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The Sakāliba and the Ghuzz in the Maghreb between the 1st and 6th Centuries AH (7th–12th Centuries CE): A Study of Onomastic Origins and Ethnic Continuity

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Abstract

This study aims to uncover the origins of the names Sakāliba and Ghuzz (or Aghzaz) and their semantic meanings in the Maghreb during a period spanning six full centuries of the medieval era. It does so by examining the historical origins of these two groups, which were newcomers to the region, from the beginning of their arrival in the Maghreb until the end of the sixth century AH/twelfth century CE.

The study also sheds light on the extent to which political, social, economic, and military factors influenced the employment of the Sakāliba and Ghuzz communities in the Maghreb in various spheres of life, while identifying their roles, functions, and contributions. This is particularly significant given that most contemporary historical studies have merely reproduced lists of the names of Maghrebi human groups without investigating their ethnic origins, ethnonymic meanings, and civilizational roles. Such studies have also overlooked the importance of identifying the status of human communities and the names of their constituent groups during the medieval period, while underestimating the role of newly arrived populations in shaping various aspects of life in the Islamic Maghreb.

Furthermore, insufficient attention has been given to the issue of the ethnic and onomastic continuity of human groups that appear in historical sources, such as the Sakāliba and Ghuzz groups.

Introduction

Since the beginning of the Islamic conquest, the Maghreb witnessed the infiltration of numerous social groups into its territories within a system of enslavement that had emerged even before the Islamic period. These human formations were neither racially nor geographically homogeneous. Rather, they were characterized by social and geographical differentiation from one another. Their ethnic origins varied, their geographical homelands differed, their routes of movement were diverse, and the channels through which they entered the region were numerous.

The clarity and diversity of their names in source materials, together with the emergence of their roles and relationships with the local population, appear to have transformed these enslaved Sakāliba and Aghzaz/Ghuzz, despite their differing backgrounds, into a significant ethnic component that made civilizational contributions to the region across the dimensions of time and space.

With their arrival in the Islamic Maghreb, noticeable changes occurred in the systems of administration, the military, and production. These groups became integrated into the service of society and contributed to the development of economic life. They also joined the Maghrebi military forces and participated alongside them in various internal and external conflicts, including military campaigns in al-Andalus.

In this context, it is important to formulate a central research problem concerning the meaning and significance of the ethnonym Sakāliba, as well as the terms Aghzaz and Ghuzz and their various linguistic derivatives. To clarify this problem further, the issue can be addressed through the following questions:

What does the term “Sakāliba” signify in descriptive and narrative sources, as well as in modern studies?

Did the term “Aghzaz” and its linguistic derivatives carry implicit meanings that were not explicitly revealed by sources from the Islamic period?

What were the geographical distribution patterns of the Sakāliba and Ghuzz communities in the Maghreb?

Key words: Sakaliba – Ghuzz – Islamic Maghreb – Ethnic Origins – Medieval Period.

1. The Sakālība Slaves: the “White Slaves”

1.1. The Ethnonym of the Sakālība “al-Ṣaḳālība”

The origin of the ethnonym al-Ṣaḳālība¹ in the Old Slavic language is Slaveninu, a term that referred to the population groups settled along the shores of the Caspian Sea. Phonetically, the term was rendered in Greek as Sklabeno, while in English the Slavs came to be referred to as “Slave,” and in French as “Esclave.”² The Slavic element is generally divided into three major groups: Eastern, Western, and Southern Slavs. They constitute one of the largest ethnic and linguistic groups in Europe,³ inhabiting mainly the eastern and southeastern regions of the continent, with their settlements extending between Constantinople and the lands of the Bulgars around the Volga River.⁴

Mohammed Meouak and Pierre Guichard⁵ point out that large numbers of the Sakālība⁵ world toward the end of the Byzantine period, following the events that affected their original homelands in Christian Eastern Europe, extending from the Khazar and Bulgar territories in the east to the borders of the Frankish and Lombard domains in the west. Germanic groups launched military campaigns against numerous Slavic settlements, resulting in the enslavement of their inhabitants and the subsequent transfer of ethnic groups of them as slaves to al-Andalus. During a second stage, these groups were transferred to regions overlooking the Mediterranean basin during the fourth century AH/tenth century CE, a period that witnessed a significant expansion of the Sakālība slave trade from the European shore toward the Maghreb.⁶

Historical studies have generally agreed that the meanings associated with the ethnonym “white slaves” expanded to include the Roman, Frankish, Slavic, Basque, Norman, Lombard, Sicilian, and Galician elements, in addition to youths, eunuchs, ghilmān (young slaves), foreign slaves, and foreign youths, as well as the mujābīb, ‘ulūj, khurs, and mamlūks.⁷

¹ Numerous ethnonyms appear in the sources to designate the Sakaliba, including al-Sakālabiyya, Saklāb, Siklāb, Sakālīb, al-Ṣaklab, Ṣaklābūn, al-Sakālība, and Sakālība. In various texts, they were also referred to as al-Mujābīb, al-Mamālīk, al-‘Ulūj, al-Khurs, and al-Fityān. Khaled Hussein Mahmoud and Karima Abd al-Raouf al-Doumi, “The Sakālība in the Maghreb during the Fatimid Period (296–362 AH/909–973 CE),” in *Economic and Social History and the History of Mentalities in the Maghreb and al-Andalus: Issues and Problems*, 1st ed., Vol. 2, Shams Print Press, Salé, Morocco, 2020, p. 254.

² Ahmad Mukhtar al-Abbadi, *The Saqaliba in Spain*, Egyptian Institute of Islamic Studies, Madrid, 1953, p. 8.

³ Al-Qazwini points to the demographic and ethnic strength of the Saqaliba in his discussion of their geographical territories, stating: “The Saqaliba are diverse peoples among whom wars take place. Had they not been divided in their allegiance, no nation could have withstood them in strength and courage, and each of their peoples has a king who does not submit to another.” Al-Qazwini, *Athar al-Bilad wa-Akhbar al-Ibad*, Dar Beirut for Printing and Publishing, Beirut, 1979, p. 614. This statement is supported by al-Bakri, who states: “In general, the Saqaliba possess power and might; had they not been divided by the great branching of their lineages and the dispersal of their clans, no nation could have matched them in strength.” See: *Kitab al-Masalik wa al-Mamalik*, ed. Adrian van Leeuwen and André Ferré, Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, Beirut, 1992, Vol. 1, p. 336.

⁴ The Slavs are generally divided into the Eastern Slavs, namely the Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians; the Western Slavs, namely the Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, and Wends; and the Southern Slavs, namely the Serbs, Croats, Bosniaks, Slovenes, and Macedonians, in addition to the inhabitants of Montenegro and the Bulgarians. The original homeland of the Slavs remains a subject of scholarly debate, but historians generally believe that they inhabited parts of Eastern Europe. They emerged onto the stage of historical events in the sixth century CE, when they expanded westward into the lands between the Oder and Elbe rivers, southward toward Bohemia and Moravia, Hungary, and the Balkans, and then northward along the upper Dnieper River in Europe. Ge.I, “Slave,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 20, 1960, p. 430.

⁵ Golden, P. B., Bosworth, C. E., Guichard, P., and Meouak, M., “al-Ṣaḳālība,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. 8, Brill, Leiden, 1995, p. 909.

