

The City of Fez: Its Founding and Civilizational Development in the Islamic Era

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Abstract

The history of the city of Fez is among the most prominent topics in the history of the Arab-Islamic cities that acquired great importance during the era of Islamic Maghrib history, given the civilizational and historical status that Fez held in the Islamic Maghrib. Fez also contributed to the development of the civilizational and urban framework of the Islamic Maghrib, and this Moroccan city acquired great importance from the time of its founding under the Idrisid state, which began to emerge in the land of the Far Maghrib (al-Maghrib al-Aqsa). Historical sources have addressed its origins, development, and role in consolidating the foundations of the state. Fez became the capital of the Far Maghrib and a civilizational and Islamic center whose influence extended to the rest of the Arab cities and, subsequently, to various parts of the Islamic world, owing to its Islamic and religious status.

Keywords: *City of Fez, Location, Planning, Naming, Founder*

Introduction

The Arab-Islamic cities attained important historical and civilizational status, coming to constitute the essential infrastructure for establishing centers of civilizational expansion and the growth of Arab cities. The city of Fez is among the most important Moroccan cities in the history of the Idrisid state, which emerged in the land of the Far Maghrib and succeeded in establishing a center of Islamic rule. Fez was able to expand the horizons of its boundaries through the processes of its founding and planning, and it was thus considered one of the most prominent Arab-Islamic cities and capitals in the lands of the Islamic Maghrib. This research comprises several points: first, the origin and civilizational development of the city of Fez; second, the location of the city; third, the process of planning and building the city; fourth, its naming; and fifth, the founder of the city and the various accounts (riwayat) concerning its founding.

I. The City of Fez

After the death of Idris ibn Abdallah,¹ he left behind a concubine (jariya) known as Kanza,² who was pregnant by him. When Rashid, the mawla (client) of Idris ibn Abdallah, and a number of tribes learned of this matter, she subsequently gave birth to a boy who resembled his father in character, beauty, and qualities, so much so that Rashid took charge of his affairs and named him Idris ibn Idris.³ He was born in the year 175 AH, in the month of Rabi' al-Thani, and was raised under the care of Rashid, who attended to

¹Idris ibn 'Abdallah ibn al-Hasan, who entered the Maghrib after fleeing the incident of the Battle of Fakhkh, which occurred during the caliphate of al-Hadi, after which he entered the Maghrib in the region of Tangier. See: al-Baladhuri, Ahmad ibn Yahya ibn Jabir ibn Dawud (d. 279 AH), *Ansab al-Ashraf*, ed. Suhayl Zakkar, Dar al-Fikr, 1st ed. (Beirut: 1964), vol. 3, p. 35; al-Tabari, Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir (d. 310 AH), *Tarikh al-Rusul wa-l-Muluk*, ed. Muhammad Abu al-Fadl, Dar al-Ma'arif, 2nd ed. (Beirut: 1967), vol. 8, p. 198.

²Kanza: a Berber concubine (jariya) whom Idris ibn 'Abdallah married; she belonged to the Awriba tribes of the Maghrib and bore him a son named Idris. See: Sa'dun 'Abbas Nasrallah, *Dawlat al-Adarisa fi al-Maghrib al-'Asr al-Dhahabi*, Dar al-Nahda al-'Arabiyya, 1st ed. (Beirut: 1987), p. 89.

³Ibn al-Abbar, Muhammad ibn 'Abdallah ibn Abi Bakr (d. 658 AH), *al-Hulla al-Siyara*, ed. Husayn Mu'nis, Dar al-Ma'arif, 2nd ed. (Beirut: 1985), vol. 1, p. 53; Ibn 'Idhari, Abu 'Abdallah Muhammad ibn Muhammad (d. 695 AH), *al-Bayan al-Mughrib fi Akhbar al-Andalus wa-l-Maghrib*, ed. G. S. Colin and É. Lévi-Provençal, Dar al-Thaqafa, 3rd ed. (Beirut: 1983), vol. 1, p. 210.

him and provided for his education and upbringing — the naming being intended to perpetuate the memory of his father and to establish his independent authority in the land of the Maghrib.⁴ Idris ibn Idris⁵ learned the Qur'an and Hadith and memorized the Prophetic biography (sira); by the age of eight he had already been introduced to the biographies of kings and the affairs of the people, and was trained in horsemanship, animal husbandry, and archery. When Idris ibn Idris grew older and reached the age of eleven, the signs of allegiance (bay'a) and devotion to him began to appear, in preparation for him to assume the governance of the country in the Maghrib.⁶ His mawla Rashid intensified his efforts to secure the oath of allegiance to Idris ibn Idris and to draw the Moroccan tribes, particularly the Berbers, closer to him. When news of this reached Ibrahim ibn al-Aghlab,⁷ the governor of Ifriqiya, the latter attempted to have Rashid killed by distributing money among those close to him, until he succeeded in reaching him and eliminating him.⁸

Al-Maknasi, in his work, recorded the account of the murder of Idris's mawla Rashid, after whom came Abu Khalid Yazid ibn al-Yas al-'Abdi,⁹ who worked to complete the process of securing allegiance to Idris ibn Idris from those tribes, until he succeeded in obtaining this allegiance and declaring obedience and governance to Idris in the year 188 AH.¹⁰ Although al-Nasiri stated that Rashid did not die until he had succeeded in securing the allegiance for Idris,¹¹ it is nonetheless clear from what the sources report that Idris did in fact receive the oath of allegiance, particularly from the Berber and Arab tribes in the Maghrib — which was precisely what he sought.

After these Moroccan tribes had gathered near Idris, he ascended the pulpit to deliver a sermon to the people, beginning with the words: "Praise be to God; I praise Him, seek His forgiveness, seek His aid, and place my trust in Him, and I take refuge in Him from the evil of my soul and the evil of every evildoer. I bear witness that there is no god but God, and that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger, whom He sent to mankind and jinn as a caller unto God by His leave, a lamp giving light, [to those] from whom He removed impurity and purified them completely. O people, I have been entrusted with this authority, in which good deeds bring reward and wrongdoing brings sin. We are, praise be to God, following a straight path, so do not turn your aspirations to anyone but us, for what you seek in the establishment of justice you will find only with us."¹²

On reflection, it is evident from this blessed sermon that Idris demonstrated eloquence, rhetorical skill, and knowledge; his intent was to set a course for the community, to enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong — all this eloquence coming from one who was but eleven years of age.¹³

⁴Abu al-Fida', *Imad al-Din Isma'il ibn 'Ali ibn Mahmud* (d. 732 AH), *al-Mukhtasar fi Akhbar al-Bashar*, ed. Muhammad Zaynahun, Dar al-Ma'arif, 1st ed. (Beirut: 1997), vol. 2, p. 13.

⁵Idris ibn Idris, son of Idris I; his mother was a Berber, and he was born in the Maghrib. He was the builder and founder of the city of Fez. See: al-Zubayri, Abu 'Abdallah al-Mus'ab ibn 'Abdallah (d. 236 AH), *Nasab Quraysh*, ed. É. Lévi-Provençal, Dar al-Ma'arif, 3rd ed. (Beirut: 1998), p. 56; al-Andalusi, Abu Muhammad 'Ali ibn Ahmad ibn Sa'id (d. 456 AH), *Jamharat al-Ansab al-'Arab*, ed. 'Abd al-Salam Muhammad Harun, Dar al-Ma'arif, n.d. (Beirut: 1962), p. 49.

