

The Image of the Central Maghreb in the Writings of al-Qalqashandī: Tlemcen as a Case Study

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Received: 07/05/2026 Accepted: 23/06/2026 Published: 30/06/2026

Abstract:

This article is concerned with studying the image of the Central Maghreb in the writings of the Egyptian encyclopedist al-Qalqashandī (d. 821 AH), particularly in his encyclopedia *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā fī ṣināʿat al-inshāʿ*, focusing on the city of Tlemcen as a model. In his description of the Central Maghreb, al-Qalqashandī relied on Eastern and Maghreb sources, foremost among which were the writings of Ibn Khaldūn, and he combined political geography, history, and administration. He divided the Islamic Maghreb into three kingdoms, making the "Kingdom of Tlemcen" the Central Maghreb, defining its borders to the east at Ifrīqiyyā and to the west at Wādī Moulouya, and identifying Tlemcen as its capital. He listed the cities of the kingdom such as Oujda, Honaine, Miliana, Algiers, and Biskra, and transmitted administrative customs from Béjaïa. His texts reflect the recognition of the Mamluk chancelleries of the Zayyanid state at that time, and highlight his interest in routes and regulations. His writings are considered a valuable source for understanding the Eastern perspective on the Central Maghreb in the late medieval age, thanks to their administrative precision and field details that he collected by virtue of his position in the Chancery (*Dīwān al-Inshāʿ*).

Keywords: al-Qalqashandī, Central Maghreb, Tlemcen, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā*, Zayyanids.

Introduction:

The Central Maghreb occupies an important geographical and political position in the history of the medieval Islamic world. Yet its presence in Eastern (Mashriqī) writings, particularly those of the Mamluk period, has largely remained indirect and fragmentary. The historians of the East wrote about this region from a central position

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(Cairo and Damascus), relying on indirect accounts, official correspondence, and diplomatic and commercial reports.

Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī al-Qalqashandī (756–821 AH/1355–1418 CE) is among the great encyclopedists of the Mamluk era. He enriched the Arab-Islamic library with comprehensive works, foremost among them his famous encyclopedia *Ṣubḥ al-a‘shā fī šinā‘at al-inshā*, which he completed in 814 AH/1412 CE. In addition, he authored other historical and administrative works, such as *Ma‘āthir al-ināfah fī ma‘ālim al-khilāfah* and *Nihāyat al-arab fī ma‘rifat ansāb al-‘Arab*, which made him one of the most important sources for the study of the political and administrative geography of the Islamic world in the eighth and ninth centuries AH. In *Ṣubḥ al-a‘shā*, al-Qalqashandī devoted considerable space to discussing the Islamic kingdoms, including the three Maghrebi kingdoms: the Far Maghreb (Fez), the Central Maghreb, and Ifrīqiyyā. The importance of this article lies in the fact that the Central Maghreb was the stage for major states such as the Rustamid, Ḥammadid, and Zabbānid dynasties. Al-Qalqashandī witnessed the Zayyanid state in Tlemcen and transmitted a vivid image of it, based on the information available to him, whether from earlier sources such as Ibn Khaldūn, or from the correspondence and envoys that reached the Chancery (Dīwān al-Inshā).

This article aims to elucidate the image of Tlemcen in al-Qalqashandī’s writings as a city of prominent political and civilizational status in the Central Maghreb. The significance of this study emerges from tracing the historical transformations the city underwent from the Islamic conquest, through the Idrīsid, Fāṭimid, Zīrid, Almoravid, and Almohad periods, and then the Zayyanid state and its conflict with the Marīnids – within a broader vision emanating from the centre of the Caliphate and sultanic correspondence.

First: Introduction to al-Qalqashandī

1. The Personality of al-Qalqashandī:

Al-Qalqashandī is Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī ibn Aḥmad al-Fazārī al-Qalqashandī, the Cairene historian and man of letters. He was born in 756 AH/1355 CE in Qalqashandah¹ to a learned family of pure

1 - Qalqashandah: Yaqut al-Hamawi mentions it as Qarqashandah, a village in Lower Egypt where al-Layth ibn Sa‘d ibn ‘Abd al-

Arab origin, descending from the tribe of Banī Badr ibn Fazārah ibn Qays ‘Aylān.² The author of *Ṣubḥ al-a‘shā* was characterised by many noble qualities. In this regard, al-Sakhāwī says: "He was religious, good, courageous, of sound nature, and committed to the path of goodness and worship. He had beautiful handwriting, was proficient in direct management, and possessed chivalry."³

Al-Qalqashandī grew up in his birthplace and was properly raised, remaining there until approximately the age of fifteen. He then went to Alexandria and stayed there for some time seeking knowledge from the most famous scholars of his age. During that period, he occupied himself with the arts of the Arabic language and literature. In 778 AH, Shaykh Sirāj al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ ‘Umar ibn Abī al-Ḥasan, known as Ibn al-Mulaqqin, authorised him to issue fatwas and teach. He then taught Prophetic ḥadīth, jurisprudence, and other religious sciences, benefiting many people.⁴ Al-Qalqashandī was a jurist inclined toward ijtihād and attempted to establish principles and rules for the science of jurisprudence. At this stage of the author of *Ṣubḥ al-a‘shā*'s life, he took an interest in the art of literature, as evidenced by the books and literary epistles he composed.

In 791 AH/1388 CE, al-Qalqashandī was chosen to work in the Chancery (Dīwān al-Inshā). He composed a maqāmah in praise of Judge Badr al-Dīn ibn al-Qāḍī ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ibn al-Qāḍī al-Dīn ibn Faḍl Allāh, the head of the Chancery at that time, and entitled it *al-Kawākib al-durriyyah fī al-manāqib al-badriyyah*.⁵ In it, he built

Rahman was born. Yaquṭ al-Hamawī, **Mu‘jam al-Buldān**, Dār Ṣādir, Beirut, 1977, vol. 4, p. 327.

2 - Būbāyah ‘Abd al-Qādir, **Maṣādir wa Marāji‘ Tārīkh al-Maghrib al-Awsaṭ (al-Jazā’ir khilāl al-‘Aṣr al-Wasīṭ)**, al-Mu’assasah al-Waṭaniyyah lil-Funūn al-Maṭba‘iyyah, Algeria, 2014, p. 236.

