



Sheikh Al-Maghili Al-Tlemceni (Died 909 AH/1505 C.E.) An Overview Of His Scientific Contributions, Role And Methodology In Sufism

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Abstract:

This scientific article discusses two important aspects of the personality of the scholar and polymath Sheikh Muhammad bin Abdul Karim Al-Mughili Al-Tlemceni, who died in 909 AH (1505 CE). The first aspect is an attempt to introduce his works, which cover various fields of knowledge and sciences, by referring to published, unpublished and lost manuscripts. The second aspect presents the Sheikh's connection with the Qadiriyya Sufi order, highlighting his role in spreading this order in the Tuat region, along with the methodology he followed in Sufism and the impact he left behind, which was later transmitted by his followers in both Morocco and Western Sudan.

Keywords: Sheikh Al-Maghili Al-Tlemceni, Sufism, Qadiriyya Order, Tuat.

Introduction:

The name of Sheikh Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Abdul Karim bin Muhammad Al-Maghili Al-Tlemceni, who died in 909 AH (1505 CE), is closely associated with his firm and courageous stance against the Jews who settled in the oases of the Tuat region in the central Moroccan Sahara, represented today by the Adrar region and its surrounding areas in Algeria. He waged war against them and expelled them after issuing a fatwa that was considered one of the most important intellectual issues of the time and attracted the attention of prominent scholars in the Islamic Maghreb, who were divided between supporters and opponents of his position.

His name is also associated with his considerable efforts at advocacy and reform in various regions of the Western Sudan, where he served as a teacher, judge and political advisor to most of its princes. His important role in these vast lands is evidenced by his scholarly works, which have survived and are widely distributed in various African manuscript collections and libraries.

Undoubtedly, these intellectual legacies are a true expression of this scholar's brilliance, reflecting the breadth of his culture and intellectual interests, with Sufism being just one of the many interests that shaped his personality. While Sheikh Al-Maghili left behind only one book - considered lost - that fulfils our need to understand his philosophy and views on Sufism, entitled "Warning the Unaware Against the Deception of Those Who Claim the Stations of the Gnostics", his other scholarly works, although written in different fields, contain numerous ideas and references that reveal aspects of his Sufism and show how his thought was intertwined with the spirit of his time and the culture of the scholars and sheikhs who influenced his development as one of the Sufis of central Morocco.

From this perspective, our work in this research paper entitled "Sheikh Al-Maghili Al-Tlemceni (died 909 AH/1505 CE): An Overview of His Scientific Contributions, Role and Methodology in Sufism" will be an attempt to introduce this figure by presenting the titles of his works, indicating the fields in which they were written, and detailing the date and place of publication for the works studied and verified, as well as noting the surviving manuscripts and their locations, alongside highlighting those that are lost. In addition, we will provide a brief overview of the spread of Sufism and its prominent figures in central Morocco, particularly in the Tuat region, while examining Sheikh Al-Maghili's role and methodology in Sufism and discussing his attitude towards some contemporary scholars and Sufis, concluding with a reflection on the impact and resonance of his Sufism in sub-Saharan Africa.

2. Overview of the intellectual and scientific legacy of Sheikh Al-Maghili:

Sheikh Al-Maghili left behind a rich and varied intellectual legacy, characterised by brevity in the treatment of various subjects, with more than twenty works in various fields of both traditional and rational sciences. These include fields such as exegesis (tafsir), theology (aqeedah), monotheism (tawhid), Maliki jurisprudence (fiqh), hadith and its sciences, logic, rhetoric, literature, political science and ethics¹.

Among his available and published works, most of which are in Islamic systems, we find the book "Questions of the Water Carriers and Answers of Al-Mughili", edited by Professor Abdelkader Zbaidi and published by the National Company for Publishing and Distribution in Algeria in 1974. It was republished in 1989 by the National Book Foundation in Algeria as part of his book "Arab Civilisation and European Influence in Sub-Saharan West Africa". This work has been translated into French and English and is on the subject of legitimate government.

Another important work is "A Message to Every Muslim and Muslimah", edited by Professor Rabih Bounar and published by the National Book Foundation in Algeria in 1968, although it was incorrectly titled "The Lantern of Souls in the Foundations of Prosperity". Its subject matter falls within the Islamic systems concerning the dhimmi (protected) status of Jews.

His treatise on "Imamate" was first published in brief in the book "Imam Al-Mughili and His Influence on Islamic Governance in the Middle Ages in Nigeria" by Professor Adam Abdullah Al-

¹ Ahmed Baba al-Tinbukti, Nail Al-Ibtihaj Bitatriz Addibadj, edited by Ali Omar, Cairo: Library of Religious Culture, 1st edition, 2004, vol. 2, p-p. 264-268.

Alluri, published by Dar Al-Halabi in Cairo in 1974. It was republished under the title “Consultation of Sudan”: One of the Jurists of Tuat and Tlemcen”, edited by Professor Ahmed Al-Alami Hamdan, in a special issue of the Faculty of Arts magazine in Fez dedicated to Moroccan-African relations in 1989. It was also reprinted under a different title, “The Crown of Religion: What is Required of Kings and Sultans,” edited by Professor Muhammad Khair Ramadan Yusuf in 1994 by Dar Ibn Hazm in Beirut, which focuses on legitimate governance and political literature.

Finally, his message “On What is Permissible for Rulers in Restraining People from the Forbidden” was first published in English by the Orientalist Richard Bellamer in 1917. It was later republished by Al-Alluri in 1965 in his book “A Brief History of Nigeria”, printed by Dar Maktabat Al-Hayat in Beirut. This work has been reprinted several times in various other books and serves as a guide for judges and leaders among Muslims.

