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Manifestations of Cultural and Scientific Exchange between Western Sudan and the Cities of Southern Algeria in the Modern Era

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Abstract

This article addresses a historical topic related to the scientific and cultural relations between the cities of southwestern Algeria and the lands of Western Sudan during the modern era. These relations held considerable importance, as they contributed to demonstrating the depth and strength of intellectual and cultural activity in both vast regions at the heart of the African continent. In terms of the study period, it represents a time of scientific and cultural flourishing during that modern era. The cities of southwestern Algeria served as destinations for caravans of scholars, sheikhs, and intellectuals from various parts of the African continent and beyond. This, in turn, had a positive impact on different aspects of life across the regions of both territories: Algeria—particularly its southwestern areas—and the cities of Western Sudan.

Keywords: *Western Sudan; Southern Algeria; Cultural exchange; Scientific networks; Trans-Saharan scholarship*

Introduction

Algeria has long enjoyed a highly strategic position within the African continent, earning it respect from both nearby and distant peoples. This led the countries of the African Sahel—especially those located in the western part—to build bridges of communication, seek closer ties, and establish strong relationships with it on multiple levels. A dynamic interaction emerged between Algeria and the Sahelian regions, centered on several fields, most notably intellectual and cultural exchange.

The region witnessed active and sustained movement in this domain, characterized by numerous scholarly journeys, the exchange of knowledge and expertise in teaching and issuing religious rulings (fatwas), as well as the emergence of authorship and a growing interest in ancient manuscripts left by scholars of southwestern Algeria (particularly the Touat region). Geographic proximity played a fundamental role in strengthening and promoting relations between Algeria and Western Sudan in cultural, intellectual, and most other fields.

Through this article, we aim to highlight the most important intellectual activities and the dynamics of cultural exchange between Algeria—particularly its southwestern region—and the countries of Western Sudan, which maintained strong ties with the Maghreb in general and Algeria in particular. We will also examine the impact of cultural interaction on other aspects of life and assess the extent to which scientific, cultural, and intellectual activity was influenced by colonial movements that affected most African countries in the modern era.

Research Problem:

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West Africa and the Sahelian countries have historically maintained strong ties and civilizational interaction with North Africa—referred to in historical and geographical sources as the Maghreb in its four divisions, with Algeria occupying its central position. This centrality enabled Algeria to play prominent roles in maintaining balance among the states of this important region on the African map throughout the ages, from the Islamic conquests to the contemporary period. Natural barriers never prevented the establishment of intellectual and cultural connections between Algeria and the countries of Western Sudan.

Accordingly, here the study research question:

What are the main manifestations of scientific and cultural relations between Western Sudan and the cities of southern Algeria during the modern era?

To answer this question, the article follows this methodological structure: an introduction and five sections:

1. The concept of Western Sudan
2. The reasons for the emergence of relations between Algeria and Western Sudan
3. Factors that facilitated communication between Algeria and Western Sudan
4. Manifestations of intellectual and cultural exchange and interaction
5. Scholars who contributed to activating intellectual and cultural exchange between Algeria and Western Sudan (with al-Maghili al-Tilimsani as a model)

The article concludes with a final conclusion.

Methodology:

To address the topic, we adopted the historical method by collecting scientific material from sources and references, organizing it, and placing it within the framework of the proposed structure. We also employed analytical approaches in sections that required commentary, clarification, interpretation, and critique.

The Concept of Western Sudan:

Arab geographers used the term "Bilad al-Sudan" (Land of the Blacks) to refer to West Africa, the region located south of the Sahara Desert, bordered to the east by Lake Chad and to the west and south by the Atlantic Ocean. It is also known as the land of Black peoples and included kingdoms such as "Tibarnu" with its capital "Kaka," "Kanem" with its capital "Jimi," and Mali—known as the land of "Takrur"—which comprised five regions: Mali, Sosso, Ghana, Gao, and Takrur (Al-Mu'addib, 1999, p. 589).

Western Sudan differs from the broader term "Sudan," as it represents only a part of it. It includes: Mauritania, Mali, Senegal, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Upper Volta (Burkina Faso), Benin, Nigeria, Niger, and Chad (Bouaziz, 2009, p. 10).

