

The History and Social Reality of the Ghuraba "Strangers" in the Central Maghreb During the Zayyanid Era (633-962AH/1236-1555 AD)

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Received: 10-10-2025 Accepted: 05-02-2026 Published: 30-05-2026

Abstract:

This study examines the socio-political and economic dynamics of foreign populations within the Central Maghreb during the Zayyanid era (633–962 AH / 1236–1554 AD), Moving beyond traditional historical narratives that treat marginalized groups as transient historical entities, this research investigates the multifaceted roles played by 'strangers' (*al-ghurabā*) in reshaping the social structure, bolstering commercial networks, and enriching the intellectual landscape of prominent Zayyanid urban centers, most notably Tlemcen. Utilizing a diverse array of primary Arabic sources-including jurisprudential *nawāzil*, biographical dictionaries, and medieval travelogues-the study analyzes how the status of these individuals fluctuated between successful social integration and cultural distinctiveness, influenced heavily by political fluctuations, regional instability, and state-sponsored containment institutional policies. Furthermore, it addresses the profound psychological implications of psychological alienation (*al-ightirāb*) and physical exile (*al-ghurbah*) endured by political refugees and displaced scholars. Ultimately, the paper provides a more nuanced understanding of the historical transformations and social structures of the Zayyanid state, highlighting the interactive relationship between newcomers and host communities, while opening fresh investigative avenues into medieval Maghrebi institutional integration mechanisms.

Keywords: Central Maghreb, Zayyanid Era, Strangers (*Al-Ghurabā*), Tlemcen, Society.

Introduction

Undoubtedly, the profound political and social transformations witnessed in the Central Maghreb, particularly during the Zayyanid period, resulted from the interplay of various internal and external factors. This dynamic generated a geographical openness toward neighboring and distant regions, fostered by continuous cultural, economic, social, and political interactions. Amidst these shifts, a distinct group emerged and expanded within the local population-whether arriving from abroad or emerging from internal socio-spatial contexts-eventually integrating into the fabric of domestic society. This group refers to the *Ghuraba* (strangers), a segment long confined to the shadows and marginalized within society, yet functioning as the product of specific historical and social conditions with profound impacts on both the state and community. Despite their diverse origins, backgrounds, and ethnicities, these strangers constituted an active element within the political, social, cultural, and economic

spheres, driven by their interactions with the local population and the lasting imprints they left on the social structure.

Accordingly, researching the *Ghuraba* and examining their historical accounts is of paramount importance for discerning the categorical stratifications within a society that underwent numerous socio-demographic structural mutations due to various considerations. Uncovering the intricacies surrounding this group and reconstructing their fragmented narratives and chronicles is essential, given the diversity of their classifications, formations, and distinctive characteristics. Furthermore, analyzing the phenomenon of marginalization within its social and psychological contexts, along with its ramifications, contributes directly to the historiographical revision of marginalized groups. This aligns with the burgeoning academic interest in subaltern studies, the growing necessity to understand their realities, and the effort to rehabilitate their historical agency. Ultimately, such an endeavor fosters a deeper comprehension of social structures, their transformations, and their underlying dimensions, enabling a rigorous re-evaluation of the position of strangers within the formation of social hierarchies, societal evolution, and openness toward foreign and incoming elements.

Within this research endeavor, and based on a set of conceptualizations aimed at clarifying perspectives and removing ambiguities surrounding various aspects of this group, this study addresses the core problematic to shed light on several axes and variables. These elements have deeply influenced the conceptualization and delineation of the lives of the *Ghuraba*, enabling a rigorous analysis of their status within the Zayyanid Central Maghreb. This trajectory is reflected in the following central questions and problematics: What was the position of the *Ghuraba* within the societal structure of the Central Maghreb during the Zayyanid era? What were their distinct categories and social formations? What were the underlying motives and causes for their influx into this specific geographical area? What were the primary centers and institutions that accommodated and sheltered them? Furthermore, did their social status and psychological condition affect their level of social integration and the surrounding living conditions?

