

The Foundational Inscription of the Minaret of the Great Mosque in Algiers

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Abstract:

This research paper aims to examine an archaeological inscription that dates the construction of minarets in the Islamic Maghreb during the eighth Hijri century, focusing specifically on the foundational inscription of the minaret of the Great Mosque in Algiers. The study centers on an in-depth analysis of this inscription, which is engraved on a marble plaque preserved on one of the mosque's walls.

This inscription is of considerable significance as it sheds light on the period of the minaret's construction, identifies the figure responsible for its commissioning, illustrates the predominant script style of the Zianid dynasty, and demonstrates the artist's skill in engraving and carving quality. Additionally, the decorative elements on the plaque provide further valuable insights. The study concludes by underscoring the historical and archaeological value of such foundational plaques as essential primary sources for understanding the region's history and civilization, urging researchers to prioritize their preservation and maintenance.

Keywords: Plaque; Minaret; Mosque; Archaeological; Algeria.

Introduction:

During the reign of the Zianid sultans, a notable trend emerged in the Islamic Maghreb, involving the construction of minarets attached to mosques that had been established prior to the founding of their state. It appears that the mosques built during the Almoravid period, which lacked minarets and decorative features, drew the attention of the Zianid rulers,

sparking a desire to remedy this deficiency. This need was further influenced by the political and cultural context of the time.

Following the establishment of their first state in Tlemcen (633-736 AH), the Zianid sultans of the Banu Abd al-Wad dynasty undertook the expansion of existing Almoravid mosques by adding minarets. Notably, the Great Almoravid Mosque in Tlemcen was outfitted with a minaret under the directive of Yaghmurasan ibn Ziyar, while the Great Almoravid Mosque in Algiers received a minaret by the order of Abu Tashfin ibn Musa, as indicated by the commemorative plaque under study.

Foundational plaques and inscriptions represent some of the most reliable and tangible artifacts of material culture, as they are resistant to fabrication or misinterpretation. These inscriptions are critical documents that researchers rely upon to enrich and authenticate their studies. They reveal new historical facts, correct prior errors, and illuminate political, social, religious, and economic dynamics of the era. Such engraved plaques provide valuable insights across a variety of fields, offering fertile ground for research, documentation, analysis, and evaluation.

The foundational plaque of the minaret of the Great Mosque in Algiers has proven instrumental in uncovering historical details about the construction of the minaret, which occurred at a time distinct from that of the mosque itself. The inscription also offers significant information about the founder, the motivations behind the construction, the names, titles, and expressions common at the time, as well as the artistic and literary quality of the engraving. Furthermore, it sheds light on the historical period in which the construction of minarets as an architectural feature became widespread.

Consequently, the central research question addresses why the Zianid sultans, from the Banu Abd al-Wad dynasty, prioritized the addition of minarets as both an architectural and decorative element in mosques, as reflected in the foundational plaque of the minaret.

To answer this, the research will undertake a detailed analysis of the plaque, examining it from historical, archaeological, and linguistic perspectives. A field-based review of both the plaque and the attached minaret will also be conducted to support the investigation.

First: Dissecting and Analyzing the Foundational Plaque of the Minaret of the Great Mosque in Algiers

1. Dissecting the Plaque

This inscription is carved on a white marble plaque in a rectangular shape, measuring approximately 75 cm in length and 50 cm in width. It is affixed to the northern wall of the mosque, to the right of the entrance leading to the minaret. The inscription consists of eleven lines, executed in the Maghribi "Thuluth" script. It appears to have lost some of the features it had during the Almohad era. (See Plate 01).

