

Motives of creativity and inspiration in al-maqqari's scientific (linguistic and literary) production: An analytical reading within its historical and cultural context

Aissa benammar¹,

¹ department of ,arabic language
faculty of ,literature and islamic civilization
el amir abdelkader university, constantine, algeria.

hacene fatima zohra amel²

²faculty of philosophy and arts -university of aliconte - spain .

mostefa salmi³

³faculty of arts and languages,
department of arabic language and literature,
amar telidji university of laghouat, algeria.

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Abstract:

This research paper aims to define the nature of creativity and inspiration as conceived by the great masters and distinguished scholars, and to examine the extent of intellectual productivity they left behind as a cultural heritage that enriches the arab-islamic library. It further explores how researchers have discussed the relationship between the foundations of the concepts of creativity and inspiration, intellectual abundance, and the process of creation in al-maqqari's works, and how this becomes evident and manifest in his scientific writings. These writings served as pillars, foundations, and references upon which researchers rely in their intellectual and scientific investigations. The paper also compares the originality of these creative contributions and the quality of their ideas within a framework of questions upon which the objectives of this study are built—questions concerning those who create events, those who witness them, and those who inquire about them. Thus, it raises the central question: Where did al-maqqari's creativity manifest in his scientific writings? What are its features? And in what ways did it appear?

This study relies on the descriptive-analytical historical method in narrating the most significant foundations related to this topic. In doing so, it highlights the richness of the arabic language and the depth of intellectual resources among its authors, by clarifying their purposes, objectives of authorship, and the contributions they made to the creative tradition within islamic heritage.

Keywords: Motives – creativity – inspiration – scientific production – al-maqqari.

Resumen en español:

Este artículo científico tiene como objetivo determinar la naturaleza de la creatividad y la inspiración en los grandes sabios y eruditos, así como el grado de productividad intelectual que legaron como un patrimonio cultural del que se enorgullece la biblioteca árabe-islámica. Asimismo, se estudia cómo los investigadores han abordado la relación entre los fundamentos del título –creatividad e inspiración– y la abundancia intelectual y el proceso creativo en al-maqqari, así como la manera en que esto se manifiesta en sus obras científicas, las cuales constituyeron pilares, bases y principios en los que el investigador se apoya para la exploración científica e intelectual de cualquier tema. También se comparan dichas producciones y la calidad de sus ideas dentro de las preguntas que sustentan los objetivos de este trabajo, planteando interrogantes sobre quiénes hacen los acontecimientos, quiénes los observan y quiénes los cuestionan, con la pregunta central: ¿dónde se

manifestó la creatividad de al-maqqarī en sus escritos científicos?, ¿cuáles son sus rasgos? Y ¿en qué contextos apareció?

Para ello se adopta el método descriptivo-analítico e histórico, narrando los principales fundamentos de este tema. De esta forma se evidencia la riqueza del idioma árabe y el caudal de conocimientos de sus autores, aclarando las intenciones y objetivos de sus obras y su contribución en la producción literaria dentro del patrimonio islámico.

Palabras clave: Motivaciones – creatividad – inspiración – producción científica – al-maqqarī.

Introduction

A new subject may ignite in the mind, or so it seems, prompting one to search, investigate, ask questions, and collect evidence and testimonies in order to bring forth this new idea, which may then develop into a book with all its required elements. This may also include gathering scattered materials on a particular topic that had not previously been compiled in a single book, though it deserves such treatment. Thus, it may appear genuinely new in its subject or classification. As an example, one of the motives behind composing *kitab al-badi'* by ibn al-mu'tazz, as he explained in his introduction, was to make it known that bashshar, muslim, abu nuwas, and those who imitated them and followed their path were not the pioneers of this literary art.

Thus, the spark of a creative artistic work—or any other form of creation—flashes suddenly in the mind of the creator, even if he is immersed in contemplation, searching for an idea. This spark illuminates the folds of his intellect, thought, imagination, and capacities all at once, in less than one-tenth of a second at most. This sudden flash summons all of the creator's abilities, talents, and cultural resources, presenting to him in that fraction of a second his complete work: The entire novel, which his mind “reads” In that instant; the complete poem, which appears before him in that moment; the statue, the painting, the play... The spark presents the entire artistic work to its creator in one burst, in less than a tenth of a second.¹

