



GREAT CITIES OF AFRICA



THE ANCIENT CITY OF MARRAKECH

The Almoravids were an African Berber Dynasty from north and north-west of the African continent in an area known as The Maghreb. The Almoravid Dynasty was formed from the unification of African Berber tribes into one clan under the religion of Islam which covered the region of modern day, Morocco, Western Sahara, Algeria, Northern Libya, and Mauretania. The formation of the Almoravid movement and dynasty can be traced back to an African Berber leader named Yahya ibn Ibrahim who was an Islamic scholar in conjunction with another African Berber named Abdallah ibn Yasin in 1036 AD.

In 1061 AD a Berber leader named Yusuf Ibn Tashifin founded the city of Marrakech in Morocco and constructed the first brick mosque within the city. The city of Marrakesh became the capital city of the Almoravid Dynasty whose territory eventually expanded out of Africa and into southern Spain in Europe. The Tensift River was located a few miles north to the city and served as a source of water. The Almoravids constructed a bridge across the Tensift River to connect the city of Marrakech to the rest

of northern Morocco. At this time both Marrakech and the city of Aghmat to the south served as hubs of trade for the newly created kingdom with Aghmat being more focused on scholarly activities. The walls which would eventually surround the city were 6 meters in height and has 12 gates. In Marrakech, the Almoravids soon constructed multiple mosques and developed mud brick houses for the city's residents. Next, a system of canals and water works were created so that water became plentiful throughout the city. The largest mosque in the city was named Masjid al Siqaya which translates as 'Mosque of the Fountain' with a minaret (tower) over 30 meters tall. Surrounding the mosque were several souqs (markets) which were used for trade by the inhabitants of the city. To the north of the city of Marrakech olive gardens and orchards were developed and to the east of the city the majority of the pottery and tile making took place. The Almoravids also began to mint their own coinage for use in trade called the 'gold dinar' by 1092 AD. The city of Marrakesh would eventually fall under the control of a new African Berber dynasty called The Almohads by 1149 AD.