# **Writing the history of Islamic law in West Africa: Sahelian scholars in Aḥmad Bābā al-Tinbuktī’s biographical works**[[1]](#footnote-2)[[2]](#footnote-3)

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Abstract

This article examines the biographies of West African *fuqahāʾ* in Aḥmad Bābā al-Tinbuktī’s (d. 1036/1627) *ṭabaqāt*. Out of the more than 700 entries about the life and works of Mālikī *ulamāʾ* featured in *Nayl al-ibtihāj* and *Kifāyat al-muḥtāj*, it is peculiar that the 14 *tarājim* of scholars of West African origin relate almost exclusively to those from the author’s hometown, Timbuktu, in the same parochial manner as the *Timbuktu Chronicles* and refer to intellectual activities chiefly of members of the powerful Aqīt household to which the author belonged. This study contextualizes these biographies within the tenth-/sixteenth-century West African tradition of Islamic learning and Islamic jurisprudence as well as within the general historical and sociopolitical context and situates them within Timbuktu’s eleventh-/seventeenth-century self-conscious historiographical tradition and the ideological beginnings of *bīḍān* hegemony.

Keywords: Aḥmad Bābā al-Tinbuktī, West African history, Islam in West Africa, Mālikism, *fiqh*

Shortly before the West African historiographical tradition began in the eleventh/seventeenth century, the first local African narrative about Islamic scholarship south of the Sahara was incorporated into the work *Nayl al-ibtihāj.* It features biographies of scholars from the Sahel[[3]](#footnote-6) written by Aḥmad Bābā al-Tinbuktī (d. 1036/1627),[[4]](#footnote-7) one of premodern West Africa’s best known intellectual figures. Preceding the interest in portraying the *ulamāʾ* evinced in the so-called *Timbuktu Chronicles*, al-Saʿdī’s *Tārīkh al-sūdān*,[[5]](#footnote-8) and the writings of Ibn al-Mukhtār,[[6]](#footnote-9) al-Tinbuktī’s description of the religious, intellectual, and sociopolitical activities of Timbuktu’s scholarly elite during the Songhay Empire’s golden age shares its distinctive approach with that of those later works, which were written during the period of Saʿdid domination over a large part of the Niger Bend (999/1591–1070/1659).[[7]](#footnote-10) They portray the Timbuktu *fuqahāʾ* as superior to scholars from other West African locations. Similarly, perhaps even more so, the biographies of West African *ulamāʾ* featured in al-Tinbuktī’s biographical works belong almost exclusively to scholars from the author’s own household, the illustrious and powerful Aqīt clan[[8]](#footnote-12) that was established in Timbuktu. This study reflects on this relative neglect of jurists from other Timbuktu households and from elsewhere in West Africa and relates it to the contexts in which al-Tinbuktī’s *ṭabaqāt* were written, being during the author’s imprisonment in Marrakech, and the development of his intellectual reputation in a foreign land. He evinced a strong interest in the sociopolitical role of the *ulamāʾ* and exemplifies a tendency toward self-consciousness among the Timbuktu learned elite that could have derived from the *bīḍān* rise to hegemony in the region.

This article argues that the selection of West African *fuqahāʾ* in Aḥmad Bābā al-Tinbuktī’s biographical dictionaries was motivated by the need to publicize the excellence and prestige of the learned tradition into which he was born at a time when he had been forced to lead his scholarly life in Marrakech, a foreign land in which he was regarded as a *sūdānī* (a black”) and, hence, inferior. While Arabic sources outside the Sahel use the *nisba* adjective *al-sūdānī* to refer to black people, Sahelian Arabic sources use the term to denote an ethnic category with a meaning of descent from non-Berber /non-Arab Sahelian peoples, as opposed to the new ethnic categorization of the *bīḍān* (“whites”) that derives from the shift in the political hegemony of the region after the tenth/sixteenth century. This particular categorization allowed individuals of Berber descent to be considered *sūdān* in the Maghreb but *bīḍān* in West Africa. al-Tinbuktī never described himself as a *sūdānī* but was thus dubbed by Maghrebian and Oriental authors, as well as by European researchers in the colonial period such as Zeys. Non-Sahelian Arabic sources use the term *sūdān* in an ethnic and geographically-related manner too, but it is striking that, while other African peoples are referred to with ethnonyms such as the *ḥabasha* (Ethiopians), the *nūbā* (Nubians), as well as the Eastern African peoples being referred to as the *zanj*, the peoples of the western Sahel were accorded a racialized denomination, as Cuoq shows , except in the case of the term *takrūr*.[[9]](#footnote-13)

This context could explain why most of the profiles of West African *fuqahāʾ* featured in Aḥmad Bābā al-Tinbuktī’s biographical works are on scholars of his own Aqīt household, but also why, out of the set of 15 *tarājim*,*[[10]](#footnote-14)* only one is of non-Berber, *sūdānī* stock. The racial prejudice that al-Tinbuktī may have personally experienced in North Africa had a parallel in how members of prominent Timbuktu households of Berber descent were at this time engineering their domination over non-Berber populations[[11]](#footnote-15) and in scholarship. Whether intentional or not, the exclusion of non-Berber West African jurists may have been sought to venerate Islamic erudition and the knowledge of Islamic jurisprudence, as opposed to devotional practices, as a domain in which *bīḍān* scholars would lead the way over other ethnic groups. That said, only biographies of the Aqīts, with very few exceptions, were included in the ṭabaqāt, and other Berber aristocratic lineages from the Timbuktu *jamāʿa*, such as the And-Ag-Muḥammad and the al-Ḥājj[[12]](#footnote-16) were completely neglected. This may have been due to rivalries between households, especially over trans-Saharan trade, which may have prevailed both during al-Tinbuktī’s enforced stay in Marrakech and after his return to Timbuktu.

al-Tinbuktī composed *Nayl al-ibtihāj bi-taṭrīẓ al-dībāj* and *Kifāyat al-muḥtāj li maʿrifat man laysa fī l-dībāj*[[13]](#footnote-17) in enforced exile in Marrakech during the first years of the eleventh/seventeenth century, although he may have begun writing the former before the Saʿdid invasion of the Songhay Empire.[[14]](#footnote-18) These works, which contain over 800 biographies of North African, Andalusī, Egyptian, and Arab Mālikī jurists not featured in Ibn Farḥūn’s famous *al-Dībāj al-mudhhab*[[15]](#footnote-19)include the biographical bibliographies of 15 West African *fuqahāʾ* from the tenth/sixteenth century, the same in both works, *Nayl* and *Kifāya*, although the author’s autobiography appears as a conclusion only in the last one. The references to West African *ulamāʾ* in Aḥmad Bābā al-Tinbuktī’s biographical works were incorporated into later *ṭabaqāt* works such as al-Bartilī’s *Fatḥ al-shakūr*[[16]](#footnote-20) and Bello’s *Infāq al-maysūr*,[[17]](#footnote-21) as well as other historical sources such as al-Saʿd’s *Tārīkh al-sūdān*. They have also been frequently drawn on from the nineteenth century onward as a source for the study of the western Sahel’s intellectual production, from the seminal works of Cherbonneau to those of Bivar and Hiskett and, most notably, Hunwick.[[18]](#footnote-22)

The *tarājim* of West African *fuqahāʾ* are interspersed among the biographies, following a particular alphabetical order adopted by the author.[[19]](#footnote-23) Some of them are extraordinarily long and rich in detail, such as pious anecdotes and lists of learned, composed and transmitted works. Others are very short without much detail. The longest, most elaborate biographies are those of the scholars with whom the author had the closest personal and/or educational relationships. Overall, the most relevant features of these for the history of Islamic law in West Africa are those that point to the geographic mobility of West African *ulamāʾ* within and beyond the Sahel, as well as the preeminent attraction of Cairo for its learned elite in the tenth/sixteenth century, despite the previous ascendancy of Fez and other Maghrebian places.

## **Orientation toward an Egyptian tradition**

As regards the geographic context for these biographies, Timbuktu was the place where eight out of the 15 West African jurists mentioned by Aḥmad Bābā al-Tinbuktī in his biographical works were born and/or died, studied and/or taught, or were appointed *qāḍī*s. All but one were members of the Aqīt household. The place of origin of two of the scholars is given as Walāta,[[20]](#footnote-25) west of Timbuktu; of three others the village of Anuṣamman in the central Sahel, close to Takedda;[[21]](#footnote-27) and Kano[[22]](#footnote-28) and Katsina,[[23]](#footnote-29) south of this area, in two other instances. Jenne[[24]](#footnote-32), is the birthplace of the only jurist of Mandingo stock whose biography features in al-Tinbuktī’s *ṭabaqāt*:the author’s shaykh, Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd b. Abī Bakr Baghayogho (d. 1002/1594); These and other aspects of his origin are omitted by the author.[[25]](#footnote-33) Within the limits of the Sahel, only Timbuktu and Walāta are mentioned as places where West African scholars taught or learned from others, whereas in Takedda (or Anuṣamman), Kano and Katsina the only activity mentioned is teaching. Two geographical areas are mentioned outside the Sahel. The first and closest is North Africa, mentioned as the place of learning for one of thejurists through the unspecific term *al-maghrib*.[[26]](#footnote-34) The rare and imprecise references to the Maghreb in al-Tinbuktī’s biographies of West African scholars contrast with the frequent references to the Mashriq. Eight out of 15 scholars spent time learning with Oriental masters during their pilgrimage to Mecca and, although where they did so is not usually mentioned, all of the masters of West African scholars in the Orient were established scholars in Cairo.

al-Tinbuktī’s biographies provide interesting insights into the mobility of West African scholars. They indicate that the most prominent scholars in al-Andalus and North Africa studied either within their own or in other prominent households and closely associated lineages of the *khāṣṣa*, but were oriented toward travel *fī ṭalab al-ʿilm* to the major centers of learning of their time, notably Cairo and Medina. Other scholars, including the author, did not study anywhere outside Timbuktu. When it came to teaching, however, we learn that some scholars settled in Kano and Katsina, an interesting insight in relation to the development of Islamic jurisprudence in the area. al-Tinbuktī indicates that Timbuktu was the main center of learning in West African Islam, at least in the tenth/sixteenth century, and that scholars from Timbuktu rarely sought knowledge anywhere else in the Sahel or North Africa, but rather in Cairo. Such information is scant in certain biographies, in which al-Tinbuktī might allude to a scholar’s masters and learned texts only superficially, but in a few cases, the author’s father[[27]](#footnote-35) and his shaykhincluded, there is fuller information.

These geographic aspects reveal significant omissions of information compared to other past or contemporaneous sources in relation to the development of Islamic education, law, and jurisprudence in the western Sahel. al-Tinbuktī’s biographies of West African Islamic scholarship focuses almost entirely on and around the author’s hometown, Timbuktu, and around the household that he belonged to, the Aqīts. Other centers of learning in the area, such as Walāta, with which the scholarly elite of Timbuktu had historical, intellectual, and commercial ties, are barely mentioned. Jenne is completely absent from the landscape of West African *fuqahāʾ* depicted by al-Tinbuktī in his biographical works. If we compare this with, for instance, the way in which al-Saʿdī refers to the scholars of Jenne and their ties with the Timbuktu notables (*aʿyān*), the incongruity of al-Tinbuktī’s ignoring of Jenne becomes evident:

When the Friend of God Most High, the jurist *Sīdī* Maḥmūd b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Aqīt[[28]](#footnote-36), saw Muḥammad Fodigi during his visit to Jenne, he was filled with admiration for his conduct, and praised him on his return to Timbuktu. It was because of this that *Amīr al-muʾminīn* Askya *al-ḥājj* Muḥammad, on his return from pilgrimage, appointed him *qāḍī* of the city of Jenne. He was the first person there to give judgements in disputes in conformity with the *sharīʿa*. Prior to that, people had their disputes settled through agreement by the *khaṭīb*, as is the habit of the *sūdān*, whereas the *bīḍān* litigate before *qāḍī*s. This is how things are customarily done by them to this day.[[29]](#footnote-37)

This citation and many others in eleventh-/seventeenth-century Timbuktu historical writings, elucidate that the commercial and intellectual ties between Timbuktu, Jenne, and Walāta were very strong. Moreover, it becomes clear from al-Saʿdī’s text that these strong ties between Timbuktu and Jenne brought the most prominent households of both cities together, bringing Berber/Ṣanhāja[[30]](#footnote-38) *bīḍān* and non-Berber *sūdān* Islamic jurists into close contact. However, this citation, one of the earliest, if not the earliest mentions of this dichotomy evinces a contrived distance between each tradition, while also quite underestimates the role of non-Berbers in the practice Islamic law. As will be discussed later, this may well have been related to the political upheavals of the late tenth/sixteenth century and the early eleventh/seventeenth century, with the decay of the Songhay Empire and the new social and political configurations brought about by the Saʿdid invasion.

Walāta, another earlier center of Islamic learning in the western Sahel, was even closer to Timbuktu geographically, but also in its commercial and intellectual ties, since its population, including the elite of the *fuqahāʾ* and the merchants, moved between one city and the other.[[31]](#footnote-39) al-Saʿdī tells us the following:

People came there [Timbuktu] from all directions, and over time it became a commercial emporium. The most frequent traders there were the people of Wagadu, followed by others from that general area. The previous center of commerce had been the town of Bīru, to which caravans came from all directions. The cream of scholars and holymen, and the wealthy from every tribe and land settled there – men from Egypt, Awjila, Fezzan, Ghadames, Tuwāt, Darʿa, Tāfilalt, Fez, Sūs, Bīṭu, etc. Little by little, together with representatives of all the branches of the Ṣanhāja, they moved to Timbuktu until they filled it with overflowing. Timbuktu’s growth brought about the ruin of Walāta, for its development, as regards both religion and commerce, came entirely from the west.[[32]](#footnote-40)

The process to which al-Saʿdī refers took place in the ninth/fifteenth century, but it was temporarily reversed during Sonni ʿAlī’s reign over the Songhay Empire, when the Timbuktu notables (*al-aʿyān*) fled the town in order to avoid the new ruler’s persecution of them over their collaboration with Tuareg chieftains. That Walāta was their destination shows that the area was out of Songhay forces’ reach but also suggests that there were strong ties between both cities. It is therefore quite surprising that only one jurist from Walāta was featured in al-Tinbuktī’s *ṭabaqāt*. A closer look at the biography of scholar Makhlūf al-Balbālī[[33]](#footnote-41) indicates several characteristics, distinct from the other West African jurists al-Tinbuktī writes about.

