

Manifestations of Political Thought in the Zayyanid State: Authority between Symbolic and Religious Legitimacy

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Abstract:

This study examines the mechanisms through which Zayyanid political thought was established. Under particular historical circumstances, it relied on the strength of tribal solidarity and dispensed with the religious mission and noble lineage. It also examines how the Zayyanids sought to employ political symbols, especially religious ones. They did so by reviving Sunni doctrine and Maliki jurisprudence, encouraging Maliki legal studies, caring for jurists, employing royal titles, and establishing an administrative system for the designation of the heir apparent.

This study seeks to analyze the objective reasons that contributed to the revival and expansion of the celebration of the Prophet's Birthday and made it an important feature of the state's political thought. It also examines the purpose of using royal mosques to invoke blessings upon the sultan from their pulpits on Fridays. The study does not rely on a chronological sequence of events in the Zayyanid state. Rather, it confines itself to examining the general foundations of political thought from the state's establishment in the thirteenth century CE until its fall in the sixteenth century CE.

Keywords: Zayyanids; political thought; Maliki school; Prophet's Birthday; pledge of allegiance.

Introduction:

When Yaghmurasan ibn Zayyan assumed power in Tlemcen in 633 AH/1235 CE and declared his independent rule there, he had taken an important part of the territories of the collapsing Almohad state. He sought to establish a state across a large part of the Central Maghrib on religious foundations that possessed political legitimacy, with the Zayyanid Banu Abd al-Wad tribe as its base. Yet these foundations were not built on the same principles as the systems of government of the Almoravids and Almohads. Yaghmurasan and his successors therefore worked to employ a set of political mechanisms and foundations with an Islamic frame of reference. These were based on Sunni doctrine and Maliki jurisprudence in a manner that satisfied the demands of the subjects and the ambitions of the elite from the major families, including merchants, artisans, jurists, and tribal shaykhs.

The Hafsiids in Ifriqiya claimed that they possessed sufficient legitimacy to rule independently over all the lands of the Islamic Maghrib because they were the legitimate heirs to the Almohad legacy. By contrast, the Marinids in the Far Maghrib fought the remnants of the Almohads and succeeded in bringing down Marrakesh, the capital of their state, in 668 AH/1269 CE. Yaghmurasan and his successors therefore sought to build the state on a political rationale that was removed from

the religious mission and noble lineage that had previously distinguished state formation in the Islamic Maghrib.

The question posed is therefore: To what extent were the Zayyanids able to transform political authority from tribal predominance into political and religious legitimacy? What foundations did they use to justify their right to rule?

1. Political Legitimacy between Tribal Affiliation and Noble Lineage

When Yaghmurasan ibn Zayyan was informed that his lineage extended to Idris I ibn Abd Allah ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Hasan ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib, he replied in his Berber language with words to the following effect: "If this is true, it will benefit us before God. As for this world, we attained it only by our swords."¹ Several historians and jurists who were contemporaries of the Zayyanid state linked him to this lineage. Among them was Shaykh Muhammad al-Tanasi, who affirmed that Yaghmurasan ibn Zayyan descended from the grandson of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, and was a fruit of the branch of al-Zahra, the chaste Fatima, may God be pleased with her.² By contrast, many historians questioned this report and affirmed that Yaghmurasan belonged to the Zanata tribe of Banu Abd al-Wad. Ibn Khaldun, who lived during the Zayyanid state, the Hafsid state in Tunis, and the Marinid state in the Far Maghrib, confirmed this view. These three Berber states inherited the territories of the collapsing Almohad state. Ibn Khaldun affirmed that the Banu Abd al-Wad belonged to the second stratum of the Zanata and descended from Yadin ibn Muhammad. They were the brothers of Tujin, Musab, Zardal, and Banu Rashid.³

The foundations on which the Banu Abd al-Wad state was established differed from those of the states that had preceded it in the Islamic Maghrib. Yaghmurasan, the founder of the Zayyanid state, dispensed with an important element of state formation in the Islamic Maghrib, namely the "religious mission," and relied only on tribal solidarity. In other words, he dispensed with religious thought based on "commanding right and forbidding wrong." His military strength was sustained by tribal solidarity, represented by the solidarity of the Zanata Banu Abd al-Wad. Ibn Khaldun, who was an expert on the states of the Islamic Maghrib, explained the importance of the religious mission that the founder of the Zayyanid state had dispensed with. He stated that it adds further strength to a state because "the religious coloring removes the rivalry and envy found among the people of group solidarity and directs their purpose solely toward the truth."⁴

States in the Islamic Maghrib, from the Idrisid state to the Almohad state, were founded on the dual basis of tribal solidarity and a religious mission. The two states established immediately before the Zayyanid state, namely the Almoravid and Almohad states, illustrate this pattern. According to Ibn Idhari al-Marrakushi, the author of al-Bayan al-Mughrib, a jurist from the Far Maghrib named Abd Allah ibn Yasin developed a powerful religious mission in the Sahara among the Sanhaja tribes, especially the Lamtuna. His mission succeeded among them despite competition from

¹Ibn Khaldun, Abd al-Rahman. *Diwan al-Mubtada wa-l-Khabar fi Tarikh al-Arab wa-l-Barbar wa-Man Asarahum min Dhawi al-Sultan al-Akbar*. Edited by Khalil Shahada and Suhayl Zakkar. Vol. 7. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 2010, p. 97.

²Al-Tanasi, Muhammad ibn Abd Allah. *Tarikh Muluk Bani Zayyan Muluk Tlemcen: Muqtataf min Nazm al-Durr wa-l-Iqyan fi Bayan Sharaf Bani Zayyan*. Edited by Mahmud Bu Ayyad. Algiers: al-Muassasa al-Wataniyya li-l-Kitab, 1985, p. 111.

³Ibn Khaldun, previously cited source, p. 97.

