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Description of the city of Bejaia during the middle ages

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Abstract :

During the Middle Ages, the city of Bejaia emerged as one of the most significant cultural and civilizational centers in the Maghreb. It served as the capital of the Ḥammādid state, established by the Hammadids in the eleventh century AD. Due to its strategic location on the Mediterranean coast, Bejaia flourished as a pivotal political, scientific, and commercial hub. Renowned as the "City of Science and Scholars", it attracted the attention of intellectuals and scholars from across the Islamic world. Its schools and mosques gained prominence as esteemed educational institutions, drawing students from diverse regions. Among the most notable manifestations of its intellectual influence is the case of the mathematician Leonardo Fibonacci, who was introduced to the Arabic numeral system in Bejaia before transmitting it to Europe. This study seeks to examine Bejaia during the Middle Age as a distinguished commercial and cultural center that seamlessly integrated scientific, economic, and intellectual activities, thereby solidifying its status as one of the most influential cities in the Islamic world during that period. This research employs a descriptive and narrative approach to examine the city's historical significance, complemented by an analytical method to explore the key factors that established Bejaia as a major cultural hub in the Maghreb.

Keywords: Bejaia, Maghreb, Middle ages, Ḥammādid.

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Introduction :

The city of Bejaia, situated in the central Maghreb, was one of the most significant urban centers in the region during the Middle Ages. Renowned for its historic port, the city played a crucial role in both internal and external trade, facilitating commercial exchanges across various regions. Bejaia was particularly known for the export of high-quality products, such as wax celebrated for its global reputation alongside oils and wool. Additionally, it served as a major cultural hub where diverse civilizations intersected, contributing to its prominence as a center of knowledge, commerce, and artistic expression.

During the medieval period, Bejaia was distinguished by its Islamic architectural heritage, evident in the construction of fortresses, mosques, and educational institutions. Among its most notable landmarks were Bejaia Castle, symbolizing political and military authority, and the Sidi Slimane Mosque, which exemplifies the richness of Islamic architectural design. The city also became an intellectual hub, attracting scholars, philosophers, and scientists from various regions of the Islamic world. It played a crucial role in the transmission of knowledge, particularly in mathematics, astronomy, and philosophy, with figures such as Leonardo Fibonacci being influenced by the mathematical advancements he encountered in Bejaia.

This study seeks to shed light on the significance of Bejaia as a key city in the Maghreb during the Middle Ages by examining its cultural and economic dimensions, while also considering its geographical location and its role as a major scientific and commercial hub. The research emphasizes Bejaia's status as a center of cultural influence, highlighting its contribution to the transmission of knowledge and sciences to the world, as well as its role in the dissemination of Islamic culture and arts. These factors positioned Bejaia as a model of advanced Islamic cities during that period. Ultimately, Bejaia was not merely a city of the Middle Ages; it was a beacon of science, culture, and commerce, embodying the intellectual and economic prosperity of its time.

Given its historical significance, this study is guided by the following research questions :

- **To what extent did geographical, cultural, and economic factors contribute to establishing Bejaia as one of the leading cultural and commercial centers during the Middle Ages?**
- **Can Bejaia truly be regarded as a center of cultural influence in the central Maghreb and the broader Islamic world?**

To address these questions, the study adopts a descriptive and narrative approach to

illustrate the historical and civilizational characteristics of Bejaia during the Middle Ages. Additionally, an analytical approach is employed to examine the key factors that contributed to its growth and prosperity as a major cultural and commercial center in the Islamic world. Through this interdisciplinary methodology, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of Bejaia's historical role and enduring legacy.

1. Location of the City of Bejaia

During the Middle Ages, Bejaia emerged as one of the most significant centers of civilization in the Maghreb and the broader Islamic world. Under the rule of the Ḥammādid dynasty, it flourished as both a cultural and political capital, fostering the advancement of science, trade, and the arts. Its strategic location on the Mediterranean coast further reinforced its status as a key political and commercial hub, making it a focal point of regional and international interest.

According to historians and geographers, the city of Bejaia is located in central Maghreb, overlooking the Mediterranean coast. Al-Ḥamawī mentioned in his book *Muʿjam al-Buldān* that:
"Bejaia is a coastal city situated between Africa and the Maghreb. The first to plan it was Al-Nāṣir ibn Al-Nāṣ ibn Ḥammād ibn Zīrī ibn Manād ibn Bulukkīn, around the year 457 AH. Bejaia is located four days' journey from the island of Banī Mazghanna... It is situated on the shores of a high mountain, while to its south lies a mountain range that served as the stronghold of the Ḥammādid kingdom..." (Al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam* 1995: p.339)

Ibn SAʿD, in his geographical analysis, associates Bejaia with the second section of the fourth region and provides its precise coordinates based on lines of longitude and latitude. He states:
"The capital of the central Maghreb is Bejaia, with a longitude of 22 degrees and a latitude of 34 degrees and 15 minutes. The width of the sea at Bejaia, extending towards Tortosa in Andalusia, measures three nautical miles. To the east of Bejaia, along the coast, lie the Mountains of Mercy." (Ibn SAʿD, *Basṭ al-Arḍ*,1958 : p.76)

Its coastal location signifies a strategically advantageous and well-protected position, rendering it highly suitable for both trade and defense. Al-Idrīsī provides detailed measurements of Bejaia in relation to several neighboring cities and regions. He describes:
"The city of Bejaia is situated along the sea, yet it rests on a rocky cliff. To its north lies Mount Masyūn...The distance from Bejaia to Atkājān is approximately one day and part of another...Traveling from Bejaia to Setif requires two days, whereas the distance between Bejaia and Baghāya spans eight days...from Biskra to Bejaia via Tifāsh covers six stages...between Bejaia and Qalʿat Banī Ḥammād extends over eight stages. The

journey to Tībissa takes six days...to al-Qasrayn six days, and to Tabna seven stages.." (Al-Idrīsī ,*Nuzhat al-Mushtāq*,1409 :p. 259-260)

The referenced Mount Masyūn exemplifies the rugged mountainous terrain surrounding Bejaia, offering natural fortification while also facilitating control over both maritime and land-based trade routes. Al-Marrākushī further elaborates:
"The distance from Bejaia to the Fortress of Banī Ḥammād is four stages; this fortress, I should note, precedes Bejaia...the journey from Bejaia to the city of Tlemcen spans twenty stages, with several smaller towns along the way, including Milīyāna, Mazūna, and Oran."(Al-Marrākushī, *Al-Muʿjib*, 2006:p.256)

Bejaia emerges as a significant urban and commercial hub, supported by an extensive network of vital roads linking it to both small and large cities. These connections extend from inland areas, such as the Fortress of Banī Ḥammād, to western regions, including Marrakesh. The mentioned routes underscore Bejaia's pivotal role in facilitating regional connectivity across the Maghreb, establishing it as a strategic center for trade, political interactions, and cultural exchange during the Middle Age.