Sheikh Al-Maghili has many works that have survived in manuscript form and are preserved in various major libraries and public and private collections. Among them are the following

- “On What Muslims Must Avoid Regarding the Infidels and the Obligations of the Dhimmi Concerning Tribute and Humiliation”, of which there is a copy in the Algerian National Library in Al-Hamma (under number: 3392) and another copy in the Kousam Library in the province of Adrar¹. It was printed twice in Fès as a lithographic edition, but because of the rarity of these printed copies, it remains in fact a manuscript. This work is categorised under Islamic systems regarding the dhimmi status of Jews.

- The Gift of the Bestower in Returning Thought to the Truth”, part of which was published by Professor Adam Al-Alluri in his book “Imam Al-Mughili and His Influence on Islamic Governance”². A manuscript copy, with a brief commentary by the author, exists in the General Library in Rabat (under the number 2231D), and another copy is in the Sheikh Al-Maghili Museum in the province of Adrar. The work is a poetic treatise on logic.

- “Reply to the Mu’tazilites”, which falls under the category of theology and monotheism.

- The Lantern of the Souls in the Foundations of Prosperity, which focuses on theology and Sufism, with one copy found in a collection in the General Library in Rabat (under number: 266D) and another copy in the Kousam Library in the province of Adrar.

-The book “Revisions with Al-Sanusi”, which deals with theology and Sufism, has a copy in the Qarawiyyin Library in Fès (under number 1531).

¹ - Mohammad Hajji, *The Intellectual Movement in Morocco during the Saadian Era*, Rabat: Dar al-Maghrib for Publishing, Translation and Publication, 1976, vol. 2, p. 268.

² - Adam Abdullah al-Alouri, *Imam al-Maghili and His Influence on Islamic Governance in Medieval Nigeria**, Cairo: Al-Halabi Library and Press, 1st edition, 1974, p-p. 25-28.

- The Decisive Argument in Returning Thought to the Truth', which is a work on logic that Al-Mughili positioned as a counterpart to Ibn Rushd's 'Fasl al-Maqal'. A copy can be found in the General Library in Rabat.

- The Obligatory in the Science of Inheritance, which deals with the science of inheritance.

These manuscripts illustrate the breadth of Al-Mughili's contributions to various fields, particularly Islamic jurisprudence, logic and theology.

Sheikh Al-Maghili composed many poems and poetic compositions, including

- "The Meemiyah in Praise of the Prophet Muhammad" and a poem about the Jews of Tuat and their followers. Copies of these works exist in a manuscript collection at the General Library in Rabat (under number 683 Q).

- "The Means of Salvation through the People of Supplication", published by Professor Moulay Al-Tahami in his book series "The Nawat Series": Highlighting Personalities of Scholars and Righteous Figures from the Tuat Region". This work focuses on Sufism¹.

As for his lost works, we note the following:

- A book on the exegesis of the Qur'an entitled "The Illuminating Moon in the Sciences of Exegesis".

- A collection of works on Maliki jurisprudence, including "The Sufficient Guide", in which he elaborated on the Mukhtasar Khalil, and "The Crown of the Guide", which is a commentary on Al-Mughni.

- Other important titles in the field of jurisprudence include "Summary of the Key" and its commentary.

- In the field of Hadith and its sciences, he wrote "The Key to Understanding in the Science of Hadith".

- He also wrote an important work on theology and Sufism entitled "Warning the Unaware Against the Deception of Those Who Claim the Stations of the Gnostics"

- In addition, he produced several lost works in logic, such as "Commentary on the Al-Jamal al-Khunji" and "The Introduction to the Commentary on the Al-Jamal".

- Another important lost work is 'A Catalogue of His Narrations', which documents the names of his teachers and the sciences he learnt from them.

These contributions reflect the significant breadth of Sheikh Al-Maghili's intellectual legacy in various fields of knowledge.

¹ Moulay al-Tohami, Series of Insights into the Personalities of Scholars and Righteous Individuals from the Tuat Region, Adrar: Modern Press for Printing Arts, 1st edition, 2005, p-p. 50-54

3. An insight into the spread of Sufism and Zawiyas in Morocco and Tuat:

Sufism began to spread in Islamic Morocco towards the end of the Almohad rule, and experienced a significant expansion in the Sahara and Western Sudan in subsequent eras. This spread was facilitated by the important trade exchanges in the region, as well as cultural interactions between the urban centres of Islamic Morocco, especially Tlemcen and Fez, and the Niger basin during the reigns of the Zayyanids, Marinids and later the Wattasids, and during the Ottoman period under the rulers of Algeria¹.

The Zawiyas (Sufi lodges) played a crucial role in the spread of Islam and the Arabic language after the first Islamic conquests, due to their numerous establishments. These zawiyas were founded by figures from Sufi religious orders and jurists. The scholars and notable figures of the Tuat were particularly known for establishing various zawiyas that served multiple purposes, combining worship and education. This dual function accelerated the spread of Islam and the Arabic language among palace dwellers and non-Arab tribes².

Zawiyas were important scientific institutions in Islamic Morocco. Not only were they places where Sufis gathered for worship, commemoration and recitation of the Koran, but they also attracted students in search of knowledge, who were sometimes allowed to live there. As a result, many waqfs (endowments) were established to effectively support their functions³.