⁴Ibid., vol. 1, p. 198.

other related tribes, particularly the Judala, who had initially received it.⁵ The Almohad state was advocated by the religious reformer Muhammad ibn Tumart and established by Abd al-Mu'min ibn Ali al-Kumi. It extended over a wider area than the Almoravid state, and its principal foundation was the solidarity of the Masmuda tribe, in Ibn Khaldun's words.⁶

States in the Islamic Maghrib arose through alliances between reformist preachers and tribal leaders. The preachers generally did not aspire to political office. Nevertheless, Islamic religious missions differed in their approaches and orientations according to the beliefs and school of each religious reformer. In the two states mentioned above, this produced a fundamental difference between Abd Allah ibn Yasin, the reformer of the Almoravid state, and al-Mahdi Ibn Tumart, the reformer of the Almohad state. Abd Allah ibn Yasin al-Jazuli based his mission on spreading the Maliki school in the Islamic Maghrib, fighting religious innovations and superstitions, reviving the institution of jihad in the Western Sudan and on the Andalusian shore, and unifying the Maliki school in the Maghrib and al-Andalus.⁷ By contrast, al-Mahdi Ibn Tumart called for understanding the principles of religion on a rational basis, at times according to the Ashari method and at other times according to the Mutazili method.⁸ Unlike Abd Allah ibn Yasin al-Jazuli, who insisted on following the path of the early Muslim community, Ibn Tumart adopted the approach of Imami Shiism in the political and social spheres and proclaimed the infallibility of the imam. Thus, Muhammad ibn Tumart's religious mission took from each Islamic school and doctrine what suited his mission in the Islamic Maghrib. The reformist preachers agreed, however, on commanding right and forbidding wrong and made it the basis of the mission's success.

The state in this region derived its legitimacy from the Islamic religious mission and noble lineage, both of which were based, as noted above, on commanding right and forbidding wrong. Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri states that the relationship between group solidarity and religion is one of synergy, mutual support, and integration. This view is based on Ibn Khaldun's understanding of the political thought of the Islamic state. Religion increases the strength of group solidarity by reducing the manifestations of partisanship, while group solidarity, in turn, gives the religious mission strength and effectiveness.⁹

Returning to Yaghmurasan ibn Zayyan's statement as reported by Ibn Khaldun, "We attained this authority by our swords," we can observe a transformation in the political thought of the state in the Islamic Maghrib after the fall of the Almohad state. The state dispensed with the religious mission and relied for its emergence on the strength of tribal solidarity. This was a practical position, or a pragmatic one in modern terms. Yaghmurasan was not the only ruler to dispense with a religious mission when founding his state. The Banu Marin seized Marrakesh, the Almohad capital, and established their state with Fez as its capital in 1269 CE under Sultan Yaqub ibn Abd al-Haqq. The Banu Marin were Zanata tribes and cousins of the Banu Abd al-Wad, who founded the Zayyanid state

⁵Ibn Idhari al-Marrakushi. *Al-Bayan al-Mughrib fi Akhbar al-Andalus wa-l-Maghrib*. Edited by Abd Allah Muhammad Ali. Vol. 4, 1st ed. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 2009, p. 8.

⁶Ibn Khaldun, Abd al-Rahman, previously cited source, vol. 1, p. 195.

⁷Adda, al-Shaykh. "Al-Dawa al-Diniyya: Ususuha wa-Khususiyyatuha wa-Atharuha fi Qiyam al-Dawla (447-542 AH)." Vol. 20, no. 27. Hassiba Ben Bouali University, Chlef, November 2020, pp. 564-565.

⁸Ibn Tumart, Muhammad. *Aazz Ma Yutlab*. Edited by Ammar Talibi. Algiers: Ministry of Culture, 2007, p. 5.

⁹Al-Jabiri, Muhammad Abid. *Al-Asabiyya wa-l-Dawla: Maalim Nazariyya Khalduniyya fi al-Tarikh al-Islami*. 6th ed. Beirut: Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-Arabiyya, 1994, p. 189.

in Tlemcen. Why, then, did Yaghmurasan dispense with a religious mission and content himself with the strength of tribal solidarity?

Ibn Khaldun answered this question in the theory he formulated: "Great states with extensive domination and mighty kingship have their origin in religion, whether through prophecy or a true religious mission." He explained: "Kingship is attained only through domination. Domination is achieved only through group solidarity and the agreement of desires in pursuing a common claim. The gathering and uniting of hearts occur only with God's assistance in establishing His religion."¹⁰ This creates a difficulty because the state is closely connected to a religious mission. To resolve it, Ibn Khaldun stated that small states, such as the Zayyanid state with Tlemcen as its capital, did not rise to the level of great and far-reaching states. Their establishment did not require the factor of religion. They could be founded through tribal solidarity alone when objective circumstances were present. Ibn Khaldun described these circumstances as the "senescence of the state."¹¹ According to al-Jabiri, this means the stage at which the ruling group becomes corrupt. The ruler then seeks the assistance of clients, mercenaries, and dependents and proceeds to impose taxes and confiscations on the people to cover his expenses, the expenses of his entourage, and the grants made to soldiers. The soldiers become excessive in their demands because they know that the ruler needs them.¹²

2. The Sunni Turn and the Consolidation of a Doctrinal Reference

The Zayyanid seizure of Tlemcen was not a passing political event. Rather, it witnessed the intellectual and doctrinal collapse of the legacy of Muhammad ibn Tumart, on which the Almohad state had been founded. The descendants of Abd al-Mu'min ibn Ali continued to follow that legacy until their capital, Marrakesh, fell in 668 AH/1269 CE.