⁶ Marek Jankowiak, “What Does the Slave Trade in the Saqaliba Tell Us about Early Islamic Slavery?,” *Roundtable, Middle East Studies*, Vol. 49, 2017, pp. 169–170.

⁷ Abd al-Ilah Benmlih, *Slavery in the Maghreb and al-Andalus*, Mu’assasat al-Intishar al-Arabi, Beirut, 2003, p. 215; Latifa Bashari, *Slavery in the Islamic Maghreb from the Conquest to the Departure of the Fatimids (1st–4th AH/7th–10th CE)*, PhD dissertation, supervised by Bouba Madjani, University of Algiers, 2008, p. 252; Ahmad Hamed Awda al-Majali, *The Saqaliba and Their Political and Cultural Role in al-Andalus*, PhD dissertation, supervised by Taqi al-Din Arif al-Duri, Mutah University, Jordan, 1428 AH/2008 CE, p. 45; Ben

The term *Sakālība* (Esclave) is an old French word meaning “slave” or “bondman.”¹ This was the designation used by medieval Arab geographers for Slavic groups in general, because certain Scandinavian Germanic groups habitually captured members of these Slavic populations and sold their men and women to the Arabs of al-Andalus. Consequently, they came to be known as the *Sakālība*.²

The term “white slaves” appears in historical, narrative, descriptive, and Arabic literary sources with various ethnonymic connotations. Among these are such designations as the *Ṣakālība* element³, the *Rūm*⁴, the *Franks*⁵, and the *Galicians*⁶. The ethnic group known as the *Ṣakālība*, or “white slaves,” which included eunuchs, young men, singing slave girls, and members of the harem, became associated with serving caliphs, sultans, and princes in palaces and princely households throughout the Islamic Maghreb. As a result, they were described as an “aristocracy of slaves”⁷.

It is well established that the owners of *Ṣakālība* slaves changed their original names, which were difficult for Maghrebi speakers to pronounce, and replaced them with simple Arabic names that were easy to articulate, such as *Wāḍiḥ*⁸, *Balāgh*, *Muẓaffar*, *Tārik*⁹, *Ayman*, *Maysūr*, *Shifā*¹⁰, *Mas‘ūd*, *Ṣābir*, *Rayān*, and others¹¹.

1-2. *Ṣakālība* Slaves from Europe to the Maghreb

The occupation by the *Ṣakālība* element of a prestigious position within the social hierarchy of the region, together with their proximity to rulers and their integration with other Maghrebi social groups, led Islamic sources to abound in their names and titles. The account of the author of *Mafākhīr al-Barbar* illustrates the position attained by *Wāḍiḥ al-Ṣaklābī* in the army. Ibn Abī ‘Āmir brought him from the city of *Ṣalīm* in al-Andalus and bestowed upon him the title of “the great youth”. He appointed him over the districts of the Maghreb, entrusted him with fighting *Zīrī*, and stipulated that *Wāḍiḥ* should be responsible for selecting the troops. *Wāḍiḥ* accepted this responsibility and selected the protectors from among the various other social classes¹².

Ibn al-Ṣaghīr¹³ provides a single account concerning the presence of the *Ṣakālība* community in the city of *Tāhart* during the imamate of *Abū al-Yaqẓān*. He mentions that a *Ṣaklābī* carried a lamp for a female slave who went to the judge at night. This account suggests that the *Ṣakālība* presence in the Rustamid capital remained limited, particularly in light of

al-Dhib Issa, *The Maghreb and al-Andalus during the Almoravid Era: A Social and Economic Study* (480–540 AH/1050–1145 CE), supervised by Ahmad Sharifi, University of Algiers, 2008, p. 38.

¹ Golden, P. B., Bosworth, C. E., Guichard, P., and Meouak, M., op. cit., p. 909.

² Samia Mustafa Massad, *Images of Andalusian Society: A Perspective through the Poetry and Popular Proverbs of the Andalusians*, 1st ed., Ain for Humanities and Social Studies and Research, Egypt, 1418 AH/1998 CE, p. 22.

³ *Abū al-‘Arab, Ṭabaqāt ‘Ulamā’ Ifrīqiya, Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, Beirut, 1996, p. 62. Abū Bakr al-Mālikī, Riyāḍ al-Nufūs fī Ṭabaqāt ‘Ulamā’ al-Qayrawān wa-Ifrīqiya wa-Zuhhādhim wa-Nussākihīm wa-Siyar min Akhbārihim wa-Faḍā’ilihīm wa-Awṣāfihiīm, ed. Bashīr al-Bakūsh, 2nd ed., Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, Beirut, 1994, vol. 2, pp. 63–64. ‘Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī, al-Mu‘jib fī Talkhīṣ Akhbār al-Maghrib, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Hawwārī, 1st ed., al-Maktaba al-‘Aṣriyya, Beirut, 2006, p. 40.*

⁴ Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣūrat al-Arḍ, Dār Ṣādir, Beirut, 1938, p. 97.*

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⁶ *Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī, Wathā’iq al-Murābiṭīn wa-al-Muwahḥidīn, ed. Ḥusayn Mu’nis, 1st ed., Maktabat al-Thaqāfa al-Dīniyya, Egypt, 1997, p. 347.*

⁷ *Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh, ed. ‘Umar ‘Abd al-Salām Tadmurī, 1st ed., Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, Beirut, 1997, vol. 9, p. 177. Al-Salāwī, al-Istiḳṣā li-Akhbār Duwal al-Maghrib al-Aqṣā, ed. Ja‘far al-Nāṣirī and Muḥammad al-Nāṣirī, vol. 2, Dār al-Kutub, Casablanca, Morocco, 1997, vol. 2, p. 42. ‘Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī, op. cit., pp. 351–371. ‘Abd al-Ilāh Binmlīḥ, al-Riqq fī al-Maghrib wa-al-Andalus, p. 218.*

⁸ *Adam Metz, al-Ḥaḍāra al-Islāmiyya fī al-Qarn al-Rābi‘ al-Hijrī, trans. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Hādī Abū Rayda, vol. 1, 5th ed., Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, Beirut, n.d., p. 298.*

⁹ *Anonymous, Mafākhīr al-Barbar, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir Būbāya, 1st ed., Dār Abī Raqrāq li-l-Ṭibā‘a wa-al-Nashr, Rabat, 2005, p. 121.*

¹⁰ *al-‘Azīzī al-Jawdhārī, Sīrat al-Ustādh Jawdhar, ed. Muḥammad Kāmil Ḥusayn and Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Hādī Sa’īda, Dār al-Fikr al-‘Arabī, Egypt, n.d., p. 41.*

¹¹ *Ibn Ḥammād al-Ṣanhājī, Akhbār Mulūk Banī ‘Ubayd wa-Sīratuhum, ed. al-Tihāmī Naqra and ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm ‘Uways, Dār al-Ṣaḥwa, Cairo, 1981, p. 69.*

¹² See the findings of the study conducted by the two researchers Khālīd Ḥusayn Maḥmūd and Karīma ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf al-Dūmī, op. cit., p. 266.

¹³ *Anonymous, Mafākhīr al-Barbar, p. 121.*

the rather obscure picture conveyed by the Ibādī sources. These sources did not explicitly use the ethnonym “*Ṣakālība*,” but instead merely employed the general term “slaves”¹, while also referring in several passages to Black slaves brought from the lands of the Sudan².