The Zawiya of Sidi Sulayman is considered to be the first zawiya established in the Tuat region, founded by the righteous saint Sulayman bin Ali Al-Sharif Al-Idrisi, who settled in the Qsar of Ouled Washen around 605 AH (1208 CE)⁴. Among the prominent zawiyas in Tuat during the ninth century AH (15th century CE) is the zawiya of Sheikh Al-Miniyari, named after its founder Abu Yahya Muhammad Al-Miniyari, who belonged to a prominent Arab tribe in the land of Al-Telul Ahmiyan. He established his zawiya in Tamantit after settling there in 815 AH (1412 CE) and served as a judge over all of Tuat. His zawiya became a centre of knowledge, welcoming scholars and students alike. It was here that Sheikh Al-Maghili studied after his arrival in Tuat under the tutelage of Sheikh Abu Zakariya Yahya bin Yadir Al-Attiki Al-Tlemceni (died 877 AH/1473 CE)⁵.

¹- Mohammad Houtia, *The Kunta Tribe Between the Tuat and Azawad Regions: A Historical Study Through Local Documents from the 12th and 13th Centuries AH / 18th and 19th Centuries CE*, Master's Thesis in Contemporary History, supervised by Dr. Nasser al-Din Saidouni, (defended at the Institute of History, University of Algiers, academic year 1992/1993), p. 154.

²- Abdullah Abbas, *The Civilizational Role of the Tuat Region and Its Cultural Influences in Western Sudan Between the 9th and 10th Centuries AH / 15th and 16th Centuries CE*, Master's thesis in Medieval History, supervised by Dr. Bashar Qouider (defended at the History Department, Faculty of Humanities - University of Algiers, academic year 2000-2001), p. 72.

³- Kamal Abu Mustafa, *Aspects of Social, Economic, Religious and Scientific Life in Islamic Morocco Through the Legal Cases and Fatwas of Al-Wanshirisi's Al-Mi'yar al-MuAarab*, Alexandria: Alexandria Centre for Publishing, 1996, p. 117.

⁴- Selka Abderrahman, *Note on the Touat*, Bulletin of the Society of Geography of Algiers and North Africa, 3rd quarter, 20-11-1922, p. 534.

⁵- Ibn Abd al-Rahim Muhammad al-Tayyib, known as Ibn Baba Haida, **The Simple Account of the News of Tamantit*, edited by Faraj Mahmoud Faraj, Algeria: Department of University Publications and National Book Institution, 1977, p. 30

Some researchers attribute the prevalence of Sufi orders in the desert, particularly in the Tuat region, to its isolation and distance from the renowned scientific institutions of the north. It is said that almost every family in the desert is associated with a Sufi order or belongs to a marabout (a religious leader), who can be found everywhere. Among the most prominent of these orders in the Sahara is the Qadiriyya¹, one of the oldest and most widespread Sufi orders. It traces its origins to its founder, Abdul Qadir Al-Jilani, who lived in Iraq between 470-561 AH (1077-1166 CE). His followers adhere to the Maliki school of thought, engage in collective remembrance (hadr), have a complete rosary (one hundred beads), and devote long hours each day to worship².

The Qadiriyya is strongly influenced by certain Indian philosophical ideas, particularly the doctrine of annihilation (fana). However, its branches in the Sahara, under the influence of shaykhs who distanced themselves from the philosophical aspects of Sufism, managed to shed these Indian remnants and adapt to the simple desert environment, which does not seek deep investigation³.

One of the most notable shaykhs of the Qadiriyya in central Morocco during the ninth century AH (15th century CE) was Sheikh Abdul Rahman bin Muhammad bin Makhlof Al-Thaalibi, who lived between 787-875 AH (1385-1470 CE). He was one of the important teachers of Al-Mughili and left behind a collection of works on Sufism, including "The Illuminating Lights Between Sharia and Truth", "The Excellent Sciences Regarding the Afterlife", and "The Exceptional Pearl in Remembrances and Supplications"⁴.

There is a historical account that he commissioned Al-Mughili to spread the Qadiriyya order in Tuat and Western Sudan, making him one of the first scholars to introduce the order to these regions. He is associated with a lineage of shaykhs of the order who later branched out into other Sufi paths. Sheikh Al-Mukhtar Al-Kunti (died 1286 AH/1869 CE) mentioned him in a poem describing the lineage of his shaykhs within the Qadiriyya order⁵.

4. The Role and Methodology of Sheikh Al-Maghili in Sufism:

Sheikh Al-Maghili established his famous Zawiyah in the Qsar of Bouali in Tuat in 885 AH (1480 CE), where he began his educational and pedagogical activities⁶. His life was not only marked by military campaigns in Tuat, as the events concerning the Jews lasted only a few years. Above all, he was a man of knowledge, culture and religion rather than a military figure.

¹- Ismail Al-Arabi, *The Sahara and its coasts*, Algiers: National Book Authority, 1st edition, 1983, p. 221.

²- Muhammad Al-Nuqaira, *The Spread of Islam in Africa and Resistance to the West*, Riyadh: Dar Al-Mareekh, 1st edition, 1982, p. 159.

³- Ismail Al-Arabi, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

⁴- Al-Tanbukti, *Nail Al-Ibtihaj*, vol. 2, pp. 283, 284.

⁵- Delegation of the Republic of Mali, *Sheikh Muhammad Ibn Abdul Karim Al-Maghili*, from the proceedings of the First Cultural Festival to Promote the Adrar Region (13-14 Sha'ban / 3-4 May 1985), p. 33.

