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THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MALIKITE SCHOOL OF ISLAMIC JURISPRUDENCE AND ITS ROLE IN THE FORMATION OF MOROCCO'S IDENTITY AND THE MAINTENANCE OF ITS NATIONAL INTEGRITY*

The present study focuses mainly on the Malikite Madhab, as the study begins and ends with it. However, the relation of this study to the concepts of identity and national integrity requires us to stop at the meaning of these two notions, in order to identify them and clarify issues associated to them.

The word « houwiya » in Arabic means identity and it is derived from the third person singular in Arabic « Houwa » (Him) that identifies the individual herself. Identify means the « person » and the elements that build his existence, like the values and constituents that regulate the existence of the individual and the group in a stable and rooted manner. Identity is acquired through the country as a nature and as a society, which is governed by political, economic, social and

* Translated from Arabic, CMIESI.

cultural patterns. These patterns forge identity and its genuine mentality. This mentality is finalized afterwards by religion, in such a way that helps self actualization, update of the angle of vision, the adaptation of thinking and behavioral outlook.

National integrity means unanimity in belonging to a homeland, starting from belonging to a land and a religion, as it was perceived in the past and now, to the awareness of the legal meaning of citizenship, rights and the duties related thereto, in addition to participating in the decision making process and the feeling of having a share of its sovereignty.

Regardless of globalization and its role in cultural amalgamation, identity remains an active and effective element in the process of preserving sovereignty and the unity related to it.

This is where we come to religion as an element that united Moroccan people, and through which they self-actualized themselves, accentuated their existence and marked their identity and personality. They did not just embrace religion as a belief or law, but they resorted to it as behavioral rule and measure, through which they have laid down their concepts and perceptions.

This was not all, as they did not consider Arabic as a means of communication amongst other local dialects only, but also as a symbol of personality, constituents and values associated to it. It is a kind of profound feeling of oneself. Arabic is also the language of the Holy Qur'an and the Islamic heritage. Arabic is a frame that gathers feelings, knowledge and experiences. For civilizational and cultural heritage, as a whole, it is almost their safeguard and their faithful portrayer.

This unanimity on the choice of religion, which is Islam, leads us to ask a fundamental question about how Moroccans embraced their religion. Moroccans are known to be religious from the past, whether during the heathendom era, or during the Phoenician era, where Moroccans had shown their acceptance of monotheism, as they were bound to Phoenician Gods that were affected by what had been worshipped in Egypt and Greece. But Moroccans had a negative stand point towards Christianity, which was associated with Roman, Vandal and Byzantine imperial and colonial movements. Yet, Judaism existed though in a limited scale. These religious circumstances that preceded Islam helped in its adoption it as a religion based on reasoned choice, and not through force or

coincidence, as the Islamic conquests were hindered for a long period of time.

This stumbling reflected the reality lived by Muslims in the Middle East, starting from the Califs, who run the political and the cultural matters of the Islamic State, which had been expanding due to Islamic conquests. Consequently, The Califs were divided into two groups, those of Ali Bin Abi Talib in Iraq, and those of Mouawiya in Damascus and Egypt, with the birth of opposing Kharijites.

This opposition was strengthened by Shiites, who rose against Mouawiya's attempt to monopolize rule. Add to this problems with the sons of Ali, mainly Al-Hussein; problems that continued to exist during the Abbasside era and until now.

Division into groups and parties affected the matters of belief and the way they were supposed to be discussed, from an Islamic jurisprudence by the Sunnite, or through the reasoning of the Islamic school of speculative theology (AL-Mu'tazilah). This also affected Islamic jurisprudence, as two schools saw day light: the first school was created in Al-Madinah al-Munawwarah, and it is a school whose doctrine relies on effect. It is also the school of Sheikhs who educated

Malik Bin Anas. On the other hand, the second school was the Hanifa one (Hanafite school) in Iraq.

The movement that created Sunnite (or Jmaa) jurisprudence, kept up with what was created by other groups, mainly Kharijites and Shiites. Consequently, conflicts rose between different jurisprudences of Imams. But these conflicts were not about the core of Sharia, as much as they were about the interpretation of texts and the application of their general provisions on specific matters.