The historical narratives available to us concerning the Aghlabid period (184–296 AH/800–909 CE) clearly demonstrate the substantial presence of the *Ṣakālība*, who entered the Islamic Maghreb during the second half of the second century AH/eighth century CE. After settling in Ifrīqiya, which was then under Aghlabid rule, they were employed as servants in palaces. They were also incorporated into the army and employed in the households of the wealthy, dignitaries, and princes. This is evident in the Ismaili account, which reports the transfer of one thousand *Ṣakālība* from Rakāda in Ifrīqiya to Egypt. They had been servants of the Aghlabid emir Ziyādat Allāh, who was defeated by Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Shī‘ī³.

As for the account given by al-Shammākhī⁴, it indicates that Emir Ibrāhīm ibn al-Aghlab ordered his *Ṣakālība* slaves to be thrown from the top of the palace. On another occasion, he killed his young servants belonging to the *Ṣakālība* element and replaced them with Sudanese slaves. This allows us to recognize the prominent roles played by this human group within palaces and the households of rulers, as well as their ability to influence events and developments taking place among the princes. This, in turn, led to their elimination, as is more clearly demonstrated by the account recorded in Kitāb al-Siyar. It is further corroborated by the Mālikī account, which states that the *Ṣakālība* youth Balāgh⁵, one of the close associates of Ibrāhīm ibn Aḥmad al-Aghlabī, incited him to appoint Ibn Ṭālib to the office of judge for a second term⁶.

The demographic presence of the *Ṣakālība* element during the Aghlabid period (184–296 AH/800–909 CE) did not amount to more than a presence whose features had not yet become clearly established within the various political, social, and economic structures. Their roles⁷ became more prominent after the Fatimids seized power in the Maghreb. The Fatimids attached the utmost importance to them, and Imam al-Mahdī took care of their upbringing and education and integrated them into the systems of government and administration⁸, as well as into the command of the Fatimid army and its military ranks.

Alongside the legal rulings cited by Muhammad ibn al-Harith al-Khushani (d. 361 AH/972 CE) in his work *Usul al-Futya fi al-Fiqh ‘ala Madhhab al-Imam Malik* (The Principles of Legal Consultation in Jurisprudence According to the School of Imam Malik), the presence of the *Ṣakālība* element in the region is further confirmed by the fact that juristic texts permitted the purchase, employment, or manumission of *Ṣakālība* slaves. He states: “If a man swears by the freedom of a slave whom he purchases from the *Ṣakālība*, and the slave is then given to him as a gift, donated to him as charity, or inherited by him, then consider the matter: if what he disliked was specifically the ownership of a *Ṣakālība* slave, and this was the particular subject and meaning of his oath, then regardless of the manner in which he comes to own a slave from among them, that slave is emancipated by him.”⁹ This legal opinion indicates that this human group was among the

¹ Akhbār al-A’imma al-Rustamiyyīn, ed. Muḥammad Nāṣir and Baḥāz Ibrāhīm, al-Maṭbū‘āt al-Jamīla, Algeria, 1986, p. 79.

² Abū Zakariyyā’, Kitāb Siyar al-A’imma wa-Akhbārihim, ed. Ismā‘īl al-‘Arabī, 2nd ed., Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, Beirut, 1982, p. 104. Al-Darjīnī, Ṭabaqāt al-Mashā’ikh bi-al-Maghrib, ed. Ibrāhīm Ṭalāy, vol. 1, Maṭba‘at al-Ba‘th, Constantine, 1974, vol. 2, p. 312. Al-Shammākhī, Kitāb al-Siyar, ed. Aḥmad ibn Sa‘ūd al-Siyābī, vol. 1, Maṭba‘at al-Nahḍa, Muscat, 1987, vol. 2, p. 135.

³ Ibrāhīm Baḥāz, al-Dawla al-Rustamiyya: Dirāsa fī al-Mujtama‘ wa-al-Nuḥum, 1st ed., Kitābak, Algeria, 2019, p. 38.

⁴ Al-Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān, Kitāb Iftitāḥ al-Da‘wa, ed. Farḥāt al-Dashrāwī, al-Sharika al-Tūnisiyya li-l-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī‘, Tunis, 1986, p. 234.

⁵ Al-Shammākhī, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 231.

⁶ One of the close *Ṣakālība* youths of Ibrāhīm ibn Aḥmad al-Aghlabī, he became highly influential within the state and occupied a position comparable to that of a vizier. He was still alive in 267 AH, the year in which Ibn Ṭālib was restored to the office of judge through the efforts and instigation of the youth Balāgh. He most probably died in 279 AH. Ibn ‘Idhārī and al-Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān report that Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm killed all of his *Ṣakālība* youths because one of the astrologers and soothsayers had predicted that he would be killed at the hands of one of them. See: Iftitāḥ al-Da‘wa, p. 234.

⁷ Al-Mālikī, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 158–159.

⁸ A number of studies have addressed the presence of the *Ṣakālība* in the Maghreb and their contributions to various political, economic, military, and cultural fields. For further information on the subject, see the following historical studies: Muḥammad al-Manūnī, “Thaqāfat al-Ṣakālība,” Majallat al-Manāhil, no. 31, Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Rabat, 1984, pp. 189–209; ‘Abd al-Ilāh Binmlīḥ, al-Riqq fī al-Maghrib wa-al-Andalus, p. 261; Laṭīfa Bashārī, op. cit., p. 269; Farḥāt al-Dashrāwī, op. cit., p. 284; Khālid Ḥusayn Maḥmūd and Karīma ‘Abd al-Ra‘ūf al-Dūmī, op. cit., p. 270.

⁹ Al-Jawdhārī, op. cit., p. 35.

categories of slaves present in the lands of the Islamic Maghreb at a time when the trade in white slaves flourished, with such slaves being employed in palaces and serving princes, sultans, and rulers.

Accordingly, it is certain, based on the information contained in the historical chronicles, foremost among them 'Uyun al-Akhbar¹, that the Ṣakālība youths were appointed to high-ranking positions. One such example was Qudam al-Ṣaklabi², whom the Fatimid Caliph al-Mansur entrusted with the affairs of the state and appointed to supervise its administration when he set out on his campaign against Abu Yazid al-Nukkari in 335 AH/946 CE. Caliph al-Mansur Billah appointed Aziz al-Jawdhari as his deputy over the kingdom and the rest of the territories and entrusted him with the state treasury and the authority to administer it³ during his military campaign against Abu Yazid al-Nukkari. This was regarded as a prestigious position within the Fatimid state, since its holder, if loyal and competent, could attain an important rank within the state apparatus⁴.

The Fatimid caliphs also incorporated Ṣakālība elements into the composition of the army and into the political and economic structures, owing to their high degree of competence and the distinguished moral qualities attributed to them. They were likewise entrusted with prestigious positions, such as that of hajib (chamberlain), to which Imam al-Mahdi appointed a Ṣaklabi who would screen visitors from reaching him⁵. In addition, Ṣakālība youths were entrusted with administrative responsibilities, including the supervision of the provinces of the Maghreb. Thus, the Fatimid Caliph Ubayd Allah al-Mahdi entrusted the young man Yashkur with the governorship of Kairouan, and subsequently appointed the youth Sabir to the same position⁶. During his reign, Caliph al-Mansur also appointed the Ṣaklabi youth Muzaffar⁷ as governor of Tripoli⁸.

