqtī, Badkūn, Qaryat al-ṡaqāliba.

All those urban and rural agglomerations were linked to the first intercontinental communications network linking sub-Saharan Africa with Europe, across the Alboran Sea. The port of Nakūr on the Rif coast, the ports of Malaga and Pechina on the Ilbīra coast ensured the flow of all kinds of goods and the movement of long-distance travelers.

## **Key-words**

Rif, Settlement, Nakūr, Medieval History, Archaeology, Maghreb.

## **Resumen**

El primer asentamiento que ha sido edificado en el Rif medieval data del año 80 de la hégira (699 d.C.). Desde aquel momento, la actividad urbanística ha ido creciendo en toda la costa rifeña hasta alcanzar su máximo grado en el siglo IX. Las fuentes árabes nos aportan datos sobre ciudades como: Tamsamān, Nakūr, Bādis, Al-Mazamma, Malīla, Ġrāwa, Marṡāna, Abrīdā, Tawrīrt. Nos informan también sobre las alquerías de Iqtī, Badkūn, Qaryat al-ṡaqāliba.

Todas aquellas aglomeraciones urbanas y rurales estaban ligadas a la primera red de comunicaciones intercontinentales que unía África subsahariana con Europa, a través del mar Alborán. El puerto de Nakūr en la costa del Rif, los puertos de Málaga y Pechina en la costa de Ilbīra aseguraban el flujo de todo tipo de mercancías y el movimiento de los viajeros a larga distancia.

## **Palabras-clave**

Rif, poblamiento, Nakūr, Historia Medieval, Arqueología, Magreb.

Even after the campaigns of recognition and archaeological field surveys undertaken last century in the area of the Rif, our knowledge on settlements and toponyms inherited from ancient times is still very confusing and superficial, except for the references to *Rusadir* (Melilla), *Molochath* (Muluya River), *Ad Tres Insulas* (Chafarinas Islands), and *Ad Sex Insulas* (al-Mazamma). In general, the traces related to the ancient history of the Rif preserved in the Greek, Latin and Arabic sources, and in the Berber oral tradition continue to be truly indecipherable and impossible to study.

In history, as well as in archaeology, the Rif remained «very badly known»<sup>2</sup> till late 20<sup>th</sup> century, according to the assessment of distinguished researchers. Likewise, it was not possible to explore with sufficient historical perspective the level of development reached by urban planning and rural peopling in medieval Rif. The documentary basis taken from contemporary historiography was mostly reduced to three texts: Firstly, we refer to the excerpt reproduced in the work of Al-Bakrī, famous geographer from present Huelva, known as *Dikr balad Nakūr*, or *Account on the Territory of Nakūr*<sup>3</sup>. The information collected by this author was extracted from an original source elaborated by the chronicler Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Warrāq al-Tārīḥī, under the auspices of the Caliph of Cordova, al-Ḥakam II.

We have evidence informing on that source employed by Al-Bakrī, whose title is *Aḥbār... Nakūr (History of Nakūr)*<sup>4</sup>. It is framed, together with other works by Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Warrāq, within the genre of writings called «Routes and Realms». His treatises contributed to settle the basis for the first geographical school from the Islamic West, as detailed in a previous work<sup>5</sup>. This account was subsequently abbreviated by

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<sup>2</sup> Stéphane GSELL : *Histoire ancienne de l'Afrique du Nord*, vol., I, Paris, 1918, p. 2, I; Miquel TARRADELL : *Guía arqueológica del Marruecos Español*, Tetuán, 1953, p. 8; Patrice CRESSIER : *Prospección arqueológica dans le Rif (Zone de l'ancien royaume de Nakur) Premiers résultats*. Thèse présentée à l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, pour l'obtention de Doctorat de troisième cycle d'Archéologie et Histoire de l'Art. (Texte dactylographié), Paris, 1981, p.4.

<sup>3</sup> AL-BAKRĪ : *Al-Muḡrib fī dikr bilād Ifrīqiya wa-l-Maḡreb*, ed., de Slane, Paris, 1965, pp. 90-99.

<sup>4</sup> IBN HAZM : « Risāla fī fadh al-Andalus wa dhikr riḡālihā », in *Rasāʾil Ibn Hazm*, ed., I. ʿAbbās, vol. II, Beirut, 1981, pp. 167-242:175; AL-MAQQARĪ : *Nafh al-tīb min gusn al-Andalus al-ratīb*, vol., III, ed., I. ʿAbbās, Beirut, 1968, vol. III, p.163.

<sup>5</sup> Ahmed TAHIRI : « Gharb al-Magreb e al-Andalus nos itinerários geográficos », in TAHIRI, Ahmed, AITOUTOUHEN TEMSAMAN, Fatima Z., & C. Oliveira (eds.) : *Itinerários e Reinos. Uma descoberta do mundo. O Gharb al-Andalus na obra do geógrafo al-Idrisi*, VRSA, Portugal, 2011, pp. 50-52.

another author in a second version entitled *Talḥīs aḥbār umarā' madīnat Nakūr min hīn binā' i-hā 'alā al-ḡumla*, or *Abbreviated History of the Emirs from the City of Nakūr, from the Beginning of its Construction*<sup>6</sup>.

The second text is included in the work of the prestigious minister and naṣrid author under the following subtitle: *Al-mulūk al-ḥimyarīyyīn bi-l-Rīf*, or *The Hymiarit Kings in the Rif*<sup>7</sup>, providing with further data of interest. Last but not least, the third text is preserved in the voluminous chronicles of Ibn Ḥaldūn under the title of *Al-Ḥabar 'an Banī Ṣāliḥ b. Maṣṣūr mulūk Nakūr wa dawlati-him fī Ḡumāra wa-tasā rīf abwālī-him*, or *News on the Banī Ṣāliḥ b. Maṣṣūr, Kings of Nakūr: Their State in Ḡumāra and the Vicissitudes of their Destiny*<sup>8</sup>. This reproduces data extracted from the *Kitāb al-Miqbās* composed by the Maghrebi chronicler Abū Marwān 'Abd al-Malik b. Mūsā al-Warrāq. We must remember that this last piece of work, as well as *Aḥbār... Nakūr*, remain lost.

It is worth noting that the interest in the history of Nakūr arose with the impressive impact on the highest echelons of colonial power of the exemplary resistance of the Rif people against the European aggression and its implacable war machinery from 1921 to 1926. It is appropriate to clarify that this initiative was taken by officers associated to the colonial High Commissioner and its intelligence services, responsible for making known the contents of the cited Arabic sources<sup>9</sup>. Except for some supplementary contributions and general considerations, those who got subsequently interested in the history of Nakūr were essentially limited to reproduce the three aforementioned excerpts and give opinions about their contents<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> IBN 'IDĀRĪ : *Al-Bayān al-muḡrib fī aḥbār al-Andalus wa-l-Magreb*, ed., S. Colin & E. Levi-Provençal, Beirut, 1980, vol. I, pp. 176-180.

<sup>7</sup> IBN AL-JAṬĪB : 171-179.

<sup>8</sup> IBN ḤALDŪN : *Kitāb al-'ibar wa dīwān al-mubtadā wa-l-ḥabar fī ayyām al-'arab wa-l-'aḡam wa-l-barbar wa man 'āsarahum min dawī al-sultān al-akbar*, vol. VI, ed., J. Šahhāda & S. Zakkār, Beirut, 1981, VI, pp. 283-287.