Morocco was affected with the positive and the negative aspects of this reality since the conquest of Oqba Ibn Nafi on 61 A.H and Moussa Ibn Nousayr on 79 A.H. In the first place, Morocco knew the Kharijites who sought refuge in its lands, running from the Omayyads and the Abbassids, mainly Ibadi and Sufi movements, whose calls against racism and tribalism were warmly welcomed by Moroccan people. Thus, leaders were born from these movements, like Mayssara Lmodghari, who lead the Tangiers revolution on 122 A.H. He was a Sufri follower. This was also the case of Banou Midrar Tribe, who established a Kharijite state in Sijilmassa. Afterwards, they embraced the Sunnite doctrine in the beginning of the fourth century of hegira, during the rule of Mohamed Bin Maymoun, who was known by the

surname of Ashakir Lillah. Abu Lkhattab Abdullah Ali Bin Assamh Al Moafri was one of the most prominent people of this era. He traveled between the states of North Africa during the year 141 A.H. He also helped Abdurrahman Bin Rustum in the establishment of a Kharijite State in Tahert, which was, at that time, the center of the Ibadites.

Like the Kharijites, Shiite groups took Morocco as a refuge from state oppression in the Middle East. Thus, Moroccans turned towards Ahl Al Bayt (descendants of the Arabian Peninsula) whom they loved. This love was manifested in the way they had welcomed Al Moula Idriss (Idriss first) as a refugee when he escaped from an ambush on 169 A.H, during the rule of Al Hadi Al Abbassi, and 10 years before as an envoy of his brother Mohamed bin Abdullah who had conflicts with Al Mansour Al abbassi. This was not all, as Isshaq Bin Abdulhamid gave up the rule of Volubilis to Al Moula Idriss. He also took an oath of allegiance to him and called the tribes to maintain allegiance towards him. However, we should point out that Bin Abdulhamid was a follower of Al Mu'tazilah, who continued to exist in some places lead by Al Mahdi Bin Toumert, who used to justify faith with reason.

The fact that Moroccans welcomed and gave allegiance to Al Maoula Idriss without converting to the Shiite doctrine is remarkable, as they remained Sunnite and didn't see any problem in loving and sympathizing with Ahl Al-Bayt. As far as Sunni Islam is concerned, the adoption of the Hanafite Madhab came first, before converting to the Malikite Madhab, which spread during the Idrissid Dynasty.

During this era, many reasons were behind the spread of the Hanafi jurisprudence, mainly the attitude of Almoula Idriss, who was satisfied by his status in Morocco, and who was convinced that Moroccans are not ready to accept the principles of Shiite Islam, knowing that he is originally affected by Azzaydiyah, which is known to be one of the most moderate Shiite group.

We must not forget the good relationships between the Idrissid and Imam Malik, who said in his Muwatta (collection of hadith) that Abdullah Al-Kamil, father of Idriss, stood against the Abbassids in favor of his brother Mohamed, who used to be known by the name of Annafsu Zakiyah the good soul), as he considered the allegiance of Abi Jaafar Al-Mansour not binding, since it was taken by force. He also advocated the nullity of forced divorce and forced oath in general. In addition

to that, Moroccans esteemed Al-Imam Malik, for he was the Faqih (Islamic law legist) of the city, a legist that was known, along with his students, by scientific faithfulness and accuracy of legislation. People realized his virtues, and mainly other Faqihs who traveled to Mecca for pilgrimage.

All these reasons were strengthened by the good relationships linking Morocco to Andalusia and Ifriqya. Good relations that were manifested in continuous visits and exchanges of envoys, and also by the flow of immigrants from Andalusia and Kairaouane towards Morocco, which strengthened and emphasized these relations. History says that on 189 A.H "three hundred people of Ahl Al-Bayt came from Kairaouane and settled in the city of Fez, at Adout Al-Karaouyin. History also recalls the coming of "Four thousand people of Ahl Al-Bayt" from Andalusia as a result of Arrabd Revolution in Cordoba during the rule of Al Hakam bin Hicham on 202 A.H. These relationships were further reinforced by the establishment of Al Karaouine mosque in Fez, on 245, by Fatima Al Fihriya, who came from Kairaouane.

This is how the Maliki Madhab continued to exist while connected to The Ash'ari doctrine and Sunnite Sufism behavior. It was reinforced by other elements, mainly the

compatibility of the nature of his doctrine, which is based on text, transfer of knowledge, recitation and narration, as he Moroccan mentality that rejects ambiguity, obscurity, complexity and interpretation. The principles of this doctrine were rooted by the Almoravids, who adopted it as reference and basis of their reformist movement, which made it due to its flexibility-permanently updated based on the principles of reasoning and lawful interests. Faqihs of this doctrine struggled many times in defense of the country and chased its aggressors. The state supported this doctrine and fought other deviating movements that could have interfered with it.

