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**Centers of cultural enlightenment in the Touat region during
the Ottoman era**

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Abstract:

The strategic location of Tuat region in the middle of the desert made it a meeting point and at the same time a gathering point for caravans trade crossing the desert, which gave its people the opportunity to interact and deal with merchants and practice trade, tis later was an important reason for the scientific and cultural movement of the region, the Tuat region was known for the spread of many scientific and cultural institutions, such as Mosques and Zawiyas, that embraced the scientific movement existing in the region and were credited with forming elites of eminent scholars.

Through this study, we will attempt to cover the most important educational and cultural institutions that have made the region a cultural center that attracts students and scholars.

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Introduction

During the Ottoman era, the area of Tuat has witnessed a wide spread of scholar and cultural instituton such as Mosques, Zawiyas, and Ktatib wich embraced the scientific movment lunched in that region; thanks to this movment; many scholar has been known among them: mohammed al Alem Zajlaoui, Abd Arahman Ibn Omar Tnilani, and Omr Ibn Abd Elkader Tinilani...etc

We can see that the Tuaties has followed a specific wise to transform knowledge unlike the common ones, they relied on the progression of enquiring knowledge in sequenced ways, starting by rehearsing and reading until the final level of being a scholar, they were also very careful with the mental and transformational knowledge.

The region of Tuat is deemed to be a huge library that conserved many sources of knowledge written by different scholars, it was excelled by the familiar ownership to be transformed through generations of scientist and scholars of the same family. This way was of a great deal to preserve books and scientific resources.

In order to get a full coverage of the theme of the study we might pose the following problem:

-What were the main cultural and enlightening institutions in Tuat area during the Ottoman reign?

1. Educational Institutions

Educational institutions spread across the landscapes of Tuat are considered among the most important pillars of the scientific renaissance witnessed by the region during the modern era. Education in these institutions was conducted according to the requirements of each stage, starting with the kuttab (primary schools), then the mosque and zawiyas (religious schools), in addition to the "**madrassa**," which combined the functions of kuttab and zawiyas.

1.1. Traditional Qur'anic schools (Katatib)

The term "**katatib**" is the plural of "**kuttab**" (scribe), with emphasis on the letter "**tā**" and is derived from the word "**maktab**," meaning a place of learning (desk). Abdul Aziz Sayyid Omar Al-Mahdawi, author of "Qatf al-Zuhur fi Akhbar Ulama' Tuat," states: "**When I started my education, my father enrolled me in the Quran school with our relative who was a Quran reciter in our town.**" (Sayed Amr, 2002, p. 09). They are, as defined by Ahmad Al-Azraq, "**the place where the student receives his initial lessons and basic upbringing under the guidance of a sheikh.**" (Al-Azraq, 2002, p. 27).

Kuttab usually refers to a building or a group of buildings often constructed by specialists due to their simplicity. Some teachers might rent houses for educational purposes, or groups of people might build houses or rooms near the mosque for educational purposes, counting it as a deed for the sake of Allah (Al-Wansharissi, 1995, p. 155, vol. 2). They are given various names such as "**Al-Jami' in Central Tuat**," "**Aqrabish**" in Central Tuat as well as "**Tidkalt**" and "**Al-Mahdara**" in Gourara. Almost no village or town is devoid of a kuttab, as it serves as a public facility where children join from the age of four or five to learn the alphabet, writing, and memorizing Quranic verses. The role of the kuttab isn't limited to teaching children but also includes their upbringing and instilling noble values, such as:

- **Collective Spirit:** As kuttab provide students with group work or simulation of group work, there is interaction among individuals and the presence of common goals (Al-Sayyid, 1999, p. 73).

- **Participation:** The presence of a common interest among members of these schools fosters psychological harmony enabling them to understand, approach, and respect one another. Frédéric Dan emphasized that common interests among community members generate a sense of unity and solidarity (Suweif, 1980, p. 302).
- **Competition:** Since these kuttab aim to teach their students the Quran, competition naturally arises, leading to diligence and effort from the students. This is attributed to the high status of Quran memorization in society, celebrated through special events and feasts, bringing pride to the parents (Kraoui & Marachdi, 2001, p. 212).

As a result of all the above, these Quranic schools provide a fundamental education for beginners. Therefore, this stage was necessary for every student because without it, they are not qualified to continue studying in the subsequent stages (Boukrabila, 2010-2011, p. 88). However, despite their long history, they have not witnessed tangible developments in terms of their infrastructure (Masdali, 2009, pp. 60-61).

