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Archaeological Saharan Urban Centers as Civilizational Linkages between the Central Maghreb and the African Interior: Warjlān as a Case Study

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Abstract
This scholarly paper seeks to reconsider the relations that developed between the Saharan urban centers of the Central Maghreb Warjlān, taken as a case study, and Western Sudan, with a view to highlighting the civilizational dimension as an aspect largely neglected in studies that have addressed this relationship. It does so by moving beyond the unilinear explanatory model that has often reduced and confined these relations to a commercial framework. The study adopts a comparative historical approach, drawing on the tools of the historical method, to examine the civilizational influences exerted by the urban center of Warjlān, one of the most important active Saharan centers, and to trace their manifestations within the societies of Western Sudan. The analysis begins by providing a historical framing of the urban center of Warjlān and its connections to the African interior to uncover mechanisms of communication, before moving on to analyze the civilizational transformations resulting from this interaction in the fields of religion, customs, dress, architecture, and mentalities. These transformations were reflected in the gradual shift towards Islam in devotional practices and social transactions, the spread of mosques, changes in dress patterns and the veiling of women, as well as the transmission of certain dietary traditions associated with the Saharan urban milieu. The influence was also evident in the architectural sphere through the presence of the Maghrebi style and in ritual life through the growing celebration of Ramadan, religious festivals, and the Prophet's birthday. The study concludes that the Saharan urban centers of the Central Maghreb, foremost among them Warjlān, were not merely stations of commercial transit; rather, they constituted a civilizational bridge that contributed to profound structural transformations affecting the various civilizational structures of Western Sudanese societies. This reflects the complex nature of civilizational interaction between the two regions, restores balance to the historical narrative in its comprehensive form, and demonstrates that the Central Maghrebi Saharan urban center was an authentic contributor to the making of the African civilizational landscape, rather than a mere subordinate margin within it.
Keywords: archaeological Saharan urban centers; Warjlān; Central Maghreb; Western Sudan.

Introduction

It is useful, from the outset, to note that the idea for this research paper arose from our examination of the history of the emergence of Saharan urban centers in the Central

Maghreb. We observed that these centers were established within a carefully studied geography; indeed, most of them were distributed along the routes of the gold and slave-trade caravans, which, without exaggeration, represented the center of gravity of global trade in the medieval period. This indicates that these urban centers experienced intense human activity, marked by ethnic and cultural diversity, given their status as points of transit. There is no doubt that this specificity enjoyed by the Saharan urban centers made them a civilizational bridge extending towards many lands, including the African interior, known as Western Sudan. This leads us to believe that, in addition to their role in protecting commercial caravans, they contributed to the emergence of structural civilizational transformations in those regions. To test this hypothesis, the present study seeks to shed light on the urban centre of Warjlān and its relationship with Western Sudan, as well as the civilisational transformations to which this relationship gave rise in the African interior, by tracing the earliest beginnings of this relationship and identifying its various mechanisms, with a view to determining the civilisational influences of this urban centre and their manifestations in the various aspects of life in Western Sudan over the longue durée.

We shall attempt to address this proposition by providing answers to the following questions: What were the foundations upon which communication between Warjlān and Western Sudan was established? What human and material intermediaries enabled its continuity? How were its manifestations reflected in historical reality? Did this communication maintain a single pattern, or did it transform in accordance with political and economic variables?

The central question that frames this study, however, lies in the attempt to distinguish between what remained constant and what changed in the outcomes of this communication: that is, to what extent did Warjlān contribute to shaping the features of civilisational, intellectual, religious, and social presence in Western Sudan, and what was the nature of the impact it left on customs, traditions, and ways of life?

Thus, the research seeks to move beyond the mere description of communication dynamics and their confinement within narrow angles towards an analysis of the profound interactions of communication and the highlighting of their civilizational dimensions. This allows us to attain a more comprehensive understanding and a more precise vision of the role of Saharan urban centers in shaping the shared history between the Central Maghreb and the African interior.

First: The Urban Center of Warjlān: Emergence and Boundaries

Discussion of the history of urban centers and cities in the medieval period raises numerous problems, beginning with the origin and meaning of the name and extending to the circumstances of emergence and the historical developments that followed. If such issues are raised even by major urban centers whose accounts filled the pages of diverse sources and compilations, these problems undoubtedly become more complex when the urban center under study is located in and classified as what Ibn Khaldūn termed the remote towns and districts. This is the case for the urban center of Warjlān, the subject of the present study. The researcher into its history in general, and into the origin of its name and its emergence in particular, finds himself confronted with contradictory accounts scattered throughout

biographical compilations, geographical works, travel literature, and historical writings, whose ambiguity is only increased by the readings of some contemporary historians.

Following our examination of the various compilations, we encountered several forms in which the name of the urban center appears, including Wārjlān,[1] Wārqlān,[2] Warjlān,[3] and Wārklān.[4] Al-Ḥamawī, however, adopted in his *Muʿjam al-Buldān* the designation Warjlān,[5] the same designation adopted by al-Darjīnī, with the addition of an alif after the wāw, thus becoming "Wārjlān". This is the most widely used designation among Ibāḍī historians, such as Abū Zakariyyāʾ,[6] al-Wisyānī,[7] and al-Shammākhī.[8] By contrast, Ibn Khaldūn mentioned it as Wārklā,[9] while the author of *The Description of Africa* recorded it as Warkalah.[10] Whatever the degree of difference and phonetic variation, we incline towards the view that all these names referred to this territory, both in ancient and modern times.[11]

Regarding the emergence of the urban center of Wārjlān, the author of The Description of Africa affirms that Wārjlān is ancient in its origins, tracing it back to the Numidian period. In this regard, he states: "... an ancient city built by the Numidians in the desert of Numidia." Al-Wazzān's reference lacks what might support and substantiate it, for it is a general indication devoid of the detail that may perhaps have been obscured in the unknown expanses of the Sahara.[12] Nor did the author of *Ghuṣn al-Bān* add anything beyond affirming that Wārjlān was one of the ancient territories.[13]

