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Political Contributions of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Karim al-Maghili in the 15th Century: Between Theorization and Implementation

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Abstract:

This study delves into the political contributions of the eminent scholar and thinker, al-Maghili, during the 15th century, examining their influence on the practical realities of the time. The research aims to unravel the nuanced concept of authority, underscoring the critical qualities a prince should possess and the characteristics of his governance aides. Furthermore, it assesses how al-Maghili's political doctrines influenced the socio-political fabric of that era. The findings reveal that al-Maghili's advanced political insights on the administration of authority transcended the confines of theoretical discourse, manifesting practically and addressing a multitude of societal and political challenges during and subsequent to his lifetime. The study advocates for a renaissance of al-Maghili's political philosophy to tackle current political challenges, analyzing his perceptions of political legitimacy and his perspectives on contemporary political dynamics.

Keywords: Muhammad ibn Abd al-Karim al-Maghili, emirate, prince, Political Legitimacy, Public Funds.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, from ancient and medieval epochs to the modern and contemporary eras, Algerian scholarship has contributed significantly to the accumulation of scientific and cultural knowledge, particularly in the political realm. Esteemed thinkers such as Saint Augustine, Ibn Khaldun, Abu Yakoub ibn Youssef al-Warjalani, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Karim al-Maghili, Muhammad ibn Abi Chanab, Abdelhamid Ibn Badis, El-Bachir El-Ibrahimi, and Malek Bennabi have made profound contributions to political thought and philosophy, garnering acclaim both domestically and internationally.

Muhammad ibn Abd al-Karim al-Maghili, a seminal reformist thinker, flourished during the 9th century Hijri (15th century AD). Adopting a nomadic lifestyle, al-Maghili traversed Tuat and the Western Sudan, fervently striving to ameliorate conditions in these regions. Alongside contemporaries from the Islamic West who either visited or settled there, he ignited a dynamic intellectual and scientific resurgence, addressing religious, political, social, and economic issues.

Al-Maghili's intellectual legacy profoundly influenced the regions he touched during his lifetime and continued to shape subsequent generations. His endeavors fundamentally transformed numerous events, behaviors, beliefs, and misconceptions across various African nations, refining societal structures and organizing the governance of several emirates.

This study seeks to answer the following questions: ***What were al-Maghili's political intellectual contributions during the 15th century, and what was their impact on reality?***

Study Significance:

The relevance of this study is derived from the profound importance of its subject matter: it illuminates the substantial intellectual and political contributions of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Karim al-Maghili, a preeminent Algerian thinker of the Medieval Period. This analysis showcases the extensive influence of al-Maghili's political philosophy on the realities of the regions where his ideas spread during his time.

The enduring relevance of his ideas underscores the necessity of revisiting and reevaluating his contributions to grasp their potential applications in addressing contemporary political and societal challenges, particularly in Algeria and similar contexts.

Study Objectives:

The primary objectives of this study are to elucidate and critically assess the significant political ideas proposed by al-Maghili, demonstrating their profound relevance and impact on the political landscape of his era. This research advocates for a revitalization of al-

Maghili's political thought, emphasizing the urgent need to delve deeper into his teachings. A thorough examination and understanding of his ideas are imperative for deriving innovative solutions to the political and societal issues facing modern societies, extending beyond Algeria.

Methodology:

This study employs a descriptive-analytical approach, which is ideally suited for presenting al-Maghili's personality and ideological contributions. This methodology facilitates a detailed examination of his political doctrines, elucidating their foundational principles, their influence on Islamic political thought, and their practical implications. The investigation unfolds through the exploration of several key aspects:

- Al-Maghili and his concept of the emirate.
- The legitimacy of political authority and its sources as perceived by al-Maghili.
- The practical impact of al-Maghili's political ideas.

1. Al-Maghili and His Concept of the Emirate

In this section, we will delve into the concept of the emirate or political authority and its responsibilities according to Al-Maghili. However, prior to this discussion, it is essential to provide a contextual backdrop of this influential thinker's life.

1.1. Al-Maghili and the Conditions He Lived Through

This subsection offers a comprehensive overview of al-Maghili's life, tracing his upbringing, education, and the fields where he excelled notably. It covers the significant roles and responsibilities he undertook, particularly highlighting his prolific contributions to political thought.