⁶Al-Nasiri, Shihab al-Din Abu al-'Abbas Ahmad ibn Khalid (d. 1315 AH), *al-Istiqsa li-Akhbar Duwal al-Maghrib al-Aqsa*, ed. Ja'far al-Nasiri, Dar al-Kutub, 1st ed. (Beirut: 1991), vol. 1, p. 217.

⁷Ibrahim ibn al-Aghlab, governor of Ifriqiya, appointed over the Maghrib during the caliphate of Harun al-Rashid. See: Ibn al-Athir, Abu al-Hasan 'Ali ibn Abi Mukarram (d. 630 AH), *al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh*, ed. 'Umar 'Abd al-Salam, Dar al-Kitab, 1st ed. (Beirut: 1997), vol. 5, p. 318.

⁸Ibn Abi Zar', 'Ali ibn al-Hasan ibn 'Abdallah (d. 626 AH), *al-Anis al-Mutrib bi-Rawd al-Qirtas fi Akhbar Muluk al-Maghrib wa-Tarikh Madinat Fas*, ed. Kamal Yuhanna Nurnberg, Dar al-Tiba'a al-Madrasiyya, 1st ed. (Beirut: 1983), p. 27.

⁹Yazid ibn al-Yas, mawla of Idris ibn Idris, who came after the murder of Rashid and took an active interest in securing allegiance to Idris; Abu Khalid belonged to the Persian tribes in the Maghrib. See: al-Bakri, Abu 'Abdallah ibn 'Abdallah ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Muhammad (d. 487 AH), *al-Masalik wa-l-Mamalik*, ed. Dar al-Gharb, n.d. (Beirut: 1992), vol. 2, p. 805.

¹⁰Al-Maknasi, Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Abi al-'Afiya (d. 1025 AH), *Jadhwat al-Iqtibas fi Dhikr man Halla min al-A'lam Madinat Fas*, ed. 'Abd al-Wahhab ibn Mansur, Dar al-Mansur, 2nd ed. (Beirut: 1974), p. 25.

¹¹Al-Nasiri, *al-Istiqsa li-Akhbar Duwal al-Maghrib al-Aqsa*, 1st ed., vol. 1, p. 218.

¹²Ibn Abi Zar', *al-Anis al-Mutrib bi-Rawd al-Qirtas*, 1st ed., p. 28.

¹³Al-Idrisi, Muhammad ibn 'Ali al-Khattabi (d. 1276 AH), *al-Durar al-Saniyya fi Akhbar al-Salala al-Idrisiyya*, Matba'at al-Shabab, 1st ed. (Beirut: 1991), p. 84.

Despite the great importance that attended the life of Idris ibn Idris from the time of his being given the oath of allegiance, al-Wazzan (Leo Africanus) provides nothing that sheds light on the personality of Idris. After that sermon, which the people took upon themselves to hasten to fulfill by giving him their allegiance, the tribes crowded around him, kissing his hand, until the oath of allegiance was completed by those tribes, particularly the Banu Zanata,¹⁴ Sanhaja,¹⁵ and Ghumara,¹⁶ at which point the process of Idris's receiving allegiance was concluded.¹⁷

Ibn Abi Zar', in his work, recorded that this act of allegiance settled the matter in his favor in the city then known as Walili (Volubilis),¹⁸ until his standing grew, his rule became firmly established, and his status rose in the land of the Maghrib. His followers around him multiplied; he settled there in the year 188 AH, during which he distributed wealth and won over the tribes that came to him from various cities. In the year 189, a number of tribes arrived from cities in Ifriqiya and al-Andalus, among them the Qaysi tribes,¹⁹ estimated at about five hundred horsemen, along with a number of delegations from the tribe of al-Azd²⁰ who came to him; Idris received them and drew them close to him.²¹ Undoubtedly, as the tribes flocking to him from the Berbers and al-Andalus multiplied within the city of Walili, he achieved what he had aspired to. During this period, the sources confirm that he began organizing his own internal administration: he appointed 'Umayr ibn Mus'ab al-Azdi as his vizier, 'Amir ibn Humayd al-Qaysi as judge, and Abu al-Hasan 'Abdallah al-Khazraji as his scribe. As his retinue and followers who gathered around him increased, the city of Walili grew too cramped to accommodate the numbers arriving, and he decided to move from it to another location that could accommodate and hold those tribes — this being when he chose the city of Fez, which will be discussed below.²²

As Taha notes in his analysis of this transformation under Idris II, the political and civilizational considerations that led Idris II to leave the confined city of Walili — which could not accommodate the incoming Arab tribes — reflect, on one hand, the tradition of princes and sultans building cities and

¹⁴Zanata: one of the tribes that settled in the land of Ifriqiya, said to be named after their ancestor Zanata, whose lineage is traced back to Noah (peace be upon him). See: al-Qalqashandi, Abu al-'Abbas Ahmad ibn 'Ali ibn Ahmad (d. 821 AH), *Nihayat al-Arab fi Ma'rifat Ansab al-'Arab*, ed. Ibrahim al-Abyari, Dar al-Kathir, 2nd ed. (Beirut: 1980), p. 273; Ahmad Sulayman al-Tayyib, *Mawsu'at al-Qaba'il al-'Arabiyya*, Dar al-Fikr al-'Arabi, 3rd ed. (Beirut: 1997), vol. 2, p. 449.

¹⁵Sanhaja: a group of tribes that settled in the Maghrib, whose lineage is traced to ancient peoples of Yemen, the Hijaz, and the Maghrib. See: Ibn Khaldun, 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Hadrami (d. 808 AH), *Diwan al-Mu'tada' wa-l-Khabar fi Tarikh al-'Arab wa-l-Barbar wa-man 'Asarahum min Dhawi al-Sha'n al-Akbar*, ed. Khalil Shahada, Dar al-Fikr al-Islami, 1st ed. (Beirut: 1981), vol. 6, p. 275.

¹⁶Ghumara: a large and well-known Berber tribe that settled in the land of Ifriqiya, comprising a number of Berber clans, whose lineage traces back to Banu Ghumara ibn Mistah. See: al-Qalqashandi, *Nihayat al-Arab fi Ma'rifat Ansab al-'Arab*, 2nd ed., p. 839; al-Dimashqi, Muhammad ibn 'Abdallah ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad (d. 842 AH), *Tawdih al-Mashiyya fi Dabt Asma' al-Ruwat*, ed. Muhammad Na'im, Mu'assasat al-Risala, 1st ed. (Beirut: 1993), vol. 6, p. 348.

¹⁷Al-Nasiri, al-Istiqsa li-Akhbar Duwal al-Maghrib al-Aqsa, 1st ed., vol. 1, p. 218; 'Abdallah Kanun, al-Imam Idris Musis al-Dawla al-Maghribiyya, al-Jam'iyya al-Maghribiyya li-l-Tiba'a, n.d. (Beirut: 1988), p. 91.

¹⁸Walili (Volubilis): an ancient, venerated city located in the land of the Far Maghrib, near Tangier; it was the first city in which Idris ibn 'Abdallah took refuge after fleeing the Battle of Fakhkh, and where he settled; it comprised a number of tribes, the most prominent being Awriba. See: al-Hamawi, Shihab al-Din Abu 'Abdallah ibn 'Abdallah (d. 626 AH), *Mu'jam al-Buldan*, Dar Sadir (Beirut: 1995), p. 382; Anonymous author (6th c. AH), *al-Istibsar fi 'Aja'ib al-Amsar*, ed. Sa'd Zaghlul 'Abd al-Hamid, 1st ed. (Beirut: 1985), vol. 1, p. 194.