Immediately after coming to power, Abu Yahya Yaghmurasan ibn Zayyan brought about a major change in religious and doctrinal thought. He issued an order adopting the Maliki school as the official school of the young state and brought leading Maliki jurists close to him. They included the jurist Ishaq ibn Ibrahim al-Tanasi. Ibn Maryam states in al-Bustan that Yaghmurasan asked him to reside in Tlemcen in order to issue legal opinions and teach. The jurist refused to settle in Tanas and took up residence in Tlemcen after the Zayyanid sultan and the city's jurists insisted that he do so.¹³ The sources state that Yaghmurasan personally rode to him in 666 AH and said: "I have come only because I wish you to move to our city and spread knowledge there. We shall provide everything you need."¹⁴ Ishaq ibn Ibrahim al-Tanasi was one of the leading scholars and jurists of the Islamic Maghrib. He was the foremost teacher and mufti in its regions, and questions reached him from Tlemcen and Ifriqiya. He wrote a ten-volume commentary on Abd al-Wahhab's Risala in Maliki jurisprudence, as Ibn Maryam records.¹⁵ Yahya ibn Khaldun describes him as a righteous scholar, an

¹⁰Ibn Khaldun, Abd al-Rahman, previously cited source, vol. 1, p. 197.

¹¹Al-Jabiri, previously cited work, p. 190.

¹²Ibid., p. 191.

¹³Ibn Maryam al-Tilimsani. Al-Bustan fi Dhikr al-Awliya wa-l-Ulama bi-Tlemcen. Edited by Muhammad ibn Shanab. Algiers: al-Matbaa al-Thaalibiyya, 1908, p. 64.

¹⁴Boudawoud, Nasr al-Din. "Al-Buyutat al-Ilmiyya bi-Tlemcen min al-Qarn 7 AH/13 CE ila al-Qarn 10 AH/16 CE." PhD diss. in medieval history, University of Tlemcen, 2009-2010, p. 71.

¹⁵Ibn Maryam, previously cited source, pp. 63-64.

ascetic and devout man, and a person credited with many acts of grace. He held a high position among the Banu Zayyan sultans. He died around 680 AH and was buried at al-Ubbad in Tlemcen.¹⁶

Abu Yahya Yaghmurasan's insistence that this figure come to Tlemcen represented a major transformation in the state's political thought. States in the Islamic Maghrib had been founded on tribal solidarity and a religious mission. Political thought was therefore closely connected with religious thought. Yaghmurasan did not claim to be the leader of a religious mission. Instead, he presented himself as the protector of religion and of the school that he encouraged and defended, namely the Maliki school. This school had suffered restrictions during the Almohad period. Yaghmurasan and his successors understood the situation and responded to it effectively. By the end of the Almohad state, the Maliki school was dominant among the general population, whereas Almohad doctrine remained the doctrine of the political and religious elite who continued to follow al-Mahdi Ibn Tumart.

Alfred Bel drew attention to this point. He wrote: "Yaghmurasan does not appear to have been a religious leader of the kind represented by Yusuf ibn Tashfin or Ibn Tumart. Yet, because the sultan in Islam is the protector of religion and Islamic law, if he did not come to power as the leader of a religious mission, he necessarily became its principal support and steadfast defender."¹⁷

One manifestation of this transformation and concern for religion was the Banu Zayyan sultans' regular attendance at the councils of jurists. Yaghmurasan ibn Zayyan brought scholars and Maliki jurists close to him. The Zayyanids also encouraged Maliki legal studies, which had been prohibited during the Almohad period. Among the most prominent scholars whom they brought close to the court were Sidi al-Sanusi, Sidi Muhammad ibn Marzuq al-Khatib al-Hafiz, and the eminent historian Abd al-Rahman ibn Khaldun.¹⁸

The Zayyanids encouraged learning and supported scholars. They built madrasas to promote the study of Maliki jurisprudence and Sufism, as well as medicine, mathematics, and astronomy. Among their most prominent madrasas, mentioned by Abbe Barges, were the Old Madrasa, the New Madrasa, and the Yaqubiyya. On the basis of information provided by Ibn Sakkal, the mufti of Tlemcen in the second half of the ninth century AH, Barges added that the Old Madrasa had been built by the Zayyanid sultan Abu Hammu I in the first half of the fourteenth century CE, or the eighth century AH. The second was built by Sultan Abu Tashfin ibn Abi Hammu I in 718 AH and was called the Tashfiniyya Madrasa. He insisted that it have a distinctive and beautiful architectural character. It stood beside the Great Mosque and near the al-Mashwar Palace. The third was built by Sultan Abu Hammu Musa II and was called the Yaqubiyya Madrasa.¹⁹

Zayyanid Tlemcen contributed to the advancement and flourishing of Sunni Malikism through its sultans' concern for scholars and jurists, as noted above. Tlemcen also hosted a number of families in which learning was inherited from one generation to the next. These families drew close to the sultans and received students and other visitors from far and wide. In this context, Nasr al-Din Boudawoud produced a study entitled "The Scholarly Houses of Tlemcen from the Beginning of the Zayyanid

¹⁶Ibn Khaldun, Abu Zakariya Yahya. *Bughyat al-Ruwwad fi Dhikr Muluk Bani Abd al-Wad*. Edited by Abd al-Hamid Hajjiyat. Vol. 1. Algiers: Alam al-Marifa, 2011, p. 151.

¹⁷Bel, Alfred. *Al-Firag al-Islamiyya fi al-Shamal al-Ifriqi min al-Fath al-Arabi hatta al-Yawm*. Translated by Abd al-Rahman Badawi. 3rd ed. Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 1987, p. 311.

¹⁸Marcais, William, and Georges Marcais. *Les monuments arabes de Tlemcen*. Paris: Albert Fontemoing, 1903, pp. 9-10.

¹⁹Barges, Abbe. *Tlemcen, ancien du royaume de ce nom*. Algiers: EURL KAFILA, 2011, pp. 319-320.

State until Its Demise." He divided these scholarly houses into major and minor families. The major families included al-Maqqari and Ibn Marzuq. Among the smaller scholarly families, he cited the family of the two sons of al-Imam.