Additionally, this section examines the pivotal circumstances and experiences that shaped his intellectual endeavors and political philosophy, providing insight into the historical and cultural contexts that influenced his theoretical and practical outputs.

1.1.1. Introduction to Muhammad ibn Abd al-Karim Al-Maghili

Muhammad ibn Abd al-Karim Al-Maghili was born into a family celebrated for its scholarly achievements, devoutness, and piety. He spent his formative years in Al-Maghila, his birthplace, where he commenced his early education. Under the guidance of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Isa Al-Maghili, a distinguished member of his family, he diligently studied and memorized the Holy Quran.

His educational pursuits extended beyond the Quran, encompassing a thorough study of Maliki jurisprudence with the same sheikh. Over time, Al-Maghili broadened his academic focus to include both the linguistic and religious aspects of Arabic and Islamic sciences, as well as their rational and traditional components.

Seeking to deepen his scholarly knowledge, Al-Maghili relocated to Béjaïa, a renowned center of Arab and Islamic learning during that era. His time in Béjaïa was brief, however, and he soon returned to Algeria to attend the school of the esteemed Imam Abd al-Rahman al-Tha'alibi. Here, he was introduced to Sufism, Tafsir (Quranic exegesis), and various Quranic readings. It was in this scholarly environment that al-Tha'alibi selected Al-Maghili as a suitable husband for his daughter.

After his studies with al-Tha'alibi, Al-Maghili returned to Tlemcen to continue his scholarly work, although he did not establish permanent roots there. Eventually, his journey took him to Tuat, where he stayed temporarily but left upon becoming disillusioned with the prospects for reform. His commitment to promoting Islam then led him to the Western Sudan, starting in Taghaza, northeast of Niger, where he served as a teacher and preacher.

His travels continued to Kano in northern Nigeria, where he met its ruler, Muhammad Rumfa, and to Katsina, where he encountered Sultan Ibrahim Maji the Second and offered his counsel. His extensive travels also brought him to the Songhai lands, culminating in his arrival in Gao, Mali around 1498 AD. There, Sultan Hajj Askia Muhammad welcomed him as an advisor.

Tragically, while in Gao, Al-Maghili received distressing news of his son's murder by Jews in Tuat, which compelled him to return there, where he passed away in 1504 AD (Hijri year 909). Throughout his life, Al-Maghili's teachings profoundly impacted numerous students across the Islamic Maghreb and Western Sudan, including Sheikh Faqih Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad Al-Tazakhti (known as Ayad Ahmad), Sheikh Al-Aqib Al-Ansami, and Muhammad ibn Abd al-Jabbar Al-Fiji.

Al-Maghili's enduring legacy spans various scientific domains, notably in linguistic, religious, and political realms. His significant political works include "A Letter to the Princes of Kano," a foundational legal text for governance, "The Questions of Askia and the Responses of Al-Maghili," which offered guidance on managing essential governance issues, "Taj al-Din on What is Necessary for Kings," and "A Letter to Every Muslim Man and Woman," where he advised Muslims and chronicled the antagonism of Jews in Tuat and the Islamic Maghreb against Sharia laws.

His influence persisted long after his death, especially through his correspondence with local rulers, and his work played a pivotal role in the Islamization of the Sudan, as acknowledged by Sheikh Usman dan Fodio (1754-1817) and other scholars.

1.1.2. Characteristics of the Historical Period Experienced by Al-Maghili

The era that Muhammad ibn Abd al-Karim Al-Maghili navigated was punctuated by numerous critical events that not only influenced him deeply but also propelled his active engagement with the pressing political issues of his time. The following key events are instrumental in understanding the backdrop against which Al-Maghili operated:

- The fall of Granada in 1492 to the combined forces of Castile and Aragon marked the definitive cessation of Islamic rule in Al-Andalus. This event stands as a pivotal chapter in both the history of Islam and that of Al-Andalus, symbolizing a significant cultural and political shift.
- The pervasive weakness and debilitation that afflicted the Islamic states, particularly those in North Africa, were

exacerbated by invasions and the expanding dominance of Christian kingdoms, especially Portugal. This period saw Portuguese forces sweeping through most North African states, substantially diminishing their strength and autonomy.