⁶- Ahmed Al-Hamdi, *Muhammad Ibn Abdul Karim Al-Maghili: Pioneer of the Intellectual Movement in Tuat and His Contributions*, Master's thesis in Islamic History and Civilisation, supervised by Dr. Abdul Majid Ben Naimia (defended at the Faculty of Humanities and Islamic Civilisation, University of Oran, academic year 1999-2000), p. 70.

He was able to gather students of knowledge from different regions, especially since he came from Tlemcen, which was known for its prominent scholars and shaykhs. Al-Mughili had followers among his students who assisted him in his advocacy and reform work, following the Qadiriyya path. His educational efforts were not limited to free individuals; he also focused on educating slaves and Mamluks, especially those of Sudanese descent, who were often acquired through the arrival of merchants who came to his zawiya to rest and possibly learn. Among these Mamluks, the scholar Maimoun became famous; he travelled with Al-Mughili on a journey to Fès to meet the Wattasid sultan, along with other students.

The esteem in which the Sheikh was held by seekers and those integrated into Sufi orders, as well as their association with righteous saints, had a clear impact on the spread of Islam and the call to it. One of the significant results of this relationship with the nurturing Shaykh and the Sufi order was the cultivation of qualities such as obedience, gentleness, propriety and benevolence in the hearts of the disciples, making them leaders and role models for others¹.

Al-Mughili, as the leader of his order and the head of his zawiya in Tuat, used this dynamic effectively to gather a considerable number of followers and disciples in the service of his reformist vision and his call against the Jews and their allies².

The main functions of Sheikh Al-Maghili's Zawiya can be summarised as being primarily a centre for worship, education and moral guidance. It housed a large library of valuable books and manuscripts, some of which still exist today. In a short period of time, it managed to compete with all the other centres and zawiyas established in Tuat at that time, especially the zawiya of Sheikh Al-Miniyari.

It also served as the location for the second largest court in Tuat, after the centre in Tamantit, under the supervision of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Asnuni (died 927 AH/1521 CE). This court specialised in adjudicating cases, disputes and issues affecting individuals and tribes belonging to the eastern part of the Tuat oasis community. Sheikh Al-Maghili personally oversaw all these cases and was committed to applying legal decisions that always prioritised the public interest.

The activities of Al-Mughili's zawiya were not limited to education and advocacy; as was the case with all zawiyas in the Tuat region, it also placed great emphasis on social aspects. It acted as a centre for the accommodation of travellers and as a shelter for the poor and wayfarers. It also provided security and stability for the passing trade caravans, especially those coming from the southern markets of western Sudan, who stopped at various oases in the Tuat region to replenish their supplies of water and food and to rest.

At that time, Tuat was the most important trade route due to its strategic location in the middle of the desert. Ibn Battuta noted that when he travelled from "Tikda" to Tuat, he had to carry provisions for seventy nights because there was no food between the two places. Al-Mughili's

¹ Ibn Askar Al-Shafshawani, *The tree of the publisher on the merits of those who were in Morocco from the sheikh of the 10th century*, edited by Muhammad Haji, Rabat: Dar Al-Maghrib for Authorship, Translation and Publishing, 2nd edition, 1977, p. 131.

² Abdullah Abbas, *op. cit.*, pp. 113, 114.

zawiya also served as a base for his small emirate, which he established in the eastern part of Tuat¹ and from which he administered its affairs. It also served as a launching pad for his army in his first and second wars against the Jews, until news of the zawiya reached various regions both inside and outside the country, including western Sudan, the far Maghreb and even the Arab East².

Despite Sheikh Al-Maghili's use of many Sufi phrases and invocations in his works, such as his method of supplication through the status of the Prophet Muhammad - evidenced in his prayer for the water carrier Muhammad I, the Amir of "Kaghou": "May God grant him success and support him with a mighty victory, and grant him a clear opening through the status of our Master Muhammad"³ -he remained committed to a reformist Sunni methodology. His Sufism focused on moral refinement and correction, advocating the authentic teachings of the religion for both rulers and ruled.

He recognised the role of those in authority in the process of reform. Therefore, in his writings on legitimate governance and others, he often advised the general public through the counsel of the elite, giving them a primary role in the reform process because they had the affairs of the Muslims in their hands. After them, he regarded the scholars as indispensable. In his "Treatise on the Reply to the Mu'tazilites" he stated: "It is obligatory for those whom God has entrusted with the affairs of the Muslims to restrain the people of innovation by urging them to repent, using the sword collectively, so that there is no fitna (sedition) and religion remains only for God, with no aggression except against the oppressors. This is the necessary command and decisive ruling concerning the people of desires and innovations, especially in this era"⁴.

Al-Mughili also relied on rational methodology, advocating the use of logic to refine and educate the mind. He considered it the science that leads to the articulation and realisation of the truth through reasoning and proof, asserting, "There is no book of proof among the heavenly texts such as the Qur'an invites"⁵.

Sheikh Al-Maghili represented the authenticity of Qadiriyya Sufi thought, which emphasised asceticism and renunciation of worldly pleasures. His approach included not only seclusion and worship, but also engagement with society to reform others, guide them to learn the principles of religion, and combat desires and innovations. True Sufism in Islam means purifying the exterior and the interior from transgressions, filling the heart with the remembrance of God, alertness, fear, hope, and practising acts of worship and deeds in accordance with the legal path,

¹- Muhammad Ibn Battuta, Gift to the Observers in the Wonders of the Lands and the Marvels of Travels, edited by Muhammad Abdul Rahim, Beirut: Dar Al-Fikr for Printing, Publishing, and Distribution, 1st ed., 2003, vol. 2, p. 380.