The Ismaili sources⁹ have clearly demonstrated the use of the Ṣakālība element within the Fatimid institutions in the Maghreb. The primary factor underlying their employment was their lack of affiliation with a particular group solidarity to which they could belong for protection or whose interests they could defend, and to which they would demonstrate complete loyalty. Indeed, the basis upon which relations between them were established was lineage in its narrow sense¹⁰, that is, their appearance as individual servants rather than as demographic groups. They carried out the services, activities, and duties assigned to them and were close to their masters in the ruling courts. They were not driven by any ambition for status or prestige, for "the slave and his property belong to his master."¹¹

As for the Almoravid period (480–540 AH/1056–1145 CE), we do not possess references in the sources of the period that explicitly attest to the presence of the ethnonym Ṣakālība. The new terms that replaced this ethnonym were "al-Rūm" (Romans/Byzantines), "al-Ḥasham," "al-'Ulūj," "al-Fityān" (young men), and "al-Khiṣyān" (eunuchs).¹² This can be

¹ Muhammad ibn al-Harith al-Khushani, *Usul al-Futya fi al-Fiqh 'ala Madhhab al-Imam Malik*, edited by Muhammad al-Majdhub, Muhammad Abu al-Ajfan, and Uthman Batikh, al-Dar al-'Arabiyya lil-Kitab, Cairo, 1405 AH/1985 CE, p. 212.

² al-Da'i Idris, *Tarikh al-Khulafa' al-Fatimiyyin bi al-Maghrib: al-Qism al-Khass min Kitab 'Uyun al-Akhbar*, edited by Muhammad al-Ya'lawi, Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, Beirut, 1405 AH/1985 CE, p. 387.

³ The sources of both Sunni and Ismaili authors contain conflicting information concerning the name of this Ṣaklabi servant. Some refer to him by the ethnonym Qudam al-Ṣaklabi, while others call him Maddam al-Ṣaklabi. For verification, see: Ibn 'Idhari, *al-Bayan al-Mughrib fi Akhbar al-Andalus wa al-Maghrib*, edited by G. S. Colin and E. Lévi-Provençal, 3rd ed., Dar al-Thakafa, Beirut, 1983, vol. 1, p. 303; Ibn Hammad al-Sanhaji, *op. cit.*, p. 71; al-Da'i Idris, *op. cit.*, p. 387.

⁴ al-Jawdhari, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

⁵ Latifa Bashari, previously cited work, p. 373.

⁶ al-Maliki, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 63–64.

⁷ Ibn 'Idhari, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 191.

⁸ One of the Ṣakālība youths who served the Fatimids, alongside figures such as Jawhar, Maysur, and Qaysar. He had taught al-Mu'izz li-Din Allah how to write during his childhood. However, al-Mu'izz later ordered his execution. The actual reason may have been that the influence of the Ṣakālība youths had become so powerful that it overshadowed that of the caliph himself. Consequently, he eliminated some of them, including Qaysar and Muzaffar, in 349 AH/960 CE. Al-Qadi al-Nu'man, *al-Majalis wa al-Musayarat*, edited by al-Habib al-Fiqi, Ibrahim Shtouh, and Muhammad al-Ya'lawi, 1st ed., Dar al-Muntazar, Beirut, 1996, pp. 435–436.

⁹ *Ibid.*, same page.

¹⁰ See: al-Qādī al-Nu'mān, *Iftitāh al-Da'wa*, p. 299; al-Dā'ī Idrīs, previous source, pp. 247–262, 357; al-Jawdhārī, previous source, pp. 35–88, 131; Ibn Ḥammād al-Ṣinhājī, previous source, pp. 69–71.

¹¹ Muḥammad 'Ābid al-Jābirī, *al-'Aṣabiyya wa-l-Dawla: Ma'ālim Naẓariyya Khaldūniyya fī al-Tārīkh al-Islāmī*, 6th ed., Center for Arab Unity Studies, Beirut, 1414 AH/1994 CE, p. 187.

¹² Laṭīfa Bashārī, previous source, p. 245.

attributed to a clear change in the sources from which the *Ṣakālība* element was supplied. The lands of the Slavs were no longer the principal center for the supply of white slaves; rather, this role became confined to the Christian principalities of al-Andalus, particularly Castile and Aragon.¹ This resulted in a clear ethnonymic transformation in the names used for *Ṣakālība* minorities in the Maghreb during the Almoravid period.

During the Almohad period,² and in the middle of the fifth century AH/eleventh century CE, al-Bakrī points to the³ continued presence of the *Ṣakālība* as one of the components of the demographic composition of the Emirate of Nakūr⁴ in the Far Maghreb. They rebelled against the emir Saʿīd ibn Ṣāliḥ, who had exempted them from taxation, but they demanded complete manumission so that they could become free, distinguishing themselves from the other categories of slaves. They confronted him in a battle at his palace, where he defeated them. They then moved toward the mountain foothills bordering the territories of the Emirate of Nakūr and fortified themselves in a village known as the Village of the *Ṣakālība* for seven days. Saʿīd ibn Ṣāliḥ then personally went out to confront them and fought them until he subdued them.⁵

Although we lack a firm ethnological basis for the *Ṣakālība* as a group, Arab genealogists,⁶ chroniclers,⁷ and travelers cent from Japheth (Yāfith), son of Ham, attempted to trace their ethnic affiliation to eastern origins, specifically to des⁸ This is evident in the text provided by Ibn Ḥawqal, who states: “The *Ṣakālība* are among the descendants of Japheth...” This is further reinforced by the response given by the Fatimid caliph al-Muʿizz li-Dīn Allāh after receiving a letter from the *Ṣakālībī* Jawdhar concerning equality among all ethnic groups in the Maghreb. He stated: “Are not the Blacks among the descendants of Ham ibn Noah, the Messenger of God? And are not the *Ṣakālība* among the descendants of Japheth ibn Noah, the Messenger of God?”⁹

In conclusion, it may be argued that we possess no evidence concerning the alleged Hamitic lineage of the *Ṣakālība* as a group, particularly since this classification was an ethnic categorization carrying political dimensions and underlying political implications. The integration of *Ṣakālība* groups into the social system of the Maghreb¹⁰ was accompanied by a clear recognition on the part of its rulers of their presence as a human element enjoying a distinguished status and position, comparable to those of other social groups. This was particularly evident during the Fatimid period (296–365 AH/909–975 CE), owing to the diverse contributions and services they provided to the Fatimids across various political, military, and economic spheres.

2/ The Ghuzz Slaves – Ghuzz:

¹ Ibn ʿIdhārī, previous source, 2/223; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh, 7/352; al-Salāwī, previous source, 2/251.

² Ibrāhīm al-Qādirī Būtišīš, Mabāḥith fī al-Tārīkh al-Ijtīmāʿī li-l-Maghrib wa-l-Andalus Khilāl ʿAṣr al-Murābiṭīn, Dār al-Ṭalīʿa li-l-Ṭibāʿa wa-l-Nashr, Beirut, 2002 CE, p. 46. See also the same author, al-Muhammashūn fī Tārīkh al-Gharb al-Islāmī, p. 287.

³ Political discourse addressed directly to slaves in the Islamic Maghreb was associated with several letters concerning the *Ṣakālība* element. Accordingly, it is possible to examine the presence of the concepts of slavery and enslavement in the political mentality of the men of politics in the Maghreb. The Almohad period provides a particularly expressive example of this phenomenon. Imam Ibn Tūmart invoked, on more than one occasion, the relationship between slave and master and employed it explicitly for political purposes. ʿAbd al-Ilāh Binmlīḥ, al-Riq fī al-Maghrib wa-l-Andalus, pp. 480–481.