Similarly, abu mansur al-tha'alibi (d. 429h) embarked on an innovative authorship, claiming that no one had preceded him in it. In the introduction to his book *tahsin al-qabih wa-taqbih al-hasan* ((beautifying the ugly and disparaging the beautiful)), he wrote:

“i have authored and composed this book, refined it and ennobled it with its title, and adorned it with selections from the masterpieces of eloquent speakers and the witty lines of poets, in beautifying the ugly and disparaging the beautiful. For these are the pinnacle of mastery and the capacity for powerful expression in the secret of eloquence and the magic of literary craft. And i do not think that anyone has preceded me in producing its like among the curiosities of works and marvels of writings...”²

He then mentions that once he completed it and it became wondrous in its beauty, he dedicated it to the library of one of the noble benefactors who had shown him kindness.

Hence, islamic civilization has often been described as ((the civilization of the text)), which reflects the profound attention given to the word—its form and its meaning—and its value in the life of muslims across the ages. This provided ever more opportunities for writing and authorship, beginning with the recording of revelation, which was accompanied by utmost precision, care, and trustworthiness. This care later extended into the methodology of scientific work in the various fields of islamic civilizational activity.³

I believe it is not enough merely to pause at the meaning or concept of creativity, but rather, it is necessary to reach an agreement on this concept. Leaving it undefined, without consensus, exposes it to personal inclinations and whims, broadening its scope to the point that it might encompass both what is excellent and what is worthless, both those who erred and those who succeeded, including what truly falls under the mantle of creativity and what is nothing more than heresy, deception, or triviality.

By its very nature, creativity is a problematic and complex concept, difficult to capture in all its dimensions and aspects. Thus, it is nearly impossible—in any sense—to confine it within a few words, whether brief or lengthy, that claim to define it comprehensively and conclusively.

One of the most pressing problems in this regard is the overlap of the term “creativity,” In its usage, with other terms employed to denote similar meanings, such as creation, innovation, discovery, invention, and production. Although the semantic distinctions among these terms were resolved a long time ago, confusion remains: On the one hand, because of their common use as substitutes for one another; and on the other hand, because of the use of “creativity” As a blanket term to replace them all. This leads to unnecessary complications that we could well do without, but it nonetheless reveals the problematic and intricate nature of the concept itself.⁴

Defining creativity:

We begin first by defining creativity within its general framework, for it is the most comprehensive on the one hand, and because most thinkers have addressed creativity within this broad scope on the other. At the outset, however, we encounter yet another problem in defining creativity. As alexandru roșca (al. Rosca) observes: It is difficult to expect a precise and agreed-upon definition at present, especially since some definitions attach importance to one particular dimension—given that creativity is a multi-dimensional phenomenon—while others emphasize another dimension. At times, creativity is defined as a readiness or ability to produce something new and valuable; at other times, it is not viewed as a readiness or ability but rather as a process through which production is realized; and still, at other times, it is seen as a new solution to a certain problem. Most researchers, however, agree that creativity is the achievement of something new and valuable for society.

Our assumption that creativity can be taught does not in any way diminish the value of creativity itself, nor detract in the least from the worth and standing of creative individuals. Creativity in itself is sacred, and it will remain sacred as long as human beings live on earth. Creativity will always preserve its loftiness and brilliance, and the most capable creators will continue to be surrounded by an aura of sanctity, for everyone reaps according to his striving and effort, and “to every striver belongs his share.”⁵

Despite the near consensus among philosophers, thinkers, and those who followed in their path that creativity—particularly in the arts and generally in fields of knowledge—is tied to a special faculty called “talent,” Which appears innate by its very meaning, and that creativity occurs through a kind of revelation or inspiration, they differed in interpreting its source. Yet despite all this, i will proceed from an assumption contrary to this consensus, building my attempt upon it. The results of my argument will not be affected even if this assumption were proven false (though i do not think it will be). I begin from the premise that creative talent is a latent seed within every human being: Attention uncovers it, striving nurtures it, and care develops it. Thus, every human being has the potential to be creative—except for those who insist on excluding themselves from the ranks of creators, and these alone bear responsibility for themselves.

