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THE CONTRIBUTION OF ALGERIA'S OBSCURE SCHOLARS TO THE EXPANSION OF KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION DURING THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD: AN EXAMINATION OF IDENTITY DIMENSIONS THROUGH THEIR SCHOLARLY WRITINGS

إسهام علماء الجزائر المغمورين في توسيع مجالات إنتاج المعرفة خلال العصر الوسيط: قراءة في الأبعاد الهوياتية من خلال المادة التصنيفية

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ملخص:

تتناول هذه الدراسة طبيعة المجالات العلمية التي استقطبت النخبة العلمية في جزائر العصر الوسيط (المغرب الأوسط)، ولا سيما العلماء المغمورين، والعوامل التي أسهمت في توجيه اهتماماتهم نحو مجالات معرفية وتخصصات علمية معينة. كما تبحث في البعد الهوياتي الذي انعكس في اختياراتهم العلمية ومضامين مؤلفاتهم، ودور إنتاجهم في الحفاظ على مقومات الهوية العلمية الإسلامية وترسيخها في المجتمع.

اعتمدت الدراسة المنهج التاريخي التحليلي، من خلال تتبع الإنتاج العلمي لعلماء المغرب الأوسط بالاستناد إلى المصادر التاريخية وكتب التراجم والرحلات والمؤلفات العلمية، وتحليل مجالات تخصصهم وصلاتهم بالمراكز العلمية في العالم الإسلامي. وتوصلت إلى أن الفقه والعلوم الدينية شكّلا أبرز مجالات التخصص، وأن الرحلات العلمية والتواصل مع المراكز الإسلامية والعوامل الجغرافية أسهمت في تنشيط الحركة العلمية وتبادل التأثير. كما أظهرت حضور البعد الهوياتي في الإنتاج العلمي ودوره في حفظ التراث الإسلامي وإبراز الإسهام العلمي للمغرب الأوسط.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

الجزائر؛ التصنيف؛ العلماء؛ الهوية؛ المغرب الأوسط

Abstract:

This study examines the scholarly disciplines that attracted the lesser-known scholarly elite of medieval Algeria (the Central Maghreb) and the factors that shaped their intellectual orientations and fields of specialization. It also explores the identity dimension reflected in their scholarly choices and writings, particularly their contribution to preserving the foundations of the Islamic scholarly tradition and reinforcing its principles within intellectual and social consciousness.

The study adopts a historical-analytical approach, drawing on historical sources, biographical dictionaries, travel literature, and relevant scholarly works to trace scholarly production, identify areas of specialization, and analyze intellectual interactions with major centers of the Islamic world.

The findings indicate that fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) and the religious sciences were the predominant areas of specialization. Scholarly journeys, books, geographical factors, and intellectual exchanges contributed to the circulation of knowledge and the development of scholarly activity. The study also highlights the significant role of identity in preserving Islamic scholarly heritage and affirming the intellectual contribution of the Central Maghreb.

Keywords: *Algeria; Central Maghreb; Identity; Scholars; Scholarly Writing.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The fields of scholarly writing produced by the Islamic intellectual tradition during the medieval period constituted a dynamic and continuously evolving enterprise. Their production, undertaken by successive generations of scholars, was shaped by a broad and multifaceted constellation of motivations, ranging from ideological and doctrinal affiliations to religious commitments, as well as the cognitive resources and intellectual capacities possessed by their authors. This dynamic significantly enriched the landscape of scholarly knowledge, broadened its intellectual horizons, diversified its fields of inquiry, and sustained the vitality of its continuous development. At the same time, it revealed the nature of individual scholarly creativity, the distinctive strengths of each producer of knowledge, and the varying levels of intellectual vitality reflected in their writings. Consequently, it has left behind a rich and diverse scholarly legacy that embodies the academic identity of its authors, attests to their standing within the scholarly community, and demonstrates the extent of their contribution to the advancement of knowledge.

Building upon this premise, the present study seeks, through a critical and analytical approach, to examine the scholarly disciplines that attracted the intellectual elites of medieval Algeria (the Central Maghreb). It further investigates the principal factors that directed scholarly activity toward particular fields of authorship and inspired scholars to cultivate these disciplines through sustained intellectual production and scholarly engagement.

From another perspective, the study also explores the underlying identity dimension that played a decisive role in directing the lesser-known scholars of medieval Algeria toward particular fields of learning while, in other cases, encouraging them to broaden the scope of their intellectual interests and scholarly specialization beyond rigid disciplinary boundaries. Furthermore, it seeks to identify the manifestations of identity embedded in the content of their scholarly writings, demonstrating how these works reflect the intellectual identity of their authors and underscore their contribution to preserving the foundations of the Islamic scholarly tradition and consolidating its principles within both intellectual thought and the collective social consciousness.

2. Fields of Scholarly Authorship in the Central Maghreb: of Specialization Areas and Drivers of Attraction

Historical sources consistently indicate that the Central Maghreb produced, throughout the medieval period, a remarkable number of distinguished scholars who excelled across a wide spectrum of intellectual disciplines, encompassing both the rational (**ulūm aqliyyah**) and transmitted (**ulūm naqliyyah**) sciences. Their scholarly reputation extended throughout the Islamic world, both eastward and westward, to the extent that the Central Maghreb itself became an important center of intellectual attraction, drawing scholars from diverse regions. Its principal urban centers likewise emerged as flourishing hubs for the study of various sciences and as sought-after destinations for students aspiring to acquire knowledge under eminent masters. Among the most prominent of these centers were Tahert, Qalʿ at Banī Ḥammād, Bejaia, and Tlemcen[1].

A review of one study that examined the development of scholarly activity in Bejaia during the Ḥafṣ id period, together with its intellectual networks across the Islamic West and beyond, reveals the city's exceptional scholarly vitality. According to the quantitative survey conducted by the author, the number of scholars originating from the Central Maghreb who contributed to Bejaia's intellectual life during the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries AH-the period covered by the study-amounted to approximately 156 scholars out of a total of 255 identified individuals[2]. Consequently, the Central Maghreb ranked first among the geographical regions represented within Bejaia's scholarly elite[3].

This substantial number reflects the remarkable dynamism of Bejaia's intellectual life during this period and attests to the continuity of the scholarly tradition originally established under the Ḥammādid rulers of Qalat Banī Ḥammād. It also confirms Bejaia's enduring status as one of the foremost reservoirs of cultural and intellectual radiance in the medieval Islamic world. Undoubtedly, Bejaia constituted one link in the broader chain of scholarly influence fostered by the major urban centers of the Central Maghreb, alongside Tlemcen, Constantine, Qalʿ at Banī Ḥammād, and Tahert, among others. Furthermore, the findings of this study provide a compelling illustration of the vibrant and productive networks of intellectual exchange that connected the scholarly elites of the Central Maghreb with one another and with learned circles throughout the wider Islamic world. These exchanges, in turn, exerted a profound and demonstrably positive influence on the various dimensions of social and cultural life.