<sup>9</sup> Edouard MICHAUX-BELLAIRE : *Le Rif. Conférence faite au cours des Affaires Indigènes, Protectorat de la République Française au Maroc*. Rabat, 1925 ; Clemente CERDEIRA FERNÁNDEZ : *Apuntes para la Historia del Rif*, Traducción y comentarios, Publicación Alta Comisaría Tetuán, Ceuta, 1926; Angelo GUIRELLI : *El norte de Marruecos. Contribución al estudio de la zona de Protectorado español en Marruecos septentrional*. Melilla, 1926; *Id. : Notas sobre la islamización y arabización de las poblaciones beréberes del Norte de Marruecos* (Biblioteca Nacional of Madrid, Signatura, Mss. 22898). Madrid, 1929.

<sup>10</sup> Isidro de las CAGIGAS : *Dinastías menores del Magreb: Los Banu Salih*. T. I, Tetuán, 1951; A. AL-BU'AYYĀŠĪ : *Al-Rīf ba'da al-fath al-islāmī*, Tetuán, 1954 ; A. M. ABŪ DĪF : *Aṭar al-qabā'il al-'arabiya fī l-ḥayāt al-maḡribiyya mundu al-fath al-'arabī ilā suqūt al-duwal al-mustaḡilla*. Vol. I, Casablanca, 1986; Guillermo GOZALBES BUSTO : « El reino de Nakur en la Edad Media », in *Estudio sobre Marruecos en la Edad Media*. Granada, 1989, pp. 24-69.

An infantry serviceman who occupied a post of inspector in the *cabila* of Aït Waryāguel was the first in finding out on the ground the data related to the city of Nakūr<sup>11</sup>. Under his amateur supervision, the first campaigns of archaeological exploration were launched, and they soon located the settlement of the ancient capital of the realm and identified some of its urban structures<sup>12</sup>. Additionally, the localities of al-Mazamma and Bādīs were the objects of ephemeral prospecting from 1929 to 1944, firstly by César Luis de Montalbán, Head of Excavations of the Central Board of Historical Monuments, and then, by Pelayo Quintero Atauri, Inspector of Excavations and Head of the Archaeological Museum of Tétouan. The ruins of the flourishing port city of Guisāsa were also explored<sup>13</sup>.

The results of subsequent campaigns of recognition and archaeological surveys undertaken in the years 1951, 1952, 1955, and 1960 by Miguel Tarradell, David Hartt, and Ahmed el Meknāsī in al-Mazamma, Bādīs, and Nakūr were scarce<sup>14</sup>. It is not until the eighties in the 20<sup>th</sup> century that the archaeological research in Bādīs and Nakūr is resumed at the initiative of an American archaeologist<sup>15</sup>. It consisted of a brief and limited intervention whose viewpoint was soon adopted by a similar project headed by a French researcher<sup>16</sup>. The archaeological prospecting and the results of their research were almost identical, to the point of reusing Redman's same expressions about «the handmade pottery of Nakūr»<sup>17</sup>, and other issues of interest.

<sup>11</sup> A. SÁNCHEZ PÉREZ : *Memoria sobre las exploraciones arqueológicas efectuadas en el lugar llamado Tamdint de Beni Bu Ayast donde se presume estuvo situada la ciudad de Nekor, Corte de los Salehidas y otras investigaciones históricas relacionadas con la Kabila de Beni Urriaghuel*. Madrid: Biblioteca Nacional, 1934.

<sup>12</sup> A. SÁNCHEZ PÉREZ : « El Reino rifeño de Nekor ». *África*, 11 (1942), Madrid, pp. 26-30; *Id.* : « Datos históricos sobre ciudades Rifeñas », in *Selección de conferencias y trabajos realizados durante el Curso de Interventores 1951-52*, Tetuán, 1952, pp. 31-47.

<sup>13</sup> Rafael FERNÁNDEZ DE CASTRO Y PEDRERA : *Historia y exploraciones de las ruinas de Cazaza*. Larache, 1943.

<sup>14</sup> M. TARRADELL : *Marruecos púnico*. Tetuán, 1960, pp. 76-77; MEKNASSI, A. : « Reconocimientos arqueológicos en el Rif », *Tamuda, Revista de Investigaciones Marroquíes*, año VII Semestre I-II (1959), pp. 156-158; P. CRESSIER : *Prospection archéologique dans le Rif*, p. 134.

<sup>15</sup> Charles L. REDMAN : « Survey and test excavation of six medieval islamic sites in northern Morocco ». *Bulletin d'Archéologie Marocaine*, XV (1983-84), Rabat, pp. 311-349.

<sup>16</sup> P. CRESSIER *et alli* : « La naissance de la ville islamique au Maroc (Nakur, Agmat, Tamdult) : Résultats préliminaires de l'approche archéologique du site de Nakur (capitale d'un émirat du Haut Moyen Âge) », Rabat 1-4 Juillet 1998, in *Actes des 1ères Journées Nationales d'Archéologie et du Patrimoine*, vol. 3: Islam. Rabat, 2001, pp. 108-129.

<sup>17</sup> CH. REDMAN : « Survey and test excavation of six medieval islamic sites in northern Morocco », p. 341; Manuel ACIÉN ALMANSA, Patrice CRESSIER, Larbi ERBATI & Maurice PICON : « La cerámica a mano de Nakūr (ss. IX-X): producción beréber medieval ». *Arqueología y Territorio Medieval*, 6 (1998), pp. 45-69.

Due to the lack of adequate historical perspective and the resignation to a superficial reading of the sources, the archaeological task neither got to formulate the required hypothesis of study, nor interpret conveniently the findings, nor restructure the components of the urban map according to the due chronological order. It had been a blind exploration over an unknown land for medieval history. Rather, the archaeological interventions carried out in Nakūr, Bādīs, al-Mazamma, Sidi Dris, and Guisāsa contributed to the destruction of its structures, and the looting of the findings that cannot be located in any museum, except for two coins minted in the city of Nakūr between 1005 and 1006. The last intervention on the settlement of al-Mazamma framed within a general project on the cultural heritage of Central Rif<sup>18</sup> literally stresses the elements of a doctoral dissertation<sup>19</sup>.

In the light of the confusion spread by the archaeological interpretation about the formation of the Islamic city in the West, and the inertia of the traditional historiography that simply seems to approach the issue from a philological perspective, it was mandatory to undertake a new methodological strategy. In order to reconstruct the fundamental elements of the medieval settlement on the coast of the Rif, it was necessary to shed light on the episodes of its history, most of them unpublished. We refer to the unknown kingdom of the Banū Ṣāliḥ, the first proclaimed in the Islamic West, whose sovereignty lasted for three hundred and twenty years (699-1019) in the area of the Rif.

To achieve such a goal, we initiated an exhaustive reading of more than a hundred and twenty Arabic sources belonging to different genres during the nineties of the previous century. The outcome of that research was presented in a 256-page book entitled *Imārat Banī Ṣāliḥ fī bilād Nakūr*, or *The Kingdom of the Banū Ṣāliḥ in Nakūr*<sup>20</sup>. However, we could not recover all the events from a long and complex history. We left numerous questions unsolved, in spite of the published works on the territorial organisation in the medieval Rif<sup>21</sup>, its connection to the network of intercontinental

<sup>18</sup> Larbi ERBATI : *Patrimoine culturel historique du Rif central. Rapport final, Programme d'Aménagement Côtier du Rif central (PAC-Maroc)*. Rabat, 2010, pp. 1-40; *Id.* : « Monuments et sites historiques médiévaux du Rif central », in *Rif, les traces de l'histoire*, Casablanca, 2012, pp. 165-171.