Among the scholars of the al-Maqqari family was Said al-Maqqari, the mufti of Tlemcen. The teachers from whom he received his education are recorded. His scholarly formation placed him among the scholars who issued legal opinions and delivered sermons in the Great Mosque of Tlemcen. A number of jurists and scholars studied under him. They included his nephew, the author of *Nafh al-Tib*, and Ibn Maryam, the author of *al-Bustan*.²⁰ Another major scholarly house in Tlemcen was the Ibn Marzuq family. Its member Muhammad ibn Marzuq, known as al-Khatib, was among the scholars who contributed most to the advancement of the Maliki school through teaching, scholarly production, and a reputation that spread widely.

Ibn Marzuq was a scholar of the eighth century AH. Ibn Khaldun discussed him in detail in *al-Ibar*. Ibn Marzuq al-Khatib was Ibn Khaldun's contemporary, and Ibn Khaldun called him "our companion." This confirms that Ibn Khaldun obtained most of the information he reported about him directly from Ibn Marzuq. According to Ibn Khaldun, he was born in 710 AH.²¹ He died in Rabi I 781 AH/1379 CE.²² He was described as "a master among masters and the pride of the Maghrib and the East." He wrote works in various branches of the religious sciences. In addition to his scholarly distinction, he undertook diplomatic missions for the Zayyanids and Marinids. Ibn Khaldun states that the Marinid ruler Abu al-Hasan sent him as an envoy to the ruler of al-Andalus, the Nasrid ruler of Granada. He later sent him to Alfonso XI, king of Castile, to negotiate a peace agreement between them. The Zayyanid sultan Uthman ibn Abd al-Rahman ibn Yaghmurasan also employed him on a diplomatic mission, in addition to other missions recorded by Ibn Khaldun.²³

3. The Pledge of Allegiance and the Continuity of Authority

A. Lexical Meaning

Al-Fayruzabadi states in *al-Qamus al-Muhit* that bay'a derives from the verbal noun bay', meaning sale. The expression ba'a ala bay'atihi means that one took another's place; it also denotes rank, elevation, and victory over another.²⁴ Ibn Manzur states that bay'a is the compact through which sale, mutual agreement, and obedience are established. He also notes that bi'a, with a short i after the initial consonant, means a Christian church.²⁵

B. Technical Meaning

In Islamic political thought, Ibn Khaldun defines the bay'a as a covenant of obedience. It is as though the person giving the pledge covenants with his ruler that he will entrust to him the consideration of his own affairs and those of the Muslims. He also undertakes to obey whatever the ruler requires of him, willingly or reluctantly.²⁶ Al-Mawardi views the bay'a as the agreement of those empowered to elect and depose rulers to pledge allegiance to the candidate who is the most meritorious, most fully meets the conditions, and is most readily obeyed by the people. Once that candidate accepts the

²⁰Boudawoud, Nasr al-Din, previously cited work, p. 71.

²¹Ibn Khaldun, Abd al-Rahman, previously cited source, vol. 7, p. 528.

²²Ibn Dawud, Nasr al-Din, previously cited work, p. 101.

²³Ibn Khaldun, Abd al-Rahman, previously cited source, pp. 529-530.

²⁴Al-Fayruzabadi, Muhammad ibn Yaqub. *Al-Qamus al-Muhit*. Edited by Amin Muhammad al-Shami and Zakariya Jabir Ahmad. Cairo: Dar al-Hadith, 2008, p. 178.

²⁵Ibn Manzur, Muhammad Ali. *Lisan al-Arab*. 1st ed., vol. 1. Lebanon: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arabi, n.d.

²⁶Ibn Khaldun, Abd al-Rahman, previously cited source, vol. 1, p. 261.

pledge, the entire community must enter into his allegiance and submit to his authority.²⁷ Al-Mawardi did not explain in detail who those empowered to elect and depose rulers were. They were most likely jurists, political leaders, senior military officers, and tribal shaykhs. He also discussed the qualifications of the imam to whom allegiance must be pledged. If two persons were candidates for the imamate, one more learned and the other braver, the choice depended on the community's need. Courage was preferable when frontier defense and resistance to rebels were required. Learning was more fitting when the need was to calm the populace and confront the emergence of religious innovators.²⁸

Ibn Khaldun described manifestations of the pledge of allegiance during the establishment of the Islamic state under the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, and the Rightly Guided Caliphs. He referred to the pledge given to the Prophet on the night of al-Aqaba and the pledge beneath the tree.²⁹ The sources do not provide a precise and detailed description of how the pledge was offered or performed. Al-Tanasi, who was contemporary with the early years of the Zayyanid state, records only the year and circumstances of each pledge. The sources indicate that allegiance to a new sultan, after the deposition or death of his predecessor, was conducted through letters and delegations from governors of frontier towns and provinces, tribal shaykhs, political officeholders, and senior military officers. In the case of the Banu Abd al-Wad sultans, senior members of the Banu Abd al-Wad and those empowered to elect and depose rulers agreed to offer allegiance to the new sultan.

The bay'a was thus a political contract between ruler and ruled in Islamic political thought. It required the subjects to obey the ruler or emir and granted him the legitimacy to perform his political duties and administer the affairs of the state.

4. Designation of the Heir Apparent

Muawiya ibn Abi Sufyan is generally regarded as the first Muslim ruler to institute hereditary designation of an heir. He transformed the caliphate from consultation into coercive dynastic kingship and designated his son as heir apparent. Ibn Khaldun explained that Muawiya preferred his son Yazid over all others in order to safeguard the public interest by preserving unity and agreement. At that time, the Umayyads, who constituted those empowered to elect and depose rulers, agreed upon Yazid.³⁰

Ibn Khaldun supported the measure introduced by Muawiya ibn Abi Sufyan. He considered it a means of safeguarding the interests of the young Islamic state during an age of dissension and conflicting opinions brought about by a transformation in human civilization.