Wārjlān appears to be one of the cities deeply rooted in antiquity and among the most important Saharan cities, with a historical legacy that reaches far back in time. Archaeologists have discovered numerous pieces of evidence indicating that the urban center of Wārjlān has

[1] Abū ʿUbayd al-Bakrī, *Al-Maghrib fī Dhikr Bilād Ifrīqiya wa-l-Maghrib*, 1st ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-Islāmī, n.d.), 182.
[2] Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad al-Idrīsī, *Nuzhat al-Mushtāq fī Ikhtirāq al-Āfāq*, 1st ed. (Cairo: Manshūrāt Maktabat al-Thaqāfa al-Dīniyya, 2002), 1:20.
[3] Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf al-Wārjlānī, *Al-Dalīl wa-l-Burhān*, ed. Sālim ibn Ḥamad al-Ḥārithī, 2nd ed. (Muscat: Ministry of Heritage and Culture, 2006), 2:103.
[4] Abū al-Qāsim ibn Ḥawqal al-Naṣībī, *Ṣūrat al-Arḍ*, 1st ed. (Beirut: Maktabat al-Ḥayāt, 1992), 86; Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Saʿīd al-Maghribī, *Al-Jughrāfiyā*, ed. Ismāʿīl al-ʿArabī, 1st ed. (Beirut: Manshūrāt al-Maktab al-Tijārī li-l-Ṭibāʿa wa-l-Nashr, 1970), 126.
[5] Abū ʿAbd Allāh Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-Buldān*, 1st ed. (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1977), 3:371.
[6] Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad al-Darjīnī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Mashāyikh bi-l-Maghrib*, ed. Ibrāhīm Ṭallāy, 1st ed. (n.p.: n.p., n.d.), 1:95; Abū Zakariyyāʾ Yaḥyā ibn Abī Bakr, *Kitāb al-Siyar wa-Akhbār al-Aʾimma*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ayyūb, 1st ed. (Tunis: Al-Dār al-Tūnisiyya li-l-Nashr, n.d.), 159.
[7] Abū al-Rabīʿ Sulaymān ibn Ḥassān al-Wisyānī, *Siyar al-Wisyānī*, ed. ʿUmar ibn Luqmān Būʿaṣbāna, 1st ed. (Muscat: Ministry of Heritage and Culture Publications, 2009), 1:99.
[8] Aḥmad ibn Saʿīd ibn ʿAbd al-Wāḥid al-Shammākhī, *Al-Siyar*, ed. Saʿūd al-Siyālī, 2nd ed. (Muscat: Ministry of National Heritage and Culture, 1992), 2:46.
[9] ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-ʿIbar wa-Dīwān al-Mubtadaʾ wa-l-Khabar fī Tārīkh al-ʿArab wa-l-Barbar wa-Man ʿĀṣarahum min Dhawī al-Shaʾn al-Akbar*, 1st ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 2000), 7:69.
[10] Al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad al-Wazzān, *Waṣf Ifrīqiyā*, trans. Muḥammad Ḥajjī and Muḥammad al-Akhḍar, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1983), 2:136–37.
[11] Ibrāhīm ibn Ṣāliḥ Aʿzām, *Ghuṣn al-Bān fī Tārīkh Wārjlān*, ed. Ibrāhīm Baḥḥāz and Sulaymān Būmaʿqal, 1st ed. (Ghardaïa, Algeria: Al-Maṭbaʿa al-ʿĀlamiyya, 2013), 56.
[12] ʿAmmār Gharāysa, "Min al-Adwār al-Ḥaḍāriyya li-l-Mudun al-Ṣaḥrāwiyya: Wārjlān Unmūdhajan," *Majallat al-Wāḥāt li-l-Buḥūth wa-l-Dirāsāt*, no. 15 (2011): 412.
[13] Aʿzām, *Ghuṣn al-Bān*, 49.

had a known human settlement since prehistoric times. These pieces of evidence consist of many tools used by people of that period, made of stone and bone.[14]

The Boundaries of Wārjlān

It is extremely difficult to speak of the geographical location of Saharan urban centers, including Wārjlān, owing to the absence of precise boundaries in Saharan regions, since the matter is closely connected with political transformations, including balances of power, not to mention the movement of caravans and their constant passage between regions in search of pasture or a place of settlement. All this renders our effort no more than an attempt to delineate the boundaries of Wārjlān. What further complicates the matter is the failure of geographers and travelers to mention this. Wārjlān represents the southern frontier of the Central Maghreb, extending from the ocean in the west to the borders of Egypt in the east, since, geographically, it constitutes "the separating and connecting part between North Africa and Central, Western, and Eastern Africa".[15] This made it a meeting point for many intellectual, cultural, social, and, above all, economic lines, namely trade and everything connected with it, which suggests the occurrence of a form of intermingling that affected numerous levels.[16]

To the east, it is bounded by the land of al-Zāb, and to the west by Wādī Mīzāb. As for the northern side, we have been unable to determine it owing to the absence of Wārjlānī residential groupings. This becomes clear from what the geographical sources state, foremost among them Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, who mentions that Wārjlān was a district situated between Ifrīqiya and the land of al-Jarīd.[17] Ibn Saʿīd, for his part, states that "its capital is Tamāriyya",[18] while al-Ḥimyarī considers it to have consisted of seven fortified, walled cities located close to one another.[19]

From what has been mentioned, Wārjlān appears as though nature had prepared it to possess vitality on more than one level and in more than one field, owing to the vast expanse it acquired, which enabled it to play numerous roles and to become one of the most important Saharan urban centers in the Central Maghreb.[20] Its civilizational role became more prominent in the African interior, specifically in Western Sudan, owing to the communication and commercial relations between them.