- The era was also characterized by frequent wars and strife among the emirates and Islamic kingdoms across North and West Africa. Such internal conflicts rendered these states incapable of supporting Granada against its Christian adversaries or resisting the Portuguese occupation and further encroachments.

- In Tlemcen, the political and social conditions were marked by significant injustices. The rulers there deviated from the principles prescribed by Islamic law, disregarding these rulings not only in their private lives but also in their governance, thereby affecting their subjects and the management of state affairs (Bakouch, 2017, p. 38).

- Both internal political disturbances and external conflicts plagued the region. Internally, severe strife among the Zayyanid princes over succession to the throne was rampant, and externally, there were consistent raids by the Spanish and Portuguese on the emirate's ports, as well as on other countries within the Islamic Maghreb (Hamid, 2023, p. 179).

- The period also saw extensive Jewish influence over trade and political affairs, notably in Tuat. This influence was marked by significant control and corruption, with Jews exploiting rulers and scholars, leading to widespread submission and resignation among the latter. Such dynamics often resulted in scholars overlooking the necessity to challenge and change wrongdoing, thereby failing to uphold the principles of their faith (Bouthman, 2013, pp. 123-128).

These tumultuous conditions underscored a period marked by occupation, the weakening of Islamic rulers, widespread injustice, corruption, and deviation from Islamic law. The dominance of Jewish influence in political and trade affairs further catalyzed Al-Maghili's resolve to advocate for and initiate reform. His efforts aimed to

ameliorate the social conditions in the regions he visited, setting a precedent for other Islamic countries to emerge from their states of subjugation and weakness.

Amid these challenges, there was a significant intellectual and scientific movement, buoyed by the support of a politically engaged class of rulers, kings, and princes who championed education. This era, especially under the reign of Askia "Hajj Muhammad the Great," witnessed the flourishing of centers dedicated to teaching, learning, and worship, elevating scholars to a high and distinguished social status (Al-Hakim, 2017, p. 171).

1.2. The Emirate and the Prince According to Al-Maghili

Al-Maghili's philosophical discourse is fundamentally concerned with the notion of political authority and the essential attributes required of those who wield this authority.

1.2.1. Authority and Political Responsibility According to Al-Maghili

Al-Maghili conceptualized the emirate as a divine stewardship, viewing it as "a caliphate from God and a deputyship of His Messenger, peace be upon him, tasked with clarifying His rulings and executing His commands among the subjects" (Bakouch, 2017, p. 6).

This profound interpretation underscores the emirate's gravity, portraying it as both a significant blessing and a solemn responsibility entrusted by God, representing the noble Prophet in the governance of people. It is thus portrayed as a role of substantial moral and ethical weight.

He drew upon a hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah, which was conveyed by the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him: "You will be keen on the emirate, and it will be a regret on the Day of Resurrection. How excellent is the wet nurse, and how evil is the weaner" (Sahih Bukhari).

Reflecting on this, Al-Maghili counseled those who seek power, cautioning them about the profound risks associated with the pursuit of authority, specifically the temptation to succumb to personal desires and the overarching need for piety and steadfastness in faith.

In his seminal work, "Taj al-Din on What is Necessary for Kings and Sultans," Al-Maghili articulated his views on political authority, describing it as a delicate balance between desire and piety: "The emirate is a trial between desire and piety" (Al-Maghili Al-Tlemceni, 1994, p. 17). This statement encapsulates several key insights:

- It highlights Al-Maghili's deep understanding of human nature and its predilection towards desire, which is often easier to follow than the path of piety.
- By placing piety at the end of his statement, he acknowledges its difficulty and the considerable effort, discipline, and patience required to attain it.
- Al-Maghili depicted the pursuit of an emirate not as a privilege but as a test of one's moral fiber and integrity, emphasizing that the wise should avoid seeking authority unless absolutely necessary or compelled.

Furthermore, Al-Maghili argued that if one must assume authority, it should be approached with a profound sense of duty and mindfulness of God. He stressed that leadership is a burdensome responsibility, not to be taken lightly, as the ruler is accountable to God for their actions and decisions, particularly on the Day of Judgment when worldly possessions and lineage will offer no benefit.

He emphasized the necessity for rulers to engage directly with their subjects, actively managing their needs and addressing their concerns, especially those of vulnerable populations like minors, women, and orphans. He advocated for the dismissal of corrupt officials, not just to cleanse the administration but to foster trust and satisfaction among the populace.