<sup>19</sup> P. CRESSIER : *Prospection archéologique dans le Rif*.

<sup>20</sup> Ahmed TAHIRI : *Imārat Banī Ṣāliḥ fī bilād Nakūr* (=The Kingdom of the Banū Ṣāliḥ in Nakūr), Casablanca, 1998.

<sup>21</sup> *Id.* : « Al-Rīf », in *Ma'lamat al-Magrib* (=Enciclopedia of Morocco), ed. M. Hiġġī, Sale, 2001, pp. 4535-4536. *Id.*; *Rīf al-Magrib y al-Andalus. Organización del territorio en las dos orillas del Estrecho (siglos VIII-XI)*. Granada, 2007, pp. 9-84.

communication<sup>22</sup>, its landowning structures<sup>23</sup>, and also on its social fabric<sup>24</sup>, its urban evolution<sup>25</sup>, and other aspects from its cultural life<sup>26</sup>. In the same terms, it was rescued from oblivion the history of another kingdom settled in the Rif during the Taifa age (1019-1080), the Ait Yūsef wa 'Alī<sup>27</sup>, whose episodes remained totally unknown.

To deepen our analysis, complete the triggering of events and clarify the pending questions, we opted for extending the inquiry to more than a hundred and fifty works from different literary genres such as Maghrebi, Andalusian and Oriental writings<sup>28</sup>. Even so, the defective current state of our knowledge on the pre-Islamic heritage left any reconstruction of the medieval settlement without a historical basis, and it disoriented the archaeological research. For that reason, we ventured to explore the classical sources, the local toponymy, and the Berber oral tradition. The results of the work initiated in 2009 were compiled in a 341-page book under the following title: *Bilād al-Rīf wa hādīrat Nakūr min fağr al-tārīḥ ilā anwār al-islām*, that is, *The Rif and the Lost City of Nakūr, from the Dawn of History to the Lights of Islam*<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> A. TAHIRI : « Uṣūl al-tafā'ul al-ḥaḍārī bayna Maṣr wa l-Mağreb » (=Maghreb & Egypt: Exchanges between Civilizations), in *Al-'Alāqāt al-miṣriya al-mağribiyya 'abra al-tārīḥ*. Cairo, 2002, pp.153-161; Ahmed TAHIRI & Fátima Z. AITOUTOUHEN TEMSAMANI (eds) : *La civilisation rifaine à travers l'histoire du Maroc. L'historien des cités disparues*. Seville, 2013, pp 29-52.

<sup>23</sup> A. TAHIRI : *Fath al-Andalus y la incorporación de Occidente a Dār al-Islam*. Valencia, 2001, pp. 2-9.

<sup>24</sup> A. TAHIRI : « Al-Šabaka al-ḥaḍāriyya wa-l-ḥarīṭa al-qabaliyya bi-bilād Nakūr (=Red urbana y estructura tribal en Nakūr. Primeras formas de organización territorial en Occidente Islámico) », in GHOU, Fayçal : *Conquête, colonisation, résistance en Méditerranée: la restructuration des espaces politiques, culturels et sociaux, (Cahier du Ceres, 12)*. Tunisia: University, 2004, pp. 7-15.:

<sup>25</sup> A. TAHIRI : « Bawākīr al-'umrān al-ḥaḍārī bi-bilād Nakūr bayna al-arkyūlūgiā wa-l-tawḥīq » (=Nakūr in the Archaeology and in the Sources: the first forms of urbanism in Islamic West), in *Annales du Rif*, Al Hoceima, 1998, vol. I, pp. 6-13; *Id.* : « Proceso de urbanización en el Rif. Situación actual y perspectivas de investigación (siglos VIII-X) », in TORREMOCHA SILVA, Antonio & MARTÍNEZ ENAMORADO, Virgilio (eds.) : *La Ciudad en al-Andalus y el Magreb*. Granada: El legado andalusí, 2002, pp. 37-47; *Id.* : « Al-Rīf: al-mustalah wa al-'umrān min ḥilāl al-mašādir al-'arabiyya » (=The Rif: Toponym and urbanism across the Arabic sources), in *Urbanisation et urbanisme dans les montagnes rifaines*. Série études spatiales n.º 1, Tétouan, 2003, pp. 9-17.

<sup>26</sup> Ahmed TAHIRI : « Al-Munāḥ al-ḥaḍārī bi l-Mağreb wa-l-Andalus wa taqaddum tiqniyyāt wamanāhiğ al-'ulūm al-tağrībiyya » (=Wisdom and development of the technologies and of the experimental methodology in the Maghrib and to the Andalus), in : *L'Idée du progres dans la pensée scientifique*. Rabat, pp. 123-150.

<sup>27</sup> A. TAHIRI : *Bilād al-Rīf wa hādīrat Nakūr min fağr al-tārīḥ ilā anwār al-islām* (= *The Rif and the missing city of Nakūr, from the rise of the history to the lights of the Islam*). Seville, 2013

<sup>28</sup> A. TAHIRI : *Bilād al-Rīf wa hādīrat Nakūr*, pp. 283-291.

<sup>29</sup> Ahmed TAHIRI : *Bilād al-Rīf wa hādīrat Nakūr*.



It was on the bank of the river called in Berber language «*Agzār amaqrān*» («Big River», or «Guadalquivir») in the current cabila of Tamsamān in 699 where it was decided to constitute a state, in accordance with the Berbers themselves, and under the leadership of a descendant of the same tribal branch as the Nafzas called Ṣāliḥ b. Maṣūr<sup>30</sup>. The data in our possession attest that the Rif was not the scene of any Muslim conquest. The disclosed accounts and the battles fought between the Arabs from Yemen and the Berbers from the Rif are nothing but unsupported suppositions and products of the imagination<sup>31</sup>.

Indeed, this represented a singular political and cultural project started in the Rif lands in a key moment for the history of the Islamic West, featured by a serious institutional bewilderment between Kairouan and Damascus after the usurpation of the power by Mūsā b. Nuṣayr. We have previously analysed how this greedy leader was set aside from caliphal legitimacy, from his conspiracy against his predecessor —Has-sān b. al-Nu'mān— in 698 to his official appointment by the Caliph of Damascus in 705<sup>32</sup>. All this constitutes a historical chapter intentionally omitted by the Omeya official chronology causing deep confusion among medievalists.

Ṣāliḥ b. Maṣūr took advantage of such confusion to proclaim the territory of the Rif as *Mustablas*<sup>33</sup> under his own and only authority without subjection to any intermediate jurisdiction or serfdom, preserving enough power to maintain a direct relationship with the Caliph of Damascus<sup>34</sup>. Thus, the Rif could avoid the burdensome yoke of the Omeya imposing system without breaking bonds with the legal authority of Dār al-Islam, what allowed it to keep its riches, accumulate stock, and establish a political, economical, and social system of its own.