Makhlūf b. ʿAlī b. Ṣāliḥ al-Balbālī, the jurist, the erudite, the great traveler. He began to study late in life. One of his first masters in Walāta was the shaykh and pious servant of God ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Aqīt, my grandfather’s full brother. He taught him the *Risāla*, and when he became aware of his virtues, he encouraged him to dedicate himself to *ʿilm*. So begun his vocation. He stopped being a trader, which was his previous dedication, and headed for the Maghreb, where he learned from Ibn Ghāzī and others. He was renowned by his outstanding memory: some people say that he memorized al-Bukhārī’s *Ṣaḥīḥ*. Then he came back to the *bilād al-sūdān* and traveled to places like Kano or Katsina, where he taught and became engaged in research *(abḥāth)* with al-ʿĀqib al-Anuṣammanī. After that, he taught in Timbuktu and in Marrakech, where he was poisoned. He became ill and went back home (Walāta), where he died after 940/1533.[[34]](#footnote-42)

Makhlūf al-Balbālī, whose only surviving work that we know of is a *fatwā* on slavery,[[35]](#footnote-43) is the only scholar al-Tinbuktī’s biographies refer to as having traveled to the Maghreb in order to pursue his learning of Islamic law. This is quite remarkable since, as we will see in the next section, it would be reasonable to assume that there was a considerable scholarly interchange between these regions both intellectually through the diffusion of works of Mālikī jurisprudence­, and socially, given the strong presence of North African communities in the western Sahel. However, it may be that al-Tinbuktī’s *ṭabaqāt* shows a pattern in the diffusion of Islamic law in West Africa that differs from that of earlier stages. Whereas scholars would have traveled to the Maghreb in order to study, it may suggest that scholars turned to studying within the Sahel or traveled to Egypt in case of the wealthiest families, something evident from the references to Egyptian works and masters in the *tarājim* of the Aqīts and others.[[36]](#footnote-44) Whether West African masters or North African jurists[[37]](#footnote-45) did this, as was the case with the Aqīts according to al-Tinbuktī is not evident in the sources. However, as I will show, the *Timbuktu Chronicles* protray a wider ethnic range than al-Tinbuktī’s biographies of West African *ulamāʾ* indicate. Whatever is the case, scholars from other prominent Timbuktu households and from other places of learning of Islamic jurisprudence in West Africa, such as Walāta and Jenne, are relatively scant in al-Tinbuktī’s biographical works.

This underrepresentation of scholars from other parts of the western Sahel may misrepresent the nature of this region’s scholars’ intellectual ties with the Maghreb, since the diffusion of Islamic learning in the earlier West African centers and the seminal and sustained non-Berber scholarship developed within them is very closely related to their involvement with the North African commercial networks.[[38]](#footnote-47) We address this later but, before considering how the sociopolitical context may have affected the author’s underrepresentation of the Maghrebian tradition in West African Islam, we turn to how his detailed description of the Egyptian influence on his colleagues from the Sahel may suggest a shift in their orientation toward the works of Cairene *ulamāʾ*.

The description of the relations between the Aqīts and Egyptian scholars throughout the tenth/sixteenth century completely overshadows any other such portrayal of intellectual ties in al-Tinbuktī’s biographical dictionaries. These ties must be understood as contributing to the distinctiveness of the West African *ulamāʾ* elite, in that the pilgrimage to Mecca and studying in Cairo was uncommon for students, given the great amount of expenditure it would require. A cautious assessment of the impact of this exchange is also necessary, since no references to the works that West African scholars learned from in Cairo can be found in their biographies, only the names of the scholars they frequented. Few specific titles are mentioned in the biographies. According to al-Tinbuktī, the Egyptian *ulamāʾ* and *fuqahāʾ* who taught West African scholars during their stay in Cairo were scholars of great renown. Among them were al-Ṣuyūṭī (d. 911/1505),[[39]](#footnote-48) Khālid al-Azharī (d. 905/1499),[[40]](#footnote-49) Burhān al-Dīn al-Qalqashandī (d. 921/1516),[[41]](#footnote-50) Burhān al-Dīn al-Maqdisī (d. 923/1517),[[42]](#footnote-51) Zakariyyāʾ al-Anṣārī (d. 926/1520),[[43]](#footnote-52) and the brothers Shams al-Dīn (d. 935/1528) and Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Laqānī (d. 958/1551)[[44]](#footnote-53). From later periods, the author mentions among the masters of West African *fuqahāʾ* in Cairo, al-Sakhāwī al-Madanī (d. 960/1553),[[45]](#footnote-54) Muḥammad al-Bakrī (d. 994/1586),[[46]](#footnote-55) and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad al-Tājurī (d. 999/1590)[[47]](#footnote-56) though the relevant works studied are not mentioned.

The references to the subjects that scholars from the Sahel studied in Cairo are also very rare in al-Tinbuktī’s biographies. al-Tinbuktī reports that al-Tāzakhtī[[48]](#footnote-57) studied *ḥadīth* under Zakariyyāʾ al-Anṣārī and al-Qalqashandī, Khalīl Ibn Isḥāq’s *Mukhtaṣar*,[[49]](#footnote-58)and other works of jurisprudence from the Laqānī brothers. These assertions raise the question of whether Mālikī scholars from West Africa studied jurisprudence in Egypt, where the majority of jurists belonged to the Shāfiʿī *madhhab* but where Mālikīs were active as well.[[50]](#footnote-59) As I will show, West African scholars studied under Egyptian Mālikī jurists such as the Laqānī brothers, but also wrote commentaries on Egyptian works of *fiqh*, indicating they were not exclusively interested in *ḥadīth* when they were in Cairo.[[51]](#footnote-60) This influence of Egyptian Mālikism, together with a certain tardy development of Islamic jurisprudence, seems to have had quite an impact on the Sahel. This could explain the absolute preeminence of references to the *Mukhtaṣar* over other works of jurisprudence in West Africa. At least according to al-Tinbuktī’s *ṭabaqāt*, most works composed by West African jurists were commentaries on the work of Khalīl b. Isḥāq.

What al-Tinbuktī says about the works that were composed, transmitted, and studied by the jurists whose biographies he features in his biographical works should not be necessarily understood as a faithful description of the intellectual milieu of tenth-/sixteenth-century West Africa. We need to contextualize what he says to critically analyze what he says, given that his references are largely confined to members of the Aqīt household, with significant exceptions such as al-ʿĀqib and al-Najīb al-Anuṣammanī from the Takedda area, [[52]](#footnote-61) and Baghayogho. al-Tinbuktī’s biographies suggest that the interest of jurists from his grandfather’s generation was mainly on the transmission and commentary of Maghrebian *fiqh* works, such as Saḥnūn’s *Mudawwana* or Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī’s *Risāla*,[[53]](#footnote-62) together with the fundamental work of the Mālikī *madhhab*, the *Muwaṭṭaʾ* of Mālik b. Anas.[[54]](#footnote-63) The *Mukhtaṣar* also appeared in this period, it and Mālik’s *Muwaṭṭaʾ* being the only Oriental works being then transmitted in the Sahel, according to al-Tinbuktī. Another Maghrebian work, the *Kitāb al-shifāʾ* of ʿIyāḍ b. Mūsā,[[55]](#footnote-64) along with Ibn Mālik’s Andalusī work on grammar,the *Alfiyya*.[[56]](#footnote-65)

Oriental works other than Khalīl b. Isḥāq’s *Mukhtaṣar* begin to appear in the lifetime of al-Tinbuktī’s father’s generation, the author’s direct masters, but they were not quite as eminent as Maghrebian works in the domain of jurisprudence. al-Tinbuktī attributes a gloss on a commentary on Khalīl b. Isḥāq’s *Mukhtaṣar* made by the Egyptian *qāḍī-l-quḍāt* al-Taʾtāʾī (d. 940/1533)[[57]](#footnote-66) to his father, Aḥmad b. Aḥmad b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Aqīt.[[58]](#footnote-67) Baghayogho introduced al-Tinbuktī to another Oriental work of *fiqh*, the *Mukhtaṣar al-farʿī*, a compendium of Mālikī jurisprudence written by Ibn al-Ḥājib of Alexandria (d. 646/1249),[[59]](#footnote-68) according to what we read in this jurist’s biography,[[60]](#footnote-69) as well as two other Oriental works of *fiqh*: Khalīl b. Isḥāq’s *Tawḍīḥ*[[61]](#footnote-70) and Ibn al-Ḥājj’s *Madkhal*.[[62]](#footnote-71) Baghayogho learned the *Uṣūl* of the Egyptian Shāfiʿī jurist and traditionist Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 771/1370)[[63]](#footnote-72) al-Tinbuktī’s father.

The West Africanscholars featured in al-Tinbuktī’s biographical works had a deep interest in the domain of logic, as we can infer from works by members of the Aqīt household. For example, al-Tinbuktī’s father was the author of a commentary on al-Khūnajī’s *Jumal*[[64]](#footnote-73) a work he taught to Baghayogho.

al-Tinbuktī says that his shaykh taught him the key works of the Mālikī *madhhab* that he himself had studied with other members of the Aqīt household: Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Saʿīd,[[65]](#footnote-74) Maḥmūd b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Aqīt’s grandson, and al-Tinbuktī’s father. These works were the same taught to the previous generation: the *Muwaṭṭaʾ*, Saḥnūn’s *Mudawwana*,[[66]](#footnote-75) the *Mukhtaṣar*, al-Qayrawānī’s *Risāla*,and al-Wansharīsī’s *Jāmiʿ al-miʿyār*.[[67]](#footnote-76) Andalusī treatises on *fiqh*, such as the *Muntaqā*, al-Bājī’s (d. 474/1081)[[68]](#footnote-77) commentary on the *Muwaṭṭaʾ*, and Ibn ʿĀṣim’s notarial procedures[[69]](#footnote-79) were taught to al-Tinbuktī by his shaykh. The Andalusī tradition is also present in other domains like grammar and versification, with works by Ibn Mālik (d. 672/1274)[[70]](#footnote-80) and al-Khazrajī (d. 617/1220),[[71]](#footnote-81) but most notably in the domain of devotions to the Prophet Muḥammad, with comments on the *Khamsiyyāt* of Ibn Māhib (d. 645/1247) to the *ʿIshrīniyyāt* of al-Fāzazī (d. 627/1230)[[72]](#footnote-82) written by al-Tinbuktī’s father. In this domain, there are also clear references to Maghrebian works such as the *Kitāb al-shifāʾ* and al-Sanūsī’s (d. 892/1486 or 896/1490) three *ʿAqīda*s,[[73]](#footnote-83) which also inspired another commentary by al-Tinbuktī’s father, demonstrating their preeminence in these circles.

The Egyptian works mentioned as studied and transmitted in al-Tinbuktī’s *ṭabaqāt* are largely those which had been at the center of the West African tradition of study from premodern times, at least from what can be inferred from relevant studies.[[74]](#footnote-84) This may suggest that the eminence of the Egyptian tradition over West African Islamic scholarship, including Islamic law, is reflected in al-Tinbuktī’s biographical writings as a trend in the eleventh-/seventeenth-century Sahel. This does not necessarily imply that the stronger emphasis on it to the exclusion of any Maghrebian reference was intentional in the sense of highlighting the “Oriental credentials” of the author before his colleagues in the Maghreb, as we will see.

## **The practical exercise of Islamic jurisprudence**

The way al-Tinbuktī describes the West African *fuqahāʾ* reveals other interesting features related to their role as jurists and religious authority figures, such as their reputation for piety and their political power that partly derived from religious prestige. Mentions to the grandeur and preeminent intellectual level of the Aqīt household seem manifestations of their symbolic capital, as does and the omission of references to other scholarly households, within and outside of Timbuktu in that it reinforces the idea of their paramount position in the West African intellectual landscape. This should be contextualized in relation to the author’s period spent in the Maghrib, as we will see.

As we have seen, most members of the Aqīt household only studied within their own family, based on what al-Tinbuktī indicates. Nonetheless, we can infer from other sources, such as *Tārīkh al-sūdān*, that many other households were also part of the intellectual elite of Timbuktu, and that it was an ethnically varied group which included North Africans and people from the Mandé and Soninke communities. We get the impression from *Tārīkh al-sūdān* that the office of *khaṭīb* or the leadership of prayer (*imām*) was held by members of other ethnic groups, which included Soninke, such as Maḥmūd Darāmī, *khaṭīb* of Timbuktu, who died in Gao in 1000/1591–2,[[75]](#footnote-85) whereas that of *qāḍī* was monopolized by the Ṣanhāja Anda-Ag-Muḥammad and Aqīt lineages. Baghayogho, whose family came originally from Jenne, is the only jurist from outside of the Aqīt household mentioned as having taught its members.[[76]](#footnote-86) Members of the Aqīt household, such as ʿAbd Allāh, Aḥmad, and Maḥmūd—sons of ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Aqīt—also had intellectual exchanges with al-Anuṣammanī, who, as we have seen, is a key figure in central Sahel Islamic jurisprudence. References to these scholars’ relations with jurists from North Africa are also very rare. According to al-Tinbuktī, only two jurists from the Maghreb taught in West Africa: Makhlūf b. ʿAlī b. Ṣāliḥ al-Balbālī and Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Maghīlī,[[77]](#footnote-87) a key celebrated figure in the development of Islamic jurisprudence in central Sahel. al-Balbālī and al-Maghīlī did not, according to al-Tinbuktī, teach the Aqīts. The frugal nature of the available textual corpora does not permit us to definitively conclude whether the Aqīts’ intellectual self-sufficiency was exaggerated, which could be seen to be the case if we consider the circumstances in which the biographies of members of this household were composed or if what al-Tinbuktī says about them reflects a lack of interconnection within Timbuktu’s scholarly lineages.