The preacher of Almoravids, Abdullah Bin Yassine, fought the opposing Bajaliyah movement, which was led at that time by Abdullah Al-Bajaliy in Taroudante. This movement is a Ghali Shiite movement from Kufa. On the other hand, Youssef Bin Tachefine defeated the Barghwata clan (west of Morocco) who invented a biased doctrine based on "Koran" and legislation that has nothing to do with Islam. They were strong during this era, more than any time before.

The most important obstacle faced by Mali doctrine after Almoravides, was the attempt of Al Mahdi Bin Toumert, the founder of the Almohad Dynasty, to introduce some principles

of Shiite imams, mainly Al 'Isma' (infallibility) and the resurrection of Mahdi (Al Mahdaouia), as he resorted to these two principles in his rule, and wrote a book "Aaz Ma Youtlab (the most demanded); knowing that he was a Sunnite Faqih, if not a Maliki one. During this period, and despite of state's power, Faqihs of Ceuta revolted against him on 543 A.H. Their revolution was led by Alkadi Ayyad.

The Mahdaoui doctrine was no more applied by the state, starting from the era of Al Mansour who replaced the book of Mahdi by a selected book from six major Hadith collections (Kutub Assihah). This process continued in the era of Al Mamoun, who banished the thoughts of Bin Toumert and their basis.

In spite of that, people preaching Mahdaouia and Fatimiah, appeared from time to time, like the case of Mohamed Ben Abdullah Imassi in Souss, during the ruling of Abdelmoumen, who fought him. This was also the case of Abdurrahim Kahtani who came out during Annasser's times in Andalusia, and who justified his claims by the hadith saying "the resurrection day shall not take place before the birth of a man from Qahtan, who shall spread justice on earth at the expense of injustice"

but still he was fought, killed and his head was taken to Marrakech.

After that, the Touizri Al Fatemy came during the era of Youssef Bin Yaacoub Almarini on 800 A.H, claiming that he was the awaited Fatemy; this claim cost him his life in Souss. In the same century, Al Abbas Al Fatemy came out in Ghmara, and entered the city of Fez before being killed. History also recalls what happened to Aakakza, and the Islamic scholars who described them in their Fatuas (legal opinions) as heretics and apostates, since they used to follow the principles dictated by Bin Toumert.

These claims continued to exist until recent times, like the Bahaiyin who came out in the north of Morocco in the beginning of the fifties of the last century. These Bahaiyin were judged and killed. They belonged to the Shiite Ismailia clan of twelvers. They claim to be the descendents of Bahaou Allah or Bab Allah, knowing that the founder of this doctrine in the east is the 19th Miraz Ashrazi. His ideas were deviating from Ismaili doctrine, and he believed in the idea of Sabaen solutions. Like Miraz Ali Mohamed, the author of a book called Al Bayan (clarification), who did not believe in prophet Mohamed's message, and he claimed to represent the

prophets. Subsequently, he was followed by his son Abbas Effendi, who used to be known by the name of Abdualbahae.

These events; along with others, proved that there is no place for false claimers and people who interfere with the Maliki doctrine. According to some Ahl Al-Bayt who came from Karbala during the period of Youssef Ben Yaacoub Al Marini that he said to his companions: "Go back, we were mistaken, this time is not ours".

This is because the Maliki doctrine is well established and rooted, to the point that it became one of the big symbols of national unity, as it brings together the north and south, in emphasis of what has been done during the era of the Almoravides who came from the Sahara and who were able to spread this doctrine in the west of Africa and its tribes. This fact was adopted by the International Court of Justice in the Hague, while dealing with the question concerning the bonds of religion uniting Morocco and its Sahara. His majesty the late Hassan the Second held a meeting in his Royal Office of Rabat, in the morning of Saturday 26th July 1975, which I had the honor to attend along with some scientists and state officials. The adoption of this fact was enough to consider that the Sahara conflict is a fictitious issue.