The Banū Yaslītan<sup>35</sup>, descendants of the tribal confederation of the Nafzas, were the first Berbers from the Rif adopting the political project of Ṣāliḥ b. Maṣūr. We have some evidence informing on the importance of a locality inherited from the pre-Islamic age, around which the pillars of the rising state were settled down. We refer to «*madīnat Tamsamān*» («city of Tamsamān»)<sup>36</sup> where the first three kings

<sup>30</sup> A. TAHIRI : *Imārat Banī Ṣāliḥ fī bilād Nakūr*, pp. 21-29.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 15-32; *Rīf al-Magrib y al-Andalus*, p. 53; *Imārat Banī Ṣāliḥ fī bilād Nakūr*, pp. 102-105.

<sup>32</sup> A. TAHIRI : *Fath al-Andalus y la incorporación de Occidente a Dār al-Islam*. Valencia, pp. 25-29; *Id.* : *Bilād al-Rīf wa hādīrat Nakūr*, pp. 94-98.

<sup>33</sup> IBN ḤALDŪN : *Kitāb al-'ibar* VI, p. 283,

<sup>34</sup> A. TAHIRI : *Bilād al-Rīf wa hādīrat Nakūr*, pp. 105-107.

<sup>35</sup> AL-BAKRĪ : *Al-Muḡrib*, p. 94; IBN 'IDĀRĪ : *Al-Bayān al-muḡrib*, vol. I, p.178; IBN ḤALDŪN : *Kitāb al-'ibar* VI, p.150.

<sup>36</sup> IBN ḤALDŪN : *Kitāb al-'ibar* VI, p. 284.



—Šāliḥ, al-Mu‘tasim, and Idrīs— established their capital city during their respective reigns, lasting for more than half a century all of them (699-751). According to our suppositions, this was located in the proximities of the place where the founder of the dynasty was buried, later turned into a sanctuary preserving the immemorial name of Sīdī Šāliḥ till present day<sup>37</sup>.

The capital had a flourishing port called «*marsā Tamsamān*» («port of Tamsamān»)<sup>38</sup>, whose facilities were located in the mouth of Agzār amaqrān, near a mound named «Badkūn»<sup>39</sup> on whose peak the sanctuary of Sīdī Idrīs, third king of the dynasty, is erected. It linked the coast of the Rif to the *coras* of Tākurunnā, Rayya and Ilbīra in the Iberian littoral, and also to the ports of Ifrīqiya (Tunisia). We must remember that the mountain range of Ronda, and the other hills of Tākurunnā we had located in Ifrīqiya were, since the pre-Islamic period, peopled by descendants of the tribal lineage of the Nafzas<sup>40</sup>. It must be remarked that Nefza is preserved till the present as a commune and locality in the government of Beja, in the northwest of Tunisia.

It was in *marsā Tamsamān* where the disembarkment of Šāliḥ b. Maṣṣūr, founder of the kingdom in the year 699, took place<sup>41</sup>. Also, we must not forget that, at his anchorage, ‘Abd al-Rahmān I, founder of the Omeya emirate in al-Andalus, embarked in 755 to effect his journey to Almuñecar, as analysed in previous research works<sup>42</sup>. The intense maritime activity in the port would explain the formation of a medieval habitat on the cited mound of Badkūn. We refer to «the farmhouse of Iqtī on the edge of the sea»<sup>43</sup>. We did not lack of evidence encouraging to highlight the importance of that settlement as a contact point of the Rif with the Mediterranean peoples and civilisations, from ancient times to the establishment of a new port in the meadow of Nakūr in 757<sup>44</sup>. However, the results of the hurried archaeological intervention were

<sup>37</sup> A. TAHIRI : *Imārat Banī Sāliḥ fī bilād Nakūr*, p. 125.

<sup>38</sup> AL-BAKRĪ : *Al-Muḡrib*, p. 91; IBN ḤALDŪN : *Kitāb al-‘ibar* VI, p. 295; IBN AL-ḤAṬĪB : *A’māl al-a’lām fī man būyi’a qabl al-ihtilām min mulūk al-islām*, 3.<sup>a</sup> parte, ed., A. M. Al-Abbādī & M. I. al-Kattānī, Casablanca, 1964, p. 171.

<sup>39</sup> AL-BAKRĪ : *Al-Muḡrib*, p. 91.

<sup>40</sup> A. TAHIRI : *Imārat Banī Sāliḥ fī bilād Nakūr*, pp. 171-172; 2007: 53; A. TAHIRI : *Bilād al-Rīf wa hādīrat Nakūr*, pp. 63-66.

<sup>41</sup> A. TAHIRI : *Rīf al-Maḡrib y al-Andalus*, pp. 22 and 42.

<sup>42</sup> A. TAHIRI : *Imārat Banī Sāliḥ fī bilād Nakūr*, p. 49; 2007: 57; *Id.* : *Bilād al-Rīf wa hādīrat Nakūr*, pp. 124-127.

<sup>43</sup> AL-BAKRĪ : *Al-Muḡrib*, p. 92.

<sup>44</sup> A. TAHIRI : *Imārat Banī Sāliḥ fī bilād Nakūr*, pp. 121-125; A. TAHIRI & F. Z. AITOUTOUHEN TEMSAMANI (eds) : *La civilisation rifaine à travers l’histoire du Maroc*, pp. 35-40.

superficial and lacking of scientific impact, and it did not leave, as usual with the Rif, any museological proof<sup>45</sup>.

It must be confirmed that the first architectonic work in the Rif under the government of the new state consisted of the edification during the year 699 of «Ribāt Nakūr»<sup>46</sup> in the southern limit of the meadow called «Agdāl» at the time, according to the clarifications of the chronicler Muhammad b. Yūsuf al-Warrāq al-Tārīhī. All the evidence at our disposal leads us to locate it on the hill situated on the right bank of the Nakūr, «five miles»<sup>47</sup> from the coast, or in other words, 12.5 kilometres in straight line. The place maintains till the present its old Berber denomination as «Azrū n tasrīth», or the «Rock of the Bride», and it is placed in the territory of the Banū Yaslīten, attached to the demarcation line with the adjacent tribal section of the Banū Waryāguel.

We must remember that the aforementioned lineages formed the strong core of the tribal confederation of the Nafzas, and they had agreed to have that place as marketplace («*Sūq*»)<sup>48</sup> where the cabilas of the Rif periodically held their meetings for product exchange, debating common issues, and making decisions regarding extraordinary matters. The cited Ribāt would play, according to our deductions from the events, the role of sanctuary where Ṣāliḥ b. Maṣṣūr would preach the Muslim faith and would welcome tribal leaders to explain them his ambitious political plan.

His reign of thirty-two years was enough for that place to become a metropolitan area, to which the name of the river that flows around it—the Nakūr— was given. It was «the first city built up in the Maghreb»<sup>49</sup>. Despite of the confusion spread among researchers due to the usual reading errors of the Arabic sources, all clues indicate that Ṣāliḥ b. Maṣṣūr was the one «who constructed the city of Nakūr»<sup>50</sup>. This is the ancient urban centre erected on the right bank of the river remaining still unknown as part of the capital, both for history and archaeology<sup>51</sup>.

It would be highly interesting to check if the foundations of that settlement hide tracks of a remote city inherited from antiquity, as it is suggested from the brief

<sup>45</sup> Mohamed KBIRI, Ahmed SIRAJ & Cinzia VISMARA : « Recherches archéologiques maroccolienne dans le Rif », *L'Africa romana*, XV (2002), pp. 567-604.

<sup>46</sup> AL-BAKRĪ : *Al-Muḡrib*, p. 91.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> AL-BAKRĪ : *Al-Muḡrib*, p. 92.