Inferences on the role of the judiciary (*al-qaḍāʾ*) in the practical implementation of Islamic jurisprudence can be drawn from what al-Tinbuktī says about his West African colleagues. al-Tinbuktī says that six out of the 15 West African scholars he writes biographies on were offered roles as *qāḍī*s, although not all of them accepted, and this aligns with accounts in *Tārīkh al-sūdān* and Ibn al-Mukhtār’s writings. Maḥmūd b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Aqīt and his sons.Muḥammad and al-ʿĀqib, were *qāḍī*s in Timbuktu,[[78]](#footnote-88) and the former was also *imām* at the Sankore mosque. Muḥammad Aydaḥmad al-Tāzakhtī was *qāḍī* of Katsina. Aḥmad b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Aqīt and Baghayogho were offered positions as *qāḍī*s, but politely refused. The piety of these last two scholars is strongly highlighted in their biographies and their desire to distance themselves from the perils to religious observance arising from proximity to political power was a frequent stance among other prominent scholars of the premodern Islamic west. As we will see, avoiding such perils is the subject of one of al-Tinbuktī’s first treatises, *Jalb al-niʿma*.[[79]](#footnote-89) However, the *ṭabaqāt* and contemporary works like the *Timbuktu Chronicles* suggest that this may not have been usual for the West African Islamic jurisprudential elite, since references in the descriptions to qualities of utmost piety often coincide with allusions to great worldly power and wealth.

References to religious piety are almost exclusively found in the biographies of Aqīt family members and scholars with whom the author had a very close relationship, such as Baghayogho. This piety is often linked to asceticism, as is the case with Baghayogho, who spent the whole day teaching and part of the night praying, according to al-Tinbuktī.[[80]](#footnote-90) Another reference to renunciation of worldly things appears in the biography of Abū Bakr b. Aḥmad b. ʿUmar Aqīt,[[81]](#footnote-91) the author’s paternal uncle who went on pilgrimage to Mecca and, upon his return, gathered his family up and settled with them in Medina for the rest of his life. He is described as having renounced this world even though he had been given the highest “leadership positions and state power” (*riʾāsa wa-dawla*). His biography contains the only direct reference to Sufism in this set of *tarājim*. al-Tinbuktī declares that Abū Bakr was his first teacher of Arabic and explains what he taught him quickly and unproblematically, “having transmitted to him his *baraka*.” The author also attributes the writing of “short works on Sufism”[[82]](#footnote-92) to him. The term *walāya* (holiness) is also used to describe another of the author’s ancestors, ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Aqīt,[[83]](#footnote-93) who is also described as being very generous.[[84]](#footnote-94) References to generosity also appear in the biographies of the author’s father and also his shaykh, both of whom lent their very valuable books to anyone who asked.[[85]](#footnote-95) Such a reference also appears in Maḥmūd b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Aqīt’s biography, of whom the author says he gave away the presents and honors that he received from “sultans”[[86]](#footnote-96) to the needy. Once again, relationships to power and wealth often appear and in different manners. al-Tinbuktī’s paternal uncle, Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd b. ʿUmar Aqīt, *qāḍī* of Timbuktu, is said to “have had luck and all the power and leadership that he could ask for” and to “live well-off.”[[87]](#footnote-98)

Muḥammad’s brother al-ʿĀqib, also a *qāḍī* in Timbuktu, is described as having obtained “abundant riches,” but also as being firm in his decision to ensure the common good (*al-khayr*), and also much feared. The counter-position of the *qāḍī*’s richness with his care for the common good is interesting here: it is as if these qualities were incompatible or could be interpreted as such. According to al-Tinbuktī, *qāḍī* al-ʿĀqib was “brave in important matters when others backed down, daring with kings and others, and winning in his conflicts with them, who normally ended up complying with what he decreed.” This point is emphasized by al-Tinbuktī mentioning that “when al-ʿĀqib saw that something was execrable, he renounced to his appointment and sat by the door of his house, until he was convinced to come back.”[[88]](#footnote-99) Like al-ʿĀqib, his cousin, Aḥmad b. al-ḥājj Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Aqīt, al-Tinbuktī’s father, was also described as being very firm in his opposition to “all injustice, even before the powerful.” His relationship with the rulers of Songhay features in his biography, with the author affirming that “he was hard on the kings and on others. They [kings] always visited him in his own house, always obeyed him. When he fell sick in Gao and other places of his travels, the great Sultan Askya Daʾūd visited him every night until he was healed, looking after him and revering his power.”

This account highlights the central role of the Aqīt household by suggesting their almost complete independence from political power, although we may assume, like other studies,[[89]](#footnote-100) that this was most likely not so, at least during the Songhay Empire’s strongest period of rule over the Niger Bend. This point is even more striking in how al-Tinbuktī depicts his father as being almost venerated by the most powerful west African sovereign while he himself was only from a secondary branch of the Aqīts, did not occupy any such posts in Timbuktu or the Songhay administration, and is not mentioned as a revered figure by any other contemporary source.

## **al-Tinbuktī as a historian of Islamic law in premodern West Africa**

The partial description of tenth-/sixteenth-century Islamic jurisprudence in West Africa given by al-Tinbuktī in his biographical works reveals several interesting aspects, of which its omissions are certainly the most peculiar. To try to understand why the author chose the jurists from the Sahel he did for profiling, we must to take into consideration the historical context in which *Nayl al-ibtihāj* were begun, one of the social and political instability in the Niger Bend region due to successional strife in the Songhay Empire on the eve of the Saʿdian invasion. al-Tinbuktī’s biographical dictionaries were also shaped by a very different context in which both works were completed: his imprisoned and then enforced stay in Marrakech somewhere between the last years of the tenth/sixteenth century and the beginning of the eleventh/seventeenth century. These two different moments in the author’s life may explain some of his motivations for starting a *ṭabaqāt* and for featuring particular West African jurists in it but not others.

The disintegration of Songhay imperial authority at the end of the tenth/sixteenth century may have influenced some of al-Tinbuktī’s earliest writings, as *Jalb al-niʿma*, written against “evil rulers” (*al-wulāt al-ẓalama*), shows. According to Zouber and Saad,[[90]](#footnote-101) the author intended in this work to warn against the dangers of proximity to political authority when not rightly exercised, foregrounding the moral preeminence and virtue of the *ulamāʾ* in whom he invested ultimate authority to legitimize worldly rulers and evaluate them according to the new social order of Islam, inf which the *ulamāʾ* were indispensable stakeholders. Zouber and Saad say that there is no allusion to Songhay rulers in *Jalb al-niʿma*, but the tumultuous political events in the Songhay Empire of the time, in which the Sankore *ulamāʾ* actively participated,[[91]](#footnote-102) probably inspired his treatise in some ways. This happened when al-Tinbuktī had also started writing *Nayl al-ibtihāj*, his declared intention for doing so beings to provide background on the Mālikī jurists not included in Ibn Farḥūn’s *al-Dībāj* or, as he put it, “to differentiate the pious from the evil, the cursed from the blessed, to know the just from the nobody, giving each one their value.”[[92]](#footnote-103) That said, the inclusion of West African *fuqahāʾ* in this work incorporates the Timbuktu legal tradition within the broader framework of the Mālikī *madhhab*. More specifically, it includes the Aqīt jurists within the pious, blessed, and just ranks of Mālikī scholars within the *umma*, rather than being “nobodies.” Writing a biographical compendium of jurists may also have been a way of highlighting their moral preeminence and social and political leadership, especially given the context and regional implications of the collapsing authority of the Songhay Empire.

al-Tinbuktī’s reflections on the role of the *fuqahāʾ* in society should be understood in relation to the expanding dominions of the *bīḍān*, the Ṣanhāja and Tuareg groups, into the southern areas of the western Sahel, of which the previously quoted passage of *Taʾrīkh al-sūdān* may be an indicator. This was directly related to the decline of Songhay authority over the territory, as well as the southward migration of agricultural peoples due to the desertification of the northern Savanna area, as shown by Webb.[[93]](#footnote-104) These changing social and political dynamics may have arisen due to the *bīḍān* seeking to subvert Songhay political leadership, not by creating state structures but enhancing the social control they already exercised through their scholars, in turn by defining and enforcing their version of the Islamic social order.

This may seem unrelated to determining why al-Tinbuktī may have chosen to write a biographical dictionary of Mālikī jurists, but it does certainly have a bearing on the author’s reflections on the key role of the *ulamāʾ* in society, as captured in the work *Jalb al-niʿma*. In this sense, his depiction of the Aqīts in his *ṭabaqāt* as epitomes of righteousness, piety and, in some cases, just and effective political leadership may complement what he had already expressed in his political treatise, that is, that worldly rulers often fail their duties of governing society, but the righteous *ulamāʾ*, especially the Aqīts, would certainly accomplish those duties much better. This raises the question of what role the Timbuktu *jamāʿa* had in the leadership of the town. The *tarājim* of West African scholars in the *ṭabaqāt* cannot fully answer this question, mainly due to their briefness, but it is fruitful to compare them with other contemporary sources.

As we see in the above citations from *qāḍī* al-ʿĀqib’s biography, one of al-Tinbuktī’s longer and more detailed accounts, this judge seemed to monopolize city leadership and exercised political power in the unstable space that the Songhay elite had left behind. Even though they were equals in theory, there is no mention of any scholar or notable having a similarly high status. This contrasts with al-Tinbuktī’s description of al-Saʿdī. from the same period, in his *Tārīkh al-sūdān*, in which there are frequent allusions to the *jamāʿa* and its effective leadership in appointing people to religious office, its debates over the right people to chose, and its commitment even to pay their salaries. However, it is noteworthy that, although completely absent from the *ṭabaqāt*, the Timbuktu *jamāʿa* seems to have functioned like other Saharan enclaves in later historical periods.[[94]](#footnote-105)

al-Tinbuktī’s descriptions of West African scholars may somehow capture the prevalent state of mind in Timbuktu’s highest social layers in the same way as the *Timbuktu Chronicles* and their message of rallying the elites would do some years later, after the deep social transformations brought about by the Saʿdian invasion.[[95]](#footnote-106) In this sense, al-Tinbuktī’s biographical dictionaries may be seen as forerunners of al-Saʿdī’s and Ibn al-Mukhtār’s works, and as prototypes for articulating the history of Islam and of Islamic jurisprudence in Timbuktu. All of these works share a declared intent, which is the memorialization of past times, while also all being very parochial, focusing almost exclusively on Timbuktu traditions and jurists. al-Tinbuktī’s *ṭabaqāt* and the *Timbuktu Chronicles* are also similarly self-vindicating in that each expresses the intellectual elite’s praise for their own intellectual and moral accomplishments. However, there is a difference between them in this regard. al-Tinbuktī’s biographies of West African jurists emphasize the merits of only a very minor part of the *khāṣṣa*, namely the author’s own household, while the *Timbuktu Chronicles* praise the city’s entire religious elite. In this sense, it could be argued that the *Timbuktu Chronicles* are both a product and indicator of the upsurge in the prominence of the *bīḍān* households, as embodied in their religious, legal, and intellectual representatives, the *ulamāʾ* of Sankore, along with other households from other ethnic, mainly Soninke, backgrounds and the newly-emerged elite of the Arma.[[96]](#footnote-107)

The description of West African jurists in al-Tinbuktī’s *ṭabaqāt* should be understood as an inspiration for this historiographical tradition with a like ideological background.[[97]](#footnote-108) Although the political aims of the *Timbuktu Chronicles*—the consolidation of the three elites of this period, the Arma, the Ṣanhāja, and the Soninke—could not have been articulated previously as such, a like upsurge of the *ulamāʾ*, in this case as representatives of the strongest economic force, the Ṣanhāja households, may also have taken place in the moment of the disintegration of Songhay rule,[[98]](#footnote-109) although al-Tinbuktī’s *ṭabaqāt* share this more narrowly in focusing on the Aqīts, but neglecting other pre-eminent scholars.

The vindication of the Timbuktu *ulamāʾ* in the aftermath of the Saʿdid invasion of the Songhay Empire may have been a way of promoting their sociopolitical role in the west and of drawing attention to their moral and intellectual excellence. This could have expanded their own and their disciples’ opportunities to obtain various religious and administrative positions in the region, which would lead to the acquisition of considerable power and wealth, as had been so for past senior members of the Aqīt household, according to their biographies in the *ṭabaqāt*. In this sense, and as already mentioned,[[99]](#footnote-110) the *fuqahāʾ* from the Ṣanhāja, more specifically the Aqīts, sought to exploit political tensions, such as in the renowned confrontation with Sonni ʿAlī and their support for several western provincial governors of the Songhay Empire who competed over the imperial throne. This political involvement was unique to the religious branches of the Ṣanhāja and was not pursued by scholars of Soninke or North African origin. This is shown by the fact that only the Aqīts had to flee Timbuktu at the time of Sonni ʿAlī’s rise to power and the fact that only the Aqīts were deported to Marrakech as punishment for their opposition to the Saʿdid occupation of Timbuktu.

The political role played by members of the Aqīt household, not only their moral or intellectual preeminence, may have influenced al-Tinbuktī’s thought and may have been a motivation for some of his early writings, including *Nayl al-ibtihāj*. Praise for the religious and moral as well as intellectual characteristics of the *fuqahāʾ* from his household could serve the purpose of distinguishing the scholarship of this city from that of other places of Islamic learning in West Africa, as was to be the case with the *Timbuktu Chronicles*. Emphasis on the righteousness of the Aqīts and the holiness of Timbuktu seem two ways of highlighting the superiority of the city’s *fuqahāʾ* over others. This would, therefore, tend to advance their careers over those of scholars from other towns in the region, with the consequent economic and political implications that might have had for them. Thus, the powerful image of the “city of scholars” may have been the convincing slogan that served the economic and political interests of the Timbuktu *khāṣṣa*, of which the elite of the *ulamāʾ* were part.