1. The Conceptual Framework of 'Alienation' (*Al-Ightirab*) and 'The Stranger' (*Al-Gharib*):

The term 'alienation' (*al-ightirab*) remains highly ambiguous, with researchers rarely reaching a consensus on a comprehensive definition. Scholars adopt divergent perspectives in defining the concept, often struggling to delineate its typologies, sources, and behavioral repercussions on both individuals and societies—a conflation that further exacerbates its obscurity and vagueness. Contemporary studies have neither succeeded in establishing a definitive conceptualization of alienation, nor have they adequately demonstrated its correlation with the specific social conditions that engender it, or with the subjective psychological state of the individual exhibiting such behaviors. Consequently, there remains a

lack of clear differentiation among the sociological, emotional, and behavioral dimensions of the phenomenon¹.

In the same context, examining the linguistic root of the terms *Ghurba* (exile/estrangement) and *Ightirab* (alienation) in Arabic lexicons reveals that they derive from the tri-consonantal root *gh-r-b* (غ ر ب). This linguistic root encompasses multiple and divergent significations, strictly governed by the semantic context in which they appear. In traditional Arabic dictionaries, *Ghurba* and *Ightirab* denote the concepts of displacement, detachment, and distance from one's homeland, family, and kinsfolk². Ibn Manzur al-Ansari (d. 711 AH / 1311 AD) defines the stranger (*Al-Gharib*) as: 'one who is far from his homeland; its plural is *Ghuraba*³, and the feminine form is *Ghariba*.' He references the Prophetic Hadith where the Prophet (peace be upon him) was asked about the *Ghuraba* and replied: 'Those who revive my Sunnah which the people have abandoned after me.' In another narration: 'Indeed, Islam began as something strange, and it will return to being strange just as it began, so glad tidings to the *Ghuraba*.' This implies that in its inception, Islam was akin to a solitary stranger without kin due to the paucity of Muslims at the time, and it will become strange again in the end of times when Muslims diminish in number, becoming like strangers. Aligned with this perspective, the term or epithet remains intrinsically linked to exile from the homeland; hence, the *Ghuraba* are also defined as 'the distant ones' (*al-aba'id*).

This is the very trajectory outlined by Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi⁴ (d. c. 410 AH / 1019 AD) in his treatise on the stranger, stating: 'The stranger is he who has no path to homelands, nor the endurance for settlement.' This conceptualization is justified by the contextual iterations of the term and its meanings in Islamic heritage, as it preoccupied many travelers, mystics (Sufis), and scholars. Consequently, the concept integrated profound spiritual dimensions, prominently reflected in the nomenclature of correspondences and titles of manuscripts. A notable example is the treatise authored by Ahmad Abu 'Asida al-Bijai (d. 865 AH / 1460 AD), entitled: *Risalat al-Gharib ila al-Habib*⁵ (The Epistle of the Stranger to the Beloved). The autobiographical account provided by al-Bijai in this epistle depicts the life of a man fleeing human injustice seeking divine mercy, migrating from physical wretchedness toward spiritual bliss; he abandoned his family and homeland under obscure circumstances, contenting himself with the proximity of the Prophet [in Medina], thereby compensating for his lost kin and country⁶.

Conversely, banishment (*Taghrib*) semantically referred to the expulsion of a legally penalized individual from their town to another. Expelling the individual to a short distance-equivalent to a traveler's journey from which one cannot return on the same day-sufficed, with

¹ Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr al-Rāzī, *Mukhtār al-Ṣiḥāh*, ed. Department of Dictionaries at Librairie du Liban Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1986, p 187. Tawfiq Musā'idiyya, "Alienation in the Poetry of 'Afif al-Dīn al-Tilimsānī" Master's thesis, Department of Arabic Literature, Mohamed Khider University of Biskra, 2007/2008, p10.

² Ibid, p40.

³ Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, vol 1 (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, n.d.), s.v , p 639.

⁴ Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī's, *Al-Ishārāt al-Ilāhiyya*, vol. 1, edited by 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī, was published in Cairo by Fuad I University Press in 1950. p79.

⁵ Abou el-Kacem Saadallah, ed. and comm, 1st ed. Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 1993.

⁶ Ibid, p5.

the punitive intent being castigation, alienation, and estrangement. Furthermore⁷, the meaning of 'the stranger' acquired a mystical, Sufi dimension, conceptualized as: 'one whose connection with creation is severed except with his Lord; thus, whoever approaches him with worldly ego is consumed, and the reality of estrangement lies in the cessation of mundane affairs and the effacement of material traces'⁸.

