

## **Contributions of Scholars from the lower Maghreb in the Sciences of Interpretation (Tafsir) and Hadith**

**Dr. Rahim Aicha**

University of Tlemcen (Algeria), E-mail: [aichouch20@hotmail.com](mailto:aichouch20@hotmail.com)

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### **Abstract:**

During the Hafsid era, the religious character prevailed in the lower Maghreb, marking this period with the influence of religion on intellectual life. Therefore, scholars and jurists directed their attention towards these sciences, which experienced significant development and prosperity, especially in the fields of interpretation (Tafsir), Hadith, and jurisprudence (Fiqh). Many individuals engaged in these fields, particularly because they provided opportunities for important positions in the judiciary, administrative offices, and other roles. Additionally, these sciences were praised as they helped people in order to ensure the correctness of their worship and the uprightness of their dealings.. To serve this purpose, the state established councils for interpretation, Hadith, jurisprudence, admonition, and al-dhikr. The Quran was prioritized among these sciences, as the descendants of the Hafsids dedicated themselves to its study, memorization, and interpretation, considering it the primary source of their legislation.

**Keywords:** The Hafsid dynasty, The science of interpretation (Tafsir), The science of Hadith, Scholars, Cultural life, The Lower Maghreb.

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### **Introduction:**

The first sultans of the Hafsid dynasty showed great interest in the intellectual and cultural aspects, bringing scholars closer to their councils and giving them special attention to encourage the spread of knowledge and religion. They granted them absolute freedom of movement to pursue learning and acquisition of knowledge. During the reign of the Hafsids, various sciences flourished, attracting students from all over to Tunisia and other cities of the Hafsid state for seeking knowledge and enrichment. The scholars of the Hafsid dynasty showed interest in both transmitted (revealed) and rational sciences. However, the era of the Hafsid state witnessed a significant flourishing in religious sciences such as interpretation, Hadith, and jurisprudence, with an expansion of their study to a considerable extent, moving towards simplification and elucidation. This is evidenced by the abundance of scholars who excelled in these sciences, the wealth of their writings, and the sultans' [www.psychologyandeducation.net](http://www.psychologyandeducation.net)

interest in the Quran, its interpretation, understanding, considering it the primary source of Islamic legislation.

Therefore, the Hafsid scholars paid attention to religious sciences like other cities of the Islamic Maghreb. The Lower Maghreb witnessed a plethora of scholarly works, especially in the fields of Quranic interpretation and Hadith. These works became reference points relied upon by students of knowledge in educational circles.

- Science of Interpretation (Tafsir): “Interpretation, fundamentally, entails revelation, manifestation, and clarification. However, in terminology, it refers to understanding the meanings of the Quran and interpreting its verses correctly to deduce valid religious rulings” (Ben Aldib, 2007, p. 129)
- Quranic interpreters are generally divided into two main orientation:
- The first orientation is known as the transmitted or narrated interpretation, “which relies on the transmitted reports from the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, to understand abrogating and abrogated verses, reasons for revelation, and the objectives of the verses. This is known only through transmission from the companions (Al-Sahabah) and the successors (Al-Tabiain)” (Ibn Khaldun, 2001, p. 554).
- The second orientation relies on opinion and independent reasoning, which can only be achieved through understanding Arabic grammar rules and principles, allowing one to comprehend meanings based on purposes and methods (Ibn Khaldun, 2001, p. 554)
- the Hafsid scholars paid attention to this science like other cities of the Islamic Maghreb, where the Lower Maghreb witnessed a plethora of scholarly works in interpreting the Quran, which became a reference relied upon by students of knowledge in educational circles. Among the prominent scholars who distinguished themselves in scientific institutions in the Lower Maghreb in this field, we mention:

**Abu Fares Abdul Aziz ibn Ibrahim ibn Ahmed al-Qurashi**, known as Ibn Bazzuzah: He was a scholar of jurisprudence and Sufism, as well as an expert in interpretation, theology, Hadith narration, and literature. He was also one of the leading figures of the Maliki school in Africa. He was born in the year 606 AH / 1209 CE in Tunisia, where he was raised and studied under its scholars, including Abu Abdullah al-Sousi, Abu al-Qasim ibn al-Bara', and Abu Muhammad al-Burji. The Minister al-Siraj described him as "one of the dignitaries adorned by the Tunisian court" (Al-Siraj, 1970, pp. 661-662) He authored numerous works, the most important of which are a Quranic interpretation where he combined the interpretations of Ibn Atiyyah and al-Zamakhshari. Additionally, he wrote a book on Sufism titled "Manahij al-Ma'arif ila Ruh al-Awarif" He also authored several other

