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BETWEEN POWER, KNOWLEDGE, AND SOCIETY: A SOCIO-HISTORICAL REASSESSMENT OF IBN AL-MĀRISTĀNĪYAH (D. 599/1202) AND THE ABBASID INTELLECTUAL FIELD

Mohammad Alqadahat¹ and Abdelrahim Abulbasher¹

¹University of Kalba, UAE, mohammed.alqadahat@ukb.ac.ae (M.A),
<https://orcid.org/0009-0003-0073-7184> (M.A),
abdelrahim.abulbasher@ukb.ac.ae (A.A), <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8621-8833> (A.A)

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Corresponding Author: Mohammad Alqadahat
(mohammed.alqadahat@ukb.ac.ae)

ABSTRACT

This article offers a socio-historical reassessment of the Baghdadi historian and physician Ibn al-Māristānīyah (d. 599/1202) by examining how his intellectual trajectory was shaped by the institutional, political, and social structures of late Abbasid Baghdād. Using the frameworks of Weber, Bourdieu, Foucault, and Skocpol, the study demonstrates that his career reflects the competitive dynamics of an intellectual field in which symbolic capital, patronage, and institutional authority defined scholarly legitimacy. Through analysis of his affiliations, rivalries, and the controversies that led to his marginalization and imprisonment, the paper shows that Abbasid historiography functioned as a social practice embedded in negotiations over orthodoxy, authority, and power. It further argues that the subsequent loss and partial recovery of his legacy illustrate the fragility of knowledge transmission and the sociological processes of memory and forgetting, patterns that continue to resonate in modern Iraqi intellectual life. Overall, the study reveals how Ibn al-Māristānīyah's life serves as a lens for understanding the intertwined production of knowledge, power, and social identity in both medieval and contemporary contexts.

KEYWORDS: Ubayd Allāh Ibn Al-Māristānīyah, Abbasid Baghdād Intellectuals, Power And Legitimacy In Knowledge, Madrasas And Bimāristān, Abbasid Institutions.

1. INTRODUCTION

The intellectual and cultural growth of Abbasid Baghdad is a compelling chapter in world history. Scholars, scientists, and theologians gathered to construct a complex knowledge system that serves truth and power (Leicht, 2022; Wange, 2024). Yet, sharp hierarchies, rivalries, and exclusion shaped who spoke, what was said, and how knowledge was shared. Ibn al-Māristānīyah, a trained physician, also ventured into historical and literary scholarship (Al-Şafadī, 2000). Despite his knowledge, his career was marked by tension—between ambition and orthodoxy, patronage and independence, and innovation and risk. His imprisonment and marginalization (Al-Şafadī, 2000) show the fragility of scholarly independence and reveal the ties between power and knowledge in his era.

To understand Ibn al-Māristānīyah's historical role, this study employs an interdisciplinary approach that draws on both history and sociology. Historically, it draws on primary sources to reconstruct his life and context, and explores how his experiences reflect changes in Baghdad's politics and institutions in the twelfth century. Sociologically, it places these changes within theories of social hierarchy, cultural capital, and institutional continuity. This analysis relies on three main theories. First, following Weber (1949), knowledge is tied to its social context. Ideas come from, and serve, groups with specific status and power. Second, Bourdieu (1990) views intellectual life as a field of competition, where individuals seek recognition and authority by accumulating symbolic capital. Third, Foucault (1977) argues that knowledge not only reflects power but helps create and define it.

By applying these frameworks to the Abbasid case, this study addresses three key research questions:

- 1) How did the social, institutional, and political structures of twelfth-century Abbasid Baghdad shape Ibn al-Māristānīyah's social mobility, intellectual trajectory, and strategies for securing scholarly legitimacy?
- 2) In what ways did Ibn al-Māristānīyah's historiographical practices—his methods, narratives, and intellectual positioning—reflect and negotiate the broader struggles over authority, orthodoxy, and symbolic capital within the Abbasid intellectual field?
- 3) How does the marginalization, partial erasure, and later recovery of Ibn al-Māristānīyah's legacy illuminate the sociological processes of knowledge production, conflict, cultural memory, and reconstruction in both medieval Baghdad and modern Iraq?

To analyze these research questions, the study interprets Ibn al-Māristānīyah not only as a chronicler of events but also as an active participant in constructing social reality. It highlights how Ibn al-Māristānīyah's writings, public disputes, and institutional affiliations reveal the intellectual conditions in a society structured by both rational-bureaucratic governance and religious moral authority. Building on this, the paper challenges the view that Islamic historiography is merely descriptive or theological, arguing instead that it is a dynamic social practice shaped by power and ideology. By integrating historical reconstruction with sociological theory, this interdisciplinary approach makes a methodological contribution by revealing how multidisciplinary research illuminates the human side of intellectual life—how scholars like Ibn al-Māristānīyah navigated patronage, competition, and moral expectations (Al-Şafadī, 2000; Laird, 2025). Furthermore, this method highlights the contemporary relevance of these dynamics: the same debates about intellectual freedom, legitimacy, and state control that shaped Abbasid Baghdad remain central to academic and cultural life in modern Iraq.

In the following sections, the study offers a socio-historical account of Ibn al-Māristānīyah's life and context. Section II covers his social background and intellectual journey. Section III situates him within the broader context of Abbasid thought. Sections IV and V analyze his historiographical work, social conflicts, and political struggles. Section VI discusses the loss and rebuilding of knowledge after the Mongol sack of Baghdad. Section VII links these history lessons to modern Iraqi society. The conclusion synthesizes these insights and considers their implications for the sociology of knowledge.

2. SOCIAL ORIGINS AND INTELLECTUAL MOBILITY

To understand 'Ubayd Allāh ibn al-Māristānīyah's career, it is essential to know his social background and mobility in twelfth-century Baghdad. This city was not only the political capital of the Abbasid Caliphate but also its primary center for education, commerce, and intellectual life (Qian, 2012; Leicht, 2022). The name al-Māristānīyah comes from his family's connection to the 'Aḍudī Bimāristān ('Aḍud Hospital), a famous center of medical learning in medieval Islam. The Bimāristān was more than a hospital. It was a place for medical education, management, and public welfare, supported by religious endowments (waqf) and part of a larger urban patronage network (Alkadhat,

2019).