Accordingly, migration and estrangement constituted an intrinsic part of the lives of many migrants and travelers in the Islamic West. This is illustrated by Abu al-Hasan al-Qalasadi (d. 891 AH / 1486 AD), who described his desire for travel by stating: 'Then my mind was moved toward relocating, and my soul yearned for departure; I then recalled the words of Qadi Abd al-Wahhab: "Travel, and you shall find a substitute for those you leave behind"⁹.

In a different context, some researchers argue that the term 'foreigner' is closer to the reality of these incoming migrants or travelers. However, this designation was unavailable during the Middle Ages¹⁰, whether in the Islamic or Christian worlds, as the concept of 'the foreigner' is more intrinsically associated with the modern era. Furthermore, Arabic writings maintained a striking silence regarding members of these communities whom they categorized as strangers, except on rare occasions when their chronicles were recorded spontaneously. Thus, the foreigner remains that outsider who fails to fulfill the prevailing criteria of belonging within the host society. Accordingly, it can be argued that alienation (*ightirab*) or estrangement (*ghurba*), as concepts in the medieval Islamic era, represented a multifaceted lived experience away from the homeland, shaped by political, scholarly, social, and economic conditions and motives. These dynamics compelled the individual to migrate and seek a change in their environment of settlement and livelihood, consequently inducing psychological and social shifts. Alienation can also be conceptualized as an emotional and social state experienced by the stranger as an inevitable consequence of existing in an unfamiliar milieu or a land other than their homeland, which hinders their integration and strips them of harmony with this new surroundings.

2. The Central Maghreb: A Sphere of Attraction for Strangers and Foreigners.

For centuries, the Central Maghreb constituted a geographical domain that accommodated numerous mass and individual migrations, serving as a locus of attraction and a hub for many strangers and foreigners who secured a significant position within the local social fabric. This dynamic was facilitated by the confluence of several favorable factors, alongside supportive political, security, and economic conditions. This reality is vividly reflected in the accounts

⁷ Al-Nawawī, *Rawḍat al-Ṭālibīn wa-ʿUmdat al-Muḥīn*, supervised by Zuhayr al-Shāwīsh, vol. 10, 3rd ed. Beirut: Al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1991, p 88.

⁸ Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Ṣabbāgh al-Qalʿī, *Bustān al-Azhār fī Manāqib Zamzam al-Akhyār wa-Maʿdan al-Anwār Sīdī Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf al-Rāshidī al-Nasab wa-al-Dār*, ed. and study by Othmane Medjoubi, PhD diss, supervised by Abdelhamid Bourayou, Department of Arabic Language and Literature, University of Algiers 2 Abou el-Kacem Saadallah, 2022/2023, 888.

⁹ Al-Qalāsādī, *Riḥlat al-Qalāsādī*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Ajfan, Tunis: Al-Sharika al-Tūnisiyya lil-Tawzīʿ, 1978, p109

¹⁰ Olivia Remie Constable, *Housing the Stranger in the Mediterranean World: Lodging, Trade, and Travel in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, trans. Mohamed Tahar Mansouri, rev. Mohamed Yassine Essid, 1st ed. Beirut: Dar al-Madar al-Islami, 2013, p18–19.

and texts of numerous travelers and geographers who visited this region and its metropolises. For instance, Tlemcen was described by one chronicler as 'a city receptive to every stranger'¹¹, A similar characterization was attributed to Tahert¹², depicted as 'a city where the stranger thrives and the wise man finds comfort.' This was primarily due to the coexistence that defined this metropolis, despite its ethnic and sectarian diversity; the Ibadhi society of that era was renowned for its tolerance, ensuring that any stranger who settled among them would establish a home in their midst¹³. This was equally true for the people of Ouargla (Warglan)¹⁴, who displayed remarkable generosity toward strangers, welcoming them with great hospitality. The same attributes were ascribed to the inhabitants of Oran, who were known for being amiable, generous, and fond of outsiders, exhibiting a protective affection toward the stranger. In his travelogue, Ibn al-Sabbah Abdullah al-Mudajjan (d. second half of the 8th century AH / 14th century AD) described the metropolis of Oran by stating: 'When any of them travels abroad, you will find none better in companionship or sweeter in affection; when they find themselves as strangers in other lands, they show one another companionship, fellowship, love, tenderness, compassion, and kindness.' These were the identical virtues manifested by the people of Bejaia in their affection for strangers and their protective embrace of them¹⁵.