3 - al-Sakhāwī, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, **al-Ḍaw’ al-Lāmi‘ li-Ahl al-Qarn al-Tāsi‘**, Dār al-Jīl, Beirut, 1992, vol. 1, p. 243.

4 - Shākir Muṣṭafā, **al-Tārīkh al-‘Arabī wa al-Mu’arrikhūn, Dirāsah fī Taṭawwur ‘Ilm al-Tārīkh wa Ma‘rifat Rijālihi fī al-Islām**, vol. 3, 1st ed., Dār al-‘Ilm lil-Malāyīn, Beirut, 1990, p. 133.

5 - Muḥammad Kamāl al-Dīn ‘Izz al-Dīn, **Dirāsāt Naqdiyyah fī al-Maṣādir al-Tārīkhiyyah**, Dār ‘Ālam al-Kutub, Beirut, p. 764.

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upon the definition of the art of inshā (chancery prose) and explained that it is the only craft befitting a seeker of knowledge. After writing the maqāmah, al-Qalqashandī composed the core of his famous book *Ṣubḥ al-a‘shā fī ṣinā‘at al-inshā* and made it a commentary on this maqāmah.⁶

Concerning his death, al-Maqrīzī mentions that he died on Saturday, 10 Jumādā al-Ākhirah 821 AH/1418 CE, at the age of sixty-five.⁷

2. His Works:

Al-Qalqashandī authored many books on the arts, literature, and various sciences, including:

Nihāyat al-arab fī ma‘rifat ansāb al-‘Arab: He wrote it for al-Muqr al-Jamālī Yūsuf al-Umawī, and it was printed at the Riyadh Press in Baghdad (Dār al-Salām).

Ḍaw’ al-ṣubḥ al-musfir wa janā al-dawḥ al-muthmir: An abridgement of *Ṣubḥ al-a‘shā*; the first volume was printed at al-Wā‘iz Press in Cairo in 1424 AH.

Qalā’id al-jumān fī al-ta‘rīf bi-qabā’il ‘Arab al-zamān.⁸

He also wrote smaller works, including:

A commentary on *Jāmi‘ al-mukhtaṣarāt fī furū‘ al-Shāfi‘iyyah*, a book attributed to a shaykh from Egypt known as al-Madlajī.

A commentary on al-Ḥawī al-ṣaghīr fī al-furū‘ by al-Qazwīnī.

Hilyat al-faḍl wa al-karam fī al-mufaḍalah bayna al-sayf wa al-qalam: An epistle he composed for al-Muqr al-Zaynī Abī Yazīd al-Dāwadār al-Zāhirī.

6 - Muḥammad ‘Abd Allāh ‘Inān, *Abū al-‘Abbās al-Qalqashandī wa Kitābuhu Ṣubḥ al-A‘shā*, al-Hay’ah al-Miṣriyyah al-‘Āmmah lil-Kitāb, 1973, p. 13.

7 - al-Maqrīzī, Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī, *Durar al-‘Uqūd al-Farīdah fī Tarājim al-A‘yān al-Mufīdah*, ed. Maḥmūd al-Ḥalīlī, Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2002, vol. 1, p. 313.

8 - ‘Umar Riḍā Kaḥḥālah, *Mu‘jam al-Mu’allifīn, Tarājim Muṣannifī al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyyah*, Mu’assasat al-Risālah, vol. 1, p. 619.

A commentary on the poem Bānat Su'ād by Ka'b ibn Zuhayr, in addition to the aforementioned maqāmah which al-Qalqashandī called al-Kawākib al-durriyyah fī al-manāqib al-badriyyah.⁹

Second: Mention of Tlemcen in al-Qalqashandī's Writings

I. In the Book Ṣubḥ al-a'shā fī ṣinā'at al-inshā

1. Introduction to Ṣubḥ al-a'shā fī ṣinā'at al-inshā:

The book Ṣubḥ al-a'shā fī ma'rifat al-inshā is considered among the best of al-Qalqashandī's works. It comprises fourteen volumes on many arts, including history, literature, and descriptions of countries and kingdoms. It is his greatest encyclopedia, the work for which al-Qalqashandī is known across the ages and by which he is mentioned by most authors. He based its composition on "documents, books, caliphal and sultanic correspondence, various types of official and diplomatic letters, in addition to previous books on epistolography, and many books on geography, history, genealogy, literature, jurisprudence, biographies, and others."¹⁰

As for the motive for its composition, he indicated it by saying:

"...And it was around the year 791 AH, upon my appointment as a scribe of inshā in the noble sultanic courts – may God Almighty magnify their standing, elevate their rank, and strengthen their sultanate – that I composed a maqāmah, building it on the idea that a person must have a craft to which he is attached and a livelihood by which he holds fast, and that writing is the only craft among the professions befitting a seeker of knowledge, and it is not permissible for him to turn away from it to any other. I leaned therein toward preferring and giving precedence to the art of inshā over the art of financial writing and refining it. I pointed out the materials that the scribe of inshā needs, and the path he should follow of the noble course. I included in it the fundamentals of the craft in a way that surpasses and exceeds longer works, and I deposited in it the laws of writing in a way that almost completely masters all its objectives. I indicated in it the manner of my attachment to the ropes of this craft,

9 - Ibid., p. 197.

10 - Ḥamzah 'Abd al-Laṭīf, *al-Qalqashandī fī Kitābihi Ṣubḥ al-A'shā*, al-Mu'assasah al-Miṣriyyah al-'Āmmah, Cairo, p. 41.

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even if I am not fully accomplished in what it requires, and my affiliation with its people, even if I am a stepson in relation to it..."¹¹

The encyclopedia *Ṣubḥ al-a‘shā* consists of six thousand pages, arranged by al-Qalqashandī into an introduction, ten chapters, and a conclusion. In the introduction, he mentions the virtue of writing, explains the meaning of *inshā*, the etiquette of writing, in addition to defining the Chancery, its history from its inception to the author's time, and the qualities of scribes.¹²

In the first article, he discusses what the scribe needs in terms of materials, including intellectual and practical matters. He devotes the second article to routes and kingdoms from the advent of Islam until al-Qalqashandī's time, detailing the affairs of Egypt, Syria, and other neighbouring regions and the roads leading to them. Then, in the third, fourth, and fifth articles, he discusses chancery culture, types of correspondence, and administrative appointments. The sixth article covers religious wills, concessions, releases, memoranda, and transfers. The seventh, eighth, and ninth articles deal with fiefs, oaths, and peace treaties. He devotes the tenth article to the arts of writing. Al-Qalqashandī concludes his book with a conclusion on matters related to the Chancery, such as the postal service, pigeon towers, and their dovecotes, in addition to ice boats, incendiaries, and manoeuvres.¹³