2.1 Biographical-Historical and Hagiographical Writing:[4]

The scholarly elite of the Central Maghreb devoted considerable attention to biographical compilation, historical writing, and the recording of the virtues and achievements of various intellectual and social elites. Their works covered a wide range of figures, including scholars of the rational sciences, jurists, specialists in ḥ adīth and Qur'anic exegesis, Sufi figures, holders of administrative positions, political and military leaders, as well as masters of craftsmanship, the arts, literature, and poetry.

2.1.1 Historical Writing:

A broad segment of the scholars of the Central Maghreb showed great interest in historical writing and the compilation of historical works. It should be noted, however, that the majority of these scholars were not historians exclusively; rather, they combined multiple fields of specialization, producing works in history alongside contributions to jurisprudence, poetry, literature, and ḥ adīth studies.

Among the most representative examples of this intellectual versatility is the historian and traveler Aḥ mad ibn Muḥ ammad al-Maqqarī al-Tilimsānī (976–1041 AH / 1578–1631 CE), who devoted attention to a wide range of disciplines, including history, literature, Qur'anic exegesis, and ḥ adīth. Among his most renowned works are: Azhār al-Riyāḍ fī Akhbār al-Qāḍ ī Iyāḍ (The Flowers of the Gardens on the Reports of Qāḍ ī ʿ Iyāḍ), Nafḥ al-Ṭ īb min Ghuṣ n al-Andalus al-Raṭ īb wa Dhikr Wazīrihā Lisān al-Dīn ibn al-Khaṭ īb (The Fragrant Breeze from the Tender Branch of Andalusia and the Account of its Minister Lisān al-Dīn Ibn al-Khaṭ īb), Rawḍ at al-Ās al-Aṭ irat al-Anfās fī man Laqītuhum min Aʿ lām al-Ḥ āḍ iratayn Marrākush wa Fās (The Garden of Fragrant Myrtle Blossoms Concerning the Notable Figures I Met in the Two Cities of Marrakesh and Fez), and al-Nafaḥ āt al-Anbariyya fī Waṣ f Niāl Khayr al-Bariyya[5].

2.1.2 Biographical Dictionaries and Hagiographical Works:

A researcher examining the compilations produced by the scholars of the Central Maghreb and their contemporaries concerning the histories of individuals and the documentation of biographical accounts will find that these works constitute a diverse biographical mosaic in terms of their methods of composition. Despite their differences, they converge under a common scholarly framework: the discipline of biographical writing (ilm al-tarājim)[6].

The various forms of this intellectual production differ according to the nature of the historical material employed in each biography, the methodology adopted in structuring its content, the modes of presentation, and even the specific purpose pursued by the compiler. Each author followed a particular approach in documenting the details of personal lives, individual trajectories, and the scholarly and formative paths of the figures whose biographies they sought to preserve.

Among the personal aspects that scholarly writing subjected to documentation and treated with extensive attention, one finds the biographical profile of the individual concerned, including their educational upbringing and formative experiences, their intellectual abilities and areas of expertise in which they excelled, the fields of knowledge in which they produced works and through which they demonstrated creativity, as well as the legacy of authorship and intellectual production they left behind. This also includes the names of the scholarly elites who were educated under their guidance and whose intellectual and educational personalities they contributed to shaping, in addition to the nature of the religious and state offices assumed by those who engaged in political affairs, held official positions, and interacted with their circles.

One of the most remarkable examples illustrating this trend within the historical period under study, and which supports our argument regarding this type of scholarly compilation, is the work produced by the biographer Abū al-Abbās al-Ghubrīnī (d. 704 AH) entitled Unwān al-Dirāya fīman ʿ Urifa min al-Ulamā fī al-Mia al-Sābia bi-Bijāya. In this work, he provided biographies of 108 figures, the majority of whom belonged to the religious scholarly elite, including jurists and Sufis, in addition to poets and men of letters. These figures were either originally from Bejaia or had arrived there, whether they settled in the city or later departed after a period of residence[7].

Within the same framework, a segment of the scholars of the Central Maghreb focused on hagiographical compilation, a genre closely connected with biographical writing. This type of work documented the lives of scholars, the decisive stages of their personal trajectories, and, in particular, their exemplary qualities, intellectual contributions, reformist efforts, and symbolic status within the collective social imagination. Among the most prominent authors in this field was Abū al-Abbās Aḥ mad ibn Qunfudh al-Qusanṭ īnī (d. 810 AH / 1407 CE), particularly through his two works: Uns al-Faqīr wa Izz al-Ḥaqīr (The Companion of the Poor Man and the Honor of the Humble) and Kitāb al-Wafayāt (The Book of Obituaries)[8].

2.2 Religious Scholarly Writing:

One of the most notable features of the political sphere in the medieval Maghreb is that religion generally constituted a decisive factor in the emergence and consolidation of numerous political entities that successively governed the region and managed the affairs of their subjects. The contribution of scholarly elites to the establishment of these political structures was evident in many cases and historical examples, and their role in strengthening the foundations of political authority was particularly significant. Indeed, most rulers of the Maghrebi states during this period developed close cooperative relationships with a broad segment of scholars and jurists, seeking their assistance in reinforcing their ties with the population and consolidating the bonds between rulers and subjects. This was due to their awareness of the scholars' influential position in the hearts of the people and their spiritual authority within the collective imagination[9].

This observation leads us to recall a well-established fact: religion played a central role in the human imagination and in the very essence of social life. It constituted a fundamental framework for evaluating human actions, assessing the outcomes of human endeavors, and determining the legitimacy of activities and the validity of their declared and implicit objectives. This perspective further demonstrates that Islamic intellectual thought devoted exceptional attention to scholarly production in the religious field, owing to its vitality and central position in human life.

The Islamic intellect relied upon revealed religious texts to cultivate a framework for human existence that harmonized with religious principles and the Sharīʿa-based vision of life. It also sought to establish the foundations of a cohesive social structure, sound political governance, and purposeful human activity through the scholarly materials produced and the writings generated by the pens of scholars who contributed to constructing this intellectual legacy.

Among the aspects that particularly support our argument is the fact that the scope of scholarly authorship in the religious field within medieval Maghrebi society in general, and the Central Maghreb in particular, was considerably broader than that of other fields of knowledge, areas of research, and specialized disciplines. The following section provides a focused examination of this dimension.