Some confusion may arise when referring to the African Sahel region, which generally encompasses the lands of Sudan. This region—as previously mentioned—has long maintained cultural and civilizational ties with North Africa, particularly Algeria, shaped by various historical circumstances and factors.

Reasons for the Emergence of Relations between Algeria and Western Sudan:

Among the most important factors are those related to nature and geographic proximity, which facilitated the building of communication bridges across several fields—especially in trade. Commercial activity was notably vibrant, with caravan trade flourishing and exchanges taking place between Algeria and other regions and states of the African Sahel, particularly Western Sudan. This, in turn, had a significant impact on other aspects of life.

Another key factor is religion. The spread of Islam in the Maghreb and its arrival in the African continent was one of the most important elements that strengthened communication and fostered

a lasting civilizational and cultural legacy, whose آثار continue to this day. Islam first reached these regions through traders, followed by preachers—though the distinction between the two is often blurred, as both groups frequently combined trade with الدعوة (religious propagation).

The introduction of Islam into these areas is surrounded by some ambiguity, but there are indications that it dates back to the same periods during which North Africa itself was conquered—possibly to the era of Uqba ibn Nafiʿ (Harakat, 1988, p. 185), or to that of Ubayd Allah ibn al-Habhab, as mentioned by the author of *al-Bayan al-Mughrib* (Al-Mu'addib, 1999, p. 589).

The spread of Arab-Islamic culture was also an important factor in shaping these relationships and strengthening communication. This culture reached Western Sudan and even penetrated deep into the African continent, influencing some African languages such as Hausa and Swahili, and interacting with others in West Africa like Fulani and Wolof (Babako, 1998, p. 152).

As a result, these peoples embraced Islam and became closely connected with the peoples of the North through strong bonds of religion, culture, history, customs, and traditions derived from Islamic teachings, as well as other aspects of social life and behavior (Shakir, 1979, p. 40).

Arab-African connections deepened across both spiritual and material dimensions of life, with Islamic teachings serving as a unifying reference. The more firmly communities adhered to these teachings, the stronger their social and cultural ties became, taking deep root within their societies.

When an African individual embraced Islam, they found themselves alongside other Muslims, equal in rights and duties, and often receiving care and support sometimes greater than that provided by their own kin. Islam could elevate their social status, enabling them to become leaders, commanders of armies, or governors if they demonstrated wisdom and competence. Regardless of skin color, social status, or economic condition, individuals were always welcomed to pray in the mosque and interact with fellow Muslims—something that, in practice, Christianity could not claim to the same extent (Salam, 1969, p. 256).

Factors that Facilitated Communication between Algeria and Western Sudan:

Commercial Activity:

A flourishing trade developed between the two regions, which contributed to the spread of Arab culture and Islamic sciences—particularly in economically prominent Sudanese cities such as Gao and Timbuktu. Algerian trade missions often included scholars and intellectuals who combined commercial activity with interests in learning and writing.

These individuals actively participated in various aspects of life. When they settled in a place, they established circles for teaching the Qur'an and practicing worship, and they engaged in educational and missionary activities alongside their commercial work (Al-Jamal, previous reference, 1990, p. 140).

Trade relations had a profound impact, producing a rich and diverse cultural and civilizational dynamism that continues to impress researchers studying the outcomes of such interactions.

Sufi Orders:

Most of the Sufi orders active in the cities of Western Sudan—such as the Qadiriyya and Shadhiliyya—were also present in Algeria and the broader Maghreb. The leaders of Sufi lodges (zawaya) served as highly influential references for followers and disciples of these orders.

Sufi practice contributed to creating a favorable environment for scientific revival and intellectual production in fields such as jurisprudence, biography, and historical writing. This movement was enriched by a group of scholars and Sufi figures. Furthermore, these widespread orders in both regions played an important political and religious role, significantly influencing the history,

civilization, and development of these societies (Al-Jamal, previous reference, 1990, p. 147).

The Arabic Language

The Arabic language spread throughout the cities of Western Sudan alongside the deepening influence of Islam. It became essential for any African who embraced Islam to learn Arabic, as it was the language of worship and the gateway to Arab-Islamic culture, as well as a means of accessing the civilization of this noble religion.

Although some Muslim African tribes remained attached to their native dialects and defended them, Arabic nevertheless developed and flourished in this environment, becoming the language of scholars and jurists who contributed significantly to enriching cultural and civilizational interaction (Qasim, 2000, p. 155).