[14] Mubārak Būṭārn and Muḥammad Najīb Khalaf, "Al-Dawr al-Tijārī li-Madīnat Warqala fī al-ʿAṣr al-Wasīṭ," *Majallat Ḥawliyyāt al-Tārīkh wa-l-Jughrāfiyā* 1, no. 2 (June 2008): 50; Ḥamad Dhakkār, "Madīnat Warqala: Al-Tasmiya wa-l-Taʾsīs, Dirāsa Tārīkhiyya," *Majallat al-ʿUlūm al-Insāniyya wa-l-Ijtimāʿiyya*, no. 17 (December 2014): 164.
[15] ʿAbd al-Karīm Ghallāb, *Qirāʾa Jadīda fī Tārīkh al-Maghrib al-ʿArabī*, 1st ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2005), 1:28.
[16] ʿAmmār Gharāysa, *Al-Madīna al-Dawla fī al-Maghrib al-Awsaṭ: Wārjlān Unmūdhajan* (master's thesis, Emir Abdelkader University, Constantine, Algeria, 2009), 17.
[17] Al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-Buldān*, 3:371.
[18] Ibn Saʿīd, *Al-Jughrāfiyā*, 126.
[19] Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Munʿim al-Ḥimyarī, *Al-Rawḍ al-Miʿṭār fī Khabar al-Aqṭār*, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Maṭābiʿ Heidelberg, 1984), 600.
[20] Gharāysa, "Min al-Adwār al-Ḥaḍāriyya," 41.

Second: The Points of Departure and Means of Communication between the Urban Center of Wārjlān and the African Interior

It is acknowledged that communication between the Central Maghreb and the African interior was not born of this period, but had existed since ancient historical times. The archaeological evidence and drawings discovered confirm early contact between the two spheres.[21] This communication was further strengthened and became more evident with the arrival of the Arab conquerors in North Africa and their penetration into this sphere, which brought about a fundamental revival in the growth of trade, particularly after they turned their attention to the routes linking the Maghreb to Sudan and undertook repairs and improvements to serve and stimulate trade. In this regard, al-Bakrī provides us with a text of great importance, stating that the governor of Ifrīqiya, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Ḥabīb, dug three wells on the caravan route linking the city of Tāmdalt in southern al-Maghrib al-Aqṣā to the city of Awdaghust.[22] It is hardly surprising that the Arab conquerors should have concerned themselves with this, for they were people of trade, and the most knowledgeable of people regarding it and its importance, especially when it is known that commercial exchanges in that period were based on two commodities upon which economy and civilization rested, namely gold and enslaved people.

With the emergence of the first political entities in the Central Maghreb, this communication acquired another dimension, as the princes of the Banū Rustam were keen to establish political and economic relations with the lands of Sudan. The sources of the period indicate that the imām Aflaḥ ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb maintained relations of amity with most of the kings of Sudan, particularly with the king of Soso.[23] With the emergence of the Rustamid state, commercial activity became more organized and prosperous. This is attributable to the policy pursued by the princes of the Banū Rustam, for all those who have chronicled this state commend its interest in trade. Ibn al-Ṣaghīr informs us of the concern and attention of the imāms of the Banū Rustam in securing the routes and providing some of their requirements, especially about the digging of wells, saying: “The roads to all countries, east and west, were used for trade, various goods, people, and merchants from all regions traded.” [24] The author of *al-Azhār al-Riyāḍiyya* also praised this in the course of his discussion of the state of the Banū Rustam, saying: “They prepared the roads, facilitated communications, and opened the doors of trade, until they won over hearts and overcame difficulties.”[25]

The urban center of Wārjlān played an important role in this respect, given that the Rustamid state extended its geographical boundaries as far as the northern Sahara, and Wārjlān came under its wing.[26] Owing to its distinctive geographical location, it is regarded as a principal gateway to Western Sudan, linked to a network of important commercial routes, which space

[21] D. G., *Tārīkh Gharb Ifrīqiyā*, 43.
[22] Al-Bakrī, *Al-Maghrib*, 156.
[23] [citation missing in the supplied manuscript].
[24] Ibn al-Ṣaghīr al-Mālikī, *Akhbār al-Aʾimma al-Rustamiyyīn*, ed. and annot. Muḥammad Nāṣir and Ibrāhīm Baḥḥāz, 32.
[25] Al-Bārūnī, *Al-Azhār al-Riyāḍiyya*, 88.
[26] ʿAbd al-Karīm Yūsuf Jūdah, *Al-ʿAlāqāt al-Khārijiyya li-l-Dawla al-Rustamiyya*, 1st ed. (Algeria: Al-Muʾassasa al-Waṭaniyya li-l-Kitāb, 1984), 58.

does not permit us to mention. Through it, the goods of the Central Maghreb reached the lands of Sudan, and the goods of Sudan reached the cities of the Maghreb and were transported through their ports to Europe. It should be noted that the role of the urban center of Wārjlān was not confined to the economic aspect represented by commercial exchanges of various kinds, but went beyond it to the transmission of civilizational influences, those influences accompanying economic activity, which are neither visible nor subject to quantification and statistics, even though their impact on human life is deeper and more enduring.

Saharan urban centers in general, and the urban center of Wārjlān in particular, did not transmit products alone to Western Sudan through their routes; rather, they also transmitted ideas, values, cultures, and modes of conduct no less important than the commodities themselves. Hence, through this study, we have deemed it appropriate to shed light on the civilizational role played by Saharan urban centers, including Wārjlān, as a link between the two spheres, the Central Maghreb and Western Sudan, by posing the following question: What were the most prominent civilizational influences transmitted to Western Sudan? What were the features of the manifestations of civilizational, intellectual, and religious presence, and their impact on public life in Western Sudan?