1.2. Mosques

The term "**mosque**" is derived from the verb "**sajada**," meaning to prostrate, and the mosque is named as such because it is a place where people prostrate (Ibn Manzur, 1405 AH, p. 204). The mosque, with a kasrah on the letter "**jīm**," refers to the congregational prayer hall (Asim, 2000, p. 282). The function of mosques in Tuat wasn't limited to religious rituals in Tuatian palaces but extended to education and dissemination of knowledge, especially religious knowledge, through study circles held for the public, lessons, sermons, and religious guidance associated with specific rituals.

The daily Quranic recitation known as "**Al-Hizb Al-Ratib**," where men and boys gather to recite, varies in timing, sometimes before noon, after Maghrib, or before Isha (Jiradi, 2010/2011, p. 70). This practice played a significant role in memorizing the Quran for adults and illiterates, and due to its fundamental role in spiritual guidance and educational unification for children, it has spread in the region since the introduction of Islam.

Examples include the ancient mosque in the Zawiya of Kanta for Sidi Ali ibn Ahmad, built by the Kantian people (Hawtia, 2007, p. 80), and the mosque of Qasbah Malouka, erected in the seventeenth century CE (11 AH) by the Belyali brothers (Aliq, 2001/2000, p. 55).

In the Timim oasis near the Ouled Waneqal Palace lies the old mosque of Sheikh Ahmed ibn Yusuf Al-Tinilani. Researcher Martan mentions that Hajj Ahmed bin Yusuf Al-Tinilani moved from the Ouled Waneqal Palace to the Tinilani Palace in 1513 CE, where he established his zawiyah (spiritual retreat) there. He was renowned in Tuat for his love of knowledge, which he fostered during the 16th century CE (10th century AH) (J. C Echalié, 1969, p. 19). In the Tidikelt region near Tameqdan, there are still traces of an ancient palace known as the Sharif Palace, which houses an ancient mosque. In the same area, there is an old mosque in the region of Oulf known as the Abu Saeed Al-Khudri Mosque (Gadi, n.d., p. 26). In the Gourara region, there are numerous examples of ancient mosques and congregational mosques in the old palaces of Timimoun, known there as the ancient congregational mosques. Among the most important is the Timimoun Palace Mosque, also known as the Ancient Mosque of Aghrem Agoubor. Not far from the ancient mosque,

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there is the Mosque of Ouled El-Hadi. Additionally, there are other ancient mosques in the palaces of Timimoun, Shirouin, Baderian, and Ouled Saeed.

These mosques and their counterparts have been religious institutions since their inception, where worshippers gather, and they are centers for academic and social life. The mosque, at the same time, is the heart of rural villages and the soul of urban life (Saadallah, 2005, p. 264, Vol. 1).

2. Zawaya

Zawiyas (spiritual retreats) in the Tuat region are considered among the most important cultural centers that stimulated educational activities and provided a unique educational system with specific curricula and regulations that differed from those of the past, especially in terms of depth, knowledge expansion, and educational system. These zawiyas combined educational, religious, and social functions. The term "**zawiya**" is derived from the verb "**zawa**," which means to collect or gather (Al-Razi, 1987, pp. 278-279). It was named so because it gathered knowledge, guests, and the poor. Among Sufis, it is considered the meeting place of Sharia (Islamic law) and reality (Sirr, 2000, p. 29, Vol. 2).

It is said that the term "**zawiya**" means a corner or a secluded place, derived from the verb "**zawa**," meaning to take a corner of the mosque for seclusion and worship or to seek refuge there (Bousselam, 2009, p. 99). In terminology, Ibn Marzouq Al-Tilimsani defined it by saying: "**...It seems that the zawiyas in our region, in the Maghreb, are the places designated for receiving and feeding the visitors and providing charity to those who seek it...**" (Al-Tilimsani, 1981, p. 413). Thus, it is a religious school and a free house for guests (Haji, 1964, p. 25). In the Tuat region, the zawiyas were known as ongoing charities that a person would dedicate during their lifetime and after their death for the benefit of people. The individual would oversee them during their life, and after their death, their heirs or those known as the supervisors would oversee them according to specific arrangements for the zawiyas (Abbas, 2000-2001, p. 122). Based on this concept, Sheikh Bay Belalem authored verses that included:

"As for the zawiyas, they are corners built *****Like a monastery or a minaret in the building
And in the north of the African continent*****They are grown for the saints' affairs
And it is said that it is a name for a building that gathers*****A school and rooms associated with
it

So the student finds a place there*****And it is also a refuge for guests".
As for the origin of zawiyas in the Tuat region, it is associated with the history of the region's architecture and the formation of its palaces, or according to the families that contributed to their formation. This is reflected in the names of palaces that bear the names of zawiyas such as the Zawiya of Hajj Belqasim, the Zawiya of the Tanner, the Zawiya of Sheikh Ibn Abdel Karim Al-Maghili, Zawiya Hinoun, and Zawiya Moulay Hiba (Hawatiya, 2007, pp. 234-235).