The Banu Zayyan sultans did not depart from the rule introduced by Muawiya and followed by most states founded in Islamic history. They differed, however, in the person designated by the sultan. Some designated a son, while others preferred a brother or an uncle. The office of heir apparent in the Banu Abd al-Wad state nevertheless remained within the Zayyanid family.

5. Royal Titles and Their Political Significance

The Banu Abd al-Wad sultans were careful to display their official titles both within the kingdom and in diplomatic correspondence carried by embassies. These titles included the following:

²⁷Al-Mawardi, Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Habib. *Kitab al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyya wa-l-Wilayat al-Diniyya*. Edited by Ahmad ibn Mubarak al-Baghdadi. 1st ed. Kuwait: Dar Ibn Qutayba, 1989, pp. 7-8.

²⁸Ibid., p. 8.

²⁹Ibn Khaldun, Abd al-Rahman, previously cited source, p. 261.

³⁰Ibid., p. 263.

A. Emir of the Muslims

The Zayyanids did not venture to assume the title of caliph, as the rulers of the Almohad state had done. Rather, the official title of the Zayyanid sultan was "Emir of the Muslims," especially during the reign of Abu Hammu Musa I. This title appeared in his work *Wasitat al-Suluk*. The opening pages of Levi-Provencal's edition read: "The Book of *Wasitat al-Suluk fi Siyasat al-Muluk*, composed by the resolute king, the courageous lion, Emir of the Muslims, our lord Musa ibn Yusuf Abu Hammu ibn Zayyan."³¹ Van Berchem published a study in *Journal Asiatique* on the titles of the sultans of the Islamic Maghrib. He stated that the titles of the sultans, especially in the Zayyanid, Marinid, and Hafsid states, did not go beyond "Emir of the Muslims." He also noted that Lavoix had published an undated coin minted in Tlemcen and held in the British Museum. It bears the inscription: "By order of Musa, Emir of the Muslims, who places his trust in the Lord of the Worlds." Van Berchem attributed it to the Zayyanid sultan Abu Hammu Musa I, who ruled Tlemcen from 707 to 718 AH/1308 to 1318 CE.³²

The Banu Abd al-Wad state was not a universal state comparable to the Umayyad and Abbasid states. It was only a regional state. At its height, it remained within the Central Maghrib, extending from the western borders of Tlemcen to Bejaia in the east. At other times, its territory contracted to no more than its capital, Tlemcen, and the surrounding areas. The Banu Abd al-Wad sultans therefore could not assume the title of caliph. Their state was founded after the complete dissolution of the Almohad state, when Yaghmurasan ibn Zayyan established his independent authority over most of the Central Maghrib.

Political realism characterized this state from its inception. As noted above, its founder, Yaghmurasan ibn Zayyan, stated that "we attained this authority by our swords." The title "Emir of the Muslims" therefore distinguished the Zayyanid ruler from the title "Commander of the Faithful," which was reserved for a caliphal state.

B. Sultan

Sultan was one of the most widespread and frequently used titles in the Islamic kingdoms, and the Zayyanid rulers bore it. According to Ibn Manzur, sultan derives from *salata*, meaning coercive power. In Arabic, *salit* means oil, and among the people of Yemen it means sesame oil. Sultan also means proof and authoritative argument; the sultan is God's proof on His earth.³³

The historical sources on the Banu Abd al-Wad state frequently use the title sultan. Yahya ibn Khaldun, who was close to the Banu Abd al-Wad sultans, uses the title "Emir of the Muslims" only for Yaghmurasan and does not call him sultan. Elsewhere in *Bughyat al-Ruwad*, however, he applies the title sultan to Said ibn Yaghmurasan, writing: "Sultan Abu Said, son of the Emir of the Muslims Abu Yahya Yaghmurasan." He uses the same title for Yaghmurasan's successors.³⁴ His brother Abd al-Rahman ibn Khaldun also uses the title sultan in *Diwan al-Mubtada*. In other passages, some historians call the sultans "our lord" or "king." Al-Tanasi described Abu Tashfin as "the perfect king

³¹ Abu Hammu Musa ibn Zayyan. *Wasitat al-Suluk fi Siyasat al-Muluk*. Edited by Levi-Provencal. n.d., p. 1.

³² Van Berchem, M. "Titres califiens d'Occident." *Journal Asiatique*, vol. IX. Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1904, p. 324.

³³ Tawati, Husayn. "Al-Wazaif al-Sultaniyya fi al-Dawla al-Zayyaniyya: al-Kitaba Unmudhajan (633-791 AH/1236-1389 CE)." Master's thesis in the cultural history of the Islamic Maghrib, University of Tlemcen, 2013-2014, p. 58.

³⁴ Ibn Khaldun, Yahya, previously cited source, pp. 225-229.

and the valiant lion."³⁵ Other titles included "the one who places his trust in God," "the one who places his trust in the Lord of the Worlds," and "the one who seeks protection in God."³⁶

6. Celebration of the Prophet's Birthday

The Banu Zayyan sultans attached exceptional importance to celebrating the Prophet's Birthday. Festivities were held for several days in order to confer political and religious legitimacy on the state. They also presented it as "the state that protects religion and Islamic law," Maliki and Sunni in doctrine and Sufi in orientation.