It is noteworthy that the city was established on the site of Old Saldai, a settlement founded by the Phoenicians near the mouth of the Soummam River, which was known in the Middle Ages as the Great Valley or the Sāḥil Valley. Bejaia occupies a triangular area, with its base along the sea, overlooking a bay that extends from Rās Karbūn to Rās Būʿāk. Within this bay lies its port, which benefits from natural protection.(Ben Amira, 2015: p.14)

The city's geographical configuration not only enhances its capacity to exploit marine resources and its coastal position but also underscores the strategic appeal of its location. This has contributed to its enduring significance in trade and cultural exchange throughout history.

The sources that describe the geographical location of Bejaia suggest that it is one of the key cities of the Maghreb, characterized by a combination of factors that establish it as a strategically significant center. Its naturally protected setting, along with its integration into an extensive road network facilitating trade and administration, reinforced its role as a political and cultural hub during the Middle Ages.

Furthermore, these accounts highlight Bejaia as a crucial point of contact with distant regions, underscoring its broad cultural and political influence. The considerable distances separating it from areas such as Tebessa and Al-Qasrayn further reflect its function as a vital link between remote territories.

2. Establishment of the city of Bejaia :

The city was established in 460AH/1068AD by Al-Nāṣir ibn al-Annās, a ruler of the Ḥammādid dynasty, who subsequently designated it as the capital of his state near the ancient Phoenician port of Saldai. To promote settlement, he relocated inhabitants to the area and granted them tax exemptions. He later moved there himself and named it *Al-Nāṣiriyya*; however, the name Bejaia ultimately became more widely recognized. The city's strategic location at the foot of a mountain was carefully chosen to provide natural protection against *Hilālī* raids. (Mīlī,1986:pp.275-276) Thus, the establishment of the city was initially motivated by security and defensive considerations. Over time, however, it evolved into a prominent economic and cultural center during its period of rule.

Al-Nāṣir ibn al-Annās's decision to establish Bejaia at the foot of a mountain proved to be a strategically sound choice, as it provided natural protection against the Hilālī raids that threatened the region at the time. Furthermore, the city's proximity to the ancient Phoenician port of Saldai positioned it as a key commercial hub on the Mediterranean coast, strengthening the Ḥammādid state's economy and facilitating the expansion of its trade relations with other regions.

The ruler's policy of granting tax exemptions to the population played a crucial role in ensuring the city's stability, as it encouraged settlement and demographic growth. While the city was originally named Al-Nāṣiriyya as a reflection of the ruler's authority and legacy, it was the name Bejaia that endured throughout history.

In his book, Ibn al-Athīr recounts the story of the founding of Bejaia, linking it to a conflict between al-Nāṣir and Tamīm ibn al-Muʿizz. Al-Nāṣir's minister, Abū Bakr ibn Abī al-Futūḥ, advised against engaging in battle with Tamīm and instead recommended cooperation. Acting on this advice, the minister dispatched a messenger to Tamīm to negotiate reconciliation. In response, Tamīm sent Muḥammad ibn al-Baʿbaʿ to al-Nāṣir. During his journey, Muḥammad ibn al-Baʿbaʿ observed the location of Bejaia and recognized its potential to develop into a city and a center of governance. Upon reaching al-Nāṣir, he not only conveyed Tamīm's message but also proposed the idea of establishing Bejaia as a royal residence near Ifrīqiyā. Furthermore, he offered to relocate and serve al-Nāṣir in managing his state. Impressed by the proposal, al-Nāṣir agreed to the plan:

"Mention of the construction of the city of Bejaia. When this battle took place between the Banū Ḥammād and the Arabs... and at that time, it was a place inhabited by Berbers. Muḥammad ibn al-Baʿbaʿ looked at it and said to himself: This place is suitable to become a port and a city... and he went until he reached Al-Nāṣir... and he mentioned to him the building of Bejaia, and he advised him to make it a royal residence, and it is

close to the land of Ifrīqiyā... When Al-Nāṣir and the messenger arrived in Bejaia, he showed him the location of the port, the city, the royal palace, and other features... So Al-Nāṣir immediately ordered construction and work..." (Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil*,1997: pp.202-203)

Muḥammad ibn al-Baʿbaʿ, the envoy of emir Tamīm ibn al-Muʿizz, recognized the strategic potential of Bejaia's location, identifying it as an ideal site for the establishment of a port and a city. His assessment reflected a forward-looking vision aimed at strengthening political and economic influence in the region. Based on his recommendation, al-Nāṣir resolved to initiate the construction of Bejaia, acknowledging the site's significance and its crucial role in advancing his political and economic objectives.

The city of Bejaia emerged following the destruction of the fortress established by Ḥammād ibn Bulukkīn, which functioned as the primary seat of Ḥammādid rule. This fortress housed their treasury, military supplies, and served as a strategic weapons depot. One of its most notable features was its advanced grain storage system, which allowed wheat to be preserved for up to two years without deterioration, demonstrating the fortress's role in ensuring the state's economic and military sustainability. (Al-Idrīsī ,*Nuzhat al-Mushtāq*,1409 :p.261) Faced with an Arab siege that restricted his rule, al-Nāṣir ibn al-Annās sought a secure location for a new capital. He chose Bejaia, a naturally protected port with ancient ruins hinting at a former settlement. Recognizing its strategic value, he established the city, naming it al-Manṣūriyya, and transferred his rule there from the Ḥammādid fortress, which lay about four days away. (Anonymous, *Al-Istibṣār*, 1986: p.126)

With the fall of the Ḥammādid state in 547 AH to the Almohads and the integration of the central Maghreb into the new political order, Bejaia underwent a profound transformation. It emerged as a leading intellectual center in North Africa, attracting scholars, students, and literary figures from various regions. From Andalusia in the west to Isfahan in the east, Bejaia became a major hub of learning and scholarship, solidifying its reputation as a key destination for seekers of knowledge. (Al-Ghubrīnī, *ʿUnwān al-Dirāya*, 1979: p.07)

Thus, it can be concluded that the threat posed by the Hilalians to the Ḥammādids was the primary catalyst for the establishment of the port and city of Bejaia. The Ḥammādid ruler, al-Nāṣir ibn al-Annās ibn Ḥammād ibn Zīrī (r.454-481AH/1062-1089AD), initiated the city's construction following the recommendation of Tamīm ibn al-Muʿizz's envoy, Muḥammad ibn al-Baʿbaʿ. Over time, Bejaia evolved into one of the most significant cultural and intellectual centers in the central Maghreb, leaving a lasting imprint on the region's historical landscape.