The pursuit of cultivating and shaping talents is an ancient matter well known in our arab heritage. The narration of poetry in the pre-islamic era was the natural means for its dissemination and popularity. There was even a professional class—the poets themselves. Whoever wished to compose poetry would attach himself to a poet, memorizing his verses until his own tongue became eloquent and his creative spring overflowed. Examples of this are many, even if we cannot always determine the first instances by name, we nonetheless know many of their leading figures. If we begin with zuhayr ibn abi sulma, for example, we find ourselves before a poet whose household was so deeply immersed in poetry as to be unparalleled among his contemporaries. Not only that, but he devoted his life to poetry, teaching it to his two sons, bujayr and ka‘b, as well as to others outside his family, the most famous of whom was al-hutay’a, who was his student and disciple. We also know that kathir ‘azza learned poetry from hudba ibn al-khashram, a student of al-hutay’a.⁶

The stories about zuhayr and his son ka‘b illustrate the method by which poets were trained. He would dictate his poetry to them, they would memorize it, and continue to do so until the method of composition and versification became imprinted upon their souls. During this process, he would test

their abilities by reciting a verse and asking them to compose another line following the same meter and rhyme.

Among the most prominent contemporary perspectives supporting our assumption is that of dr. Anders ericsson, a psychologist at florida state university, who reached his conclusions after ten years of continuous research into this issue.⁷ Based on his experiments and studies, he argued that any person can achieve a level of genius performance in the field of their choice if they work hard enough at it. It should be noted here, however, that the difference between us and ericsson lies in the focus: We are concerned with cultivating and shaping creativity, while ericsson focuses on cultivating genius. There is, of course, a significant difference between the two, even though they overlap in many ways.

One debated matter in this context was the so-called “mozart argument,” Which involved disputes between advocates and opponents of the possibility of “manufacturing genius.” Dr. Ericsson’s opinion was that even mozart’s achievements were the result of extensive work and effort. Building upon this, roşca developed his definition of creativity, emphasizing the nature of the product and insisting on its necessity to include individual or collective value—granting greater importance to collective benefit. He defined it as follows: “creativity may be considered, according to the definition of (programmed) integrated unity, the combination of subjective and objective factors leading to the achievement of a new and original product of value by the individual or the group.” In the context of our study, we will consider creativity exclusively as the activity or process that leads to the production of something characterized by novelty, originality, and value for society. As for creativity in its general (broad) sense, it is the generation of new solutions to ideas, problems, and methods.⁸

The concise philosophical dictionary defined creativity as equivalent to creation, describing it as “a purposeful activity that leads to the discovery, invention, or creation of something new that was not known before, or to the effective assimilation of available cultural wealth, in response to the demands of the age.” The dictionary further notes: “the necessary condition for creativity is the individual’s profound engagement with the spirit of their age, and their ability to perceive its pressing problems within the concrete contexts of social, intellectual, professional, practical, and existential situations.”⁹

The creative act, directed toward solving objectively posed and socially valuable tasks, simultaneously manifests as a process of self-realization responding to deep internal needs (the message). In the course of creativity, internal capacities—imagination, memory, and latent faculties not previously suspected—are mobilized. Thus, as a result of the creative act, one discovers something new not only about the external world but also about oneself. Creativity often resembles a rebirth, with all the accompanying pains and joys—(creative inspiration).

If we turn to the other side of the heritage, namely the views of thinkers, we find that abu ‘uthman al-jahiz regarded creativity as one of the innate dispositions with which humans are endowed. In this sense, it is closest to the concept of talent. To those who seek creativity, he said: “you will never be without response and inspiration if there is a natural disposition, or if you proceed in your craft along its natural vein... For souls do not yield their treasures under compulsion, nor release their stores under fear, but they offer them freely with desire and love.” (71) similarly, abu hayyan al-tawhidi considered creativity a special talent bestowed only upon a few, stressing that creativity differs from other types of work in its conditions and its true nature.

Likewise, the great scholar ibn khaldun spoke extensively about creativity—its nature, conditions, and circumstances—though without using the term “creativity.” Instead, he employed the word *malaka* (faculty), meaning talent, which he saw as a firmly established quality acquired through the repeated practice of an act until its form becomes ingrained. In this definition, he comes very close to our assumption that the creative faculty is universal among humankind, and that experience and training are key factors in activating and preparing it for creativity.

With this general concept of creativity—intellectual, artistic, scientific, behavioral, and professional—and although we do not object to including all these under our framework of creativity,

which we attempt here to define, we are not entirely comfortable with such broad inclusivity. This is because there are numerous other terms that are used with meanings similar to creativity, and creativity itself is at times used in place of them. In addition to creation, discovery, and invention, we also find *fatra*, *bar'*, *sana'*, *ijad*, *ihdath*, *takwin*, *ja'l*, *ibtikar*, and even *fi'l*. Hence, it is preferable that we now delineate the boundaries of creativity in comparison with these related terms, clarify the distinctions between them, and finally conclude with a definition of creativity.