The inscription can be read as follows:

1. *In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, and peace be upon our Master Muhammad*
2. *When the Emir of the Muslims, Abu Nashfin, may Allah strengthen and aid him, completed the minaret*
3. *of Algiers, on Sunday, the 7th of Dhu al-Qi'dah*
4. *in the year 722 AH, and it was completed in the month of Rajab in the year 723 AH*
5. *The minaret was called out in its current state, as a minaret of its kind, beautiful as I am.*
6. *The Emir of the Muslims provided it with beauty, completing my construction,*
7. *and faced the full moon saying: "Peace be upon you, O Moon-like one"*
8. *No sight can compare to my beauty—look upon my splendor and the joy of my adornment.*
9. *And may my Creator raise my status as He has elevated my stature.*
10. *And may Allah's victory continue to support its banner, granting him the protection and beauty that follows.*

2. Description of the Script:

This inscription is executed in the Maghribi Naskh script,¹ specifically in the late Maghribi Thuluth style. The script is evenly distributed across the plaque's surface, with the engraver achieving notable harmony in the inscriptions from lines one through six, where the design and execution appear well-coordinated. However, lines seven to ten depart from this uniformity, executed in a different style. The plaque is adorned with ornamental plant motifs that interlace with the letters and lines, adding an intricate decorative dimension.

The writing on the plaque reveals a certain softness in the letters, diverging from the traditional Maghribi Naskh style, particularly due to the artistic embellishments that detract from its aesthetic clarity. This deviation is most evident in the letter "S" in the word "Nasrah" (line 1), "M" in "Min" (line 3), "W" in "Wa" (line 5), "Y" in "Hali" (line 6), and "D" in "Madhkur" (line 8).

These words are marked with diacritical marks and color, characteristic features of the Maghribi Naskh script. It seems the engraver adhered to the fundamental rules of the script, following the principles of "Tawali'," "Nawazil," and "Qawa'im."

The inscription exhibits two distinct stylistic phases: the first style predominates in lines one through five, while the second style is employed in lines six through eleven, differing notably from the previous script pattern.

3. Linguistic Interpretation:

Upon examination of the text, several linguistic errors become apparent, which detract from the inscription's overall linguistic value. These mistakes reflect the lower cultural and educational standards of the time in the central Maghreb region. Some travelers who visited Algiers in the 7th Hijri century noted the decline in intellectual and scholarly activity, with one observer remarking, "...there remained no one from the scholars counted, nor anyone associated with any discipline..." (Al-Abdari, undated, p. 23).

¹ The Maghrebi script generally includes the various scripts of the Maghreb and Al-Andalus, which refers to the geographical region extending from the desert of Barqa in Libya to the Ebro River in Al-Andalus.

Such observations document the deteriorating state of knowledge, which was evident in writings from the 7th Hijri century and persisted until the fall of the Almohad Caliphate.

The engraver appears to have been influenced by the colloquial language of the period, which is reflected in his work. This influence lowered the linguistic quality of the inscription, especially considering its role as a marker of a significant historical and civilizational event.

For instance, the engraver misspelled several words, indicating a linguistic weakness: "Dhī Qa‘da" instead of "Dhū al-Qa‘da" in line three, "Nada" instead of "Nādā" in line four, and "Ilāhī" instead of "Ilāhī" in line ten.

There are also noticeable issues with grammatical and diacritical marks, such as the substitution of a "yā" for a "hamza" in "Al-Jazā‘ir" (line seven), and the misspelling of "Lawā‘ih" as "Lawā‘ih" in line eleven.

Grammatical errors are further apparent in the improper use of the shadda (double consonants), as seen in "Allāh" instead of "Allah" in line one, and the incorrect repetition of the shadda in "Ar-Raḥmān" instead of "Ar-Raḥmān" in line one.

4. Titles, Names, and Forms in the Inscription Text:

A. Abu Tashfin:

Abu Tashfin was Sultan Abu Nashfin, son of Sultan Abu Hamou, son of Sultan Labi Sa‘id, son of Emir of the Muslims Abu Yahya Yaghmurasan ibn Ziyān, the fifth ruler of the Banu Abd al-Wad dynasty in Tlemcen. He was born in 692 AH and was known for his noble character and virtuous actions. He ascended to power on the 23rd of Jumada al-Awwal, 718 AH / July 1318 CE, and passed away in 737 AH / 1337 CE.

During his reign, he implemented significant reforms within his administration, appointing notable figures such as the scholar Abu Abd Allah Ibn Madura as his secretary, the jurist Abu Abd Allah Muhammad Ibn Mas‘ud, and the judge Abu Abd Allah Muhammad Ibn al-Mansur as the chief justice. His court also included prominent scholars such as Abu Hassan Muhammad al-Husayni (Ibn Khaldun, *Bughiyat al-Ruwad*, 1980, p. 215).