Zawiyas spread in the Tuat region due to its location on the commercial route linking Morocco and the West Sudan. Due to the vastness of the area and the difficulty of its routes, the Tuat region became a place for providing food to travelers, taking care of pilgrims and trade caravans, and promoting education and knowledge. These roles were distributed among the zawiyas of the region, with each zawiya specializing in one or more of these roles. Thus, the zawiyas in Tuat were classified into two categories:

2.1. Zawiyas for feeding

Their purpose was to receive guests and provide food to travelers. Strangers, traders, and pilgrims visited them for rest and food. The traveler did not need to carry provisions with him because in every palace in Tuat, there were customs. If there was a zawiya in the palace, the traveler would go to the zawiya's house, finding everything he needed for feeding the animals... And if there was no zawiya, the people of the palace had a custom and repentance for each one of them, and this system did not change even if the guest stayed for a long time (Al-Idrisi, n.d., pp. 234-235). Al-Ayashi talks about the Zawiya of Sheikh Abdullah bin Tamtam (Haji, 1964, pp. 1747-1748), Abdullah bin Tamtam Al-Daghamshi: He had a famous zawiya among the people of goodness and religion. He fed those who came to him in regions where food could almost be considered medicine. This was confirmed by reports about him.

He never let anyone eat from his food without leaving a portion for the oppressed. He was famous for his sayings and knowledge, and he had a special status with Allah. As an example of feeding zawiya, he said: **"... Our companions have praised him greatly and mentioned that he was among the people of goodness and religion, feeding those who came to him in regions where food could almost be considered medicine"** (Al-Ayashi, n.d., p. 12, Vol. 1). However, the majority of this type of zawiya, after a period from their establishment, engaged in educational and other social activities, with their sheikhs sitting for teaching and giving religious guidance (Jaafari, Cultural Relations Between Qawas and the Arab Sudan during the 12th Century AH, 2000, p.34).

2.2. Educational Zawya

These are known as Quranic schools or jurisprudential schools, where students enroll after completing the initial stages of education to continue memorizing the Quran, studying its sciences, jurisprudence, grammar, and Hadith.

These institutions have historically provided food and accommodation for students coming from distant areas, imposing an additional financial burden on the school's leader. One of the solutions was to utilize the services (food and shelter) provided by Sufi lodges (El Bouzidi, 2007, p.37). These lodges were established earlier in the region for the benefit of disciples, visitors, and travelers. The lodge met the school's need for students while providing the lodge with more disciples, thus initiating a complementary relationship. In Zajelo, Tawat, this integration was exemplified by the relationship between the lodge of Sheikh Ali bin Hnini and the scientific school of Sheikh Mohamed Al-Alami. Eventually, the relationship led to the merging of the two leaderships, scientific and Sufi (Jaradi, 2010-2011, p. 72).

The scientific and guiding nature predominates in the zawiya of Tawat, as they are credited with the spread of Islam in West Africa, with Tawat being considered its gateway. They are also considered the impregnable fortress that fortified Islamic identity, personality, and noble customary values. Moreover, the zawiya contributed to the graduation of many scholars, jurists, preachers, and fighters in the path of Allah. Regarding the noble message of the zawiya, Mohamed Al-Ma'moun Al-Mustafa Al-Qasimi Al-Hassani says (Razouki, 2010, p. 213): **"The message of the zawiya, as it becomes clear to any impartial researcher, is a comprehensive message that**

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encompasses this religion. It is a civilizational message linked closely to the scientific and cultural history of Algeria. Its role was not limited to education but rather its functions were broader and its deeds were more extensive. It was a fortress of education and jihad, an institute of knowledge and work, a place for recitation and remembrance, a council for reform and justice, a venue for consultation and advice, and a gathering for cooperation, solidarity, and mutual support."

2.3. Functions of Zawiyas

The functions of zawiyas have diversified to include various cultural and social fields. Culturally, they have played a significant role in spreading and preserving Arab culture, teaching religious and linguistic sciences, preserving knowledge in manuscript repositories, and fulfilling other roles as mentioned above.

