

## **Beyond Flexibility in Fatwas: Maqāṣid, Maṣlaḥa, and Modernity in Northwest African Islamic Law at the Turn of the Twentieth Century**

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My research is focused on Islamic legal thought and texts in their socio-historical context. In particular, I investigate use and understanding of the aims and objectives of Islamic law (maqasid al-shari'a), alongside the notion of general interests/benefit (maslaha) and how these concepts interact in the realm of juristic opinions (fatwas) covering real cases.

I do so by focusing on the conceptualization and use of these concepts by Muslim jurists from Northwest Africa (Mauritania) at the turn of the twentieth century. This is a similar time period to when the revival of this approach to the law was promoted by Muhammad 'Abduh (d. 1905) in Egypt, but my main scholars of focus, Ma' al-'Aynayn al-Qalqami (d. 1910) and Muhammad Yahya al-Walati (d. 1913) were not connected to this reform movement. Instead, they were widely respected traditional scholars within the Maliki school of Islamic law, which remains widely known for developing and using these concepts historically.

My interest is in how these authors remained connected to the Islamic legal corpus and heritage, whilst also dealing with tremendous socio-cultural change taking place in their time due to colonialism. This is contrasted with more modern and contemporary approaches that seek to dismiss the textual corpus.

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