¹⁹Qaysiyya: one of the ancient Arab tribes originating in the land of Yemen, whose lineage traces to Qays ibn 'Aylan ibn Ma'add — a large and numerous tribe and people. See: Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, Abu 'Umar Yusuf ibn 'Abdallah ibn Muhammad ibn 'Asim (d. 463 AH), *al-Inba' ala Qaba'il al-Ruwat*, ed. Ibrahim al-Abyari, Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi, 1st ed. (Beirut: 1997), p. 65; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Usul fi Ahadith al-Rasul*, ed. 'Abd al-Qadir al-Arna'ut, Maktabat al-Halwani, 1st ed. (Beirut: 1973), vol. 12, p. 807.

²⁰Al-Azd: one of the ancient tribes rooted in parts of Yemen and the Hijaz, among the greatest and most famous of the Arab tribes. See: Ibn al-Kalbi, Hisham ibn Muhammad ibn al-Sa'ib, *Nasab Ma'add wa-l-Yaman al-Kabir*, ed. Naji Hasan, Dar 'Alam al-Kutub, 1st ed. (Beirut: 1988), vol. 2, p. 479; al-Salmasi, Abu Zakariyya Yahya ibn Ibrahim ibn Ahmad (d. 551 AH), *Manazil al-A'imma al-Arba'a*, ed. Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Rahman Qaddah, Maktabat al-Malik Fahd, 1st ed. (Beirut: 2002), p. 13.

²¹Ibn Abi Zar', *al-Anis al-Mutrib*, 1st ed., p. 29; al-Jazna'i, *Jana Zahrat al-As fi Bina' Madinat Fas*, 2nd ed., p. 17.

²²Al-Nasiri, *al-Istiqsa*, 1st ed., vol. 1, p. 219; Ibn Abi Dinar, Abu 'Abdallah Muhammad ibn Abi al-Qasim al-Ru'ayni (d. 1111 AH), *al-Mu'nis fi Akhbar Ifriqiya wa-Madinat Tunis*, ed. Muhammad Hammam, al-Matba'a al-Dawliyya al-Tunisiyya, 1st ed. (Beirut: 1967), p. 99.

capitals,²³ and, on the other, his departure in search of a new location befitting the city he sought to establish. Fez thus became one of the great Islamic capitals founded by Idris II and became his seat of government.²⁴

II. The Selection of the Site of the City of Fez

Despite the descriptive value contained in Leo Africanus's *Description of Africa*, he did not provide any direct information on the city of Fez regarding the selection of its site or its planning, confining himself instead to a geographical description alongside other aspects. In any case, Idris ibn Idris resolved to move and build a new city; his decision was clearly aimed at finding a location on which to erect the city of Fez, and those tribes assisted him in personally searching for a site of geographical importance.²⁵

The historian Ibn Abi Zar' relates in his work that Idris ibn Idris resolved to leave the city of Walili in the year 190 AH, together with his people, in the process of finding a site for what he sought to build. The account states that when Idris saw that his affairs had stabilized, his rule had grown great, and his followers in the land of the Maghrib had multiplied, and that the city of Walili had become too confined for him, he thought of building a city in which he and his people could settle. He set out on the process of selecting sites until he reached Mount Zalagh,²⁶ which impressed him greatly; he resolved to build the city of Fez near it, having found there the general geographical qualities of pure air and fertile soil. He began constructing part of the city's walls, but a flood of water descended from the top of the mountain and destroyed everything he had built of walls and tents, whereupon Idris II decided to abandon the work site and move to another location.²⁷

Despite this first attempt by Idris ibn Idris to select the site of Fez near this mountain, which was fraught with dangers and flash floods, and although this was among the reasons for abandoning the work site despite the availability of natural materials there, he was mindful of the danger to which the tribes above would be exposed at Mount Zalagh — an indication of the soundness of his judgment and his handling of the matter.²⁸

It appears that al-Wazzan overlooked the matter of the selection of the site of Fez, whereas other sources addressed this aspect, particularly regarding the year 191 AH, in the second attempt undertaken by Idris ibn Idris, in which he set out toward a site better than the previous one, until he reached a location near the Sebou River,²⁹ close to the hot springs (hamma) of Khawlan,³⁰ and he was pleased with the site owing to its proximity to water; consequently, Idris ibn Idris resolved to build the city of Fez nearby.³¹

²³Jamal Ahmad Taha, *Madinat Fas fi 'Asr al-Murabitin wa-l-Muwahhidin: Dirasa Siyasiyya wa-Hadariyya*, Dar al-Wafa', 1st ed. (Beirut: 2001), p. 45.

²⁴Al-Jaza'iri, Mubarak ibn Muhammad al-Hilali (d. 1364 AH), intro. Muhammad al-Hilali, *Mu'assasat al-Wataniyya*, n.d. (Beirut: 1986), vol. 2, p. 98.

²⁵Isma'il al-'Arabi, *Dawlat al-Adarisa wa-Muluk Tilimsan wa-Fas wa-Qurtuba*, Diwan al-Matbu'at, 1st ed. (Beirut: 1983), p. 78.

²⁶Mount Zalagh: located in the Arab Maghrib near the site of the city of Fez, overlooking it from the north, distinguished by an abundance of natural resources and inhabited by a number of Moroccan tribes. See: al-Maknasi, *Jadhwat al-Iqtibas fi Dhikr man Halla min al-A'lam Madinat Fas*, p. 288; al-Nasiri, *al-Istiqsa*, vol. 1, p. 220.

²⁷Al-Jazna'i, *Jana Zahrat al-As fi Bina' Madinat Fas*, 2nd ed., p. 18; al-Idrisi, *al-Durar al-Saniyya fi Akhbar al-Salala al-Idrisiyya*, 1st ed., p. 69.

²⁸Al-Bilawi, Hasan ibn Husayn ibn Ma'tuq (d. 1301 AH), *al-Durr al-Nafis fi Nasab Ahl Balad wa-Turuq min Akhbar Al Idris*, ed. Sabir al-Sharnubi, *Markaz al-Tarikh al-'Arabi*, 1st ed. (Beirut: 2023), p. 72; Taha, 'Abd al-Wahid Dhannun et al., *Tarikh al-Maghrib al-'Arabi*, al-Mawarid al-Islami, 1st ed. (Beirut: 2004), p. 207.

²⁹The Sebou River, which flows past Fez from the east and west, considered one of the greatest rivers of the Maghrib, with numerous tributaries. See: al-Marrakushi, 'Abd al-Wahid ibn 'Ali al-Tamimi (d. 647 AH), *al-Mu'jib fi Talkhis Akhbar al-Maghrib*, ed. Salah al-Din al-Hawwari, *al-Maktaba al-'Asriyya*, 1st ed. (Beirut: 2006), p. 262; Abu al-Thana', Mahmud Muqaddish ibn Sa'id (d. 1228 AH), *Nuzhat al-Anzar fi 'Aja'ib al-Tawarikh wa-l-Akhbar*, ed. 'Ali al-Zawari, *Dar al-Gharb al-Islami*, 1st ed. (Beirut: 1988), vol. 1, p. 74.

³⁰Hammat Khawlan: hot springs located a short distance from the site of Fez, whose waters were said to be used for medicinal treatment. See: al-Maknasi, *Jadhwat al-Iqtibas*, 1st ed., p. 28.

³¹Al-Nasiri, *al-Istiqsa*, 1st ed., vol. 1, p. 221; Sa'd Zaghlul 'Abd al-Hamid, *Tarikh al-Maghrib al-'Arabi: Tarikh Duwal al-Aghaliba wa-l-Rustamiyyin wa-Bani Midrar wa-l-Adarisa hatta Qiyam al-Fatimiyyin*, Dar al-Ma'arif, 1st ed. (Beirut: 1979), vol. 2, p. 445.