Muhammad al-Tanasi describes the celebration held by one of the Banu Abd al-Wad sultans, Abu Hammu Musa II, who is regarded as the second founder of the Zayyanid state. He writes: "On the night of the birth of the Chosen One, peace and blessings be upon him, he observed the occasion with ceremonies surpassing all others. He held a banquet to which nobles and commoners were gathered. There were rows of cushions, carpets spread out, and candles like columns. The dignitaries of the court sat according to their ranks ... wearing tunics of colored silk and holding censers and sprinklers."³⁷

The celebrations in the sultan's palace and throughout the city lasted an entire week. The Qur'an was recited in several readings, and assemblies of exhortation were held. Jurists and hadith scholars read the Prophet's biography and accounts of his noble qualities. Poems praising the Prophet were recited to honor the occasion and exalt the standing of the Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him. Sultan Abu Hammu Musa II composed praise poetry for the occasion. Al-Tanasi, a jurist close to the Zayyanid court, transmitted the following verses in which Abu Hammu Musa II praised the Prophet:

Alas for me on Judgment Day; what sorrow will be mine,
if all my striving finds no favor with you.
I hope for nothing but the intercession of the best of those
who brought guidance and guides through an upright faith.
Through him the disobedient hope for the forgiveness of their sins,
and for every evil deed they committed through the ages.
At his birth, the whole universe was filled with light;
and every Sunni became a sun, a full moon, and a radiant star.³⁸

The finest and most delicious foods were served on this religious occasion. Ibn Marzuq al-Khatib al-Tilimsani described the foods served at the Marinid court because its celebrations under Sultan Abu al-Hasan resembled those held in the Zayyanid palace. He wrote: "It was customary to prepare for it with many kinds of food and sweets, perfumes and incense, the display of decorations, and great care in arranging the seating. When the meal was finished, fresh fruit available in its season was brought, followed by dried fruit and then cakes...."³⁹

Regardless of who first introduced the celebration of the Prophet's Birthday in Islamic history—the Fatimid caliph al-Muizz li-Din Allah (341-365 AH)—the present concern is to identify the first ruler

³⁵Al-Tanasi, Muhammad ibn Abd Allah, previously cited source, p. 184.

³⁶Tawati, Husayn, previously cited work, p. 60.

³⁷Ibid., p. 162.

³⁸Ibid., p. 167.

³⁹Ibn Marzuq al-Tilimsani, Muhammad. *Al-Musnad al-Sahih al-Hasan fi Maathir wa-Mahasin Mawlana Abi al-Hasan*. Edited by Maria Jesus Viguera. Algiers: al-Sharika al-Wataniyya li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzi, 1981, p. 152.

who exalted this religious occasion in the Islamic Maghrib and the reasons for honoring it and magnifying its celebration.

Academic studies specializing in Zayyanid history indicate that one reason the Banu Zayyan sultans celebrated the Prophet's Birthday was their desire to appear as pious and devout political rulers who honored religious rites. They also sought to remind the people of the Prophet's life in the hope that it would benefit them.⁴⁰ Abd al-Aziz Filali attributes the Maghribis' celebration to the Christian-Muslim conflict in al-Andalus, especially after the Muslim defeat at the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa in 609 AH/1212 CE. This defeat generated a psychology of defeat among Muslims and a desire to imitate the victor, on the principle that the defeated are inclined to imitate the victorious. Muslims even began celebrating the birth of Christ on 25 December each year. This phenomenon reached Ceuta⁴¹ and spread through many cities of the Islamic Maghrib.

The first person to call for the celebration of the Prophet's Birthday under oppressive political, security, and social conditions was Abu al-Qasim ibn Abi al-Abbas al-Azafi, the pious jurist who governed Ceuta. He wrote a work entitled *al-Durr al-Munazzam fi Mawlid al-Nabi al-Muazzam*. In it, he condemned the innovation of celebrating Christian dates and regarded it as a grave reprehensible innovation. He therefore called upon Muslims to celebrate the Prophet's Birthday.⁴² Ibn Idhari al-Marrakushi records that in 647 AH, the year in which al-Azafi came to power, he ordered the celebration of the night of the Prophet's birth. Ibn Idhari wrote: "Among his great deeds was his observance of the Prophet's Birthday, peace be upon him, in that year. On that occasion, he fed the people of his city many kinds of food and favored their children, on the eve of the blessed birthday, with newly minted coins as part of his benevolence and generosity toward them."⁴³

The celebration spread throughout the Islamic Maghrib. It reached Tlemcen later than it did the Marinid and Hafsid courts. Historical sources state that the Marinids observed it with great ceremony. One such source is *al-Musnad al-Sahih al-Hasan* by Ibn Marzuq al-Khatib, who was close to the Marinid court during the reign of Sultan Abu al-Hasan. He wrote: "May God be pleased with him—that is, Sultan Abu al-Hasan—he observed it while traveling and while in residence, and nothing distracted him from doing so. We were once staying in Ceuta, facing the Christian landing at al-Khadra, when the night of the Prophet's Birthday arrived. Wherever he was, descendants of the Prophet, judges, jurists, and preachers from the towns came to attend it."⁴⁴

As noted above, Abu Hammu Musa II was the first Zayyanid sultan identified by the historical sources as having celebrated this religious occasion on a grand scale. This was late in comparison with the Hafsid and Marinid states, both of which had already celebrated it. Some researchers suggest that the delay may have resulted from disagreement among jurists about the value and permissibility of the celebration. They differed over whether it was a commendable or reprehensible innovation. Those who followed the opinion of Imam Malik ibn Anas regarded it as a blameworthy innovation.⁴⁵ Abu

⁴⁰Muhammad, Quwaysim. "Al-Ihtifal bi-l-Mawlid al-Nabawi al-Sharif fi Mintaqat Tlemcen khilala al-Ahd al-Zayyani (633-962 AH/1235-1554 CE)." *Al-Hiwar al-Mutawassiti*, nos. 15-16 (March 2017): 512.

⁴¹Filali, Abd al-Aziz. *Tlemcen fi al-Ahd al-Zayyani*. 2nd ed. Algiers: al-Muassasa al-Wataniyya li-l-Funun al-Matbaiyya, 2002, p. 277.

⁴²Filali, Abd al-Aziz, previously cited work, pp. 279-280.