<sup>49</sup> AL-ZAYĀNĪ : *Al-Turḡumāna al-kubrā fī aḥbār al-ma'mūr barran wa-baḥran*, ed. A. al-Filālī, Mohammedia, 1967, p. 79.

<sup>50</sup> AL-BAKRĪ : *Al-Muḡrib*, p. 92.

<sup>51</sup> A. TAHIRI : *Bilād al-Rīf wa hādīrat Nakūr*, pp. 251-252.



Fig. 1: The Territory of Nakūr in the Antiquity until the 2nd Century B.C. (map 1)

data preserved in the Maghrebi geographical sources in this regard<sup>52</sup>. Another native geographer from al-Andalus confirms, in a peculiar reference, that «the city of Nakūr» has been built by the al-Ġabābira, or «the Almightyies»<sup>53</sup>, referring to the Canaanite-Philistines who migrated from Palestine to North of Africa more than a thousand years BC ago (map 1).

After this supposition at the end of the previous century on the ancient roots of the city of Nakūr<sup>54</sup>, we have stopped to analyse the data provided by the Greek and Latin sources about the city of «Ἀκράθ» (Acrat)<sup>55</sup>, or «Acrus urbs»<sup>56</sup> situated, according to the directions of their authors, in the Western Mediterranean, after «Sige urbs» («city of Sige»), and before the Pillars of Hercules<sup>57</sup>. We are not convinced about the labyrinthine interpretations given in advance. The collation of the data extracted from classical and medieval sources with the Berber oral tradition, and the local toponymy led us to suppose it would be the ancient metropolis on which the medieval city of Nakūr was settled down<sup>58</sup>.

<sup>52</sup> AL-ĤIMYARĪ : *Al-Rawḍ al-miṭār fī ḥabar al aqṭār*, I. ‘Abbās, Beirut, 1975, p. 134; *Kitāb al-Istibṣār fī ‘aḡā’ib al-amṣār*, Casablanca, 1985, p. 136; A. TAHIRI : *Imārat Banī Sāliḥ fī bilād Nakūr*, p. 128.

<sup>53</sup> AL-ZUHRI : *Kitāb al-ḡuḡrāfiya*, ed. M. H. Sāduq, s.d., Cairo, p. 113.

<sup>54</sup> A. TAHIRI : *Imārat Banī Sāliḥ fī bilād Nakūr*, p.128.

<sup>55</sup> PTOLEMY : *Geographicae Enarrationis*, Liber Quartus, C. Mullerus, Paris, 1901, p. 582.

<sup>56</sup> SCYLACIS : *Geographi Graeci Minores*, C. Mullerus, Paris, 1855, p. 90.

<sup>57</sup> A. TAHIRI : *Bilād al-Rīf wa ḥādirat Nakūr*, pp. 46-51.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

To check the coherence of our hypothesis, we spare no efforts to examine the etymological root, the lexicographical meaning, and the linguistic structure of the word «Nakūr»<sup>59</sup>. The etymology and phonetic wording of its root —*Akr*— coincide with the philological criteria applied in the Berber language. On this basis, the toponym was composed by adding the letter *N* («of»), meaning «possession or belonging»: *N + Akr = Nakr*.

We do not lack of reasons to consider that the same linguistic root has been adapted by other Mediterranean cultures in ancient times, being employed in the coining of their lexicon according to their grammatical rules. We refer to words such as *ἀκρα* («akra»), *ἀκροϛ* («akros»), and *ἀκρον* («akron»), from which the famous toponyms «Acropolis» and «Akra Barbarion»<sup>60</sup> in Greece, or «Akroterion»<sup>61</sup> in present Algarve in Portugal were formed. We also got to identify numerous place names in ancient Arabia, Euphrates, Sicily, and Iberia which adopted an identical etymological root<sup>62</sup>.

The author of the general description of Africa did not hesitate to identify Ptolemy's «Acrat»<sup>63</sup> with the medieval city of al-Mazamma. We must remember that, in his times, the city of Nakūr did no longer exist, after being abandoned in 1090 and substituted by another urban centre built up in the nearby port of al-Mazamma. Due to its geographical situation in the very same meadow of Nakūr just a few kilometres away, it was habitual among medieval chroniclers especially from the contemporary period<sup>64</sup> to confuse both cities and mix up data between both histories, as cited before<sup>65</sup>. According to the aforementioned author, Acrat would be «an ancient city built up by Africans»<sup>66</sup> upon the peak of a hill facing the sea, whose position is located in the border line between the provinces of the Rif and the Kart. It would be adequate to recall in this context the fact that the Benimerines (13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> centuries) were the ones who adopted the course of the Nakūr River as a limit between both regions.

With the formation of the kingdom of the Banū Ṣāliḥ, other places where ancient empires used to settle upon flourished again on the coast of the Rif after a long

<sup>59</sup> A. TAHIRI : *Bilād al-Rīf wa hādīrat Nakūr*, pp. 24-35.

<sup>60</sup> STRABON : *La geografía de Strabón*, ed., A. García y Bellido, Madrid, 1968, p. 108.

<sup>61</sup> STRABON : *La geografía*, p. 52.

<sup>62</sup> A. TAHIRI : *Bilād al-Rīf wa hādīrat Nakūr*, pp. 25-27.

<sup>63</sup> LUIS MÁRMOL CARVAJAL : *Ifriqiya (=General Description of Africa)*, trad. M. Ḥaġġī *et al.*, Rabat, 1989, vol. II, p. 245.

<sup>64</sup> AL-WAZZĀN : *Wasf Ifriqiya (=Description of Africa)*, trad. M. Ḥaġġī *et alii*, Beirut, 1983, I, p. 328.

<sup>65</sup> A. TAHIRI : *Bilād al-Rīf wa hādīrat Nakūr*, pp. 240-243.

<sup>66</sup> L. MÁRMOL CARVAJAL : *Ifriqiya II*, p. 245.

agony. We refer to the missing city of Rhysaddir<sup>67</sup>, whose name is formed by a prefix of Oriental origin —«Rhys» or «Ra's» («head», or «cape») —, and the Berber suffix «-addir» («cliff»). We are not convinced by the tangled interpretations that did not stop spreading confusion on the foundation of the medieval city of Melilla, and the etymological origin of its name<sup>68</sup>. Undoubtedly, we must recognise the labour initiated under the power of the Banū Ṣāliḥ, at the initiative of «the Emir of the Banū Yafran... whose name is Amlīl... who built up the city of Malīla (Melilla)»<sup>69</sup> in the year ninety-two of the Hegira (711). It was in the same period, and, precisely, in the «year ninety»<sup>70</sup> of the Hegira (708) when «the Emir of the Luwāta.... whose name is Bādīs»<sup>71</sup> founded a new port locality. We refer to the city of Bādīs, known later as Vélez de la Gomera.

After the fall of the Omeya caliphate of Damascus in 749 and the proclamation of the Abbassid state, the dynasty of the Banū Ṣāliḥ separated from the last political tie that linked it to the East. The deep transformation that shook, at that time, all *Dār al-Islām* provoked the third emir —Idrīs b. Ṣāliḥ— to raise the rank of his kingdom, strengthen its foundations and focus his perspective on new horizons. In order to achieve that goal, they had to establish a new capital able to incorporate into the same location the two main tribal confederations considered as the pillars of the new state: the Banū Yaṣlīten and the Banū Waryāḡuel. They tried to set an urban hub around which the rest of the cabilas belonging to the same Nafza tribal branch —the Gzan-nāya, the Banū Wartradīn, and the Banū Yaznāsen— would revolve. With they would have enough political, social, and financial stability to associate to the new dynamic the other big tribal confederations of the Rif: the Ṣanhāḡa, the Ġumāra and the Mekkāsa, which would move around the same axis in a wider tribal circle.