Pilgrimage Journeys (Hajj)

Muslims of West Africa regularly organized collective pilgrimages to the Hijaz, undeterred by hardships and obstacles. Kings, elites, and princes from the Sudanese Islamic cities participated in these journeys and took responsibility for organizing and supporting pilgrims. Their contact with various Muslim peoples in Algeria, the broader Maghreb, Egypt, and the Hijaz reinforced the spirit of brotherhood fostered by Islam (Al-Jamal, previous reference, 1990, p. 144).

The Maghreb—and Algeria in particular—served as a meeting point for different groups of pilgrims coming from the cities of Western Sudan and the African Sahel. These groups would travel together in caravans toward Libya, then Egypt, and finally the Hijaz. This created opportunities for interaction and exchange, especially among scholars and seekers of knowledge. Historical sources indicate that these pilgrimage groups often numbered in the thousands.

Unity of the Jurisprudential School

Muslims of West Africa showed strong admiration for the Maliki school of law, which was also the dominant school in Algeria and the Maghreb, preferred over others for a long time. The acceptance of this school by the people of Western Sudan represents a significant sign of harmony between the two regions.

The Maliki school gained great respect among the populations of Western Sudanese cities and became a major source of intellectual influence. It helped unify communities under a shared legal framework that prevailed throughout the Maghreb, contributing to the emergence of a scientific and intellectual renaissance, as well as the rise of a scholarly elite actively engaged in intellectual and cultural exchange between the two regions (Ibn Khaldun, 1968, p. 159).

The adoption of the Maliki school in Western Sudan dates back to early times and is linked to their connection with North Africa—particularly Algeria—where this school has prevailed since the early Islamic period. This adherence continues to the present day, similar to the situation in Morocco and Algeria. For example, Chad places great emphasis on studying *Al-Muwatta* in mosques and zawiyas to reinforce the Maliki tradition.

Manifestations of Intellectual and Cultural Exchange and Communication:

The forms of exchange and interaction between Algeria and Western Sudan were numerous and diverse, but the most important include the following:

Communication through Travel:

Given that relations between the Maghreb—including Algeria—and West Africa extend deep into history, it was natural for travel between the two regions to be frequent. Populations moved from Algeria to Western Sudan and vice versa, and among these travelers were scholars who played a key role in stimulating intellectual and cultural activity.

A thorough review of biographical dictionaries, encyclopedias, and historical works would reveal a vast number of scholars who traveled to Sudan, making it difficult to list them exhaustively.

However, it is important to highlight some prominent figures, notably the scholar Muhammad ibn Abd al-Karim al-Maghili al-Tilimsani, one of the most distinguished Algerian scholars who significantly energized intellectual life in the cities of Western Sudan and influenced major historical developments (Bouaziz, 2009, p. 143).

The same applies to scholars who came from Western Sudan to Algeria and its active centers of learning at the time, such as the Touat region. Mosques, scholarly gatherings, and zawiyas flourished with visits from prominent scholars, which helped invigorate intellectual and cultural exchange. This contributed to a flourishing movement of authorship in various disciplines. Among these figures were Umar ibn Muhammad Afayt and Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Sudani.

Exchange of Writings across Various Fields of Knowledge

The educational texts used in Western Sudan were largely similar to those in Algeria. This similarity resulted from the shared legal school, common Qur'anic readings, and the frequent scholarly exchanges between the regions.

As a result, educational focus was placed on core disciplines such as jurisprudence (fiqh), hadith, biography (sira), grammar (nahw), and logic, along with related fields like poetry, Sufism, and praise of the Prophet. These subjects had long been central to the intellectual culture of Algerian and Maghrebi scholars and were similarly influential in Western Sudan since at least the 5th century AH.

Consequently, many of the books studied in Western Sudan were authored by Maghrebi and Algerian scholars or were their works explained, summarized, or commented upon (Al-Mu'addib, 1999, p. 594). Works of jurisprudence received particular attention and formed the core of scholarly study—such as *Al-Mi'yar* by al-Wansharisi. In theology, works like *Ida'at al-Dujna fi 'Aqa'id Ahl al-Sunna* by Ahmad al-Maqri were studied, along with a book on logic by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Karim al-Maghili al-Tilimsani (Al-Mu'addib, 1999, p. 595).