The social tradition developed by the Timbuktu *ulamāʾ* has resulted in the city’s fame as a city of scholars being often debated.[[100]](#footnote-111) However, the available textual evidence does not allow us to conclude that this was specific of Timbuktu and references in other contemporary sources to the participation of the *ulamāʾ* in the administrative and political affairs in other locations, such as Jenne, may suggest similar social traditions existing elsewhere in the western Sahel. The fact that the sources are almost silent on the relationships of the scholars with the other members of their households, who must have provided them with the financial support that allowed them to devote themselves to scholarship, reinforces this point of view. The only mention of the West African jurists’ jobs in al-Tinbuktī’s biographical works are in the biography of al-Balbālī, who was also the only jurist whom the author describes as having studied in the Maghreb.[[101]](#footnote-112)

There is, however, another historical dimension to al-Tinbuktī’s *ṭabaqāt*, since both works were finished during the author’s time in Marrakech. The Maghreb and its intellectual influence on the development of Islamic law in West Africa constitute are also strikingly absent from al-Tinbuktī’s biographies. This is particularly striking since most of both works under discussion here is dedicated to biographies of Maghrebian Mālikī jurists and because many of their sources are of Maghrebian and Andalusī origin.[[102]](#footnote-113) Yet the biographies of West African jurists in the *ṭabaqāt* omit almost any mention of the intellectual ties between the western Sahel and North Africa. They also neglect to mention key works of North African Mālikī jurisprudence, such as al-Qayrawānī’s *Risāla* or al-Wansharīsī’s *Miʿyār*, both of which had been relayed to the members of the Aqīt household. A closer look at other parts of these works shows a powerful North African tradition in the education of West African scholars. In the biography of ʿAbd Allāh b. Aḥmad al-Zammūrī,[[103]](#footnote-114) we see that this scholar settled in Walāta during the period in which the Sankore *ulamāʾ* had taken refuge there from Sonni ʿAlī’s persecution. He transmitted the *Kitāb al-shifāʾ* of ʿIyāḍ b. Mūsā to al-Mukhtār al-Naḥwī b. Anda-Ag-Muḥammad, one of the West African scholars mentioned in the biographies of the Aqīts that feature among al-Tinbuktī’s biographical works.[[104]](#footnote-115) He, in turn, taught it to his descendants, who were eulogists of great repute well into the eleventh/seventeenth century,[[105]](#footnote-116) and also to al-Tinbuktī’s grandfather, Aḥmad b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Aqīt.[[106]](#footnote-117) However, there is no mention of this chain of transmission in the *ṭabaqāt*.

Omissions such as these speak volumes, although we should remember that scholarly and commercial networks changed over time and that the fact that al-Tinbuktī’s biographies of West African *ulamāʾ* focus on jurists from the tenth/sixteenth century may be why he only minorly describes interregional relations of jurists across the Sahara. It may also reflect a changing trend toward focus on other domains, such as logic and its use for doctrinal purposes, under al-Sanūsī’s influence.[[107]](#footnote-118)

However, given that al-Tinbuktī completed *Nayl al-ibtihāj* and its abridgment during his enforced stay in Marrakech, he may have intended that his picture of the intellectual and legal landscape of West Africa would serve his academic and societal credentials in a foreign land, where his aristocratic pedigree was not really known. In this sense, he could have accompanied these omissions with a stronger emphasis on the links of the Aqīts to Egyptian scholarship, something that could advance his agenda over that of his Maghrebian colleagues. His failure to mention other scholarly lineages in Timbuktu, which are very present in the *Timbuktu Chronicles*, may also have been him seeking to boost his role as an intellectual and legal intermediary between the western Sahel and North Africa, due to his informally acting as *muftī*, but also as a commercial intermediary, given that the elite of the *ulamāʾ* determined trade-related litigation. This also points to the author’s involvements with North African Sufism, especially with the *zāwiya* of the Nāṣiriyya brotherhood in Tamgrout,[[108]](#footnote-119) and suggests to what extent he may have assimilated lesion from their piety and devotion and the legitimation of power in early Modern Morocco[[109]](#footnote-120) and to apply it to commercial settings, of which his legal opinions on slavery are the most eloquent embodiment.

## **Conclusions**

The unique description of West African scholarship in Islamic law in al-Tinbuktī’s biographical works relates to the author’s concern with the history of the *ulamāʾ*, especially of the jurists of the Mālikī *madhhab*, as well as his interest in their role in society. His own role as a jurist may well have been part of his considerations when deciding to begin writing around the turn of the eleventh/seventeenth century and continuing to do so for almost one decade. This made him a forerunner in the development of historical writing in West Africa, which was, in turn, deeply related to the sociopolitical aspirations of the elite scholars of the region. al-Tinbuktī’s biographical works, long cherished by scholars of the intellectual history of West Africa for their unquestioned value, need to be understood in the context of the rise and fall of the Songhay Empire and the impact of that on the religious elite who were fundamental to the Islamic legitimation of its rulers. It was most saliently the role of this religious elite to define what was Islamically right in the new society that sprung out of Songhay domination, with Islamic law as the main instrument for it. It is a role that scholars tried to buttress as the empire succumbed to Saʿdian conquest, something somewhat obstructed by the new Arma elite.

Even though he was far from being a key actor in the political affairs of his time, unlike the famous *qāḍī*s of the Aqīt household, al-Tinbuktī played an essential role in the consolidation of the social order brought about by the spread of Mālikism southward and eastward in the Sahara-Sahel space driven by the Almoravids. al-Tinbuktī’s self-awareness as an *ʿālim*, revealed in his biographical writings, can also be observed in other treatises of his, such as *Jalb al-niʿma*, or those of others such as *Tuḥfat al-fuḍalāʾ bi-baʿḍ faḍāʾil al-ulamāʾ*. In them, the oppositions between religious knowledge and Sufi devotion are explicitly discussed. Further analysis of these works is necessary to analyze al-Tinbuktī’s conception of the political leadership given by the *ulamāʾ* and their stance toward devotional practices outside of those established by the scholarly elites of Timbuktu in the tenth/sixteenth century that may have challenged the influence of the religious prestige obtained through scholarship on Islamic law. How this opposition was related to the nascent *bīḍān* hegemony in the western Sahel, of which al-Tinbuktī’s *tarājim* bear witness, remains an open question of paramount import.

al-Tinbuktī’s biographical writing project, the author’s earliest writings, immediately sets out its clear aim to incorporate the Ṣanhāja scholarly tradition of *fiqh* from Timbuktu into the broader framework of the Mālikī *madhhab* and reflects the general state of mind arising out of the city’s economic, sociopolitical, and intellectual prevalence in the western Sahel on the eve of the Saʿdian invasion. However, *Nayl al-ibtihāj* and *Kifāyat al-muḥtāj*, completed afterthe author’s deportation to Marrakech, his experience of captivity and exile, and the loss of his social privileged status, must also be contextualized in relation to this radical change in the author’s life. His experience in the Maghreb clearly affected his self-conception as a scholar and the fall of the Aqīt household must have eventually forced him to find some other source of revenue. al-Tinbuktī’s mature writings bear witness to his dedication to being an informal *muftī*, before and after he departed from Marrakech to return to Timbuktu. The nature of his professional activity in this regard remains unclear, but including the biographies of scholars from his own family and presenting them as the only Sahelian *ulamāʾ* who merited inclusion in his *ṭabaqāt* may have been a way for him to reinforce his prestige and, hence, to promote his legal career as a reference point in the context of trade with the Sahel, as shown in the diffusion of *fatāwā* such as in *Miʿrāj al-ṣuʿūḍ*.

## **ANNEX**

Teachers, works taught, and writings by West African scholars in Aḥmad Bābā al-Tinbuktī’s *ṭabaqāt*[[110]](#footnote-121)

1. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Takrūrī,[[111]](#footnote-122) the earliest scholar mentioned in al-Tinbuktī’s *ṭabaqāt,* an eighth/fourteenth-century scholar. The reference is short and does not include any mention to his masters, students or works composed.
2. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Aqīt b. ʿUmar b. ʿAlī b. Yaḥyā al-Ṣanhājī al-Massūfī(d. 929/1522–3),[[112]](#footnote-123) the author’s great uncle, whom he described as a saint (*wālī*). He is said to have taught in Walāta, without further detail being provided.
3. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Abī Muḥammad al-Tāzakhtī, known as Aydaḥmad (d. 937/1531).[[113]](#footnote-124) According to the author, he traveled to several locations in the Sahel, such as Takedda or Katsina, where he was appointed as *qāḍī*, and joined Maḥmūd b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Aqīt on his pilgrimage to Mecca.
   1. Learned from Burhān al-Dīn al-Qalqashandī, Burhān al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, Zakariyyāʾ al-Anṣārī and the brothers Shams al-Dīn and Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Laqānī.
   2. Composed works: *Taqāyīd wa-ṭurar ʿalā Mukhtaṣar Khalīl* (*Annotations* to Khalīl b. Isḥāq’s *Mukhtaṣar*).
4. Makhlūf b. ʿAlī b. Ṣāliḥ al-Balbālī (d. 940/1533)[[114]](#footnote-125) from Walāta, who learned in the Maghreb and was a teacher in different West African towns.
   1. Learned from Ibn Ghāzī.[[115]](#footnote-126)
5. *al-Ḥājj* Aḥmad b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Aqīt b. ʿUmar b. ʿAlī b. Yaḥyā b. Judāla al-Ṣanhājī al-Tinbuktī (d. 943/1536),[[116]](#footnote-127) Aḥmad Bābā al-Tinbuktī’s paternal grandfather, who also taught in several locations within West Africa.
   1. Learned from And-Agh-Muḥammad al-Kabīr[[117]](#footnote-128) and al-Mukhtār al-Naḥwī,[[118]](#footnote-129) his maternal grandfather and uncle respectively, as well as al-Ṣuyūṭī and Khālid al-Azharī (d. 905/1499).[[119]](#footnote-130)
   2. Transmitted works: Saḥnūn’s *Mudawwana*, ʿIyāḍ b. Mūsā’s *Shifāʾ*.
   3. Composed works: *Dawāwīn* (*Recopilations*), *Fawāʾid* (*Anecdotes*) and *Taʿlīqāt* (*Commentaries*).
6. Maḥmūd b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Aqīt b. ʿUmar b. ʿAlī b. Yaḥyā al-Ṣanhājī al-Massūfī al-Tinbuktī (d. 955/1548),[[120]](#footnote-131) *qāḍī* of Timbuktu, described by the author as a precursor of the study of Khalīl b. Isḥāq’s *Mukhtaṣar* in the Sahel.
   1. Learned from Burhān al-Dīn al-Qalqashandī, Burhān al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, Zakariyyāʾ al-Anṣārī and the brothers Shams al-Dīn and Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Laqānī.
   2. Transmitted works: Saḥnūn’s *Mudawwana*, Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī’s *Risāla*, Khalīl b. Isḥāq’s *Mukhtaṣar*, Ibn Mālik’s *Alfiyya*, *al-Salālijiyya*.*[[121]](#footnote-132)*
   3. Composed works: *Sharḥ ʿalā Mukhtaṣar Khalīl* (Commentary to Khalīl b. Isḥāq’s *Mukhtaṣar*, in two volumes).
7. al-ʿĀqib b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Anuṣammanī al-Massūfī (d. after 950/1543),[[122]](#footnote-133) a jurist from Agadez, who settled in the village of Anuṣamman, near Takedda, and is considered as one of the founding fathers of Islamic jurisprudence in the central Sahel.
8. Learned from al-Maghīlī, al-Ṣuyūṭī and Khālid al-Azharī.
9. Composed works: *Taʿlīq ʿalā qawl Khalīl “wa-khuṣṣisat niyyat al-ḥālif”* (Commentary on a Passage of Khalīl b. Isḥāq’s *Mukhtaṣar* which says that “the Intention of an Oath Must Be Specific”), *Juzʾ fī wujūb al-jumaʿa fī qaryat Anuṣamman* (Work on the Compulsoriness of Friday Prayer at the Village of Anuṣamman); *Masāʾil* works: *al-Jawāb al-majdūd ʿan asʾilat al-qāḍī Muḥạmmad b. Maḥmūd* (New Reply to the Questions of *qāḍī* Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd)*, Ajwibat al-faqīr fī asʾilat al-amīr* (Replies of the Humble (Jurist) to the Questions of the Prince, Legal Opinion Originated at Askya Muḥammad I’s Command).[[123]](#footnote-134)
10. Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Aqīt b. ʿUmar b. ʿAlī b. Yaḥyā al-Ṣanhājī (d. 973/1565),[[124]](#footnote-135) *qāḍī* of Timbuktu, paternal cousin of the author’s father.
    1. Composed works: *Taʿlīq ʿalā Rajaz al-Maghīlī fī l-manṭiq* (*Commentary* on al-Maghīlī’s *Rajaz*[[125]](#footnote-136) on logic).[[126]](#footnote-137)
11. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Saʿīd (d. 976/1568),[[127]](#footnote-138) who was a grandson of Maḥmūd b. ʿUmar Aqīt’s through one of his daughters, one of Timbuktu’s most relevant scholars.
    1. Learned from Maḥmūd b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Aqīt.
    2. Transmitted works: Saḥnūn’s *Mudawwana*, Mālik’s *Muwaṭṭaʾ*, Khalīl b. Isḥāq’s *Mukhtaṣar.*
12. Composed works: *Mustadrakāt fī l-fiqh* (Jurisprudential Corrections), *Ḥāshiya laṭīfa ʿalā Khalīl* (Agreeable gloss on Khalīl, Based on the Work *al-Bayān wa-l-taḥṣīl)*.[[128]](#footnote-139)
13. al-ʿĀqib b. Maḥmūd b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Aqīt b. ʿUmar b. ʿAlī b. Yaḥyā al-Ṣanhājī (d. 991/1583),[[129]](#footnote-140) *qāḍī* of Timbuktu, another paternal cousin of the author’s father.
    1. Learned from Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Laqānī, Muḥammad al-Bakrī.
14. Abū Bakr b. Aḥmad b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Aqīt (d. 991/1583),[[130]](#footnote-141) the author’s paternal uncle.
    1. Composed works: *Muʿīn al-ḍuʿafāʾ fī l-qināʿa* (Help for the Weak of Conviction).[[131]](#footnote-142)
15. Aḥmad b. Aḥmad b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Aqīt b. ʿUmar b. ʿAlī b. Yaḥyā (d. 991/1583),[[132]](#footnote-143) the author’s father.
    1. Learned from Maḥmūd b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Aqīt, Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Laqānī, al-Sakhāwī al-Madanī, Muḥammad al-Bakrī, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad al-Tājurī.
16. Transmitted works: al-Bukhārī’s *Ṣaḥīḥ,* Muslim’s *Ṣaḥīḥ,* ʿIyāḍ b. Mūsā’s *Shifāʾ.*
17. Composed works: *Sharḥ takhmīs Ibn Māhib li-ʿIshrīniyyāt al-Fazazī* (Explanation of Ibn Māhib’s *Khamsiyyāt* to al-Fazazī’s *ʿIshrīniyyāt*, *Imnāḥ al-ahbāb min Mināḥ al-Wahhāb* (Rendering of the Treasures of the Gifts of the Generous, al-Maghīlī’s *Rajaz* Poem on Logic), *Ḥāshiya ʿalā Sharḥ al-Tatāʾī ʿalā Mukhtaṣar Khalīl* (*Gloss to al-Tatāʾī’s* Explanationof *Khalīl Ibn Isḥāq’s* Mukhtaṣar), *Sharḥ ʿalā Jumal al-Khūnajī* (Explanation of al-Khūnajī’s *Jumal*), *Sharḥʿalā al-Ṣugrā* (Commentary on al-Sanūsī’s *al-ʿAqīdat al-ṣugrā*), *Sharḥʿalā al-Qurṭubiyya* (Commentary on al-Qurṭubī’s *Urjūzat al-wildān*).[[133]](#footnote-144)
18. Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd b. Abī Bakr al-Wankarī al-Tinbuktī, known as Baghayogho (d. 1002/1594),[[134]](#footnote-145) the only jurist of Mandé stock in Aḥmad Bābā al-Tinbuktī’s biographical works, whose family moved to Timbuktu from Jenne, where Maḥmūd b. Abī Bakr Baghayogho had been appointed *qāḍī* by Askya Isḥāq.
    1. Learned from Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Saʿīd, Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Laqānī, Muḥammad al-Bakrī, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad al-Tājurī.
    2. Transmitted works: Ibn al-Ḥājib’s *Farāʾi­ʿ,* Mālik’s *Muwaṭṭaʾ,* Ibn Mālik’s *Taṣḥīl, a*l-Bajjī’s *Muntaqā,* Saḥnūn’s *Mudawwana*, with al-Ḥasan al-Zarwīlī’s *Explanation*,[[135]](#footnote-146)al-ʿIrāqī’s *Alfiyya*[[136]](#footnote-147) with its author’s *Explanation*, al-Qazwīnī’s *Talkhīṣ al-miftāḥ,* al-Saʿad’s Commentary on Khalīl b. Isḥāq’s *Mukhtaṣar,* al-Sanūsī’s *al-ʿAqīda*.
    3. Composed works: *Bayān mā fī Sharḥ al-Tatāʾī mina-l-ṣaḥw naqlan wa-taḥrīran* (Exposure of the Transmission Mmistakes in al-Tatāʾī’s *Explanation*), *Fatāwī* (*Fatwā*s), *al-Hadāyā fī jamʿ wa-naẓm mubaṭṭilāt al-ṣalāt* (Gifts that Recopilate and Organize the Occasions in which Prayer is Invalid), *Ḥadīth tanbīh al-gāfilīn wa-tanẓīm al-akhbār wa-badīʿ al-athār* (*Ḥadīth* that Warns Those who Err, that Organizes the News and the Marvels of the Vestiges*,* Ibn ʿAbbās’ *ḥadīth* collection), *Taʿlīq wa-ṭurar* (Commentary and Notes on Mistakes found on Explanations of Khalīl b. Isḥāq’s *Mukhtaṣar*, which also included al-Taʾtāʾī’s *Great Explanations*.
19. al-Najīb b. Muḥammad Shams al-Dīn al-Takiddāwī al-Anuṣammanī (d. after 1012/1603),[[137]](#footnote-148) a jurist from Takedda, who settled at the near village of Anuṣamman, one of the key authors of the premodern central Sahel.
    1. Composed works: *al-Ṭarīqat al-muṭlā ilā al-waṣīlat al-uẓmā* (The Path that Brings to Great Union), also known as *Uns al-muḥibbīn fī Sharḥ manāqib al-mursalīn* (Way of Those who Love to Explain the Works of the Messengers), *Taʿlīq ʿalā l-Muʿjizāt al-kubra* (Commentary on the *Great Miracles* by al-Ṣuyūṭī[[138]](#footnote-149)), *Sharḥ ṣaghīr ʿalā l-Mukhtaṣar* (Minor Commentary on Khalīl b. Isḥāq’s *Mukhtaṣar* in two volumes), *Sharḥ kabīr ʿalā l-Mukhtaṣar* (Great Commentary on Khalīl b. Isḥāq’s *Mukhtaṣar* in four volumes), Commentary on Ibn Māhib’s *Takhmīs* (Versified Amplification) of al-Fāzāzī’s *ʿIshrīniyyāt.*