Third: Manifestations of Civilizational Influence and Features of Presence

Before engaging with the most important manifestations of the influence of merchants upon the Sudanese peoples, it is necessary to point out that the lands of Sudan fall within the regions far removed from temperateness, and that the inhabitants of such regions are further removed from temperateness in all their conditions, as Ibn Khaldūn described them: "Their buildings are of clay and reeds, their foodstuffs are millet and herbs, and their clothing is made of the leaves of trees. . . . Most of them are naked and without clothing... As for their conditions in religion, they know no prophecy and follow no revealed law; religion is unknown among them, and their conditions are far removed from those of human beings and close to those of beasts."[27] Since the lands of Sudan fall within the sphere of these regions, they were known for many of these traits. This is confirmed by the observations of travelers who visited Sudan and witnessed many of these characteristics. However, these characteristics declined to some extent as a result of commercial exchanges and openness to other peoples.

The commercial journey to those regions was not merely a material load of goods but also carried a cultural load. If the former yielded material profit and wealth, the latter brought about civilizational development and prosperity in the lands of Sudan. The first manifestations of Maghrebi merchants' influence upon the Sudanese appeared in:

Belief

Before discussing the influence of merchants on the people of Sudan in this respect, it is useful to pause to consider the religion and beliefs of the Sudanese people. Pagan religion was widespread among them and, in most cases, combined the human being with the

[27] Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-ʿIbar*, 84–85.

environment in which he lived. These beliefs also differed and multiplied according to regions and peoples, the most important of which were: the worship of ancestral spirits,[28] the worship of dakākīr, namely idols,[29] and totemism, namely the forces of nature.[30]
These manifestations of paganism, however, gradually began to disappear after their contact with the Maghrebi merchants arriving in the region. Although these merchants had come for trade, their presence in pagan lands did not prevent it from marking the beginning of a link between the inhabitants and the new religion. "The merchant, through his values, dress, and dealings, represents values unfamiliar to the society into which he comes."[31] Their dealings with the inhabitants and their contact with them enabled them to influence them, especially since the Maghrebi merchant, alongside trade, carried a kind of commodity for which he charged no price; rather, he carried cultural and civilizational elements that formed part of what the merchant transmitted.[32] The appearance and conduct of the Muslim merchant were important factors in the inclination of the people of Sudan towards Islam, for the conduct and qualities of the Muslim merchant constituted an element of attraction drawing the Sudanese individual towards Islam. Among the most important of these forms of conduct were:

Frequent Ablution and Prayer

When the Muslim merchant entered a village, he quickly attracted attention through the frequency of his ablutions, in addition to his concern for, and regular observance of, prayer at its appointed times. His appearance while prostrating, together with his composure, also conferred upon him a kind of solemnity and reverence that stirred the innate disposition of the pagan African.

Cleanliness of Body, Fine Appearance, and White Garments

These attracted and influenced the African. Al-Wazzān described the dress of Maghrebi merchants as "fine clothing" and stated that "they are more elegant and generous".[33] All this served to strengthen relations between Muslim merchants and those who dealt with them, creating a form of attraction and appreciation; in such an atmosphere, goods and ideas were exchanged.[34]

The Nobility of Their Morals and the Excellence of Their Dealings

Muslim merchants were known for their sincerity in their work, their avoidance of fraud, and their abstention from consuming usury in commercial transactions. Imām ʿAbd al-Wahhāb

[28] Al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-Buldān*, 3:142.
[29] Al-Bakrī, *Al-Maghrib*, 176.
[30] Naʿīm Qaddāḥ, *Ḥaḍārat al-Islām wa-Ḥaḍārat Ūrūbā fī Ifrīqiyā al-Gharbiyya*, 2nd ed. (Algeria: Al-Sharika al-Waṭaniyya li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzīʿ, 1975), 3. See also al-Bakrī, *Al-Maghrib*, 174.
[31] Raḥḥāl Būbrīk, "Al-Islām bi-Ifrīqiyā: Al-Ṣayrūra al-Tārīkhiyya wa-Anmāṭ al-Tadayyun bi-Gharb Ifrīqiyā," in *Ifrīqiyā ka-Ufuq li-l-Tafkīr*, vol. 1 (Rabat: Publications of the Academy of the Kingdom of Morocco, "Silsilat al-Dawrāt," 2015), 273.
[32] Wajīh Kawtharānī, *Tārīkh al-Taʾrīkh: Ittijāhāt, Madāris, Manāhij*, 2nd ed. (Doha: Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2013), 254.
[33] ʿAbd Allāh Sālim Bāzīna, *Intishār al-Islām fī Ifrīqiyā Janūb al-Ṣaḥrāʾ*, 1st ed. (Tripoli: University of 7 October Publications, 2010), 151. See also al-Wazzān, *Waṣf Ifrīqiyā*, 2:21.
[34] Bāzīna, *Intishār al-Islām*, 151.

ibn Rustam prevented his son Aflaḥ from traveling to the land of Kawkaw out of fear that he might consume usury. This was indicated by al-Darjīnī: "He had wished to travel to Jawjaw, so his father questioned him on matters of usury. He hesitated over one issue and did not answer it, whereupon his father ordered him to return and said: Stay, lest you bring usury upon us."[35] Merchants were also renowned for their truthfulness and trustworthiness. Al-Wazzān described them as "fair-minded people, very sincere and trustworthy in their trade, and their most important commercial journeys are those they undertake to the lands of Sudan".[36] All these praiseworthy qualities won hearts over to them, secured respect for them, and inspired the confidence of the local inhabitants. The population therefore emulated them in their dealings, conduct, and daily behaviour. Their tolerance and their use of gentle speech were also a powerful motive for pagans to abandon the religion of their forefathers and enter Islam.[37]