books including "Al-Is'ad fi Makasid al-Irshad" (Happiness in the Objectives of Guidance), a commentary on "Al-Ahkam al-Sughra" by Abdul Haq al-Ishbili, an explanation of the Barahin al-Aqaid, and another explanation of the Beautiful Names of Allah, (Mekhlouf, (nd), p. 190) Ibn Bazzazah occupied an important position among the scholars of his time due to his Sufi inclination and the abundance of his writings, especially his interpretation of the Quran. He was one of the leading scholars of the Maliki school, relied upon by many. He passed away in Tunis in the year 673 AH / 1274 CE (Hossni, 1990, pp. 394-395).

**Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Ibrahim al-Haralli:** A scholar, Quran reciter, and interpreter. He was born in Marrakesh, He learned from many scholars of the Maghreb and the Mashriq during his journey for Hajj. He had knowledge of interpretation, Islamic principles, jurisprudence, rational sciences, and natural sciences. He was also the most knowledgeable person of his time in logic. He conducted teaching sessions and Quranic recitations in the Great Mosque and the Mosque of Abu Zakariya al-Zawi (d. 611 AH). He would present verses and chapters of the Quran in a harmonious and eloquent manner, applying the principles of Quranic interpretation similar to the principles of jurisprudence in legal rulings. Al-Haralli was not primarily focused on teaching; however, he authored numerous works, including "Miftah al-Bab al-Maqful fi Fahm al-Quran al-Munzal" (The Key to Understanding the Revealed Quran). He died in Hama, the Levant, in the year 637 AH / 1242 CE. (Al-Ghabrini, 1981, pp. 145-158)

**Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Ansari:** A scholar of jurisprudence and interpretation. Ibn Arafah acquired knowledge from him. He served as a deputy in leading prayers at the Zitouna Mosque, meaning a secondary imam. He authored a massive Quranic interpretation. He took up teaching at the Anqiya School in the year 742 AH / 1345 CE until his death in 746 AH / 1345 CE. (Al-Zarkashi, 1966, p. 71)

**Abu Abdullah Muhammad ben Muhammad ben Arfah al-Warghami al-Tunisi:** He was born in 716 AH / 1316 CE, originally from Warghama in the far southeast of Tunisia. He was a teacher, an imam, a sermonizer, and a mufti. He assumed the imamate of the Grand Mosque in the year 750 AH / 1349 CE and remained there for more than half a century. He issued religious edicts in the year 773 AH / 1371 CE and remained in this position for thirty years. He began preaching at the mosque in the year 776 AH / 1374 CE and remained there for more than a quarter of a century, receiving inquiries even from outside Africa. He had been passionate about reading and studying since his youth, learning extensively from scholars such as Muhammad ibn Abdul Salam, Muhammad ben Harun, Muhammad al-Zubaidi, Muhammad al-Abi, ben al-Habhab, and others. He acquired various fields of knowledge prevalent in his time, including Quranic recitation, hadith, jurisprudence,

obligations, logic, debate, and arithmetic. He constantly directed questions to them to satisfy his thirst for knowledge. Among his famous works are "Al-Mukhtasar al-Fiqhi fi al-Madhab al-Maliki", in which he compiled legal issues and clarified legal principles, and "Simplified Approaches to Schools of Thought", and ben Arifah authored works on logic, fundamentals of religion, an abridgment of Al-Hawafi's book on inheritance, "The Clear Methods of Giving Advice", "Interpretation of the Holy Quran", and "The Comprehensive Summary on Monotheism". He passed away in the year 803 AH / 1400 CE. (Ghurab, 2006, pp. 71-75)

**Ibrahim ibn Faid al-Zu'awi**, died in 857 AH / 1453 CE, excelled in several religious sciences and authored numerous books, including one on the science of interpretation titled "A Book in the Interpretation of the Holy Quran". (Al-Tinbukti, 2004, p. 296)

It is worth mentioning that most of the scholars and jurists of Hafsid were actively involved in the field of Quranic interpretation through teaching or writing. Among them was the prominent scholar of Bijaya and its sermonizer, Abdul Rahman al-Waghliasi, who excelled in various religious sciences including the science of interpretation. Moreover, Bijaya relied on the works of scholars from the cities of the Islamic Maghreb, becoming a reference for students in study sessions. One such scholar was Abu Abdullah Muhammad al-Maqri al-Tlemsani (d. 759 AH), known for his book 'Al-Jami' li Ahkam al-Quran' (Moussa, 2001, p. 117), The jurist Sa'id al-Aqabani (d. 811 AH) authored an interpretation (Tafsir) on Surahs Al-An'am and Al-Fath" (Boumar, 1972, p. 66) And others like Ahmed ibn Zago (d. 845 AH) and Abdul Karim al-Maghili (d. 909 AH).