1. This study revises a previous publication on Aḥmad Bābā al-Tinbuktī’s intellectual environment, derived from the author’s doctoral dissertation: see Marta García Novo, “Ulemas mālikíes del *bilād al-sūdān* en la obra biográfica de Aḥmad Bābā al-Tinbuktī (963/1556–1036/1627)”, in *Biografías magrebíes: Identidades y grupos religiosos, sociales y políticos en el Magreb medieval*, Estudios Onomástico-Biográficos de al-Andalus, XVII, ed. Mohamed Meouak (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2012), 417–82. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. This article forms part of the results of the Research Group (GIF) MASYG (University of Alcalá, UAH) and the Research Sub-Project “Transits and Migrations in North Africa: Diachronic Analysis of the Population and its Environment (DIANA)” (PID2021-122872NB-C22; P.I.: H. de Felipe, University of Alcalá), which, together with the Research Sub-Project “Transformations in Maghrebian Space through a Historic Perspective (TRAMAGHIS)” (PID2021-122872NB-C21; P.I.: M.Á. Manzano, IEMYRhd, University of Salamanca), is within the Coordinated Research Project “Transits and Transformations in Maghrebian Space and Population (MAGNA II)” (MICIN/AEI/10.13039/501100011033 y FEDER Una manera de hacer Europa) (Coord.: M.Á. Manzano). The author wishes to thank Kaj Öhrnberg, Helena de Felipe, and Xavier Ballestín, as well as the five anonymous reviewers of this article, for their thorough revision and insightful comments. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Arabic *sāḥil*, “shore”. Premodern Arabic sources refer to the Sahelian region as *bilād al-sūdān*, “the land of the blacks.” About the use of this expression and the geographical area that it has historically designated, see J.-L. Triaud and A.S. Kaye, “Sūdān”, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* Second Edition, ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 24 June 2019 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\_islam\_COM\_1103>. The toponym *al-takrūr*, although used in a similar way, refers specifically to the westernmost part of the Sahel, see ʿUmar Al-Naqar, “Takrūr, The History of a Name”, *Journal of African History* 9 (1969), 365–74. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
4. Mahmoud Abdou Zouber, M., *Aḥmad Bābā de Tombouctou (1556/1627): sa Vie et son Oeuvre* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1977). John O. Hunwick, “A New Source for the Biography of Aḥmad Bābā al-Tinbuktī (1556–1627)”, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 27:3 (1964), 568; John O. Hunwick, “Further Light on Aḥmad Bābā al-Tinbuktī”, *Research Bulletin, Centre of Arabic Documentation* 1, 2 (1966), 19–31. See also John O. Hunwick (comp.), *The Writings of Western Sudanic Africa* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003), 17–31; Ḥassan Sadki, *Makhṭūṭāt Aḥmad Bābā al-Tinbuktī fī l-khazāʾin al-maghribiyya* (Rabat: Institut des Études africaines, 1996). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
5. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Saʿdī, *Tārīkh al-sūdān*. Arabic text and French translation by Octave Houdas (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1900). English translation in John O. Hunwick, *Timbuktu and the Songhay Empire. al-Saʿdī’s* Taʾrīkh al-sūdān *down to 1613 and Other Contemporary Documents* (Leiden: Brill, 1999). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
6. Which, according to M. Nobili and S. Mathee, were the core of the nineteenth-century work known as *Tārīkh al-fattāsh*. See Mauro Nobili, M. and Mohamed Shahid Mathee, “Towards a New Study of the So-Called *Tārīkh al-Fattāsh*”, *History in Africa* 42 (2015), 37–73, and Mauro Nobili, *Sultan, Caliph and Renewer of the Faith: Aḥmad Lobbo, the* Tārīkh al-fattāsh *and the Making of an Islamic State in West Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018). See also John O. Hunwick, “Studies in the *Tārīkh al-fattāsh* I: Its Authors and Textual History”, *Research Bulletin – Centre of Arabic Documentation* 5 (1969), 57–65; Nehemia Levtzion, “A Seventeenth-Century Chronicle by Ibn al-Mukhtār: A Critical Study of *Ta’rīkh al-fattāsh*”, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 34:3 (1971), 571–93; and John O. Hunwick, “Studies in the *Ta’rīkh al-fattāsh* II: An Alleged Charter of Privilege Issued by Askiya *al-Ḥājj* Muḥammad to the Descendants of Mori Hawgāro”, *Sudanic Africa* 3 (1992), 133–48. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
7. See Michel Abitbol, *Tombouctou et les Arma* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1979). Also John O. Hunwick, “Aḥmad Bābā and the Moroccan Invasion of the Sudan (1591)”, *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 2:3 (1962), 311–28; Henri de Castries, “La conquête du Soudan par Moulaye Ahmed el-Mansôur”, *Hespéris* 3 (1923), 438–88; Georges Pianel, “Les préliminaires de la conquête du Soudan par Moulaye Ahmed el-Mansôur, d’après trois documents inédits”, *Hespéris* 40 (1953), 185–97; Mercedes García-Arenal, *Aḥmad al-Manṣūr: The Beginnings of Modern Morocco* (London: Oneworld, 2009), 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
8. Marta G. Novo, “The Aqīt Household: Professional Mobility of a Berber Learned Elite in Premodern West Africa”, in *Professional Mobility in Islamic Societies (700-1750): New Concepts and Approaches*, ed. Mohamed El-Merheb and Mehdi Berriah (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 52–76. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
9. Joseph M. Cuoq, *Recueil des sources arabes concernant l’Afrique Occidentale du VIIIe au XVIe siècle* (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1975), 2-9*.* About racial prejudice in premodern Morocco see Chouki El Hamel, *Black Morocco: A History of Slavery, Race and Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 109–11. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
10. The complete list of Sahelian *fuqahāʾ* featured in Aḥmad Bābā al-Tinbuktī’s biographical dictionaries, along with details of their intellectual, religious and sociopolitical activities, can be found in the Annex of this article. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
11. Bruce Hall, *A History of Race in Muslim West Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 55–68; James L. A. Webb, *Desert Frontier: Ecological and Economic Change Along the Western Sahel, 1600–1850* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1994). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
12. About these households seeElias Saad, *Social History of Timbuktu:* *The Role of Muslim Scholars and Notables, 1400–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 44-45, 48-49. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
13. Aḥmad Bābā al-Tinbuktī, *Nayl al-ibtihāj bi-taṭrīz al-Dībāj*, ed. M. ʿAmar (Cairo: Maktabat al-Thaqāfat al-Dīniyya, 2004, 2 vols.); ed. ʿA.H. al-Harrāma (Tripoli (Libya): Kulliyyat al-Daʿwat al-Islāmiyya, 2000); ed. on the margins of the *Dībāj* of Ibn Farḥūn (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Maʿāhid, 1932); Aḥmad Bābā al-Tinbuktī, *Kifāyat al-muḥtāj li-maʿrifat man laysa fī l-Dībāj*, introduced and edited by M. Mutīʿ, Rabat: Wizārat al-Awqāf wa-l-Shuʾūn al-Islāmiyya, 2000, 2 vols; ed. ʿA. ʿUmar, Cairo: al-Maktabat al-Thaqāfiyya wa-l-Dīniyya, 2004, 2 vols. Both works will hereafter be referred to as “Aḥmad Bābā’s biographical works” or “Aḥmad Bābā’s *ṭabaqāt*”. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
14. Zouber, *Aḥmad Bābā*, 13–4, 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
15. Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm b. ʿAlī al-Yaʿmarī Ibn Farḥūn (d. 799/1397), *al-Dībāj al-mudhhab fī maʿrifat aʿyān ulamāʾ al-madhhab*, op, cit. See Mohamed Fadel, “Ibn Farḥūn”, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Third Edition, ed. K. Fleet, G. Krämer, D. Matringe, J. Nawas, E. Rowson. Consulted online on 16 June 2019 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\_ei3\_COM\_30773>. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
16. Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr b. Ṣiddīq al-Walātī al-Bartilī (d. 1805), *Fatḥ al-shakūr li-maʿrifat aʿyān ulamāʾ al-takrūr*, ed. M. I. al-Kattānī, M. Ḥajjī, (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1981); French translation in Chouki El Hamel, *La vie intellectuelle islamique dans le Sahel Ouest-Africain* (Paris: Éditions L’Harmattan, 2002). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
17. Muḥammad Bello (d. 1837), *Infāq al-maysūr fī taʾrīkh bilād takrūr* (Rabat: Institut des Études Africaines, 1996). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
18. Auguste Cherbonneau, *Essai sur la littérature arabe au Soudan* *d’après le takmilet-ed-dibadje d’Ahmed Baba, le tombouctien* (Constantine-Paris: Abadie, A. Leleux, 1861); Adrian D.H. Bivar and Mervyn Hiskett, “The Arabic Literature of Nigeria to 1804: A Provisional Account”, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 25:3 (1962), 104–48; Hunwick, *The Writings*. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
19. This order follows the letters of the aliphate only in the initial of the given name. For a description of the work see Abdeljelil Temimi, “L’ouvrage ‘Nayl al-ibtihadj’ d’Ahmad Baba de Tombouctou: une Encyclopedie de Biographies maghrebines”, *Revue Maghrebine de Documentation* 3 (1985), 143–6. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
20. Walāta (Oualata) is a Saharan town of what is now the Mauritanian region of Hodh (Ḥawḍ), which was one of the main enclaves of Trans-Saharan trade: see “Walāta”, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs, consulted online on 16 June 2019 http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\_islam\_SIM\_7839; see also Rainer Oßwald, *Die Handelstädte der Westsahara. Die Handelsstädte der Westsahara : die Entwicklung der arabisch-maurischen Kultur von Shinqīṭ, Wadān, Tishīṭ und Walāta* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1986). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
21. The toponym Takedda refers to several locations in areas of the north-central Sahel, in present-day Niger: see John O. Hunwick, “Takidda”, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* Second Edition, consulted online on 16 June 2019 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\_islam\_SIM\_7340>. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
22. Kano is one of present-day Nigeria’s federal states. On the history of the Hausa emirate of the same name, see Murray Last, “Kano”, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Third Edition, consulted online on 16 June 2019 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\_ei3\_COM\_32985>. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
23. In the medieval sources, the toponym “Katsina” refers to several locations in present-day Nigeria: see John Ralph Willis, “Katsina”, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, consulted online on 16 June 2019 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\_islam\_SIM\_4029>. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
24. Jenne (Djenné) is located in the flood region of the Niger river in present-day Mali. For its history, see Geert Mommersteeg, “Djenné”, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Third Edition, consulted online on 24 June 2019 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\_ei3\_COM\_24987> [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
25. See Annex, biography #13. The lack of references to Baghayogho’s geographical origin is meaningful, as will be shown later, in that this scholar was responsible of a large part of al-Tinbuktī’s education in the Islamic sciences, according to al-Tinbuktī himself, and it is quite unlikely that the latter ignored his shaykh’s familial and educational background. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
26. No other North African locations are mentioned, except if we take into account the *nisba* of Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Abī Muḥammad Aydaḥmad al-Tāzakhtī (d. 937/1531), whose possible origin is not referred to by other means. See Annex, biography #3. Tāzakht is a locality of the Sūs valley, in the South of present-day Morocco. See Évariste Lévi-Provençal, and Claude Lefébure, “al-Sūs al-Aḳṣā”, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, consulted online on 16 June 2019 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\_islam\_COM\_1127>. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
27. Aḥmad b. *al-ḥājj* Aḥmad b. ʿUmar b. Muhammad Aqīt (d. 991/1583), al-Tinbuktī’s father. See Annex, biography #12. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