²- Abd al-Hamid Bakri, A Brief History of Tuat and Its Notables (9th to 14th century AH), Ain Millila (Algeria): Dar Al-Huda Printing, Publishing and Distribution Company, 1st edition, 2005, p. 55.

³- Muhammad ibn Abd al-Karim al-Maghili, Questions of the Water Bearers and Al-Maghili's Answers, introduced and edited by Abd al-Qadir Zbaidi, Algeria: National Company for Publishing and Distribution, 1st edition, 1947, p. 21.

⁴- Muhammad ibn Abd al-Karim al-Maghili, manuscript: Reply to the Mu'tazila, special photocopied version, consisting of 11 pages, 19 lines per page, copied in large Moroccan script, page 1 recto.

⁵- Mabrouk Maqdem, Imam Muhammad ibn Abd al-Karim al-Maghili Through Historical Sources and Documents, Tlemcen: Algeria Book Foundation, 1st edition, 2002, p. 114.

following the Holy Qur'an and the noble Prophetic tradition, as opposed to innovations that Islam forbids¹.

As the renowned Sufi Abu Al-Qasim Al-Junaid (d. 297 AH) once said: "He who does not memorise the Qur'an and does not write the Hadith cannot be followed in this matter, for our knowledge is bound to the foundations of the Book and the Sunnah"².

Sheikh Al-Maghili was an Ash'ari, and as is well known, Ash'arism is a doctrine attributed to Ali ibn Ismail ibn Ishaq Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari (260-324 AH / 874-936 CE), who was one of the most prominent theologians and jurists. The Ash'ari doctrine was prevalent in most of the central Maghreb during the ninth century AH (15th century CE), where the works of Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-Sanusi (d. 895 AH / 1490 CE) in theology and other subjects served as the local source for the study of kalam (Islamic theology) and were imbued with a Sufi perspective³.

A study of some of Sheikh Al-Maghili's works clearly reveals the nature of the authentic Sufism to which he adhered, such as his references to the reality of tawakkul (trust in God). He emphasised the need for a Muslim to work diligently in this world for his livelihood, while at the same time mastering his work and adhering to God's boundaries regarding what is lawful and unlawful, as well as the interests of all Muslims. He also stressed the importance of worship and various acts of obedience that bring the servant closer to his Lord, based on the verse:

> "And say: 'Work, for Allah will see your work and His Messenger and the believers. And you will return to the Knower of the unseen and the seen, and He will inform you of what you have done"⁴.

He stressed that everything depends on the Divine Will, and that the Divine Will depends on nothing else, for it is the decree of eternity. It is the wisdom of God, the Exalted, that He has made the Noble Qur'an and the Prophetic Sunnah - the two main sources of legislation - to include all rulings and legal obligations, such as the arrangement of rewards for obedience and punishments for disobedience⁵.

Condemnation of the world and preparation for the hereafter is one of the most important points of intersection between the mysticism of Sheikh al-Maghili and that of his predecessors in this regard. The qualities of ascetic scholars, true mystics and sincere Muslims include a contempt for this transitory world. Sheikh al-Maghili compared the pleasures and desires of this world to a royal caravan travelling through a land of war and many dangers, surrounded by various

¹- Omar Abdullah Kamel, *Sufism Between Excess and Deficiency*. Beirut: Dar Ibn Hazm for Printing, Publishing and Distribution, 1st edition, 2001, p. 48.

²- Same reference, p. 21.

³- Abu al-Qasim Saad Allah, *The Cultural History of Algeria*, Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 1st edition, 1998, vol. 2, p. 92.

⁴- Surah At-Tawbah, verse 105.

⁵- Muhammad ibn Abd al-Karim al-Maghili, manuscript *The Lamp of Souls in the Principles of Prosperity*, photocopied from the library of Sheikh Shari al-Tayyib ibn Abd Allah al-Belbali, Kousam, Timmi Municipality, Adrar Province, no number, page 1 recto.

temptations from all sides. There is only one path to safety, known only to one person - the prince - who leads gently, out of compassion for his followers, lest they stray.

Despite this, the followers split into three groups. The first group of people recognised the false desires around them and paid no attention to them, following their prince and thus escaping with their booty. They are similar to the sincere believers who followed their noble messenger and achieved success in the Hereafter, escaping the torment of the fire surrounded by the desires of the world.

The second group “looked at the phenomena with their eyes, not with contemplation”. They were captivated by the desires of this land and were deceived by them, and they lagged behind the caravan of the prince. They dwelt in that land until the day of reckoning came upon them, and they were burned up and perished. Such are they who are deceived by the state of the world, and are heedless of the Hereafter, though they know it. They forgot Allah, so He made them forget themselves, and they died with Hell as their abode.

As for the third group, they were among those left behind by the caravan. Realising the dangers of this land after their prince had left them, they decided to catch up with the caravan, seeking the easier paths through the trees and rivers. However, an enemy attacked them unexpectedly, resulting in the deaths of most of them, with only a few surviving. They are like those of misguided desires who, in the darkness of innovation, stray from the path of the Prophetic Sunnah and split into seventy-two sects, of which only one group succeeded by acting in accordance with the guidance of the Holy Qur’an and the Prophetic Sunnah¹.