Growing up in this environment gave Ibn al-Māristānīyah early exposure to rationalist and empirical thinking. This approach was typical of the professional elites of late Abbasid times (Leicht, 2022). These elites, unlike the ‘ulamā’ (religious scholars), emphasized hands-on training, government service, and technical expertise. As Weber (1949) noted, their identity was shaped by a “rationalization of knowledge.” Specialized skills became a source of social authority. The rise of these professionals within the Abbasid bureaucracy shows how rational management sometimes challenged the influence of traditional religious scholars.

In this sense, Ibn al-Māristānīyah’s social position reflects Bourdieu’s (1990) “conversion of capital.” Born into a family whose status derived from technical and institutional roles, he transformed this technical capital into symbolic capital through his scholarly achievements. Mastery of medicine, history, and adab (literature) enabled him to cross professional boundaries and claim authority in both practical and intellectual fields. Abbasid society valued such versatility, expecting the ideal scholar to unite ‘ilm (knowledge) and adab (refinement), embodying both moral and intellectual virtues. Yet this interdisciplinarity brought tension. Bimāristān-trained classes were respected for technical skill but often lacked the religious prestige of traditional scholars in *madrasas* and *mosques*. This tension led to what Weber might call status dissonance—a mismatch between economic or educational capital and symbolic societal recognition (Oxoby, 2004; Waters, 2016). Ibn al-Māristānīyah’s shift from medicine to historical scholarship was thus an effort to bridge this gap and seek legitimacy in Baghdād’s intellectual hierarchy (Ibn al-Najjār, 1997; Al-Şafadī, 2000).

The mechanisms of such mobility were complex. The Abbasid world operated through dense patronage networks, where advancement often depended on the favor of bureaucratic or religious elites (Shuriye, 2016). Scholars like Ibn al-Māristānīyah navigated these systems by cultivating relationships with patrons, frequently exchanging knowledge for protection or sponsorship. In Granovetter’s (1973) terms, these “weak ties” — informal, cross-class connections — were crucial in linking distinct social circles and creating opportunities for advancement. The interplay of patronage, reputation, and institutional affiliation allowed talented individuals to ascend the ranks of Baghdād’s cultural elite, even without aristocratic lineage (David, 2004). However, this system also

reinforced dependency. The same networks that facilitated social mobility also constrained intellectual autonomy. Patronage required loyalty; deviation from accepted norms risked exclusion or punishment. This tension between autonomy and dependence is central to Bourdieu’s (1990) conception of the intellectual field, where actors must continuously negotiate their position between the pursuit of truth and the demands of power. For Ibn al-Māristānīyah, this negotiation was particularly delicate, as his writings occasionally challenged the historical narratives sanctioned by both court historians and religious authorities.

The Abbasid Caliphate’s late period — characterized by internal fragmentation, foreign incursions, and the increasing influence of military and clerical elites — intensified these pressures. Knowledge production became both more institutionalized and more politicized. The establishment of Nizāmiyya madrasas earlier in the century had formalized education within a Sunni orthodoxy (Ibrahim, 2019), privileging certain fields (jurisprudence, theology) over others (philosophy, medicine, historiography). Within this ideological landscape, figures like Ibn al-Māristānīyah — trained in secular and scientific traditions — had to work harder to justify their intellectual pursuits (Al-Şafadī, 2000). His decision to engage in historical writing can therefore be seen as an attempt to translate his technical expertise into moral and cultural capital, aligning himself with disciplines that carried greater symbolic legitimacy in Abbasid society.

From a broader sociological perspective, Ibn al-Māristānīyah’s trajectory sheds light on the social mechanisms of professionalization in the medieval Islamic world. The Abbasid bureaucracy valued literate and educated officials who could perform both administrative and intellectual tasks (Galnoor & Oser, 2015). As such, the boundary between scholars and bureaucrats is often blurred. This process parallels what Skocpol (1984) describes as the interdependence of state structures and intellectual formations — a dynamic in which the expansion of bureaucratic governance generates new social roles and forms of expertise. In Baghdād, scholars like Ibn al-Māristānīyah occupied these liminal spaces, serving both as intellectuals and as participants in the state’s administrative machinery.

In summary, Ibn al-Māristānīyah’s social ascent exemplifies how knowledge served as a mechanism of social mobility in Abbasid Baghdād. His career was shaped by the conversion of technical skill into symbolic authority, mediated through institutional affiliation and patronage. Through this lens, his life

reveals the intricate relationship between education, class, and power in one of the world's most intellectually vibrant societies. This analysis highlights that, even in the twelfth century, the pursuit of knowledge was not a purely intellectual endeavor, but a deeply social process structured by hierarchies of access, recognition, and legitimacy.

3. THE ABBASID INTELLECTUAL FIELD: INSTITUTIONS, POWER, AND KNOWLEDGE

The intellectual and cultural life of Abbasid Baghdad reached its peak during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, forming one of the most complex systems of knowledge production in pre-modern history. The city's numerous madrasas (colleges), Bīmāristānāt (hospitals), libraries, and mosques created a dense network of learning institutions, collectively referred to by modern historians as the Abbasid intellectual field. These institutions were not merely educational centers; they were arenas of social and symbolic competition, where scholars sought prestige, patronage, and legitimacy (Wange, 2024).

From a Bourdieusian perspective, this field functioned as a structured space of positions and position-takings—what Bourdieu (1990) terms a *champ intellectuel*—in which agents competed for both symbolic capital (recognition, prestige, orthodoxy) and material capital (patronage, appointments, stipends). Within the Abbasid context, symbolic capital often derived from mastery of sacred knowledge and moral virtue. In contrast, material capital depended on affiliation with the state or private *waqf* (religious endowments) that funded educational institutions. The equilibrium between these forms of capital was fragile, as scholars were constantly negotiating their autonomy in relation to the political and religious authorities that sustained them.