The historian Ibn Abi Zar' mentions that Idris ibn Idris was pleased with this site because of the flowing water it contained, and he resolved to build the city of Fez there. He began cutting trees and timber and commenced construction, until he observed certain dangers in the Sebou River caused by the flow of the water, which could lead to destruction and danger. For this reason, he withdrew from the construction and abandoned the site, returning to the city of Walili.³²

In analyzing this attempt at the Sebou River — a site different from Mount Zalagh in that it was more significant for its abundance of flowing water and the natural resources, trees, and timber it contained — it too was fraught with dangers that Idris ibn Idris perceived, chief among them flooding caused by rising water levels and the slope of the land. It may therefore be said that these attempts failed, and he went on to select a suitable site for building the city of Fez.

Here Leo Africanus's role comes into play, as he records that Idris ibn Idris, in building the city of Fez, began by gathering a number of specialists and architect-engineers to examine the sites bordering the plains or slopes — al-Wazzan confining himself to this account alone.³³

Ibn Abi Zar' relates that when Idris ibn Idris returned to the city [Walili], he sent his vizier 'Umayr ibn Mus'ab al-Azdi, who diligently searched for other locations. 'Umayr set out with a number of tribesmen to seek what had been requested of him, stopping in a number of districts to select sites, until he came to examine the plain of Sais,³⁴ where he found an open expanse of land of temperate character and abundant water. He was so struck by what he saw that he descended to it, to a copious spring, performed his ablutions there and prayed, asking his Lord to help him find a place fit for His worship. This spring was subsequently named after him, 'Ayn 'Umayr (the Spring of 'Umayr).³⁵ 'Umayr ibn Mus'ab proceeded onto the plain and came upon springs of water flowing abundantly across the whole expanse of land; around these springs grew tamarisk, oleander, and juniper trees. Tasting the water, he found it sweet and the air temperate, and he arrived at this site, situated between two mountains, inhabited by tribes of Zanata³⁶ and Banu Yadghash³⁷ — this being the land of the city of Fez.³⁸

According to the historical sources, 'Umayr ibn Mus'ab returned to Idris ibn Idris and informed him of the site he had found for building the city; Idris was delighted with what he heard and asked about the ownership of this land. It was said that it belonged to a number of tribes of Zawagha, known as Banu al-Khayr, and Idris asked to purchase this land from them.³⁹ It is evident that Idris ibn Idris undertook to purchase this land from its inhabitants, offering them payment; the price of the land is estimated to have been about six thousand dinars.⁴⁰

Ibn Abi Zar' provides us with the complete picture of the purchase of this land from both tribes, particularly Banu Barghash, to whom he paid two thousand five hundred dirhams for the land. His vizier then drew

³²Ibn Abi Zar', al-Anis al-Mutrib, 1st ed., p. 30.

³³Al-Wazzan, al-Hasan ibn Muhammad Abu 'Ali (10th c. AH), Wasf Ifriqiya (Description of Africa), trans. Muhammad Hajji, Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 2nd ed. (Beirut: 1983), vol. 1, p. 220.

³⁴Fahs Sais: the plain, or level tract, extending between the cities of Fez and Meknes, forming a boundary between the Middle Atlas mountain range and the coastal Atlas, located roughly eighteen miles west of Fez. See: al-Jazna'i, Jana Zahrat al-As, 2nd ed., p. 18; al-Wazzan, Wasf Ifriqiya, 2nd ed., vol. 1, p. 299.

³⁵Ibn Abi Zar', al-Anis al-Mutrib, 1st ed., p. 30; al-Nasiri, al-Istiqsa, 1st ed., p. 221; al-Jazna'i, Jana Zahrat al-As, 1st ed., p. 18.

³⁶Zanata: one of the most prominent Moroccan tribes settled in Fez, descended from various branch clans. See: Ibn Khaldun, Diwan al-Mubtada' wa-l-Khabar, 1st ed., vol. 6, p. 170.

³⁷Banu Yadghash (Yarghash): one of the branches of the Zanata tribes in the Far Maghrib, likewise settled near Fez. See: al-Jazna'i, Jana Zahrat al-As, 2nd ed., p. 19.

³⁸Ibn Abi Zar', al-Anis al-Mutrib, 1st ed., p. 31; Muhammad Kamal Shabana, al-Duwaylat al-Islamiyya fi al-Maghrib: Dirasa Tarikhiyya Hadariyya, Dar al-Qalam, 1st ed. (Beirut: 2007), p. 31.

³⁹Al-Idrisi, Muhammad ibn 'Ali al-Sanusi al-Khattabi (d. 1272 AH), al-Durar al-Saniyya fi Akhbar al-Salala al-Saniyya, p. 70; Sa'dun 'Abbas Nasrallah, Dawlat al-Adarisa fi al-Maghrib al-'Asr al-Dhahabi, Dar al-Nahda al-'Arabiyya, 1st ed. (Beirut: 1987), p. 152.

⁴⁰Al-Mashriqi, Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Mustafa (d. 1334 AH), al-Hilal al-Bahiyya fi Muluk al-Dawla al-'Alawiyya, ed. Idris Buhaila, Manshurat Wizarat al-Awqaf, 1st ed. (Beirut: 2005), vol. 1, p. 222; al-Faqi, 'Isam al-Din 'Abd al-Ra'uf, Tarikh al-Maghrib wa-l-Andalus, Maktabat al-Nahda al-Sharq, 1st ed. (Beirut: 1984), p. 138.

up the deed of sale for this land, with Abu al-Hasan ibn 'Abdallah serving as scribe and witness; this took place in the year 191 AH, after which he settled on this land. Al-Wazzan, however, fails to mention these details.⁴¹

III. The Planning and Construction of the City of Fez

Despite the historical stature that al-Wazzan occupies, he provides us with no historical account of the planning and construction of the city of Fez in his work sufficient to serve the purpose. Other historical sources, however, address this matter, which marked the beginning of the plotting and founding of the city of Fez — a city that had been a seat of religious learning (fiqh) and knowledge from the time of its founding, and the seat of his administrative kingdom. Its founder combined in its layout the sweetness of its water with the nature of its climate and the excellence of its trees, and situated the residential quarters, orchards, and markets nearby.⁴²

Al-Kinani reports that the planning of the city of Fez took place near a valley abundant in trees, plants, and natural resources, situated between two small mountains — a choice made by Idris ibn Idris to meet the needs of the tribes, with the houses connected to the city of Fez.⁴³ The site chosen for planning Fez left a marked imprint on the identity of its construction, shaped by the presence of river waters flowing through its land.⁴⁴

Idris ibn Idris intended, in both construction and planning, for Fez to be an Islamic city and the capital seat of the Idrisid emirate in the country.⁴⁵ He sought to situate its founding centrally among the cities of the Maghrib, surpassing all other cities in every direction, so that it would occupy a central position and serve as the country's base, close to its various regions — particularly ensuring proximity to the resources needed for agriculture, rivers, and produce, so as to meet the needs of the tribes.⁴⁶ The planning of Fez encompassed various aspects, including its alleys, streets, and houses, along with everything necessary for the city, and factors central to the expansion of its service districts and public facilities.⁴⁷ It is noted that Leo Africanus confined his account to offering a general description without addressing the planning process in its early stages, whereas Ibn Abi Zar' provided complete details of the city's planning, holding that the most important characteristics for its construction were that the city should combine several civilizational qualities: rivers and flowing water, fertile soil, protective factors such as walls, and the sound judgment of the ruler in ordering its affairs.⁴⁸ This was particularly so once Idris ibn Idris undertook to plan the city of Fez in order to consolidate the pillars of his state, regulate governance, secure the foundations of his authority, impose his administration over the tribes, and continue the process of urban development through the building of the city of Fez.⁴⁹ Other sources report that when Imam Idris ibn Idris began planning and building the city of Fez, he stood, raised his hands, and prayed to his Lord, saying: "O God, make it a home of knowledge and jurisprudence in which Your Book is recited and Your ordinances upheld, and make its people steadfast upholders of the Sunna and the [Muslim] community."⁵⁰

⁴¹ Al-Anis al-Mutrib bi-Rawd al-Qirtas, 1st ed., p. 31; al-Jazna'i, Jana Zahrat al-As, 2nd ed., p. 19.