In the social sphere, zawiyas have served as shelters for orphans, guests, and travelers. They have actively contributed to strengthening social bonds within the community through mediating disputes, organizing pilgrimages, assisting the poor with wedding ceremonies, and conducting mass circumcisions (Boumediene, 2009-2010, p. 25)

In addition to these permanent roles, zawiyas have also played a secretive or public role whenever necessary, such as calling for jihad in the path of Allah. In this role, zawiyas have encompassed the function of military garrisons and added to it the aforementioned scientific and social roles.

If military garrisons were initially established in the East during the Abbasid era as military formations and places to gather armies for defense against Christian invaders, like the Abbasid Garrisons in Tughur Al-Sham, the Algerian Garrison had a more far-reaching impact as its mission was not limited to defense alone (Shtara, n.d., p. 78, Vol. 1).

One of the most important zawiyas in the Tawat region is as follows:

2.3.1. Zawiya of Sheikh Suleiman bin Ali

This is the oldest zawiya in the region, founded by Sheikh Suleiman bin Ali who migrated to Tawat from Fez in 580 AH/1184 CE and settled in Ouled Washen. He started teaching students before formally establishing the zawiya in the beginning of 581 AH/1185 CE, and officially founded it in 595 AH/1199 CE. He taught the Quran, language, creed, and monotheism. The locals rallied around him, adhering to his teachings and spreading his Sufi ideology through the invocations he taught his followers. They dispersed throughout the desert and the western Sudan (Al-Hamdi, 2012, pp. 60-61). His wealth was dedicated to the zawiya, which served as a center for knowledge, education, worship, and Sufism. It was a destination for pilgrim caravans seeking rest. The zawiya boasted a diverse library covering various subjects such as jurisprudence, grammar, interpretation, medicine, astronomy, and mathematics.... (Ben Khwaya, April 2008, p. 118).

2.3.2. Zawiya of Sheikh Mohamed ibn Abdelkarim Al-Maghili

Sheikh Al-Maghili is considered the founder of this zawiya after he departed from Timbuktu following a dispute between him and Al-Asnawi, the judge of the Tawat community, regarding an incident involving Jews in Tawat. He chose to leave and settled in the oasis of Bouali, where he established this zawiya in the year 885 AH/1480 CE and began its scientific activities. This zawiya quickly combined both educational and militant missions, serving as a base for the Maghili army to strike the Jewish strongholds in Tazoult, Takhfift, and Timbuktu. Additionally, it adopted a Qadiri Sufi order that spread in the region of the western Sudan, further enhancing its influence

in these areas. The zawiya housed a library containing numerous manuscripts and writings, including those authored by Sheikh Al-Maghili himself. Furthermore, it possessed endowments consisting of lands, orchards, and a substantial share of the local water resources. (Al-Hamdi, 2012, pp. 62-63).

2.3.3. Al-Bakriyah Zawiya

The history of the Bakriyah family traces back to Maimoun (Bakri, Series of Scholars of Tawat, 2008, p. 106), the son of Omar ibn Mohammed ibn Omar Al-Baz, who was born in Fez and studied under its scholars such as Ibn Ghazi. He settled in Tawat in 909 AH/1503 CE, during the time of its judge, Abdullah Al-Asnawi, and married into the community. Sheikh Maimoun was the first to introduce the Muhit Khalil to the Tawat region after an incident with the people of Tawat prompted his departure to Fez, where he bought the book for forty mithqals of gold and brought it back to Tawat. The scholars admired him and accepted him, which increased the book's popularity. Following him, Sheikh Maimoun became a beacon of knowledge and was utilized by the locals until his death. His sons and grandsons carried on his legacy, including Sheikh Abdelkarim ibn Ahmed ibn Abi Mohammed, who became a prominent scholar in Tawat. His son, Mohammed ibn Abdelkarim (Bakri, Series of Scholars of Tawat, 2008, p. 122), passed away in 1092 AH/1681 CE, followed by his son Al-Bakri (Baba, 2011-2012, p. 45), who died in 1133 AH/1721 CE. Al-Bakri established the Bakriyah Zawiya in 1117 AH/1705 CE in Tawat, which continued to disseminate knowledge and graduate scholars who enriched the scientific arena of Tawat during the 11th and 12th centuries AH/17th and 18th centuries CE. Among them were the sons of the Bakriyah family, such as the judge Abdelhak ibn Abdelkarim, the judge of Tawat, and Hassan ibn Saeed Al-Bakri, and Sheikh Mohammed Al-Bakri ibn Abdul Rahman. Outside the Bakriyah family, notable figures included Ahmad ibn Youssef Al-Wanqali (Tamouz, 2009-2010, p. 43), and later Al-Tinilani, who established the Tinilani Zawiya, which dominated the scientific scene during the 11th and early 12th centuries AH.