1. *The Institutional Ecology of Learning*

The Abbasid educational system evolved from the earlier traditions of mosque-based study circles (*ḥalaqāt*) to the more formalized madrasas that emerged in the eleventh century under the Seljuk vizier Nizām al-Mulk, who established the famed Nizāmiyya College. These madrasas, supported by *waqf*, institutionalized the teaching of Sunni jurisprudence and theology, effectively turning education into a state-regulated mechanism for religious orthodoxy (Makdisi, 1981; Garden, 2013). While this system provided financial stability and academic structure, it also narrowed the boundaries

of legitimate inquiry, marginalizing disciplines such as philosophy, the natural sciences, and critical historiography.

Ibn al-Māristāniyah, whose early career was rooted in the 'Aḍudī Bīmāristān ('Aḍud Hospital), operated at the periphery of this madrasa-based orthodoxy (Alkadhat, 2020). The Bīmāristān was a unique institution where medical instruction intersected with public welfare and scientific experimentation. It symbolized what Weber (1949) might describe as the rationalization of knowledge—the organization of intellectual activity around bureaucratic routines and empirical observation. Within this setting, learning was not merely religious or textual, but also practical and technical, producing a professional class of physicians, administrators, and educators who contributed to Baghdad's reputation as a cosmopolitan center of knowledge (Wange, 2024).

However, as Foucault (1977) would suggest, such institutions also operated as technologies of power, organizing the production and circulation of knowledge in ways that reinforced social hierarchies. The state's involvement in regulating education ensured that intellectual labor remained aligned with political and religious objectives. The appointment of teachers, the content of curricula, and the administration of endowments were all instruments of governance. The historian's pen, much like the jurist's sermon or the physician's prescription, became an extension of state authority.

2. *Patronage, Bureaucracy, And the Scholar's Dependence*

In this intricate web of institutional power, patronage played a decisive role. The survival of scholarly life in Baghdad depended on elite sponsorship, including caliphs, viziers (ministers), and wealthy families, who endowed colleges, funded libraries, and sponsored authors (Neggaz & Renterghem, 2025). For scholars like Ibn al-Māristāniyah, securing such patronage was crucial to maintaining financial stability and gaining access to intellectual networks. The patron-client relationship, while enabling knowledge production, also imposed ideological constraints. Patrons often expected loyalty, doctrinal conformity, or works that glorified their political agendas. This relationship reflects Weber's (1949) typology of domination. While the Abbasid caliphs exercised legal-rational authority through their administrative institutions, they also wielded traditional authority through the cultural prestige of their lineage and religious legitimacy. The scholars who operated under their patronage

internalized these dual pressures (Wange, 2024). As a result, the boundaries between autonomy and dependence were constantly negotiated within the intellectual field.

For Ibn al-Māristāniyah, navigating these dynamics was both an opportunity and a peril. His medical and historical expertise made him attractive to patrons seeking educated bureaucrats, but his intellectual independence often put him at odds with the expectations of those patrons. His career demonstrates what Bourdieu (1990) calls the “double bind” of intellectuals—where success in acquiring symbolic capital often requires compromises that threaten the very autonomy on which scholarly credibility depends.

3. *Knowledge, Orthodoxy, And the Politics of Legitimacy*

The Abbasid intellectual field was also characterized by an ongoing struggle over orthodoxy, a contest to define the legitimate forms of knowledge and authority. Theologians, jurists, and historians competed not only for audiences but also for the right to interpret truth (Hazari & Laskar, 2020). In Foucault’s terms, this competition can be understood as a “regime of truth”, where power determines which statements count as knowledge and which are dismissed as heresy or falsehood. The intellectual identity of Ibn al-Māristāniyah was situated within this contested terrain. His engagement with historical writing allowed him to navigate the boundaries between religious history and empirical historiography. By emphasizing accuracy, chronology, and critical analysis, he implicitly challenged the purely theological interpretations of the past that had dominated madrasa discourse (Neggaz & Renterghem, 2025; Wange, 2024). In doing so, he contributed to what Weber described as the disenchantment of the world, a gradual process of rationalization through which intellectual inquiry becomes separated from purely religious purposes.

However, this shift toward empirical historiography also made him vulnerable. The guardians of orthodoxy often perceived such approaches as threats to established authority (Strauss, 2022). Accusations against Ibn al-Māristāniyah by rival scholars—such as Ibn al-Dubaythī (Ibn al-Dubaythī, 1974) and Ibn al-Najjār (Ibn al-Najjār, 1997)—can thus be read as part of the symbolic struggles that Bourdieu associates with fields of cultural production. These conflicts were not merely personal but structural, reflecting deep divisions between competing forms of authority: the

traditionalist and the rationalist, the juristic and the scientific, the sanctioned and the subversive.

4. *Institutions As Sites of Social Reproduction*

Despite these tensions, the Abbasid intellectual institutions served as powerful mechanisms of social reproduction. They transmitted not only knowledge but also social hierarchies, perpetuating what Bourdieu (1990) terms the *habitus*—the internalized dispositions that shape individuals’ attitudes toward specific social behaviors and beliefs. Through rituals of teaching, citation, and patronage, the intellectual elite reproduced their own values and worldview. The authority of scholars was legitimized by their participation in these institutional traditions, creating a self-reinforcing cycle of prestige and power.

Ibn al-Māristāniyah’s case exemplifies this dynamic. His education and professional life within these institutions instilled in him a *habitus* that valued both intellectual achievement and moral conformity. Yet, his intellectual curiosity and critical tendencies placed him on the margins of the established orthodoxy. His marginal position, while precarious, also allowed him a unique perspective from which to critique the mechanisms of power that shaped the very institutions he inhabited (Al-Şafadī, 2000).

5. *The Scholar and The State*

At its core, the relationship between scholars and the Abbasid state was dialectical: scholars lent legitimacy to the state through their moral authority, while the state provided the institutional means for their intellectual production (Wange, 2024; Neggaz & Renterghem, 2025). This symbiosis, however, was always unstable. When scholars challenged the political order, they risked persecution; when they conformed too closely, they risked losing credibility among their peers. Ibn al-Māristāniyah’s trajectory—culminating in both recognition and imprisonment—illustrates this precarious balance.