Abu Tashfin was known for his ascetic lifestyle and focus on infrastructure projects, which included the construction of palaces, factories, and gardens. His contributions also

extended to the improvement of public works, notably bringing thousands of slaves from the Roman Empire, along with skilled laborers such as carpenters, tile makers, and decorators. Among his notable achievements was the establishment of important landmarks, such as the "Dar al-Malik" (Royal House) and a school that is now known as the "Tashfini School" in Tlemcen (Al-Maqri, *Nafh al-Tayyib*, 1995, p. 156).

B. The Minaret

The term "minaret" refers to the tower that rises above a mosque, from which the call to prayer (adhan) is issued (Ben Qirbah, 1986, p. 8-9).

The origin of minarets in Islam can be traced back to the governorship of Muslima ibn Mukhallad al-Ansari in Egypt (47 AH / 667 CE), who commissioned the construction of the first minaret at the ancient mosque of Umar ibn al-Khattab in Fustat (al-Maqrizi, *Al-Khutat*, 1959, p. 225).

Second: Study of the Founding Plaque of the Historic Minaret of Algiers' Great Mosque

The analytical examination of this founding plaque offers insight into the early history of minaret construction within the Islamic world and its subsequent spread throughout the Maghreb region.

Historian al-Maqrizi, in his *Al-Khutat*, mentions that the construction of minarets began under the governorship of Muslima ibn Mukhallad al-Ansari, who enlarged the mosque and added a minaret. As the practice of delivering sermons expanded, he ordered the erection of minarets in all mosques across Egypt, with the exceptions of the mosques of al-'Ajib and Qulawah (al-Maqrizi, *Al-Khutat*, 1959, p. 225).

The architectural tradition of minarets subsequently spread across the Maghreb, with the first minaret built at the Great Mosque of Kairouan in 105 AH, followed by those at the mosque of Sfax in the 3rd century Hijri / 9th century CE (al-Bakri, *Al-Maghrib*, 1957, p. 33), the Great Mosque of Córdoba in 340 AH / 950 CE (Al-Sayed Salem, 1986, p. 20), the Qal'at Bani Hammad in the 5th century Hijri / 11th century CE (Bouruiba, 1977, p. 208),

and the minaret of the Great Mosque of Tlemcen in 679 AH / 1280 CE (Bouruiba, 1983, p. 45).

These minarets were often accompanied by marble plaques, typically placed on one of the walls or near the entrance leading to the staircase that ascends to the minaret. The inscriptions on these plaques chronicle the historical and cultural events tied to their construction.

It seems that these plaques were a common feature of religious buildings constructed during the period of widespread building activity funded by rulers, sultans, and philanthropists.

In the Islamic Maghreb, numerous examples of founding and dedication plaques from the 7th, 8th, and 9th Hijri centuries have been discovered. Notable examples include those at the Tashfini School, the Mosque of Sidi al-Halwi in Tlemcen, the Mosque of Sidi al-Khadr in Constantine, the Bouanania School in Fez, and the Yacoubia School in Tlemcen (Bouruiba, 1983, p. 45; al-Maqrizi, *Nafh al-Tayyib*, 1995, p. 183).

The founding plaque of the historic minaret of Algiers' Great Mosque is one such important plaque, documenting the event, time, place, and civilization. It is located on the northern wall of the mosque, to the right of the entrance that leads to the staircase ascending to the minaret.

The construction of the minaret of the Great Mosque of Algiers dates back to the reign of the Zayyanid dynasty in the 8th century Hijri (723 AH), as indicated by the inscription. The plaque remains in good condition despite having been created more than eight centuries ago.

The plaque contains a founding inscription for the minaret and a general description of it. The engraver carefully chose key phrases to immortalize this commemorative structure, which include the following:

1. Bismillah (In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful):

This phrase begins the founding inscription, appearing in the first line as "Bismillah al-Rahman al-Rahim wa sallat Allah 'ala Sayyidina Muhammad."