2.3.4. Tinilani Zawiya

Sheikh Ahmed ibn Youssef Al-Wanqali, born in Ouled Anghal, a neighborhood in Adrar known for the mausoleum of the scholar Al-Wanqali, received his education from the scholar Abdelkarim ibn Ahmed in Tawat. He left Ouled Anghal due to harassment from his relatives and settled in the area of Tinilani, where he established this zawiya on the 11th of Ramadan, 1058 AH/1648 CE. He built its mosque, dug its wells, and constructed its palace. (Baatthman, The Scientific Role of the Tinilani Zawayas, April 2010, p. 5).

The period of Sheikh Omar bin Abdul Qadir bin Ahmed bin Yusuf Al-Tanilani witnessed the zenith of the Zawiya's glory and contribution. He visited Fez and acquired knowledge from its scholars. Upon his return to Tanilane, teaching activities flourished there in 1129 AH/1717 CE. This period saw the arrival of many students from various regions of the Sahara to study there due to the esteemed status of Sheikh Omar bin Abdul Qadir Al-Tanilani. He was described by the author of "**Sahib al-Durrah al-Fakhirah**" as "**one of the distinguished scholars and diligent imams in the school of thought, knowledgeable in grammar, jurisprudence, hadith, language, and prosody**" (Al-Muhaddawi, n.d., p. 3). Numerous scholars graduated from this Zawiya, including Abd al-Rahman bin Muhammad Al-Ghazawi, his son Muhammad Abd al-Salam, Sheikh Ahmed Belhaj Dafin Ouled Ahmed Timi, and Qadi Tinjurarayn Muhammad bin Ahmed al-Faqih (Hawtia,

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2007, p. 237). The Zawiya housed a library of manuscripts, which grew to around one hundred manuscripts by the year 1195 AH/1780 CE (Bou Said, 2012-2013, p. 23). The Zawiya was particularly focused on scholarly endeavors, and its graduates made significant contributions to the region's intellectual landscape. This serves as evidence of the abundant source of knowledge provided by the Tanilane Zawiya.

2.3.5 Baddrian Zawiya

As for the Baddrian Zawiya, it was established in the ninth century AH by Abu Muhammad Al-Jazouli, who was one of the descendants of Muhammad bin Suleiman Al-Jazouli. He was born in Jazoula in the Ouled Saeed area in the Tindjorarin province (Gourara) in 806 AH and spent sixteen years there studying jurisprudence, Arabic, and mathematics under Abu al-Abbas al-Laqani and his brother Abdul Nereer. He traveled to Tunis and met Sheikh Aba al-Qasim al-Berzali, then he went to Mecca and Medina. He was proficient in jurisprudence, principles, and Arabic, and he passed away in 863 AH. He moved to Tinrkouk, where he established the Jazouli Zawiya and affiliated Zawiyas in various palaces, such as the Fatiss Zawiya and the Bani Isa Zawiya. After his death, his son Muhammad bin Abdullah Al-Sufi managed the affairs of the Zawiya. He divided the Zawiya into three sections: the first section was dedicated to students and travelers, the second section was allocated for the poor, consisting of forty houses, and the last section was left for his sons and grandsons (Boukrabila, 2010-2011, p. 93). This Zawiya focused on scholarly activities, producing a large number of scholars, including Abdul Rahman bin Muhammad Al-Ghazawi and his son Muhammad Abdul Salam, Sheikh Ahmed Belhaj Dafin Ouled Ahmed Timi, and Qadi Tinjurarayn Muhammad bin Ahmed al-Faqih (Hawtia, 2007, p. 237). The Zawiya housed a library of manuscripts, which grew to around one hundred manuscripts by the year 1195 AH/1780 CE (Bou Said, 2012-2013, p. 23).

2.3.6 Aqbeli Zawiya

Founded by Sheikh Abdul Rahman, also known as Abu Nuaima Al-Qablawi, in 1650 CE in Aqbeli. Aqbeli is a municipality within the Oulf district, approximately 60 kilometers east of it. It is renowned for its manuscript repositories, including Bayt Al-Awda, Sahel, Al-Mansour, and Arkshash. Aqbeli is inhabited by well-known tribes that have contributed to its scientific production and cultural heritage. The Zawiya served as a meeting point for pilgrims from Takerkoust and Tuwat. This facilitated exchanges among scholars, enabling the sharing of scientific expertise and opinions on various matters. Notably, it attracted scholars like Sheikh Ahmed bin Al-Hajj Al-Amin Al-Ghalawi, who served as the caravan leader for pilgrims to Takerkoust, thus connecting Aqbeli to Abu Nuaima (Al-Bartali, 1981, p. 48).