28. Maḥmūd b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Aqīt (d. 955/1548), al-Tinbuktī’s great uncle. See Annex, biography #6. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
29. al-Saʿdī, *Taʾrīkh al-sūdān*, ed. Houdas, 18; Hunwick, *Timbuktu and the Songhay Empire*, 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
30. On the history of Ṣanhāja/Massūfa Islamic scholarship and jurisprudence in Timbuktu and its links with the Saharan towns of Wadān and Tishīt, in present-day Mauritania, see Harry T. Norris, “Ṣanhāja Scholars of Timbuctoo”, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 30:3 (1967), 634–40. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
31. About the learned elites of this Saharan enclave, see Timothy Cleaveland, “Timbuktu and Walāta: Lineages and Higher Education”, in *The Meanings of Timbuktu*, ed. Shamil Jeppie and Souleymane Bachir Diagne (Cape Town: HSRC, 2008), 77–93. And from the same author, *Becoming Walāta: A History of Saharan Formation and Transformation* (Portsmouth (NH): Heinemann, 2002). Also Rainer Oβwald, *Schichtengesellschaft und islamisches Recht. Die* zawāyā *und Krieger der Westsahara im Spiegel von Rechtsgutachten des 16.–19. Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1993). [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
32. al-Saʿdī, *Taʾrīkh al-sūdān*, 21; Hunwick, *Timbuktu and the Songhay Empire*, 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
33. Makhlūf b. ʿAlī b. Ṣāliḥ al-Balbālī (d. after 940/1533). See Annex, biography #4. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
34. al-Tinbuktī, *Nayl*, 608. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
35. This *fatwā* was included in J.O. Hunwick’s and F. Ḥarrāq’s edition of al-Tinbuktī’slegal opinions on slavery: see Aḥmad Bābā al-Tinbuktī, *Miʿrāj al-ṣuʿūd: Aḥmad Bābā’s Replies on Slavery*, ed. and English translation by John O. Hunwick, and F. Ḥarrāq, (Rabat: Institute of African Studies, 2000), 11 (English translation), 95 (Arabic text). [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
36. The influence of Egyptian scholarship has also been brought up by studies such as Bruce Hall and Charles Stewart, “The Historical *Core Curriculum* and the Book Market in Islamic West Africa”, in *The Trans-Saharan Book Trade: Manuscript Culture, Arabic Literacy and Intellectual History in Muslim Africa* ed. Graziano Krätli and Ghislaine Lydon (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 109–74. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
37. There are several references to the relations of the Sankore *ulamāʾ* and the Tuwātī community established in Timbuktu in the *Taʾrīkh al-sūdān*: see al-Saʿdī, *Taʾrīkh al-sūdān*, 59–60; Hunwick, *Timbuktu and the Songhay Empire*, 84–5, for the high esteem for scholars from this community by Maḥmūd b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Aqīt; see also Élise Voguet, “Tlemcen-Touat-Tombouctou: un réseau transsaharien de difussion du Mālikisme (fin VIII/XIVème–XI/XVIIème siècles”, *Revue des Mondes Musulmans et de la Méditerranée*, 141 (2017), 259–79. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
38. Ivor Wilks, “The Transmission of Islamic learning in the Western Sudan”, in *Literacy in Traditional Societies* ed. Jack Goody (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 162–97, especially 165–71. Andreas E. Massing, “The Wangara, an Old Soninke Diaspora in West Africa?”, *Cahiers d’Études africaines* 158 (2000), 281–308; Andreas E. Massing, “Baghayogho: A Soninke Muslim Diaspora in the Mande World”, *Cahiers d’Études africaines* 176:4 (2004), 887–922. Also, Lanneh Sanneh, *The Jakhanke* (London: International African Institute, 1979). [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
39. The Egyptian polygraph Abū l-Faḍl ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr b. Muḥammad Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (Cairo, 849/1445–911/1505), see Elizabeth M. Sartain, *Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī: Biography and Background* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973). [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
40. Khālid b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Abī Bakr al-Azharī, was an Egyptian grammarian and Shāfiʿī jurist: see al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ* (Beirut: *s.d*., Maktabat al- Ḥayāt) III, 171–72; al-Gazzī, *al-Kawākib al-sāʾira fī aʿyān al-miʾa al-ʿāshira* (Beirut: American University Press, 1945–58), I, 188; ʿUmar Riḍā Kaḥḥāla, *Muʿjam al-muʾallifīn: Tarājim muṣannifī l-kutub al-ʿarabiyya* (Damascus: al-Maktabat al-ʿarabiyya, 1957–1961), IV, 96; Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur.* *Zweite, den Supplementbänden angepaßte Auflage*, I-II (Leiden: Brill, 1943–9), supplementary vols. I-III (Leiden: Brill, 1937–42) *(GAL; GAL S)*; II 34-35, S II 22–3. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
41. Burhān al-Dīn al-Qalqashandī, Egyptian traditionist and jurist, chief *qāḍī* of the Shāfiʿī *madhhab*: see al-Gazzī, *Kawākib*, I, 108; Kaḥḥāla, *Muʿjam*, I, 61; Brockelmann, *GAL* II, 94; *GAL S* II, 85. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
42. Burhān al-Dīn al-Maqdisī was a Palestinian *muftī*, Shāfiʿī jurist, and poet who settled in Cairo. See al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ*, I, 134–6; al-Gazzī, *Kawākib*, I, 108; Kaḥḥāla, *Muʿjam*, I, 88; Brockelmann, *GAL* II 23, *GAL S* II 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
43. Zayn al-Dīn Zakariyyāʾ b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Anṣārī al-Sumakī al-Azharī, known as Zakariyyā’ al-Anṣārī, was an Egyptian jurist, chief *qāḍī* of the Shāfiʿī *madhhab*. See Kaḥḥāla, *Muʿjam*, IV, 182; Brockelmann, *GAL* II 122–4, GAL S II (1938), 117–18. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
44. Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Laqānī, Egyptian Mālikī jurist: see al-Tinbuktī, *Nayl*, #718, 586. His brother, Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Laqānī, was also a Mālikī *muftī* and jurist, see al-Tinbuktī, *Nayl*, #725, 590. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
45. ʿAbd al-Muṭīʿ Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Sakhāwī al-Madanī (d. 960/1553) was an author of a *Tafsīr* and a History of Medina—see al-Tinbuktī, *Nayl*, #356, 287— and is not to be confused with the famous prosopographer, traditionist, and author of *al-Ḍawʿ al-lāmiʿ*. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
46. Abū l-Makārim Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Bakrī, Egyptian Shāfiʿī jurist, Ashʿarī theologist, Sufi and poet, see al-Gazzī, *Kawākib*, II, 136–7; al-Nabuhānī, *Jāmiʿ karamāt al-awliyāʾ*, Beirut: 1988, I, 303–5; Kaḥḥāla, *Muʿjam*, XI, 281; Muṣṭafā b. ʿAbd Allāh Ḥajjī Khalīfa*, Kashf al-ẓunūn ʿan asāmī l-kutub wa-l-funūn*, ed. G. Flügel (Leipzig: Bentley, 1835–52), 27, 336, 376, 672, 889, 1028, 1798, 2030, 2031. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
47. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad al-Tājurī was a Maghrebian astronomer who settled in Cairo. See Kaḥḥāla, *Muʿjam*, V, 131; Brockelmann, *GAL* II 469, *GAL* S II 485. Also, Mercè Comes Maymó and Mònica Rius Piniés, “Circulaciò de coneixements per la Mediterrānia: entre Orient i Occident”, in *Actes de la VIII Trobada d’Història de la Ciència y de la Tècnica. Mallorca, 18, 19, 20 i 21 de novembre de 2004* (Barcelona: Societat Catalana d’Història de la Ciència i de la Tècnica, 2006,409–18). [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
48. See Annex, biography #3*.* [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
49. Khalīl Ibn Isḥāq b. Mūsā b. Sh̲uʿayb, Abū l-Mawadda Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn, Ibn al-Jundī (d. ca. 776/1374), Egyptian jurist, one of the main figures of the Mālikī *madhhab*. See Mohamed Ben Cheneb, “K̲h̲alīl b. Isḥāḳ”, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, consulted online on 16 June 2019 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\_islam\_SIM\_4162>. On his most famous work, the *Mukhtaṣar fī l-furūʿ*, see Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* (Leiden: Brill, 1949), II, 101–3; S II (1938), 96–9. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
50. See Carl F. Petry, “Educational Institutions as Depicted in the Biographical Literature of Mamluk Cairo: The Debate over Prestige and Venue”, *Medieval Prosopography* 23 (2002), 101–23. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
51. For this traditional standpoint, see Nehemia Levtzion, “Mamluk Egypt and Takrūr”, in *Studies in Islamic History and Civilization in Honour of Professor David Ayalon*, ed. Moshe Sharon (Jerusalem: Cana, Leiden: Brill, 1986), 199. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
52. al-ʿĀqib al-Anuṣammanī, mentioned above, and al-Najīb b. Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn al-Takdawī al-Kanāwī al-Anuṣammanī (d. after 1012/1603). See Annex, biography #7. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
53. *al-Risāla fī l-fiqh*, one of the main works of the Mālikī *madhhab*, by ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī (d. 386/996), see Hady Roger Idrīs, “Ibn Abī Zayd”, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* Second Edition, consulted online on 24 June 2019 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\_islam\_COM\_1103>. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
54. Mālik b. Anas al-Aṣbaḥī (d. 179/796), the “imam of Medina”, eponymous source for the Mālikī *madhhab*. His *Muwaṭṭaʾ* is one of the fundamental works of this legal school, see Joseph Schacht, “Mālik b. Anas”, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* Second Edition, consulted online on 24 June 2019 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\_islam\_COM\_1103>. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
55. *al-Shifāʾ bi-taʿrīf ḥuqūq al-Muṣṭafā*, by ʿIyāḍ b. Mūsā al-Yaḥsūbī al-Sabtī (d. 544/1149), one of the main figures of North African Mālikism, see Brockelmann, *GAL* I 455-456, *GAL* S I 630-32. The *Shifāʾ* was one of the key works that described and helped to invigorate the practices of devotion of the Prophet Muḥammad. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
56. *Rajaz* poem on Grammar, written by Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Jayyānī, known as Ibn Mālik (d. 672/1274). Brockelmann, *GAL* I 359-63, *GAL* S I 521-27. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
57. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Tatāʾī (d. 940/1536), Egypt’s Mālikī *qāḍī-l-quḍāt*. Tinbuktī, *Nayl*, #720, 588. He was the author of a Commentary on Khalīl b. Isḥāq’s *Mukhtaṣar*, Brockelmann, *GAL* II 411, GAL S II 435. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
58. Aḥmad b. *al-ḥājj* Aḥmad b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Aqīt, Aḥmad Bābā al-Tinbuktī’s father, see Annex, biography #12. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
59. This is the *Mukhtaṣar fī l-furūʿ*, also known as *Jāmiʿ al-ummahāt* or *Mukhtaṣar al-farʿī*, Ibn al-Hājib’s compendium on Mālikī jurisprudence. Brockelmann, *GAL* I 367-73, *GAL* S I 531-39. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
60. al-Tinbuktī, *Nayl*, #736, 603; *Kifāya*, II, 240. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
61. *al-Tawḍīḥ*, Khalīl b. Isḥāq’ Commentary on *al-Mukhtaṣar al-farʿī*, by Ibn al-Hājib; Brockelmann, *GAL* I 373, *GAL* S I 538. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
62. Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-ʿAbdarī al-Fāsī, Mālikī was a jurist born in Cairo in 737/1336. The work mentioned is *al-Madkhal al-sharʿī al-sharīf*: see Brockelmann, *GAL* II 101, 326; *GAL* S II 95. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
63. Abū Naṣr Tāj al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Ibn ʿAlī al-Subkī, Egyptian jurist and traditionist, *qāḍī l-quḍāt* of the Shāfiʿī legal school. The work is his widely known work on *uṣūl al-fiqh*, the *Jāmiʿ al-jawāmiʿ*, see Brockelmann, *GAL* II 108–10, *GAL* S II 105-07. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
64. This is a work on logic by the jurist and philosopher Afḍal al-Dīn al-Khūnajī (d. 646/1248), who was also a *qāḍī* in Cairo. Khaled El-Rouayheb, “al-Khūnajī, Afḍal al-Dīn”, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Third Edition, consulted online on 09 June 2019 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\_ei3\_COM\_24187>. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
65. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Saʿīd (d. 976/1568). See Annex, biography #9. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