3. Description of the city of Bejaia in the Middle Ages:

Throughout history, cities have served as centers of civilization, embodying the developmental stages of societies across time and space while reflecting their social, economic, and cultural transformations. Among these cities, Bejaia emerges as one of the most prominent urban centers that flourished during the Middle Ages, evolving into a key political, intellectual, and commercial hub in the central Maghreb. Its strategic geographical location and natural beauty contributed to its pivotal role in shaping the region's history. Therefore, examining Bejaia during the medieval period offers valuable insight into its significance and the influential role it played during this critical era.

Historical sources indicate that the city of Bejaia was established on the site of the Ḥammādid fortress, originally founded by Ḥammād ibn Bulukkīn. This fortress served as the administrative and political center of the Ḥammādid state, functioning as both the seat of government and a secure repository for wealth and military supplies. Before Bejaia's construction, the fortress housed the royal treasury, stored the state's financial reserves, and safeguarded its arsenal. Additionally, it featured an advanced grain storage system, enabling wheat to be preserved for up to two years without spoilage. (Al-Idrīsī ,*Nuzhat al-Mushtāq*,1409:p.261) Subsequently, Al-Nāṣir founded al-Manṣūriyya, relocating the Ḥammādid capital from the fortress to Bejaia, which became the royal residence. Situated four days from the Ḥammādid fortress, the city featured an expansive layout, surrounded by mountains and bordered by the sea on three sides. (Al-Ḥimyarī, *Al-Rawḍ al-Miʿṭār*,1980:p.81) Over time, Bejaia emerged as the political and commercial hub of the Ḥammādid state, playing a crucial role in regional governance and trade.

One of the most defining features of Bejaia during the Middle Ages was its thriving port, which served as a crucial hub for trade. Merchant ships regularly docked there, carrying a diverse array of goods, establishing the city as a significant economic center in the central Maghreb. This port garnered considerable attention in historical and geographical accounts, with numerous historians and geographers, including Al-Bakrī documenting its prominence and strategic importance:
"The port of Bejaia is a thriving and well-populated city, particularly with Andalusian inhabitants. To its east lies a large river that allows laden ships to enter, providing a secure winter port that stands apart from the maritime routes of Andalusia. Bejaia's port serves as the coastal gateway to the Abi Tawil fortress…" (al-bikri, al masalik, 1986,p.130)

It functions as a pivotal hub for trade, welcoming ships laden with goods and fostering commercial exchange. Its role as a regional trading center highlights Bejaia's substantial economic significance in the central Maghreb region. Bejaia's port played a pivotal role

in facilitating trade, attracting commercial caravans from diverse regions and serving as a key connection between inland areas, the coastline, and surrounding territories. As noted by the author of *Al-Istibṣār*, it was a prominent maritime hub where Roman vessels from the Levant and distant Roman lands arrived, alongside Muslim ships from Alexandria, Yemen, India, China, and other distant regions. (Anonymous,*Al-Istibṣār*,1986:p.130).

This notion is reinforced by Al-Ḥamawī, who described Bejaia as a kingdom with a port that allowed ships to embark and navigate in all directions, highlighting its strategic maritime significance. (Al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam*, 1995: p.339) It is important to acknowledge that Bejaia, as a coastal city overlooking the Mediterranean Sea, served as a key point of connection, facilitating both diplomatic and economic relations through the steady influx of ships.

The excellence of Bejaia's port was one of its defining advantages, attributed both to its strategic location and the advancements made since the Ḥammādid period. Its infrastructure allowed ships to approach the coast with ease, facilitating the disembarkation of passengers and goods, which were subsequently transported to the Dīwān al-Baḥr, serving as the primary point of entry into the city. (Valerien, p.313) Given the port's involvement in maritime traffic, trade and the exchange of goods were inevitable. Consequently, Bejaia emerged as a significant commercial hub in the central Maghreb. The port's prosperity facilitated extensive trade between various regions, bolstering the city's economy and attracting merchants and travelers from across the world. Numerous historical and geographical sources have highlighted Bejaia's prominence as a thriving commercial center in the central Maghreb.

This prosperity was largely attributed to its port, which played a crucial role in facilitating trade between the East and the West, establishing the city as a key transit point for commercial caravans. Its accessibility for maritime trade further enhanced its significance, as noted by Al-ʿUmarī, who described it as the second largest city in Tunisia in rank and status, excelling in commerce, wealth, and infrastructure. Bejaia possesses great fortifications and strength, and ships can enter its port with remarkable ease. (Al-ʿUmarī,*Masālik al-Abṣār*,1423:p.147)

The port was well-equipped to accommodate incoming ships, likely due to its naturally sheltered position, which provided protection from winds and storms, or the efficient organization of its entrance, ensuring a direct connection to major maritime navigation routes.

After the fifth century AH, the city of Bejaia emerged as one of the most significant ports in the central Maghreb along the Mediterranean. This prominence was closely

linked to its hinterland, which not only benefited from the city's maritime connections but also played a crucial role in supplying a substantial portion of the goods that fueled its commercial activities. (Nakadi,2018: p.14) Al-Idrīsī adds that Bejaia was a thriving trade center where merchants from various regions gathered, facilitating the exchange of valuable goods and contributing to its economic prosperity :
"Ships arrived at its shores, caravans made their way to it, and goods were transported by both land and sea, contributing to a thriving commercial environment. Trade in Bejaia was highly profitable, and its inhabitants were prosperous merchants. The city was also distinguished by its diverse industries and skilled craftsmen, surpassing many other regions in this regard. Bejaia served as a meeting point for merchants from the far west, the desert, and the east, where trade disputes were settled, and goods were exchanged for substantial sums of money." (Al-Idrīsī ,*Nuzhat al-Mushtāq*,1409 :p.260).

The city of Bejaia is described here as a central commercial station in the countries of the central Maghreb, to which various merchants from the countries of the Maghreb and the Levant, and even European merchants, traveled, laden with their various commercial goods, in order to sell them or to conduct commercial exchanges.

By the mid-12th century, evidence suggests the presence of Christian merchants in the port of Bejaia, primarily Italians, including Genoese, Pisans, Venetians, and Savonians. In the 13th century, historical records become more detailed, revealing an increasing number of merchants, notably the Provençals and Catalans, frequenting the port. Bejaia remained a significant maritime hub in the Maghreb until the 15th century. (Valerian,1999, p.146).