The Zawiya houses one of the greatest repositories in the Tidikelt region and Tuwat in general, boasting nearly three hundred valuable manuscripts across various disciplines. Among its luminaries was the founder's son, Sayyid Ahmed Al-Habib, who passed away in 1205 AH (Belalim, 2004, pp. 398).

2.3.7. Sheikh Omar bin Saleh Zawiya

Established by Sheikh Omar bin Muhammad bin Al-Saleh, a prominent Quranic scholar of the tenth century AH. He passed away in 1599 CE, and his Zawiya emerged as a significant center of cultural and scientific influence in the Oukarout region. It welcomed guests and students from various regions. Notably, the renowned Sheikh Muhammad bin Ali Al-Nahwani Al-Ouqrouni was

one of its prominent scholars. The Zawiya produced numerous scholars, including Sheikh Al-Bakri and Sheikh Sidi Ali bin Hanini. It also attracted students from outside Tuwat, such as the writer Abdul Hakim bin Abdul Karim Al-Sijilmasi and Muhammad bin Abdullah bin Abdul Karim Al-Watasii (Jafari, 2009, pp. 166-167).

2.3.8. Sheikh Abu Al-Anwar Zawiya

Founded by Sheikh Abu Al-Anwar bin Abdul Karim Al-Tanilani (d. 1755 CE). He studied under many scholars, including Sheikh Bin Deen Allah Al-Titafi and Sheikh Sidi Ali bin Hanini. Engaging in trade between Tuwat and West Sudan, he settled in Awlif Al-Sharifa upon his return to Tuwat. There, he purchased orchards, wells, and built a Zawiya, where he engaged in teaching. After his death, his grandson Moulay Hiba bin Muhammad succeeded him and expanded the Zawiya. It became one of the most renowned Zawiyas in Tuwat and the wider region, attracting people and students from all over. Eventually, the Zawiya became synonymous with Moulay Hiba's name (Jafari, 2009, pp. 170-171).

These are some of the most significant scholarly Zawiyas in Tuwat, with others equally important, contributing to the intellectual flourishing of the Tuwat region in the modern era.

3. Libraries and Manuscript Repositories

Given the significant intellectual heritage that has developed in the southern Algerian region throughout its history since the arrival of Islam, especially in modern times, the area has housed numerous libraries containing handwritten manuscripts preserving the knowledge and scholarly contributions of its intellectuals. These repositories spread alongside the zawiyas (Islamic religious schools) and scientific schools in Tuwat, characterized by a familial ownership structure. This can be attributed to scholarly families renowned for their contributions to shaping and enriching these repositories, such as the Bakri, Tennilani, and Kenti families, among others, who played a significant role in establishing and expanding these repositories in Tuwat and even in the regions they traveled to, like Western Sudan.

Among the most notable manuscript repositories in Tuwat are:

3.1. Bakriya Repository in Temacine

One of the oldest and richest libraries in the region, founded by Sheikh Maimoun bin Amr in the late 9th century AH. By the 11th century AH (17th century CE), under the leadership of Sheikh Sayyid Al-Bakri, its second founder, the library's manuscript collection reached three thousand. For three centuries, the Bakriya Library remained a unified collection, overseen by scholars from the family who were recognized for their scholarly excellence and dedication. It was meticulously cared for, ensuring accessibility without discrimination and protection from innovation (Bakri, Series of Scholars of Tuwat, 2008, p. 28, Vol. 2).

3.2. Sheikh Abdullah Al-Belbali's Repository

Located in the palace of Kosam in Tuwat's land, this palace became a renowned center of learning since the establishment of the Belbali school in the 11th century AH (17th century CE). The school reached its peak in the late 13th century AH (19th century CE) under the leadership of the eminent scholar Sheikh Abdullah bin Ahmad Al-Habib Al-Belbali. This treasury houses a large number of manuscripts covering various fields (Jafari, A., 2009, p. 106).

3.3. Masnawi Repository

Founded by Sheikh Muhammad bin Ismail Al-Gourari, who brought books from Istanbul.