In sum, the Abbasid intellectual field was a microcosm of the broader social order—a structured yet dynamic system in which knowledge served as both an instrument of domination and a potential tool of resistance. By situating Ibn al-Māristāniyah within this framework, we gain a clearer understanding of how intellectuals navigated the interlocking pressures of authority, patronage, and orthodoxy in one of the most vibrant periods of Islamic civilization.

4. HISTORIOGRAPHY AS A SOCIAL

PRACTICE

Historiography in the Abbasid world was not merely a descriptive enterprise; it was a social act through which scholars, such as Ibn al-Māristānīyah, engaged in the construction, negotiation, and legitimation of collective memory. His historical writings—though now largely lost—are preserved through citations, biographical notices, and the accounts of contemporaries such as Ibn al-Dubaythī and Ibn al-Najjār, who referenced his work within their chronicles. Even these indirect traces reveal the intentionality and sociological function of his scholarship: to assert intellectual authority, to shape historical consciousness, and to situate himself within the hierarchies of Baghdad's scholarly field (Ibn al-Najjār, 1997).

1. *The Social Function of Historiography*

From a sociological standpoint, historical writing in the Abbasid era operated as a mechanism of social integration and legitimation. Historians were not passive recorders of events but producers of social knowledge—their narratives defined moral norms, political legitimacy, and cultural identity. In this sense, historiography performed a function akin to what Alexander (2003) calls the *cultural performance of meaning*: through the act of narrating, the historian organized experience into a coherent moral framework that guided collective understanding. For Ibn al-Māristānīyah, this role was particularly complex. His position at the intersection of the scientific and literary traditions meant that he could not rely on the authority of purely religious discourse. Instead, he crafted his legitimacy through the discipline of historical rationality—the organization of events, causes, and outcomes in a manner that reflected order and moral causation (Neggaz & Renterghem, 2025; Wange, 2024). His writings, as inferred from later sources, combined chronological precision with ethical commentary, suggesting that he viewed history as both an empirical record and a medium for moral reflection.

In this regard, Ibn al-Māristānīyah's work can be read through Weber's (1949) notion of the rationalization of knowledge—the transformation of cultural meaning into structured, methodical systems of understanding. By applying chronological ordering, critical evaluation of sources, and attention to causality, Ibn al-Māristānīyah contributed to a gradual process of intellectual differentiation, in which history emerged as a discipline distinct from theology.

2. *Historiography As Self-Positioning*

Within the Abbasid intellectual sphere, the production of historical knowledge also served as a means of social positioning. As Bourdieu (1990) argues, every act of the cultural output is simultaneously a claim to authority within a competitive field of producers. By engaging in historiography, Ibn al-Māristānīyah sought not merely to document events but to define the terms of intellectual legitimacy (Richter-Bernburg, 1982). His choice of topics, narrative style, and sources reflected a deliberate effort to align himself with the rationalist and empirical traditions that characterized Baghdad's scientific institutions, while distinguishing himself from traditional chroniclers who focused on religious piety or political panegyrics.

In this way, his historiographical method represented a strategy of distinction—an attempt to claim symbolic capital by redefining what counted as “serious” knowledge. This move was risky. By privileging rational inquiry over devotional narrative, Ibn al-Māristānīyah challenged the interpretive monopoly of the religious establishment (Richter-Bernburg, 1982). The criticisms leveled against him by contemporaries reveal the underlying symbolic violence of the intellectual field, where deviations from accepted norms were sanctioned through moral or reputational discrediting (Richter-Bernburg, 1982; Al-Şafadī, 2000). Such processes mirror what Foucault (1977) describes as the disciplinary mechanisms of power: institutions that appear to foster knowledge also delimit it by establishing the boundaries of what is sayable and thinkable. Historiography, under these conditions, became a regulated discourse—a space in which the historian's freedom was constrained by the epistemic and political rules of the time.

3. *Knowledge, Authority, And Truth*

Ibn al-Māristānīyah's engagement with history also raises questions about truth and authority. In the medieval Islamic intellectual tradition, truth was not purely empirical; it was linked to ethical and theological frameworks that defined the purpose of knowledge as moral edification (Richter-Bernburg, 1982; Wange, 2024). Yet, by emphasizing observation, causality, and documentation, Ibn al-Māristānīyah participated in a subtle epistemic shift—one that Foucault might interpret as the early stages of a transition from a “regime of revelation” to a “regime of verification.”

This transformation was not a rejection of faith but an expansion of epistemic pluralism, reflecting Baghdad's cosmopolitan environment. Scholars

debated the proper balance between revelation and reason, text and observation, faith and experience (Richter-Bernburg, 1982; Alexander, 2003). In navigating these debates, Ibn al-Māristāniyah embodied the sociological figure of what Mannheim (1936) termed the *intellectual in marginality*: an actor situated between social worlds, capable of reflexive critique precisely because of his ambiguous position. His historical work thus served not only to record the past but to interrogate the moral and institutional conditions of his present. By writing history, he implicitly commented on the structure of society, the role of scholars, the fragility of truth under political authority, and the enduring tension between knowledge and power.

4. *The Cultural Dimensions of Historical Writing*

Beyond its epistemic function, Ibn al-Māristāniyah's historiography participated in the broader cultural economy of *adab* (literary refinement). Historical writing was both a scholarly pursuit and a form of cultural performance, demonstrating mastery of eloquence, erudition, and rhetorical artistry (Richter-Bernburg, 1982; Al-Şafadī, 2000). The historian's prose, citations, and moral judgments were all instruments of social display, signaling participation in Baghdad's literary elite. This dimension highlights Bourdieu's (1990) insight that intellectual production is inextricably linked to aesthetic and social distinction. To write history elegantly was to embody the virtues of the cultivated class, to demonstrate that one's intellect was both refined and morally grounded. Ibn al-Māristāniyah's integration of stylistic sophistication with empirical rigor thus represented an ideal of cultural capital, bridging scientific and literary domains.