Late creativity:

Creativity at an advanced age is a matter that falls within the logic of creativity itself and does not lie outside its domains. Age is by no means a definitive determinant of creativity, for a person may become creative in later years—perhaps even very late. Just as we have numerous examples of creativity at a very young age, so too do we have many cases of individuals whose creativity emerged in their later years, even after they had passed the ages of forty, fifty, or even sixty. Their creative works were by no means less valuable, significant, or magnificent than those of creators who began their journey at a very early age. For instance, the world-renowned novelist Isabel Allende (i. Allende), from Chile (South America), completed one of her novels in (1992).¹⁰

Nor should we forget here Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi, the philosopher of literature and the literate philosopher, whose eloquent, refined prose captivated writers and critics alike, and who is regarded as the author of some of the most splendid texts in the history of Arabic literature. For this philosopher-writer, the signs of his talent and creativity only began to emerge after the age of fifty... Indeed, we find no record or mention of him before that age.

The delayed appearance of creative talent in an individual may be due to numerous factors and diverse causes, which are difficult to pinpoint on the one hand and equally difficult to agree upon as definitive on the other.¹¹ We cannot know with certainty the true cause of delayed creativity, but it is plausible to assume that there was a desire or talent already present which simply did not find the opportunity to emerge earlier, for one reason or another. The cause may have been repression, shyness, social circumstances, economic conditions, or something else. Indeed, we assume from the outset that talents and capacities exist among all people (144) to an equal or at least comparable degree, while conditions, circumstances, and upbringing are what nurture and strengthen one tendency or another, one talent or another.

In any case, it should be noted that craftsmanship and contrivance often prevail over spontaneity and inspiration in the works of those who become creative at a later age. This does not, however, diminish the value, importance, or beauty of their creativity, for such qualities are tied to the strength and depth of talent, not to the age at which it manifests.¹²

What is more important is that, regardless of the reasons behind the delayed appearance of creative talent, the potential for its emergence later in life is not absent—indeed, it may be no less than the potential for its emergence earlier. Most crucial of all is that the talent be genuine, and that the creativity arising from it be authentic, not empty chatter or triviality drawn from the well of superficiality.

The stages of the creative process are, perhaps, already settled with respect to their basic sequence and steps, for nearly all theories agree at least on dividing the process into three: The spark, the incubation, and the execution. Some, however, add one or two additional stages, or even more. At the same time, there may be differences in the terms used to designate these stages. Yet it must be said that such differences in terminology matter little in defining the stage or its nature, for they are variations of expression within nearly the same semantic field.¹³

Nevertheless, the stages of the creative process—though they may appear clear, especially to those interested in theories of creativity on the one hand, and to creators themselves on the other—actually require clarification and explanation. Despite their apparent clarity, they contain many obscure, ambiguous, or disputed aspects, even among the creators themselves.

Discussing the stages and steps by which an artistic work is created, from the first moment to the last, is of great importance—particularly for creators themselves, but also for those interested in the creative process more generally. For it is an attempt, often no more than an attempt, to understand how the artistic work comes into being.¹⁴

In general, creators do not concern themselves with such knowledge, for they live the experience. They may neither need nor care to understand how the creative process unfolds, even if they cannot articulate how they produce their artistic work. What matters to them is to produce their creative work. The majority of creators do so without study or knowledge of the stages through which the creative process passes.

Yet, through observation and experience, we have found that many creators go through phenomena or crises that leave them puzzled, unable to explain what they are experiencing. In most cases, this bewilderment could have been avoided had they possessed greater knowledge of the stages of the creative process, its circumstances, and its characteristics.

As for those interested in creativity and its theories, what concerns them most about delving into the inner self of the creator and the stages of the creative process is intellectual curiosity—and perhaps curiosity alone. Yet even knowledge gained out of mere curiosity yields not a few benefits of significance, foremost among which are:

- Enhancing the creative process.
- Strengthening creative capacity.
- Deepening the understanding of the artistic work.¹⁵

A life extended through the foundation of an identity: Who is al-maqri?