This development had a significant impact on the city. The commercial activity resulting from the arrival of European merchants became a key driver of wealth and prosperity, benefiting at least a portion of Bejaia's population and its surrounding regions. Additionally, it influenced local production, aligning it with the growing demand from markets along the northern Mediterranean coast. Ultimately, this economic expansion reinforced Hafsid rule by providing the treasury with substantial and consistent tax revenues. (Valerian, pp.310-311).

Bejaia served as a significant economic center, actively contributing to trade by supplying raw materials and goods for export and import with European markets. While the resulting wealth was not evenly distributed, the city played a crucial role in structuring and directing local production to align with European market demands. This economic integration with Mediterranean markets underscores Bejaia’s status as a key hub in global trade.

The city was surrounded by rivers, which played a vital role in its economic and social life, particularly due to its coastal location. These rivers served as essential trade routes, facilitating the transportation of goods from the interior to the port and onward to Mediterranean markets. In addition to their commercial significance, they contributed to the well-being of the local population by supporting various essential activities. As noted by Al-Marrākushī "The Bejaia River, known as the Great Valley, is its park, and along its banks lie its orchards and palaces." (Al-Marrākushī, *Al-Muʿjib*, 2006,p.262).

Its valleys are numerous, and a mile away there is a river that comes to it from the west, from the Djurdjura Mountains. This major river flows through the region and ultimately reaches the sea. (Maqdīsh,1988, p.93) Al-ʿUmarī also highlighted this feature, stating:
"Situated at the foot of a mountain, the city is traversed by a river that flows from the Levantine Sea, allowing boats to cross into it. It is fed by two water springs, one of which is particularly large and serves as a primary source of drinking water for the inhabitants. Additionally, a river extends for approximately two miles, surrounded by orchards, before eventually emptying into the Levantine Sea." (Al-ʿUmarī,*Masālik al-Abṣār*,1423:p.146).

Due to its natural strategic position, is situated at the foot of a mountain and in close proximity to the sea, benefiting from abundant water resources, including springs and a flowing river. These geographical features established Bejaia as a crucial link between trade routes. The rivers played a vital role in supporting agriculture by supplying water for irrigating orchards and agricultural lands. Additionally, they formed an integral part of the city's natural resource network, contributing significantly to its economic sustainability.

The geographical description of Bejaia highlights its unique positioning, being encircled by mountains on all sides while opening to the sea on three fronts. This strategic location significantly enhanced its role in trade and communication with the outside world. As noted by the author of *Al-Istibṣār*, Bejaia was a great city surrounded by mountains, with the sea on three sides. Key routes include al-Madīq to the west, paths to Qalʿat Ḥammād via ʿAqab and ʿAwwār, and an eastern road. (Anonymous, Al-Istibṣār,1986: p.126)

According to Ibn SAʿD, Bejaia features a river near *Al-Ḥassan*, surrounded by orchards and gardens, flowing into the sea east of the city from Shakra in the southern desert. The open sea extends toward Tortosa in Andalusia, while to the east, the Mountains of Mercy pose challenges for sailors due to rough waters.(Ibn SAʿD, *Basṭ al-Arḍ*,1958:p.76) Al-Idrīsī also mentions another river situated approximately a mile from

the city, originating in the west and flowing toward Mount Djurdjura. This significant river allows ships to navigate its mouth as it meets the sea. However, its water levels gradually decrease as it extends inland, though it remains navigable in most areas. (Al-Idrīsī ,*Nuzhat al-Mushtāq*,1409 :p. 260)

Given the discussion on water sources, it is important to emphasize that Bejaia was also surrounded by lush orchards. The availability of natural irrigation played a crucial role in sustaining these fertile lands, making the city an ideal center for agriculture and the production of diverse crops that characterized the region. Beyond their economic significance, these orchards contributed to the city's scenic charm and symbolic value. Al-ʿUmarī describes two notable orchards: One to the east, known as Al-Rafīʿ, and another to the west, called Al-Badīʿ, these orchards served as spaces for leisure and cultural gatherings. Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Makūdī al-Qābisī, upon witnessing them, described their beauty in his writings:

This is the exquisite, just as you have seen exquisite
and the elevated, just as you have known sublime.
These are sanctuaries, all deeply cherished
where beauty in its entirety is gathered.(Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik al-Abṣār,* 1423:pp.147-148)

These gardens were integral to the social and cultural fabric of Bejaia, inspiring poets and writers who praised their beauty. Their admiration reflects not only the city's picturesque landscape but also its abundant natural resources. The author of *Al-Istibṣār* describes Bejaia as a distinguished city by the sea, surrounded by the Dora Mountains. Nourished by rivers and springs, it featured lush orchards and a major river flowing through gardens. Waterwheels ensured irrigation, sustaining its fertile lands, while expansive parks made it a haven for relaxation and nature. (Anonymous, *Al-Istibṣār*, 1986: p.130)

Bejaia was distinguished by its diverse economic and cultural activities, playing a significant role as a commercial hub. Notably, it was renowned for its candle production, which was widely exported to various regions, further enhancing its economic prominence. The city's markets were vibrant and well-stocked with a wide range of goods, offering visitors access to an array of agricultural and handcrafted products that met their diverse needs. The city housed five main markets, each serving distinct commercial purposes. These included the wool market, the Qayṣariyya market, the Bāb al-Baḥr market, a market situated near the al-Madhbaḥ district. (Bourouiba,1984: p.232) and a smaller market or Sūwayqa, referenced by Al-Marrākushī:

"...ʿAbd al-Muʾmin passed through Bejaia and entered the city for a brief stroll. As he walked through a market near one of the city's gates, known as Bāb Tātūnt…he inquired about a particular merchant…The local traders of the Sūwayqa informed him that the merchant had passed away." (Al-Marrākushī,*Al-Muʿjib*, 2006: p.262)

The term *Sūwayqa* refers to a small market and represents the diminutive form of the word "market." In linguistic usage, diminutives are employed to indicate a smaller version of something. In this context, Sūwayqa does not denote a large or central marketplace but rather a smaller market, either in terms of physical size or significance.