2. The Founding Phrase:

The engraver inscribed the phrase in two places, "Lama tamma" (When it was completed) in line two and "Wa kana tamamahu wa kamaluhu" (And it was completed and perfected) in line four.

3. Name of the Founder:

The name of the founder appears with his titles and honorifics: "Amir al-Muslimin Abu Tashfin," mentioned in lines two and seven. The engraver chose to include only the founder's title and political position.

4. Name of the Established Structure and its Location:

The minaret's name appears in three variations throughout the inscription: "Minar al-Jazair" (Minaret of Algiers) in lines two and three, "Al-Minara al-Madhkura" (The aforementioned Minaret) in lines five and six, and "Minar halahu" (His minaret's state) in line six.

5. Start and Completion Dates of Construction:

The inscription provides a specific date for the beginning of the construction with the day, month, and year: "On Sunday, the seventh of Dhul-Qa'dah (thus) of the year two hundred and twenty-two, seven hundred," in lines three and four. The end of the construction is noted with just the month and year: "In the beginning of Rajab, the year two hundred and twenty-three, seven hundred" in line five.

Third: Archaeological, Historical, and Lexical Interpretation of the Plaque:

1. Archaeological Interpretation:

This plaque is a vital archaeological artifact that chronicles a significant architectural feature—the minaret of the Great Mosque of Algiers. It represents one of the key architectural additions to Islamic religious sites in both the Mashriq and Maghreb regions. The plaque is considered one of the most important Zayyanid monuments in Algiers.

The engraver chose marble for the inscription due to its suitability for carving and its inherent durability. Marble preserves the aesthetic and artistic value of the inscription over time, safeguarding both the historical writing style and the quality of the craftsmanship, as it resists wear and deterioration due to its strength and enduring nature.

The text is inscribed in a Naskh-style script, prominently carved into the surface of the marble plaque, as shown in (see plaque image number 1).

2. Historical Interpretation

The inscription on this plaque marks the founding of the minaret of the Great Mosque of Algiers², dating it to more than two and a half centuries after the mosque's original construction, specifically in the early 8th century Hijri / 14th century CE (723 AH / 1323 CE). This date is corroborated by the marble plaque located to the right of the minaret's entrance, aligning with the reign of the Zayyanid kings from the Bani Abd al-Wad dynasty of Tlemcen.³

² The Great Mosque of Algiers is one of the three historic mosques, which are: the Great Mosque of Algiers, the Great Mosque of Tlemcen, and the Mosque of Nedroma. These were built during the reign of the Almoravid dynasty in the 5th century AH / 11th century CE.

- See: Abdel Rahman Djilali, *History of the Three Cities (Algiers - Medea – Miliana)*, Ministry of Culture, Algeria, 2005, p. 31.

³ The Zayyanid dynasty of Bani Abd al-Wad in Tlemcen was ruled by five kings (5):

- Yaghmurasan ibn Ziyān, the first king of Bani Abd al-Wad, ruled from (633 AH - 681 AH = 1236 CE - 1282 CE).
- Abu Sa'id Uthman I, the second king of Bani Abd al-Wad, ruled from (681 AH - 703 AH).
- Abu Ziyān Muhammad I, the third king of Bani Abd al-Wad, ruled from (703 AH - 707 AH = 1303 CE – 1307 CE).
- Abu Hamu Musa I ibn Uthman, the fourth king of Bani Abd al-Wad, ruled from (707 AH - 718 AH = 1307 CE - 1318 CE), and was killed by his son on 21st of Jumada al-Awwal, 718 AH = 1318 CE.
- Abu Tashfin Abdel Rahman I, the fifth king of Bani Abd al-Wad, ruled from (718 AH - 736 AH = 1318 CE - 1336 CE). For more information, see:
- Ibn al-Ahmar Ismail ibn Yusuf, *History of the Zayyanid State in Tlemcen*, edited, annotated, and commented by Hani Salama, 1st edition, Library of Religious Culture for Publishing and Distribution, Port Said, 1421 AH = 2001 CE, p. 52.