2.2.1 Jurisprudential Compilations and Works on Legal Cases (Nawāzil):

A researcher examining scholarly production in the field of the religious sciences in the medieval period of the Central Maghreb may, in our view, conclude that works of jurisprudence (fiqh) occupied the largest share among the writings

devoted to the Islamic legal sciences. This indicates that jurisprudence represented the broadest domain within which religious scholarly production found its most extensive space for compilation and intellectual care. Works on theology (ilm al-aqīda) ranked second in terms of scholarly attention, followed by writings on the principles of jurisprudence (uṣ ūl al-fiqh) and Qur'anic sciences (ulūm al-Qurān), and finally the science of ḥ adīth.

This remarkable orientation of scholarly elites toward the field of jurisprudence can be explained by several factors. For a society seeking harmony with the revealed legal texts, jurisprudence occupies a position comparable to that of water for the life of fish. If the domains of religious scholarship were deprived of this field, the religious reality of society would become unsettled, and its spiritual vitality in worshiping the Creator according to what the Sharīa approves, seeks, and requires would be weakened. A statement close in meaning to this idea has been transmitted: people "**need knowledge of religion just as they need food and drink**[10]".

In order to further clarify the significance of our argument, we may point to some of the distinctions between the field of jurisprudential inquiry and the disciplines of theology and dialectical theology (kalām). The latter is primarily based on rational argumentation and the discussion of proofs through counter-proofs[11], and is generally confined to specific theological objectives, among its functions being the refutation of the arguments of the People of the Book and religious innovators. Jurisprudence, by contrast, addresses all matters related to the detailed and fundamental aspects of Islamic legal practice in the life of the Muslim, matters whose rulings every rational person must understand in order to conduct their life according to the desired legal framework and ultimately attain salvation in the Hereafter[12].

This leads us to emphasize that scholars of jurisprudence in general, and jurists of the Central Maghreb in particular, devoted exceptional attention to the religious sciences directly connected with diagnosing and addressing the problems of society in a focused manner, while naturally not neglecting other branches of knowledge. They represented the primary and enduring support for members of society through the clarification of legal rulings that illuminated the path of religious life for those who followed it. They also served as wise guides who provided counsel and issued legal opinions (fatāwā) capable of addressing emerging legal issues, correcting social disturbances, and responding to newly arising communal challenges.

Among the most prominent jurists of the Central Maghreb during the period under study, we may mention: Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad al-Qalī (d. 669 AH / 1270 CE), ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Yūsuf ibn Zāghū al-Tilimsānī (7th century AH / 13th century CE)[13], Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Mashdālī (d. 731 AH / 1330 CE), and the Mālikī jurist Aḥmad ibn Qāsim ibn Saīd al-Uqbānī (d. 840 AH / 1436 CE), who authored several commentaries, including Sharḥ al-Ḥūfiyya (Commentary on al-Ḥūfiyya), Sharḥ al-Burda (Commentary on al-Burda), and Sharḥ Urjūzat Ibn al-Yāsamīn[14].

There is no doubt that achieving the objectives of the Sharīʿa through the establishment of an intellectual environment capable of sustaining a religiously oriented social life in all its dimensions cannot be accomplished without recognizing the complementarity among the various branches of the Islamic religious sciences, their specializations, and their fields of inquiry. Therefore, despite the unequal degree of attention devoted by the scholars and jurists of the Central Maghreb during the medieval period to jurisprudential authorship and legal studies, the other religious sciences also received considerable scholarly attention. Numerous scholars excelled in each of these disciplines and left behind a substantial intellectual legacy within their respective fields of specialization.

For instance, in the field of Qur'anic exegesis (tafsīr), the eminent scholar Abd al-Raḥmān al-Thaʿālibī (d. 876 AH / 1471 CE) distinguished himself by abridging the exegesis of Ibn ʿAṭiyya al-Andalusī (d. 542 AH / 1147 CE) into two volumes. He also authored his own Qur'anic commentary entitled al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān[15].

As for the science of ḥadīth, among its prominent representatives were Bakr ibn Ḥammād al-Zanātī (d. 295 AH / 908 CE), and Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq ibn Sulaymān al-Tilimsānī (d. 625 AH / 1227 CE), who was a transmitter of ḥadīth, a jurist, and a theologian. Among his works are: al-Mukhtār fī al-Jamʿ bayna al-Muntaqā wa al-Istidhkār, al-Fayṣal al-Jāzim fī Faḍīlat al-Ālim[16].In the field of theology (ilm al-aqīda), Abū Abd Allāh Muḥammad al-Maghrāwī al-Wahrānī (d.929 AH/1523 CE) authored al-Jaysh al-Kamīn fī al-Karʿalā man Yukaffir ʿĀmmat al-Muslimīn[17]

The jurisprudential care undertaken by the scholars of nawāzil literature, in their endeavor to collect and formulate legal opinions (fatāwā) based on revealed legal texts, represented an essential effort aimed at addressing the emerging social realities of the Central Maghreb. Their objective was to resolve the newly arising problems of society and respond to the religious and worldly concerns of its members, which required a sound legal perspective and a rigorous jurisprudential reasoning capable of healing the wounds caused by such issues. This intellectual

endeavor was clearly embodied in numerous compilations that preserved a vast corpus of legal opinions and jurisprudential conclusions.

A significant observation regarding nawāzil-jurisprudential writing is that the intellectual legacy left by the jurists of the Central Maghreb and its practitioners of independent legal reasoning (ijtihād) took two main forms. Part of this heritage was preserved within the collections of jurisprudential nawāzil compiled and recorded by jurists during their own period, while another part remained dispersed until later jurists and scholars undertook the task of collecting and organizing it. Among the most prominent works of this genre are the Nawāzil Ibn Marzūq al-Ḥafīd by Ibn Marzūq al-Ḥafīd (d. 842 AH), and the compilation Madhhab al-Rāiq by al-Māzūnī, in which he gathered the legal opinions of his father Abū Zakarīyā al-Māzūnī (d. 883 AH / 1478 CE) and supplemented them with additional nawāzil material of his own authorship. This work eventually became attributed to him by some scholars under the title al-Durar al-Maknūna fī Nawāzil Māzūna[18].

2.3 The Field of Literature and Language:

Among the generally recognized aspects of scholarly interest in the field of literature and linguistic sciences is the fact that the close relationship between the religious sciences and their objectives, on the one hand, and the scholar's mastery of the principles of the Arabic language, grammatical rules, and rhetorical arts, on the other, constituted one of the major factors that encouraged scholars to engage with this field of inquiry, devote attention to its disciplines, and produce scholarly works within its domain.