Dress

Through what is recorded in geographical and travel writings, whose authors were concerned with documenting the cultures and customs of peoples in all respects, we observe that nakedness was the predominant characteristic among the people of Sudan. Some of them made their clothing from tree leaves and animal skins in order to cover their private parts. The people of Sāma, for example, "used to walk naked, except that the woman covered her private part with plaited straps".[38] Some women covered themselves with animal skins, as did the people of Kawkaw, among whom the clothing of the common people consisted of skins with which they covered their private parts.[39] The same applies to the people of Kawār and Zaghāwa, all of whom "used skins as clothing with which they covered their private parts".[40] After the society of Western Sudan embraced Islam, the phenomenon of nakedness witnessed a gradual decline. Following the marital alliances that took place between some of them and their mixing with merchants, the elegant attire and white garments of the Muslim merchant became an object of interest, attraction, and influence among the Sudanese. It appears that the dress of the Maghrebis also won the admiration of the kings of Sudan, for the king of Soso expressed his admiration for the appearance of the envoy of Imām Aflaḥ ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb by saying: "You are handsome in face, appearance, and deeds."[41] What encouraged the Sudanese to imitate the dress of the people of the Maghreb was the abundance of cotton and woollen textiles in Sudanese markets. These textiles were among the most important commodities transported to Sudan and enjoyed great popularity in many cities and commercial centres. The Central Maghreb was known for its abundant production of cotton and woollen textiles, and many of its cities were renowned for the textile industry, which

[35] Al-Darjīnī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Mashāyikh*, 2:320.
[36] Al-Wazzān, *Waṣf Ifrīqiyā*, 21.
[37] Bāzīna, *Intishār al-Islām*, 152.
[38] Al-Ḥimyarī, *Al-Rawḍ al-Miʿṭār*, 299.
[39] Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-Aʿshā*, vol. 5, 1st ed. (Cairo: Al-Maṭbaʿa al-Amīriyya, 1915), 285.
[40] Al-Idrīsī, *Nuzhat al-Mushtāq*, 1:28. See also al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-Aʿshā*, 1:285.
[41] Sulaymān Pasha ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Bārūnī, *Al-Azhār al-Riyāḍiyya fī Aʾimmat wa-Mulūk al-Ibāḍiyya*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAlī al-Ṣulaybī, vol. 2, 1st ed. (London: Dār al-Ḥikma, 2005), 223.

experienced great popularity and prosperity. Among them was the city of Tāhart, which was famous for "the manufacture of woollen, linen, cotton, and silk textiles, and woollen and linen textiles were among the most important goods exported by the Rustamids to Western Sudan".[42]

Tlemcen was also known for the manufacture of wool, where "all kinds of exquisite articles were made from wool, and there could be found there a complete garment weighing nine ounces or thereabouts."[43] The family of ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Najjār was renowned "for possessing large workshops for weaving fine wool in Tlemcen, to which merchants came from all the lands of Africa and Western Sudan, after he had developed and expanded the textile industries."[44] Dress among the people of Sudan differed according to their social classes, as follows:

Dress of the Elite: Kings, Ministers, and Military Commanders

In the kingdom of Ghana, none among those who followed the king's religion wore stitched garments except the king himself and his heir apparent. The king wore a silk wrapper with which he draped himself, or a cloak in which he wrapped himself, trousers around his waist, and sandals on his feet; he had a complete attire, and also adorned himself with women's jewellery. Ministers, for their part, wore loose garments and waist-wrappers.[45] In Tādmakkat, the king's dress consisted of a red turban, a yellow shirt, and blue trousers.[46] In the kingdom of Mali, the dress of kings was more elegant than that of others. It consisted of a red, furred robe made of Byzantine cloth known as *al-muṭannafas*; on his head he placed a gold skullcap fastened with a gold band more than a span in length.[47] As for the notables, they wore luxurious garments ornamented with gold. The interpreter wore garments from the *zardakhāna*, placed on his head a turban with fringes, and wore leather socks and spurs on his feet.[48]

Dress of the Common People

The dress of the common people differed according to region. The clothing of the common people of Ghana consisted of cotton, silk, and brocade wraps dyed red, each according to his means and circumstances. As for the people of Tādmakkat, their clothing consisted of cotton and *nawlī* dyed red.[49]

The dress of the common people in the kingdom of Mali closely resembled Maghrebi attire. It consisted of "turbans wrapped under the chin like those of the Arabs, robes and tunics

[42] Muḥammad ʿAbduh Suwādī and Ṣāliḥ ʿAmmār al-Ḥājj, *Dirāsāt fī Tārīkh al-Maghrib al-Islāmī*, 1st ed. (Cairo: Manshūrāt al-Maktab al-Miṣrī, 2004), 223.
[43] Muḥammad ibn Būbakr al-Zuhrī, previous source, 113.
[44] Muḥammad ibn Marzūq al-Tilimsānī, *Al-Manāqib al-Marzūqiyya*, ed. Salwā al-Zāhirī, 1st ed. (Casablanca: Publications of the Ministry of Awqāf and Islamic Affairs of the Kingdom of Morocco, Maṭbaʿat al-Najāḥ al-Jadīda, 2008), 188.
[45] Al-Idrīsī, previous source, 1:24. See also al-Bakrī, previous source, 175.
[46] Al-Bakrī, same source, 181.
[47] Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, previous source, 4:257. See also K. Madhu Panikkar, previous reference, 467.
[48] Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, same source, 257.
[49] Al-Bakrī, previous source, 176. See also al-Idrīsī, previous source, 1:24.

without slits or openings, and the cloth of their garments was white, made of cotton fabric that was abundant among them. It was known among them as *al-kamīṣā*, and was woven with the utmost fineness and delicacy."[50] As for merchants, they wore tunics and trousers of varying lengths and widths, together with a large turban worn by both men and women, called *diyālāmūkū*.[51]

Among the Maghrebi garments that became widespread in the lands of Sudan was the *burnous*, the traditional garment for which the people of the Maghreb were known. Al-Maqdisī noted that the Berbers wore burnouses, including white and black varieties, and that it was the garment specific to the winter season. The *burnous* spread among the people of Sudan and was made of coarse wool, in brown as well as blue. It seems to me that its use may have been restricted to the class of jurists and judges rather than others. Perhaps al-Saʿdī's reference to the jurist Muḥammad Sāqū al-Wankarī confirms this, for he mentioned that when the sunset prayer overtook him during his journey, he spread out his burnous and prayed upon it.[52]