5. Sheikh al-Maghili’s position on some of the scholars and Sufis of his time:

A significant and dangerous shift began to emerge in the trajectory of the Sufis, which some contemporary scholars refer to as practical Sufism. This shift is characterised by an exaggerated belief in the Sheikh, the innovation of gatherings, the recitation of dhikr, dancing and miracles, at the expense of authentic theoretical Sufism, especially the involvement of the common people in the Sufi movement². This transformation is mainly attributed to the weakness of states in the face of internal disintegration and external threats. In addition, the exaggerated belief in the sheikh and the proliferation of zawiyas (Sufi lodges) and shrines had two significant consequences: first, the simplification of knowledge and the increase in discussion of the branches of the Maliki school through numerous explanations and summaries of many works; second, the closing of the door to ijihad (independent thought), as education was transferred to the zawiyas, which competed with traditional schools and mosques in disseminating knowledge and attracting followers. Instead of people flocking to enlightened scholars in schools and mosques, they began to rally around a sheikh or leader.

¹ Al-Maghili, manuscript *The Lamp of Souls in the Principles of Prosperity*, page 7 verso - 8 recto.

² Boudaoud Obeid, *The Phenomenon of Sufism in Central Morocco Between the 7th and 9th Centuries AH / 13th and 15th Centuries CE: A Study in Socio-Cultural History*. Oran: Dar al-Gharb for Publishing and Distribution, 1st edition, 2003, p. 123.

While Ibn Yusuf al-Sanusi and Abd al-Rahman al-Thaalibi were among the greatest ascetics and scholars of the ninth century AH (15th century CE), both of whom combined scientific production with Sufi conduct and thus attained considerable fame and scholarly stature, and both of whom advocated solitude, escape from worldly concerns¹, and concentration on the sciences of the hereafter, Sheikh al-Maghili took a contrary approach. He used his knowledge to criticise people's living conditions and point out the dangers in his society, criticising the kind of solitude that leads to the neglect of worldly responsibilities. He called for a balance between knowledge and action, exemplified by his reformist campaign against corrupt scholars and certain enemies of religion. He was a model of the active scholar, combining scholarly tasks with military duties².

The most prominent features of Sheikh Al-Maghili's era and the environment in which he lived were the spread of Sufism and self-styled scholars and saints, and the spread of superstition and magic. The Jews were teaching people the basics of magic in the palaces of Tawati, and they only stopped this practice after Sheikh Al-Maghili killed one of them who was using magic to put out fires and prevent them from igniting. He addressed the people of Tawati and said: "The covenant with the Jews has been cancelled because they have violated the covenant and practised magic"³.

In addition, innovations, immorality and superstition spread, causing many misguided followers to stray from the true path. Even the Sufi masters lamented the deviations of some of their own, which led them to criticise these false practices. Some even wrote books on the subject. Sheikh Al-Maghili took up the fight against these deceitful figures, exposing their machinations and refuting their claims of holiness and knowledge⁴. He wrote an important book entitled "Warning the Ignorant about the Deception of the Hypocrites Claiming the Stations of the Gnostics". This book is one of his lost works, as mentioned above, with references to it found only in the writings of some historians and biographical texts, such as "Nail al-Ibtihaj" by Ahmad Baba al-Tinbukti⁵.

Some of the ideas in this book have reached us through other writings of Sheikh al-Maghili, especially those concerning self-proclaimed scholars and the means of distinguishing true scholars. At the beginning of his discussion on this subject, he states that a Muslim can distinguish the scholars from others if he is pious, and that one who struggles to recognise this is among the people of desires: "Truth is light, and its possessor is supported, while falsehood is darkness, and its possessor is broken. [And whoever does not have the light from Allah has no light."⁶

Sheikh al-Maghili states that a person's knowledge is linked to his actions and morals, and that true knowledge is attained when one can distinguish between truth and falsehood. He

¹- Abu al-Qasim Saad Allah, Same Reference, vol. 1, p. 49.

²- Ahmed Hamdi, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Karim al-Maghili: A Pioneer of Intellectual Movement in Tuat, p. 171.

³- Muhammad ibn al-Mukhtar al-Kabir al-Kunti, Manuscript The Charms and Wonders of the Two Sheikhs: the Mother and the Father, photocopied from the Kousam Library, Adrar Province, page 64 verso.

⁴- Ahmed Cherchar, The Call of Sheikh al-Maghili in West Africa, Al-Murabitoun Magazine (an Islamic cultural magazine published by the Institute of Islamic and Arabic Sciences in Mauritania), year 3 / 1995-1996, no. 3, p. 42.

⁵- Al-Tanbukti, Nail al-Ibtihaj. vol. 2, p. 266.

⁶- Surah An-Nur, verse 40.

emphasises that knowledge is of great importance and serves as a mirror that reflects its possessor. Knowledge is a light that Allah shines in a person's heart, illuminating truth as truth and falsehood as falsehood¹.

The Sheikh outlines conditions aimed at reducing the danger posed by pretenders to knowledge and those who mislead others, especially when relying on a book to understand a matter or a ruling in the religion of Allah. These conditions include

- The book must be attributed to a scholar whose name is known and whose authority in knowledge and character is established so that one can rely on what it contains. There are misguided individuals who may write a book that promotes their delusions and falsely attribute it to one of the true scholars in order to adorn it for people with this attribution.
- The person who examines the book and claims to understand its meaning must engage with it through correct reasoning until his understanding is firmly established, for the mind is the lamp of the heart.
- The reader must have knowledge of language and logic, for language is the means of grasping the meanings of words, and logic allows one to determine how to judge some of them against others².
- The person who examines the book and claims to understand its meaning should be knowledgeable in the field and have the ability to operate within the intended goal. For example, someone who lacks expertise in jurisprudence is likely to be mistaken in their understanding.