Many scholars praised abu al-‘abbas ahmad al-maqri, spoke highly of him, and extolled his works. Among those who adorned his reputation was his student shihab al-din ahmad ibn ahmad al-‘ajami al-shafi‘i al-ash‘ari al-wafa‘i (d. 1087h), who said: ((among the most renowned of our maliki shaykhs, the great erudite scholar, the eminent litterateur and hadith master, the rare jewel of the maghrib)).¹⁶ Abu salim al-‘ayyashi (d. 1090h) described him as a masterful hafiz, also reporting that the scholar shams al-din al-babili—“the hafiz of his age”—said to abu mahdi ‘isa al-tha‘alibi al-jaza’iri: ((from the maghrib, none more proficient than shaykh al-maqri has reached us, nor do i recall anyone superior to you.)).¹⁷

Al-muhibbi (d. 1111h) wrote: ((the hafiz of the maghrib, the jahiz of eloquence, whose equal in sharp intellect, clarity of mind, and brilliance of wit has not been seen. He was a dazzling sign in kalam, tafsir, and hadith, and a wondrous marvel in literature and public discourse. His works became widely known.)).¹⁸

Here, we turn to the reasons that drove al-maqri to authorship. Scholars have noted that writing has aims and motives, and that behind every book there is a story and a cause. They enumerated nearly forty reasons, among them:

1/ **works without a preface:** Not every book contains an introduction that explains the reason for its composition. In some, there is no preface at all, as in al-sihah, al-sunan, and the works on asceticism and spiritual refinement (zuhd and raqa’iq), some of which appeared later, such as ((the works of ibn abi al-dunya, d. 281h)), ((al-zuhd wa-l-raqa’iq by ibn al-mubarak)), the works of ibn abi ‘asim, ((makārim al-akhlaq by al-khara’iti)), and ((al-‘ilal wa-ma‘rifat al-rijal by ibn hanbal)).¹⁹

2/ **works with a preface but without a stated reason:** These usually include mention of the book’s subject, a listing of its chapters and sections, or a description of the author’s effort in compiling it, but without reference to the motivation behind it. For example, the first words of al-hafiz ibn al-sunni in his book ((al-qana‘a)) were: “this is a book in which i have mentioned the virtue of contentment and its description.”²⁰

3/ **works with multiple reasons:** In contrast to those with no stated reason, some authors cite several motives. An author may find that his discourse has branched out into new topics, or that he has encountered issues related to his original subject from different perspectives, prompting him to

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analyze, refine, and arrive at fresh conclusions beyond his initial plan. Since prefaces are often written after the work is completed rather than before, the primary motive may be the first impetus for writing, with other reasons following thereafter. For example, al-tha'alibi (d. 701h) authored his grand tafsir al-kashf wa-l-bayan fi tafsir al-qur'an out of a desire for divine reward and gratitude to god—for the thanks due for knowledge is to spread it, and its zakat is to spend it. He also mentioned compiling it in response to the requests of scholars and students who pressed him to produce a comprehensive, refined, and reliable commentary. He aimed as well to extract neglected insights, gather dispersed material, clarify what was obscure, and omit superfluous digressions, while arranging and organizing it with excellence.²¹

Ahmad ibn hamdan al-namari (d. 432h) listed several reasons for composing his book ((al-ri'aya al-sughra)) on jurisprudence according to the madhhab of imam ahmad. These included:

- The decline of zeal for writing in jurisprudence.
- The need for conciseness to facilitate access to rulings.
- The necessity of fiqh for the islamic community.
- Responding to the request of ((those whose refusal would be unseemly, whose rejection would be disliked, and whose intention would be gratefully acknowledged.)).²²

Among the motives of creativity and inspiration for al-maqri: Causes, drivers, and aims

1- (honoring and esteeming scholars and granting them their due status):

It is said that one of the reasons that drove al-maqri to author nafh al-tib was the recognition and respect he received from the people of damascus. They honored him, elevated his status, and sought to serve him, in contrast to the ingratitude and neglect he had experienced from some scholars in the maghrib who treated him unworthily. The litterateur ahmad ibn shahin, custodian of the jaqmaqiyya madrasa, invited him, and when al-maqri visited the school, he was greatly impressed and took residence there. He elaborated at length on his experience in damascus and the kindness shown to him by its people. It suffices here to cite part of what al-muhibbi reported: ((he dictated sahih al-bukhari in the great mosque under the dome of the eagle after the dawn prayer. When the crowd increased after a few days, he moved to the courtyard of the mosque, opposite the dome known as al-ba'uniyya. Most of the notable scholars of damascus attended, and none of the students was absent. The day of the final session was immensely grand, attended by thousands, with loud weeping heard throughout. The teaching circle was moved to the middle of the courtyard... A pulpit was brought for him, and he ascended it... His stay in damascus lasted less than forty days, yet a great multitude of its scholars accompanied him when he departed for egypt.)).²³