In *Ṣubḥ al-a‘shā fī ṣinā‘at al-inshā*, we find that al-Qalqashandī discusses the state of the Arabic language in various eras, its spread in different countries, including Egypt, Persia, the lands of Africa (*Ifriqiya*), and other regions. He also mentions the reason for the success of Arabic, as it became the language of science, literature, governance, and politics, and above all, the language of Islam and the Holy Qur'an. In addition, the author of *Ṣubḥ al-a‘shā* provides an explanation of the administrative systems that existed in Islamic

11 - al-Qalqashandī, **Ṣubḥ al-A‘shā fī Ṣinā‘at al-Inshā**, vol. 1, Maṭba‘at Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah, 1922, p. 9.

12 - Muḥammad Kamāl al-Dīn ‘Izz al-Dīn, **al-Qalqashandī Mu‘arrikhan**, Dār ‘Ālam al-Kutub, Beirut, p. 35.

13 - Muḥammad Kamāl al-Dīn ‘Izz al-Dīn, **Dirāsāt...**, p. 764–780. [Note: Here, the previous reference is not immediately the same as [12], so I used short title.]

states and describes Egypt from all aspects, especially the Nile. Moreover, this book is considered a distinguished exhibition of the traces of chancery writing from the time Muslims knew the Chancery up to the author's time.¹⁴

Al-Qalqashandī spent a long time composing his book, nearly twenty years, and completed it on Friday, 28 Shawwāl 814 AH. It was published and edited in 1913 CE by the Literary Department of the Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah (Egyptian National Library).¹⁵

Al-Qalqashandī followed a distinguished methodology in his book *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā*, with fluid style, splendid expression, and harmony among topics. He named it thus because it is a light by which to be guided; for *al-a'shā* (the dim-sighted) in Arabic is "the one afflicted with an illness whereby he loses sight when the sun's rays are absent, and the sufferer of this illness does not expect relief except with the rising of the morning light." Thus, this book is like the morning (*ṣubḥ*) for the dim-sighted (*a'shā*).¹⁶

Sources upon which al-Qalqashandī relied

Al-Qalqashandī derived his material from sources whose authors lived in the era in which they wrote, which enhances their value in analyzing political, administrative, financial, military, and judicial systems. These consist of a very large group of sources, difficult to enumerate or fully grasp, as these sources are no less than one hundred, and may exceed this number. Among them were the following:

Dhakhīrat al-kitāb by Ibn Ḥājib al-Nu'mān.

Husn al-tawassul fī ṣinā'at al-tarassul by Shihāb al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-Ḥalabī.

al-Mathal al-sā'ir by Ibn al-Athīr.

al-Ṣinā'atayn by Ibn Hilāl al-'Askarī.

Kitāb Qawānīn al-dawāwīn by Ibn Mammātī.

al-Tadhkirah by Abū al-Faḍl al-Ṣūlī.

Kitāb al-Umm by al-Shāfi'ī.

al-'Ilm wa al-dawāh by Muḥammad ibn 'Alī.

14 - Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Dabbāgh, "Nazarāt Hawla Kitāb Ṣubḥ al-A'shā lil-Qalqashandī", *Majallat Da'wat al-Ḥaqq*, vol. 6, no. 5, 1963, pp. 46–49.

15 - al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-A'shā*, vol. 14, p. 404.

16 - Ibid., vol. 1, p. 10.

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al-Milal wa al-niḥal by al-Shahristānī.
al-‘Iqd al-farīd by Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih.
Adab al-kātib by Ibn Qutaybah.
Ṣinā‘at al-kitābah by Abū Ja‘far al-Naḥḥās.
al-Aḥkām al-sultāniyyah by al-Māwardī.
Faḍā’il al-‘Arab by Ibn Abī ‘Ubaydah.
Nuzhat al-mushtāq by al-Idrīsī.¹⁷

In addition, there were other books whose authors al-Qalqashandī did not mention, such as: al-Rawḍ al-mi‘ṭār, Mawād al-bayān, Rasm al-ma‘mūrah, Tārīkh Ṣafad, al-Qānūn al-hanā’ al-dā’im bi-mawlid Abī al-Qāsim, Tārīkh al-Nīl, Kitāb al-aṭwāl, al-Dār al-multaqī, and other books that the author of Ṣubḥ al-a‘shā needed for every science he mentioned in his work, such as history, geography, literature, writing, genealogy, and other disciplines.¹⁸

2. The Geographical Boundaries of the Kingdom of Tlemcen

Al-Qalqashandī’s (d. 821 AH/1418 CE) treatment of the Central Maghreb in his book Ṣubḥ al-a‘shā fī ṣinā‘at al-inshā represents an extremely important source for understanding the image of the Zayyanid state in Mamluk political and administrative consciousness. The man was not a traditional historian but rather a high-ranking official in the Chancery in Cairo, which allowed him

17 - By the author al-Sharīf Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Idrīsī, born in Ceuta in 493 AH/1100 CE and died around 558 AH/1163 CE. He studied in Cordoba and is considered the greatest Arab geographer of the Middle Ages. His book abounds with accurate information due to his reliance on primary sources written by geographers and travelers before him, in addition to his own observations. He wrote *Nuzhat al-Mushtāq*, in the introduction of which he explained the conditions of countries and the earth's creation, its seas, mountains, distances, its working, plant species, their uses, local crafts, wonders reported about them, the conditions of their inhabitants, and everything related to them. - al-Idrīsī, al-Sharīf Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad, *Nuzhat al-Mushtāq fī Ikhtirāq al-Āfāq*, Maktabat al-Thaqāfah al-Dīniyyah, Cairo, 1994, vol. 1, pp. 6–7.

18 - Muḥammad Kamāl al-Dīn ‘Izz al-Dīn, *Dirāsāt...*, p. 807.

access to official correspondence and diplomatic documents between the Mamluk Sultanate and the kingdoms of the Islamic West.

Consequently, the study of the Central Maghreb in his writings should not be read merely as a historical narrative, but as a reflection of the Mamluk state's vision of the political system in the Islamic West and of the position of the Banū 'Abd al-Wād within regional power balances.