He further asserts that a reader should be able to articulate what they have understood, stating: "If books are treasures of knowledge in the end times, then the keys to their strongholds are in the hearts"³.

Sheikh al-Maghili explains that the true scholars of remembrance are those who possess two qualities: knowledge and piety. For those who lack knowledge often mistake the truth for falsehood and vice versa, and are led astray from the path of God through ignorance. Likewise, those who lack piety may abandon the truth and follow falsehood out of greed. He says: "The pious scholar is a light among lights, perceived by insight rather than by sight, and he is recognised only by the testimony of righteous scholars. This is how truth is distinguished from falsehood, and no dust is left on the path of truth".

Sheikh al-Maghili emphasises the importance of inquiring and verifying the identity and sincerity of a scholar before taking from him, saying: "It is obligatory for any group that encounters a man who claims to be a scholar not to follow him until they have investigated him, because ignorance is more abundant than knowledge, and desires often outweigh piety,

¹ Muhammad ibn Abd al-Karim al-Maghili, Manuscript On What Muslims Must Avoid Regarding Infidels and What is Required of the People of Dhimmah Regarding Jizyah and Humiliation, photocopied from the library of Sheikh Shari al-Tayyib ibn Abd Allah al-Balbali, Kousam, Timmi Municipality, Adrar Province, no number, page 15 verso.

² Al-Maghili, Manuscript On What Muslims Must Avoid Regarding Infidels, page 16 recto and 16 verso.

³ Al-Maghili, Manuscript On What Muslims Must Avoid Regarding Infidels, page 17 recto.

especially at the end of the ninth century AH (15th century AD) and in the farthest corners of the world, such as the land of Tuat.” According to Sheikh al-Maghili, scholars fall into three categories, and it is permissible to follow only two of these categories, provided certain conditions are met, in order to prevent people from falling into the traps of false claimants to knowledge. These categories are:

1. A man renowned for his knowledge and piety in the land of pious scholars; he is worthy of being followed even if he has no formal authorisation, for his reputation in this regard is stronger than any authorisation.
2. A man who has a written authorisation from a pious scholar confirming his identity and testifying that he is worthy to be followed in the religion of God; he too is worthy to be followed.
3. A man whose fame is unknown and whose authorisation is not confirmed; this man should not be followed¹.

6. The Impact and Influence of Sheikh al-Maghili’s Zaouia on Sufism in Sub-Saharan Africa:

The influence and contributions of Sheikh al-Maghili’s Qadiriya Zaouia continued after his death. Many regions of the African continent are linked to the impact that this Zaouia left on the hearts of his followers and disciples. The followers of Qadiriyya called for both religion and knowledge, without separating the two. They would send Africans seeking more knowledge to renowned centres of learning and culture in the north. They successfully established and funded schools, which they themselves supervised, and their call to Islam was based on persuasion, wisdom and influence in pagan societies in a peaceful manner that left no room for violence².

The Qadiriyya order arrived in West Africa around the ninth century AH (15th century CE) by migrants from Tuat, who established “Walata” as the first centre of their order. Their descendants were forced to settle in “Timbuktu” after being expelled from the former³. It seems that among this group of Tuat were the followers of Sheikh al-Maghili, who included both advocates and disciples who had graduated from his zawiya. Prominent among them were the Arab Kunta, who traced their lineage back to the leader Uqba ibn Nafi al-Fihri. They lived for a time in Kairouan before migrating to the central Maghreb and then to Tuat. The first known of them was Kunta Muhammad al-Kabir, a notable figure of the ninth century AH (15th century CE)⁴.

¹ Al-Maghili, Manuscript On What Muslims Must Avoid Regarding Infidels, page 18 recto and 18 verso.

² Ammar Hilal, Sufi Orders and the Spread of Islam and Arab Culture in Black West Africa, Algeria: National Institution for Printing Arts, no date, 1988, p. 113.

³ Sir Thomas W. Arnold, The Call to Islam: A Study in the History of the Spread of the Islamic Faith, translated by Hassan Ibrahim Hassan et al., Cairo: Al-Nahda Al-Masriya Library, 4th edition, 1971, p. 364.

⁴ Muhammad Ali al-Ayni and F.J. Seymour, Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani: A Great Sheikh Among the Righteous of Islam, translated by Muhammad Hajji and Muhammad al-Akhdar, Casablanca: Dar al-Thaqafa for Publishing and Distribution, 1st edition, 1993, p. 11.

Regarding their activities on the continent, it should be noted that they relied on spreading their method of inviting people to Islam by establishing schools and cultural centres, promoting a peaceful approach based fundamentally on guidance. They sought to be role models for others through their good character, similar to the influence a teacher has on his pupils. They instilled in the local population the essential morals and ethics advocated by Islam, such as charity and tolerance. Thus, “the followers of Qadiriyya in Western Sudan demonstrated their fidelity to the principles of the founder of the group and its general traditions”.

In later centuries, followers of the Tijaniyya order - founded by Abu al-Abbas Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn al-Mukhtar al-Tijani, born in the village of Ouled Madi in Algeria in 1150 AH (1737 CE) - were influenced by the approach of the Qadiriyya in these regions¹.