2- Visits to scholarly centers:

From the introduction to al-maqri's book and his journey to damascus, it can be understood that this visit was both a cause and a result of the book's composition. During his stay, he spoke to his students about lisan al-din, his political and literary standing, which stirred in them a desire for further knowledge about him.²⁴ In truth, al-maqri's visit to damascus was linked to a ((promise)) that assisted him in completing the book²⁵ though perhaps the idea had already been kindled in his mind before that.

3- Insistence, encouragement, and motivation (responding to a request or question):

For the early scholars, writing books in response to a request or a question posed was a familiar and widely accepted practice—indeed, it was common. This might come at the request of a student, a scholarly friend, the suggestion of a ruler or governor, or the entreaty of a son or a group. This tradition was a noble practice, a legitimate reason, and a refined custom in authorship. Such works often became monumental references throughout human history. They could provide abundant knowledge, resolve contested issues, establish good practices, describe remedies, clarify obscure matters with the author himself as a witness, or present useful experiences and lessons.²⁶

Such was the reason for the authorship of nafh al-tib. Ahmad al-shahini, teacher at the jaqmaqiyya, was among the most insistent in urging him. Al-maqri responded to his request and promised to begin

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upon his arrival in cairo. At first, he intended to title the book ((‘arf al-tib fi al-ta‘rif bi-l-wazir ibn al-khatib)), but when he saw that the material had expanded to include the history and literature of al-andalus, he changed the title to: ((nafh al-tib min ghusn al-andalus al-ratib wa-dhikr waziriha lisan al-din ibn al-khatib)).²⁷

4- Admiration for the idea of the book:

It often happens that many authors take up the pen to write about what appeals to their soul and pleases their judgment. This may come as a sense of duty, dictated by conscience, or as a form of hobby and recreation—like any other pastime a person wishes to pursue. Such affection may be for a subject, a person, or a profession.

The eminent scholar muhammad ibn ibrahim al-kharkushi (d. 406h), may allah have mercy on him, said in his book ((sharaf al-mustafa, peace be upon him)): “what drove me to compile the virtues of al-mustafa muhammad the prophet, peace be upon him, was my love for him and familiarity with him. For whoever loves something mentions it often; and because he, peace be upon him, decreed that a man is with whom he loves. I also wished to multiply prayers upon him in both word and deed.”²⁸

In the same manner, al-maqri’s admiration for lisan al-din ibn al-khatib was sufficient to compel him to write about him—because of what he had preserved of his letters, poetry, and stylistic imitations. This admiration pushed him to compose a work about him, especially since he sensed in ((his role model)) the same estrangement and loneliness that he himself experienced when he sought refuge in the maghrib.²⁹

5- Spiritual consolation:

This is also evident in the book ((dham al-hawa)) by ibn al-jawzi, where he explains that the reason for composing the book was that someone complained to him about love and passion, confiding his sorrow in hopes of finding a remedy. Ibn al-jawzi thus authored an entire work on the subject, explicitly stating in a few lines of its introduction: “one of those afflicted confided his suffering to me, and his complaint stirred my resolve to compile this book about the affliction that had befallen him, a passion into which he had fallen. He asked me to go into detail in describing the cure for his ailment. I thus offered him counsel and relief in the most eloquent arrangement.”³⁰

In a similar way, al-maqri’s book ((rawd al-as)) served to relieve his anguish, allowing him—through poems of longing and through past and recent history—to return spiritually and emotionally to his homeland, a return that was psychological and spiritual.³¹

6- Answering questions:

This may fall under the types of authorship rather than its causes. Yet, its placement here is appropriate after the previous type of authorship ((responding to a request or question)), since it has also been counted among the types and causes of authorship as ((collecting what is dispersed)). Thus, the motive here combines both. Most works of fatwas fall into this category, as their origin is usually answers provided by a jurist to questions, which are later compiled into a book—either by the jurist himself or by others—or by collecting the fatwas of several scholars on one or more topics. Such works serve as invaluable references, like the fatwas of al-subki and ibn taymiyyah.³²