This unity of faith is based on free will and conviction a different levels. It is manifested in state, people, scholars and Faqihs, who rooted the Ash'ari theology, served the Maliki doctrine and excelled in it as teachers, writers or preachers. As far as the Moroccan Sahara is concerned, we should refer to some famous scholars like Mohamed Bghigh, who passed away on 1002 A.H, and was considered by many researchers as the Mujaddid (updater) of tenth hundred version of religion. Also, there is Mohamed Yahiya Al Welati who passed away 1330 A.H. He was known for his encyclopedic knowledge, his large compilations and a large number of pupils. It is impossible to count the number of such great scholars in Morocco, scholars who rooted the unity of faith and doctrine, within the precepts of a moderate and fair Islam, adapted to the characters of the Moroccan identity with its constituents and values.

Nowadays, and with all these sectarian and ideological conflicts in the world, we are in dire need to recall the reality of country and its history; stick to the diversity of the components of its identity; renew this melting pot in a way that strengthens it and makes it able to face all the challenges and the restraints imposed by globalization, which had erased

differences between nations, in such a way that could cause identities to vanish should they not be based on spiritual pillars that could be the secret of their survival.

THE ROLE OF THE *ULEMA* OF THE MOROCCAN SAHARA IN CONSOLIDATING NATIONAL UNITY

One aspect of the biographies of the *Ulema* of the Moroccan Sahara that has attracted our attention is their declaration of belonging to Morocco. For the sake of illustration, we would like to mention one or two examples. The first is "Hurmat Ibn Abdel Jalīl Ibn al-Qādī al-Alawī al-Maghribī". This is how Wallātī refers to him in *Fath al-Shukūr*. The second is the other scholar, Abdullah al-Buhsini, also known as "al-Maghribi" (the Moroccan). There is also a number of *Shanqītī* people who trace their lineage back to Morocco. Al-Tijānī Ibn Bābā Ahmed says in *Muniayt al-murīd*:

Ibn Bābā al-Alaoui said his lineage is Moroccan

And his madhhab¹ is Maliki²

¹ Madhhab: (school, way. In Sunni Islam there are four madhhabs: the Malikis, the Hanafis, the Shafiis, and the Hanbalis.

² "Maliki" Legal School. One of the four approved schools of Sunni Islamic law, the Maliki derives its name from the eighth-century scholar of Medina Malik ibn Anas (d. 795).

Examples of the *Ulema* who are proud of their Moroccan lineage abound; while we do not wish to dwell on this point, we would like to move on to another aspect of this contact that existed through culture between the North and the South, and examine the depth of the unity in its religious and intellectual dimensions.

There is the religious and School trend expressed through faith and doctrine, whether in *fiqh* (Islamic law) or in Sufism. We do know that the doctrine which Moroccans had adopted was *Ash'ari*, that the School is Maliki, and that their Sufism is Sunni, following Al-Junayid *tariqa* (spiritual orders). These three elements are mutually exchanged and common among the Sahara *Ulema*, amongst the Sufis and the Jurists and judges. This is manifest in the books that were, and still are, studied in the North and The South, for a quick glance at what Sahrawi students and scholar used to study reveals that they are the same as those that we still have here at home: Ibn^cashīr's books, "Sharh Mayàrah" "Shafà" by ^ciyyaḍ, "dalà'il al-khayràt", the "hikam" of Ibn ^cAlà' Allah", and al-Maqarri's "Ihà'at ad-dijnah". The same books were also studied in fields other than *fiqh*, Sufism and creed, as in such fields as grammar, language and poetry; examples of such books are al-

Makkūdī's "al-Ajrūmiyyah" and "Sharh al-alfiyyah", and as-Sabtī's "al-Khazrajiyyah", etc. Moreover, it is not good enough for Sahara scholars to study these books; they also explicate their contents, which testifies to their avid interest in these writings. We do not wish to list the names of the Sahara scholars who have explicated Moroccan works in this field. Suffice it to mention some names, such as Sharif Mohammed Ibn al-Imām al-Hassani al-Idrissi who died in 1280 Hegira, and who explicated al-Makkūdī's work titled "al-basīṭ was al-taʿrīf fi ʿilm al-taṣrīf", Abdullah al-Būḥsīnī who elucidated al-Maqrī's work: "iḍāʿatu al-dajna fi ʿaqāʿidi al-Sunnah", Ibn al-ḤajLamīnLatwātī who explicated al-Marghītī's book "nuḍumu al-muqannaʿ". These *Ulama* were in the habit of reading and explicating these books written by Moroccans. The same also applies to works on Sufism; a case in point is the work by Sidi al-ʿarbilbnSāyeḥ, who died in 1309 Hegira. He expounded AlaouiShangītī's work titled "maniyat al-murīd". This explicated work is known as "maniyat al-mustafīd min maniyat al-murīd".