Scholars of Western Sudan were closely connected to the works of their counterparts in Algeria and the Maghreb in general. They relied on these works in scholarly circles and lessons, and produced various writings around them, including commentaries, annotations, rebuttals, and marginal notes. For example, a commentary on al-Maghili's didactic poem in logic was written by the father of Ahmad Baba of Timbuktu.

Scholars of Western Sudan also contributed another genre of writing known as "refutations" (*rudud*), which appeared most prominently in legal and theological debates. Some Maghrebi scholars followed the same approach and produced similar works. One example is the refutation by al-Mukhtar al-Kunti titled *Jadhwat al-Anwar*, directed against two scholars from Shinqit, one of whom—al-Mukhtar ibn Bun (d. 1208 AH)—was initially strongly critical of al-Kunti before later retracting his stance, leading to correspondence between them. Another related work is *Fath al-Quddus fi al-Radd 'ala Abi 'Abd Allah Muhammad Akansus* by Ahmad al-Bakkay ibn Muhammad al-Mukhtar al-Kunti. According to Ibrahim al-Kattani, it is a large volume criticizing the Tijaniyya order, in which the author condemned blind imitation and the claim that independent reasoning (*ijtihad*) had ceased, considering such views a deviation from the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Works concerning prominent figures of the Maliki school also received considerable attention. Among them is *Nayl al-Ibtihaj* by the renowned scholar Ahmad Baba al-Sudani, written as a supplement to *al-Dibaj al-Mudhahhab* by Ibn Farhun. A response to it was authored by Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Ibrahim al-'Alami al-Hasani (d. 11th century AH / 16th century CE), titled *Idah al-Sabil liman bi al-Dibaj wa al-Takmil*. Ahmad Baba also wrote *Kifayat al-Muhtaj*, a summary of *Nayl al-Ibtihaj*, which was later supplemented by Muhammad ibn al-

Tayyib al-Qadiri (d. 1187 AH) in a work titled *al-Taj fi Tadhyil Kifayat al-Muhtaj*.
What applies to jurisprudence and legislation also applies to Qur'anic recitations. The populations of both regions generally followed the recitation of Nafi' according to the narration of Warsh across different periods and places. In the 10th century AH (16th century CE), Muhammad Baba ibn Muhammad al-Amin (d. 1014 AH) mastered both the Warsh and Qalun transmissions under leading authorities of his time.
In the 12th century AH (18th century CE), 'Abd Allah ibn Fudi al-Fulani stated in the introduction to his Qur'anic exegesis *Diya' al-Ta'wil* that he relied on the most authoritative grammatical interpretations, highlighted well-known recitations—especially that of Nafi' through Warsh, which was prevalent in their region—and explained legal rulings according to the Maliki school, which he identified as their adopted legal framework.
Despite the strong focus of scholars in Algeria and Western Sudan on religious sciences and their extensive authorship in these fields, they did not neglect other disciplines. They also paid attention to language, literature, and poetry in its various forms, demonstrating notable creativity across several genres:

Poetry:

This can be divided into several types, including:

Nostalgic Poetry (Longing for Homeland):

This type reflects the poets' sense of exile during their travels and their yearning for family, loved ones, and homeland. An example is a poem by Ahmad Baba al-Sudani, composed while in the Maghreb:

"O you heading to Kago, turn toward my town,
Convey my greetings and deliver my message to my beloved.
A fragrant greeting from a longing exile
To the homeland of loved ones—my kin and neighbors.
How dear are my relatives there—
My village, where my noble ancestors are buried."

Prophetic Praise Poetry:

Praise poetry (*madih nabawi*) was widespread among the people of Sudan and the desert regions. Many poems were composed by scholars and poets skilled in literary arts. This genre represents another form of cultural exchange between Western Sudan, Algeria, and the broader Maghreb, drawing inspiration from Andalusian and Eastern traditions. Poets exchanged compositions and created works reflecting their cultural and historical contexts.

An example from a 47-verse poem praising the Prophet begins:

"May God's blessings and peace
Be upon the Prophet, the best of mankind,
Radiant in appearance, near in generosity,
Kind and compassionate, a brave lion,
That Hashimite Prophet,
The noble, guiding one from Tihama."