Accordingly, it is imperative to assert that the strategic geographical location of the Central Maghreb, its political and economic conditions, and its ethnic and cultural diversity collectively played a pivotal role in elevating this geographical region's prominence among the *Ghuraba*. Consequently, during significant historical periods, this territory transformed into a vital point of transit and settlement for these strangers, serving as a crossroads for their coexistence and gradual integration with the indigenous population.

3. Categories and Formations of the *Ghuraba* in Zayyanid Society.

The *Ghuraba* constituted a significant element within the social structure of Zayyanid society. They were documented across various historical sources under multiple connotations and appellations. Consequently, the following question arises: Who exactly were the *Ghuraba* in Zayyanid society?

A. Foreign Traders and Merchants :Certain metropolises in the Central Maghreb served as major hubs of attraction for foreign merchants. As noted by al-Hasan al-Wazzan, the city of Ouargla hosted a substantial number of foreign traders who were strangers to the country; they brought commodities from the lands of the Berbers to exchange them for goods transported by

¹¹ Ibn al-Ṣabbāḥ al-Andalusī, *Nisbat al-Akḥbār wa-Tadhkirat al-Akhyār*, ed. Joumaâ Cheikha, *Journal of Andalusian Studies (Majallat Dirāsāt Andalusīyya)*, special issue 45–46 Tunis, December 2011, p 57

¹² Al-Maqdisī, *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm fī Ma'rīfat al-Aqālīm*, 3rd ed, Cairo: Maktabat Madbūlī, n.d, 228.

¹³ Ibn al-Saghūr, *Akḥbār al-A'imma al-Rustamiyyin*, ed. Muḥammad Naṣir and Ibrāhīm Baḥḥāz, Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1986, p36

¹⁴ Al-Ḥasan al-Wazzān (Leo Africanus), *Waṣf Ifrīqiya*, vol. 2, trans. Mohamed Hajji and Mohamed El Akhdar, 2nd ed, Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1983, p136.

¹⁵ Ibn Ṣa'd, *Rawḍat al-Nisrīn fī al-Ta'rīf bi-al-Ashyākh al-Arba'a al-Muta'akḥkhirīn*, ed. and rev. Yahia Bouaziz, 1st ed. Algiers: Éditions ANEP, 2002, p 51. Ibn Maryam, *Al-Bustān fī Dhikr al-Awliyā' wa-al-'Ulamā' bi-Tilimsān*, ed. Abdelkader Boubaya, 1st ed. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2014, 400.

merchants from the Bilad al-Sudan¹⁶. Similarly, the inhabitants of Ténès engaged in extensive trade with foreigners, who sourced wheat, barley, and other commodities from the city to transport them to Algiers and other regional destinations¹⁷.

The usage of the term *Ghuraba* is present in the writings of Ibn Khaldun (d. 808 AH / 1406 AD) as a synonym denoting merchants, as stated in his quote: 'Know that among the traits of perfection competed for by tribes possessing solidarity (*Asabiyya*), which serve as evidence of their sovereignty, are the honoring of scholars... and the various categories of merchants and strangers (*Ghuraba*)¹⁸, and treating people according to their status.' This reflected the reality of numerous tribes in the Central Maghreb; for instance, the Zenata tribe's relations with foreign merchants were characterized by friendliness and friendship, particularly with Andalusian traders who conducted extensive commercial activities with them. Consequently, Andalusian ships frequently visited Zenata ports, such as the ports of Ténès and Oran. Andalusian sailors also established cities and outposts along the coast of the Central Maghreb, where they settled with the consent of this tribe. Furthermore, foreign merchants in Tlemcen were obligated to pay a tax estimated at one-tenth of the value of the goods (tithe), collected by the state on vessels arriving to trade at its ports. Additional fees were also imposed on top of this tax, such as fees for brokers, porters, and translators stationed at the maritime custom-house (*Diwan al-Bahr*), prior to the merchants proceeding to their commercial hostels (*Fanadiq*)¹⁹.

B. Visiting Scholars and Physicians: This segment constituted the most transient group among the *Ghuraba*, given that the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge inherently required extensive travel and relocation across various metropolises and countries. This reality is illustrated by Ibn al-Khatib al-Salmāni, who depicted his own experience by stating: 'Know that throughout my long experience and my repeated travels to both the East and the West'²⁰, Similarly, when the traveler al-Abdari arrived in the city of Algiers, he constantly searched for someone to alleviate his alienation, a sentiment vividly captured in his account: 'I entered the city inquiring about a scholar who could relieve distress, or a man of letters (*adib*) who could comfort a stranger'²¹.