Another equally important aspect of this intellectual contact is Sufism. Suffice to mention here some *zawiyas* (brotherhoods) which were established in the Sahara and

which were a connecting link between them and their counterparts in the North. One such *zawiya* is the Bakkà'īya brotherhood which is attributed to ^cAmrūlbnSheikhSidi Ahmed al-Bakkày who died in 960 Hegira. It is a reference as to his accompaniment of Sheikh Abdulkarīm al-Maghīlīwho was his contemporary and under whom he studied *qàdirīyya*. Another *zawiya*, also *qàdirīyya*, is the *Fàḍīliya* Brotherhood which was attributed to Sheikh Mohammed FàḍillbnMāmīn. Some attribute the founding of this *zawiya* to Sheikh Zarrūq, others to Sheikh at-Ta^cālibī. Without mentioning the names of all these personalities who were consolidating unity within the context of *zawiyas*, I would like to say a few words about *Zawiya at-Tijàniya* with its various sects, especially al-*Ḥàfiḍīya* sect whose founder is Mohammed al-Ḥàfiḍī al-Alaoui who died in Adrār in mid-thirteen century Hegira. It is directly attributed to Sheikh Ahmed at-Tijàni and to Sidi al-ArablbnSāyeḥ.

Other *zawiyas*, though with limited influence in comparison to others, are *an-Nàṣīriya* whose founder is Sheikh Mohammed IbnNàṣir ad-Dar^ci who died in 1036 Hegira. This *zawiya* earned its influence thanks to the *Ulama* who had visited Tamkrūt or who had studied under its Sheikhs, all of

which bears witness to this attachment and contact that existed between the Sufis of the South and the poles of Sufism in the North.

Should we want to take a look at some of the aspects that underline this contact between the *Ulama* of the North and those of the South, we will first meet Sahara scholars who had lived in the North; among them is the great scholar Mohammed Maḥmūd al-Bayḍāwi al-Shangīṭī who had migrated to Marrakech wherein he studied. He died in 1349 Hegira. We sometimes mention the dates deliberately because they emphasize the ancient ties, not the most recent ones as some might think. We also mention his sister Khadija Bent al-Bayḍāwi who had migrated to Marrakech, too, wherein she took up teaching. She was a scholar steeped in the Biography, the Arabic language and grammar. She was the mother of the literary scholar Mohammed al-Bayḍāwi al-Shangīṭī who enjoyed a strong presence in the North, having lived in Tetouan, Tangier and Rabat. He held positions and had many a contribution in the field of teaching and in writing books. He was a great Moroccan poet to whom we have devoted a special research. He died on 11 of Muḥarram in the year 1365 Hegira, corresponding to December 1945 AD.

Of those who had settled down in the North, we mention Mohammed B`ab`a as-Saḥr`aw`i who died in 1342 Hegira, and who had lived for so many years in Ill`igh in Sous that he became, according to al-Mukht`ar as-Soussi (may he rest in peace), the author of "al-ma`^ḥs`ul", one of the natives. Other such scholars are Mohammed S`alim as-Saḥr`aw`i, Sheikh Sidiy`albn Sheikh Sidi Ahmed Ould ad-D`im`an`i, and M`a' al-^ḥaynainlbn al-^ḥt`iq. Too long is the list of those scholars who lived in the North, and who enjoyed a strong presence in the field of teaching and held positions in government, thus consolidating ties between the North and the South.

Also, mention ought to be made of the delegations that used to exchange visits between the North and the South in both directions. One such delegation is the one that visited S`aḥ`iya al-Ḥamra during the reign of MoulayAbdelaziz, the purpose of which visit was to free Tarf`aya from the English. We do have poems that testify to the warm welcome with which this five-member delegation was received, and I do recall the beginning of a poem by the erudite scholar Ibrahim al-Buw`ari in which he says:

A very warm welcome to the five eminent scholars;

Five, they are just like the five pillars of Islam.