The influence of the Qadiriyya Order, founded by Sheikh Al-Maghili in Tuat, reached its peak when they succeeded in attracting some kings and princes of Western Sudan to their call. The spread of this order in the Maghreb and Western Sudan was linked to common influences, with the origins rooted in the Qadiriyya order of Sheikh Al-Maghili in Tuat². The branching out of this order, thanks to various sheikhs, leaders and followers, contributed to the continuity of the Qadiriyya; the earliest branch in the Maghreb is attributed to the Kunti Bakai order, founded by Ahmad Al-Bakai ibn Muhammad Al-Kunti Al-Kabir (d. 920 AH/1514 CE), who is recognised as a saint and devout servant of God. He was well known and respected and is considered the ancestor of all Kunti, including Kunti Al-Hajar and Kunti Azawad³. He settled in Walata until he was killed in southern Morocco.

The Qadiriyya order in Morocco and Western Sudan was revived by Al-Mukhtar ibn Ahmad Al-Kunti (d. 1226 AH/1811 AD), a descendant of Sheikh Ahmad Al-Bakai, and his order became known as the Mukhtariya⁴. His first activities were in the Azawad region, where he was born, where he established his own zaouia and numerous schools in the Niger Bend, modern Mauritania, and the Sahara to spread Islam and the Qadiriyya order. He financed students and teachers from his own resources and also taught in his zaouia⁵. He became famous for the idea of the renewing scholar, and saw Sufism as “a spiritual path navigated by the heart through thoughts in harmony with beliefs and visions; its essence is a heavenly light and divine insight that falls into the heart of the servant”. In his perspective of renewal, he defined the relationship between the pole and the disciple as a progression from one stage to another: from ignorance to knowledge, from doubt to certainty, from desire to asceticism, from stinginess to generosity, and from mere perception to true understanding⁶.

¹- Sir Thomas W. Arnold, Same Reference, p. 366.

²- Abdullah Abbas, Same Reference, p. 118.

³- Muhammad al-Bartali, Opening of Gratitude in Identifying the Notable Scholars of the Tukolor, edited by Muhammad al-Kattani and Muhammad Hajji, Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 1st edition, 1981, p. 31.

⁴- Muhammad Ali al-Ayni and F.J. Seymour, same reference, pp. 11, 12.

⁵- Aziz Batran, Sheikh al-Mukhtar al-Kunti and His Role in Spreading Islam and the Qadiri Path in the Sahara and West Africa, Historical Research Magazine (published by the Centre for the Studies of Libyan Jihad Against Italian Invasion in Tripoli), no. 2, p. 319.

⁶- Al-Mukhtar al-Kunti, The Eid Sermons, edited by Habib Allah Omar, no date, pp. 7, 8.

The spread of the Mokhtariyya Qadiriyya order increased during the time of his son, Muhammad al-Kunti (d. 1241 AH/1826 CE), who wrote the book “Al-Tara’if wa Al-Talā’id min Karamāt al-Shaykhayn al-Wālidā wa al-Wālid”. The order expanded southwards, reaching Timbuktu in the Niger basin and the Lake Chad region in central Sudan¹. True Sufism, he says, is manifested in its association with good manners and ethical behaviour. He believes that “the saints did not reach Allah by numerous deeds, but rather by observing etiquette, through which they achieved superiority in worship... All etiquette is limited to five principles: preserving the sanctity of one’s relationship with God; maintaining high aspirations for both worlds, so as not to be attached to any shortcomings, both external and internal; serving well by adhering to the followers and avoiding innovation; renouncing one’s own strength and power; and the effectiveness of one’s resolve..²”.

The Qadiriyya order, led by the Kunti family after Shaykh al-Mughili, expanded in the desert and western Sudan and branched into other important lines, the most notable of which is the Fadliyya, attributed to Shaykh Muhammad Fadl (d. 1286 AH/1869 CE), who belonged to the Idrisid family, descendants of Omar Sharif of Wazzan. He received the order from Shaykh Muhammad al-Aghdof and then from Mokhtar al-Kunti the Elder. His numerous sons spread the order throughout various regions of the desert and western Sudan, with his son Shaykh Mustafa Muhammad Ma’a al-Aynain (d. 1316 AH/1898 CE) being particularly distinguished, marking the peak of the Fadliyya Qadiriyya’s expansion and influence, and enjoying special favour with the Sultans of Morocco³.

7. Conclusion

This scholarly article concludes that Shaykh Muhammad bin Abdul Karim al-Mughili was an encyclopaedic scholar with more than twenty works in various fields of knowledge. He was one of the few scholars of his time who successfully combined scientific theorisation with practical application in many scientific and intellectual fields. He was a jurist with legal opinions, which he tried to reach through his knowledge and culture, and tried to implement them in reality; for example, his fatwas against the Jews and his involvement in the judiciary fall in this context. His writings on legitimate government also sought to embody his political experience as an advisor to various princes.

In the field of Sufism, he also sought to express his attachment to the ideas of the Sufis of the Qadiriyya order through the Zawiya he founded in Tuat, which attracted many students and followers who continued the mission of spreading this order in this region, as well as outside Tuat, whether in the Maghreb or in sub-Saharan Africa in western Sudan. The Kunti family became the torchbearers of the spread of the Qadiriyya order from Shaykh al-Mughili, who in turn had received it from his teacher, al-Thaalibi. This led to the emergence of many branches and new names such as the Kunti Bakaiyya, the Mokhtariya and the Fadliyya.

¹ Muhammad Ali al-Ayni and F.J. Seymour, same reference*, p. 12.

² Al-Mukhtar al-Kunti, manuscript altarayif waltalayidh, page 23 recto.

³ Muhammad Ali al-Ayni and F.J. Seymour, Same Reference, p. 12.