⁴³Ibn Idhari al-Marrakushi, previously cited source, p. 472.

⁴⁴Ibn Marzuq al-Tilimsani, Muhammad, previously cited source, p. 152.

⁴⁵Filali, Abd al-Aziz, previously cited work, p. 278.

al-Abbas al-Azafi, the author of al-Durr al-Munazzam, who died in 677 AH, opposed that position. He ruled that the celebration was permissible and promoted its ceremonies.⁴⁶

The Zayyanids recognized the political importance of celebrating the Prophet's Birthday. They made it a means of consolidating the legitimacy of rule and strengthening the sultan's position as protector of religion and symbol of the unity of the subjects. The celebration was honored and exalted on the night of 12 Rabi I every year.

7. The Minting of Coinage

The minting of coinage has been an important element in state formation throughout history. In modern terms, it is "a symbol of the sovereignty and political and economic independence of states." Ibn Khaldun defined the mint as the office concerned with "examining the currency used in transactions among people and protecting it from adulteration or loss of weight, whether it is used by count or according to any other relevant standard, and then placing the sultan's mark on those coins."⁴⁷ There is no evidence that Yaghmurasan ibn Zayyan ordered coins to be minted when the state was founded. The state was then still being built and was occupied by war with the Hafsid to the east and the Marinids to the west. The coins circulating during Yaghmurasan's reign bore the names of Hafsid rulers.⁴⁸

The first official Zayyanid coin was issued after the Marinid siege of Tlemcen was lifted during the reign of Sultan Abu Hammu Musa I (707-718 AH). It bore the inscription: "How near is God's deliverance." According to Muhammad al-Hadri, the people of Tlemcen continued to mint their own coins for a time after their state had disappeared. He also states that there was only one mint in the city.⁴⁹

The same researcher raises doubts about several coins republished by the French numismatist Henri Lavoix and held in the Bibliotheque nationale de France. One coin, of unknown date and catalogued as Lavoix 980, bears the following inscription within two squares on its obverse: "In the name of God. By order of the servant of God, Commander of the Faithful Abu al-Rabi Sulayman, may God support him and grant him victory. Minted in the city of Tlemcen, may God protect it."

The reverse bears the inscription: "By the command of God, the servant of God who places his trust in God, Emir of the Muslims Abu Abd Allah Muhammad, may God support him and grant him victory." The margin reads: "In the name of God. May God bless our master Muhammad."

Muhammad al-Hadri therefore asks whether the coin was minted during the reign of the Marinid sultan Abu al-Rabi Sulayman, who ruled from 708 to 710 AH and to whom the Zayyanid sultan Abu Abd Allah Abu Zayyan Muhammad ibn Abi Said Uthman ibn Yaghmurasan submitted, or during the reign of the Ottoman sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, who ruled from 1520 to 1566, and to whom the Zayyanid sultan Abu Abd Allah Muhammad VI submitted.⁵⁰

Muhammad al-Hadri noted the similarity between the names of the sultans in these two different periods. What matters here is that Zayyanid authority in both periods experienced subordination and

⁴⁶Tahir, Abd al-Karim. "Fatawa al-Ihtifal bi-l-Mawlid al-Nabawi al-Sharif bi-l-Maghrib wa-l-Andalus bayna al-Tahrim wa-l-Ijaza." *Al-Akاديميyya li-l-Dirasat al-Ijtima'iyya wa-l-Insaniyya*, no. 20 (June 2018): 98.

⁴⁷Ibn Khaldun, Abd al-Rahman, previously cited source, vol. 1, p. 281.

⁴⁸El Hadri, Mohamed. "Monnaies merinides et zayyanides au Cabinet des monnaies, medailles et antiques de la BnF: Supplement." *Revue numismatique* 165 (2009): 394.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 395.

⁵⁰El Hadri, Mohamed. "Monnaies et relations diplomatiques sous les derniers Zayyanides de Tlemcen." *Annales Islamiques* 41 (2007): 132.

the loss of political sovereignty to foreign governments: first the Marinids and, much later in the state's history, the Ottomans. Coinage was a symbol of sovereign independence in Zayyanid political thought. The Zayyanids therefore attached great importance to minting coins in the names of their own sultans.

8. Invocation for the Sultan in the Friday Sermon and the Symbolism of Sovereignty

The Friday sermon was associated with mosques throughout the Islamic world. Although it was a religious rite performed every Friday at the noon prayer, it also provided the sultan with a political opportunity. The preacher could pray for his success and for righteous advisers on his behalf. The sultan could thereby acquire political legitimacy in a place where large crowds gathered throughout the kingdom of Tlemcen and the towns in which Zayyanid authority was exercised.

Abd al-Rahman ibn Khaldun regarded the invocation in the Friday sermon as one of the emblems of Islamic sovereignty. He also stated that the Companion Amr ibn al-As was the first to introduce a pulpit in Egypt, while the Companion Abd Allah ibn Abbas was the first to invoke the caliph's name from the pulpit. In Basra, in southern Iraq, Ibn Abbas prayed for Ali ibn Abi Talib and said: "O God, grant Ali victory in the cause of truth."⁵¹ Ibn Khaldun also stated that the preacher praised the caliph by name from the pulpit and prayed that God would grant him that in which He had placed the welfare of the world.⁵²

Al-Mawardi states in *al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyya* that mosques are of three kinds: mosques in which the five daily prayers are performed, mosques in which the Friday prayer is performed, and mosques used for supererogatory prayers. The third category did not enjoy the same status as the first two.⁵³

According to al-Mawardi, the first two categories were divided into public and royal mosques. The sultan supervised royal mosques, and no one could lead prayer in them unless the sultan appointed and formally invested him. This prevented the subjects from encroaching upon a matter entrusted to the ruler.⁵⁴ Al-Mawardi's account shows that appointing an imam to a mosque and entrusting him with the Friday sermon were serious matters. They required scholarly competence and political loyalty to the sultan. If the sultan appointed to this important and sensitive office a jurist who opposed the political authority, that jurist could express opposition before the subjects and challenge the sultan and the established authority. This could incite the population against the sultan and might even lead to armed rebellion against him and his state.