Al-Qalqashandī devoted chapters in the fifth volume of *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā* to the kingdoms of the Maghreb, including the Zayyanid kingdom of Tlemcen, providing a precise description of its borders and political conditions in his time (late eighth century AH / fourteenth century CE). The city of Tlemcen was the capital of the Zayyanid state and its political and civilisational centre of gravity. Al-Qalqashandī transmitted from several geographers descriptions affirming its prosperity. He discusses the kingdom of Tlemcen among the kingdoms of the Maghreb, mentioning that it is bounded on the west by the kingdom of Fez, on the south by the deserts separating the Maghreb from the lands of the Sudan, and on the north by the Roman Sea. Then, quoting from Ibn Khaldūn's *al-'Ibar*, he states that its western border is the Moulouya River, which separates it from the Far Maghreb.¹⁹

Then, quoting Abū al-Fidā'²⁰ in his book *Taqwīm al-buldān*: "... adjacent to the Far Maghreb. Its capital is Tlemcen, [the capital] of the Central Maghreb, east of Fez, at the beginning of the fourth clime,"²¹ according to the ancient geographical division, and he

19 - al-Qalqashandī, **Ṣubḥ al-A'shā**, vol. 5, p. 149.

20 - Abū al-Fidā' is 'Imād al-Dīn Ismā'īl ibn 'Alī ibn Maḥmūd ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Umar ibn Shāhinshāh ibn Ayyūb, an Ayyubid prince and governor of Hama in Syria, a scholar, historian, and geographer who lived in the seventh and eighth centuries AH, and died in 732 AH/1331 CE. He was known for his wide culture in history, literature, and religious fundamentals, as well as his attention to astronomy, medicine, and philosophy. Among his most famous works is **Taqwīm al-Buldān**, considered one of the most important geography books in Islamic heritage; he also authored **al-Mukhtaṣar fī Akhbār al-Bashar**.

21 - al-Qalqashandī, **Ṣubḥ al-A'shā**, vol. 5, p. 150. Abū al-Fidā' 'Imād al-Dīn Ismā'īl ibn Muḥammad, **Taqwīm al-Buldān**,

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considered it the capital of the Central Maghreb. He then quotes Ibn Saʿīd: "... where the longitude is fourteen degrees and forty minutes, and the latitude is thirty-three degrees and twelve minutes." Ibn Saʿīd al-Maghribī also pointed to its connection to the Andalusian sphere through its ports, such as Hunayn and Mustaghānim, which faced major Andalusian cities, reflecting its role in maritime commercial activity, thereby enhancing its regional status.²²

Al-Qalqashandī also relied on the work *Nuzhat al-mushtāq fī ikhtirāq al-āfāq*, in which Muḥammad al-Idrīsī described Tlemcen as a flourishing city containing huge markets, congregational mosques, as well as ancient antiquities indicating its deep-rootedness.²³ Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī mentions in his book *Masālik al-abṣār*, quoting al-Idrīsī: "It has ancient remains, huge markets, congregational mosques, rivers, trees, and many walnut trees. It has apricots resembling in beauty the apricots of Damascus. On its river are watermills. Its river flows into a great pool, a remnant of the ancients, and the sound of its gushing is heard from a distance. Then it flows into another river after passing through gardens, and it bends around its southern and eastern sides, and small ships enter it where it flows into the sea. It is a house of learning, located among the Berber tribes, and a destination for merchants from afar. Its land is fertile in crops and livestock, and it has many fortresses."²⁴

3. Addressing the Political Situation and the Conflict with the Marīnids

The relationship between the Zayyanid state in Tlemcen and the Marīnid state in the Western Maghreb constituted one of the most prominent axes of the political history of the Islamic Maghreb during the seventh and eighth centuries AH. This relationship was complex, combining military conflict, regional rivalry, and sometimes

corrected and printed by Baron MacGuckin de Slane and Professor Renaud, Imprimerie Impériale, 1850, p. 136.

22 - al-Qalqashandī, **Ṣubḥ al-Aʿshā**, vol. 5, p. 150.

23 - al-Idrīsī, **Nuzhat al-Mushtāq**, vol. 1, ed. by a group of researchers, Maktabat al-Thaqāfah al-Dīniyyah, Egypt, p. 250.

24 - Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī, **Masālik al-Aḥṣār fī Mamālik al-Aḥṣār**, vol. 4, ed. by a group of researchers, Markaz Zāyid lil-Turāth wa al-Tārīkh, United Arab Emirates, 2001, pp. 124–125.

temporary appeasement, as each party sought to extend its influence over the Maghrebi sphere.

Al-Qalqashandī addressed these relationships, albeit indirectly, by discussing in his book *Ṣubḥ al-a‘shā* a large number of official and fraternal correspondences between the Mamluk court in Egypt and the rest of the Islamic world, which included mention of many news and events that occurred in the region. Among the most important correspondences that al-Qalqashandī transmitted to us are those that took place between the Mamluk court and the Zayyanid and Marīnid states. Al-Qalqashandī devoted a chapter in his book entitled "On Corresponding with the Ruler of the Central Maghrib, who is the Ruler of Tlemcen"²⁵[²⁵] and another chapter entitled "On the Correspondence Received by the Mamluk al-Nāṣir from the Marīnid Sultan, Ruler of Fez,"²⁶ which included four letters containing mention of the most important events witnessed by the Central and Western Maghreb. Here, we will focus especially on events related to the news of Tlemcen and the Zayyanid state, the most important of which are:

The letter of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Marīnī²⁷ in 737 AH/1337 CE. The importance of this document lies in its mention of historical events and more detailed facts concerning the intensity of the Marīnid-Zayyanid conflict, of which Tlemcen was the theatre for most of its events. It is a copy of a reply received by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn from Sultan Abū al-Ḥasan al-Marīnī – "the good news of the conquest of Béjaïa and victory over Tlemcen" – in which he describes his desire to expand in the Nearer and Central Maghreb. The letter was written in the city of al-Manṣūrah, indicating

25 - al-Qalqashandī, **Ṣubḥ al-A‘shā**, vol. 7, p. 385.

26 - Ibid., vol. 7, p. 386.