Social Poetry:

This type addresses social and religious issues, depicting societal conditions or commenting on crises affecting communities.

An example is a poem criticizing the people of Touat and their jurist "al-'Asnuni al-Tilimsani" for honoring اليهود (Jews):

"O inhabitants of Touat, listen to my words,
It is time to reveal both part and whole.
Are you upon the religion of Muhammad,
Or are you and the Jews alike?
Why have you honored them above yourselves,
When Islam is more deserving of honor?
If this is the opinion of your jurist,
What then of the foolish and weak-minded?"

The City of Touat and Its Role in Stimulating Scientific Activity:

The Touat region was one of the प्रमुख centers that contributed to the development of cultural life and the advancement of scientific activity in southwestern Algeria during the modern period. It established strong ties with major centers such as Fez and Marrakesh in Morocco, as well as Tunisia, Egypt, the Hijaz, and several cities of Western Sudan including Gao, Timbuktu, Jenne, and Takrur.

Touat, historically part of what was known as the Central Maghreb (modern Algeria), represents a natural geographical and cultural extension between north and south. Located in southwestern Algeria, it occupies a strategic position between longitudes 1° East and 4° West, and latitudes 26° to 30° North. It stretches over approximately 2,000 square miles in a الهلال (crescent-like) formation.

Its location places it at the heart of the western Sahara, making it a key الاتصال hub between North Africa and the Sahel (historically known as Bilad al-Sudan), as well as a نقطة التقاء (meeting point) between eastern and western regions.

During the modern period, Touat witnessed significant intellectual production and vibrant scholarly activity involving both local Algerian scholars and visiting scholars from near and distant regions. It became a true center of intellectual radiance, benefiting students and the عامة population alike. This openness fostered strong ties with neighboring societies, especially those of Western Sudan, driven by dynamic intellectual, scientific, and cultural exchange manifested in multiple forms.

The growing activity of sheikhs and scholars in mosques and *zawiyas*, along with the exchange of scholarly visits and continuous travel between regions in pursuit and dissemination of knowledge, was a defining feature of the modern period. The region witnessed several notable figures during the 11th century AH (17th century CE), such as Sheikh Abd al-Karim ibn Muhammad al-Tuwati, who traveled from Touat to various regions seeking knowledge, including Beni Abbas, Figuig, and the lands of Takrur.

Another figure was Sheikh Abu al-Qasim al-Tuwati (10th century AH / 16th century CE), who moved to Timbuktu, settled there, and taught, earning respect from both the العامة and elite. Similarly, Sheikh Salim al-'Asnuni (10th century AH / 16th century CE) traveled to the lands of Sudan and was responsible for the conversion of many people to Islam. These scholarly journeys from Touat to Western Sudan had a significant impact on spreading knowledge in the region. Among the distinguished scholars who emerged in Bornu and influenced cultural and social life

was Sheikh Muhammad al-Tahir al-Fulati al-Tuwati, known for his mastery of both transmitted and rational sciences, as well as his piety and righteousness (Salmi, 2012, p. 69).
Following them was Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abi Muhammad al-Amrini (11th century AH / 17th century CE), who chose trade over a القضاء (judicial) position offered to him. He traveled between Touat and Sudan for commerce, and wherever he went, he seized the opportunity to hold scholarly gatherings and spread knowledge through teaching. Later figures continued this mission in the 12th century AH (18th century CE), such as Sheikh Sidi Ali ibn Hanini (d. 1115 AH), who traveled to Sudan, reached Niamey and Niger, and engaged in الدعوة and religious teaching for several years before returning home (Bel'alam, 2016, p. 251).
Conversely, there was also movement in the opposite direction. Students and scholars from Western Sudan traveled to Touat to study, completing the cycle of intellectual, scientific, and cultural exchange. Among them was Sheikh Abd Allah ibn Ahmad al-Fulani (12th century AH / 18th century CE), who came from Takrur to Touat to study in Zaghlou under Sheikh Abd al-Rahman al-Zajlawi and later under Sheikh Abd al-Rahman ibn Ba'amr in Tinlan, where he eventually passed away. Another was Sheikh Muhammad al-Aydaw'ali (12th century AH), who came from Shinqit to Touat after studying there and settled in Tamentit under Sheikh al-Bakri ibn Abd al-Karim as a student and teacher.