Accordingly, our research journey through the present study has led us to identify a significant body of works produced by the scholarly elites of the Central Maghreb during the medieval period in the fields of linguistics and literature. Among these figures was the traditionist, jurist, poet, and man of letters Bakr ibn Ḥammād al-Zanātī (d. 295 AH / 908 CE), author of the extensive poetic collection al-Durr al-Waqqād min Shir Bakr ibn Ḥammād al-Tāhartī (The Shining Pearl from the Poetry of Bakr ibn Ḥammād al-Tāhartī), and one of the distinguished Algerian poets[19].

Also among them was the grammarian poet and man of letters Yaḥ yā ibn Abd al-Muṭ ī al-Zawāwī (d. 627 AH / 1231 CE), whose works include al-Durra al-Alfiyya fī Ilm al-Arabiyya, and al-Fuṣ ūl fī al-Naḥ w[20].

2.4 Applied and Experimental Sciences:

The scholarly elites of the Central Maghreb contributed to the revival of scientific life in its experimental and applied dimensions. This is evident through the body of works they produced in this field, including, for example, the medical contributions of Abū ʿ Abd Allāh Muḥ ammad ibn Saḥ nūn al-Tilimsānī (born in 580 AH / 1184 CE), as well as those of the physician Muḥ ammad ibn Aḥ mad, known as Ibn Andrās (d. 674 AH / 1275 CE)[21] .

Biographical works also provide insight into the scholarly trajectory of one of Tlemcen's intellectual figures, namely Saīd ibn Aḥ mad ibn Yaḥ yā al-Maqqarī (10th century AH / 16th century CE), who was described as **"well versed in both the transmitted and rational sciences and highly skilled in teaching them**[22]". Likewise, the scholar al-Ābilī (d. 757 AH / 1356 CE) received unanimous recognition from "**various sources, biographical dictionaries, and works of scholarly classes**" for his excellence and intellectual brilliance in the rational sciences, to the extent that it was said of him that he was "**the most knowledgeable of God's creation in the arts of rational thought**[23]."

3. Identity Dimensions in the Contents of Scholarly Works

In this section of the study, we seek to uncover aspects of the identity dimensions embedded within the contents of scholarly compilations and intellectual production generated by the scholarly mind of the Central Maghreb during the medieval period. In other words, we examine the materials that reveal the nature of the factors that directed the writings of scholarly elites toward certain fields of knowledge rather than others, influenced their greater attention to specific disciplines, and contributed to the formation of the scientific, geographical, and religious foundations upon which this intellectual orientation was established. The following discussion aims to shed light on these dimensions.

3.1 The Local Dimension:

This dimension is particularly evident in the body of jurisprudential nawāzil literature, such as the legal opinions contained in al-Miʿ yār al-Muʿ arrab and other compilations collected by specialists in this field. The contents of these legal opinions and the issues they addressed through revealed texts, juristic reasoning, and other sources of legal interpretation, such as analogy (qiyās) and consensus (ijmāʿ), reveal a distinctly local identity that reflects the social reality and emerging issues specific to the individuals and society of the Central Maghreb.

These cases may differ, in terms of their underlying causes, from matters that appear similar on the surface, while also differing fundamentally from other cases dealing with the same issue. This is due to the distinctive nature of the prevailing social customs of Central Maghrebi society, which possessed its own particular traditions and practices. These included dietary customs with their specific ingredients and forms, clothing styles and varieties, marriage practices with their traditions and conventions, patterns of family life, and other aspects of social organization. They also reflected the differences expressed by the characteristics of the local environment in comparison with other regions of the Islamic West (al-Gharb al-Islāmī) or the eastern Islamic lands.

Moreover, nawāzil texts address personal matters related to specific cases or identifiable individuals, rather than merely dealing with abstract social entities whose rulings can always be generalized. Instead, they examine individual situations connected to a person's particular circumstances, concerns, problems, ideas, mistakes, or personal characteristics. Consequently, these legal opinions were closely adapted to the local geographical environment and the social identity of the Central Maghreb. They also represented an integrated social reality without excluding any social group or marginalizing any segment of society. Rather, they presented an authentic portrayal of social conditions in harmony with the objectives of the Sharīʿa and the purpose of providing legal guidance and remedy for emerging communal issues[24].

The local dimension can also be observed in certain historical, biographical, and hagiographical works that focused on documenting local historical events or recording the biographies of regional figures. An example of this is the work of al-Ghubrīnī, which was devoted to the biographies of scholars associated with Bejaia. Although he included figures who arrived in Bejaia, whether they settled there permanently or not, the local dimension remains evident through the geographical framework that defined these biographies, namely the city of Bejaia itself.

This dimension is likewise apparent in the content of Ibn Maryam al-Tilimsānī's work "al-Bustān fī Dhikr al-Awliyā wa al-Ulamā bi-Tilimsān", as well as Ibn al-Ṣ aghīr al-Mālikī's Sīrat al-A imma al-Rustamiyyīn, and other compilations devoted to documenting the history of the Central Maghreb.

3.2 The Spatiotemporal-Geographical Dimension:

We believe that, while examining this stage of the research, it is appropriate to highlight an important point related to its content, namely the nature of the regions, Islamic urban centers, and intellectual environments that radiated the light of knowledge and through which the rivers of learning flowed. These were the places that attracted the scholarly elite of the Central Maghreb in their intellectual pursuits, driven by various objectives, including the desire to expand their mastery of the sciences, deepen their knowledge, excel in the vast domains of learning, and acquire proficiency in both rational and transmitted disciplines. They were also motivated by the opportunity to engage with leading scholars of different specializations, exchange knowledge and experiences within the intellectual centers they visited and where they settled, or to explore the heritage of the Islamic community and its distinguished civilizational achievements.

Furthermore, these journeys were motivated by the pursuit of elevated chains of transmission (ulū al-isnād), the desire to obtain scholarly licenses (ijāzāt), and the aspiration to participate in academic debates and undertake teaching activities in the mosques and schools that flourished in those regions. It appears that the eastern Islamic lands occupied the foremost position among the destinations attracting these scholarly elites, followed by the Far Maghreb, then Tunisia, and subsequently al-Andalus, while other Islamic regions received varying degrees of attention[25].

We also believe that this variation in the degree of attraction exerted by these regions can be explained by several factors. It is well known that among the elements contributing to the attractiveness of the eastern Islamic lands were the sacred sites that called for visitation, as well as the major scholarly institutions that appealed to students of knowledge and drew them toward them. Added to this was the obligation of performing the pilgrimage (ḥ ajj), which stood at the forefront of the objectives of scholarly travel, as a response to fulfilling the fifth pillar of Islam for those who were able to undertake it[26].