Al-Maghili also insisted on the prince's need to practice self-restraint and fairness, ensuring justice not only in personal dealings but also in the broader governance context. In judicial matters, he highlighted the importance of impartiality, careful examination of evidence, and the selection of credible witnesses to prevent false testimony. These principles, according to Al-Maghili, are vital for

maintaining integrity and justice within the judicial process (Al-Omari, 2021, p. 315).

1.2.2. Characteristics of the Prince and His Assistants According to Al-Maghili

- **Characteristics of the Prince:**

Al-Maghili provided a detailed exposition on the essential characteristics that a prince must exhibit to be an effective ruler. He asserted that maintaining a dignified appearance is paramount, as it instills respect and awe; this pertains more to one's demeanor rather than mere attire. Moreover, Al-Maghili advised that the prince should adopt a posture of humility by sitting squarely, and minimize excessive movements to preserve the aura of dignity and grace befitting a sovereign.

The prince is also expected to embrace truthfulness, regardless of the source, honor commitments, and eschew negligence in issuing directives or prohibitions to avert errors. In his role as a judicator, he must ensure equitable justice, upholding the prophetic teaching that "each person entitled to rights should receive their rights from himself and others," highlighting the imperative of fairness among disputants (Al-Maghili Al-Tlemceni, 1994, p. 41).

Al-Maghili emphasized the prince's responsibility to engage with society's vulnerable groups -women, children, and orphans- listening to their concerns, and to dismiss any corrupt judges and state officials to cultivate the populace's trust and approval.

In matters of security and military strategy, whether in times of peace or war, Al-Maghili stressed the importance of the prince surrounding himself with virtuous individuals—scholars, the devout, the righteous, and ascetics—while shunning the wicked, ignorant, and morally corrupt to safeguard the integrity of governance and manage the subjects' affairs effectively. He also underscored the need for vigilance and caution, both domestically and during travel, to thwart the machinations of hypocrites and deceitful courtiers. Additionally, Al-Maghili insisted on the utmost confidentiality concerning state secrets to protect the emirate’s security and stability.

Regarding military preparedness, the prince must always be ready to defend the emirate and its people. Al-Maghili recommended

that the prince should sometimes disguise himself in potentially hostile environments, remain armed at all times, and demolish indefensible fortifications to prevent their use by enemies. He cautioned the prince against showing cowardice or defeatism, alerting him to the dangers of being influenced by those who exhibit such traits.

In terms of governance, Al-Maghili enjoined the prince to be transparent with his subjects, ensuring they are informed about matters pertinent to governance—such as legal pardons, to avoid any misunderstandings or misgivings. He advocated for a governance style that involves direct disclosure or delegation to trusted individuals to manage critical aspects like fiscal matters, inheritances, and taxations, thus prioritizing public service over the pursuit of wealth (Bakouch, 2017, p. 10).

Companions or Assistants of the Prince:

Al-Maghili highlighted that a ruler is incapable of managing all the affairs of the state single-handedly; thus, he necessitates reliable assistants. In his seminal work "Taj al-Din," he delineates the roles that these essential aides should embody—ranging from ministers, scribes, and accountants to trustees, judges, police officers, imams, guards, scholars, and wise counselors. He elucidated the fundamental qualities these companions should possess, such as justice, profound knowledge, piety, decisiveness, gentleness, a retentive memory, trustworthiness, and reliability.

Al-Maghili eloquently described these assistants as: "Servants who act in the presence, wise men who advise, trustees who collect and disburse, scribes and accountants who preserve, messengers and scouts, guards and watchmen" (Al-Maghili Al-Tlemceni, 1994, p. 25).

Among the cohorts that the prince should meticulously select to aid his governance, Al-Maghili advised: "Scholarly piety guides, leading imams gather, just witnesses testify, overseers uncover and amend, police officers deter, intermediaries intercede, trustworthy judges decide, and revered men for the sake of God, officials who love the right of God, and ministers who fear none but God," (Al-Hakim, 2017, p. 185).

In military affairs, he specified that warriors should embody characteristics such as: "who gather men and lighten burdens, who carry on war and bear arms... eloquent ones who invigorate hearts and disdain retreat, knowledgeable in warfare whose advice reveals troubles" (Al-Omari, 2021, p. 317).