The fortress of Tiklāt, located beyond Bejaia, features a well-established marketplace offering abundant and affordable goods. Overlooking the Bejaia Valley, it houses a fortified dwelling, the palaces of Ḥasan, and the gardens of Yaḥyā ibn ʿAzī.(Al-Ḥimyarī, *Al-Rawḍ al-Miʿṭār*,1980:p.147) The markets in Bejaia were held on designated days, with each market named after the day on which it took place. For instance, the Sunday market was one such example. As Al-Idrīsī noted: "The road from the city of Bejaia to the castle extends from Bejaia to the strait, then to the Sunday market..."(Al-Idrīsī, *Nuzhat al-Mushtāq,*1409:p.262)

The Monday Market was another significant marketplace. (Maqdīsh,1988, p.95) They also have the Thursday Market. (Al-Idrīsī*, Nuzhat al-Mushtāq*,1409:p.262) is situated within a fortress atop a mountain, with a continuous supply of running water. Due to its strategic fortification and natural defenses, it remains inaccessible to Arab forces. Additionally, the site contains agricultural lands and provides various resources. (Maqdīsh,1988,p.95) Another notable marketplace was the Money Changers' Market, which Al-Ghubrīnī mentioned in reference to the jurist Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh al-Sharīf. Additionally, he also made reference to the Bāb al-Baḥr Market. (Al-Ghubrīnī, *ʿUnwān al-Dirāya*,1979 :p.195-178)

Bejaia was renowned for its diverse markets, which offered an abundance of fresh vegetables and fruits, as well as a wide variety of marine products. This economic activity established the city as a vital and influential center in its region. Beyond its agricultural and commercial significance, Bejaia was also distinguished for its shipbuilding industry, producing ships and boats that played a crucial role in trade and reflected the city's economic prosperity and naval strength. Historical sources highlight its wealth of agricultural resources, which further reinforced its status. The region was rich in fertile valleys and farmland, with wheat and barley cultivated in abundance.

Its production of figs and other fruits was sufficient to supply numerous other regions. Additionally, high-quality asphalt and tar were sourced from local areas, and the city had accessible and valuable iron mines. Bejaia was also known for a wide range of specialized industries, further contributing to its economic prominence. (Al-Idrīsī ,*Nuzhat al-Mushtāq*,1409:p.260) The city housed an industrial facility dedicated to the construction of naval fleets for warfare, as well as the production of transport ships and portable boats. This was made possible by the abundant supply of timber from the surrounding mountains. (Maqdīsh,1988, p.93)

Their land is well-fortified and rich in natural resources, including cotton and figs. (Ibn SAʿD, *Basṭ al-Arḍ*,1958: p.76) Bejaia's Mediterranean climate, characterized by moderate rainfall in winter and relative dryness in summer, provides an ideal environment for fig cultivation. Additionally, the presence of rivers and abundant water resources has facilitated cotton production, making it a significant economic asset for the region. Alongside wool, hides were among the first goods exported from Bejaia. Genoa showed particular interest in sheepskins, while sheep furs and hides constituted a significant portion of Bejaia's exports to Flanders by the late 7th century AH (13th century AD). Moreover, during this period, Bejaia became the primary supplier of wool to Genoa. In addition to raw materials, the city also engaged in the export of textiles, including burnouses. (Chelia,2020, p.8)

During the Middle Ages, Bejaia was a prominent center for candle production, with wax primarily derived from beeswax. The city's high-quality wax was extensively exported to Europe, leading to the term Bougie the French word for "candle" being named after Bejaia. This linguistic association is documented in the Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue française, which states: "Bougie: candle, a term of historical origin referring to the city of Bejaia, where this product was manufactured." (Brachet,1870, p.98) The association between wax and the city of Bejaia was noted by the French historian and writer Gilles Ménage, who stated:
"The origin of Bougie is likely derived from Bejaia, a town in Africa. It is common for merchandise to be named after its place of origin. Today, it is well known that our merchants import wax and candles from Africa." (Ménage,1650, p.130)

In this context, the reference is to the city of Béjaïa, historically known as Bougie. Dominique Valérian note that in the late 13th century, L.de Mas-Latrie published a significant document a census detailing foreign goods sold in Flanders according to their place of origin. Regarding Bougie, which he referred to as the "kingdom of candles," the records list lambskins, leather, wax, and feathers among its key exports. This account is further corroborated by archival records from Marseille. (Valerian,p.18)

This evidence demonstrates the dynamic trade relations between Bejaia and Europe, showcasing the economic interconnectedness of the Mediterranean region. Candles, a fundamental source of lighting during that period, were a highly sought-after commodity. Ships eagerly sought to acquire them, particularly due to Bejaia's longstanding reputation for producing high-quality candles, a distinction it maintained throughout history.

Charles Féraud affirms that Béjaïa was indeed a thriving commercial center in the region, engaging in the export of wax and various other goods. Among its key exports were animal hides, derived from a wide range of species, as well as tree bark known as

écorces tanniques, which was essential in leather production. Notably, in the 14th century, the bark referred to as *l'iscorzia di Bugiea* was a well-known trade commodity. Additionally, Béjaïa exported alum, wax originating the term "candle" and likely first traded in the form of candle wax along with oil, cereals, raisins, wool, and woolen textiles. (Féraud,1869,p.142)

Several documents from the 1470AD indicate significant commercial activity between Béjaïa and Marseille.

For instance, in 1475AD, Monon Laurent chartered the ship Saint Antoine, which was manned by 120 crew members and stocked with weapons and provisions, to engage in trade at the ports of Béjaïa. Later that same year, in September, he returned to Béjaïa specifically to procure wax, demonstrating the city's role as a key supplier of this valuable commodity. (Valérian, *Les archives de Marseille*, p.10)

Charles Steuben, in his book Histoire de la Civilisation, states that the Italians of Pisa resided in the city of Bejaia, Algeria, where they learned the techniques of wax production from local manufacturers. They subsequently introduced this knowledge to their homeland and other parts of Europe. The term for wax remains Bougie, derived from the Frankish pronunciation of Bejaia, reflecting the city's historical significance in the trade and production of this commodity. (Jilālī,1965, p.384)

Bejaia was characterized by an abundance of agricultural wealth and high-quality food products, including fruits, vegetables, and meat, making it a symbol of stability and self-sufficiency. Its prosperity largely stemmed from the fertility of its land and the superior quality of its produce. Al-Idrīsī describes the city as having an ample supply of edible fruits and exceptional resources, all available at affordable prices. He further notes that meat was plentiful, and the land was highly suitable for livestock and agriculture.

Whether agricultural production increased or declined, Bejaia remained prosperous, ensuring the well-being and satisfaction of its inhabitants.(Al-Idrīsī ,*Nuzhat al-Mushtāq*,1409:p.261) Bejaia was not merely an agricultural city; rather, its wealth enabled it to develop a model of economic integration between agriculture and trade. This synergy contributed to its widespread recognition and prominence among Mediterranean cities of the time.

