 Generally speaking, the important primary sources for the history of Qarāqūsh and the Banū Ghāniya can be divided into two groups: historical works and geographical works. The vast majority of sources in the first category are chronicles with the exception of a few specialized treatises, a biographical dictionary, and the collection of official Almohad letters. The historical works have been further divided according to their authors’ region of origin as either Maghribī (western) or Mashriqi (eastern).

1 Maghribī Historians

Not surprisingly most of the important sources for the history of the struggle between the Almohads and the Banū Ghāniya were written by Maghribī authors. The bulk of the surviving chronicles were written by historians who lived after the fall of the Almohad state under the Marinids or Hafsids. Fortunately some of the Marinid chroniclers, in particular Ibn ʿIdhārī, preserve a great deal of earlier material (see below). The three Maghribī historians who have the most to say about the Banū Ghāniya are Ibn ʿIdhārī, Ibn Khaldūn, and Al-Marrākushī. In this section we will consider each of the Maghribī authors in chronological order and pay special attention to their influences and the sources upon which they drew.

1.1 Al-Baydhaq (First Half of the 12th Century AD)

Abū Bakr b. Alī al-Ṣanhājī, known as al-Baydhaq, was one of the original Almohads and a close companion of the Almohad mahdī Ibn Tūmart as well as the first caliph, ʿAbd al-Muʾmin. Thirty-six manuscript pages have survived from a work of his entitled Akhbār al-Mahdī Ibn Tūmart. Little information can be gleaned from this text about al-Baydhaq’s life because the beginning of the manuscript is missing. Nonetheless it is evident that he was a close follower of Ibn Tūmart and his account is very valuable as it gives the testimony and point of view of a man who took part in the establishment

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of the Almohad movement from its earliest days until the great Almohad triumphs in the Maghrib and al-Andalus in the middle of the twelfth century AD.\(^3\) In a recent study of the Akhbār Bombrun has drawn attention to important parallels between the depiction of Ibn Tūmart’s career in this work and the sīra (biography) of the prophet Muḥammad.\(^4\)

1.2 **Almohad Letters (Various Authors, 12th and 13th Centuries)**

Approximately 160 official Almohad letters are known to have survived.\(^5\) These range in date from the time of Ibn Tūmart in the early twelfth century until the terminal phase of the Almohad state in the mid-thirteenth century. It is important to note that these letters do not survive as separate documents; rather they were recorded in various manuscripts. While some of these letters are contained in the manuscripts of well-known published works such as the major Almohad chronicles and various literary anthologies, a large number of them were found in unpublished manuscripts in the Moroccan royal library (al-Khizāna al-Ḥasanīya) in Rabat and the Escorial. Among the unpublished works is a scribal handbook by a thirteenth century Almohad secretary named al-Balawī. The surviving letters were composed by dozens of Almohad kuttāb (secretaries). Many of the latter were celebrated for their literary accomplishments and as a result we know something about their lives and careers.\(^6\) The subjects treated in these letters include announcements of victories by the caliphs, exhortations and reprimands directed at the inhabitants of specific cities, orders and information sent from the caliph to his regional governors, diplomatic exchanges, and private correspondence between the secretaries themselves.\(^7\)

So far two major collections of Almohad letters have been published. The first of these was Lévi-Provençal’s Trente-sept lettres Almohades which appeared in 1941. The letters in this collection date from the reigns of the first four Almohad caliphs; the bulk of them are from the reign of the first caliph, ʿAbd al-Muʾmin. A few of them deal with the Almohad campaigns against the Banū Ghāniya and the Hilālī Arabs in Ifrīqiya and

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6 For more details on the authors of the Almohad letters and the manuscripts that contain them see *Rasā’il Muwaḥḥidiya: Majmū’a Jadida*, ed. Aḥmad ʿAzzāwī (Qunayṭra, Morocco: Manshūrāt Kulliyat al-Ādāb, 1995), vol. 1, pp. 10–37.