⁴² Ibn Abi Zar', al-Anis al-Mutrib, 1st ed., p. 33; al-Jazna'i, Jana Zahrat al-As, 2nd ed., p. 22.

⁴³ Al-Kinani, Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Karim ibn Qasim, Zahrat al-As fi Buyutat Ahl Fas, ed. 'Ali al-Muntasir, Dar Qurtuba al-Najah, 1st ed. (Beirut: 2002), vol. 8, Introduction, p. 8.

⁴⁴ Al-Bakri, Abu 'Abdallah ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Muhammad (d. 487 AH), al-Masalik wa-l-Mamalik, ed. Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 1st ed. (Beirut: 1332 AH), vol. 2, p. 795.

⁴⁵ Shawqi Abu Khalil, al-Hadara al-'Arabiyya al-Islamiyya, Dar al-Fikr al-Mu'asir, 1st ed. (Beirut: 1994), p. 552.

⁴⁶ Al-'Umari, Shihab al-Din ibn Ahmad (d. 749 AH), Masalik al-Absar fi Mamalik al-Amsar, ed. Kamil Salman al-Jaburi, Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1st ed. (Beirut: 2001), vol. 4, p. 92.

⁴⁷ Ibn al-Wardi, Siraj al-Din ibn 'Umar ibn al-Muzaffar, Kharidat al-'Aja'ib wa-Faridat al-Ghara'ib, ed. Anwar Mahmud Zanati, Maktabat al-Thaqafa al-Diniyya, 1st ed. (Beirut: 2008), p. 55; Muhammad 'Abd al-Sattar, al-Madina al-Islamiyya, Dar 'Alam al-Ma'rifa, 1st ed. (Beirut: 1999), pp. 84–86.

⁴⁸ Ibn Abi Zar', al-Anis al-Mutrib, 1st ed., p. 33.

⁴⁹ Mahmud Isma'il, al-Adarisa (172–375 AH), Maktabat Madbuli, 1st ed. (Beirut: 1981), p. 95.

⁵⁰ Ibn Abi Zar', al-Anis al-Mutrib, 1st ed., p. 37; al-Jazna'i, Jana Zahrat al-As, 1st ed., p. 23; al-Maknasi, Jadhwa al-Iqtibas, 2nd ed., p. 31.

Al-Maknasi relates in his work that when Idris ibn Idris intended to plan the city of Fez, an elderly monk from the region's monks passed by him and asked what he intended to do between the two mountains. Idris answered that he wished to lay out a city there as a dwelling for himself and his descendants and those who would come after him. The monk told him that this land would become a city named Fez, founded by one of the House of Prophethood; Idris then realized that it was he whom the monk meant. Al-Wazzan ignores and does not mention this account in his work.⁵¹

It is recorded that the decision to build the city of Fez was taken in the year 192 AH, in which Idris ibn Idris began building his residence known as Dar al-Qayrawan (the House of Qayrawan), next to which he built a mosque; thereafter the founding of the city of Fez began to grow in significance, its features becoming apparent through these clear beginnings.⁵² He developed its infrastructure and enhanced its architecture, intending it as a residence for kings, nobles, his soldiers, and his people.⁵³ The construction of the city of Fez began on a Thursday in the month of Rabi' al-Awwal in the year 192 AH; he situated his buildings at Jarrawa,⁵⁴ began construction, and founded the 'Adwat al-Andalus (the Andalusian Quarter), raising the walls around it. A year later, in 193 AH, he laid out the 'Adwat al-Qarawiyyin (the Qarawiyyin Quarter), around which he built dwellings and connected structures.⁵⁵

The construction of the city of Fez proceeded on the side of 'Adwat al-Andalus, where he built the wall around all its sides and constructed the great mosque, known also as the Mosque of the Elders (Jami' al-Ashyakh),⁵⁶ which he made a religious monument for the performance of worship.⁵⁷

In the year 193 AH, he began building the 'Adwat al-Qarawiyyin, situated on the left bank of Fez, where the city wall was erected, and he built the Mosque of the Sharifs (Jami' al-Shurafa') along with a number of houses and a qaysariyya (covered market). Other urban features were also established, feeding the growth of Fez, including some inns (funduqs) and bathhouses, during the course of the city's construction.⁵⁸

Other sources devoted attention to the building of Fez, particularly al-Bakri, who states that the founding of 'Adwat al-Andalus took place in the year 192 AH, and that 'Adwat al-Qarawiyyin followed a year later, in 193 AH; Fez thus became a city he had founded, situated near mosques and religious centers.⁵⁹ Al-Wazzan, however, does not discuss this matter, but others report that Idris ibn Idris, having founded the city of Qarawiyyin in the year one hundred and ninety-three [AH], subsequently went out to the neighboring cities.⁶⁰ Some historians state that Idris ibn Idris began building the city of Fez by laying out the 'Adwat al-Andalus quarter in the year 192 AH, then moved to 'Adwat al-Qarawiyyin in 193 AH, until this city became an architectural and reformist landmark in the Islamic Maghrib.⁶¹

⁵¹ Al-Maknasi, *Jadhwat al-Iqtibas*, 2nd ed., p. 31.

⁵² Ibn al-Khatib, Abu 'Abdallah Muhammad ibn 'Abdallah ibn Sa'd (d. 776 AH), *A'mal al-A'lam fi man Buyi'a qabla al-Ihtilam min Muluk al-Islam*, ed. Kasrawi Hasan, Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 1st ed. (Beirut: 2003), vol. 2, p. 375.

⁵³ Ibn al-Khatib, *Tarikh al-Maghrib al-'Arabi fi al-'Asr al-Wasit*, ed. Ahmad Mukhtar al-'Abbadi, Dar al-Kutub, n.d. (Beirut: 1964), p. 201.

⁵⁴ Jarrawa: a site in the land of Ifriqiya where mudbrick structures were built at the time 'Isa ibn Idris (Abu al-'Aysh) entered, on which the city walls stood. See: Ibn 'Idhari, *al-Bayan al-Mughrib*, 3rd ed., vol. 1, p. 65; al-Baghdadi, 'Abd al-Mu'min ibn 'Abd al-Haqq (d. 739 AH), *Marasid al-Ittila' ala Asma' al-Amkina wa-l-Biqa'*, ed. 'Ali Muhammad, Dar al-Jil, 1st ed. (Beirut: 1997), vol. 1, p. 321; al-Suyuti, 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi Bakr (d. 911 AH), *Lubb al-Lubab fi Tahrir al-Ansab*, ed. Muhammad Ahmad 'Abd, Dar Sadir, n.d. (Beirut: 1978), p. 62.

⁵⁵ Ibn Abi Zar', *al-Anis al-Mutrib*, 1st ed., p. 38; al-Nasiri, *al-Istiqsa*, 1st ed., p. 222.