C. Thieves and Spies: Given that banditry (*hiraba*) and theft inherently necessitate concealment and disguise, the identities of most thieves remained unknown, causing them to be categorized as strangers. Our evidence for this is the faction discussed by Ibn Marzuq in his

¹⁶ Al-Wazzān's, *Wasf Ifriqiya*, Volume 2, p 136.

¹⁷ Luis del Mármol Carvajal, *Ifriqiya*, vol. 2, trans. Mohamed Hajji et al. Rabat: Moroccan Association for Composition, Translation, and Publication / Dār Nashr al-Ma'rifa, 1989, p 354.

¹⁸ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimat Ibn Khaldūn*, ed. 'Alī 'Abd al-Wāhid Wāfi, vol. 2, 7th ed. Cairo: Dār Nahḍat Miṣr, 2014, p 501. Abd al-Bāsiṭ al-Malaṭī, *Al-Rawḍ al-Bāsim fī Ḥawādiṭh al-'Umr wa-al-Tarājim*, ed. Robert Brunschwig, Paris: Librairie Larose, 1936, p 63–64.

¹⁹ Siham Dahmani, "The Tax System of the Zayyanid State (633 AH–1236 AD / 962 AH–1554 AD)", PhD diss., Department of History, University of Constantine 2, 2017/2018, p191-195.

²⁰ Lisān al-Dīn ibn al-Khaṭīb, *Nuḥḍat al-Jirāb fī 'Alālat al-Ighṭirāb*, vol. 2, ed. and comm. Aḥmad Mukhtār al-'Abbādī, Casablanca: Dār al-Nashr al-Maghribiyya, n.d., p 158.

²¹ Abū 'Abd Allāh al-'Abdarī, *Riḥlat al-'Abdarī*, ed. 'Alī Ibrāhīm Kurdī, 2nd ed. Damascus: Dār Sa'd al-Dīn lil-Ṭibā'a wa-al-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī', 2005, p 82.

Musnad, who noted: 'There was a group called the *Ghuraba*; they were spies, intelligence agents, and highwaymen. They employed methods derived from their custom and varied in their practices, using them deliberately to unlawfully consume people's wealth. Eventually, others joined them, engaging in gambling and mockery... deceiving the weak-minded. Consequently, certain dues were imposed on them, and money was extorted from them... yet they possess subtle anecdotes and astonishing accounts²².' Similarly, Sheikh Ahmad ibn Yusuf al-Miliani, addressing a student, remarked: 'The strangers steal the lamps from the mosque²³.' Furthermore, Abd al-Basit al-Malati, who fell victim to theft, recounted: 'Two thieves entered my lodging in Tlemcen and hid inside the house without my noticing. They then ambushed us at night, and a great ordeal ensued between them, myself, and a servant of mine, after we perceived them before falling asleep.' Al-Malati added: 'While we were in Tlemcen, eleven Franks were brought in, captured off the coast of Honaine; they had arrived in a vessel to abduct Muslims and raid the highways and similar areas²⁴.' The widespread phenomenon of pilfering and banditry in society ultimately drove the inhabitants to refrain from sheltering strangers at night, even if those outsiders faced real and imminent danger²⁵.

The association of theft and espionage with the faction of the *Ghuraba* (strangers) likely predates the Zayyanid era, a phenomenon that can also be traced back to the Almohad period. This is alluded to by Ibn Idhari al-Marrakushi regarding a burglary that occurred in the *Qaysariyya* (commercial complex) of Marrakech in 607 AH / 1210 AD, during a period of security breakdown. He recounted: 'And there is no stratagem for the resourceful save submission to the Greatest, the Exalted. The rabble from the lower classes and various types of strangers braved the fire, plundering some of what they found among the items spared by the blaze, before sneaking away along every pathway²⁶.'