According to our suppositions, the new strategical challenges encouraged the third king of the Banū Ṣāliḥ to take the decision of expanding the preexisting city towards the other bank of the Nakūr River. It is not a casualty that they favoured the hill in the front located in the territory of the Banū Waryāḡuel to settle down the foundations of *Dār al-Imāra* (Royal House), *al-Masḡid al-ḡāmi'* (Major Mosque), *al-Muṣallā* (oratory), *al-aswāq* (bazaars), *al-arbāḡ* (suburbs), and *al-ḡammāmāt* (baths), among other edifications<sup>72</sup>. It was the first example of Islamic city in the Western World whose urban structure, elements, and construction techniques did not take a long time to

<sup>67</sup> A. TAHIRI : *Bilād al-Rīf wa ḡadīrat Nakūr*, pp. 44-46.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 229-237.

<sup>69</sup> AL-ZAYYĀNĪ : *Al-Turḡumāna al-kubrā*, p. 79.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> A. TAHIRI : *Imārat Banī Ṣāliḥ fī bilād Nakūr*, pp.131-138.

be adapted in the Omeya Seville, with the Mosque of Ibn 'Adabbas and its district of Triana, and also in the caliphal Cordova, as previously analysed<sup>73</sup>.

The chronicles relate that architectural intervention specifying that the Emir Idrīs was the first in «building the city of Nakūr on the bank of the river and failed to finish it off»<sup>74</sup>. This account has been erroneously interpreted by medieval and contemporary narrators for not distinguishing between the old urban centre constructed by Ṣāliḥ b. Maṣṣūr on the right bank of the Nakūr, and the new expansion district on the left side. The works continued without exception under the reign of his heir, Sa'īd b. Idrīs (751-803), who remained, during the first years of his ruling, «residing in the city of Tamsamān»<sup>75</sup>.

Once the construction was finished, the Banū Ṣāliḥ decided to move the capital of the kingdom from the ancient locality of Tamsamān to the magnificent city of Nakūr. With this action, the gravity centre was displaced from the region of the «Big River» («Aḡzār amaqrān») to the meadows of the Nakūr. This significant event has been referred by the chroniclers, who undoubtedly affirmed that Sa'īd b. Idrīs was the responsible for «building the city of Nakūr in his early reign, and he got installed in it»<sup>76</sup>. Due to the magnitude of the infrastructures and the quality of the works undertaken, he was carelessly attributed all the labour by the chroniclers, who affirmed that «Sa'īd b. Idrīs b. Ṣāliḥ b. Maṣṣūr was the one in building the city»<sup>77</sup>.

In this as in other similar cases, it is not a contradiction of Arabic sources frequently considered without reason: confusing, imprecise, and sparing. Whereas it is true that the medieval polygraphers transmit us scattered data extracted from their original contexts before being returned to their works; however, we notice that the philological approach adopted by contemporary historians and archaeologists do not permit to decipher the mysteries of a barely known historical period. Instead of complaining, it would be certainly more adequate to analyse thoroughly the contents of the sources before elaborating any historical or urban reconstruction.

In order to consolidate the handmade-commercial infrastructure of the outlined city of Nakūr, the Banū Ṣāliḥ took the fundamental initiative of linking their capital

<sup>73</sup> A. TAHIRI : *Al-Binā' wa-l-'umrān al-ḥaḍārī bi Iṣbīliya al-'abbādiya: I'adat tarkīb al-madīna min ḥilāl al-maṣādir al-'arabiya* (=The urbanite construction and populousness in Abbadite Seville: City's Reconstruction through Arabic Sources). Beirut, pp 29-32.

<sup>74</sup> IBN ḤALDŪN : *Kitāb al-'ibar* VI, p. 284.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> IBN ḤALDŪN : *Kitāb al-'ibar* VI, p. 284.

<sup>77</sup> AL-BAKRĪ : *Al-Muḡrib*, p. 91; IBN 'IDĀRĪ : *Al-Bayān al-muḡrib*, vol. I, p.176.

to the recently created locality of Siġilmāsa in 757. This action aimed at laying the foundations of an impressive axis of intercontinental communication which channelled, for the first time in the Middle Ages, the route of gold to Nakūr and established a mercantile connection between the peoples from the occidental basin of the Mediterranean and those from sub-Saharan Africa<sup>78</sup>.

No less significant was the labour of adaptation undertaken in the bay of Nakūr opposite the «island called al-Mazamma»<sup>79</sup>, where the Banū Šāliḥ founded a flourishing port, known since then as «*marsā Nakūr*»<sup>80</sup>. Thanks to its anchorage, the maritime routes of the kingdom were ramified to Pechina, Ibiza, Majorca, Barcelona, and Galia, where the on-shore itineraries to Bulgaria and Russia were branched<sup>81</sup>. The navigation lines did not cease to multiply along the 8<sup>th</sup> century and especially the 9<sup>th</sup> century, from the coast of the Rif to Malaga and Seville<sup>82</sup>.

Nakūr was also connected to Alexandria by sea through the ports of Ifrīqiya<sup>83</sup>. Besides, it was possible to travel in parallel through on-shore itineraries from Nakūr to Tāhert and Kairouan bound for the capital of Egypt at that time: Al-Fuṣṭāṭ. All the evidence collected confirms that the city of Nakūr was a great commercial metropolis during the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries. In its port and markets, the big routes of communication coming from the East, sub-Saharan Africa, and Europe got intertwined (map 2).

Due to the trading activity accomplished at an ecumenical scale through bazaars and craft workshops, the city of Nakūr did not take a long time to reach its peak of urban evolution and demographical expansion. The variety of marketplaces, the size of its suburbs and neighbourhoods, the extension of its oratory, and the diversity of facilities (baths, corn exchanges, mosques, or water distribution system) were reflected by a famous Oriental geographer by calling it «*al-madīna al-kabīra*» («the Big City») <sup>84</sup>. More significant is the account of an Iraqi wise chronicler and traveller when getting stunned by the elegance of its facilities and the greatness of its buildings, after a visit

<sup>78</sup> A. TAHIRI : *Al-tiġāra wa-l-mubādalāt bi-l-Andalus*. pp. 212-214.

<sup>79</sup> IBN ḤAWQAL : *Kitāb ṣūrat al-arḍ*, ed. M. J. de Goeje, Leiden, 1937, p. 78.

<sup>80</sup> IBN ḤAYYĀN : *Al-Muqtabas V*, ed., P. Chalmeta & F. Corriente & M. Sobh, Madrid, 1979, p. 413; IBN 'IDĀRĪ : *Al-Bayān al-muġrib*, p. 179 ; A. TAHIRI : *Bilād al-Rīf wa hādīrat Nakūr*, pp. 254-255.

<sup>81</sup> A. TAHIRI : *Bilād al-Rīf wa hādīrat Nakūr*, pp. 212-222; *Id. : Al-tiġāra wa-l-mubādalāt bi-l-Andalus: mīlād al-raṣmāliya bi-l-bilād al-maġribiya* (= *Trade and Transactions in al-Andalus. The Birth of the Capitalism in Islamic West*). Seville, 2015, pp. 78-81 ; A. TAHIRI & F. Z. AITOUTOUHEN TEMSAMANI (eds) : *La civilisation rifaine à travers l'histoire du Maroc*, pp.: 45-52;

<sup>82</sup> A. TAHIRI : *Bilād al-Rīf wa hādīrat Nakūr*, pp. 218-222.