In addition, these lands contained numerous educational facilities and centers of learning, while their cities were home to eminent scholars and leading jurists deeply versed in the religious sciences. For these reasons, a broad segment of the scholarly elite of the Central Maghreb traveled to these regions in pursuit of the aforementioned objectives and others.

This perspective enables us to identify the nature of the geographical identity of the destinations that attracted scholars from the Central Maghreb during the medieval period, as illustrated by the following points:

One of the significant observations that may be highlighted within the framework of our research argument, and in harmony with the central question underlying this study, concerns the religious dimension as a fundamental factor in determining the nature of the destinations that attracted the scholarly elites of the Central Maghreb, as well as the foundations upon which they based their choices and the nature of the intellectual intentions that shaped their objectives. Accordingly, the performance of the religious obligation of pilgrimage (ḥ ajj) constituted a powerful factor in determining the desired destination for intellectual benefit and represented a significant link in the chain of scholarly aims and aspirations. This is because a large number of scholars from the Central Maghreb combined their religious purpose with the objective of acquiring knowledge in urban centers that radiated intellectual enlightenment and sustained scholarly activity, such as the regions of the Ḥijāz, Iraq, and Syria.

The factor of responding to the desire for knowledge acquisition and benefiting from the diversity of intellectual disciplines available within the targeted geographical spaces also played an important role among the factors attracting the scholarly elites of the Central Maghreb. This may be described as scholarly reputation. Major Islamic intellectual centers, such as Medina, Iraq, Damascus, Egypt, the Far Maghreb, and al-Andalus, represented attractive scholarly environments that drew intellectual elites toward them, particularly because the development of sciences-especially the religious sciences-within their educational institutions was characterized by a dynamic and active movement.

The third observation that deserves mention concerns the geographical dimension (the proximity factor). Geographical proximity also played a significant role in determining the nature of the factors that attracted the scholarly elites of the Central Maghreb. The Far Maghreb occupied the first position among the destinations attracting these scholars, followed by the Central Maghreb's neighboring eastern region (Ifrīqiya/Tunisia), and then al-Andalus.

Land and maritime routes, as well as geographical networks-particularly trade routes and pilgrimage routes (ḥ ajj caravans)-which constituted a fundamental means of connecting the urban centers of the Islamic world, also represented an important factor in determining the scholarly destination or intellectual center that attracted scholarly elites, whether toward the East or the West. It is worth noting that geographical writings constituted a key for transcending boundaries and overcoming barriers; in other words, they stimulated the desire for scholarly travel and contributed to facilitating civilizational and intellectual communication between the

eastern and western wings of the Islamic world. This was due to the scholarly material contained in these works and the geographical information they preserved, to the extent that it has been stated that Arab geographical thought in the medieval period represents one of the forms of cultural communication[27].

Regarding the direction taken by scholarly elites toward the western sphere, whose furthest destination was the Andalusian lands, their journeys usually began from the cities of the Central Maghreb, such as Bejaia, Constantine, Algiers, and Miliana, passing through Tlemcen and the Far Maghreb, including Fez and Marrakesh, before reaching Andalusian cities such as Valencia, Seville, and Granada. As for those scholars from the Central Maghreb who turned eastward in pursuit of knowledge, Tunisia represented their first stop and one of the preferred intellectual centers for learning. This was followed by Barqa (Cyrenaica) as the first frontier of the Maghreb lands on the overland route toward the East, then Egypt as the gateway for Maghrebi scholars to the eastern Islamic world, and finally the Ḥijāz, Syria, and Iraq, which constituted the most prominent destinations attracting scholarly travelers[28].

We believe that it is appropriate to support the research material presented above with a list of names of scholars from the Central Maghreb who traveled in pursuit of knowledge and further intellectual enrichment, whether toward the eastern Islamic lands or within the sphere of the Islamic West. This is intended to provide greater clarification and reinforce the content of the study. It should be noted, however, that this is only a brief list aimed at illustrating some of the geographical regions and Islamic scholarly centers visited by the scholarly elites of the medieval Central Maghreb. Among these figures was Abū al-Ḥasan Alī ibn Abī Naṣ r Fatḥ ibn Abd Allāh al-Bijāī (d. 652 AH), who traveled before 590 AH / 1193 CE to al-Andalus. He entered Malta and Seville, where he studied with their scholars, then proceeded to Mecca, where he received knowledge from scholars there, as well as in Jerusalem, Damascus, Alexandria, and Cairo. He eventually returned to Bejaia to engage in teaching.

Also among them was "Abd Allāh ibn Ḥajjāj al-Bijāī" (died after 642 AH / 1242 CE), who entered al-Andalus. Likewise, Abd al-Raḥ mān ibn Muḥ ammad, known as Ibn al-Saṭ ṭ āḥ (d. 629 AH / 1215 CE), traveled to al-Andalus, where he studied maqāmāt literature in Murcia under its scholar Abū al-Qāsim al-Ṭ arsūnī and transmitted from him in 618 AH /1221 CE. He also undertook teaching and documentary work there before returning from Murcia to Bejaia in 623 AH /1226 CE[29].

3.3 The Doctrinal (Madhhab-Based) Dimension:

This dimension represents one of the aspects whose manifestations we consider important to examine, particularly in relation to the dominant legal school in the Central Maghreb, namely the Mālikī school, which was the school followed by the majority of the people of the Maghreb and al-Andalus[30].

As previously noted, the attention devoted to jurisprudence by scholars engaged in producing knowledge within this field surpassed that given to other scientific disciplines in the domain of the religious sciences. Indeed, it is rare to encounter a biography of a scholar from the Maghreb without finding it accompanied by the description of faqīh (jurist). It should also be noted that some scholars combined several sciences and specializations within the field of religious knowledge.

Accordingly, the abundant scientific and jurisprudential production preserved in Mālikī legal compilations and nawāzil encyclopedias can hardly be separated from the spirit of the Mālikī school, its essence, principles, and foundational rules.

Therefore, scholars from the Central Maghreb who traveled to the eastern Islamic world in pursuit of knowledge and learning selected Mālikī jurists whose intellectual orientation was consistent with the legal school prevailing in their homeland. Their aim was to strengthen their jurisprudential knowledge and refine their interpretive and deductive abilities, in order to derive the greatest possible benefit from legal texts and employ them according to their true meaning and essence, thereby avoiding erroneous understandings of jurisprudential texts and their objectives.

The eagerness of Maghrebi students of knowledge to study the Mālikī school, sit in the presence of its leading jurists and eminent scholars of legal reasoning, and explore its written works was considerable. This reflects the extent of their commitment to mastering this specialization and gaining command of its intellectual foundations[31].