The inscription also refers to one of the titles of the Zayyanid kings, Abu Tashfin Abd al-Rahman ibn Abu Hamu Musa⁴, the fifth Sultan of the Bani Abd al-Wad dynasty (al-Jilali, 2005, p. 44). He was the last ruler of the first Zayyanid state, established by Abu Yahya Yagmurasan in 633 AH / 1236 CE.

The text highlights that the minaret was built under the command of Abu Tashfin. Interestingly, the term "minar" (meaning tower) is used instead of the more common term "muezzin" (minaret). This terminology underscores the structure's primary function and perhaps hints at its dual role as a watchtower, given its strategic location near the coastline.

The design of the minaret adheres to the architectural style prevalent in the Maghreb, bearing similarities to the minarets of the Great Mosque of Tlemcen and the Agadir minaret. It also appears to have drawn influence from the minaret of the Great Mosque of Kairouan, a model that inspired many minarets across the Islamic Maghreb.

The minaret of the Great Mosque of Algiers rises 15 meters above the ground and culminates in a dome, adorned with three copper ornaments. The upper balcony is supported by 24 buttresses, which mirror the surrounding upper walls of the mosque. Its four facades are decorated with three engraved arched designs, made from rammed earth,

⁴ Abu Tashfin Abdel Rahman ibn Abu Hamu Musa, the fifth king of Bani Abd al-Wad, ruled from (718 AH - 737 AH = 1318 CE - 1337 CE). He was crowned to rule in Tlemcen after the death of his father in 718 AH. His reign ended after his death in 737 AH by Sultan Abu al-Hasan Ali al-Murabit. He was fond of decorating the streets and building palaces, and he utilized thousands of skilled artisans and craftsmen, including many Roman captives skilled in woodworking, construction, tiling, and decoration. His reign is marked by monumental works such as Dar al-Mulk (The Royal Palace), Dar al-Surur (The House of Joy), Abu Fhar, and the Grand Mausoleum. His most remarkable achievement was the construction of the famous school named after him, the Tashfiniyya School, a masterpiece of art. He also built minarets for mosques, including the minaret of the Great Mosque of Algiers.

For further reading, see:

- _ Ibn al-Ahmar Ismail ibn Yusuf, *History of the Zayyanid State in Tlemcen*, edited, annotated, and commented by Hani Salama, 1st edition, Library of Religious Culture for Publishing and Distribution, Port Said, 1421 AH = 2001 CE, p. 52.
- _ Al-Tansy Muhammad ibn Abdullah, *History of the Zayyanid Kings of Tlemcen*, edited by Muhammad Agha Bouayad, National Press Foundation, Al-Raghaya, Algeria, 2011, p. 140.

with a central window for light on both the northern and western sides (al-Jilali, 2005, p. 45) (see plaque image number 02).

The mosque to which this minaret is attached dates back to the Almoravid period in the 5th century Hijri / 11th century CE. It is the second-largest mosque in the region after the Great Mosque of Tlemcen, covering an area of 2000 square meters. The mosque measures 48 meters in length, 40 meters in width, and 8 meters in depth, featuring 11 prayer halls and five aisles that surround the mosque on three sides, excluding the northeastern side. It is supported by stone and brick columns, each covered with a layer of lime.

The mosque contains 72 supporting columns at the corners, spaced 3.40 meters apart. These columns hold four intersecting arches, two of which are shaped like pointed horseshoes, while the other two are serrated and multi-lobed (al-Jilali, 2005, p. 73) (see plaque image number 03).

The inscription also marks the completion of the minaret's construction and the commencement of its primary function: calling the faithful to prayer. The phrase "Nadaa al-minar" (The minaret called) clearly refers to the intended role of the minaret—serving as a purely religious structure to announce prayer times to the people of Algiers.

Furthermore, the inscription describes the aesthetic features of the minaret once its construction was completed, emphasizing the striking visual impact it had on the overall design of the mosque.

The minaret was adorned with exquisite copper ornaments, added by the Amir of the Muslims to enhance its aesthetic appeal. These decorations distinguished the minaret, making it stand out among the mosques of its time. The inscription also highlights the resonant sound emanating from the top of the minaret during prayer times, echoing across the city as a service to God and His righteous faith.