⁴ al-Masālik wa-l-Mamālik, 2/768.

⁵ An emirate located in the Rif region of the Far Maghreb, near the city of Melilla. It was founded by Saʿīd ibn Idrīs ibn Ṣāliḥ ibn Manṣūr, with Timsāmān, overlooking the sea, serving as its capital. The population base upon which the Banū Ṣāliḥ emirate was established consisted of Nafza, the principal tribal confederation around which other branches, such as Ṣinhāja, Zanāta, and Ghumāra, were organized. Al-Bakrī, previous source, 2/763. Aḥmad al-Tāhirī, “The Emirate of Banū Ṣāliḥ in the Land of Nakūr,” ed. Muḥammad Ūniyā, Majallat Ḥawliyyāt al-Rīf, no. 2, Morocco, 2009 CE, p. 153.

⁶ Ibn ʿIdhārī, previous source, 1/177. See also the following study: Dariusz Rozmus, “A More Precise Dating of the as-*Ṣakālība* Rebellion in the Medieval Maghrib,” Folia Orientalia, vol. 32, 1996, pp. 157–158.

⁷ Al-Samʿānī, al-Ansāb, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Yaḥyā, 1st ed., Ottoman Encyclopedia Council, Hyderabad, India, 1962 CE, p. 320.

⁸ Al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh al-Rusul wa-l-Mulūk, vol. 2, 2nd ed., Dār al-Turāth, Beirut, 1967 CE, 1/206; Ibn Khaldūn, Dīwān al-Mubtadaʿ wa-l-Khabar fī Ayyām al-ʿArab wa-l-ʿAjam wa-l-Barbar wa-man ʿĀṣarahum min Dhawī al-Sulṭān al-Akbar, ed. Khalīl Shaḥāda, Dār al-Fikr, Beirut, 2001 CE, 2/218.

⁹ Ibn Ḥawqal, previous source, p. 110.

¹⁰ Al-Jawdhārī, previous source, p. 65.

2-1/ The Ethnonym al-Aghzāz – Ghuzz (Ghuzz):

The ethnonyms “Oghuz,” “Oghz,” and “Ghuzz” were used to designate a human group whose origins can be traced to one of the Turkic tribal confederations that, during the fifth century AH/eleventh century CE, inhabited the region between the steppes of Central Asia and Mongolia. It is not unlikely that the Orkhon inscriptions, which provide some of the earliest descriptions of Turkic human groups, referred to the Seljuk Ghuzz, who constituted one branch of the Ghuzz. Furthermore, by the end of the fifth century AH/eleventh century CE, their territories had extended from the Amu Darya River in Central Asia to the Persian Gulf in the south, and from the Indus River in the east to the Mediterranean Sea in the west.¹

2-2/ The Ghuzz Invasion: How Did They Enter the Maghreb?

Historical sources record the arrival of the Ghuzz group in the Maghreb in 486 AH/1093 CE. However, it should be noted that their numbers remained limited during the Almoravid period. There is no evidence indicating their presence in the Maghreb apart from a single account found exclusively in Rawd al-Qirtas, which mentions that Emir Yusuf ibn Tashfin recruited the Turkish Ghuzz into the Almoravid armies.²

The Ghuzz elements became more prominent in the Maghreb during the Hammadid period, when they seized Tripoli and subsequently moved toward other areas of Ifriqiya in 488 AH/1095 CE, particularly the regions of Gabès and al-Jarīd. This resulted in a state of disorder in Ifriqiya, prompting the Sanhaji emir Yahya ibn Tamim to confront them. He³ engaged in a military conflict with Shah Malik al-Ghuzzi,⁴ the commander of the Ghuzz, and inflicted a defeat upon them in the city of Sfax in Ifrikiya.⁵

More than eighty years later, in 569 AH/1173 CE, the Maghreb witnessed another movement of this ethnic group, which formed part of the composition of the Mamluk army that entered the city of Tripoli as part of the campaign led by Baha

¹ It should not be overlooked in this context that the Ṣakālība played various roles and made significant contributions in the Maghreb during the medieval period. Evidence for this can be found in the documentary traditions that transmitted accounts of them. They were integrated into various political, military, and economic structures in the Maghreb from the second century AH through the first quarter of the seventh century AH, that is, throughout the period under study. They appeared as commanders in Maghrebi armies, as close associates of rulers in royal courts, and as important officials appointed to high-ranking positions. They also participated in internal rebellions and played a role in assassinations within palaces. Furthermore, they led land and naval campaigns against European states and the Italian city-states, in addition to being employed in Fatimid campaigns against Egypt, the territory that the Fatimids had sought to control ever since their arrival in the Maghreb in the third century AH. Various Sunni, Ibadi, and Ismaili sources testified to the prominent presence of the Ṣakālība in Maghrebi society and to the distinguished performance they demonstrated during periods in which other forms of group solidarity and other human elements were marginalized. For verification, see: al-Dā'ir Idrīs, previous source, p. 425; al-Jawdhārī, previous source, p. 41; Ibn 'Idhārī, previous source, 1/209

² Adam Zeidan, “Ghuzz, Oghuz,” Oghuz History, Empire, & Turkic Peoples – Encyclopedia, <https://www.britannica>.

³ Ibn Abi Zar', Al-Anis al-Mutrib bi-Rawd al-Qirtas fi Akhbar Muluk al-Maghrib wa-Ta'rikh Madinat Fas, lithographic edition, Morocco, p. 140; al-Salawi, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 27.

⁴ It should be noted here that there is a major issue concerning the conflicting historical accounts regarding the arrival of Ghuzz groups in the Maghreb during the Almoravid period. The only account available to us is that of Ibn Abi Zar' in Rawd al-Qirtas, which is not corroborated by other sources. Therefore, it cannot be accepted as conclusive evidence of the presence of the Ghuzz element in the Maghreb during Almoravid rule, particularly in the absence of indications in other historical records pointing to their arrival and settlement in the region. Ibn Abi Zar', op. cit., p. 140.

⁵ Yahya ibn Tamim ibn al-Mu'izz ibn Badis al-Sanhaji governed Mahdia in 497 AH/1103 CE and succeeded his father in 501 AH/1107 CE. He is credited with constructing the Zirid naval fleet, with which he participated in the conquest of the cities of Genoa and Sardinia. He died in 509 AH/1116 CE. Al-Zirikli, Al-A'lam, 15th ed., vol. 8, Dar al-Ilm lil-Malayin, 2002, pp. 139–140.

al-Din Qaraqush al-Muzaffari.¹ This is explained by the account reported by Ibn Wasil,² who states: “Qaraqush proceeded ... to the Maghreb with a group of Turks, and a group of Arabs joined him. He seized Tripoli of the West and much of the territory of Ifriqiya.”