Scholars Who Contributed to Activating Intellectual and Cultural Exchange between Algeria and Western Sudan (Al-Maghili al-Tilimsani as a Model):

Biography of the Scholar al-Maghili al-Tilimsani (10th century AH / 16th century CE):
The exact date of his birth is unknown, but it is likely that he was born at the beginning of the 9th century AH (15th century CE), based on his death date in 1502 CE. Like many Muslim children, he memorized the Qur'an at a young age and devoted himself to studying Islamic, Arabic, religious, and rational sciences under prominent scholars such as Sheikh Yahya ibn Yadir and Sheikh Abd al-Rahman al-Tha'alibi, from whom he particularly studied Sufism.
As his knowledge expanded, he began teaching and became a respected scholar, training a number of notable students, including the jurist Ayd Ahmad, Sheikh al-'Aqib al-Ansami, and Muhammad ibn Abd al-Jabbar al-Fijiji. He was distinguished by his vast knowledge, mastering Maliki jurisprudence as well as logic, and was also a prominent شيخ in the Qadiriyya Sufi order. He held positions of issuing fatwas and القضاء in Kashna (modern Nigeria). Ahmad Baba described him as a leading scholar, deeply knowledgeable, devoted to the Sunnah, and opposed to its enemies. According to Adam Abd Allah al-Aluri, al-Maghili was one of the most prominent scholars to arrive in Western Sudan from Algeria and the Maghreb. Through his teaching circles, writings, and debates with scholars from both the East and West—such as Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti—he played a crucial role in shaping the intellectual life of the region.
His influence extended beyond scholars and Sufis to include rulers and political authorities. For example, he advised the ruler of Nigeria, Muhammad Waqfa, through a written رسالة containing guidance on governance and state organization, similar in nature to *al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyya* by al-Mawardi. This influence contributed to the establishment of one of the first Islamic states in Nigeria based on the Maliki school. His ideas also influenced Sheikh Uthman dan Fodio, who later established an Islamic state in West Africa that unified the Hausa emirates.

His Travels and Their Role in Reviving Exchange between Algeria and Western Sudan:
Al-Maghili undertook several journeys, the most important of which were to Western Sudan. He first traveled to the region of Aïr in northern Nigeria, then proceeded to the Hausa lands, where he settled in the city of Tighza, an important commercial and cultural center. There, he engaged in teaching, preaching, and reform, gaining a reputation as a scholar committed to combating

innovations, superstitions, and what he viewed as harmful influences.
From Tighza, he moved to Kano and then to Katsina, where he stayed for some time, married, and established connections with its ruler, Abu Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Ya‘qub. At the ruler’s request, he wrote a treatise outlining the principles of governance according to Islamic law and methods of preventing immoral behavior.
This treatise reflects his deep understanding of the political, economic, social, and cultural conditions of Western Sudan, as well as the customs and practices of its people. It also demonstrates his strong commitment to ensuring the تطبيق of Islamic law in these regions.
After a prolonged stay in Hausa lands, al-Maghili traveled to Takrur in Upper Volta (northern Senegal, west of ancient Ghana) and then to Gao, the capital of the Songhai Empire. There, he met its ruler, Askia Muhammad the Great, who had expanded his empire to include regions such as Kebbi in present-day northern Nigeria. The ruler enlisted scholars—including al-Maghili—to spread Islam and combat non-Islamic practices.
During his time in Takrur, al-Maghili also encountered the Egyptian scholar Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti. They engaged in scholarly debates, particularly regarding Greek logic, which al-Maghili supported but al-Suyuti opposed. Their exchanges included correspondence and even poetic dialogue.
While residing with Askia Muhammad, al-Maghili was asked to provide guidance on seven مسائل related to governance and Islamic law. He responded with detailed and comprehensive answers.
He remained in the Songhai lands for a period, continuing his reform efforts and strengthening religious, cultural, and intellectual exchange between Algeria and Western Sudan. He was well received and highly respected. However, when he learned that Jews in Touat had killed the son of Sheikh Abd al-Jabbar, he became angered and requested that Askia detain all Touat residents in Songhai. This decision was later contested by Sheikh Abu al-Mahasin Muhammad, who argued that those individuals should not be held accountable for actions committed elsewhere. Al-Maghili accepted this reasoning and intervened to secure their release.
These journeys played a major role in stimulating cultural exchange between Algeria—considered one of the most important regions of the Maghreb—and Western Sudan. This occurred through the benefits that the inhabitants of the visited regions gained from al-Maghili’s expertise and experiences, as well as from drawing upon his vast knowledge across various fields. At the same time, al-Maghili became familiar with the customs, traditions, and ways of life of the different peoples he encountered. He fulfilled the role of advisor, preacher, and guide, extending even to rulers, who valued his knowledge and sought his legal opinions (fatwas) to help establish Islamic principles in their lands and combat the widespread presence of pagan practices and innovations.
Thanks to these journeys, ties between the two regions were strengthened, and scholars in both areas received great respect and appreciation from both the العامة and elites. Mosques and scholarly gatherings flourished with prominent figures such as al-Maghili and Ahmad Baba of Timbuktu, along with scholars from West African kingdoms. Cultural activity experienced a significant revival, which had a clear impact on the flourishing of authorship in its various forms and directions (Al-Mu’addib, previous reference, p. 593).