⁵⁶ Jami' al-Ashyakh (Mosque of the Elders): built by Idris ibn Idris in 'Adwat al-Andalus, also known as the Mosque of Lights (Jami' al-Anwar), designated for prayer and worship. See: al-Maliki, Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Mubarak (d. 1072 AH), *al-Durar al-Thamin wa-l-Mawrid al-Mu'in*, ed. 'Abdallah al-Munshawi, Dar al-Hadith, n.d. (Beirut: 2008), p. 363.

⁵⁷ Al-Nasiri, *al-Istiqsa*, 1st ed., vol. 1, p. 222.

⁵⁸ Roger Le Tournau, *Fès avant le protectorat (Fez before the Protectorate)* [Arabic trans.], Dar al-Gharb al-Islamiyya, 1st ed. (Beirut: 1992), vol. 1, p. 56; Ibrahim Harakat, *al-Maghrib 'abra al-Tarikh*, Dar al-Rashad, 1st ed. (Beirut: 2000), vol. 1, p. 124.

⁵⁹ Al-Bakri, *al-Masalik wa-l-Mamalik*, 1st ed., vol. 2, p. 299; al-Himyari, *al-Rawd al-Mi'tar fi Akhbar al-Aqtar*, 1st ed., p. 434.

⁶⁰ Ibn al-Abbar, *al-Hulla al-Siyara*, 1st ed., vol. 1, p. 53.

⁶¹ Anonymous author, *al-Istibsar fi 'Aja'ib al-Amsar*, 1st ed., p. 180.

Thereafter Idris ibn Idris turned to his people and tribes, asking and assisting them in building dwellings near the city of Fez, along with planting trees at every site where the walls were to be constructed, assuring them that all this was an offering to God Almighty. In response to this call, the people hastened to plant trees and build their city, and they even competed with one another in building their new capital or city.⁶² Building activity in Fez increased; Idris ibn Idris laid out a residential site and built it near the city of Fez, cutting timber and the necessary materials, and personally laying the foundation stone of the city, which at first resembled a small village between the two mountains.⁶³ Al-Wazzan notes, in his account of the city of Fez, that when Idris ibn Idris completed the construction of Fez, he situated it amid a surrounding landscape of high hills and level ground, so that the city of Fez appeared, at its center, to occupy a level area, and he undoubtedly surrounded it with high, massive walls.⁶⁴

Idris ibn Idris continued the construction of Fez, beginning with the 'Adwat al-Andalus quarter, building the wall and constructing a gate known as Bab al-Zaytun, descending by it to the great valley (wadi), and establishing Bab al-Makhfiyya (the Hidden Gate) opposite the 'Adwat al-Qarawiyyin. He also built another wall for the city of Fez, with a gate called Bab Abi Sufyan, extending to Ra's Hajar al-Faraj, and continued this wall to Jarrawa, where he built the Bab al-Kanisa (Church Gate).⁶⁵

IV. The Naming of the City of Fez

The name of the city of Fez has attracted the attention of numerous scholars and historians, giving rise to differing opinions on which no consensus has been reached, with variance both in the differences themselves and in what they signify regarding the origin of the name. I will present this, following the various accounts (riwayat) that have come down to us.

One of the accounts addressing the naming of the city is that of Leo Africanus (al-Hasan al-Wazzan), who states that the city was named Fez (fa's, "axe"/"pickaxe" in Arabic) after the pickaxe found on the first day that digging into the ground began, together with a quantity of gold, this tool bearing the Arabic name fa's. He also offers another account regarding the naming, stating that the site on which Fez was built was believed to already bear the name Fas, or that it derived from the river running through it, since the river was called Saf in the Berber language — these being the versions of the city's naming that al-Wazzan transmits to us according to what he found.⁶⁶ Al-Jazna'i, meanwhile, relates that when Idris ibn Idris began building his city, he worked personally alongside the craftsmen and laborers; a golden pickaxe (fa's) was placed before him, which he held in his hand as he began digging and building. This word was so often repeated on their tongues throughout the period of construction — the laborers saying "bring the fa's," "take the fa's," "dig with the fa's" — that the city came to be named Fez for this reason.⁶⁷ According to another account, the naming derives from a very large pickaxe found when digging began at the foundation of Fez on the qibla side — a pickaxe four spans in length and weighing sixty ratls — after which the city was named.⁶⁸

Ibn Abi Zar', in another account, similarly attributes the naming to Idris ibn Idris, said to have wished thereby to honor a number of the tribes; it is related that when Idris ibn Idris began building the city of Fez, his followers and people asked him, "O Prince, what shall we name it?" He replied, "Name it after the first man who appears to you." A man then passed by them, and they asked him his name; he had a speech

⁶²Ibn Abi Zar', al-Anis al-Mutrib, 1st ed., p. 39; 'Abd al-Hadi al-Tazi, Jami' al-Qarawiyyin, Dar al-Nashr al-Ma'rifa, 1st ed. (Beirut: 1972), vol. 1, p. 46.

⁶³Sa'd Zaghul 'Abd al-Hamid, Tarikh al-Maghrib: Tarikh al-Duwal al-Aghaliba wa-l-Rustamiyyin wa-Bani Midrar hatta Qiyam al-Fatimiyyin, 1st ed., vol. 2, p. 447.

⁶⁴Wasf Ifriqiya (Description of Africa), 2nd ed., vol. 1, p. 221.

⁶⁵Ibn Abi Zar', al-Anis al-Mutrib, 1st ed., p. 40.

⁶⁶Al-Wazzan, Wasf Ifriqiya, 2nd ed., vol. 1, p. 218; the term "Saf" has been glossed as meaning "river" or "destruction."

⁶⁷Al-Jazna'i, Jana Zahrat al-As, 2nd ed., p. 23.

⁶⁸Ibn Abi Zar', al-Anis al-Mutrib, p. 45; al-Idrisi, al-Durr al-Nafis fi Nasab Ahl al-Bilad wa-Tarf min Akhbar Al Idris, 1st ed., p. 77.

impediment (lisp), and said, “My name is Faris,” dropping the letter ra' due to his lisp, [so that it came out as “Fas”].⁶⁹ Idris ibn Idris then said, “Name it as he pronounced it,” and so they called it Fas (Fez).⁷⁰

Ibn al-Abbar, in his book, discusses the name of the city of Fez, stating that when its foundations were dug, a pickaxe (fa's) was found among them, and so it was named the city of Fez, after which the Berbers settled it.⁷¹ Tracing these accounts to this point, it appears that the prevailing view affirms that the name of the city of Fez did not arise from nothing or from a gap [in the record], but was connected to the object that was found — namely, the association of the pickaxe (fa's) with the city's name — this being the most widely transmitted account among historians, despite the other interpretations surrounding it. In the absence of a definitive historical text that settles the origin of the name of Fez once and for all, it nonetheless appears that the pickaxe that was found was the reason for the naming, and nothing else, even though the historian al-Wazzan offers two possibilities regarding this naming: either the discovery of the pickaxe or the name of the Fez river. Ibn al-Qadi records his own account of the naming of Fez, stating that when construction was completed, Idris was asked what he would name it; he replied that he would name it after the city that had previously stood there, which the monk had told him was called Saf, “but I will invert its first name and name it by its reverse” — and it is this reversal of the word Saf that gives rise to the name Fas [Fez].⁷² Isma'il al-'Arabi addresses this account, relating it to the legendary atmosphere surrounding the construction and naming of the city of Fez, drawing a parallel with the case of 'Abdallah al-Mahdi, to whom a monk came in the city of al-Mahdiyya when he was surveying the site of that city; when asked its name, the monk said it was called “Jazirat al-Khulafa” (Island of the Caliphs), before it was later named Tunis, and so on.⁷³

V. The Founder of the City of Fez

Disagreement is not confined to the naming of the city of Fez alone; differing views have also emerged regarding its founder, giving rise to a degree of controversy among historians and a divergence of opinion, some attributing its founding to Idris I and others to Idris II. The various accounts will be set out below.