In this context, mention must also be made of the contact between the Sahara *Ulama* and men of letters, and the kings and princes of Morocco. This phenomenon began during the Almohad era in the sixth century Hegira. One evidence of this is the poet Abu Ishàq Ibn Ya^cqūb al-Kanimi who was in touch with al-Manşūr al-Muwaḥidi and who praised him in a poem from which we quote these two verses:

My eyes still see his face in aḥijāb.

His generosity brought me closer to him,

But his augustness put a distance between him and me.

Skipping stages, we mention the poet Abdullah Ibn al-Haj Ibrahim al-Alaoui who was in touch with Caliph Sidi Mohammed Ibn Moulay Abdullah with whom he exchanged books and other things. Another poet to be mentioned is poet Mohammed al-Majdiril Ibn Ḥabīb Allah who found favor in the eye of Sultan Sidi Mohammed Ibn Abdullah, and who studied and taught in Fes. Another name to be mentioned here is Abdullah al-Alaoui, known as Ibn rāzīkah the great poet, who died around 1230 Hegira; he was a member of the court of Mohammed al-^calim about whom he wrote many eulogistic poems and also about Meknes. There was also al-

Mukhtār Ibn Haiba al-ibiri who was a secretary to Sultan Moulay Abderrahman and Muhammed Ibn Sidi Mohammed the grandson of the aforementioned Ibn Rāzīkah. He too was in contact with Moulay Abderrahman and had composed many eulogistic poems about him. Worth mentioning in this context is poet Mu^cawiyah Ibn Shadd at-Tandighi who wrote poems about Moulay Yazīd Ibn Sidi Mohammed Ibn Abdullah, and poet Amīn Ibn Mohammed al-Mukhtar ad-Dīmānī who composed many eulogistic poems about Moulay Abdel-Ḥafīd. Examples abound. There are also many men of letters and poets who wrote eulogistic pieces of prose and poems about some *Tariqa*³ Sheikhs, especially Sid Ahmed Tijāni and Sidi al-Arabī Ibn SāyeḤ. These poets constitute an important element in consolidating this contact. Many in number, suffice it to mention here Mohammed al-Ḥassan Ibn Abdel-Jalīl al-Alaoui and Mohammed al-Alaoui (both of whom lived in XIII Century). There is also poet Mohammed Faḷ Oueld Bāh Ibn Bābā, the father of our friend Mr. Mukhtar Oueld Bāh.

One of the important aspects that consolidated this contact between the North and the South was that the kings of

³ Path or way of the individual's inner journey to God; a course of method of religious study institutionalized in a Sufi establishment.

Morocco attached great importance to the publications of works of the Sahara scholars since the importation into the country of the printing press in XIX Century. The number of printed books by Sahara scholars is too large to list here. Suffice it to say that many books by the same author were published, namely of Ahmed Bābā at-Tamkūti, Mukhtar al-Jakni, AbdelkaderShanguiṭi, Mohammed ṢghīrShanguiṭi, Mohammed NābighaShanguiṭi, Mohammed Fāl al-Dimani, Abdellahlbn Ibrahim al-AlaouiShanguiṭi, etc. as to the books composed by Mā' al^caynayn and by the members of his family, they are too many to enumerate here.

Still within the context of this contact between the North and the South, Moroccan men of letters and poets from the North used to address their eulogistic prose and poems to some Sahara personalities, especially Mā' al^caynayn. Many are those who wrote panegyrics about Sheikh Mā' al^caynayn; amongst them are: Tahar al-Ifrāni, Ahmed Ibn al-Mawāz, AbderraḥmānlbnZaydān, Ahmed Ibn al-Māmūn al-Balghiti, Ahmed Skiraj, and Abdullah al-Qabbāj. Their eulogistic poems are to be found in their collections and in some sources, namely in "al-"abḥor al-mu^cayaniya" which was compiled by

Mohammed IbnMà' al-^çaynayn and edited by our colleague Dr. Ahmed Mufid.

Another aspect that I would also like to mention is the letters that were exchanged, especially those that Sahrawi scholars used to address to the kings of Morocco. These letters are so many in number that it is impossible to list them all here. Suffice it to mention some, namely the letters of Sheikh Ma' al-^çaynayn to MoulayAbdelaziz in which he reassures him of the situation in the Sahara and in which he conveys to him the loyalty of its tribes.

Speaking of loyalty, you may have noticed that, within the framework of culture, we have not said a word about a very important aspect, namely that of allegiance to the kings of Morocco, because we took it for granted, and also because this is part of the political framework may be tackled by some colleagues in their presentations.