- **The science of Hadith**

refers to the preservation of what was narrated about the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, whether in sayings or actions, and what was narrated about his companions. The science of Hadith emerged when Muslims needed the Hadith to interpret the verses of the Quran they disagreed upon. They began to collect scattered Hadiths transmitted by reliable narrators among the companions because it was not documented during the lifetime of the Prophet, peace be upon him, but rather passed down orally.

The Hafsid scholars took care of the science of Hadith, considering it the second source of Islamic legislation after the Quran, and among the most famous Hafiz scholars who excelled in this field, we mention:

**Abu Abdullah Muhammad** ben Abdul Rahman ben Muhammad Al-Ramah al-Qaisi al-Qairawani: He was born in 749 AH / 1348 CE in Kairouan. He grew up and studied there, then traveled to Tunisia where he acquired knowledge from many scholars, most notably Abu al-Qasim ben Zaytoun. Afterward, he returned to

Kairouan and became one of the leading teachers there (Al-Tinbukti, 2004, p. 118), In Kairouan, al-Ramah used to issue fatwas and teach from morning until the call to Dhuhr prayer, then after Asr prayer, he would lead readings in Sahih al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, Al-Muwatta, and Al-Shifa by Qadi 'Iyad in the Grand Mosque. Towards the end of his life, he taught Ibn al-Jawzi's "Al-Mawrid al-Adhab" and after Friday prayer, he would teach in his own corner, explaining any difficult lessons from the week. Many distinguished scholars graduated under him, including al-Shabibi, al-Burzuli, and Ibn Najji. Abu al-Hasan al-Marini and other scholars attended his classes, such as Abu Abdullah Muhammad al-Sati (Al-Siraj, 1970, p. 645).

**Abu Zakariya Yahya ben Abi Ali al-Zawawi:** A jurist and scholar of Hadith, he was born in the Banu Isa tribe of the Zawawa clans. He received his early education in the fortress of Banu Hamad, then traveled to the Mashriq (Eastern Islamic lands) in search of knowledge and studying. He settled in Jijel, where he established sessions for disseminating knowledge. He had two councils in the Grand Mosque: one for teaching the science of Hadith and the other for listening to the interpretation of the Quran. However, he would read Hadith after Friday prayer due to the large number of people and their crowding. He passed away in 611 AH / 1215 CE. (Hassani, 2007, p. 267)

**Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Samghan al-Qalai:** A jurist and scholar of Hadith, he was born and raised in the fortress of Banu Hamad. He initially worked in military service but later turned to the study of sciences and knowledge. He then migrated to Jijel, where he settled and studied under the judge Abdul Haq al-Ishbili. He delved into various sciences, especially the science of Hadith, in terms of narration, transmission, and chain of transmission. He held judicial positions in several Moroccan cities and also served as a deputy to the marriage judge, Abu Abdullah al-Usuli, in Jijel. He turned the attic of his house into a place for teaching his students, especially the distinguished ones among them. (Bouaziz, 1999, p. 37)

**Muhammad ibn Qasim ibn Ahmad al-Ansari,** known as al-Maliyuti: A jurist and scholar of Hadith from the people of Al-Murriya, And its origin is from Jayan, He settled in Algeria and then moved to Bejaia, where he settled and devoted himself to teaching jurisprudence and Hadith. He also led prayers and delivered sermons in the Grand Mosque. (Ibn Al-Qadi, 1971, p. 74)

**Abu al-Hasan Ali ben Abi Nasr Fath ibn Abdullah al-Bajai:** A jurist and scholar of Hadith, he was born, raised, and educated in Bejaia. Then he traveled to Al-Andalus and the Mashriq in pursuit of knowledge and enrichment, where he met eminent scholars from whom he benefited. He later returned to Bejaia after excelling in the science of Hadith and began teaching and educating. His classes were attended by distinguished students, prominent jurists, and scholars of Hadith. He withdrew

from public life in his later days and passed away in Bejaia in 652 AH/ 1254 CE. (Hilal, 1988, p. 242)