As for women's dress, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa referred to the attire of the wives of the interpreter in the kingdom of Mali and stated that "they wore fine garments, and on their heads were bands of gold and silver containing gold and silver ornaments."[53]

As for the women of Timbuktu and Walāta, the wearing of the veil spread among them. The traveller Marmol indicates that the women of Timbuktu and Walāta were veiled and face-covered, with the exception of their slave women. The women of Jenne also wore face-veils made of cotton in blue and black.[54]

What may be noted is that dress was more elegant in the commercial centres frequently visited by merchants. Although the people of Sudan were influenced by the Maghrebis in wearing wool, cotton, and silk, they preserved their cultural specificity, which may be discerned in the nature of the colours adopted, such as red, blue, and yellow. The use of these colors remains widespread in those regions to this day. One may also observe the depth of Maghrebi influence on occasions in which their influence appears clearly and manifestly, especially during feasts and on Fridays, when the people of Western Sudan were keen to dress elegantly, wear clean garments, and put on white clothing. This was indicated by Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, who witnessed Friday and the feast occasion in the kingdom of Mali.[55]

Food

Through our examination of the types of food in the lands of Sudan, we find that what predominated on their tables was millet, fish, and milk. This was due to the geographical environment. As is well known, "the Nile runs through this land from east to west, and in it are various kinds of fish and species of large and small fish; from it comes the food of most

[50] Al-Qalqashandī, previous source, 5:299.
[51] Muḥammad al-Gharbī, previous reference, 1:609.
[52] ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Saʿdī, previous source, 118.
[53] Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, previous source, 4:260.
[54] Marmol Carvajal, previous reference, 3:193.
[55] Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, previous source, 4:260.

of the Sudanese, who catch and salt it, and it is of the utmost goodness and thickness."[56] The food of the people of Sallā and Takrūr consisted of fish, millet, and milk. As for the remote regions, or those through which the Nile did not pass, their food differed from that of other cities. The food of the rest of the people of Awdaghust, for example, consisted of millet, with the exception of the king and the wealthy among them, whose food consisted of wheat.[57] The livelihood of the people of Tādmakkat, meanwhile, was based on meat, milk, and a grain that the earth produced without cultivation.[58]

As for the food of the people of Mali, it differed from that of the other cities, owing to the nature of its climate. Al-ʿUmarī described it as "intensely hot, harsh in living conditions, and limited in the varieties of its foodstuffs."[59] For this reason, most of their foodstuffs depended on rice, which represented the principal food of the population because of its abundant cultivation in their land. Another type of grain known as *fūnī* was also famous among them; it was kneaded and made into bread. Among their foods were *al-qaṭāniyā* and *al-qāfī*, the latter being one of their preferred foods above all others.[60]

The kingdom of Mali knew many types of vegetables, such as onions, ʿAnnābī cucumbers, and aubergines. As for fruits, they were varied among them, including the sycamore fig, which was abundant there. Wild trees bearing edible and pleasant fruits also grew among them.[61] Some fruits reached them through Maghrebi merchants and enjoyed great demand, among them dates, which were brought to them from the land of Sijilmāsa or the land of al-Zāb, and which the people of Wārklān brought to them.[62]

What should be noted is that food in the lands of Sudan differed according to social class. The tables of the common people were dominated by the consumption of fish, rice, and millet. As for the tables of the elite, they replaced these with the meat of sheep and camels, and rarely consumed fish, while rice appeared on their tables only as a secondary item.[63]

As for the Maghrebi community, it adhered to its foods, which became widespread among the people of Sudan, were well received, and established a strong presence on their tables, especially among the elite and middle classes. Among these foods was couscous, the preferred food of the affluent group. They also came to know the consumption of mutton, whether cooked, grilled, or wrapped in extremely thin sheets of dough. From the Maghrebi community, they also became acquainted with the consumption of lamb and birds, such as chicken and geese.[64] We also find that they knew many kinds of sweets, such as *qaṭāyif* and preserves. As for beverages, a drink known as "date spirit" became widespread among

[56] Al-Idrīsī, previous source, 1:20.
[57] Al-Ḥimyarī, previous source, 63.
[58] Ibid., 128.
[59] Shihāb al-Dīn ibn Yaḥyā al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik al-Abṣār fī Mamālik al-Amṣār*, ed. Kāmil Salmān al-Jabūrī, vol. 4, 1st ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2010), 49.
[60] Ibid., 50–51.
[61] Shihāb al-Dīn ibn Yaḥyā al-ʿUmarī, previous source, 51. See also al-Hādī Mabrūk al-Dālī, previous reference, 78.
[62] Al-Ḥimyarī, previous source, 64.
[63] Muḥammad al-Gharbī, previous reference, 1:612.
[64] Masʿūd Khālidī, "Athar al-Jāliyāt al-ʿArabiyya wa-l-Barbariyya ʿalā al-Ḥayāt al-Ijtimāʿiyya fī al-Sūdān al-Awsaṭ wa-l-Gharbī bayn al-Qarnayn al-Khāmis wa-l-ʿĀshir al-Hijriyyayn/al-Ḥādī ʿAshar wa-l-Sādis ʿAshar al-Mīlādiyyayn," *Majallat al-Ādāb wa-l-ʿUlūm al-Insāniyya* 11, no. 1 (June 2018): 184.

them.[65] It seems to me that this influence, and the appearance of varieties from the tables of the people of the Maghreb, was limited to the elite and well-to-do classes, and could not have extended to the general population because of its cost. It is therefore possible that it became common within a specific group and not among others.