Still on the subject of letters, a missive from Sheikh Ma' al-^çaynayn was addressed to MoulayAbdelaziz in which the Sheikh seeks the Sultan's support of Sahrawi mujahedeen in their combat against the French armies in Adrâr, and in which he asks him to appoint someone to command the jihad in the Sahara provinces. Letters of this kind abound. There are also

Sufi brotherhood letters. Suffice it to mention here the very important study of our colleague Prof. Mohammed Drif on Sufism. There is a plethora of this kind of letters, many of which are published in his book.

Another aspect of this contact is the exchange of academic degrees (i.e, licence) between the *Ulama* of the North and those of the Sahara. There are some who conferred degrees on their colleagues and those who received them, and there are those that used to exchange certificates of appreciation among them. Some *Ulama* earned these certificates very early, among them are Mohammed Ibn Mohammed Ibn Abu Bakr al-Twati (who died in 1010 Hegira; that is at the turn of XI century) and Ahmed Ibn al-Qàdi, both of whom exchanged certificates of appreciation. Al-Twati was a distinguished scholar in *Fiqh* and Hadith. Other such scholars are Sidi Abdullah IbnHadj Ibrahim al-Alaoui who lived in Fes and who exchanged certificates of appreciation with BannaniMaḥshiAbdelbaqi. Reference was also made to the certificate of appreciation which Mohammed Sedati conferred on Mohammed al-Mani Soussi. The list is long.

Allow me to also mention the exchange of conundrums and riddles, which is a well-known facet of Arabic literature.

Suffice it to mention in this context Abdellah al-Alaoui known as IbnRazga mentioned above. He sent a riddle in verse to the scholars of Fes and to IbnZakri in particular about *SuratYüssef* (Joseph), and was in the habit of exchanging riddles with scholars. In addition to exchanging riddles, there was also an exchange of *Fatwas* in *fiqh* and in other fields of Islamic knowledge. We do have many examples which I do not wish to dwell on here, such as what happened in the tenth century between Mohammed Ibn Abdullah al-^cAṣṇūni who died in 927 Hegira and Mohammed IbnAbdelkarim al-Maghili who died in 909 Hegira about invalidating the dhimi status for the Jews of Twàt.

Regarding the aspects of this contact, one thing worth mentioning is the exchange of *Ikhwàniyàt* among poets on various occasions; for example, the eminent scholar, IbnRàzilal, who was always present in many facets, and who talked about his meetings with some scholars from Marrakech and about the contests he had with a number of poets of the period.

This contact was further consolidated by the interaction that was taking place between the men of letters and the poets, on the one hand, and the Alaouite kings, on the other.

One significant example of this is Mohammed al-Bayḍawī al-Shanguiṭī's elegy addressed to MoulayYūssef, and the eulogy about the late king, Mohammed V (May he rest in peace). This poem is both an elegy and a eulogy at the same time. My own studies have revealed that it is the first poem to have been composed about Mohammed V. We all know the importance of celebrating Throne Day and of everything that was said about it during the protectorate. Suffice it to read the opening lines of this poem:

The good Imam's gone; what a great master he was;

And Mohammed is the good Imam's equal.

After this period, many were the Sahrawi poets who composed poetry about the late king Mohammed V and about the late King Hassan II, and also about His Majesty Mohammed VI. Examples and collections of such poems abound. We do not wish to mention names so as not to forget anyone. However, we have around this table some colleagues who had composed poems that confirm this contact and consolidate unity.

In conclusion to this preliminary talk, and as we listen to many presentations on the subject of culture and its

importance in consolidating unity, we deem it necessary to say that – as we all know – the element that was so decisive for the International Court of Justice in the Haig while it was examining the issue of the Sahara's being an integral part of the North was that of allegiance ties and doctrinal relations, for the question that was posed was: Do the inhabitants of the Sahara adhere to the same doctrinal school to which the people from the North belong? When it became clear to the Court judges that the Maliki School was the element that brought the North and the South together in addition, of course, to the allegiance ties, the judgment that we all know was issued. Therefore, the importance of culture is evident in reinforcing and consolidating unity through various aspects, namely through those that we have mentioned in passing and which will be enriched and discussed further by my colleagues. How much we stand in need of remembering these aspects at this juncture and how important it is to mobilize them, because we ourselves ought to be constantly mobilized for as long as challenges continue to exist.