27 - Abū al-Ḥasan al-Marīnī is Sultan Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn ‘Uthmān ibn Ya‘qūb ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq, one of the most prominent sultans of the Marīnid state in Morocco during the eighth century AH / fourteenth century CE. He assumed power in 731 AH/1331 CE. His reign was distinguished by the expansion of Marīnid influence in the Central and Far Maghreb and Tunisia. He was also known for his interest in urbanism, learning, and patronage of scholars. His rule ended after a decline in his political and military power, and he died in 752 AH/1351 CE. See al-Salāwī, **al-Istiḳṣā**, vol. 3, pp. 118–119.

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that the correspondence took place after the fall of Tlemcen. The text of the letter as quoted by al-Qalqashandī states: "... We have written to you ... from al-Manṣūrah of 'Tlemcen' – may God Almighty protect it – to maintain correspondence with speedy news, for the most recent and freshest news to be exchanged and gifted is what concerns the matter of the disobedient one who killed his father, and the condition of the region of Tlemcen and its kingdoms is in a noble position..."²⁸

This document also includes a description of the nature of the relationship between the Banū 'Abd al-Wād and the Banū Marīn, stating: "That is because his ancestors, the Banū Zayyān, had taken possession of this kingdom in ancient times, and there continued between them and my ancestors, who ruled the kingdom of the Far Maghreb, battles that led them to death and made them taste lethal poison. They would abandon conflict and return to reconciliation, then they would soon break their pledge and not refrain from treachery..."²⁹

The document then addresses the long Marīnid siege of Tlemcen led by Yūsuf ibn Ya'qūb. After Yūsuf ibn Ya'qūb al-Marīnī had firmly established his rule after his father in 687 AH/1286 CE, he ceded Andalusian cities to the Banū al-Aḥmar (Nasrids) and then devoted himself to fighting the Banū Zayyān.³⁰

It is worth noting that the cause of the conflict was that Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf al-Marīnī had a son named Abū 'Āmir, whom he appointed governor of Marrakech. He rebelled there and proclaimed himself ruler at the instigation of his minister Ibn 'Aṭw. His father marched against him, so he fled towards Tlemcen in 688 AH/1289 CE. Sultan Abū Sa'īd 'Uthmān al-Zayyānī granted him refuge and honoured his stay. Then his father forgave him and returned him to Fez, but he did not forgive his minister and demanded that the

28 - al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-A'shā*, vol. 8, p. 89.

29 - Ibid., vol. 8, p. 91.

30 - Ibid., vol. 8, p. 91. See also: Bil'araj 'Abd al-Raḥmān, "Qirā'ah fī al-'Alāqāt al-Siyāsiyyah bayna Dawlat Banī Zayyān wa al-Mamālīk min khilāl al-Murāsālāt al-Diblūmāsiyyah, bayna al-Qarnayn 7-9 H/13-15 M", *Majallat al-Ḥikmah lil-Dirāsāt al-Tārīkhiyyah*, vol. 2, no. 4, June 2014, p. 164.

Zayyanid sultan hand him over, but he refused. Thus, Abū Ya‘qūb decided to invade Tlemcen and laid a long siege to it, which ended with the construction of the city of al-Manṣūrah. He continued to launch raids around the country, causing much damage, and took over the cities dependent on Tlemcen, including: Nedroma, Hunayn, Oran, Mustaghānim, Cherchell, Barshaq, Māzūnah, al-Wansharīs, and all the lands of the Banū ‘Abd al-Wād, Tūjīn, and Maghrāwah.³¹

There is disagreement over the duration of the siege. The author of *Ṣubḥ al-a‘shā* and Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-‘Umarī both state that the siege lasted nine years,³² while most Maghrebi sources agree that the Marīnid siege of Tlemcen lasted eight years and three months – among them the historian ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Khaldūn, Ibn Abī Zar‘ al-Fāsī, and the author of *al-Istiḳṣā*, Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad ibn Khālīd al-Nāṣirī – whereas Ibn Marzūq specifies nine years. During this siege, the inhabitants of Tlemcen suffered extreme hunger and fear, and "they experienced such hardship as no nation had ever endured; they were forced to eat carrion, cats, and rats, until they ate the dismembered limbs of dead people." The siege continued until Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf was killed treacherously by his servant in 706 AH/1307 CE, whereupon Tlemcen was relieved of the severity of the siege following the Marīnids’ departure to their lands.³³

The letter then refers to Abū Tāshfīn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān I ascending the throne and assuming sole authority after he had killed his father Abū Ḥammū Mūsā I³⁴ in 718 AH/1318 CE, his refusal to conciliate with the Marīnids, and his exploitation of Abū Sa‘īd al-Marīnī’s preoccupation with Andalusian affairs to continue the policy of his predecessors in expanding eastward toward the Central Maghreb and seizing areas of influence. He thus invaded the territories of Banū Tūjīn and Maghrāwah, then marched east toward the territories of the Banū Ḥafṣ, besieging Béjaïa in 719 AH/1319

31 - Ibn Khaldūn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, **Dīwān al-Mubtada’ wa al-Khabar fī Tārīkh al-‘Arab wa al-Barbar wa man ‘Āṣarahum min Dhawī al-Sha’n al-Akbar**, vol. 7, ed. Khalīl Shaḥādah, rev. Suhayl Zakkār, Dār al-Fikr lil-Ṭibā‘ah wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī‘, Beirut, Lebanon, 2000, pp. 127–128.

32 al-Qalqashandī, **Ṣubḥ al-A‘shā**, vol. 8, p. 91.

33 - Ibn Khaldūn, **Dīwān**, vol. 7, p. 130.

34 - al-Qalqashandī, **Ṣubḥ al-A‘shā**, vol. 8, p. 94.