**Abu Bakr Muhammad ben Ahmad ben Sayyid al-Nas al-Ya'mari al-Ishbili:** A jurist and scholar of Hadith, born in Seville in 600 AH / 1203 CE, where he acquired knowledge under the guidance of Ibn Jubayr. He was a proficient memorizer of Hadith, knowledgeable about its narrators and their names. He traveled to Béjaïa, where he assumed the position of delivering sermons and teaching at its grand mosque. Al-Ghbarini praised him in his biography, saying: "He was a scholar of Hadith; when he recited, he traced its chain of transmission back to the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. After completing the chain, he would return to discussing the narrators, starting with the Companions, may God be pleased with them. He, may God have mercy on him, used to narrate around ten thousand Hadith with their chains." When his reputation spread, the Hafsid Sultan summoned him, honored him, and included him in his council. He passed away in the capital city of Tunisia in 659 AH / 1261 CE". (al-Hanbali, 1997, p. 298)

**Ibn Abi al-Dunya, Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi al-Barakat al-Saffadi al-Tarabulsi:** A prominent scholar of Hadith and Islamic jurisprudence, renowned in his era. He was considered the chief jurist and the head of scholars. The traveler al-Tajani mentioned him, saying: "He is among the distinguished figures of Tripoli known for their virtue, knowledge, and literary contributions" (al-Tijani, 1958, p. 272), He was born in the city of Tripoli al-Gharb in the year 606 AH / 1209 CE. He studied under the scholars of his time until he became proficient. When he went to Tunisa, Prince al-Mustansir al-Hafsi commissioned him to build the al-Mustansiriya school within the city of Tripoli. Later, he was summoned to reside in Tunisa, where he took charge of handling legal matters related to congregational prayers, marriages, and preaching at the Zaytuna Mosque. Among his works, we can mention "The religious creed" and its commentary, which pertains to the field of theology. Students used to memorize and study it under his guidance, and "Clarity of confusion in responding to the denialers of analogy", He passed away in Tunisa in 684 AH / 1285 CE. (Ibn Farhoun, 1991, pp. 25-26)

**Abdul Aziz ben Omar ben Mukhluf Abu Muhammad and nicknamed as Abu Fares:** a jurist and scholar of Hadith. He was born in Tlemcen in the 602 AH. He moved to Béjaïa, where he studied under its scholars such as Abu al-Hasan al-Harali, Abu Bakr ben Mahraz, Abu al-Abbas al-Milyani, and others. He devoted himself to teaching, conducting a morning lesson at the Mosque of Ain al-Jazeera and teaching between prayers at the Grand Mosque. He was blessed in teaching and successful in imparting understanding. Many students benefitted from his knowledge, including Abu al-Abbas Ahmed al-Ghbarini. He served as a judge in Constantine,



century AH / 15th century CE. He acquired knowledge from many renowned scholars such as Ibn 'Arafa, Ibn Khaldun, al-'Uqbani, al-Ghbarini, al-Barzali, and others. Then, he dedicated himself to disseminating knowledge, holding sessions that were filled with scholars and students studying Hadith, jurisprudence, and literature. Notable scholars like al-Qalsadi, al-Rasa'i, al-Akhdiri, al-Wasili, Muhammad al-Qalshani, and Ibn Marzouq studied under him. Al-Qalsadi mentioned about him: "The most prestigious schools showed great interest in having him teaching with them" (Al-Zarkashi, 1966, p. 136), Before teaching in al-Mustansiriya, he also taught at al-Sijumiya. Additionally, he was appointed as a Mufti and delivered sermons at the Tuwfiq Mosque in Tunis. Later, he served as a judge alongside the Mufti at the Qasbah Mosque in the year 847 AH / 1443 CE. In the year 850 AH / 1446 CE, he became the Imam of the Zaytuna Mosque and delivered sermons and fatwas there. He passed away in the year 851 AH / 1447 CE and was buried in the suburb of Sidi Bou Said (Al-Tinbukti, 2004, p. 308).

**Yahya ben Abdul Rahman ben Saleh ibn Aqeel al-Ajistani:** A scholar of Hadith, born in 777 AH. He excelled in various religious sciences, particularly in the field of Hadith. He became renowned for teaching in Béjaïa and other cities in the Islamic West. One of his works is a commentary on Sahih al-Bukhari. He passed away before completing it in the year 862 AH / 1452 CE. (Noueihed, 1980, pp. 229-230)

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