Barter was the most fundamental and widely practiced form of exchange among merchants in Bejaia. The mathematician Fibonacci identified these transactions (baractis) as valuable examples for illustrating arithmetic principles, suggesting that such exchanges were commonly used in commercial activities. Historian Eliyahu Ashtor

argues that this method of trade evolved during the late Middle Ages between Christians and Muslims; however, determining the exact nature and extent of its development remains challenging. (Valerian, p.592)

It is essential to underscore the significance of dyeing materials, particularly the renowned Bejaia peels, for which the city was distinguished due to their exceptional quality. This crimson substance was derived from the eggs of an insect that thrived on oak trees. The importance of this commodity is evidenced by its mention in a rental contract dating back to 855AH/1459 AD, listing it among the goods transported from Bejaia to other regions of Algeria. (Chelia,2020, p.74) Dominique Valérian notes that *the iscorza di Buggiea* from Bejaia, as is compared by Laura Bletto to *erba Buggiea*, also referenced by *Buggie*a, and identified with sumac thezera peels used in the process of washing hides.

While Pratica does not provide specific details regarding its composition, it suggests that the substance was associated with tanning peels, commonly used in leatherworking. This is supported by the fact that certain trees, particularly the Aleppo pine in the Bejaia region, were known to produce peels suitable for such purposes. (Valerian, p.409) The tanning powder derived from bark was transported in such significant quantities that it became widely recognized across the Mediterranean under the name iscorza di Buggiea. (Rozet, 1970, p.153)

The city was also renowned for its industrial activity, its inhabitants were affluent merchants, and it was home to a diverse range of industries and skilled craftsmen, uncommon in other regions. Additionally, Bejaia possessed rich and accessible iron mines, along with a variety of unique and intricate manufacturing enterprises. (Al-Idrīsī ,*Nuzhat al-Mushtāq*,1409 :p.260)

The inhabitants of Bejaia specialized in the production of turbans, textiles, as well as the construction of ships and war vessels. (Bourouiba,1984, p.229) The city housed two dedicated shipyards for the construction of boats and ships. (Anonymous, *Al-Istibṣār*, 1986: p.130) This reflects the region's abundant timber resources, which served as the primary material for ship-related industries, both military and commercial. Notably, Bejaia was surrounded by mountainous areas that provided a steady supply of raw materials, allowing the city's shipbuilding industry to rely largely on locally sourced resources.

The city was renowned for its skilled artisans who specialized in producing Maghrebian-style textiles, furnishings, and carpets. This craftsmanship thrived due to the abundant availability of raw materials such as linen and hemp, which formed the foundation of the linen fabric industry, along with the production of woolen blankets.

(Hidya, 2018, pp.140-146) The city was also notable for its abundance of medicinal plants, which its inhabitants utilized in the production of medicines. The region was rich in various botanicals beneficial for pharmaceutical purposes, including the rue tree, scolopendorium, barberry, centaury, rosinone, costus, wormwood, and other medicinal herbs. (Al-Idrīsī ,*Nuzhat al-Mushtāq*,1409 :p. 269) Al-ʿUmarī also pointed out that one of the regions of Bejaia was renowned for its medicinal treatments. He noted :

"The effectiveness of this remedy first emerged and gained recognition in central Maghreb through a Berber tribe known as Banī Wajhān in Bejaia. People would seek them out for treatment, but they were reluctant to share their knowledge…some individuals eventually discovered it and disseminated this knowledge to others. As a result, its reputation spread, and its significant therapeutic benefits became widely recognized." (Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik al-Abṣār*,1423:p.115)

Bejaia continued to thrive as one of the most prosperous cities in the Maghreb, maintaining extensive commercial ties with ports across the Mediterranean. It served as a key supplier of various goods, including raw cotton, linen, silk, wool, hides, wax, apples, minerals, carob beans, nuts, fodder, and spices. (Rozet,1970,p.153) It was one of the most important commercial centers in the central Maghreb. Wheat and barley farming was widespread there, and it had forests where pine trees grew, from which asphalt and tar were extracted. It also sold golden turbans.(Bourouiba,1984,pp.227-231)

The pottery and porcelain industry in Bejaia experienced significant advancement, as evidenced by artifacts discovered in the fortresses of Beni Hammad and Bejaia, which are now preserved in the Algiers Museum. The decorative patterns on these artifacts predominantly feature brown and green hues, while yellow is rarely observed. Blue, on the other hand, only appears in pieces from relatively later periods. (Hamoum,2022, p.6)

In the 13th century AD, Bejaia was a prominent and well-fortified city, renowned for its strategic location and strong defenses. Situated at the base of a rugged mountain, it was bordered by both a river and the sea, serving as a natural stronghold. Its position provided a commanding view of the surrounding landscape, reinforcing its security and making it nearly impervious to attack. As a result, no adversary could easily besiege or conquer it, solidifying its reputation as an impenetrable city. (Ben Amira,2015: p.15)

The geographical features of Bejaia, including its surrounding mountains and proximity to the sea, played a pivotal role in fortifying the city and safeguarding it from external threats. According to the author of *Al-Istibṣār*, Bejaia was accessible only from the west, making it nearly impenetrable. Entry was restricted to individuals authorized by the ruler, preventing entire armies from entering. Strategically located on Mount Masyūn, extending into the sea, the city was further safeguarded by a strong wall

constantly struck by waves, enhancing its natural defenses. (Anonymous, *Al-Istibṣār*,1986:p.130) Bejaia's strong defenses stemmed from its surrounding high mountains. Built beside a towering peak, its walls enclosed the entire mountain, reinforcing its security. To the south lay a vast plain, with distant mountains faintly visible about four days' journey away. (Al-Idrīsī, *Nuzhat al-Mushtāq*,1409: p.261)

It had an exceptional defensive position, nestled between towering mountains and bordered by the sea on three sides. Access was limited, with the western Strait running along the Great Valley River, a difficult southern route to Ḥammād Castle, and a similarly challenging eastern path. The west remained the most accessible route. A poet captured its formidable defense, stating: "Bejaia is all eagles... a refuge only for those who can match its strength." (Al-Ḥimyarī*, Al-Rawḍ al-Miʿṭār*,1980:p.81)

The Ḥammādid princes ordered the construction of strategically positioned fortifications, including the Qubbat al-Ḥāris at the mountain's summit and in Sīdī Yaḥyā Bay. These defensive structures were similar to the Byzantine Castellum, which were particularly common in open cities such as Tabna and Timgad.(Amarna,2008, p.236)