It seems that the mosques of the Almoravid dynasty captured the attention of the Zayyanid kings, inspiring their architectural decisions, particularly with regard to the additions made to the mosques. This is most evident in the addition of minarets, as well as the aesthetic embellishments that contributed to the grandeur and beauty of the architectural structures.

These ornamental features, including arches, balconies, domes, and copper decorations, added significant visual appeal to the minarets. This attention to decorative elements was

complemented by a focus on functionality, a necessity to fulfill the minaret's primary purpose.

While the Almoravid mosques initially lacked minarets and decorative features, the Zayyanid sultans addressed this gap, responding to the prevailing circumstances and environment of their time. The efforts of the Zayyanid kings in expanding Almoravid mosques and incorporating minarets—such as those at the Great Mosque of Tlemcen and the Great Mosque of Algiers—clearly reflect their architectural involvement.

When standing before these two mosques, one can observe the towering minarets as enduring symbols of the sultans' contributions throughout their reign. The minaret of the Great Mosque of Tlemcen is attributed to Sultan Yagmurasan ibn Ziyan, the first king of the Bani Abd al-Wad dynasty⁵, while the minaret of the Great Mosque of Algiers is credited to his grandson, Abu Tashfin (al-Jilali, 2005, p. 47). The latter is mentioned in the inscription on the plaque under examination.

3. Alphabetical Analysis:⁶

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Yagmurasan ibn Ziyan ibn Thabit ibn Muhammad al-Aid, the first to establish independent rule in Tlemcen from the Sultans of Bani Abd al-Wad, was crowned after the killing of his brother Ziyan ibn Ziyan in 633 AH. He was born in 603 AH = 1206 CE and died in 681 AH = 1283 CE. His body was transported to Tlemcen, where he was buried. He is credited with constructing the two minarets at the two major mosques of Agadir and Tajararat, which form the modern Tlemcen. When asked to inscribe his name in the mosque, he refused, saying, "That knowledge is with my Lord."

For further reading, see:

- Ibn al-Ahmar, *op. cit.*, p. 59.
- Al-Tansy, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

⁶ (For reference to the letter forms as they are inscribed on the plaque, see below in Table 01 – Alphabet Chart of the Inscriptions on the Foundational Plaque of the Minaret of the Great Mosque of Algiers.)

The artist adhered to the basic principles of calligraphy while executing the inscription, modifying the shapes of the letters depending on their position within the text. This variation often arose from the spatial constraints, which required the artist to adapt the letterforms, resulting in deviations from the standard script. Notable examples include:

A. The Letter Alif (ا):

The letter "alif" is carved consistently in height and flourish, as seen in words like "Allah" (الله) and "Minar" (المنار). Its form changes depending on its placement within a word. For instance, it appears in its free form when standing alone (as in "Zad" – زاد), as a ligature when combined with the letter "lam" (as in "Allah" – الله, "Rahman" – الرحمن), and as a compounded form at the end of a word (as in "Tafafah" – تفاقحا, "Salla" – صلى).

B. The Letter Ba (ب) and its Variants:

The letter "ba" appears in three distinct forms. It is depicted large and compounded, as seen in the "ba" of the basmala (بِسْمِ), where it is typically written in this enlarged style. In other contexts, it takes different forms: at the beginning of words like "Tamam" (تم) and "Sabe'a" (السابع), it appears suspended; in the middle of words such as "Thani" (الثاني) and "Muttammi" (لمتتممي), it assumes a suspended form as well. It also appears singularly in words like "Qadda" (قعدة).

C. The Letter Jeem (ج) and its Variants:

The letter "jeem" is carved in various forms, starting with a smooth and consistent shape in words like "Rahman" (الرحمن) and "Rajab" (رجب). It becomes compounded or intermediate in words like "Muhammad" (محمد) and "Hali" (الحالي).

D. The Letter Dal (د) and its Variant:

The letter "dal" appears in two distinct forms: one in a compressed position at the beginning of words such as "Muhammad" (محمد), "Sunday" (الأحد), and "Badr" (بدر), and another in a singular form in words like "Thī" (ذي), "Nadaa" (نادا), and "Zad" (زاد).