Since the tables of the people of Sudan became varied and numerous in terms of types and categories, it is not unlikely that there was also diversity in the vessels in which those dishes were served, especially since archaeological excavations revealed the existence of pottery vessels in the city of Awdaghust dating back to the period of the Rustamid state. Nor can we exclude this, particularly since commercial caravans, with the passage of time, witnessed the transport of luxury goods, and some pottery and clay vessels were among the goods carried by merchants towards Sudan, especially since the Central Maghreb was renowned for its clay and pottery industries.

Dwelling

Most buildings in the lands of Sudan were made of clay. Al-Idrīsī referred to this, saying: "The buildings of the people of this land are made of clay and long, broad timber."[66] This construction varied between towns and countryside. Houses in rural areas were simple, without walls, and most of them were built of clay, such as the houses of the city of Timbuktu at the beginning of its foundation, which consisted of huts built with stakes plastered with clay and roofed with straw.[67] The construction of the notables and the wealthy differed from that of the common people in that the walls of wealthy people's houses were usually built of baked brick, whereas the houses of the poor and those of modest means were built of dried mud-brick, sometimes mixed with straw. Among the people of Sudan, there was also the custom of building a courtyard or enclosure in front of the house to shelter animals.[68]

This pattern of construction, however, began to change gradually after the arrival of Muslims in the region and the settlement of many of them there, especially the merchant class, whose profession compelled them to remain there for long periods. This obliged them to establish houses in those regions. Among the merchants who settled there and are mentioned in some sources was the al-Maqqarī family, who acquired estates and houses and married women.[69]

This new architectural pattern emerged in cities that attracted large numbers of foreigners, especially Maghrebis, and that were important commercial centres, such as the city of Awdaghust, which was one of the first stations at which merchants arriving in the lands of Sudan stopped. This city experienced significant urban development, and contemporary historians who have studied Awdaghust agree that the Maghrebi commercial communities

[65] K. Madhu Panikkar, previous reference, 486.
[66] Al-Idrīsī, previous source, 1:20.
[67] Bashshār Akram al-Mallāḥ, previous reference, 192. See also al-Wazzān, previous source, 2:165.
[68] ʿAbd al-Qādir Zabādiyya, *Al-Ḥaḍāra al-ʿArabiyya wa-l-Taʾthīr al-Ūrūbī fī Ifrīqiyā al-Gharbiyya Janūb al-Ṣaḥrāʾ*, 1st ed. (Algeria: Al-Muʾassasa al-Waṭaniyya li-l-Kitāb, 1989), 88.
[69] Al-Maqqarī, previous source, 5:205.

were the ones who carried the seed of urbanisation to the city by spreading different architectural patterns, from the last quarter of the fourth/tenth century onwards.[70]

It appears that the new demographic situation brought about a qualitative shift in architectural patterns and in methods of using space. The use of stone in construction became widespread and would come to be considered one of the most prominent features of architecture, after Sudanese architectural specificity had been dominated by the use of clay materials. The intensive use of stone in building became widespread in the lands of Sudan from the beginning of the merchants' settlement there, giving rise to two types of architectural patterns in the region: a Maghrebi architecture that relied on the use of stone as its distinctive mark, and a Sudanese architecture that relied on clay as the essential element in construction. This may be discerned in the city of Ghana, which represents the most prominent model of the blending of Maghrebi and Sudanese civilisational influences.[71]

It consisted of "two cities situated on the plain, one of which is the city inhabited by the Muslims; it is a large city containing twelve mosques. . . . The king's city lies six miles from it and is called al-Ghāba. The dwellings between them are continuous, and their buildings are made of stone and acacia wood. The king has a palace and domes, all of which are surrounded by a wall like a rampart."[72] Nevertheless, stone was not used on a wide scale, and apart from the king's palace, the only houses built of stone were those of foreign merchants.[73]

The influence of construction extended beyond the cities of Awdaghust and Ghana to the city of Agadez, which al-Wazzān describes "as a walled city whose houses are skilfully built according to the pattern of the houses of the land of the Berbers."[74] The city of Timbuktu also witnessed development in building until it came to rival the great Islamic cities, after its building style and materials had changed. Credit for this is due to the Maghrebis who settled there, especially the merchant class, including those who owned many shops there, particularly cloth merchants. Thanks to these individuals, the style of construction changed, and the inhabitants of the region were able to introduce new building materials such as baked brick and stone construction.[75]

In the kingdom of Ghana, al-Bakrī indicates that, apart from the king's palace, the only houses built of stone were those of foreign merchants, large houses surrounded by gardens.[76] Al-Idrīsī describes the palace of the king of Ghana as being "on the bank of the Nile; its construction was firmly secured and skilfully executed, and its dwellings were adorned with various kinds of engravings, paints, and glass sunshades."[77] The kings, nobles, and commanders of Ghana would bring builders from the Maghreb to build palaces and houses for them in the Maghrebi style. Excavations have revealed the existence of beautiful

[70] Aḥmad Mawlūd Wuld Aydah, *Al-Ṣaḥrāʾ al-Kubrā: Mudun wa-Quṣūr*, vol. 1, 1st ed. (Algeria: Ministry of Culture, 2009), 76.
[71] Aḥmad Mawlūd Wuld Aydah, same reference, 54.
[72] Al-Bakrī, previous source, 175.
[73] K. Madhu Panikkar, previous reference, 488.
[74] Al-Wazzān, previous source, 2:171.
[75] Masʿūd Khālidī, "Athar al-Jāliyāt al-ʿArabiyya wa-l-Barbariyya," previous reference, 193. See also al-Wazzān, previous source, 2:165.
[76] Al-Bakrī, previous source, 175. See also K. Madhu Panikkar, previous reference, 487.
[77] Al-Idrīsī, previous source, 1:20.

buildings, excellently planned over a distance of two kilometres, with a population of more than thirty thousand people. These included two-storey buildings constructed of gypsum stone, with walls engraved in yellow gypsum.[78]