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The sheikh went to Baghdad and, upon his return, to Istanbul, where he acquired books and manuscripts. Before his death, he bequeathed most of the collection to the Prophet's Mosque in Medina (Jafari, Movement of Scholars from the Qarawiyyin in Fes to Tuwat during the 12th Century AH, April 2009, p. 159).

3.4. Sheikh Abu Al-Anwar's Repository

Located in Sheikh Abu Al-Anwar's zawiya, Maulay Hiba bin Muhammad expanded the zawiya and enriched its library by acquiring and collecting books and manuscripts in various fields, especially during his visits to Akedz and Tikdah in the Azawad region (Houtiya, 2007, pp. 240-241).

3.5. Sheikh Al-Maghili's Zawiya Repository

One of the oldest manuscript repositories in the region, located in the palace of Bouali near the shrine of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abd al-Karim Al-Maghili. Most of its contents are the works of Sheikh Al-Maghili, who left behind a scholarly legacy exceeding thirty works, both printed and handwritten, known for their diversity and comprehensiveness (Nouijem, 2001/2002, p. 48).

3.6. F. Melluka Repository

Established in the 18th century (12th century AH), credited to Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdul Rahman Al-Balbali, who passed away in 1244 AH. This treasury was considered one of the largest in the Arab Maghreb region (Faraj, 1977, p. 91).

3.7. Matrafah Repository

Founded by Sheikh Mohammed Al-Alam bin Abdul Kabir at the end of the 16th century (10th century AH). The Sheikh took great care to enrich it with valuable books, resulting in nearly five hundred manuscripts covering various fields. After Sheikh Mohammed Al-Alam's passing, his sons supervised the treasury (Jafari, 2009, p. 106).

3.8. Kunta Zawiya Repository

Also known as the Great House Treasury, established by Sheikh Ahmed Al-Raqad during the 10th century AH. This treasury contains a vast array of manuscripts covering diverse sciences and arts, with a predominant focus on Islamic jurisprudence (Al-Sadiq, 2007, p. 19). Sheikh Omar bin Muhammad Al-Mustafa bin Ahmed Al-Raqadi Al-Kunti (d. 1744 CE) contributed significantly to its enrichment by collecting numerous books through various means (Al-Tanilani, n.d., p. 38).

3.9. Abu Nuaima Al-Hamli Al-Qabli Repository

Located in Aqbeli, from the land of Tidikelt, established by Sheikh Ahmed bin Abdul Rahman bin Abu Nuaima Al-Aqbaawi Al-Kunti in 1725 CE (1163 AH). This treasury contains a large number of diverse manuscripts covering various sciences and arts (Al-Sadiq, 2007, p. 20). The credit for its enrichment goes to its founder, Abu Nuaima, known as the Sheikh of Caravans, for his involvement with pilgrims, trade caravans, and utilizing the books they carried. Thus, the treasury contains many works from Africa (Qadi, n.d., p. 197).

These are some of the most important manuscript treasuries in Tuwat, with many others equally significant. They are spread across various regions and palaces, totaling over fifty treasuries and libraries. They vary in terms of the number and importance of manuscripts they contain, as well as the diversity of sciences represented, influenced by the passage of time.

3.10. Academic Authorizations

An authorization in language refers to permission (Al-Fayruzabadi, 2005, p. 508); (Ibn Fares,

1979, p. 494, Vol. 1), The term "**ijazah**" originates from the verb "**istijaz**" meaning to request permission. Ibn Al-Faris mentioned it as the water that livestock and agriculture depend on, implying requesting permission for access. It is a scientific term coined by Islamic scholars in the early narrational periods. Initially, it aimed to authenticate sciences based on the Quran and narrations of the Prophet Muhammad. Over time, it evolved to encompass various fields of knowledge.

Through obtaining an ijazah, the researcher gains the right of narration, meaning the permission to narrate. This allows them to participate in the scholarly arena. The ijazah is granted by the sheikh to their student for narrating their auditory or written works, even if the student hasn't directly heard or read them from the sheikh. The sheikh grants permission by saying, "**I permit you to narrate from me this book or the book of so-and-so that was narrated to me, or whatever you have heard from my auditory works.**" (Al-Jazouli, n.d.)

When the sheikh authorizes the student in a science or a set of sciences they have taken from him, the lineage of that science is mentioned, indicating the sheikhs from whom it was taken, sequentially leading back to its original source. Mentioning the lineage was a sign of credibility, so many seekers of knowledge would go to great lengths to obtain an ijazah from a renowned scholar.