At the same time, his emphasis on factual accuracy and documentary evidence suggests a commitment to what Alexander (2003) calls the autonomy of cultural production—a belief in the intrinsic value of intellectual work beyond its immediate political utility. This pursuit of intellectual integrity, even amid constraints, is what ultimately rendered his scholarship both innovative and precarious.

5. *Historiography As Social Memory*

Finally, Ibn al-Māristāniyah's historiographical practice can be viewed as an early expression of what Halbwachs (1992) later theorized as collective memory—the social construction of the past through shared narratives. In compiling biographies, documenting institutions, and recounting public

events, historians contributed to the collective self-understanding of Baghdad's citizens. Their works preserved not just information but identity, providing continuity amid the political turbulence of the late Abbasid period.

By participating in this process, Ibn al-Māristāniyah positioned himself as a custodian of cultural memory, even as his rivals contested his own account of it (Neggaz & Renterghem, 2025; Wange, 2024). His legacy, reconstructed from fragments, testifies to the fragility and resilience of intellectual history, demonstrating that knowledge, once produced, continues to live on through reinterpretation and remembrance. In this sense, his work exemplifies the sociological proposition that knowledge is never static; it is a living social practice, constantly redefined through interaction, conflict, and transmission. Ibn al-Māristāniyah's historiography thus stands not only as a testament to his intellect but also as an enduring mirror of the social dynamics that produced it.

5. CONFLICT, LEGITIMACY, AND THE POLITICS OF KNOWLEDGE

Conflict has always been an inherent part of intellectual life. Within the vibrant yet hierarchical milieu of Abbasid Baghdad, scholarly rivalry was not an anomaly but a constitutive feature of the philosophical field itself (Muhammad & Al-Ayyubi, 2023). The career of Ibn al-Māristāniyah vividly demonstrates this dynamic: his disputes with contemporaries such as Ibn al-Dubaythī and Ibn al-Najjār, his eventual imprisonment, and his marginalization within Baghdad's scholarly community reveal the sociological logic of competition and exclusion that governed the production of knowledge in his time.

1. *The Sociology of Scholarly Conflict*

In Bourdieu's (1990) analysis of intellectual fields, conflict is not merely personal antagonism, it is a structured struggle over the monopoly of symbolic capital. Within any field of cultural production, actors vie for recognition, legitimacy, and authority. The stakes of these struggles are not material, but symbolic: prestige, credibility, and the right to define what constitutes valid knowledge. In this sense, the hostility Ibn al-Māristāniyah faced from his peers (Al-Şafadī, 2000) was a predictable outcome of his attempt to redefine historiography in a manner that diverged from traditional expectations. His contemporaries, particularly Ibn al-Dubaythī, were deeply embedded in the orthodox religious establishment that dominated Baghdad's scholarly

life. Their authority rested on moral credibility, conformity to established interpretive norms, and alignment with powerful patrons. Ibn al-Māristānīyah, by contrast, represented a hybrid intellectual type—part scientist, part historian, and part moral commentator—whose rationalist tendencies and critical historiographical methods threatened the symbolic order of the orthodox field. His approach challenged not only epistemic norms but also social hierarchies, as it undermined the monopoly of jurists and theologians over legitimate knowledge (Richter-Bernburg, 1982; Al-Şafadī, 2000).

These tensions illustrate what Coser (1956) termed the *functional role of conflict* in maintaining social order. By policing boundaries and reaffirming norms, intellectual rivalries in Baghdād helped sustain the overall structure of the field. Even as figures like Ibn al-Māristānīyah were marginalized, their exclusion served to reinforce the dominant definition of orthodoxy and to legitimize those who remained within its confines (Al-Şafadī, 2000). Thus, conflict functioned both as a mechanism of innovation—introducing new perspectives—and as an instrument of social control.

2. *Imprisonment And the Disciplining of Knowledge*

The imprisonment of Ibn al-Māristānīyah marked the climax of his confrontation with institutional authority. While specific details of his incarceration remain obscure, historical references suggest that it was connected to his outspoken views and possible criticisms of established scholars or officials. From a sociological perspective, his imprisonment can be understood through Foucault's (1977) concept of *disciplinary power, which involves* the transformation of punishment from a physical spectacle into a method of social regulation designed to normalize behavior.

In Abbasid Baghdād, as in other medieval societies, intellectual dissent was often managed through symbolic punishment rather than outright execution. The goal was not to silence the scholar permanently but to reinscribe him within the moral boundaries of acceptable conduct. Imprisonment thus functioned as a pedagogical act—both a personal correction and a public warning. The incarceration of a respected historian like Ibn al-Māristānīyah signaled to others the dangers of excessive autonomy in the pursuit of knowledge (Al-Şafadī, 2000). This episode highlights the paradox of intellectual freedom in the Abbasid context. On one hand, Baghdād prided itself on being a city of learning and debate; on the other, its institutions were tightly intertwined with political authority and

religious orthodoxy. The scholar's dependence on patronage meant that autonomy was always conditional, and the limits of acceptable discourse were carefully policed. Ibn al-Māristānīyah's fate reveals how the production of knowledge was constrained by power even as it appeared to thrive under its protection.

3. *Symbolic Violence and The Politics of Reputation*

Beyond formal punishment, Ibn al-Māristānīyah suffered from symbolic violence—the subtle, non-physical coercion that operates through discourse, reputation, and social exclusion (Bourdieu, 1990). Rivals accused him of arrogance, exaggeration, and intellectual deviation. Such accusations, common in medieval biographical literature, served to delegitimize intellectual opponents and reinforce the moral authority of the accuser. In this regard, Ibn al-Māristānīyah's conflict with Ibn al-Dubaythī was more than a personal feud—it was a struggle over narrative control (Al-Şafadī, 2000). The biographical dictionary (*tabaqāt*) was a powerful medium through which scholars shaped the memory of their peers. To exclude or demean a scholar in such a work was to erase him from the symbolic order of legitimate knowledge. The fact that later historians recorded Ibn al-Māristānīyah's disputes primarily from the perspective of his detractors reflects how symbolic capital can be redistributed posthumously, reshaping a scholar's legacy to conform to institutional norms.