As for the kingdom of Mali, it appears that it did not content itself with the Maghrebi style alone; rather, a mixture of the Maghrebi and Andalusian styles emerged, especially during the reign of King Mansa Mūsā, who brought about a genuine revolution in the urban sphere that changed the form of the city, particularly after he brought in both Abū Isḥāq al-Sāḥilī, known as al-Ṭuwayjin, and ʿAbd Allāh al-Kūmī. The architectural character embodied by al-Sāḥilī appeared clearly in the construction of the square-shaped dome in the royal palace in the city of Niani, the capital of Mali. This was what most impressed the Malians and the historians who wrote on this subject. It appears that Abū Isḥāq displayed all his talent in it, decorating it with lime, various pigments, and engravings. The descriptions of this dome expressed the birth of a new model of Maghrebi architecture, famous for its domes and square minarets, especially during the Zayyanid and Marinid periods.[79]

Since a new architectural style appeared in the construction of houses in the lands of Sudan, differing completely from what had previously existed in terms of form and building materials, it is not unlikely that new furnishings also appeared inside homes in keeping with the new pattern. Some houses contained varied furniture, their floors were covered with carpets and mats, and seats and luxurious beds were placed in them. Wooden chests were used to store clothing and adornment tools. This, however, remained confined to the palaces of kings and their entourages, rather than extending to the common people.[80]

As for religious architecture, which symbolised the religious affiliation of the people of Sudan, numerous mosques appeared in the Maghrebi style. In his study on the spread of Islamic religious architecture across the Sahara, Schacht indicates that the Ibāḍīs of southern Tunisia, Wārjlān, and Mīzāb were the ones who transmitted the features of religious architecture. The minaret with stairs moved from southern Tunisia to Sudan by way of Wārjlān, while the rectangular miḥrāb moved from Mīzāb. He also considers that the Ibāḍīs were the ones who introduced Islam into parts of Africa.[81]

We do not exclude the validity of what he argued when we consider the reality of the commercial relations and connections that linked the Rustamid state with Sudan from the middle of the second/eighth century and continued even after the fall of their state, as well as the network of routes that connected the lands of Sudan with the Central Maghreb. Numerous mosques bearing the Maghrebi architectural character spread throughout the lands of Sudan. Al-Bakrī referred to the existence of twelve mosques in the kingdom of Ghana. Al-Sāḥilī also supervised the construction of several mosques in both Gao and Timbuktu. Maḥmūd Kaʿt mentions that Sultan Mansa Mūsā, ruler of Mali, built a mosque in every city through which

[78] Masʿūd Khālidī, "Athar al-Jāliyāt al-ʿArabiyya wa-l-Barbariyya," previous reference, 191.
[79] Nūr al-Dīn Shaʿbānī and Zaynab Jaʿnī, "Al-Fann wa-l-ʿImāra bi-Mamlakat Mālī," *Majallat al-Maʿārif li-l-Buḥūth wa-l-Dirāsāt al-Tārīkhiyya* 2, no. 4 (April 2016): 249.
[80] Bashshār Akram al-Mallāḥ, previous reference, 194.
[81] Tadeusz Lewicki, *Dirāsāt Shamāl Ifrīqiyya*, trans. Aḥmad Būmazkū, vol. 2, 1st ed. (California: Tawalt Cultural Foundation Publications, 2006), 52.

he passed during his journey to the pilgrimage.[82] The mosque and the house of the preacher enjoyed a high status among the sultans of Mali; those who incurred the sultan's wrath and feared being killed would seek refuge in the mosque, or, failing that, in the house of the preacher. This is what happened with Queen Qāsā, the wife of Sultan Mansa Sulaymān, who conspired against him, and with his female cousins, whom he pardoned.[83] This incident reveals to us the sanctity and sacredness of the mosque in the imagination of the Sudanese individual.

Celebrations and Feasts

The people of Sudan were known for observing the nights of the blessed month of Ramadan, for this month enjoyed great reverence and veneration. Religious rites and ceremonies were performed according to the Mālikī school.[84] As for the atmosphere and manifestations of the feast, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa transmitted them to us, having witnessed them in the kingdom of Mali. He states: "On the morning of the feast, people go out to the congregational mosques to perform the feast prayer, attended by the king, dressed in white garments and wearing the ṭaylasān on his head. He is usually accompanied to the prayer by jurists, scholars, and senior men of state. After the prayer has ended, people exchange congratulations and distribute alms to the poor."[85] The people of Western Sudan also celebrated the noble Prophet's birthday,[86] which we cannot exclude as having reached them through Maghrebi merchants. Through the foregoing, we observe the extent to which the people of Sudan were influenced by the Maghrebis, and how their celebrations acquired an Islamic colouring, with the religious aspect being strongly present in the manifestations of celebration.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, we conclude the effective and pioneering role undertaken by the Saharan urban centres of the Central Maghreb, including the urban centre of Wārjlān, which was the subject of this research paper. The Saharan urban centres contributed to linking and strengthening the bonds of communication between the two spheres, and played important roles in spreading Islam and civilisation in the African interior and in bringing about changes in social structures.

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[82] Al-Bakrī, previous source, 175. See also Maḥmūd Kaʿt al-Tunbuktī, *Tārīkh al-Fattāsh*, annot. Ādam Bamba, 1st ed. (Damascus: Muʾassasat al-Risāla Nāshirūn, 2014), 122.
[83] Taqī al-Dīn ʿĀrif al-Dūrī and Khawla Shākir al-Dujaylī, *Tārīkh al-Muslimīn fī Ifrīqiya*, 1st ed. (Abu Dhabi: Dār al-Kutub al-Waṭaniyya, 2014), 237. See also Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, previous source, 4:263.
[84] Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, previous source, 4:256; Ismāʿīl al-ʿArabī, *Al-Ṣaḥrāʾ al-Kubrā wa-Shawāṭiʾuhā*, previous reference, 306.
[85] Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, previous source, 4:260.
[86] Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, same source, 4:270.

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