D. Immigrants Arriving from Al-Andalus: In the context of Andalusian migration from their original homeland, they arrived both individually and in groups following internal political crises, and most notably during periods of forced displacement. Consequently, the term *Ghuraba* (strangers)-or a similar designation signifying newcomers or distinguishing them from the indigenous inhabitants-applied to them. For this reason, certain historical writings described them as strangers; this was the case with Ahmad ibn Abi Jum'ah al-Wahrani al-Maghribi, known as Shaqrun (d. 920 AH / 1514 AD), who referred to them as 'the near strangers' (*al-ghuraba al-quraba*)²⁷. Along this line of thought, Ibn al-Khatib noted: '...and by

²² Ibn Marzūq, *Al-Musnad al-Ṣaḥīḥ al-Ḥasan fī Mā'āthir wa-Maḥāsin Mawlānā Abī al-Ḥasan*, ed. and study by María Jesús Viguera, intro. Mahmoud Bouayed (Algiers: Société Nationale d'Édition et de Diffusion [SNED], 1981, p 286.

²³ Al-Ṣabbāgh al-Qal'ī, *Bustān al-Azhār*, p 634.

²⁴ Al-Malaṭī, *Al-Rawḍ al-Bāsim*, p 42-43.

²⁵ Mohamed Fatha, *Al-Nawāzil al-Fiqhiyya wa-al-Mujtama' (6-9 AH / 12-15 AD)*, Publications of the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences - Hassan II University Casablanca: Dār al-Nashr al-Maghribiyya, 1999, p 405.

²⁶ Ibn 'Idhārī al-Marrākushī, *Al-Bayān al-Mughrib fī Akhbār al-Andalus wa-al-Maghrib: Qism al-Muwaḥḥidīn*, ed. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm al-Kattānī et al, 1st ed. Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1985, p 258.

²⁷ Boubaker Hassouni, "The Manuscript of the Epistle of Imam Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad ibn Abī Jum'ah al-Maghrawī, Mufti of Oran in the 10th Century [AH], to the People of Al-Andalus during the Time of Tribulation:

the strange group, homelands are established, and desires are renewed.' This indicates that the Andalusian nation, in the final era of its existence, was referred to as 'the strange nation' (*al-umma al-ghariba*), in reference to its isolation across the sea and its lack of any form of aid or military assistance.

Accordingly, the period spanning from the 7th century AH to the final decade of the 9th century AH witnessed a massive influx of Andalusians into the Central Maghreb, with thousands relocating to Tlemcen and Oran. Expressing their alienation, Abu Jum'ah al-Maghrawi stated in his message: 'Asking for your sincerity and your alienation (*ghurbatikum*) to offer good prayers... so glad tidings to the strangers who remain righteous when people become corrupt... for [reward] shall reach the strangers, God Almighty willing.'²⁸

In any case, Andalusian settlement in the Central Maghreb spanned extensive territories, encompassing both coastal and interior regions, albeit to varying degrees. Among the most prominent centers that attracted growing numbers of them, we mention:

Tlemcen: It was the largest metropolis in the Central Maghreb to accommodate Andalusian immigrants, who arrived there from Fez, Tunis, and Al-Andalus. This was particularly true for the scholarly elite, who left a profound impact on Tlemcenian society. Following the fall of various major Islamic cities in Al-Andalus, Tlemcen emerged as one of the primary urban centers in the Central Maghreb to receive Andalusian refugees. These immigrants formed massive throngs of newcomers arriving for trade, the pursuit of knowledge, or religious devotion, with many ultimately choosing to reside and settle permanently in the city²⁹.

G. Transients and Destitutes Arriving in the Metropolis or Country: This designation applies primarily to individuals who were impoverished or socially isolated, constituting one of the categories present within medieval Central Maghrebian society. Legal and fatwa (*Nawazil*) compilations contain various expressions reflecting the status of certain transients arriving in urban centers. A prime example is the 'transient woman', whose circumstances jurists meticulously investigated, particularly when she sought marriage. One such case was addressed by Muhammad ibn Abi al-Qasim al-Sharif, concerning: 'A woman who fled from a distant land, with no known family in the country she arrived in, where she knows no one, and who is in dire need due to hunger and lack of clothing, claiming that her husband has died.' The jurist ruled that if she is unclothed, destitute, and a transient stranger in the country known to no one, her word is to be accepted, and she may marry there. This is a historical reality that cannot be denied; some women were compelled by destitution to migrate to a land other than their own, where their identities remained unknown, seeking marriage. Indeed, numerous jurisprudential and fatwa cases incorporated their chronicles and aspects of their lives, highlighting the causes behind their arrival in a specific country, such as the loss or death of a husband, divorce, or orphanhood. For instance, [sources record cases of] a woman arriving in

A Study and Commentary," *Algerian Journal of Manuscripts (Al-Majalla al-Jazā'iriyya lil-Makhtūṭāt)* 6, no. 7 (June 2010): p 157.