As for the Far Maghreb, groups of the Ghuzz entered Marrakesh in considerable numbers during the reign of Caliph Abu Ya‘qub Yusuf. They subsequently became one of the components of the demographic and ethnic landscape of the Far Maghreb. The author of *Al-Mu‘jib* stated: “During the days of Abu Ya‘qub, the Ghuzz first came to the Maghreb, in the year 574 AH, and they continued to increase among us until the final days of Abu Yusuf.”³ In another passage, he also demonstrated the continued arrival of groups of the Ghuzz in the western part of the Maghreb. Apparently, the principal reason for their intensive presence during the Almohad period was their association with the military positions and duties assigned to them, as these groups continued to arrive in the region throughout the Almohad era.⁴ Evidence of this is found in the fact that during the reign of Caliph Abu Yusuf Ya‘qub, either in 582 or 583 AH, the Ghuzz entered the Far Maghreb from Egypt. Among them was the mamluk Qaraqush, one of the commanders of the Ghuzz.⁵

The emergence of the Ghuzz groups in the eastern part of the Maghreb and their rapid seizure of its territories can be⁶ explained by the geographical factor, namely, the proximity of these territories to Egypt, which served as a base for the movement and deployment of the Mamluk Ghuzz, thereby facilitating their control over these areas. On the other hand, the considerable distance separating the Almohad political center from the farthest regions of Ifriqiya and Tripoli also played a role. Nevertheless, this did not prevent al-Mansur himself from undertaking the task of suppressing the disturbances and rebellions that broke out in Ifriqiya following the arrival of the Ghuzz under the leadership of Zayn al-Din Yuzba al-Ghuzzi.⁷

During the campaign led by al-Mansur against the city of Gafsa to put an end to the disorder that had spread throughout the eastern territories following the Ghuzz's prolonged occupation of them, Almohad letters revealed the continued enslavement of members of the Ghuzz group and their incorporation as a military unit within the Almohad army.⁸ This was due to the considerable military strength they demonstrated and the significant danger they posed in influencing the course of events in the region, particularly after their alliance with the Mallorcans⁹ and the Arabs during the disturbances that swept through Ifriqiya at the time.

It can also be argued that although the Ghuzz entered the Maghreb during the caliphate of Yusuf ibn ‘Abd al-Mu‘min, they did not join the army until the reign of al-Mansur, who enslaved them and recruited them into the composition of the Almohad army. This demonstrates their military strength and experience, which encouraged al-Mansur to benefit from their services in exchange for granting them financial rewards and land grants. The Ghuzz subsequently became a major

¹ I was unable to find a biographical entry for him in the books of biographical dictionaries and biographical classes.

² Ibn Idhari, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 302; Sharki Nawara, *Social Life in the Islamic West during the Almohad Period (524–667 AH/1126–1267 CE)*, Master's thesis, supervised by Abdelaziz Mahmoud Laraj, University of Algiers, 2008, p. 59; Ben Dhib Issa, op. cit., p. 46.

³ Abu Sa‘id Qaraqush ibn Abdullah al-Asadi, known as Baha al-Din, was of Turkish Mamluk origin. He was raised in the service of Salah al-Din al-Ayoubi, and it was also said that he served Asad al-Din Shirkuh, the uncle of Sultan Salah al-Din. He constructed the wall surrounding Cairo and entered the Maghreb with groups of Ghuzz during his campaign against Tripoli in 569 AH/1173 CE. Ibn Khallikan, *Wafayat al-A‘yan wa-Anba’ Abna’ al-Zaman*, edited by Ihsan Abbas, 1st ed., vol. 4, Dar Sader, Beirut, 1971, p. 91; al-Zirikli, op. cit., pp. 192–193.

⁴ Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij al-Kurub fi Akhbar Bani Ayoub*, edited by Jamal al-Din al-Shayyal, vol. 1, Dar al-Kutub wa-al-Watha‘iq al-Qawmiyya – al-Matba‘a al-Amiriyya, Egypt, 1957, pp. 236–237.

⁵ Abd al-Wahid al-Marrakushi, *Al-Mu‘jib fi Talkhis Akhbar al-Maghrib*, op. cit., p. 188.

⁶ Izz al-Din ‘Umar Musa, *Al-Muwahhidun fi al-Gharb al-Islami: Tanzimatuhum wa Nuzumuhum*, Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, Beirut, n.d., p. 226.

⁷ For further information on the Mamluk campaigns in the Maghreb and the movements of the Ghuzz groups in the territories of Tripoli and their control over them, see: Ibn Wasel, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 236–237; Lévi-Provençal, *Majmu‘ Rasa’il Muwahhidiyya min Insha’ Kuttāb al-Dawla al-Mu‘miniyya*, vol. 10, Publications of the Institute of Higher Moroccan Studies, Morocco, 1360 AH/1941 CE, p. 189 ff.; al-Himyari, op. cit., p. 414; ‘Izz al-Din ‘Umar Musa, op. cit., p. 225.

⁸ Abu Shama, *‘Uyun al-Rawdatayn fi Akhbar al-Dawlatayn al-Nuriyya wa al-Salahiyya*, ed. Ibrahim al-Zaybaq, 1st ed., vol. 3, *Mu‘assasat al-Risala*, Beirut, 1418 AH/1997 CE, p. 257; Ibn Wasel, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 236–237.

⁹ Lévi-Provençal, op. cit., p. 214.

component of the Almohad army in Ifriqiya and the Maghreb.¹ They even maintained their close position to the Almohad sultans. When Prince Abu Yusuf Ya'koub set out for the region of Tinmel in the Far Maghreb, he was accompanied by a contingent of the Ghuzz.² Their principal duties may perhaps have consisted in providing security and protection for the sultan and the senior officials of his state.

3. Ethnic Minorities in the Maghreb: Continuity or Disappearance? Enslaved People as a Case Study .

The formation of Sudanese, Šakāliba, and Ghuzz enslaved groups into distinct ethnic communities with vital roles in the Maghreb during the Islamic period confirms their strong presence within various social and economic structures of the Maghreb. Historical sources record that they were brought in large numbers and employed in the service of their masters. Their widespread presence in both urban and rural areas eventually made them a visible feature of social life. Consequently, various categories emerged among them, including female slaves, concubines, pages and young male slaves, and servants, who were found in the palaces of sultans, the homes of the wealthy, and the residences of ordinary people.

Maghrebi societies did not merely rely on the services of these enslaved groups; rather, they recognized their high level of competence and enduring loyalty. The persistence of slavery in the Maghreb, as well as the continued employment of servants and concubines, was closely associated with the quality of the services they provided to their masters. In addition, there was an economic dimension, represented by their role as a source of labor and the extent to which they were employed in various aspects of the life of Maghrebi societies. Therefore, a legitimate question arises in this regard: Did the system of enslaving people in the Maghreb continue from the beginning of the conquest until the end of the Almohad period, and what manifestations provide evidence of its continuity?

When addressing the issue of ethnic interaction among the groups of Sudanese, Šakāliba, and Ghuzz slaves in the Islamic Maghreb, it should be noted that the matter has already been addressed conclusively in the preceding sections.³ There, we traced in detail the human presence of the slave population across time and space, from the beginning of the conquest until the end of the Almohad period in the Maghreb. Nevertheless, I will briefly highlight some of the social features reported in historical sources and support them with scattered passages found in books of legal rulings, documentary records, and *nawāzil* (juridical cases).⁴ These sources are particularly valuable because their data touch upon the social reality of marginalized and overlooked groups in the history of the region. They also provide precise insights into the lives of female slaves, concubines, and male slaves, as they constituted one of the social elements closest to the resident population and played a prominent role in the life of Maghrebi societies.