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CE, and renewed the attack in 721 AH/1321 CE toward both Béjaïa and Constantine, but they resisted him.³⁵

It is certain that the Ḥafṣids did not stand idly by in the face of the Zayyanid advance. The Ḥafṣid sultan sent an embassy requesting assistance from Abū Saʿīd al-Marīnī (710–731 AH/1310–1331 CE) to repel the Zayyanid attacks, in exchange for a political marriage between one of the Ḥafṣid princesses and Abū al-Ḥasan, son of Sultan Abū Saʿīd al-Marīnī. The Marīnids did not hesitate to accept the proposal; rather, they saw the alliance as a favourable opportunity to destroy the Zayyanid state and annex Tlemcen to their kingdom in Fez. Abū Saʿīd al-Marīnī dispatched an embassy to Abū Tāshfīn calling on him to cease attacking Ifrīqiyyā and lift the siege of Béjaïa, but the Zayyanid sultan met their request with refusal and challenged the Banū Marīn in their own domains.³⁶

It should be noted that death overtook the Marīnid sultan Abū Saʿīd in 731 AH/1331 CE before he could react against the Banū Zayyān. However, as soon as Sultan Abū al-Ḥasan assumed the caliphate after his father, he prepared an army and marched from Fez in 732 AH/1332 CE, and sent reinforcements to his Ḥafṣid in-laws in Béjaïa. The Ḥafṣids were able to demolish the military base that Abū Tāshfīn had built near Béjaïa and lift the siege, and the Zayyanid forces withdrew beyond their borders.³⁷

After Abū al-Ḥasan put down his brother's rebellion and consolidated his authority, he marched with his army in 735 AH/1335 CE toward the Central Maghreb, overrunning many cities along the way, including Oujda, Nedroma, and Hunayn. Hardly had the year 736 AH/1336 CE passed when the Banū Marīn took possession of the territories of the Zayyanid state and besieged Tlemcen when they could not enter it. Sultan Abū al-Ḥasan rebuilt the city of al-Manṣūrah, making it his headquarters and that of his army, and

35 - al-Tansī, **Tārīkh Banī Zayyān Muqtaṭaf min Naẓm al-Durr wa al-ʿUqyān fī Sharaf Banī Zayyān**, ed. Maḥmūd Būʿayyād, Dār Mūfam lil-Nashr, Algeria, 2011, p. 143.

36 - Yaḥyā ibn Khaldūn, **Bughyat al-Ruwwād fī Dhikr al-Mulūk min Banī ʿAbd al-Wād**, vol. 1, ed. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Ḥājiyāt, Dār al-Ṭibāʿah al-Shaʿbiyyah lil-Jaysh, Algeria, 2007, p. 218.

37 - Ibn Khaldūn, **Dīwān**, vol. 7, pp. 146–147.

through it tightened the noose around Tlemcen, using the most advanced military machinery of that period, such as trebuchets. The siege lasted for more than thirty months, during which the Banū Zayyān put up fierce resistance until the Marīnids discovered the water source that supplied the city and cut it off, leading to the collapse and retreat of the Banū Zayyān. In late Ramaḍān 737 AH/1337 CE, Sultan Abū al-Ḥasan managed to storm Tlemcen and eliminate Sultan Abū Tāshfīn and his entourage. Thus, the star of the Zayyanid state faded for a full twelve years, as the Central Maghreb became politically subordinate to the Marīnid state. What Abū al-Ḥasan al-Marīnī and his Marīnid ancestors had aspired to – absolute leadership over the Zanātah tribes – was achieved.³⁸ This situation continued until the advent of Abū Ḥammū Mūsā II.

Thus, in examining this letter, we see details of many events that occurred in the Islamic Maghreb, such as the entry of Tlemcen and the bloody manner in which it was done, in addition to the praise directed to al-Ḥasan after he granted security to everyone from the Banū ‘Abd al-Wād who surrendered to him. It also informed us of the manner in which the Zayyanid sultan Abū Tāshfīn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān I was killed.

Since Abū al-Ḥasan al-Marīnī’s seizure of Tlemcen, the Zayyanid state disappeared from the political map of the Islamic Maghreb, and this continued during the days of his son Abū ‘Inān Fāris, i.e., between 737 and 760 AH/1337–1360 CE, except for the transitional period marked by the return of Abū Thābit³⁹. Then its features were renewed after the death of Abū ‘Inān and the coming of Abū Ḥammū Mūsā II to power. However, we have not found among the available documents and sources any correspondence between him and the Mamluks – a matter that is difficult to explain, especially as Sultan Abū Ḥammū II, the reviver of the Zayyanid state, was interested in consolidating his rule and reviving the state regionally and internationally. The situation continued until power passed to the Circassians (Burjī Mamluks) in Cairo,⁴⁰ whereupon sources record for us the return of an atmosphere of friendly relations. After Abū Zayyān assumed power in Tlemcen – after being released

38 - Ibid., vol. 7, p. 146.

39 - Ibid., vol. 7, p. 161.

40 - Ibid., vol. 7, p. 161

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by the Banū Marīn during the reign of Abū Fāris, his rule lasting between 796 and 801 AH/1394–1399 CE – he contemporaneous with the reign of Sultan al-Zāhir Barqūq, the first of the Circassian kings. The latter sent a gift to the kings of the Maghreb, including the Zayyanid sultan Abū Zayyān Muḥammad ibn Abī Ḥammū in 799 AH/1397 CE, attempting to gain support for his rule and to improve the atmosphere of friendly relations after eliminating the authority of the Baḥrī Mamluks. Abū Zayyān responded with another gift consisting of thirty saddled horses and fabrics, along with a poem of his own composition praising al-Zāhir Barqūq.⁴¹

II. Ma'āthir al-ināfah fī ma'ālim al-khilāfah

1. Introduction to Ma'āthir al-ināfah fī ma'ālim al-khilāfah:

The subject of this book revolves around the Islamic Caliphate, as is evident from its title and content. Al-Qalqashandī wrote it after *Al-Ṣubḥ al-a'shā fī šinā'at al-inshā* and *Nihāyat al-arab fī ansāb al-'Arab*. He indicated the reason for its composition, stating that he wished to serve the high treasury, saying: "I desired to serve its high treasuries by composing a work on the landmarks of the Caliphate, encompassing the subtleties of its truths, undertaking the mention of its elegant necessities and its appendages, locally adorning it with the jewels of Al-Mu'taḍid's merits, by which his status is elevated, his value becomes precious, and his remembrance is raised high. May this composition, by being attributed to him, become as proverbial in the horizons, and may his noble merits immortalise his remembrance throughout the ages and the succession of dynasties. I have named it Ma'āthir al-ināfah fī ma'ālim al-khilāfah, even if I am not of this matter's kind nor a knight of this field. Rather, the Commander of the Faithful – may God make his face glad with his existence – is more knowledgeable of that and more worthy and fitting of its understanding."⁴²

41 - Bil'araj 'Abd al-Raḥmān, previous article, p. 170.