In Al-Maghili's perspective, knights are to be valiant, perpetually armed, fearless in the face of wars and battles, and possess an astute understanding of their territories and strategies for ensuring peace and security. These are the traits the ruler must seek in selecting brave knights who are capable of forming formidable armies essential for maintaining the nation's stability and security.

From Al-Maghili's detailed descriptions, it is evident that these qualities are vital for the prince to identify competent, trustworthy, and just individuals who can effectively support him and manage the state's affairs. Thus, Al-Maghili acknowledges that the morality and integrity of the emirate are contingent upon the righteousness of both the prince and his governing officials, and any lack thereof could lead to corruption.

2. Political Legitimacy and Resources According to Al-Maghili

Al-Maghili’s discourse on political thought significantly centered on the concept of political legitimacy and resource management, which profoundly impacted the socio-political landscape of his era.

2.1. Political Legitimacy According to Al-Maghili

In "Taj al-Din on What is Necessary for Kings and Sultans," Al-Maghili accentuated the crucial role of political legitimacy, stating, "The root of every calamity is the ruler’s seclusion from the subjects." (Al-Maghili Al-Tlemceni, 1994, p. 18). To establish and fortify political legitimacy, Al-Maghili delved into several pertinent issues in his book, underscoring the necessity for transparent and inclusive governance as a cornerstone for a stable and legitimate authority.

The ruler must immerse himself in the affairs of the subjects, show concern, and take action regarding their matters. Secluding oneself from the subjects and their concerns, as Al-Maghili noted,

causes all calamities and problems. The country's and people's conditions will not improve by isolation but through immersion and proximity to the subjects, and by properly considering their various affairs. Authority, of course, is a responsibility and a duty, not an honor. As rights come with responsibilities, there are also duties toward the subjects who have entrusted the ruler and placed their affairs in his hands.

Another issue Al-Maghili addressed concerning the legitimacy of the emirate or authority is the appearance of the ruler. Al-Maghili believed that the ruler's dignity is crucial in earning the satisfaction, loyalty, and obedience of the subjects. He said: "The emirate is a suppressor of the commanding self" (Al-Maghili Al-Tlemceni, 1994, p. 19), hence he urged the prince to maintain a proper appearance, including appropriate clothing and grooming, and to avoid resembling women, wearing gold, or silk, among other things explicitly forbidden to men in Islam. (Bakouch, 2017, p. 40)

This view reflects Al-Maghili's deep immersion in Islamic culture, as he memorized the Quran and studied religious sciences such as jurisprudence, exegesis, hadith, and more. His political ideas in this area are derived from these studies. Although the matter of appearance may seem secondary in gaining political legitimacy compared to immersion in the affairs of the subjects, appearance significantly impacts people's perceptions. When people accept something, they tend to love it. If the ruler gains the love of the people, his leadership and authority become easier because he will gain their satisfaction and legitimacy, and vice versa.

Additionally, Al-Maghili pointed out the necessity for the ruler to avoid extravagance and waste, as well as excessive frugality that leads to the corruption of the public treasury. The consequences of this can be dire for the legitimacy, continuity, and stability of governance. The more corruption spreads, the less political legitimacy the ruler and his governance will have. (Al-Omari, 2021, p. 316)

2.2. Resources of Political Authority According to Al-Maghili

Recognizing the importance and role of wealth in establishing governance and managing the affairs of the subjects, Al-Maghili devoted a significant portion of his book "Taj al-Din" to discussing the main sources of public funds and the correct methods for spending them.

2.2.1. How to Procure Public Funds:

Al-Maghili adopted a very clear approach in addressing the matter of public funds and how to procure them. He warned the ruler against leaning towards unlawful means of collection, citing the verse from the first Ayah of Surah At-Talaq: "And whoever transgresses the limits of Allah has certainly wronged himself. You do not know; perhaps Allah will bring about after that a [different] matter." He explained to the prince the sources of unlawful wealth and the sources of lawful wealth.