²⁸ Ibid, p 157-158.

²⁹ Al-Tanasī, *Nazm al-Durr wa-l-'Iqyān fī Bayān Sharaf Banī Zayyān*, ed. Agha Mahmoud Bouayed (Algiers: Mofam Publishing, 2011), 126–128.

a town where neither her place of origin nor her identity is known, claiming she had a husband who passed away³⁰. Similarly, other cases involve individuals making a legal acknowledgment while noting their predicament as strangers in the place where the acknowledgment was made³¹.

Ibn Marzuq al-Khatib recorded an incident regarding the movement of strangers within the quarters of Tlemcen. It states that a judge was seated at *Marsa al-Tulaba* (the Students' Port), one of the alleyways in the metropolis of Tlemcen, when he noticed 'two young men who entered and then left. He summoned the doorkeeper and asked him: "Whom did these two come to see?" The doorkeeper replied: "I have no knowledge." The judge reprimanded him, called the two young men forward, and questioned them. Their accounts grew contradictory and faltered, prompting the judge to say: "Tell me the truth, you only came to this school (*maktab*) with malicious intent." Thereupon, they confessed and repented.' This incident underscores the obligation of both the market inspector (*Muhtasib*) and the judges to enforce laws regulating strangers within Tlemcen's quarters and neighborhoods, particularly in safeguarding their privacy and customs³².

4. The Socio-Psychological Status of the *Ghuraba*.

There is no room for doubt that alienation (*al-ightirāb*) and exile (*al-ghurbah*) are considered forms of psychological punishment. Although the individual enduring exile may maintain physical security and apparent bodily integrity, being deprived of remaining among kin—within one's social embrace and accustomed cultural milieu—inevitably dismantles psychological cohesion and devastates the emotional well-being. This is due to the psychological exhaustion, mental fatigue, and physical strain that afflict the self. A prime³³ historical archetype of one who suffered the repercussions of psychological exile is Lisan al-Din ibn al-Khatib. Expressing the inner turmoil of his soul, he addressed the Marinid Sultan, Abu Salim al-Marini, on the occasion of the conquest of Tlemcen, stating: *'Your presence is that which relieved my anguish and brought solace.'* In another instance, he adds: *'And exile became familiar while its wound remained unhealed³⁴,'* which reflects the plight of his displacement and the arduous moments he endured. His wife passed away, leaving behind a husband and children, as evinced in his statement: *'On the sixth of Dhu al-Qa'dah in the year 762 AH [1361 AD], I was struck by that which embittered my life and disrupted my peace: the passing of the mother of my children, leaving behind small, helpless young ones, both male and female, in a land of exile, beneath the canopy of desolation, and under the shadow of calamity. Thus, my grief over her intensified, my despair deepened, and I was overcome by the magnitude*

³⁰ Al-Wansharīsī, *Al-Mi'yār al-Mu'rib wa-l-Jāmi' al-Mughrib 'an Fatāwā Ahl Ifrīqiyyah wa-l-Andalus wa-l-Maghrib*, supervised by Mohamed Hadji (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1981), volume 3, p 112.

³¹ Ibid, volume 11, p 398.

³² Ibn Marzūq, *Al-Manāqib al-Marzūqiyya*, ed. Salwa El Zahri, 1st ed, Rabat: Publications of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, 2008, p183.

³³ El-Bachir Boukaâda, "Banishment and Exile in the Central Maghreb between the 4th–6th AH / 10th–12th CE Centuries: A Reading into the Causes and Implications," *Al-Mi'yar Journal* 59, no. 25 (2021), p 672.

³⁴ Lisān al-Dīn ibn al-Khatīb, *Nufūdāt al-Jirāb*, 2/p 93, 135

*of my sorrow*³⁵. This mirrors the condition of Ibn Marzuq al-Khatib, who suffered a political catastrophe that forced him into alienation and the agony of separation, as illustrated in his words: *'Thus, I found myself in the lands of alienation, tasting the pain of distance after proximity; burdened by dependents and weighed down by destitution*³⁶.