Furthermore, the very nature of jurisprudential classification produced by scholars of the Central Maghreb reveals the extensive presence of Mālikī legal production within the broader field of religious writing. This is demonstrated by the commentaries these scholars composed on the works of prominent Mālikī authorities and scholars in both the eastern and western Islamic lands. For example, Abū al-Barakāt al-Tilimsānī wrote a commentary on the introduction of Khalīl's Mukhtaṣ ar; Aḥ mad ibn Muḥ ammad al-Maqqarī al-Tilimsānī authored Azhār al-Riyāḍ fī Akhbār al-Qāḍ ī Iyāḍ (The Flowers of Gardens Concerning the Reports of

Judge Iyāḍ); Ibn Zāghū al-Tilimsānī composed Aqḍ iyat Mukhtaṣ ar Khalīl (The Judicial Cases of Khalīl's Abridgement); and al-Wansharīsī authored Īḍ āḥ al-Masālik ilā Qawā' id Madhhab Mālik (Clarification of the Paths to the Principles of Mālik's School), among many other works.[32]

3.4 The Comprehensive Dimension in Scholarly Production:

Through this dimension, we seek to examine selected examples of the scholarly works produced by some scholars of the Central Maghreb in order to appreciate the vast scope of their intellectual production, the diversity of their fields of specialization, and the multiplicity of domains that attracted their attention. This allows us to develop approaches for assessing the encyclopedic nature of Central Maghrebi scholars based on the breadth of their writings.

Indeed, the observation that religious writing dominated the intellectual production of the period under study at the expense of other disciplines is an undeniable fact, firmly established by historians of classification and intellectual production in all their approaches and objectives. Nevertheless, the statistical examination of samples from the scholarly centers of elite intellectual production reveals the abundance of works left by the Central Maghrebi scholar and jurist, as well as the extensive range of fields covered by their writings. These works testify to the diversity of disciplines that attracted their attention and in which they demonstrated creativity and mastery.

By referring to the scholarly corpus attributed to Ibn Qunfudh al-Qusanṭ īnī (d. 810 AH), based on what was reported by al-Tinbuktī (d. 1036 AH / 1627 CE), we find that this author considerably expanded the scope of the scientific fields in which he produced and enriched the range of scientific fields to which he contributed. In the field of literature and language, he composed several commentaries, including Sharḥ Alfiyyat Ibn Mālik (Commentary on Ibn Mālik's Alfiyya) and Sharḥ al-Khūnjī (Commentary on al-Khūnjī).

In the field of the humanities and social sciences, he authored several works, including Tuḥ fat al-Wārid fī Ikhtiṣ āṣ al-Sharaf min Qibal al-Wālid (The Gift of the Recipient Concerning the Nobility Inherited from the Father), al-Wafayāt (The Obituaries), and Uns al-Faqīr wa Izz al-Ḥ aqīr (The Companion of the Poor and the Honor of the Humble), in which he provided biographies of the Sufi master Abū Madyan Shuayb and his followers. In arithmetic and the law of inheritance (farāiḍ), he authored Bughyat al-Fāriḍ min al-Ḥ isāb wa al-Farāiḍ .

Meanwhile, the field of religious sciences occupied a considerably larger space in his intellectual production compared with other disciplines. Among his works in this domain are Anwār al-Saāda fī Uṣ ūl al-Ibāda (The Lights of Happiness on the Foundations of Worship), Taysīr al-Maṭ ālib fī Tadīl al-Kawākib (Facilitating the Objectives through the Adjustment of the Stars), and Wasīlat al-Islām bi-al-Nabī alayhi al-Salām (The Means of Islam through the Prophet, Peace Be upon Him)[33] .

Likewise, the scholarly production of Aḥ mad ibn Zāghū al-Tilimsānī (d. 845 AH) was characterized by a diversity of scientific fields. His writings focused primarily on the religious sciences, including Qurʾ anic exegesis, such as Tafsīr al-Fātiḥ a (Commentary on al-Fātiḥ a), jurisprudence, such as Aqḍ iyat Mukhtaṣ ar Khalīl, as well as hadith, legal theory (uṣ ūl), logic, Sufism, Arabic language, poetry, rhetoric, arithmetic, inheritance law, and geometry[34].

the scholarly and literary production of ʿ Abd al-Raḥ mān al-Thaālibī was similarly characterized by a remarkable diversity, combining numerous scientific disciplines and scientific fields / fields of scholarship. In the religious sciences, he produced significant works such as al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān (The Beautiful Jewels), Rawḍ at al-Anwār wa Nuzhat al-Akhyār (The Garden of Lights and the Stroll of the Righteous), Riyāḍ al-Ṣ āliḥ īn (The Gardens of the Righteous), al-Durr al-Fāiq (The Excellent Pearl), Sharḥ Ibn al-Ḥājib (Commentary on Ibn al-Ḥājib), Jāmi al-Fawāid (The Compendium of Benefits), Jāmi al-Ummahāt fī Aḥ kām al-Ibādāt (The Compendium of Foundational Works on the Rulings of Worship), al-Naṣ āʾ iḥ (The Counsels), al-Dhahab al-Ibrīz fī Gharāib al-Qurʾ ān al-Azīz (The Pure Gold Concerning the Marvels of the Noble Qurʾ ān), and al-Irshād fī Maṣ āliḥ al-ʿ Ibād (Guidance Concerning the Welfare of the Servants). In the field of language and literature, he authored Tuḥ fat al-Ikhwān fī Irāb Baḍ Āy al-Qurān (The Gift to the Brothers on the Grammatical Analysis of Some Qurʾ ānic Verses)[35] .

4. The Impact of Scholarly Production and Intellectual Effort on the Social Sphere

In this section, we seek to identify-even within a limited scope-the nature of the impact left by the scholarly production generated by the intellectual abilities of the Central Maghrebi scholarly elites within the various scientific disciplines they entered and in which they excelled. We examine its influence on the collective imagination of Central Maghrebi societies, its reflection in social practices, and its effect on the religious and intellectual realities of that period.

Regarding the efforts of scholarly and juristic elites to establish justice within society and enforce the authority of truth in the interactions and public lives of its members, assuming the judicial office (qaḍā) represented one of the means for achieving this objective, alongside the efforts undertaken by scholars outside the sphere of official positions. Among those who assumed judicial positions in Tlemcen, for example, were the chief judge (qāḍī al-jamāʿa) Ibrāhīm al-ʿUqbānī (d. 880 AH / 1475 CE), Judge Saīd al-Uqbānī, Judge Muḥammad ibn Hadiyya al-Qurashī (735 AH / 1335 CE), and Judge Alī ibn Abd al-Nūr (d. 764 AH / 1363 CE).