42 - al-Qalqashandī, *Ma'āthir al-Ināfah fī Ma'ālim al-Khilāfah*, vol. 1, ed. 'Abd al-Sattār Aḥmad Farrāj, Dār 'Ālam al-Kutub, Beirut, p. 8.- ouahrani kaddour, Manhajiyyat al-kitābah al-tārīkhiyyah 'inda al-Qalqashandī min khilāl kitābihi Ma'āthir al-ināfah fī ma'ālim al-khilāfah (The Methodology of Historical Writing according to al-

The value of the book is evident from the value of the subject around which it revolves, because the Caliphate in Islam is the greatest religious institution, defining the system of governance and establishing its foundations and methods. Al-Qalqashandī divided his book into an introduction, seven chapters (abwāb), and a conclusion, preceded by a brief preamble.⁴³

The Preamble: In it, al-Qalqashandī mentions the reasons for composing the book, namely, to highlight the virtue of the caliphal office and its importance in elevating the word of Islam, after praising Caliph al-Mu‘taḍid and how God exalted Egypt’s status through his existence. He also reviews the development of the Caliphate until its arrival in Egypt.

The Introduction: He discusses the meaning of the Caliphate, who is called caliph, who is eligible for the Caliphate, how to attribute oneself to the caliph, and the kunyas and titles applied to him. The author divided this part into two sections (faṣl). The first section begins with the meaning of the Caliphate linguistically and terminologically. The second section of the introduction he devoted to the kunyas and titles applied to the caliph.⁴⁴

Chapter One (al-Bāb al-awwal): On the obligation of investing the Imamate (caliphate) to those who undertake it, explaining the conditions of the Imamate without which it is invalid, the ways in which it is concluded, what the caliph owes to the subjects, what the subjects owe to the caliph, and what causes the caliph’s dismissal and removal from the Imamate. Al-Qalqashandī divided this chapter into six sections:

Section One (al-Faṣl al-awwal): On the obligation of investing the Imamate to those who undertake it; others held that it is only obligatory by divine law (shar‘) and reason has no bearing on it.

Qalqashandī through his Book *Ma’āthir al-ināfah fī ma‘ālim al-khilāfah*). PhD diss., University of Oran, 2014, p. 113.

43 - Qalqashandī through his Book *Ma’āthir al-ināfah fī ma‘ālim al-khilāfah*), PhD diss., University of Oran, 2014, p. 120.

44 - al-Qalqashandī, **Ma’āthir al-Ināfah fī Ma‘ālim al-Khilāfah**, vol. 1, ed. ‘Abd al-Sattār Aḥmad Farrāj, Dār ‘Ālam al-Kutub, Beirut, p. 8.

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Section Two: On the conditions of the Imamate; he relied on the Shāfi'ī position in this, as they stipulated thirteen conditions for the Imam for its validity.

Section Three: On explaining the ways in which the Caliphate is concluded.

Section Four: Containing what the caliph owes to the subjects.

Section Five: On what the subjects owe to the caliph.

Section Six: On what causes the caliph's dismissal, which includes cases such as abdication and removal.

Section Seven: On the functions that used to be issued by the caliph in former times, and what is now issued by him in terms of delegating the sultanate to the sultan.⁴⁵

Chapter Two (al-Bāb al-thānī): "On mentioning those who held the Caliphate from the beginning of Islam down to our time, detailing the situation of each caliph among them and the governors of the eastern and western regions of Islam in his time, the events and liberties that occurred in his days, explaining the seats of the Caliphate and the provinces they comprised, the arrangement of the Caliphate as it was in ancient times, and mentioning the famous individuals who claimed the Caliphate in some regions and the invalidity of the suspicion of their claims." This chapter contains three sections. Section One: On those who held the Caliphate from the beginning of Islam to al-Qalqashandī's time. Section Two: On the seats of the caliphs, the realms that the Caliphate comprised, explaining the arrangement of the Caliphate and its symbols, and how the caliph invests kings and the sultanate. Section Three: Including famous individuals who claimed the Caliphate in some regions.⁴⁶

Chapter Three (al-Bāb al-thālith): "On mention of what is written for caliphs in terms of pledges of allegiance (bay'āt) and covenants ('uhūd) in ancient and modern times." It contains two sections: Section One: On pledges of allegiance (bay'āt), which are written for those who assume the Caliphate through the allegiance of the people of loosening and binding (ahl al-ḥall wa al-'aqd) without a covenant from the previous caliph. Section Two: On what is written

45 - Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 28–80.

46 - al-Qalqashandī, *Ma'āthir al-Ināfah*, vol. 2, pp. 1–259.

for caliphs in terms of covenants ('uhūd), which are written for those who assume the Caliphate by a covenant from the preceding caliph.⁴⁷

Chapter Four (al-Bāb al-rābi'): "On what used to be written on behalf of caliphs concerning the appointments of kings of provinces and their princes, appointments of ministers, judges, leadership of prayers, the syndicate of those with noble lineages, and all other religious and chancery appointments, and what is written about them." It contains two sections: Section One: On what is written on behalf of caliphs in terms of covenants for kings, which is continuous from what used to be written about them in terms of appointments up to al-Qalqashandī's time. Section Two: On what is written on behalf of caliphs for those other than kings.

Chapter Five (al-Bāb al-khāmis): "On what used to be written on behalf of caliphs concerning fiefs (iqṭā'āt), the conversion of years, and imposing upon the People of the Dhimmah the conditions incumbent upon them." It contains three sections: Section One: On what used to be written about them concerning fiefs; their custom was to write: "This is a document from the servant of God, So-and-So, the Imam, the son of So-and-So." Section Two: On what is written concerning the conversion of the kharāj (land-tax) years on behalf of the caliphs, which is to write transferring the solar year to the lunar year in name but not in reality, to reconcile them and remove ambiguity concerning them. Section Three: On what used to be written on behalf of the caliphs concerning imposing upon the People of the Dhimmah what is incumbent upon them according to the conditions of the dhimmah contract and holding them to it.

Chapter Six (al-Bāb al-sādis): "On correspondence issued by caliphs and heirs apparent to the Caliphate, and books issued by kings, ministers, and the like to them." Section One covers books issued by caliphs and heirs apparent. Section Two covers books issued by kings.⁴⁸

47 - Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 260–353.

48 Ibid., vol. 3. Kaddour Ouahrani, *Manhajyyat al-kitābah al-tārīkhiyyah 'inda al-Qalqashandī min khilāl kitābihi Ma'āthir al-ināfah fī ma'ālim al-khilāfah* (The Methodology of Historical Writing according to al-Qalqashandī through his Book Ma'āthir al-ināfah fī ma'ālim al-khilāfah), PhD diss., University of Oran, 2014, p. 120.