The structure also featured a tower that functioned both as a defensive fortification and a signal tower, enabling communication with key strategic locations in the region. Its primary role was to facilitate contact with the advanced forts on the plain, particularly in Hudna, which was visible from a great distance. Given that enemy forces typically advanced from this direction, a signaling system was implemented. During the day, messages were transmitted using mirrors, while at night, signals were conveyed through fires arranged in a predetermined pattern. (Eugène, 1909, p.39)

All this evidence underscores the strategic planning behind Bejaia's development as a fortified city, designed to withstand both internal and external challenges. A notable aspect of its infrastructure was the presence of inns, particularly for foreign merchantsThe earliest mention of inns in Bejaia dates to 600 AH/1200 AD. A Genoese inn is recorded during a conflict, later confirmed by the 634 AH/1236 AD treaty of Sulṭān Abū Zakariyāʾ. By 650 AH/1252 AD, a notarized contract referenced the Bejaia inn (*Fundico magno Busée*), indicating multiple establishments. Records from 617 AH/1220 AD also note a Marseillais inn in the city. (Valerian, p.263)

These establishments functioned not only as places of residence but also as vital commercial and cultural hubs. As a major urban and trading center, Bejaia housed numerous inns that accommodated merchants, travelers, and pilgrims from various parts of the Islamic world and the Mediterranean region. These inns offered a range of essential services, including lodging, storage facilities for goods, and provisions for merchants, while also ensuring their safety and security.

In the 12th century AD, Bejaia became a major commercial hub, attracting Pisan merchants who secured privileges through formal agreements. The earliest known treaty, dated 1230 AD, granted them rights to establish inns, bathhouses, cemeteries, and churches across North Africa and the Kingdom of Bejaia. (Amirouche,2018,pp.479-480) The agreements concluded with the Italian city of Pisa underscore the Kingdom of Bejaia's open policy, which facilitated trade and cultural exchange with European powers. The Pisans' right to establish inns, bathhouses, cemeteries, and churches demonstrates the era's religious and social tolerance, as well as the rulers' intent to attract foreign merchants and encourage investment in the city.

Furthermore, these commercial privileges highlight Bejaia's status as a major international economic center, drawing merchants from Europe and beyond and integrating it into global trade networks.

Regarding currency, it is notable that in the 11th century AD, the Ḥammādid ruler al-Nāṣir issued gold coins called "Nasiri," while Emir al-Manṣūr likely minted Fatimid coins within the citadel. R.Brunschwig's study examines Almohad and Ḥafṣid coin circulation, revealing a sophisticated monetary system. By the 14th century AD, decimal fractions were used in Ḥafṣid administrative accounting for currency conversions. (AISSANI, 1993, p.19)

The currency was divided into gold and silver categories. Gold denominations included the dinar (mithqāl) and its fractions: half, quarter, and eighth dinar. Silver currency comprised the dirham and its subdivisions: half dirham (qirāṭ), quarter, eighth, and the kharūba, equal to one-sixteenth of a dirham. (Bourouiba,1984, p.230) This indicates that Bejaia's monetary system was well-structured and meticulously regulated, demonstrating the strength of the state and its capacity to oversee economic affairs while facilitating both domestic and international trade.

Charles Feraud described Bejaia as a picturesque city, gracefully ascending the mountain slopes and adorned with a covered portico overlooking the sea. The landscape was interwoven with lush gardens filled with orange and pomegranate trees, as well as grapevines. Against this verdant backdrop, approximately fifty mosques with their white domes and towering minarets stood prominently, offering a glimpse into the city's architectural and cultural splendor. (Feraud,1869,p.13)

Bejaia is distinguished by its surrounding orchards and forests, which enhance its natural beauty. One of its most iconic landmarks is Mount Messioun, a striking symbol of the city's unique landscape. According to *Al-Istibṣār*, this towering mountain extends into the sea, featuring abundant springs, flowing waters, and lush orchards. It is also home to diverse wildlife, including numerous monkeys and the thorny dharb, further

emphasizing the richness of Bejaia's natural environment. (Anonymous, *Al-Istibṣār*,1986:p.130) The poet .Ibn Ḥamdis depicted the pond of Al-Manṣūr Palace with vivid imagery in his verse:

- ✓ "Lions once dwelled in the stronghold of leadership,
- ✓ now replaced by the roaring sound of flowing water.
- ✓ It is as if woodpeckers have filled the sky,
- ✓ their beaks melting crystal into shimmering streams.
- ✓ The streams, like swords, seem to have dissolved without a trace,
- ✓ merging into the tranquil pond."(Ibn Ḥamdis, Dīwān, 2005, p.469)

This poetic depiction highlights the grandeur of Al-Manṣūr Palace, where the harmony of nature and architecture creates an atmosphere of elegance and power.

During this period, Bejaia covered 150 hectares with 21 neighborhoods, 73 mosques, and a population of 150,000. The Great Mosque featured a façade with seventeen porticoes. The city's grand architecture, strong fortifications, and ornate palaces influenced Norman architecture, reflecting its cultural and architectural significance. (Jilālī, 1965, p.378)

According to Leo Africanus, Bejaia's population numbered in the tens of thousands. C. Courtois describes its composition during the Ḥammādid period, while D. Urvoy examines it in the Ḥafṣid era. The population mainly consisted of tribes and Andalusians, alongside a significant Spanish (Andalusian) community led by a sheikh. Additionally, the city housed a strong Jewish presence and a Christian colony. The ruling families and most judges were Berbers, with few Andalusian judges. (AISSANI, 1993, p.24)

Bejaia's rulers showcased remarkable architectural ingenuity. Ibn Khaldūn highlights al-Manṣūr's passion for construction during the Ḥammādid era, excelling in city planning, factories, palaces, and irrigation systems. His contributions included the King's Palace, the Lighthouse, the Planet, and the Peace Palace within the citadel. In Bejaia, he built the Pearl Palace and the Amīmūn Palace, enriching its architectural and cultural landscape.(Ibn Khaldūn, *Al-ʿIbar*,1981, p.232)

The city was famed for its magnificent palaces, often praised by poets. Al-Ḥamdānī described "The Pearl", an area adorned with Sanhaja-built palaces featuring sea-facing arches, iron windows, carved doors, and muqarnas-style rooms made of white marble. The walls bore intricate engravings, gilded in gold and lapis lazuli, with exquisite calligraphy, making Bejaia's palaces among the most refined of their time (Al-Ḥimyarī, *Al-Rawḍ al-Miʿṭār,* 1980:pp.81-82) Ibn Ḥamdis vividly praised al-Manṣūr's palace, portraying it as so radiant that even the blind could regain their sight. He likened its

atmosphere to paradise, with a breeze that seemed to revive the lifeless. Its elevated chambers and grand design evoked the splendor of Al-Firdaws, leaving the poet in awe and longing (Al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-Ṭīb*,1862: p.232)