The Mālikī juridical corpus addressed the lives of slaves and the nature of their social relations with the Maghrebi population. Muḥammad ibn Saḥnūn mentioned in his Responses numerous issues concerning female slaves and male⁵ slaves. He was asked, for instance, about protected non-Muslim slaves who were compelled to work on Saturdays and Sundays. He replied that they should indeed be compelled to work because they were superstitious and claimed that there was no blessing in working on these two days. The social status of female slaves is further illustrated by an incident in which the jurist Muḥammad ibn Saḥnūn wrote thirty letters to wealthy individuals, asking each of them to provide him with a female slave. Thirty female slaves were consequently gathered for him; he clothed them and then gave them to a man whom he had wronged.⁶ Likewise, Ziyādāt Allāh ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Aghlab presented the Abbasid caliph al-Mu'taḍid bi-llāh with one hundred male servants and one hundred female slaves.⁷ What can be inferred from these accounts is the substantial presence of female slaves, concubines, and servants, as well as their relationships with jurists and political authorities in Maghrebi society during the Aghlabid period.

Ibādī texts reveal the widespread presence of slaves of various ethnic backgrounds in palaces, residences, and households, where they served the inhabitants of the Maghreb and supervised various aspects of domestic life. They thus constituted

¹ Al-Himyari, *Al-Rawd al-Mi'tar fi Khabar al-Aqtar*, ed. Ihsan 'Abbas, 2nd ed., Maktabat Lubnan, Beirut, 1984, p. 414.

² Izz al-Din 'Umar Musa, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

³ Abd al-Wahid al-Marrakushi, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

⁴ Addressing the Issue of Ethnic Interaction among Groups of Sudanese, Šakāliba, and Ghuzz Slaves in the Islamic Maghreb

⁵ See the preceding sections entitled: "Sudanese Slaves – Šakāliba Slaves – Ghuzz Slaves."

⁶ It should be noted in this regard that *nawāzil*, *fatwas*, and documentary records dealing with the status of slaves and their relations with the inhabitants are relatively scarce in the Maghrebi juridical corpus during the early medieval Islamic period. Had we attempted to compare this material with that of the later Islamic period, we would have encountered an enormous wealth of sources, given that the production of works dealing with documents, legal rulings, and *nawāzil* underwent significant development after the seventh Islamic century / eleventh Christian century. Numerous later compilations consequently appeared, most of which fall outside the chronological framework of the present study, with the exception of some *nawāzil* dating to the period preceding the end of the Almohad era, which is the period under investigation here.

⁷ *Kitāb al-Ajwiba*, 1st ed., Dār Ibn Ḥazm, Tunis, 2011, p. 340.

a significant social category comprising female slaves, concubines, male slaves, and servants, particularly among the Sudanese and *Ṣakālība*. During the reign of Imam Aflah ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, the Rustamid state witnessed significant civilizational achievements. He ruled as imam for fifty years, during which he established agricultural estates, constructed canals and waterways, and built palaces. Consequently, the use of male and female slaves expanded considerably within Rustamid society during his reign, particularly in the palaces, as none of the palaces of Tāhart or its surrounding areas was devoid of male slaves and concubines who attended to its affairs.¹ Female slaves, in particular, had a prominent presence, as they performed domestic duties and daily household tasks, including food preparation, laying out furnishings, cleaning, and other activities.

Al-Shammākhī² highlights the practice of slave trading by recounting a dispute that arose between a man and his wife concerning a male slave belonging to the husband. The husband sold the slave and purchased another one. His wife intervened, claiming a share in the surplus value that remained with her husband. Ibādī jurists differed in their judgment concerning the matter: some held that “she has no share in the slave,” while others maintained that “she is entitled to her share in the slave.”³

According to Ismaili sources, enslaved people lived in the Fatimid Maghreb (296 AH–362 AH / 908–972 CE) and were among the principal groups relied upon in the productive process. They were employed in agricultural work and construction, and worked in handicrafts and trade. They were also incorporated into the political apparatus, maintaining close relations with the Fatimid caliphs. They resided in their palaces, attended to their needs, accompanied them on their journeys, managed various aspects of their affairs, and served in their protection units. During his allegiance ceremony in Rakada in 297 AH/909 CE, Ubayd Allah al-Mahdī “took twelve thousand mamluks from among the slaves.”⁴ Al-JawdhariDin Allah -Mu’izz li-alalso reported that groups of Slavic servants (*Sakliba*) were employed during the reign of⁵ al-Fatimi, to the extent that a special bureau was established for them to supervise, train, and educate them.⁶ Given their important roles in the history of the Fatimid state, the source texts came to record the names of many of them, and they became known as the “special slaves” (al-‘abid al-khawass).⁷ Among them were Jawdhar, Madam, Rayyan, Ghulam, Ja‘far, al-Muzaffar, Qaysar, Farah, Sulayman, Maysur, Nazif, Wasif, and Sandal.⁸ The list of names of the young *Sakliba* remains extensive.

Ibn Abi Dinarpoints to the continuity of the institution of slavery during the fourth century AH/tenth century CE. When⁹ Abu Yazid al-Nukkari entered the city of Tunis during his military movement, he seized large quantities of money, slaves, and possessions. Likewise, in the context of the arrival of the Hilalian and Sulaymian groups in Ifriqiya and their confrontation with al-Mu’izz ibn Badis at Haydaran in 443 AH/1052 CE, his slaves remained with him, and “the number of slaves was twenty thousand.” According to Ibn al-Athir, “thirty thousand mamluks gathered under his command,”¹⁰ when the Sanhaja were defeated and the Zanata abandoned him by withdrawing from the conflict.¹¹ This indicates the enormous number of enslaved people and their employment in military activities as organized military units. The use of enslaved people during the Zirid period may likewise have constituted an expression of political grandeur and royal magnificence. The author of al-Mu’nis states: “Among the Sanhajid rulers was Badis ibn Mansur ibn Youssef ibn Buluggin ibn Ziri, who traveled to his palace on the island of Sardinia with his men and slaves.”¹²

During the fourth century AH/tenth century CE, al-Darjini's testimony highlights the continued presence of enslaved people in the regions of the Central Maghreb, particularly in the city of Qantanar, where female slaves and enslaved people of various ethnic origins were widespread. The Ibadi jurist Sa‘id ibn Zanghil expressed his dissatisfaction with their role when their groups failed to support the Wahbiyya and stand with the religious mission against the Nukkari groups. He expressed this sentiment by saying: “My heart is afflicted with sorrow over the decline that has befallen the people of the mission and the rejoicing of their enemies. I had thought that their male and female slaves would confront

¹ Ibid., p. 74.

² Al-Qāḍī Ibn al-Zubayr al-Rashīd, al-Dhakhā‘ir wa-l-Tuḥaf, edited by Muḥammad Ḥamīd Allāh, Dār al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, Kuwait, 1378 AH/1959, p. 47.

³ Ibn al-Ṣaghīr, previous source, pp. 51–52.

⁴ Kitāb al-Siyar, 1/268.

⁵ Abd al-Ilāh Binmlīh, previous reference, p. 397; Khālīd Ḥusayn Maḥmūd, al-Ṣakālība fī Bilād al-Maghrib, p. 269.

⁶ Khalid Hussein Mahmoud, The Saqaliba in the Maghreb, p. 51.

⁷ Al-Jawdhari, op. cit., p. 116.

⁸ Khalid Hussein Mahmoud, The Saqaliba in the Maghreb, p. 271.