E. The Letter Ra (ر) and its Variant:

The letter "ra" is depicted in three variations: as a singular form at the beginning of words like "Zad" (زاد), compounded at the end of words like "Fanzoroo" (فانظروا), and as a singular form in words like "Minar" (منار).

F. The Letter Seen (س) and its Variant:

The letter "seen" appears in two forms: compounded at the beginning of words like "Saidna" (سيدنا), "Sab'a Mi'a" (سبعمائة...), and compounded in the middle in words like "Bism" (بسم), "Samaa" (السماء).

G. The Letter Sad (ص) and its Variant:

The letter "sad" is depicted in different forms: at the beginning of words, it is raised prominently, as seen in "Salla" (صلى), and in the middle of words, it is preceded by a raised form, as in "Nasrah" (نصره).

H. The Letter Ta (ط) and its Variant:

The letter "ta" appears in one basic form but with variations: in the middle of words, it is shaped like two parallel lines, with the "ta" raised at the top, resting on the base line, and slanting as seen in words like "Manzar" (منظر), "Kamanazri" (كمنظري), and "Fanzoroo" (فانظروا).

I. The Letter Ain (ع) and its Variant:

The letter "ain" begins as a compounded form with elevation in words like "Aam" (عام), and in the word "Ghurra" (غرة), it is drawn in an open style. In "Ishreen" (عشرين), it appears in a connected and spread form, while in words like "Sab'a Mi'a" (سبعمائة), it is in the middle, appearing in an open form.

J. The Letter Fa (ف) and its Variant:

The letter "fa" is depicted at the beginning of words in a compounded form, as in "Qabilni" (قابلني), "Aqama" (أقام), "Rafa" (رفع), and in the middle of words like "Tafafah" (تفافحا) and "Qamar" (القمر).

K. The Letter Kaf (ك):

The letter "kaf" is depicted in two distinct styles: one as a shaped letter at the beginning of words like "Kasani" (كساني), and another in a stretched form as in "Al-Madhkur" (المنكور).

L. The Letter Lam (ل):

The letter "lam" appears in three forms: compounded at the beginning of words like "Liqa" (لقاء), compounded in the middle in the word "Allah" (الله), and at the end of words, it varies, sometimes decorated with plant-like designs, where it appears stretched and slanted in words like "Salla" (صلى), and in its singular form in "Hali" (حالي).

M. The Letter Meem (م):

The letter "meem" is drawn in various forms: at the beginning, compounded; in the middle, compounded; and in the stretched form, as seen in words like "Madda" (مدة), "Tamamha" (تمامها), "Minar" (منار), and "Tamam" (تمام). It also appears in its singular form in words like "Yawm" (يوم) and "Aam" (عام).

N. The Letter Noon (ن):

The letter "noon" appears in several ways: at the beginning, compounded in words like "Nadaa" (نادا), "Fanzoroo" (فانظروا), and "Nasrah" (نصره); in the middle, compounded between two stretched forms in words like "Minar" (منار), "Hasana" (حسننا), "Qabilni" (قابلني), "Manzar" (منظر); and at the end of words like "Min" (من), "Ithnayn" (اثنتين), and "Al-Muslimin" (المسلمين). It also appears singularly in words like "Kan" (كان) and "Balsan" (بلسان).

S. The Letter Heh (هـ):

This letter appeared in three distinct forms: at the beginning of the word, in the middle, and at the end. At the beginning, it took the shape of a cat's face, as seen in "Talahy" (تلاهي). In the middle of words, it took an ascending form, as in "Awwaluha" (أولها), "Tamamuha" (تمامها), "Kamalaha" (كمالها), and "Laha" (لها). At the end of words, it appeared in three variations: limited, realized, and accompanied, in words like "Allah" (الله), "Hali" (حاله), "Lawayah" (لوايه), and "Lahu" (له).