The Ḥammādids carried out extensive architectural projects, building palaces, mosques, minarets, pulpits, markets, esplanades, and arches. They restored older structures and founded the major cities of al-Qalʿa and Bejaia, surrounding them with grand palaces and remarkable buildings that showcased their architectural ambition and cultural influence. (Mīlī,1986: p.261)

The architectural structures included defensive walls encircling the cities, with Bejaia's walls ranging from 1.70 to 6 meters thick. Bāb al-Baḥr, a coastal gateway, provided access to the port. The city had three main gates, strategically placed towers, night lighting systems, and mosques within its boundaries. (Bourouiba,1984, p.271) Near the Pearl Palace, the mosque stood as a remarkable landmark with a 60-cubit minaret, a grand marble-framed entrance, and 32 marble columns. Its facade featured 17 porticoes and a massive dome, while the interior was adorned with marble flooring and decorative ceramic walls, showcasing the era's architectural sophistication. (Ben Amira,2015: p.46)

Béjaïa's impressive architecture and esteemed institutions attracted scholars and students from various regions to study diverse disciplines. Over time, it became a major center of Islamic learning and devotion, earning the nickname "Little Mecca". The city embodied a unique cultural identity, serving as a thriving center for science and the arts. It attracted scholars and intellectuals from across the Islamic world, fostering a rich cultural exchange that influenced its inhabitants, who became known for their generosity and hospitality. During its golden age, the city emerged as a prominent hub of learning, where both rational and traditional sciences were studied. Notably, the Italian mathematician Leonardo Fibonacci acquired his knowledge of arithmetic, algebra, and geometry there.

The Dictionary of Scientific Biography recognizes him as the first major mathematician of the Christian West. In Liber Abaci (1202), he credits his studies in Bougie, where he learned calculation and Al-Khwarizmi's algebra under an exceptional master, gaining proficiency in the abacus and the Arabic numeral system. (AISSANI, 1993, p.58)

During the Ḥammādid era, Bejaia became a major intellectual center, attracting scholars from Egypt, the Levant, and al-Andalus. Arab culture and scientific pursuits thrived, with reports indicating that the city once had ninety muftis simultaneously. (Al-Ghubrīnī, *ʿUnwān al-Dirāya*,1979:p.7) Schools were likely housed in palaces from the

reigns of al-Nāṣir and al-Manṣūr. Mosques like the Rayḥāna Mosque and the Great Mosque were key learning centers, where scholars such as Abū Ḥāmid al-Ṣaghīr and ibn Khaldūn taught.(AISSANI,1993,p.56) Bougie was a renowned center of Islamic scholarship and asceticism, attracting visitors from afar. Among its revered Almoravids, Sidi Touati stood out as a prominent spiritual leader and founder of a monastery. (FÉRAUD, 1869,p.14)

The Kuttābs of Bejaia played a vital role in education, preparing students for advanced learning in neighborhood mosques and eventually in larger mosques, which served as major centers of higher education.(Hamoum, 2023, pp.46-52) Al-Nāṣir ibn al-Annās also established the "Sīdī al-Tawwātī" school, which had three thousand students. All sciences were taught there, including rational and transmitted sciences such as astronomy and mathematics.

Scholars and students attended from various regions, drawn by Bejaia's esteemed scientific status in the Middle Ages.(Ben Amier, 2021, p.645) The strong emphasis on educational institutions in Bejaia highlights its significance as a leading scientific and cultural center.

Education in the city was not confined to religious studies but encompassed a wide range of disciplines, including the sciences and arts. Bejaia attracted scholars and students from various regions, fostering an intellectual and scientific renaissance that established it as a beacon of knowledge in the Islamic world. Moreover, these institutions played a crucial role in shaping generations of scholars and thinkers who contributed to the advancement of fields such as jurisprudence, philosophy, medicine, and mathematics.

4. Conclusion:

In the thirteenth century, Bejaia exemplified the ideal medieval city, where military fortification and strategic location were seamlessly integrated with economic prosperity and cultural vibrancy. Situated at the foot of a mountain and bordered by a river and the sea, the city possessed natural defenses that rendered it resistant to invasions. Its command over maritime and trade routes further fueled its economic growth. This equilibrium between security and openness established Bejaia as a cultural hub, fostering both stability and engagement with the broader world. Bejaia's strategic and geographical significance was evident in its blend of defensive strength, natural beauty, and resource diversity.

Its fortified position, reinforced by its surrounding landscape, ensured protection from external threats, while its accessibility via land and sea routes solidified its role as

a vital commercial and intellectual center. Beyond its military resilience, Bejaia thrived as a flourishing economic and cultural crossroads, cementing its status as a key urban center and a driving force of civilization in the region. In the Middle Ages was not merely a prosperous city but a major center in the Maghreb and the Islamic world, where military strength, economic prosperity, and intellectual and cultural advancement converged. Its strategic location allowed it to serve as a vital commercial hub, overseeing key land and maritime trade routes and attracting merchants and travelers from diverse regions.

The political acumen of its rulers played a crucial role in maintaining its stability and defending it against external threats, enabling the city to flourish as a dynamic and thriving metropolis.

Beyond its local significance,Bejaia emerged as a key commercial and cultural bridge, fostering connections not only with neighboring regions but also with Europe and the Levant. This openness granted it a distinguished status on the international stage, facilitating the exchange of goods and ideas and positioning it as a conduit for cross-cultural interactions between East and West. The city's renowned educational institutions attracted scholars and intellectuals from across the Islamic world, further solidifying its reputation as a center of knowledge and learning, alongside its strategic political and economic influence.

Bejaia’s historical significance extends far beyond its commercial and military roles; it was a cradle of intellectual and scientific advancement, nurturing generations of scholars who made profound contributions to disciplines such as jurisprudence, philosophy, medicine, and mathematics.

As a center of knowledge and innovation, Bejaia played a crucial role in the transmission of scientific thought between civilizations, earning its place as one of the most prominent Islamic cities of the medieval era. However, the city's legacy cannot be fully captured in a few words it remains a beacon of scholarship and intellectual exchange, leaving an enduring impact on the course of Islamic civilization and the history of thought and culture.

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