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Chapter Seven (al-Bāb al-sābi‘): Mention of firsts attributed to caliphs, and curiosities, pleasantries, and marvels pertaining to them. It contains two sections: Section One: Firsts attributed to them. The first to receive the pledge of allegiance as caliph was Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq after the death of the Prophet (peace be upon him); this has already been mentioned in Chapter One in the discussion of the ways in which the Caliphate is concluded. Section Two: Mention of curiosities, pleasantries, and marvels pertaining to the caliphs.⁴⁹

Conclusion (Khātimah): On what specifically concerns Caliph al-Mu‘taḍid, for whom the book was composed. It contains two sections: Section One on his lineage, and Section Two on mention of some of his merits and attributes.⁵⁰

2. The Most Important Historical Events of Tlemcen through the Book Ma’āthir al-ināfah fī ma’ālim al-khilāfah

Al-Qalqashandī addressed Tlemcen in his book Ma’āthir al-ināfah fī ma’ālim al-khilāfah in multiple places within his discussion in Chapter Two: "On mentioning those who held the Caliphate from the beginning of Islam down to our time, detailing the situation of each caliph among them and the governors of the eastern and western regions of Islam in his time, the events and liberties that occurred in his days, explaining the seats of the Caliphate and the provinces they comprised, the arrangement of the Caliphate as it was in ancient times, and mentioning the famous individuals who claimed the Caliphate in some regions and the invalidity of the suspicion of their claims,"⁵¹ following the chronological sequence of events in the Central Maghreb according to the caliph who held the Caliphate in that period. He discusses its conquest by Abū al-Muhājir Dīnār,⁵² then Tlemcen's entry into the obedience of Idrīs al-Akbar (the Elder), and mentions the laying out of its congregational mosque, saying: "...Tlemcen in its early days was in the hands of Muḥammad ibn Khazar ibn Ṣawlāt, the emir of Zanātah. Then it entered the obedience of Idrīs al-Akbar, who took possession of it in the year 174 AH, and

49 - Ibid., vol. 3, pp. 334–374.

50 - Ibid., vol. 3, pp. 375–381.

51 - al-Qalqashandī, *Ma’āthir al-Ināfah*, vol. 1, p. 81.

52 - Ibid., vol. 1, p. 115.

laid out its congregational mosque..."⁵³ He then discusses the arrival of Idrīs al-Aṣghar (the Younger) in Tlemcen, the renovation of its mosque, and his residence there for three years, saying: "Then he appointed his brother Sulaymān ibn ‘Abd Allāh over it, and he remained there until Idrīs al-Akbar died. His son Idrīs al-Aṣghar assumed the kingship after him, and came to Tlemcen in the year 199 AH. He renovated its mosque, repaired its pulpit, and stayed there for three years, and appointed over it his cousin Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān..."⁵⁴ He then continues to recount the history of Tlemcen until the extinction of the Idrīsid state and the region's entry into the obedience of the ‘Ubaydids (Fātimids), mentioning: "Tlemcen was in the hands of al-Ḥasan ibn Abī al-‘Īsā ibn ‘Īsā ibn Idrīs ibn Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān. When the mission of ‘Ubayd Allāh al-Mahdī al-Fātimī appeared in the Maghreb, his commander Mūsā ibn Abī al-‘Āqibah advanced to Tlemcen and took it from al-Ḥasan ibn Abī al-‘Īsā in the year 219 AH, and it remained in the hands of the agents of al-Mahdī until the year 340 AH..."⁵⁵ Then he discusses the transfer of Tlemcen to the Banū Zīrī and then to the Banū Lamtūnah in the time of Yūsuf ibn Tāshfīn.⁵⁶

After that, al-Qalqashandī moves on to indicate the entry of Tlemcen under the obedience of the Almohads and the beginning of the emergence of the Banū ‘Abd al-Wād from Zanātah until their control over the Central Maghreb and the establishment of the Zayyanid state.⁵⁷

Al-Qalqashandī devoted a wide space to Tlemcen and the Central Maghreb during the Zayyanid state in this chapter compared to previous states. He mentions the assumption of power by Yaghmurāsan ibn Zayyān and the major events that accompanied it until his death in 681 AH.⁵⁸ Then his son ‘Uthmān ibn Yaghmurāsan assumed power until his death in 703 AH.

Al-Qalqashandī also addresses the long Marīnid siege of Tlemcen led by Yūsuf ibn Ya‘qūb, the ascension of Abū Tāshfīn

53 - Ibid., vol. 1, p. 202.

54 - Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 207–208.

55 - Ibid., vol. 1, p. 224.

56 - Ibid., vol. 2, p. 23.

57 - Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 100–106.

58 - Ibid., vol. 2, p. 131.

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‘Abd al-Raḥmān I to the throne and his assumption of sole authority after killing his father Abū Ḥammū Mūsā I in 718 AH. Then he moves on to discuss Sultan Abū al-Ḥasan’s ability to storm Tlemcen, take control of it, and eliminate Sultan Abū Tāshfīn and his entourage in late Ramaḍān 737 AH.⁵⁹ Al-Qalqashandī also mentions the fall of Tlemcen into the hands of the Marīnid sultan Abū ‘Inān in 753 AH, and then its recovery by Abū Ḥammū Mūsā II in 760 AH.⁶⁰

Conclusion

In conclusion, we deduce from the above the following points:

Al-Qalqashandī’s treatment of the Central Maghreb in *Ṣubḥ al-a’shā* and *Ma’āthir al-ināfah* is not to be read merely as a description of the region, but rather it shows how the Mamluk state viewed the structure, influence, and status of the Zayyanid sultanate in the region.

It also shows that Tlemcen was an important political centre playing a role in regional balances, which made it a subject of interest in official correspondence and diplomatic letters.

Tlemcen appears in al-Qalqashandī’s writings in a partial and reduced image, as he focused on political events while local social, economic, and cultural aspects are absent.

He fails to elucidate the complexity of the historical and political reality of the region, especially since the time period he addressed is full of important political events.

Al-Qalqashandī’s reliance on transmission from other sources.

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59 - al-Qalqashandī, **Ma’āthir**, vol. 2, p. 143.

60 - Ibid., vol. 2, p. 165.

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