This process aligns with Mannheim's (1936) theory of the sociology of intellectuals, which posits that every system of ideas is tied to a particular social position. Those who occupy marginal or heterodox positions often produce more critical or innovative thought, yet they are also more likely to be silenced or forgotten once power reasserts itself. The erasure of Ibn al-Māristānīyah's reputation after his death thus illustrates how the politics of knowledge extend beyond the production of ideas into their circulation and preservation.

4. *Intellectual Conflict as A Structural Phenomenon*

At a structural level, the tensions surrounding Ibn al-Māristānīyah reveal the dual nature of the Abbasid intellectual field: it was simultaneously a space of innovation and regulation. Scholars operated within a field that rewarded intellectual creativity but punished deviation from orthodoxy. This contradiction reflects the broader dynamics of the Abbasid state, which celebrated learning as a sign of divine favor while also utilizing it as a tool of

ideological control. In Weberian terms, this reflects the tension between charismatic and bureaucratic authority. The charisma of intellectual innovation, the ability to inspire and enlighten, was constantly subordinated to the bureaucratic rationality of the state and the institutionalized authority of the religious establishment. Scholars like Ibn al-Māristāniyah, whose authority derived from personal erudition rather than institutional position, were particularly vulnerable when their charisma was perceived as a threat to the established order (Al-Şafadī, 2000).

At the same time, these conflicts also contributed to the evolution of intellectual culture. As Coser (1956) observed, dissent and controversy can strengthen a community by forcing it to articulate and defend its core principles. Ibn al-Māristāniyah's marginalization, paradoxically, may have contributed to the institutional stabilization of historiography in Baghdād by clarifying its acceptable boundaries and reinforcing the distinction between historical writing and political commentary.

5. *The Personal and The Structural*

Ibn al-Māristāniyah's conflict with his contemporaries must therefore be interpreted at two levels. Personally, it reflects his struggle for recognition in a field dominated by powerful rivals. Structurally, it represents the systemic reproduction of authority within the Abbasid intellectual hierarchy. Every field, as Bourdieu (1990) reminds us, reproduces its own conditions of existence by sanctioning those who deviate too far from its norms. The labeling of Ibn al-Māristāniyah as arrogant or subversive was part of this reproductive process—it reaffirmed the symbolic boundaries of orthodoxy. It preserved the coherence of the intellectual field.

Nevertheless, his endurance in historical memory, however fragmented, indicates that intellectual resistance leaves traces. Even when marginalized, dissenting voices shape the contours of collective consciousness by exposing the limits of permissible thought. The very fact that later historians felt compelled to refute or reframe Ibn al-Māristāniyah's contributions suggests that his work continued to haunt the field—an echo of critique that persisted beneath the veneer of orthodoxy.

In sum, the conflicts that marked Ibn al-Māristāniyah's life were not aberrations but reflections of the structural tensions inherent in the Abbasid system of knowledge production. His career illustrates how power and intellect coexisted in a relationship of mutual dependence and contestation, where every assertion of truth carried the risk of

transgression. Understanding these dynamics provides valuable insight not only into the sociology of medieval Islamic scholarship but also into the enduring patterns of intellectual life—where recognition and repression, legitimacy and dissent, are intertwined in the pursuit of knowledge.

6. THE LOSS AND RECONSTRUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE

The destruction of Baghdād in 1258 CE by the Mongols remains one of the most devastating events in Islamic intellectual history (Karim, 2018). The sack of the city not only brought an end to the Abbasid Caliphate but also symbolized the collapse of an entire civilizational system of knowledge, patronage, and cultural production. For scholars such as Ibn al-Māristāniyah, whose works had already fallen into neglect by that time, the Mongol invasion represented both a physical and symbolic annihilation—a rupture in the transmission of knowledge that epitomized the vulnerability of intellectual life to the forces of history.

1. *The Epistemic Rupture Of 1258*

The Mongol invasion led to the destruction of libraries, archives, and institutions that had preserved centuries of knowledge (Karim, 2018). Chroniclers such as Ibn al-Athīr (Ibn al-Athīr, 1965) and later historians described the Tigris running black with the ink of discarded books—a vivid metaphor for the obliteration of memory. The event marked an epistemic rupture, a moment when the continuity of scholarly traditions was violently interrupted, forcing the Islamic world to rebuild its intellectual foundations almost from scratch.

From a sociological standpoint, this rupture exemplifies what Halbwachs (1992) referred to as the social frameworks of memory—the concept that collective remembrance is sustained through institutions and social structures. The destruction of Baghdad was not only a loss of manuscripts and monuments, but also a disintegration of the institutional scaffolding that supported collective memory: the madrasas, mosques, and Bimāristānāt where knowledge was reproduced across generations (Scheiner & Janos, 2021; Karim, 2018). Without these institutions, the very conditions for intellectual continuity were undermined.

Ibn al-Māristāniyah's lost works thus stand as a microcosm of this larger phenomenon. His writings, once part of Baghdād's vibrant intellectual field, vanished amid the collapse of the archives that preserved them. Yet, traces of his influence persisted in the citations of later historians—a faint echo of his

intellectual presence that testifies to the resilience of memory even amid destruction.

2. *The Social Mechanisms of Remembering*

Despite the devastation, the Islamic scholarly tradition proved remarkably resilient. Within decades of Baghdad's fall, new centers of learning emerged in Cairo, Damascus, Aleppo, and Shiraz, sustaining and reconstituting the lost intellectual heritage (Borges & Weinberger, 1984). The preservation of names, citations, and anecdotes about figures like Ibn al-Māristānīyah reveals how memory operates through social mechanisms, even in the absence of material continuity.

Connerton (1989) emphasizes that societies remember through *performative acts*, recitations, and narratives that symbolically restore the past. In this sense, the act of later historians mentioning Ibn al-Māristānīyah, however briefly, constituted a form of commemorative reconstruction. Each reference was an act of remembering that inscribed his name back into the historical consciousness of the Islamic world.