Major Intellectual Works and Contributions Benefiting Western Sudan:

Al-Maghili al-Tilimsani left behind thousands of students in West Africa. Many scholars wrote about him and his intellectual, social, and cultural legacy, including Ahmad Baba al-Timbukti, Ibn Maryam al-Maliti, and al-Maqri, among others. They regarded him as one of the greatest reformers in the Maghreb and Western Sudan during the 10th century AH (16th century CE).

The intellectual production of that period was rich and diverse, with many works still preserved in manuscript form by his students in Western Sudan. Among the most important works are:

- *Iklil Ma'na al-Nabil* (a commentary on *Mukhtasar Khalil*)
- *Idah al-Sabil fi Buyu' Ajal Khalil*
- *Tanbih al-Ghafilin 'an Makr al-Mulabbisin bi-Da'wa Maqamat al-'Arifin*
- Answers to the questions of Askia Muhammad the Great
- A one-page تفسير of Surat al-Fatiha
- *Manh al-Wahhab* (a didactic poem in logic, with three commentaries)
- *Miftah al-Nazar fi 'Ilm al-Hadith*
- *Al-Fath al-Mubin*
- *Nayl al-Ibtihaj bi al-Dhayl 'ala al-Dibaj* by Ahmad Baba al-Timbukti
- A concise treatise on what rulers are permitted to do in restraining people from prohibited acts

Conclusion

After reviewing the main aspects of intellectual, scientific, and cultural exchange between Algeria and Western Sudan during the modern historical period—specifically from the 10th century AH (16th century CE) to the 12th century AH (18th century CE)—and highlighting the role of the Touat region as an important cultural center during that time, it becomes clear that it served as a destination for students and scholars from Western Sudan, Shinqit, Timbuktu, Takrur, and even from the far Maghreb.

This contributed to stimulating scientific activity and fostering intellectual and cultural prosperity, which had a positive impact on everyday life. Despite the scarcity of sources and some inconsistencies in their information, this does not diminish the importance of this historic region in southern Algeria. It functioned as a key transit نقطة for Sahelian countries in general and Western Sudan in particular, as well as a meeting point for trade caravans rich not only in goods but also in knowledge and culture—since these caravans often included scholars and sheikhs traveling between regions.

The movement of scholars and their journeys from Algeria, particularly the Touat region, to Western Sudan helped create a dynamic intellectual environment that benefited both Algerians and Africans alike, enriching their religious and worldly knowledge.

Through interaction with scholars from other regions, they adopted diverse intellectual approaches, acquired prestigious sciences, and transmitted them to their societies upon their return. This resulted in the emergence of numerous works across various disciplines, including Qur'anic exegesis, logic, linguistics, hadith, biography, and historiography. Cultural and scientific exchange also contributed to the rise of new urban centers and intellectual hubs established by scholars trained in both Western Sudan and southern Algerian cities.

Research on this topic still requires further rigorous and systematic work to uncover the depth of these scientific and cultural relationships, reveal overlooked information, and better understand the contributions of the many scholars and their students who played a crucial role in shaping intellectual and cultural life during this important period of modern history in both Algeria and Western Sudan.

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