⁹ Ibn ‘Idhari, op. cit., II, p. 223.

¹⁰ Al-Jawdhari, op. cit., pp. 35, 91; al-Qadi al-Nu‘man, al-Majalis wa-l-Musayarat, pp. 240, 256; Ibn Hammad, op. cit., p. 89.

¹¹ Al-Mu’nis fī Akhbar Ifriqiya wa-Tunis, p. 7.

¹² Ibn al-Athir, al-Kamil fī al-Tarikh, VIII, p. 87.

the Nukkari and repel them, even if only with pottery and stones. But today they have become equals to the people of the mission and, after their humiliation, have healed their grudges.”¹

This account suggests that groups of enslaved people were widely settled in the oasis regions of the Central Maghreb. The Ibadi groups employed them in their service, contributing to the emergence of a region characterized by considerable human and ethnic diversity.

The legal cases of the fifth and sixth centuries AH/eleventh and twelfth centuries CE addressed the lives of enslaved persons, including female slaves and servants, as well as their integration into the social structure of Maghrebi societies. The juridical texts recorded the details of their lives with considerable precision. They frequently faced numerous social problems that were presented to jurists in the two Maghrebian regions in the form of legal questions for the purpose of determining the appropriate legal rulings. Among the most prominent emerging phenomena recorded in the *nawāzil* literature were defects discovered in the purchase of female slaves and slave girls. One legal case² concerned a slave girl whom the purchaser returned to her owner because of a defect. Female slaves were offered for sale as commodities whose prices were determined, and buyers competed to purchase them. ‘Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī reported one such case, stating: “So-and-so purchased a Galician female slave together with her son, and the merchant undertook to sell them separately.”³ Ibn Sahl also added some problems concerning the sale of enslaved persons. In another legal case, the issue of “purchasing a black female slave who had not yet menstruated”⁴ was raised. As for Ibn al-Ḥājj,⁵ he was asked about the manumission of a female slave owned jointly by two brothers. He ruled that she was to be emancipated following the death of one of them. Some Maghrebi families also experienced domestic problems because of female slaves and servants. The *nawāzil* of al-Wansharīsī⁶ recorded a legal opinion concerning a woman who had become angry with her female servant and swore, by fasting for an entire year, that she would expel her from her house.

In reality, the cohabitation of female domestic slaves with Maghrebi families within their homes led to family disputes that disturbed marital relations. Imām Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Māzarī (d. 536 AH/1142 CE) was asked about a man who⁷ had acquired a female slave to serve his father. She asked him not to live with his parents or with him. The jurist ruled that the man was obliged to provide for the servant and that she could not be compelled to live with them, on the grounds that doing so could cause harm to the marital relationship between the spouses.

On the other hand, enslaved persons of diverse ethnic origins—including local, Sudanese, and European populations—in the Maghreb during the sixth century AH/eleventh century CE were characterized by a well-groomed appearance and elegant clothing. The author of *al-Istibṣār*⁸ indicates that the wealthy class in the Nafūsa Mountains dressed their female slaves (*waṣā’if*) in the finest garments and adorned them with the most splendid jewelry, displaying them along the roads for immoral purposes. This confirms the continued practice among Ibādī communities of employing female and male slaves as servants or treating them as commodities in trade in order to generate income and financial profits. When female slaves were put up for sale, particular attention was paid to their appearance, as they were presented and promoted in the best possible condition.

The source texts and juridical *nawāzil* concerning female slaves and male slaves in the Maghreb were therefore numerous. Their evidence demonstrates the continued ethnic presence and social and economic activity of these groups from the beginning of the Islamic conquest until the end of the Almohad period. Enslaved groups constituted a human resource entrusted with a range of social services for their masters, including cooking, childcare, and the management of households and residences. Groups of enslaved persons also emerged as a dynamic component of the region’s ethnic composition, participating in the productive process.

Despite the numerous problems they encountered, which were reflected throughout the historical and juridical source texts, the role of Maghrebi jurists in protecting their rights and preserving their dignity throughout the period under study cannot be overlooked. Their prominent presence in the juridical and historical corpus provides strong evidence of their continued ethnic presence, their integration into the local demographic structure, and their participation in the various spheres of Maghrebi civilization.

Conclusion

¹ Ibid., p. 83; Ibn ‘Idhari, op. cit., I, p. 292.

² Ibn Abi Dinar, op. cit., p. 78.

³ Al-Darjini, op. cit., I, pp. 150–151.

⁴ Ibn Sahl, *al-I‘lām bi-Nawāzil al-Aḥkām*, ed. Nūrah Muḥammad ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Tuwayjirī, 1st ed., vol. 1, n.p., n.p., 1995, p. 409.

⁵ Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī, *Documents of the Almoravids and Almohads*, ed. Ḥusayn Mu’nis, 2nd ed., Maktabat al-Thaqāfa al-Dīniyya, Cairo, 1997, p. 335.

⁶ Ibn Sahl, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 410.

⁷ Nawāzil Ibn al-Ḥājj al-Tujībī, ed. Aḥmad Shu‘ayb al-Yūsufī, 1st ed., vol. 3, *Tetouan Press*, Tetouan, 2018, p. 468.

⁸ *al-Mi‘yār al-Mu‘rib wa-al-Jāmi‘ al-Mughrib ‘an Fatāwā ‘Ulamā’ Ifrīqiya wa-al-Andalus wa-al-Maghrib*, ed. a group of jurists, supervised by Muḥammad Ḥajjī, 1st ed., Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, Beirut, 1981, vol. 4, p. 130.

In conclusion, the attainment by the Maghreb region of a stage of civilizational development, economic growth, and social prosperity, coupled with the expansion of commercial activity and the flourishing of routes and roads connecting it with neighboring lands, led the inhabitants of the Maghreb to acquire slaves of diverse ethnic origins, including Sudanese, Abyssinian, Nubian, and Ethiopian origins. These individuals were referred to as black slaves because of their dark complexion. As for the white slaves, or *Ṣakālība*, their origins can be traced to Europe. They entered the region through the routes of the Mediterranean, arriving particularly from al-Andalus and Sicily.

Just as the human geography of the Maghreb became ethnically diverse through the influx of these foreign groups of enslaved people, they also contributed to enriching the local demographic landscape and diversifying the nomenclature used to identify the incoming population groups. Ethnonyms associated with slaves emerged, such as *Ṣakālība* and *Aghzāz*, and these designations continued to be present in the Islamic Maghreb throughout the period extending from the first century AH/seventh century CE until the end of the Almohad period.

The study has demonstrated that enslaved people, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds and physical characteristics, performed numerous positive roles. These included serving in palaces, households, and homes; working in agriculture, pastoralism, and markets; and contributing to artisanal activities and the productive process. They also participated in administration by occupying important positions, such as that of *ḥijāba* (chamberlain). Their military contributions were manifested in their employment in warfare and their incorporation into the composition of the armies of the Maghreb. Conversely, they also played negative roles, including involvement in the planning of political assassinations, participation in coups against sultans and rulers in the Maghreb, and contributing to the outbreak of disorder and the disruption of security. Nevertheless, most of the administrative, economic, and military structures of the Maghrebi states during the period under study were subject to mechanisms governing the utilization of slaves in the service of the various social classes. This was due to the centrality and significant status of this group as a skilled labor force, which Maghrebi communities employed across various spheres of public life.

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