The biographical dictionary tradition (*ṭabaqāt*) served as one of the most powerful vehicles for this process. Compiled by scholars such as al-Samʿānī, Ibn Khallikān, and al-Dhahabī, these works functioned as archives of social memory, cataloguing generations of scholars, their teachers, and their contributions (Al-Samʿānī, 1962; Ibn Khallikān, 1969). Even when they preserved conflicting or biased accounts, they ensured that individuals like Ibn al-Māristānīyah were not entirely effaced (Al-Samʿānī, 1962; Wurtzel, 2015). The persistence of his name, despite marginalization, attests to the collective capacity of societies to retain fragments of knowledge, even when their institutional bases collapse.

3. *The Sociology of Forgetting*

However, remembering always entails forgetting. As Connerton (1989) and Zerubavel (1996) argue, societies selectively recall the past in accordance with their present needs. The marginalization of Ibn al-Māristānīyah's intellectual legacy can be seen as a product of this selective remembrance: his rationalist historiography and scientific orientation were less compatible with the post-Mongol intellectual environment, which shifted toward spiritual mysticism, traditionalism, and scholastic orthodoxy.

This transformation reflects what Mannheim (1936) described as the *relationism* of ideas—the dependence of knowledge on social and historical context. As the intellectual center of gravity shifted from Baghdad to the more conservative institutions

of Mamluk and Timurid territories, scholars who represented critical or heterodox traditions were often excluded from collective memory. Ibn al-Māristānīyah's disappearance, therefore, was not accidental; it was the result of a reconfiguration of cultural priorities, wherein certain forms of knowledge were privileged while others were forgotten (Strauss, 2022).

Yet this process of forgetting also reveals a more profound sociological truth: memory and oblivion are intertwined. The partial erasure of Ibn al-Māristānīyah's name allowed later historians to reconstruct him anew, often in ways that reflected their own intellectual values. In this sense, forgetting becomes not merely loss but a precondition for reinterpretation—a space in which new meanings can emerge.

4. *Memory, Loss, And Cultural Resilience*

The survival of fragments of Ibn al-Māristānīyah's biography in later works, such as those by al-Dhahabī and Ibn Khallikān, points to the cultural resilience of Baghdad's intellectual legacy. Even after the destruction of its physical infrastructure, the memory of its scholars continued to circulate, carried by itinerant scholars and transmitted through oral and written chains (Karim, 2018). This mobility of knowledge networks ensured that Baghdad's intellectual ethos did not vanish entirely but was instead diffused across the broader Islamic world.

From a sociological perspective, this resilience illustrates the networked nature of knowledge—what Granovetter (1973) referred to as the “strength of weak ties.” The connections between scholars, teachers, and students across regions served as channels of continuity, allowing fragments of Baghdad's intellectual culture to survive in new settings. The persistence of Ibn al-Māristānīyah's name, though diminished, is emblematic of how knowledge transcends institutional collapse through dispersed networks of human relationships.

Furthermore, the reconstruction of intellectual identity after the Mongol invasion can be read as a form of cultural trauma recovery. Following Alexander's (2003) theory of cultural trauma, societies respond to catastrophic loss by re-narrating their history to reaffirm identity and continuity. In the post-Mongol Islamic world, the revival of learning under the Mamluks and later the Ottomans represented precisely such a process: a deliberate effort to restore meaning through remembrance.

5. *Ibn Al-Māristānīyah As a Symbol of Intellectual Fragility*

In this broader framework, Ibn al-Māristānīyah's intellectual fate becomes symbolic. His disappearance from the canon and partial recovery through later citations embody the dialectic of fragility and endurance that defines the sociology of knowledge. Every system of learning is vulnerable to material destruction and political repression, yet the ideas it produces can persist in dispersed, transformed, or reinterpreted forms. The fragmented memory of Ibn al-Māristānīyah thus serves as a case study in how societies reconstruct intellectual continuity in the aftermath of rupture. His absence from major later bibliographies (Strauss, 2022) does not signify irrelevance but rather the structural vulnerability of heterodox knowledge, the kind of rationalist and critical thought that often survives only in traces, awaiting rediscovery.

At the same time, his partial recovery by modern scholars signals the reactivation of historical memory as a sociological process. Just as medieval biographers preserved fragments of his name to reaffirm their intellectual lineage, contemporary historians and sociologists rediscover figures like Ibn al-Māristānīyah to reconstruct a more inclusive narrative of Islamic intellectual history—one that recognizes the diversity, conflict, and dynamism at its core.

In this sense, Ibn al-Māristānīyah's story transcends his own biography. It encapsulates the enduring sociological lesson that knowledge is a social inheritance—continuously transmitted, contested, and renewed. The ruins of Baghdād, once symbols of loss, also testify to the remarkable capacity of human societies to remember, rebuild, and reinterpret their intellectual past.

7. RELEVANCE TO MODERN IRAQI SOCIETY

The story of Ibn al-Māristānīyah—his intellectual achievements, conflicts, marginalization, and posthumous recovery—extends far beyond the medieval Abbasid context. It provides a profound lens for understanding the sociological dynamics of knowledge, power, and cultural memory in contemporary Iraq. By reading his life and legacy through the dual prisms of history and sociology, we uncover enduring patterns that continue to shape Iraqi society today: the politicization of intellectual authority, the fragility of institutions, the struggle for academic autonomy, and the persistent tension between tradition and modernity.

1. *Historical Continuities of Knowledge and Power*

The relationship between scholars and political authority in the Abbasid period, characterized by both patronage and surveillance, bears a striking resemblance to the experiences of intellectuals in modern Iraq. Throughout Iraq's modern history, from the late Ottoman reforms to the British Mandate and post-2003 reconstruction, the state has maintained a complex and ambivalent relationship with knowledge producers.

Just as Ibn al-Māristānīyah's work was shaped by the patronage structures and moral expectations of Abbasid Baghdād, modern Iraqi intellectuals operate within state-dominated institutions where ideological or sectarian pressures often compromise autonomy (Haddad, 2020). The dependence of universities and research centers on political patronage reproduces a dynamic that Bourdieu (1990) identified as the subordination of the intellectual field to the field of power. In both contexts, the pursuit of independent thought is fraught with risk, and dissenting voices can easily be marginalized, co-opted, or silenced.