- **Sources of Unlawful Wealth:**

- Receiving payment in return for conducting trials or other duties performed by the prince. Such actions corrupt the prince's religion and governance.
- The prince or ruler accepting gifts and donations from the subjects or those whose affairs he manages. Since the tasks performed are within his responsibilities, he is not allowed to accept anything in return other than his salary, to prevent this behavior from spreading among the subjects, thus affecting governance and leading to corruption.
- Receiving bribes from anyone, regardless of their status in society. Bribery is an unlawful source as it disrupts the standard of fair dealings among the subjects and affects the principle of equal opportunity in employment, holding judicial, political, or administrative positions, among others.
- Another source of unlawful wealth is rulers accepting money from adulterers or thieves, as these are unlawful funds that, when taken, result in significant harm to both governance and society.

- Taking what is known as the tithe, which is a sum paid by the owners of rights or estates, exceeding the actual stipulated amount. (Bakouch, 2017, p. 11)
- Another source from which the ruler should not procure funds is the "maks" (tax) (Al-Maghili Al-Tlemceni, 1994, p. 52), which is levied by tax collectors from merchants. He cited the Hadith: "A tax collector will not enter Paradise."

Al-Maghili's clear stance on financial integrity and the lawful procurement of public funds underscores the ethical standards he championed for political authority. These principles reflect his profound commitment to integrating Islamic values into political governance, ensuring that the acquisition and management of wealth are conducted morally and justly.

- **Sources of Lawful Wealth:**

In contrast to the unlawful sources of wealth, Al-Maghili emphasized to the prince that the sources of political authority's wealth must be those permitted by Allah. The sources of lawful wealth, according to him, include the following:

- Zakat and the collection thereof in its various forms, including Zakat on assets, agriculture, livestock, Zakat al-Fitr (charity given at the end of Ramadan), and Zakat on minerals, should be collected according to the amounts prescribed by Sharia, without any increase or decrease.
- Taking one-fifth of the spoils of war, as well as funds from Jizya (a tax levied on non-Muslims) and reconciliation payments, these are funds legislated by the Creator and the prince has the right to collect them and add them to the public funds of the state.
- Another lawful source includes inheriting the estate of a deceased person who has no heirs; in this case, it is lawful for the state to collect these funds and add them to the treasury of the Muslims.

- Fay' or war gains are also considered lawful, and it is the ruler's duty to collect these and incorporate them into the state's budget, using them to manage the affairs of the subjects. (Bakouch, 2017, p. 11)

2.2.2. How to Spend Public Funds:

After delineating the sources of public funds, Al-Maghili emphasized the importance of valuing these resources, purifying the economy, and rationalizing expenditures as legislated by Islamic principles. He referenced significant Quranic verses to underscore the gravity of adherence to divine laws in financial governance, citing Surah Al-Ma'idah (45): "*And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed - then it is those who are the wrongdoers,"* and Surah Ash-Shu'ara (227): "*And those who have wronged are going to know to what [kind of] return they will be returned."* These citations highlight the ethical and spiritual dimensions of financial management in governance.

Al-Maghili identified the dangers of both stinginess and extravagance in the management of state funds as primary causes of governance failure. He advocated for a balanced approach to fiscal policy, stating that the spirit of sovereignty is embodied in generosity, which if absent, reflects the soul of Satan (Al-Maghili Al-Tlemceni, 1994, p. 48).

He further noted that while generosity sustains a kingdom, both parsimony and prodigality can lead to its ruin (Al-Maghili Al-Tlemceni, 1994, p. 54). In advocating for these principles, Al-Maghili essentially called for modern economic principles that emphasize neither parsimony nor wastefulness, but rather moderation in spending. The types of public fund spending as outlined by Al-Maghili are as follow:

The first type of public fund spending involves Zakat on assets, crops, livestock, and Fitr. Al-Maghili mandated that if the ruler is just, everyone must contribute to Zakat, which should then be distributed to the eight categories specified in the Quran: the poor, the needy, Zakat collectors, those whose hearts are to be reconciled, the freeing of captives, debtors, for the cause of Allah, and travelers in need. He stressed that if none of these categories are present in his country, the funds should be used in the nearest place where they are needed.

Furthermore, the ruler should equitably distribute the funds between local and external recipients based on necessity and without deducting transportation costs from the Zakat itself, which should be covered by other state funds. Zakat al-Fitr specifically should be directed towards the local or nearest poor and needy (Al-Maghili Al-Tlemceni, 1994, p. 50-55).