Ain (ع) – The Letter Waw (و):

This letter was drawn in two main forms: as a singular letter at the start of words and at the end. At the beginning, it appeared in words like "Wa Nasrah" (ونصره), "Fanzoroo" (فانظروا), "Wa Rafa" (ورفع), and "Wa la Zal" (ولا زال), where it is grouped and linked. At the end of words, it also appeared grouped together, as seen in "Lawayah" (لوايه).

F. The Letter Lam-Alif (لام الألف):

This letter appeared in two forms: at the end of a word and independently. At the end, it was in a compounded form, as seen in "Thalatha" (ثلاثة), "Salami" (سلامي), "Ala" (ألا), and "Ilahi" (إلهي). When independent, it was depicted singularly and raised, as in "Fala" (فلا) and "Wala" (ولا).

S. The Letter Yeh (ي):

This letter appeared in four distinct forms: at the beginning, in the middle, at the end, and as an independent letter. At the beginning, it was compounded, as seen in "Aida" (أيده), "Sab'miya" (سبعماية), "Ishreen" (عشرين), and "Ayuh" (أيها). In the middle, it appeared as a compounded form, as in "Al-Rahim" (الرحيم), "Saidna" (سيدنا), "Amir" (أمير), "Muslimin" (المسلمين), "Nashafin" (ناشفين), "Binyani" (بنياني), and "Alaik" (عليك). At the end of words, it appeared in a compounded and extended form, as in "Kahali" (كحالي), "Binyani" (بنياني), "Kasani" (كساني), "Tali" (التالي), "Tijani" (تيجاني), and "Arkani" (اركاني). As an independent letter, it appeared singularly and grouped together in words like "Thi" (ذي), "Ay" (أي), and "Kamanzari" (كمنظري).

Conclusion:

From this research, several conclusions can be drawn, summarized as follows:

- _ Foundational inscriptions are one of the most crucial material sources for historians and archaeologists, providing an enduring record over time.
- _ These inscriptions hold significant historical value as they serve as documents that testify to events and works, enabling us to reinterpret history from an objective standpoint.
- _ In the 8th century Hijri (14th century CE), during the era of the Zayyanid sultans of the Bani Abd al-Wad dynasty, the construction of minarets attached to Almoravid mosques—originally lacking minarets—became widespread across the Central Maghreb.
- _ These inscriptions shed light on the evolution of Arabic calligraphy in the Central Maghreb, with various styles emerging, such as the "Al-Maghrebi al-Thu'bani" script, which was predominant during the reign of the Almohad sultans.

- Foundational texts, like the one on the plaque examined here, commemorate the names of the founders, builders, and the dates of construction. Such texts preserve the memory of important structures, like the minaret of the Great Mosque in Algiers.



The Marble Plaque Installed on the Northern Wall of the Great Mosque, to the Right of the Minaret Entrance

(Prepared by the researcher)

الأحرف	في البداية	في الوسط	في النهاية	مستقلة	ملاحظة
حرف أ	أ		(أ)	أ	
حرف ب ت ث	ب ت ث	ب ت ث		ة	
حرف ج وأخواتها	ج ح ح	ج ح ح			
حرف د وأخواتها			د ذ	ن	
حرف ر وأخواتها	ر		ر	س س س	
حرف ش	ش	ش			
حرف ص ض	ص	ص			
حرف ط ظ		ط			
حرف ع غ	ع ع	ع	ع		
حرف ف ق	ف	ف			
حرف ك	ك	ك	ك		
حرف ل	ل	ل	ل	ل	
حرف م	م	م	م		
حرف ن	ن		ن	ن	
حرف ه	ه	ه			
حرف و	و				
حرف لا				لا	
حرف ي	ي	ي	ي	ي	

Table 01: The Alphabetical Letters Used in the Inscription of the Founding Plaque of the Historic Minaret of the Great Mosque of Algiers
(Prepared by the researcher)



Western Facade of the Minaret



Northern Facade of the Minaret

Plaque No. 02, Minaret of the Great Historical Mosque...2

(Prepared by the researcher)



Main Entrance of the Mosque



Front Facade of the Mosque

Plaque No. 03, The Great Historical Mosque of Algiers

(Prepared by the researcher)

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