<sup>83</sup> A. TAHIRI : « Uṣūl al-tafā'ul al-aḍārī... », pp. 153-161.

<sup>84</sup> AL-IṢṬAḤRĪ : *Al-Masālik wa-l-mamālik*, ed. M. al-Haynī & M. Garbāl, Cairo, 1961, p. 34.



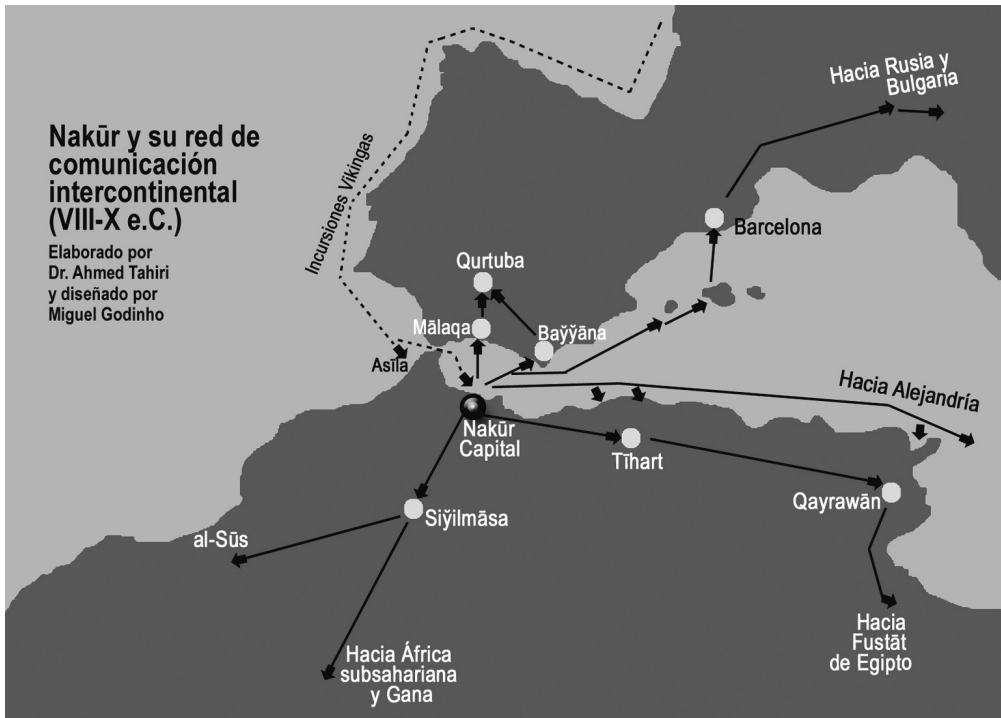


Fig. 2: Nakūr and its network of intercontinental communication (map 2)

he paid to Nakūr in 891. According to him, it was a monumental city «*al-madīna al-‘uzmā*»<sup>85</sup>.

The accumulation of richness in the shape of golden and silver coins in the hands of an emergent social elite favoured the beginning of a new economical system in Nakūr which we refer to as «*nizām al-taṭmīr al-ta‘āqudī*», or «contractual investing system»<sup>86</sup>. In other words, a pioneering trading class mentioned by the Dean of the Andalusian historians in the following terms: «*aṣḥāb al-salāma min al-tuġġār*», or «the placid trading lords»<sup>87</sup>. The structures, mechanisms, and subsequent evolution of this unexplored system have been duly covered in another research work specially dedicated to this question<sup>88</sup>.

The exchange of goods, the currency coinage, the mining activity, and the handmade production favoured the urban growth, and the appearance of numerous

<sup>85</sup> AL-YA‘QŪBĪ : *Kitāb al-Buldān*, ed. M. J. de Goeje, Leiden, 1967, p. 356.

<sup>86</sup> A. TAHIRI : *Al-tiġāra wa-l-mubādalāt bi-l-Andalus*, p. 7.

<sup>87</sup> IBN ḤAYYĀN : *Al-Muqtabas* V, p. 414.

<sup>88</sup> A. TAHIRI : *Al-tiġāra wa-l-mubādalāt bi-l-Andalus*.



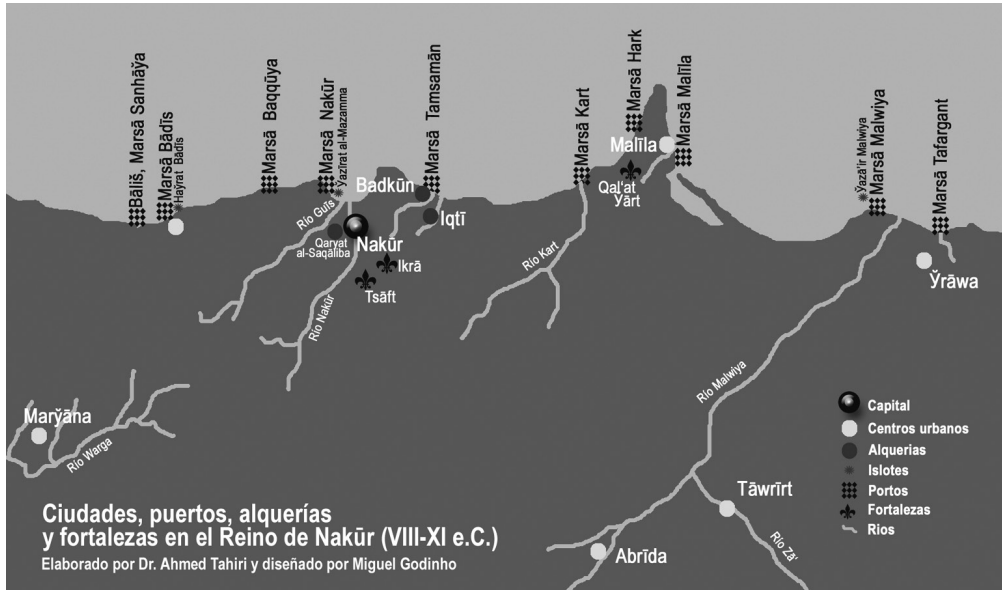


Fig. 3: Towns, harbours, qūra and fortresses in the Kingdom of Nakūr (8th-11th BC) (map 3)

farmsteads and ports along the coast (map 3). For this reason, the name Rif was given to this territory whose meaning «symbolises the fertility and abundance of provisions, and the proximity of water. The Rif also refers to the place where there is human life»<sup>89</sup>, according to the most accredited dictionaries of classical Arabic. Judging from a saying of the prophet, to say that we come from the Rif is to declare ourselves as inhabitants of the city «*ahl al-mudun*»<sup>90</sup>. The same tendency to urbanisation was spread all over the Maghreb, whose littoral was not late to become «a constant shadow with an endless amount of farmsteads and cities, from Tripoli to Tangier. It was certainly not comparable in riches and prosperity to any other place in the world»<sup>91</sup>.