1. The account of Abu Bakr al-Razi addresses the question of the founding of the city of Fez; importantly, this account is among those transmitted by Ibn al-Abbar in one of his works and has not reached us directly. It states that Idris ibn 'Abdallah entered the Maghrib in the year 172 [AH], fleeing from Abu Ja'far, and settled in the city of Walili, where Berber tribes gathered around him and submitted to him; they then founded the city of Fez, and when its foundations were dug, a pickaxe (fa's) was found among them, and Berbers settled it. He did not live long, dying in the year 174 [AH]; he left behind a pregnant wife, who bore a son after his death named Idris ibn Idris. He ruled the city of Fez after his father for a long period and died in the month of Rabi' al-Awwal in the year 213 [AH], having been born in the month of Rabi' al-Akhir in the year 175 [AH].⁷⁴ I will pause at this transmitted account and analyze and compare it in light of the historical sources dealing with the entry of Idris ibn 'Abdallah into the Maghrib in the year 172 AH. Most of the early, original historical sources confirm that Idris ibn 'Abdallah entered and took charge of the land of the Maghrib in the year 172 AH, fleeing the Abbasids — a point on which there is no disagreement, as attested by numerous historical sources.⁷⁵ In analyzing this transmitted account, and in light of what these

⁶⁹The lisp (al-thagh): a speech impairment in which the letter ra' is pronounced as ghayn or lam, and sin as tha' — a defect that causes certain letters, and the sounds associated with them, to drop from an utterance. See: al-Razi, Zayn al-Din Abu 'Abdallah Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr (d. 666 AH), Mukhtar al-Sihah, ed. Yusuf al-Shaykh Muhammad, al-Maktaba al-'Asriyya, 1st ed. (Beirut: 1999), p. 279; Ibn al-Najjar, Taqi al-Din Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Futuhi, Muntaha al-Iradat, ed. 'Abdallah ibn 'Abd al-Muhsin, Mu'assasat al-Risala, 1st ed. (Beirut: 1999), vol. 5, p. 90.

⁷⁰Ibn Abi Zar', al-Anis al-Mutrib, 1st ed., p. 45.

⁷¹Ibn al-Abbar, al-Hulla al-Siyara', 1st ed., vol. 1, p. 55.

⁷²Al-Maknasi, Jadhwat al-Iqtibas, 1st ed., p. 36; Sa'idouni, Dawlat al-Adarisa fi al-Maghrib fi al-'Asr al-Dhahabi, p. 158.

⁷³Isma'il al-'Arabi, Dawlat al-Adarisa: Muluk Tilimsan wa-Fas wa-Qurtuba, p. 81.

⁷⁴Ibn al-Abbar, al-Hulla al-Siyara', 2nd ed., vol. 1, p. 55.

⁷⁵Al-Maturidi, Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Mahmud (d. 333 AH), Ta'wilat Ahl al-Sunna, ed. Majid Sallum, Dar al-Kutub, 1st ed. (Beirut: 2005), vol. 1, p. 33; al-Hamawi, Mu'jam al-Buldan, 2nd ed., vol. 5, p. 384; al-Saghani, Husayn ibn 'Ali al-Hanafi,

sources state, I discount this account for its lack of precision regarding the founding of Fez definitively under Idris I. It would be illogical for Idris I to have entered the Maghrib in the year 172 AH fleeing Abbasid pursuit and then immediately undertaken the building of a city for himself, lacking sufficient support from allied tribal bases and without having established political influence. This account attributing the founding to Idris I is therefore open to doubt, given its disregard for the time required and the improbable speed of both his arrival and the city's founding.

A further analysis of this same transmitted account shows that al-Bakri does not mention the building of the city of Fez under either Idris ibn 'Abdallah or Idris ibn Idris; the wording of the account, which states "they built the city of Fez," uses the general plural form rather than referring to a specific individual — which, in my view, precludes attributing the act of founding to Idris I, contrary to what others have claimed.

2. In the second account, mentioned by a number of historians, the old city of Fez in fact comprised two cities: one known as the city of the Andalusians (*Madinat al-Andalusiyyin*), built in the time of Idris ibn 'Abdallah, and the other, the city of the Qarawiyyin, built afterward.⁷⁶ In analyzing this account, it appears that al-'Umari was merely transmitting it, and we have not been able to consult it directly since it is lost; he confirms that the Fez of 'Adwat al-Andalus was founded by Idris ibn 'Abdallah, and 'Adwat al-Qarawiyyin by Idris ibn Idris. Al-Qalqashandi follows the same line, transmitting from Ibn Sa'id that the city of Fez was built by Idris ibn 'Abdallah, one of the Idrisid caliphs in the Maghrib, and known as 'Adwat al-Andalus, while the other quarter, built afterward, is known as 'Adwat al-Qarawiyyin. Others likewise state that each quarter was founded in a specific year under Idris ibn Idris.⁷⁷

Isma'il al-'Arabi holds that this account, as transmitted from Ibn Sa'id, is open to objection, since although Ibn Sa'id is a reliable source in the composition of his historical and geographical works, he offers a differing account elsewhere: in his well-known work *al-Badi'*, he states that the construction of the city of Fez began at the start of Rabi' al-Awwal in the year 192 AH and was completed in Rabi' al-Thani of the year 193 AH.⁷⁸

3. In the account provided by Leo Africanus (*al-Hasan al-Wazzan*) (d. 962 AH), who wrote at a much later period in his travel account known as *Description of Africa*, he mentions the founder of the city of Fez as one of a group [of Idrisids] in the time of Caliph Harun al-Rashid, in the year 185 AH. Al-Wazzan continues, stating that Idris was the founder of the city of Fez and a relative of Caliph Harun, since Idris was a descendant of Imam 'Ali; he resolved to go to Mount Zerhoun and found the city, gathering a number of specialists and engineers who examined the site of the city with great precision, until they settled on building the city near those spring waters, where crops and vegetation were cultivated, near the great river, with small hills nearby. When Idris died, one of his sons built another city to the west, less magnificent than the first, likewise situated along the course of the river.⁷⁹

It is evident that Leo Africanus's account is confused with regard to the founder of the city of Fez, and this constitutes a set of errors he made in his book, as noted by the translators of his work, Muhammad Hajji and Majid al-Akhdar.

4. The account of Ibn Abi Zar' (d. 726 AH): the substance of what he relates in his work is that the building of the city of Fez took place under Idris II, proceeding in three stages. In the year 190 AH, Idris set out to search for the site of the city, heading toward Mount Zalagh; it was then established that it was unsuitable for building the city, and he abandoned it. In the year 191 AH, the second stage, he went to a nearby site at

al-Nihaya fi Sharh al-Hidaya, ed. al-Markaz al-Islami, n.d. (Beirut: 1991), Introduction, p. 7; al-Jaza'iri, *Tarikh al-Jaza'ir fi al-Qadim wa-l-Hadith*, vol. 2, p. 48.

⁷⁶Al-'Umari, *Masalik al-Absar fi Mamalik al-Amsar*, 1st ed., p. 181; al-Qalqashandi, *Subh al-A'sha fi Sina'at al-Insha'*, 1st ed., vol. 5, p. 148.