Observing the pursuits and competition among the scholars of Tuat and the students of knowledge therein, one can see their eagerness to obtain an ijazah with its lineage. For instance, Sheikh Abdul Rahman ibn Omar Al-Tanilani mentioned that he met Sheikh Abu Abdullah ibn Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Al-Dara'i in the land of Zaglu, during the time when the latter was returning from Hajj. Al-Tanilani sat with him, benefited from him, and read some books to him, then sought his ijazah. He asked for his chains of transmission, but the sheikh excused himself, saying they were in his books, which were in Tidikelt, and he was awaiting someone to bring them to him. Al-Tanilani returned home, and when he heard they had arrived, he went back, and the sheikh gave them to him, allowing him to take what he desired from them. (Al-Tanilani, n.d, p. 55)

Al-Tanilani was not the only one to strive for obtaining an ijazah with its lineage. The scholars and students of knowledge in Tuat exhibited great care and diligence in seeking ijazahs, as evidenced by their eagerness to obtain them, sometimes traveling to distant lands for an ijazah from a scholar in a particular book or hadith. This happened with Sheikh Al-Bukhari ibn Abdul Karim Al-Tamantititi, who traveled to Cairo to obtain an ijazah from Sheikh Abu Abdullah Al-Kharashi, the Mufti of the Maliki school in Egypt, and he got what he wanted (Al-Tamantititi, n.d., p. 01). Similarly, Sheikh Omar ibn Abdul Qadir Al-Tanilani was granted a general ijazah by the Imam Jamal Al-Din Abu Ali Al-Hasan ibn Rahal Al-Maddani in various sciences of jurisprudence, grammar, eloquence, and principles of jurisprudence. Sheikh Abdul Rahman ibn Omar Al-Tanilani traveled to the land of Tikror, where he obtained an ijazah from Sheikh Ahmed ibn Saleh Al-Souki Al-Tikrori in Sahih Al-Bukhari, "**Healing by Describing the Rights of the Chosen One,**" and in the sciences of jurisprudence, grammar, and eloquence. (Al-Tanilani, n.d, p. 48)

The students of knowledge didn't limit themselves to obtaining an ijazah from a single sheikh. Their ijazahs varied depending on the sciences or books they studied or the sheikhs from whom they took them. Their insistence on proving the chain of what they learned through seeking the ijazah, regardless of the number of sheikhs they studied with, is evident. For example, the index of Sheikh Abdul Rahman Al-Tanilani mentions that Sheikh Omar ibn Abdul Qadir Al-Tanilani

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studied under a number of scholars in Tikror and obtained many ijazahs from them. He also studied extensively with scholars in the far Maghreb, totaling twenty-two sheikhs, from whom he obtained numerous ijazahs in various books and compilations (Baathman, indexing of Abdul Rahman bin Omar Al-Tawati (Master's thesis), 2009, p. 50 and beyond).

Obtaining this number of ijazahs was not easy. It's reported that when Sheikh Al-Tanilani's father sent him to Fes for study, he immersed himself day and night in study and repetition, dedicating all his time to knowledge. He didn't even open a letter that arrived from Tuat to avoid disrupting his studies, until he achieved his goal and obtained the highest certificates (ijazahs). When he finally returned home, he started opening letters one after another, only to find in the first one news of his second mother's death, then his father's death, and the rest of the letters were as they used to come before those (Hassabi, 2007, p. 135).

This narration highlights for us the value of licenses and the extent of sacrifice that students of knowledge used to make in order to obtain them, as they are equivalent to the highest academic degrees in our time.

Often, the journey of pilgrimage was a path to obtaining licenses and scholarly invitations (The Kutubi, n.d., page 204, Vol. 1). Scholarly invitations refer to the request for a license directed by the seeker to scholars, experts, and traditionists, requesting from them a license in a particular field of knowledge or a chain of narration. Just as invitations come from the higher ranks, they also come from equals and those lower in rank. Some students of knowledge made pilgrimages an opportunity to meet scholars, benefit from their knowledge, and obtain licenses from them.

CONCLUSION

At the conclusion of this article, we can say that the Tawat region witnessed during the Ottoman era what can be considered a cultural, scientific, and civilizational renaissance, enabling it to occupy a prominent position among the neighboring cities and towns. Parallel factors such as economic and commercial factors, as well as strategic geographical factors, contributed to its activation.

This scientific and cultural dynamism crystallized clearly, and its features and images were embodied in the competition of a group of Tawati figures with dedication and diligence. It manifested in the abundance of compositions and classifications, which encompassed various arts and sciences, as well as in the scattering of schools and corners throughout the vast lands and palaces of the Tawat region.

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