Many jurists led the Friday prayer and ascended the pulpit of the Great Mosque in Tlemcen. This study cannot mention them all, but a few may be noted. One was the jurist Ibn Yakhlaḥ ibn Abd al-Salam. Muhammad ibn Marzuq al-Khatib mentions him in *al-Manaqib al-Marzuqiyya* and states that he was his maternal grandfather. Known as Abu Ishaq al-Tanasi, he was among the most renowned jurists and pious men. Sultan Yaghmurasan invited him to live in Tlemcen and serve as imam of its Great Mosque. As noted above, he accepted the invitation after some hesitation.⁵⁵ Other jurists included Abu Zayd Abd al-Rahman ibn Muhammad ibn Abd Allah al-Imam and his brother, who were known together as the two sons of al-Imam. According to Abd al-Hamid Hajjiyat, Abu Zayd

⁵¹Ibn Khaldun, Abd al-Rahman, previously cited source, vol. 1, p. 332.

⁵²Ibid., p. 333.

⁵³Al-Mawardi, Abu al-Hasan ibn Habib, previously cited source, p. 130.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 130.

⁵⁵Ibn Marzuq al-Tilimsani, Muhammad. *Al-Manaqib al-Tilimsaniyya*. Edited by Salwa al-Zahiri. 1st ed. Casablanca: Matbaat al-Najah al-Jadida, 2008, p. 275.

and his brother were from Barshak and studied in Tunis under leading scholars. Abu Zayd held a high position among the Banu Zayyan sultans and with the Marinid ruler Abu al-Hasan. He presided over the council of scholars in Tlemcen. His students included Abd Allah ibn al-Sharif, Said al-Uqbani, and Ibn Marzuq the Elder.⁵⁶ Another prominent figure who preached in Tlemcen, the Zayyanid capital, and Fez, the Marinid capital, was Muhammad ibn Marzuq al-Khatib, author of *al-Musnad al-Sahih* and *al-Manaqib al-Marzuqiyya*. He combined diplomatic work with legal scholarship. He belonged to a major scholarly family known throughout the Islamic Maghrib, and his reputation spread to al-Andalus and the Islamic East. Al-Tinbukti states in *Nayl al-Ibtihaj* that Ibn Marzuq served as preacher in Tlemcen for the Marinid sultan Abu al-Hasan after the latter entered the city as a conqueror and built a mosque at al-Ubbad. Ibn Marzuq succeeded his deceased uncle in the office.⁵⁷ In addition to preaching and teaching, he undertook diplomatic work. The Marinid sultan sent him to al-Andalus and Castile to negotiate peace and secure the release of the sultan's captive son.⁵⁸

During the history of the Zayyanid state, especially in its early formative stage, the Banu Abd al-Wad faced fierce competition from the Marinids in the west and the Hafsids in the east. At one point during this period, Yaghmurasan ibn Zayyan recognized the Almohad caliphate under Caliph al-Rashid and had his name invoked from the pulpits during the Friday sermon. His young state, however, faced a Hafsid invasion led by Emir Abu Zakariya al-Hafsi, which resulted in the occupation of Tlemcen in 640 AH. A peace agreement was concluded with Yaghmurasan under which his state would continue to exist on condition that the Friday sermon be delivered in the name of Abu Zakariya al-Hafsi rather than the Almohad caliph al-Rashid.⁵⁹

In Islamic political thought, invoking other sultans in a state's mosques was a political indication that their sovereignty was recognized. It was also a means of declaring allegiance and conferring legitimacy upon the superior authority.

9. Conclusion

The preceding discussion leads to the conclusion that the Zayyanids dispensed with the legitimacy derived from a religious mission and noble lineage. These had been cornerstones in the establishment of earlier states in the Islamic Maghrib, such as the Almoravid and Almohad states. The Zayyanids relied instead on the strength and solidarity of the tribe. Yaghmurasan confirmed this position when he was told that he belonged to a noble lineage and gave the notable reply discussed in the first section of this study.

This does not mean that Zayyanid political thought dispensed with religious legitimacy. Rather, the Zayyanids employed other mechanisms, apart from a religious mission and noble lineage, to obtain political legitimacy. The manifestations of Zayyanid political thought included the Sunni turn and the adoption of Sunni doctrine and Maliki jurisprudence, with a Sufi character, as the state's official religious framework. The Zayyanids supported jurists, Maliki legal studies, and hadith scholars, and they built madrasas for legal education. They also revived the celebration of the Prophet's Birthday, magnified the occasion, and made it a manifestation of their political thought. They employed royal

⁵⁶Hajjiyat, Abd al-Hamid. *Abu Hammu Musa al-Zayyani: Hayatuhu wa-Atharuhu*. Algiers: al-Sharika al-Wataniyya li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzi, 1974, p. 44.

⁵⁷Al-Tinbukti, Ahmad Baba. *Nayl al-Ibtihaj bi-Tatriz al-Dibaj*. Edited by Abd al-Hamid Abd Allah al-Harrama. 2nd ed. Tripoli: Dar al-Kitab, 2000, p. 450.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, p. 451.

⁵⁹Hajjiyat, Abd al-Hamid, previously cited work, p. 13.

titles, regulated the designation of the heir apparent, and maintained the invocation for the sultan from the pulpits on Fridays. These measures reflect their determination to combine political independence with religious legitimacy.

The Zayyanids adapted their political thought to the distinctive conditions of the Islamic Maghrib and to the prevailing historical circumstances. They succeeded in employing Islamic religious symbols to serve their political project and ensure the continuity of their state.

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