The second type of public fund, known as Fay, includes "one-fifth of Zakat, minerals, one-fifth of spoils of war, contributions from Dhimmis (non-Muslims under Muslim rule) and those with peace treaties, and wealth left by a deceased person with no heirs, and what God has given as war booty without battle" (Al-Maghili Al-Tlemceni, 1994, p. 56-57).

Al-Maghili instructed the ruler to allocate these funds based on their importance to the Muslim community, prioritizing piety and the avoidance of self-interest. He specified that the first priority for Fay funds should be the military and weapons for security needs, followed by provisions for judges and scholars due to the importance of religion and justice in society. If there are surplus Fay funds, or if there are greater needs in other countries, the ruler should distribute these funds accordingly.

Any remaining Fay can be reserved for future crises or necessary expenditures like building mosques, ransoming prisoners of war, paying off debts, facilitating marriages, and supporting pilgrimages (Bakouch, 2017, p. 12-13).

By meticulously specifying the sources and methods for the expenditure of public funds, Al-Maghili provided a comprehensive framework for financial integrity and responsible governance aligned with Islamic teachings. This approach not only ensures the welfare of the subjects and the stability of the state but also reflects his profound understanding of the economic and political necessities of an Islamic state.

3. The Impact of Al-Maghili's Political Ideas on Reality

Thought is the product of the thinking process, which utilizes intellectual, psychological, and mental capabilities, including perceptions, judgments, and views on a variety of issues. Al-Maghili was a prominent thinker and scholar of his time, known for his deep reflections and deliberations on numerous topics that spanned religion, commerce, politics, society, the judiciary, and security. Among these, his expertise in the political arena was particularly notable, alongside his religious contributions. He encapsulated his most significant political ideas and visions not only in his writings but also in letters and advice he penned to major princes and sultans across the African regions he visited.

Al-Maghili's brilliance in Islamic political thought during the medieval period was not confined to mere theorizing. He actively translated his theoretical insights into practical actions, effectively bringing his political views from the realm of ideas into reality. He did not limit himself to theorizing about various political issues; rather, he took on roles as a warrior leader, reformer, judge, and advisor on governance and public affairs. He engaged actively in the Western Sudan regions, traveling to their capitals and provinces, where he exerted significant efforts in advising their rulers and guiding those in authority to address injustices and corruption that harmed the public interest.

Among the places he visited was Takeda in the Aïr region, northeast of Niger, where he spent considerable time preaching and teaching many who sought his knowledge. Additionally, he traveled to northern Nigeria, specifically to the city of Katsina, where the locals benefitted from his extensive knowledge and teachings. He served as a teacher there and influenced its ruler, Ibrahim Maji II, offering him advice for the betterment of his nation (Yakoub, 2020). He also spent time in the city of Kano, where he was hosted by Emir Muhammad Rumfa, who welcomed him and appointed him as a judge and advisor. Al-Maghili provided religious rulings and political advice to the emir, assisting in the governance and management of public affairs (Bakouch, 2017, p. 4).

The way Al-Maghili was received by the rulers and kings of those regions indicates his significant and esteemed position among

them. They consulted him on matters of religion and politics, leading him to write important letters and advice, including his notable work "Taj al-Din," which he composed for the Emir of Kano. He also authored "The Questions of Askia and the Responses of Al-Maghili" for the Emir of the Songhai Kingdom, which served as a guide for the emir to support and strengthen his rule and face his adversaries.

Al-Maghili's ideas had a substantial impact in the city of Tamentit and the Tuat palaces, where he observed the rampant corruption and transgressions of the Jews. He settled there, assessed the situation, and noted that the Jews were the wealthiest due to their control of trade and influence over those in power. This led him to denounce the rulers in the Muslim lands for their subservience to the Jews. He condemned the Jews for not adhering to the principles of the Dhimmi (non-Muslims under Muslim rule) and for violating Islamic law, even exhibiting arrogance towards Muslims.

Al-Maghili actively sought to rectify the situation, declared enmity against the Jews, fought them, destroyed their synagogues, and ultimately triumphed over them, expelling them from Tamentit. He then continued his work to organize and reform the country, earning respect and appreciation for himself and his son (Milek, 2012, p. 101-102).