66. This is *al-Mudawwanat al-kubrā*, the chief work by the North African jurist Abū Saʿīd ʿAbd al-Salām b. Saʿīd al-Tanūkhī, known as Saḥnūn (d. 160/777–240/855): see Mohamed Talbi, “Saḥnūn”, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* Second Edition, consulted online on 24 June 2019 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\_islam\_COM\_1103>. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
67. *Jāmiʿ al-miʿyār al-mugrib ʿan fatāwī ulamāʾ Ifrīqiya wa-l-Andalus wa-l-Maghrib*, by Aḥmad al-Wansharīsī (d. 914/1508). See Francisco Vidal Castro, “Aḥmad al-Wansharīsī (m. 914/1508). Principales aspectos de su vida”, *al-Qanṭara* 21/2 (1992), 315–52 and idem “Las obras de Aḥmad al-Wansharīsī (m. 914/1508): Inventario analítico”, *Anaquel de Estudios Árabes,* 3 (1992), 73–112. Also Vincent Lagardère, *Histoire et Société en Occident musulman au Moyen Âge. Analyse du* Miʿyār *d’al-Wanšarīsī* (Madrid : Casa de Velázquez, 1995). [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
68. Sulaymān b. Khalaf al-Bajjī’s (d. 474/1081) commentary on Malik’s *Muwaṭṭaʾ*. Brockelmann, *GAL* I 534, *GAL* S I, 743–4. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
69. *Tuḥfat al-ḥukkām fī nukat al-ʿuqūd wa-l-aḥkām*, by Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. ʿĀṣim (d. 829/1426) who was a Mālikī jurist from Granada. al-Tinbuktī, *Nayl*, #592, 483; Brockelmann, *GAL* II 341, *GAL* S II 375. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
70. See fn 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
71. *al-Rāmizāt al-shāfiya fī ʿilm al-ʿarūḍ wa-l-qāfiya*, by ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿUthmān al-Khazrajī (d. 613/1216). Brockelmann, *GAL* I, 391, *GAL* S I, 553. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
72. This is the adaptation by Ibn Māhib, a sufi and ascetic from Almería (d. 645/1247, see F.N. Velázquez Basanta, “Ibn Māhib, Abū Bakr”, in *Biblioteca de al-Andalus VI*, ed. Jorge Lirola Delgado, (Almería: Fundación Ibn Tufayl de Estudios Árabes, 2009), #748, from the ʿ*Ishrīniyyāt* of Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Yakhlaftan al-Fāzazī (d. 627/1230), a poem on the devotion of the Prophet Muḥammad by this Sufi and poet from Cordoba. Aḥmad Bābā al-Tinbuktī, *Nayl*, ed. al-Harrāma, #281, 239. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
73. Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Sanūsī al-Tilimsānī (d. 892/1486 or 896/1490), one of the main figures of North African Sufism, eponym of the Sanūsiyya Sufi brotherhood. Author of several dogmatic treatises (ʿ*Aqīda*, pl. *ʿAqāʾid*), known as *Kubrā* (Great), *Wusṭā* (Middle) and *Ṣugrā* (Minor). *Nayl*, #696, 572. See Gunhild Graf, “*ʿIlm al-kalām* in Mauretanien anhand maurischer Kommentare zur *Iḍāʾat ad-duǧunna fī iʿtiqād ahl as-sunna* von al-Maqqarī (st. 1041/1632)”, *Asiatische Studien/Études Asiatiques* 72:3 (2018), 751–94. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
74. See Hall, Stewart, “The historic “core curriculum””, and Charles Stewart, “Southern Saharan Scholarship and the *bilād al-sūdān*”, *Journal of African History* 17/1 (1976), 73–93. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
75. See al-Saʿdī, *Tāʾrīkh al-sūdān*, 111, 141, 151, 210; Hunwick, *Timbuktu and the Songhay Empire*, 156, 191, 202, 259. The final chapters of al-Saʿdī’s work include quite abundant references to non-Berber scholars who occupied this kind of posts in Timbuktu and elsewhere. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
76. Muḥammad Baghayogho’s father, Maḥmūd, served as *qāḍī* in this city. See al-Saʿdī, *Tāʾrīkh al-sūdān*, 96–97; Hunwick, *Timbuktu and the Songhay Empire,* 137–8. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
77. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Maghīlī (d. 911/1505), jurist, exegete, traditionist, theologist and expert in logic from the city of Tlemcen, in the Northeast of present-day Algeria. See al-Tinbuktī, *Nayl*, #701, 576–79; Kaḥḥāla, *Muʿjam*, X, 191; Brockelmann, *GAL* S II 363; ʿAbd-al-ʿazīz ʿAbdallah Batran, “A Contribution to the Biography of Shaikh Muḥammad Ibn ʿAbd-al-Karīm Ibn Muḥammad (ʿUmar-AʿMar) al-Maghīlī, al-Tilimsānī”, *Journal of African History*, XIV/3 (1973), 381–94. Also, John O. Hunwick, *Sharīʿa in Songhay: The Replies of al-Maghīlī to the Questions of Askya al-Ḥājj Muḥammad* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Ulrich Rebstock, “Ein magribinischer Gelehrter im Sudan: Muḥammad b. Abdalkarīm al-Maġīlī al-Tilimsānī”, *Boletín de la Asociación Española de Orientalistas*, 14 (1978), 111–8. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
78. The biography of ʿUmar b. Maḥmūd b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Aqīt (d. 1003/1594), who was *qāḍī* of Timbuktu at the time of the Saʿdian invasion and was deported along with al-Tinbuktī to Marrakech, where he died, was not featured by al-Tinbuktī in any of his *ṭabaqāt*: see al-Saʿdī, *Taʾrīkh al-sūdān*, 212; Hunwick, *Timbuktu and the Songhay Empire*, 261. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
79. Aḥmad Bābā al-Tinbutkī, *Jalb al-niʿma wa-dafʿ al-niqma bi-mujānabat al-wulāt al-ẓalama* (Obtaining Good and Paying Revenge by Avoiding Unjust Rulers), ed. J.M. al-Zīrīqī: 2017; ed. M. b. ʿAzūz, Casablanca and Beirut: Markaz al-Tūrāth al-Thaqāfī al-Maghribī, Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2011. About this work see Zouber, *Aḥmad Bābā*, 156–62. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
80. See Annex, biography #13*.* [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
81. Abū Bakr b. Aḥmad b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Aqīt (d. 991/1583). See Annex, biography #11. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
82. al-Tinbuktī, *Nayl*, #156, 151; *Kifāya*, I, #137, 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
83. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Aqīt b. ʿUmar b. Yaḥyā al-Ṣanhājī al-Massūfī (d. 929/1523). See Annex, biography #2. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
84. al-Tinbuktī, *Nayl*, #267, 235; *Kifāya*, I, #226, 255. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
85. For al-Tinbuktī’s father, see Annex, biography #12; for his shaykh, see Annex, biography #13*.* [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
86. al-Tinbuktī, *Nayl*, #746, 607–08; *Kifāya*, II, #655, 254–46. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
87. al-Tinbuktī, *Nayl*, #730, 597–98; *Kifāya*, II, #641, 234. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
88. al-Tinbuktī, *Nayl*, #144, 141–2; *Kifāya*, I, #94, 137–9. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
89. Michael A. Gomez, “Timbuktu under Imperial Songhay: A Reconsideration of Autonomy”, *Journal of African History* 31(1) (1990), 5–24. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
90. Zouber, *Aḥmad Bābā*, 89;Saad, *Social History*, 152. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
91. Saad discusses the possibility that *Jalb al-niʿma* was inspired by the rebellion of Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq against Askya al-Ḥājj, in which the Timbuktu notables took al-Ṣādiq’s side, who failed in this attempt. However, he does not see any specific relationship between al-Tinbuktī’s views and the circumstances surrounding al-Ṣādiq’s coup: see Saad, *Social History*, 152–4. al-Ṣādiq’s rebellion is described in *Tārīkh al-sūdān*, 121–24; Hunwick, *Timbuktu and the Songhay Empire*, 168–71. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
92. al-Tinbuktī, *Nayl*, 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
93. On the intellectual constructions of race that accompanied this process, see Hall, *History of Race*; Webb, *Desert Frontier*. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
94. On al-Saʿdī’s account, see fn 75. On the *jamāʿa* in Saharan communities, see Ismail Warscheid, “Those Who Represent the Sovereign in his Absence’: Muslim Scholarship and the Question of Legal Authority in the Pre-Modern Sahara (Southern Algeria, Mauritania, Mali), 1750–1850”, in *Islamic Scholarship in West Africa: New Directions and Global Contexts*, ed. Ousmane Kane (Martelsham: Boydell & Brewer, 2021), 121–35. As suggested by Saad, “the phenomenon of a collective leadership which is signified by the term *jamāʿa* was always a factor of prime import in the organization of the city (*Social History*, 125). My thanks to the anonymous reviewer who suggested I incorporate the concept of *jamāʿa* in Saharan communities as described by Warscheid into the analysis. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
95. Paulo F. De Moraes Farias, “Intellectual Innovation and Reinvention of the Sahel: The Seventeenth-Century Timbuktu Chronicles”, in *The Meanings of Timbuktu*, ed. Shamil Jeppie and Souleymane Bachir Diagne (Cape Town: HSRC, 2008), 97. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
96. The Arma were the descendants of the leaders of the Saʿdian expedition, see “Arma” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* Second Edition, ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 17 November 2019 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\_islam\_COM\_1103>. Also, see Abitbol, *Tombouctou et les Arma.* [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
97. De Moraes Farias identifies the birth of the Timbuktu historiographical tradition with the chronicles of al-Saʿdī and Ibn al-Mukhtār, while Musa considers it as with al-Tinbuktī’s *Nayl* and, in some way, that his opinions on slavery are part of this tradition: see I.D. Musa, “The rise of Muslim Sudanic Historiography in *bilād al-sūdān*: a tentative analysis”, in *Studia Arabica et Islamica: Festschrift for Iḥsān ʿAbbās on his Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Wadad Al-Qāḍī (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1981), 362. De Moraes Farias’ view of the historical writings of eleventh-/seventeenth-century Timbuktu as a genre of its own is further developed in Mauro Nobili, “New Reinventions of the Sahel: Reflections on the *Taʾrīẖ* Genre in the Timbuktu Historiographical Tradition, Seventeenth to Twentieth Centuries”, in *Landscapes, Sources and Intellectual Projects of the West African Past: Essays in Honor of Paulo Fernando de Moraes Farias*, ed. Toby Green and Benedetta Rossi (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2018), 201–19. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
98. De Moraes Farias, “Intellectual Innovation”. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
99. Nehemia Levtzion, “Islam in West African Politics: Accommodation and Tension Between the *ulamāʾ* and Political Authorities”, *Cahiers d’Études africaines* 18/71 (1978), 338–40, 341, 344. Saad, *Social History*, 48–9, 54–5. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
100. Saad, *Social History* 14, 225–33. For more recent contributions to this debate, see Charles Stewart, “Calibrating the scholarship of Timbuktu” and Bruce Hall, “Rethinking the place of Timbuktu in the Intellectual History of Muslim West Africa”, in *Landscapes, Sources and Intellectual Projects of the West African Past*, 220–38 and 239–58 respectively. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
101. al-Tinbuktī, *Nayl,* ed. al-Harrāma, #747, 608; *Kifāya*,II, #656, 246. There is another reference to the economic activities of a scholar in the biography of ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Aqīt, one of the author’s great-uncles who lived in Walāta at the end of the ninth/sixteenth century. This jurist had a slave who was authorized to trade (*maʾdhūn bi-l-tijāra*), and sold milk on his behalf, see al-Tinbuktī, *Nayl,* #267, 235; *Kifāya,* #226, 255. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
102. The major source of the *Nayl* and the *Kifāya*, however, is the work *Tawshīḥ al-dībāj wa-ḥilyat al-ibtihāj*, by Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā b. ʿUmar Badr al-Dīn al-Qarāfī (d. 1009/1601), an Egyptian Mālikī jurist and *qāḍī*: see Fernando R. Mediano, “Estudios de las fuentes del *Nayl al-ibtihāŷ* de Aḥmad Bābā e índices de los personajes biografiados en él”, in *Estudios onomástico-biográficos de al-Andalus*, III, ed. María Luisa Ávila (Granada: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Escuela de Estudios Árabes, 1990), 78–79 and 159–55. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
103. ʿAbd Allāh b. Saʿīd b. Yaḥyā b. Muʿāwiya b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Zammūrī (d. after 888/1484), a disciple of Ibn al Qawrī, see *Kifāya,* #225, vol. I, 254–5. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
104. John O. Hunwick, “Fez and West Africa in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: Scholarly and Sharifian networks”, in *Fès et l’Afrique. Relations économiques, culturelles et spirituelles*, (Rabat: Publications de l’Institut des Études Africaines, 1995), 61–63. About the transmission of the *Shifāʾ* to the descendants of al-Mukhtār al-Naḥwī see Ulrich Rebstock, *Maurische Literaturgeschichte* (Würzburg: Ergon, 2001), 36, #102. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