⁷⁷Al-Bakri, *al-Masalik wa-l-Mamalik*, vol. 2, p. 795.

⁷⁸Isma'il al-'Arabi, *Dawlat al-Adarisa: Muluk Tilimsan wa-Fas wa-Qurtuba*, p. 96; Mahmud Isma'il, *al-Adarisa (172–375 AH)*, Maktabat Madbuli, 1st ed. (Beirut: 1991), p. 56.

⁷⁹Wasf Ifriqiya, 2nd ed., vol. 1, pp. 218–220.

the Sebou River, in the area of the hot springs of Khawlan, intending to begin building a city there, but decided to withdraw for fear of flooding. Then, in the year 192 AH, the third stage, he sent his vizier 'Umayr ibn Mus'ab to search for a site for the city; after his search, 'Umayr arrived at a site in the land of Sais, was impressed by what he saw, and returned to Idris. The land was then purchased from the tribes, and construction of the city began.⁸⁰

5. The account of Ibn Hawqal (d. 380 AH) in his book *Surat al-Ard* (The Face of the Earth): he mentions the city of Fez, stating that it is a magnificent city watered by a river, comprising two sides ('idwatan), each governed by a different amir, and that it is a fertile city paved with stone, founded by Idris ibn Idris.⁸¹

Analysis of this account places it among the early and important primary sources, confirming that the city of Fez consisted of two quarters, each facing the other across [the river] — a description that is historical, political, and geographical in nature, resting on the great river that flows through it and its fertile, natural land, as well as the internal conflicts and disputes [between the two quarters]. It confirms, finally, that the construction of the city of Fez was undertaken by Idris ibn Idris.

This account has been given considerable weight by some of its supporters, who adopted it without discussing the accounts that have reached us directly.⁸²

Nor, finally, has the account of the author of *al-Rawd al-Mi'tar*, al-Himyari, been discussed or interpreted; he states that the city of Fez was founded in the 'Adwat al-Andalusiyyin in the year 192 AH, and 'Adwat al-Qarawiyyin in the year 193 AH, under Idris ibn Idris.⁸³

Taken together, these accounts provide clear evidence that the founding of the city of Fez was carried out by the hand of Idris II, beginning with 'Adwat al-Andalus in the year 192 AH, and it is remarkable that these accounts have not been more thoroughly examined by those inclined toward more distant attributions.

6. The account of al-Kattani (d. 1345 AH): in the process of tracing the historical accounts, I turn to the account of al-Kattani,⁸⁴ (d. 1345 AH); although he is a relatively late authority chronologically, his account may nonetheless serve as an outcome drawn from earlier accounts. The substance of his account is that Idris founded the city of Fez, and that its founding took place on the morning of Thursday, the first of Rabi' al-Awwal in the year 192 AH, when he raised his hands in supplication.⁸⁵

7. The account of an anonymous author (d. 615 AH): this account, found in one of his important works dealing with the origin of the city, is considered valuable historically, being an important document close in time to the Idrisid period or to the founding of Fez. It confirms that Fez was founded in 'Adwat al-Andalusiyyin in the year 192 AH/808 CE, while 'Adwat al-Qarawiyyin was founded in 193 AH, and that Fez had already attained a level of architectural development and prosperity.⁸⁶

8. The account of al-Himyari (d. 900 AH): based on what has been said with reference back to the account of the anonymous author, it is clear that the account of al-Himyari, author of *al-Rawd al-Mi'tar*, transmits the same historical accounts verbatim from earlier sources — clear evidence of his reliance on them as a

⁸⁰Ibn Abi Zar', *al-Anis al-Mutrib*, pp. 30–31; al-Nasiri, *al-Istiqsa*, p. 73; Sa'd Zaghlul Salam, *Tarikh al-Maghrib al-'Arabi*, Maktabat al-Ma'arif, n.d. (Beirut: 1979), vol. 2, p. 447.

⁸¹Ibn Hawqal, Muhammad ibn 'Ali Abu al-Qasim (d. 380 AH), *Surat al-Ard*, Dar Sadir, n.d. (Beirut: 1938), vol. 1, p. 90.

⁸²Lévi-Provençal, *al-Islam wa-l-Maghrib fi al-Andalus*, trans. Mahmud 'Abd al-'Aziz Salim, *Majmu'at Shabab al-Jami'a*, n.d. (Beirut: 1990), p. 25.

⁸³Al-Himyari, *al-Rawd al-Mi'tar*, 1st ed., p. 434.

⁸⁴Al-Kattani: the hadith scholar and jurist Abu 'Abdallah Muhammad ibn Ja'far ibn Idris al-Kattani, born in 1274 [AH], author of numerous works, notably on the sciences of the Prophet (peace be upon him), including *al-Nubdha al-Yasira al-Nafi'a* and *al-Azhar al-'Atira al-Anfas bi-Dhikr Qutb al-Maghrib wa-Taj Madinat Fas*, as well as *al-Rihla al-Samiya*; he died around 1345 AH. See: al-Azhari, Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn al-Siddiq (d. 1380 AH), *al-Mudawi li-'Ilal al-Jami' al-Saghir*, Dar al-Kutubi, 1st ed. (Beirut: 1996), Introduction, p. 58; Ibn Suda, 'Abd al-Salam ibn 'Abd al-Qadir (d. 1400 AH), *Ithaf al-Mutali' bi-Wafayat A'lam al-Qarn al-Thalith 'Ashar wa-l-Rabi'*, ed. Muhammad Subhi, Dar al-Gharb, 1st ed. (Beirut: 1997), vol. 2, p. 444.

⁸⁵Al-Kattani, Salwat al-Anfas wa-Muhadathat al-Akyas bi-man Uqbira min al-'Ulama' wa-l-Sulaha' bi-Fas, ed. Muhammad Hamza ibn 'Ali, n.d. (Beirut: 2004), p. 73.

⁸⁶Anonymous author (d. 615 AH), *al-Istibsar fi 'Aja'ib al-Amsar*, vol. 1, p. 180.

trustworthy historical source.⁸⁷ In this context, and through the historical texts presented above concerning the founder of the city of Fez — a question that has been the subject of controversy and disagreement — what emerges, based on and drawing attention to these accounts, is that the overwhelming majority of these texts indicate and confirm that the founding of the city of Fez is attributable to Idris ibn Idris, following the oath of allegiance given to him by the tribes and the arrival of tribal delegations to him in the old city [Walili], which he found in need of a new and more spacious city.

Nevertheless, despite the existence of two accounts — those of al-Bakri and Ibn Sa'id — attributing the founding of Fez to Idris ibn 'Abdallah, comparison of these texts with the two accounts shows no clear corroborating influence; the remainder of the sources favor attributing the founding definitively to Idris ibn Idris, the majority of accounts being considered more precise, focused, and consistent regarding the chronology of the city of Fez's history.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research makes clear that the city of Fez was among the most prominent Arab-Islamic capitals in the land of the Far Maghrib, owing to the historical, geographical, and social standing it enjoyed, and owing to the attention devoted by the Idrisid state to the emergence and development of Islamic cities. Fez was the Moroccan capital that attracted the attention of scholars and leading religious figures in the propagation of Islam; it was not merely a residential city but a civilizational one, demonstrating urban and civilizational development on a par with other states and cities, and it was a civilizational, religious, and scholarly center that contributed to the flourishing of Islamic civilization.

⁸⁷Al-Rawd al-Mi'tar fi Khabar al-Aqtar, 2nd ed., p. 434.