Nevertheless, the urban life in Nakūr was soon interrupted by the devastating Viking incursion in the year 858. After an eight-day invasion, the city was left ruined and burnt down<sup>92</sup>. More impact on the urban structures had the conflict erupted at the beginning of the 10<sup>th</sup> century between the Fatimid caliphate, proclaimed in 909 in Ifrīqiya, and its Omeya rival established in Cordova in 928. As a consequence of

<sup>89</sup> IBN MANZŪR : *Qāmūs lisān al-‘arab*, ed. ‘A. Ali & alii, s.d., Cairo, pp. 128-129; AL-FARAHĪDĪ : *Tarīb kitāb al-‘ayn*, ed. M. al-Majzūmī & I. al-Samurrā’ī, Baqrā- Qum, Iran, (1414h/ 1993), vol. I, p. 735.

<sup>90</sup> IBN MANZŪR : *Qāmūs lisān al-‘arab*, pp. 128-129.

<sup>91</sup> IBN ‘IDĀRĪ : *Al-Bayān al-muḡrib* II, p. 35.

<sup>92</sup> A. TAHIRI : *Imārat Banī Šālih fī bilād Nakūr*, pp. 61-63; A. TAHIRI : *Bilād al-Rīf wa ḥādirat Nakūr*, pp. 142-145.

the political and doctrinal clash between both powers in the western Mediterranean, the Rif became the scene of violent and disastrous battles, getting its flourishing urban structures reduced to ashes. The capital was repeatedly occupied, destroyed, and depopulated by caliphal troops —Faṭimids and Andalusians— during 917, 929, 932, and 935, as previously detailed<sup>93</sup>.

The tenth king of Nakūr was the one in charge of rehabilitating the old depopulated area erected on the left shore of the river in 932. All the authorised sources agree to affirm that Abū Ayūb Ismāʿīl «rebuilt the old city founded by Ṣāliḥ b. Maṣṣūr, repopulated it, reestablished the bazaar in it, and took it as residence, where he remained until the year 323 of the Hegira (934)»<sup>94</sup>. Thirteen years later, the thirteenth king —Ġurṭum b. Aḥmad— started the tasks of clearing the land and evacuating the debris piled up on the left bank of the river where the other depopulated area of the capital remained. It was him the one reconstructing the last and definitive urban structure of Nakūr on that shore.

Thus, it became a smaller city about which we have two brief but valuable descriptions. We refer to the account of the chronicler Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Warrāq who represented it in the following terms: «The city of Nakūr is located among hills... It has four gates: *bāb Sulaymān* to the east, *bāb Banī Waryāguel* between east and north, *bāb al-muṣallā* to the west, and *bāb al-yahūd* to the north. Its walls are made of rammed earth»<sup>95</sup>. It was in the middle of the 10<sup>th</sup> century when such village received the visit of the famous Iraqi geographer and narrator who summed up his observation as follows: «Nakūr is currently a medium size settlement, and it was much bigger in the past»<sup>96</sup>.

Apparently, the archaeologists interested in the study of Nakūr did not take enough methodological measures to decipher both sides of a splendid city that was diminished to a plain fortress since the middle of the 10<sup>th</sup> century: the so-called «ḥiṣn Nakūr», or «fortress of Nakūr»<sup>97</sup>, by contemporary sources. They blindly undertook their surveys confirming hastily that we had a simple «rural settlement... with rather rough architecture»<sup>98</sup>. The genesis of the Islamic city in the West, and the fundamen-

<sup>93</sup> A. TAHIRI : *Imārat Banī Ṣāliḥ fī bilād Nakūr*, pp. 73-99; A. TAHIRI : *Bilād al-Rīf wa hādīrat Nakūr*, pp. 153-198.

<sup>94</sup> AL-BAKRĪ : *Al-Muḡrib*, pp. 97-98; IBN ḤALDŪN : *Kitāb al-ʿibar* VI, p. 285; IBN AL-ḤAṬĪB : *Aʿmāl al-aʿlām*, p. 177.

<sup>95</sup> AL-BAKRĪ : *Al-Muḡrib*, p. 90.

<sup>96</sup> IBN ḤAWQAL : *Kitāb ṣu-rat al-ard*, p. 78.

<sup>97</sup> « Kitāb mafājir al-Barbar », in *Tres textos árabes sobre beréberes en el Occidente Islámico*, ed. M. Yaʿlā, C.S.I.C., Madrid, 1996, pp. 123-272: 162.

<sup>98</sup> P. CRESSIER : *Prospection archéologique dans le Rif*, p. 136.

tals of urban life in the Rif coast would be indefinite if we agree with fragmentary readings of sources.

It was in the year 1080 when the Almoravids definitively razed the fortress of Nakūr turning into wreckage the remains of its facilities. The disintegration of the contractual investing system, and the implementation of a new one based on feudal concession<sup>99</sup> made way to a new urban architecture characterised by fortification. To face the challenges of the epoch, every coastal city such as Bādis, al-Mazamma, Malīla, and also interior areas like Margāna, Ġrāwa, and Tāwṛirt, were solidly fortified.

The tendency to fortification was also noticed in the rural sphere. For instance, the farmhouse of the Slavics «*qaryat al-ṣaqāliba*»<sup>100</sup>, turned into a fortress named «*qal'at al-ṣaqāliba*», or «fortress of the Slavics»<sup>101</sup>. Other impressive fortresses were erected in the Rif as a consequence of the structural imbalance caused by the invasions of the Fatimid and Omeya armies by sea and land. We refer to «*qal'at Ġārt*»,<sup>102</sup> «*qal'at Ikrā*»<sup>103</sup>, and «*Tsāft*»<sup>104</sup>, among others.

The Dean of the Andalusian historians provides us with data of interest on the building of the fortress of Ġārt in 935. The works were performed under the technical supervision of Muḥammad b. Walīd, master of the engineers, accompanied by a squad of thirty builders, ten carpenters, fifteen excavators, six painters with expertise in lime works, six experts in timber formwork, two forge blacksmiths, and two welders chosen among the most skilful of their guilds. They brought their necessary utensils and tools with them to undertake their tasks<sup>105</sup>. It was a military action carried out by the Omeya caliphate in the Rif with the intention of containing the weakened kingdom of Nakūr, snatching the control of the intercontinental communication network from the former, and blocking the access to gold in sub-Saharan Africa.

From these dates onwards, a new era featured by a deep ruralisation of all the Rif coast started. It is true that new settlements and other citadels emerged in the area in subsequent centuries, but that requires a separate study.

<sup>99</sup> A. TAHIRI : *Al-filāḥa wa-l-ʿumrān al-qarawī bi-l-Andalus. Min niām al-taṭmīr al-taʿāquḍī ilā namat al-īnzāl al-iqtāʿī* (=Agriculture And Rural Settlement in Al-Andalus: From A System Of Contractual Investment to the Mode of Feudal Concession). Alexandria, 2004.

<sup>100</sup> AL-BAKRĪ : *Al-Muḡrib*, p. 93.

<sup>101</sup> IBN AL-ḤAṬĪB : *Aʿmāl al-aʿlām*, p. 174.

<sup>102</sup> IBN ḤAYYĀN : *Al-Muqtabas V*, p. 387.

<sup>103</sup> AL-BAKRĪ : *Al-Muḡrib*, p. 98; IBN ḤALDŪN : *Kitāb al-ʿibar VI*, p. 286,

<sup>104</sup> AL-BAKRĪ : *Al-Muḡrib*, p. 93.

<sup>105</sup> IBN ḤAYYĀN : *Al-Muqtabas V*, p. 388.