In Bejaia, judicial authority was held by the jurist and judge Ḥasan ibn Alī al-Masīlī, as well as Abd al-Ḥaqq ibn ʿAlī, judge of Algiers[36]. As for teaching, numerous scholars occupied this role in Tlemcen during the Zayyanid period. Among the most prominent were the teaching imam Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Imām (d. 743 AH / 1342 CE) and Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn al-Imām (d. 845 AH / 1441 CE).[37]

In the field of bringing knowledge from outside into the Central Maghrebi domain, Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Mashdālī (d. 731 AH / 1330 CE) played a significant role in introducing Ibn al-Ḥājib's Mukhtaṣar to Bejaia. This work became a an important text in Mālikī jurisprudence, and its students devoted themselves to explaining, commenting upon, and studying it. From there, it spread throughout the Maghreb, where students of knowledge engaged with it through teaching sessions and scholarly circles[38].

The scholarly elites of the Central Maghreb also left an enduring imprint beyond their geographical homeland, whether in the eastern or western Islamic world, and whether in the field of intellectual life or within the sphere of religious offices and state positions. For example, in al-Andalus, the jurist and linguist ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad, known as Ibn al-Saṭṭāḥ (d. 629 AH / 1215 CE), undertook teaching and documentary work in Seville. Likewise, Aḥmad ibn Hilāl al-Arūḍī assumed teaching duties in Murcia until his death there in 640 AH / 1242 CE, while Manṣūr ibn Alī al-Zawāwī taught at the Naṣrid Madrasa in Granada.

In the Far Maghreb, the jurist Abū Sarḥān al-Zawāwī al-Bijāī (8th century AH / 14th century CE) officially assumed the positions of judge and teacher in Ceuta[39]. In Fez, Muḥammad al-Qurashī al-Tilimsānī (d. 759 AH / 1359 CE) held the position of chief judge (qāḍī al-jamāa). In Tunisia, Abū Mahdī Īsā al-Bijāʾī (d. 813 AH / 1411 CE) served as deputy chief judge (nāib qāḍī al-jamāa). Likewise, Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Marzūq al-Khaṭīb (d. 781 AH / 1379 CE) served in Tunisia

as a preacher and teacher. The same applies to the jurist Abū Isḥ āq al-Tanasī (d. 680 AH / 1281 CE) and Ibn al-Darrāj al-Tilimsānī (d. 693 AH / 1294 CE)[40].

In Egypt, Abd al-Muḥ sin al-Wajhānī al-Ṣ awwāf (d. 690 AH / 1290 CE) taught Arabic linguistic sciences at the Old Mosque (al-Jāmi al-Atīq) in Cairo. Meanwhile, the distinguished jurist and verifier Abd al-Salām ibn Sayyid al-Nās al-Zawāwī held the position of Mālikī judge in Damascus in 644 AH / 1246 CE and also became prominent there in issuing legal opinions and teaching[41].

This discussion enables us to identify the nature of the geographical identity of the destinations that attracted scholars from the Central Maghreb during the medieval period, as follows:

4.1 Positive Social Impact:

This effectiveness was manifested through the active contribution of Central Maghrebi scholars to addressing social issues, whether through voluntary initiatives or official responsibilities, as well as through their scholarly efforts to create the most suitable conditions for a stable and comfortable social life.

This role is particularly evident in the activities of scholars who assumed religious and state offices, foremost among them the authority of the judiciary. It is also reflected in their written production across various scientific fields, their contribution to revitalizing intellectual activity and enriching scholarly literature, and their social engagement-especially during periods of crisis that afflicted society, disrupted daily life, harmed social conditions, and threatened social and psychological security. Such crises included periods of warfare and political instability, as well as times of natural disasters and environmental emergencies, such as diseases, epidemics, plagues, earthquakes, and fires.

The role of Sufi scholars emerged clearly in their efforts to provide support, alleviate suffering and respond to social needs, and alleviate its suffering. They presented themselves as an alternative source of assistance alongside political authority, seeking to rescue members of society from their difficult circumstances. This was demonstrated through their charitable and voluntary activities, forms of assistance, and provision of services, including feeding the poor, performing rain-seeking prayers during droughts and periods of withheld rainfall, and providing healing and health-related support through spiritual healing (ruqya), touch, blowing, and treatment with herbs and medicines. In pursuing these aims, they relied upon the authority of spiritual miracles (karāmāt) to achieve their objectives and fulfill their purposes.

Among the most prominent examples illustrating these reformative activities, based on what is reported in biographical and hagiographical works, is the contribution of the Sufi Abū ʿ Abd Allāh Ibn al-Lajjām (d. 614 AH / 1218 CE), who collected funds in Tlemcen in order to prepare poor girls for marriage, thereby protecting them from hardship and preventing them from falling into moral misconduct[42]. Likewise, al-Ḥasan Abrakān confronted people engaged in frivolous activities and criticized those characterized by immoral behavior[43]. Also notable was Muḥammad ibn Marzūq al-Tilimsānī, known as Abū Abd Allāh (d. 681 AH / 1282 CE), who was renowned for his spiritual gifts and mystical unveilings.

Likewise, the spiritual master who "**held the leadership of the righteous and the education of disciples in the lands of the Rāshidiyya and the Maghreb**," Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf al-Milyānī (d. 927 AH / 1526 CE), represented one of the most influential Sufi figures of the region[44].

Accordingly, the Sufi succeeded in building a strong bridge of relationship between himself and the common people, with the karāma (spiritual miracle) serving as its reinforced foundation. Society became attached to the Sufi due to the free services he provided to its members and the solutions he offered to help them resolve their problems and overcome their crises. Furthermore, Sufi scholars established a solid popular base, as they came to possess an effective influence within Central Maghrebi society and enjoyed considerable credibility among its social fabric. Some Sufi figures and spiritual masters (aqṭāb) even attained a status of veneration among the common people, who submitted to their authority and guidance.

The Sufi orders of the Central Maghreb, through their scholars and jurists, also contributed to producing a significant body of written works that served the Sufi path, clarified its beliefs, foundations, and conditions, highlighted the spiritual ranks and miraculous gifts of its adherents, and revealed the different categories of sainthood (wilāya), their degrees, and the stages of spiritual advancement within them. They also produced biographical and hagiographical works documenting the lives of their prominent figures and spiritual leaders. Moreover, their representatives played remarkable roles in revitalizing educational life and enriching intellectual and scholarly activity. Among the foremost figures, as al-Ḥafnāwī mentions, was: "**The master of masters, the leader of the knowers of God and their exemplar, the learned jurist, Sufi, and saint Abū Madyan Shuʿayb (d. 595 AH / 1198 CE), under whose guidance a thousand saints possessing spiritual miracles graduated**[45]**.**".