Another notable political contribution from Al-Maghili was his influential role in the Songhai Empire, particularly in its capital, Gao, under the rule of Sultan Hajj Askia Muhammad the Great.

Al-Maghili’s comprehensive responses to Askia’s inquiries helped to address and resolve a myriad of social, political, economic, and religious issues that the sultan faced. His influence in the Western Sudan is further evidenced through his connections with rulers like Askia Muhammad of the Songhai Empire, who sought his counsel on matters concerning neighboring pagan and infidel nations and the Islamic rulings on jihad against them. Al-Maghili’s guidance was instrumental, enabling the sultan to conquer these regions and effectively spread Islam.

The impact of Al-Maghili extended well beyond his time in the Western Sudan, influencing thought and practice even three centuries later, as evidenced in the teachings of Sheikh Usman Dan Fodio and his followers and successors. They adopted and implemented Al-Maghili's ideas and teachings in religion and politics, which led to significant cultural, social, and political transformations during their era (Chitara, 2019, p. 36).

Al-Maghili's efforts exemplify how a thinker can transcend the theoretical realm and effect tangible, lasting changes through active engagement and the practical implementation of ideas. His legacy continues to inspire and guide those who seek to balance governance with religious principles, ensuring justice and integrity in leadership.

Moreover, Al-Maghili not only theorized about the emirate but also actively established and practiced governance in Tuat. His intervention was not merely to curb the rampant corruption and oppressive dominance of the Jews, who controlled various economic, political, and security activities and influenced the rulers to serve their interests, but also to establish an alternative emirate amidst the chaotic state of affairs in Tuat at that time.

After settling in Tuat, Al-Maghili embarked on reforms and corrections of practices that contradicted Islamic Sharia law, including the demolition of Jewish synagogues and their expulsion. Following these decisive actions, he was pledged allegiance as the governor of all Tuat palaces in 1477 AD, where he implemented laws based on Islamic principles to which everyone submitted. He subsequently appointed his son, Sidi Muhammad, as his successor and traveled to Sudan to continue his mission of reform (Hadj Ahmed, 2018, pp. 187-194).

Thus, the actions undertaken by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Karim Al-Maghili from Tuat to the Western Sudan were primarily for political reasons, albeit deeply intertwined with religious and reformative motives, aiming to establish a state governed by Islamic Sharia law. He fought and expelled the Jews, established his state, and in the Western Sudan, earned the trust of its kings to secure the western front of his state. He spent 20 years there, urging its rulers to build their states on solid Sharia-based foundations by intertwining religion with politics (Hamid, 2023, p. 183).

Conclusion:

From the above discussion, it is evident that Al-Maghili was a distinguished figure known for his profound knowledge and leadership across various fields and disciplines amid the significant scientific and cultural movement in the Islamic Maghreb during the 15th century AD. From analyzing his political thoughts and their tangible impact on reality, we can draw the following conclusions:

- Authority occupied a central position in Al-Maghili's thought, and he articulated clear principles on how it should be attained and managed.
- Al-Maghili believed that a wise person does not actively seek the emirate; however, if leadership is destined and assigned to them, they must govern with a deep reverence for God. He regarded leadership as a significant responsibility, a trial that balances between personal desires and piety. In our current times, this abstention from actively seeking power remains profoundly relevant.
- According to Al-Maghili, financial corruption is one of the most substantial threats to political legitimacy, alongside the dangers posed by the ruler's seclusion from the subjects. He emphasized that direct engagement with the populace is essential for maintaining a legitimate and effective governance structure.
- Al-Maghili was not merely a thinker, scholar, and jurist; he actively applied his theoretical insights into practical actions. He initiated and implemented his ideas both within and outside of Algeria, striving to correct misconceptions and improve conditions across various domains.
- His political ideas and actions brought about significant changes in many regions and countries he visited, contributing to societal and political reforms that continued to influence subsequent eras long after his death.

Given the enduring importance and demonstrated effectiveness of Al-Maghili’s political ideas in addressing numerous societal and

political challenges in Algeria and beyond, particularly in the Western Sudan during his time, there is a strong case for the revival of his political thought. The establishment of research centers dedicated to an in-depth study of his intellectual legacy could be immensely beneficial, leveraging his insights to address many of today's pressing issues.

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