In addition to the aforementioned, strangers in certain regions were subjected to psychological intimidation and terror due to the nature of the inhabitants of the areas they visited or traversed. Some mountain tribes in the Central Maghreb were renowned for their fierceness, to the extent that strangers could not pass through their territories in peace unless accompanied by a *wali*³⁷ (holy man/saint). Among the well-known accounts regarding the interaction of *awliya* (saints) with strangers is an incident involving the revered Sheikh Abu Hasan al-Harralli (d. 638 AH / 1241 AD), who held the *Ahl al-Bayt* (the Prophet's lineage) in high esteem. One day, a stranger came to him claiming to be a *sharif* (a descendant of the Prophet). The Sheikh honored him and granted him a *tashura* (a traditional monetary token/purse) equivalent to a sum of dirhams. When the man departed, a bystander remarked to the Sheikh: *'This man is a stranger; he is so-and-so from the people of Marrakesh.'* The Sheikh replied that his gesture was intended for the Prophet, peace be upon him, adding: *'If the man spoke the truth, then it is well; otherwise, the righteous intention has been fulfilled*³⁸. Conversely, the positive implications of alienation manifested in cultivating commendable traits among many of these expatriate individuals. For instance, the people of Oran were explicitly known for showing profound compassion and solidarity toward one another when in exile³⁹.

The categorization of strangers within the marginalized hierarchy-lacking both familial and moral support-is substantiated by a multitude of manifestations that carry connotations of exclusion, marginalization, a sense of alienation, and signs of grief and despair. In this regard, Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi describes the situation and psychological state of one such stranger, noting: *'Paleness overcame him though he was sheltered, and sorrow vanquished him until he became like a withered skin; if he spoke, he spoke brokenly in sadness, and if he remained silent, he remained silent in bewildered restraint*⁴⁰. Psychological approaches are paramount in this direction, as they reveal the condition of the migrant stranger displaced from their homeland. Furthermore, examining their feelings and emotions reflects, in many instances, the depth of their perception of marginalization and marginality, underscoring the importance of studying this group to achieve a more precise understanding of social structures and their transformations.

Conclusion.

This study demonstrates that, far from being a marginal element, the "stranger" cohort in

³⁵ Ibid, 2/ p 205 .

³⁶ Ibn Marzūq, *Al-Musnad al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, p82.

³⁷ Al-Wazzān's, *Wasf Ifrīqiyyā*, Volume 2 , p 46.

³⁸ Al-Ghubrīni, *'Unwān al-Dirāyah fīman 'Urifa min al-'Ulamā' fī al-Mī'ah al-Sābi'ah bi-Bijāyah*, ed. Adil Nuwayhid, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīdah, 1979), p 34.

³⁹ Ibn al-Ṣabbāḥ al-Andalusī, *Nisbat al-Akḥbār* , p 58.

⁴⁰ Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī's, *Al-Ishārāt al-Ilāhiyya*, 1/p 79-80.

Ziyyanid-era Central Maghreb acted as a vital, active agent in the society's social, economic, and intellectual life. Their diverse backgrounds contributed significantly to the openness and prosperity of urban centers like Tlemcen, establishing it as a preeminent cultural hub in the region.

This study reveals that the status of strangers in Ziyyanid-era Central Maghreb varied from full social integration to distinct cultural communities or marginal groups, depending on origins, occupations, and prevailing conditions. The Ziyyanid court played a key role in managing this presence through infrastructure, such as *fanadiq* (hostels/inns), and containment policies that utilized the expertise of these groups.

Ultimately, the category of strangers, in all its diverse configurations, constitutes a vital pathway for understanding the social dynamics of the Zayyanid Central Maghreb. It further unveils an interactive dynamic between the newcomer and the local, and between the static and the transient, within a historical context characterized by continuity and mobility across multiple spaces. Moreover, the benevolence displayed by many inhabitants of the Zayyanid Central Maghreb toward strangers reflects their receptivity and openness to foreigners, as locals frequently sought proximity to them, showing profound empathy and compassion. While this study succeeds in demystifying this group and resolving existing problematic questions surrounding them, the phenomenon of alienation and strangers remains a fertile ground for further investigation. It opens promising horizons for future research, particularly regarding the mechanisms of integration, as well as the impact of political and doctrinal transformations in reshaping the position of these strangers within society.

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