Perhaps the strongest evidence supporting this argument and enhancing its credibility lies in the educational and instructional efforts undertaken by Sufi figures and spiritual masters within the field of scholarly life. Thus, Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-Hawwārī instructed students and supervised their learning and supervised their acquisition of learning. Likewise, Muḥammad al-Sanūsī worked as a teacher and legal authority (muftī), dedicating himself to answering the questions submitted to him. The same educational practice characterized the activities of Aḥmad al-Ghumārī and Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-Fijījī[46].

Furthermore, the preaching and admonition sessions organized by the scholarly elites within the studied region, held in mosques, schools, zāwiyas (Sufi lodges), and the homes of scholars, played a pivotal role in influencing the social fabric, reforming the conduct of society's members, and guiding them toward the religious observance.

Among the most renowned of these scholarly, preaching, advisory, and guidance-oriented gatherings were those held in the house of the Tlemcenian preacher and jurist Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Lakhmī (d. 614 AH / 1217 CE). Indeed, scholars also held circles of learning and preaching even in their workplaces. This was the established practice of the Tlemcenian traditionist scholar Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm (d. 663 AH / 1264 CE), who **"owned a shop from which he earned his livelihood every day, and after finishing his work during the day, he would sit in the evening to teach al-Muwaṭṭaʾ, prophetic biographies, grammar, literature, and language to students of knowledge**[47]**."**

4.2 Intellectual and Educational Fortification: This was achieved through the following:

Advancing the scientific and intellectual movement through steadily toward a developed and flourishing social life in all its dimensions[48].

The efforts of scholarly elites converged in order to promote the educational, moral, and intellectual advancement of the societies of the Central Maghreb in particular and the Islamic world in general. Among the manifestations of this endeavor were the scholarly debates and discussions that were held, as well as their strong commitment to leading the process of social reform and the educational mission through teaching and preaching, particularly as reflected in the remarkable intellectual and literary production initiated by the scholars of the Central Maghreb.

The works produced by scholarly elites constituted educational material whose contents were taught in schools and various educational, pedagogical, and religious institutions. This followed a method whereby the student would read the text, while the teacher assumed the task of explaining, analyzing, and clarifying its contents for all learners. Examples include the works of the Tlemcenian scholar Saʿ īd ibn Muḥ ammad al-Uqbānī: Talkhīṣ Amāl al-Ḥisāb (A Summary of the Operations of Arithmetic), Sharḥ Qaṣ īdat Ibn al-Yāsamīn fī al-Jabr wa al-Muqābala (Commentary on Ibn al-Yāsamīn's Poem on Algebra and Equations), and Sharḥ Jumal al-Khūnjī fī al-Manṭ iq (Commentary on al-Khūnjī's Principles of Logic). Likewise, among the works of ʿ Abd al-Raḥ mān al-Thaʿ ālibī (d. 875 AH / 1471 CE) is his renowned work al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān fī Tafsīr al-Qurān (The Beautiful Jewels in the Interpretation of the Quran). This also includes the works of Ibrāhīm ibn Fāʾ id al-Zawāwī al-Qusanṭ īnī (d. 857 AH / 1453 CE), such as Tafsīr al-Qurʾ ān al-Karīm (Interpretation of the Noble Qur'an), Sharḥ Alfiyyat Ibn Mālik (Commentary on Ibn Mālik's Alfiyya), and Taysīr al-Sabīl li-Muqtaṭ af Azhar Rawḍ Khalīl[49].

The general dedication of Central Maghrebi scholars to scientific, educational, pedagogical, and authorial activities. The teacher and educator Abū ʿ Abd Allāh al-Sharīf (d. 771 AH / 1369 CE), for instance, devoted himself entirely to teaching and training students. Among his works are Miftāḥ al-Wuṣ ūl ilā Bināʾ al-Furū alā al-Uṣ ūl, and Sharḥ Jumal al-Khūnjī. Likewise, Abū Yaḥ yā Abd al-Raḥ mān al-Sharīf (8th century AH / 14th century CE) devoted his entire life to education and did not engage in any other occupation or activity, spending approximately forty-two years teaching[50].

4.3 The Role of Books in Stimulating Intellectual Exchange among the Regions of the Islamic World:

The scholarly journey constituted one of the most effective means for activating the movement of books between the various regions of the Islamic world and facilitating their circulation among students of knowledge. This was due to the fact that the book represented a highly significant instrument for transmitting ideas, accessing the experiences of others, learning about their intellectual disciplines, and becoming acquainted with the nature of their cultures.

Bakr ibn Ḥammād al-Zanātī (200–295 AH / 815–908 CE) is considered one of the earliest and prominent travelers from the Central Maghreb. At the age of seventeen, he journeyed from Tahert to the eastern Islamic lands, where he associated with the literary figures and intellectuals of Baghdad and succeeded in establishing a distinguished position for himself within the literary circles of that city.[51]

The Maghrebi book, upon reaching the eastern Islamic lands, enabled scholars there to become acquainted with the Maghreb, discover its scholarly experiences, recognize the fields in which its scholars excelled, and gain insight into the nature of its written production. It was even stated that the Egyptians "**possessed hundreds of books about the Western Islamic world, and that the Western Islamic world maintained strong connections with them through the journeys of books and people**[52]." Maghrebi works, particularly historical writings, constituted a source of citation and an inexhaustible reservoir upon which eastern scholars relied in their own processes of compilation and historical writing. One study devoted to eastern scholars in the Maghreb states that hardly any **"(eastern) historical book is devoid of information transmitted from Maghrebi and Andalusian historians**[53]."

These works also represented a contributing factor in the flourishing of book trade and the revival of its circulation between the Central Maghreb and the cities of the Western Islamic world, as well as between the Maghreb and the urban centers of the eastern Islamic lands. It is well known that the book trade contributed to expanding culture, exchanging knowledge and experiences[54], and fostering mutual influence and intellectual communication, in addition to generating financial profits for those who owned and traded in books.

5. ***Conclusion***

In light of the research material upon which this study has been constructed, among the findings that attracted our attention and deserve presentation are the following:

- The fields of scholarly excellence were unevenly distributed across the domains of knowledge, with the religious sciences occupying the leading position. Within this field, jurisprudence (fiqh) constituted a major component of the overall religious scholarly production.

- Intellectual influence between scholars of the Central Maghreb and scholars in other regions of the Islamic world was reciprocal rather than unilateral. Scholarly travel was a major driver of this interaction.

- Geography and proximity contributed significantly to determining the destinations of students and scholars, particularly through routes, pilgrimage networks, trade routes, and geographical writings.

- Books played an effective role, through scholarly travel and commercial exchange, in facilitating the interaction of ideas, cultures, intellectual traditions, and scholarly experiences across the Islamic world.

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7. Footnotes:

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