105. See *Tārīkh al-sūdān*, 28–9. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
106. For the biography of al-Tinbuktī’s grandfather, Aḥmad b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Aqīt, see Annex, biography #5. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
107. On the diffusion and popularity of al-Sanūsī’s works in the Sahel, see Dorrit Van Dalen, *Doubt, Scholarship and Society in 17th-Century Central Sudanic Africa* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 90, 109–19. Also, Graf, “*ʿIlm al-kalām* in Mauretanien”. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
108. Tamgrout is a location in the Darʿa valley, in the South-East of present-day Morocco. al-Tinbuktī spent some time there on his way back to Timbuktu in 1016/1607–8 and issued several legal opinions on trade-related matters, including the *Replies* to al-Īsī, edited and translated by J.O. Hunwick and F. Harrāq. See Aḥmad Bābā al-Tinbuktī, *Miʿrāj al-ṣuʿūḍ*, 78–91, 41–53 (English translation). Yūsuf al-Īsī was, according to Hunwick, the copyist of a manuscript that he acquired in Marrakech, and that included several fragments related to the Nāṣiriyya, and most significantly, a prayer from this brotherhood: see Mss. Hunwick 535–45, Africana Library, Northwestern University; Hunwick, “Aḥmad Bābā on slavery”, 132. The Nāṣiriyya brotherhood was the largest economic organization in eleventh-/seventeenth-century Morocco, and controlled trans-Saharan commercial routes, especially from the west African coast (present-day Senegal and Mauritania) and inland territories: see David Gutelius, “The Path is Easy and the Benefits Large: the Nāṣiriyya, Social Networks and Economic Change in Morocco, 1640–1830”, *Journal of African Studies* 43 (2002), 27–49. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
109. David S. Powers, *Law, Society and Culture in the Maghrib, 1300–1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Vincent Cornell, *Realm of the Saint: Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1998). [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
110. References to non-West African scholars and works can be found in the text of the article. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
111. al-Tinbuktī, *Nayl,* #326, 275; *Kifāya,* I, #276, 292–3; Rebstock, *Maurische Literaturgeschichte*, 14, #45. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
112. al-Tinbuktī, *Nayl,* #267, 235; *Kifāya,* I, #226, 255; Rebstock, *Maurische Literaturgeschichte*, 12, #37. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
113. al-Tinbuktī, *Nayl,* #719, 587; *Kifāya,* II, #631, 222–3. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
114. Makhlūf b. ʿAlī b. Ṣāliḥ al-Balbālī (d. 940/1533) was a jurist from Walāta who lived and taught in several places in the Sahel: see al-Tinbuktī, *Nayl,* #747, 608; *Kifāya,* II, #656, 24. Rebstock, *Maurische Literaturgeschichte*, 14, #43 “al-Bilbālī”; “Makhlūf b. ʿAlī b. Ṣāliḥ al-Balbālī”, in *Arabic Literature of Africa Online*, consulted online on 16 June 2019 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2405-4453\_alao\_COM\_ALA\_20001\_1\_4>; Cherbonneau, *Essai*, 7; Bivar and Hiskett, “Arabic Literature of Nigeria”, 110–1. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
115. Ibn Ghāzī, Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-ʿUt̲h̲mānī (d. 919/1513) was a jurist and polymath from Meknès: see John F.P. Hopkins, “Ibn G̲h̲āzī”, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, consulted online on 16 June 2019 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\_islam\_SIM\_3172>. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
116. al-Tinbuktī, *Nayl,* #135, 137–138; *Kifāya,* I, #86, 132–3; Rebstock, *Maurische Literaturgeschichte*, 15, #46. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
117. Rebstock, *Maurische Literaturgeschichte*, 7, #26. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
118. Rebstock, *Maurische Literaturgeschichte*, 12, #35. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
119. Khālid b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Abī Bakr al-Azharī was a famous Egyptian Grammarian and Shāfiʿī jurist: see al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ*, III, 171–2; Gazzī, *Kawākib*, I, 188; Kaḥḥāla, *Muʿjam*, IV, 96; Brockelmann, *GAL* II, 34-35, *GAL* S II, 22-23. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
120. al-Tinbuktī, *Nayl,* #746, 607–08; *Kifāya,* II, #655, 245–6; Rebstock, *Maurische Literaturgeschichte*, 15-16, #48. Also, Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Makhlūf, *Shajarat al-nūr al-zakiyya* *fī ṭabaqāt al-mālikiyya* (Cairo: 1930), 1043; Hunwick, *The Writings of Western Sudanic Africa*, 13–4; Kaḥḥāla, *Muʿjam*, XII, 85; Cherbonneau, *Essai*, 14–6. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
121. Probably the ʿ*Aqīda* of ʿUthmān b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿIsā al-Salālijī (d. 547/1178). See Kaḥḥāla, *Muʿjam,* VI, 259. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
122. al-ʿĀqib b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Anuṣammanī, a jurist from the locality of Anuṣamman, in the vicinity of Takedda, played a key role in the diffusion of Islamic scholarship in the central Sahel. See al-Tinbuktī, *Nayl,* #458, 353; *Kifāya,* I, #392, 377; Rebstock, *Maurische Literaturgeschichte*, 17, #50; Bivar and Hiskett, “The Arabic Literature of Nigeria”, 111; “al-ʿĀqib b. Muḥammad al-Anuṣammanī al-Masūfī”, in *Arabic Literature of Africa Online*, General Editors John O. Hunwick, Rex S. O’Fahey. Consulted online on 16 June 2019 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2405-4453\_alao\_COM\_ALA\_20001\_1\_6>; John O. Hunwick, “al-ʿĀqib al-Anuṣammanī’s Replies to the Questions of Askya al-Ḥājj Muḥammad: The Surviving Fragment”, *Sudanic Africa*, II (1991), 139–63. About al-ʿĀqib al-Anuṣammanī’s relationship with al-Maghīlī, see Rebstock, “Ein magribinischer Gelehrter im Sudan”, 117. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
123. These two works have been preserved, see “al-ʿĀqib b. Muḥammad al-Anuṣammanī al-Masūfī”, in *Arabic Literature of Africa Online*, and Hunwick, “al-ʿĀqib al-Anuṣammanī’s replies”. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
124. al-Tinbuktī, *Nayl,* #730, 597-98; *Kifāya,* II, #641, 234; Cherbonneau, *Essai*, 19–20; “Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Aqīt”, in *Arabic Literature of Africa Online*, consulted online on 16 June 2019 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2405-4453\_alao\_COM\_ALA\_40001\_2\_2>. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
125. This didactic poem bears the title *Mināḥ al-Wahhāb fī radd al-fikr ʿalā l-sawāb* (“The Gifts of the Generous for the Refutation of Thought by Sane Judgment”). Manuscript copies are preserved in Nigerian, Nigerien, and French (BNF) libraries. See “Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Maghīlī al-Tilimsānī”, in *Arabic Literature of Africa Online*, consulted online on 16 June 2019 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2405-4453\_alao\_COM\_ALA\_20001\_1\_3>. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
126. “Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Aqīt”, in *Arabic Literature of Africa Online*. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
127. al-Tinbuktī, *Nayl,* #145, 142–3; *Kifāya,* I, #95, 139; Rebstock, *Maurische Literaturgeschichte*, 19, #61; Cherbonneau, *Essai*, 21; also see “Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Saʿīd”, in *Arabic Literature of Africa Online*, consulted online on 16 June 2019 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2405-4453\_alao\_COM\_ALA\_40001\_2\_3>. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
128. *al-Bayān wa-l-taḥṣīl wa-l-sharḥ wa-l-tawjīh wa-l-taʿlīl fī masāʾil al-mustakhraja*, by Abū-l-Walīd Ibn Rushd, Averroes’ grandfather (m. 520/1126) (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1984); al-Tinbuktī, *Nayl,* #145, 143; *Kifāya,* I, #95, 139. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
129. al-Tinbuktī, *Nayl,* #459, 353–54; *Kifāya,* I, #393, 377–78. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
130. al-Tinbuktī, *Nayl,* #156, 151; *Kifāya,* I, #137, 181; Cherbonneau, *Essai*, 24–5; “Abū Bakr b. al-Ḥājj Aḥmad b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Aqīt”, in *Arabic Literature of Africa Online*, consulted online on 16 June 2019 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2405-4453\_alao\_COM\_AL\_40001\_2\_4>. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
131. A work on Sufism, see “Abū Bakr b. al-Ḥājj Aḥmad b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Aqīt”, in *Arabic Literature of Africa Online*. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
132. al-Tinbuktī, *Nayl,* #144, 141–2; *Kifāya,* I, #94, 137–39; al-Bartaylī, Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr b. Ṣiddīq al-Walātī (d. 1805), *Fatḥ al-shakūr*, ed. M. I. al-Kattānī, M. Ḥajjī, VI, 29–30; Kaḥḥāla, *Muʿjam*, II, 33; Rebstock, *Maurische Literaturgeschichte*, 21, #73; Cherbonneau, *Essai*, 21–4. Also see “Aḥmad b. al-Ḥājj Aḥmad b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Aqīt”, in *Arabic Literature of Africa Online*, consulted online on 16 June 2019 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2405-4453\_alao\_COM\_ALA\_40001\_2\_5>. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
133. *Urjūzat al-wildān*, is a poem on *ʿibādāt* in the Mālikī *madhhab*, also known as *al-Muqaddimat al-qurṭubiyya*, by the jurist Yaḥyā b. ʿUmar al-Qurṭubī al-Azdī (d. 567/1171–2). Kaḥḥāla, *Muʿjam*, XIII, #216; Brockelmann, *GAL* I 551, *GAL* S I 763. About the works of Aḥmad b. Aḥmad b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Aqīt, see “Aḥmad b. al-Ḥājj Aḥmad b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Aqīt”, in *Arabic Literature of Africa Online*. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
134. al-Tinbuktī, *Nayl,* #736, 600–3; *Kifāya,* II, #646, 237–40; al-Qādirī, *Nashr al-mathānī*, ed. M. Ḥajjī and A. Tawfīq (Rabat: al-Jamaʿiyyat al-Maghribiyya li-l-Taʾlīf, 1986), IV, 40; al-Muḥibbī, *Khulāṣat al-athar fī aʿyān al-qarn al-ḥādī ʿashar*, Beirut: Dār Ṣāḍir, 1966, IV, 211–2; al-Baghdādī, *Hādiyat al-ʿārifīn, asmāʾ al-muʾallifīn wa-āthār al-muṣannifīn*, ed. R. Bilge and M. K. Inal (Istanbul: Wikālat al-maʿārif, 1951–1955), II, 260; al-Baghdādī, *Īḍāḥ al-maknūn fī l-dhayl ʿalā kashf al-ẓunūn ʿan asāmī l-kutub wa-l-funūn*, ed. S. Yaltakaya (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 1992), II, 697; Kaḥḥāla, *Muʿjam*, XI, 315. Cherbonneau, *Essai*, 25–31; see also Hunwick, “Further light on Aḥmad Bābā al-Tinbuktī”, 22–25, and idem “A Contribution to the Study of Islamic Teaching Traditions in West Africa: The Career of Muḥammad Baghayogho, 930/1523–4”, *Islam et Sociétés au Sud du Sahara* (1990), 149–62. Also, see “Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd b. Abī Bakr al-Wangarī”, in *Arabic Literature of Africa Online*, consulted online on 16 June 2019 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2405-4453\_alao\_COM\_ALA\_40001\_3\_1>. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
135. I have not been able to locate this author, mentioned in the *Kifāya*: see al-Tinbuktī, *Kifāya,* II, #646, 240. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
136. Didactic versification of ʿ*Ulūm al-ḥadīth* by Ibn Ṣalāḥ (d. 643/1245), written by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. al-Ḥusayn al-ʿIrāqī (d. 806/1404). Brockelmann, *GAL* II 77-78, *GAL* S II 69-70. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
137. al-Tinbuktī, *Nayl,* #757, 616; *Kifāya,* II, #665, 256; al-Muḥibbī, *Khulāṣat al-athar*, IV, 448. See also Bivar and Hiskett, “The Arabic Literature of Nigeria”, 113; Harry T. Norris, *The Tuaregs: Their Islamic Legacy and its Diffusion in the Sahel* (Warminster: Aris and Phillips,1975), 38; Harry T. Norris, *Sufi Mystics of the Niger Desert* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 16–7, 19 (n 15); “al-Najīb b. Muḥammad Shams al-Dīn al-Takiddāwī al-Anuṣammanī”, in *Arabic Literature of Africa Online*, consulted online on 16 June 2019 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2405-4453\_alao\_COM\_ALA\_20001\_1\_8> [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
138. *al-Muʿjizāt wa-l-khaṣāʾiṣ al-nabawiyya* (The Prophet’s Miracles and Particularities), see Brockelmann, *GAL* II 184, *GAL* S II 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)