In this sense, al-maqri authored some of his works, including ((ithaf al-mughram al-mughra fi sharh al-sanusiyya al-sughra)) and ((hashiya ‘ala sharh umm al-barahin li-l-sanusi)). The latter became particularly esteemed among the maghrebis because of its qualities that set it apart from other theological texts. Most importantly, it contained the very essence of ash‘ari theology, enabling students—through memorization and understanding—to dispense with consulting the larger compendiums of ‘ilm al-kalam. As al-sanusi himself expressed: “it surpasses with its virtues the greatest compendiums,” For though concise, it presents proofs that clarify the truth for receptive minds, leading them to comprehension and acceptance.³³

It is thus no surprise that the maghrebis eagerly embraced it for commentary, memorization, study, teaching, and copying, adorning it with the praise it deserved. Shaykh abu ‘abd allah muhammad ibn

‘umar al-mallali al-tilmisani even considered it among the most important theological works, unmatched by any creed composed by earlier or later scholars.³⁴

7- Introducing andalusian heritage:

Like other maghrebis, al-maqri felt the extent of the mashriqis’ neglect of andalusian and maghrebi heritage. In earlier times, this neglect was due to their reliance on eastern culture; in al-maqri’s era, it was rather due to the general weakness of culture. It is telling that even lisan al-din—an eminent figure of the maghrib and al-andalus—needed someone to introduce him to the mashriqis and recount his life and works. Thus, al-maqri saw in his book a comprehensive encyclopedic composition that fulfilled this purpose, clarifying the cultural connection between the east and the west.³⁵

8- Gratitude for blessings (seeking reward from god):

At times, there may be no direct or worldly motive for authorship. Rather, the author undertakes writing in pursuit of divine reward and recompense. For every person who writes something aligned with the shari‘a and sincerely for the sake of god will be rewarded, and he will continue to receive the reward of every reader who benefits from it until the end of time.

Al-maqri alluded to this motive behind his book ((husn al-thana fi al-‘afw ‘amman jana)), where he wrote:

“as for what follows: When god’s decreed command was executed and i was struck by the poisoned arrow of envy, when my guidance to truth was thwarted by the obstinacy of time, when my misfortunes grew and my supporters diminished... I sought to endure with patience but found myself appealing in vain. Thus, i turned to god in supplication, seeking relief from this ordeal and deliverance from this trial—by composing something that might serve as an intercessor for pardon and acceptance for a fault committed in the past...”³⁶

He concluded by imploring god to veil its shortcomings, to allow it to be received with forbearance, and to grant him acceptance through his abundant grace.³⁷

9- The importance of the book’s idea:

The importance of the book is clear to every researcher and reader. It introduced us to figures we had not known, despite their proximity in time and their roles in the scholarly and literary movements of their age. It also broadened our knowledge of others about whom we knew only their names or very little.

For instance, al-maqri’s entry on the writer muhammad al-wajdi spans (29) pages of his book, whereas muhammad ibn tayyib al-qadiri, in nashr al-mathani, devoted to him no more than two lines. This alone demonstrates the great service al-maqri rendered to his homeland through this work.

In addition to the figures he introduced and whose stories he preserved, the book contains a collection of poems, muwashshahat, and fragments that are not found in other printed or manuscript sources. Although not all of these reach the pinnacle of eloquence, they nevertheless enrich our literary heritage, connect the literary eras of the maghrib, and reveal the prosperity and affluence enjoyed during the sa‘adian era under sultan ahmad al-mansur.

Among them are indeed poems and fragments that soared to the heights of eloquence. One such example is the poem composed by ‘abd al-‘aziz al-fishtali when sultan ahmad al-mansur declined to accept a gift intended for his heir.³⁸

Conclusion:

In this research, we have sought to affirm the meaning that al-maqri is one of the gifts of islamic civilization, whose radiant light and generous shade extended over both arab and western civilizations. Through the exquisite islamic legacy he left, inscribed in the pages of history, he produced a collection of scholarly works that attest to his exceptional genius in the art of authorship. His abundant virtue, vast knowledge, noble character, and creativity enabled him to surpass the luminaries of the eastern school in more than one field and discipline, making him a precious treasure in the sciences of his time.

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Footnote

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