The Abbasid model of intellectual control—where scholars gained legitimacy through alignment with moral orthodoxy and state authority—finds echoes in modern Iraq's educational and religious establishments. Even after the fall of the Ba'ath regime, the struggle over knowledge and truth continues in new forms (Lueck & Chang, 2015; Haddad, 2020), reflecting what Foucault (1977) referred to as the *microphysics of power*: the pervasive, diffuse mechanisms through which authority shapes discourse, limits debate, and regulates the production of knowledge.

2. *The Sociology of Intellectual Marginalization*

Ibn al-Māristānīyah's marginalization within his own intellectual community offers a useful analogy for understanding the systemic exclusion of independent scholars in modern Iraqi academia. The sectarianization and politicization of universities, particularly after 2003, have produced new hierarchies of legitimacy that mirror the symbolic violence of Abbasid scholarly life.

Many contemporary Iraqi academics face conditions that resemble those of Ibn al-Māristānīyah, operating within contested intellectual spaces where competing ideologies define what constitutes "truth" (Dakhil, Shuk, & Al-Jorani, 2024). Scholars who deviate from dominant narratives—whether political, sectarian, or ideological—often encounter the same structural barriers: limited institutional support, reputational attacks, or even

physical threats.

This continuity highlights the sociological persistence of what Mannheim (1936) termed the *social location of thought*: the idea that knowledge is always embedded in social hierarchies and power relations. In Iraq, as in medieval Baghdad, the authority to define legitimate knowledge remains closely tied to social position—whether religious, ethnic, or political. Ibn al-Māristānīyah's life thus anticipates the precarity of the modern intellectual, caught between the ethical commitment to truth and the pragmatic need for survival within restrictive institutions.

3. *Cultural Memory and National Identity*

Ibn al-Māristānīyah's partial erasure and later rediscovery also illuminate how collective memory and national identity are constructed in Iraq today (Haddad, 2020). Following decades of war, sanctions, and political instability, Iraq has faced not only physical devastation but also cultural amnesia—the erosion of collective memory about its cosmopolitan, intellectual past. The neglect of historical figures like Ibn al-Māristānīyah reflects broader patterns of historical discontinuity in Iraqi education and public consciousness.

Yet, as Halbwachs (1992) and Connerton (1989) suggest, collective memory is never static; it can be reconstructed through narrative renewal. The rediscovery of overlooked scholars such as Ibn al-Māristānīyah contributes to a broader sociological process of reclaiming intellectual identity. By integrating his story into Iraq's national narrative, historians and sociologists can challenge homogenized accounts of the past and highlight the pluralism and dynamism that have always characterized Iraqi society.

This process carries contemporary significance, as it reminds Iraqis that intellectual diversity and critical inquiry are not foreign imports, but rather deeply rooted in their own civilizational heritage. Reclaiming that lineage can serve as a symbolic act of resistance against both cultural erasure and ideological simplification.

4. *The Sociology of Loss and Reconstruction in Modern Iraq*

Modern Iraq, like Abbasid Baghdad, has experienced cycles of intellectual flourishing and destruction. The 2003 invasion, the looting of the National Museum and the Iraqi National Library, and the displacement of scholars during years of conflict represent a modern reenactment of the epistemic ruptures of 1258. The social mechanisms of

remembering and forgetting analyzed earlier—loss of archives, migration of intellectuals, selective reconstruction—continue to shape the contemporary Iraqi knowledge landscape (Dakhil, Shuk, & Al-Jorani, 2024; Haddad, 2020).

In this context, Ibn al-Māristānīyah's story becomes emblematic of the sociology of intellectual resilience. Just as fragments of his memory survived through citations and biographical notes, modern Iraqi scholars in exile and diaspora serve as the custodians of national memory. Through research, publications, and transnational collaboration, they maintain intellectual continuity beyond territorial boundaries—a process that echoes Granovetter's (1973) concept of “weak ties” as bridges that sustain networks during social disintegration.

These patterns reveal that intellectual life in Iraq—past and present—has always been shaped by a dialectic of fragility and endurance. Knowledge is vulnerable to material destruction but can be reconstituted through social networks, moral commitment, and collective remembrance.

5. *Lessons For the Sociology of Knowledge and Cultural Reconstruction*

Understanding Ibn al-Māristānīyah's legacy in relation to modern Iraq underscores the enduring sociological proposition that knowledge and society are co-constitutive. The structures that enable or constrain intellectual production—patronage, power, discourse—are not merely historical contingencies but ongoing dynamics that define how societies understand themselves.

For Iraqi society today, reflecting on the Abbasid model of intellectual life provides both cautionary and inspirational lessons. It warns of the dangers of excessive centralization of authority and ideological control over education, while also offering a vision of Baghdad's cosmopolitanism as a model for intellectual pluralism and dialogue.

Moreover, this comparative perspective demonstrates the value of interdisciplinary inquiry—combining history's attention to continuity and context with sociology's focus on structure and agency. By integrating these disciplines, we gain a deeper understanding of how knowledge systems evolve, collapse, and renew themselves in response to political and cultural pressures.

Ultimately, the figure of Ibn al-Māristānīyah becomes more than a historical curiosity. He stands as a symbol of the Iraqi intellectual condition—a reminder that the pursuit of truth, however precarious, remains a defining feature of social life. His life and legacy illuminate the complex interplay

between power and knowledge, memory and identity, resilience and loss – themes that continue to resonate powerfully in the ongoing reconstruction of Iraqi society.

8. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative socio-historical methodology that integrates close reading of medieval primary sources with contemporary sociological theory (Rosenthal, 1993). The reconstruction of Ibn al-Māristānīyah's life and intellectual environment relies on a range of biographical dictionaries and historical chronicles, including Ibn al-Dubaythī's *Dhail Tārīkh Baghdād*, Ibn al-Najjār's *Dhail Tārīkh Baghdād*, al-Ṣafadī's *al-Wāfi bi-l-Wafayāt*, Ibn Khallikān's *Wafayāt al-A'yān*, and al-Dhahabī's *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'*.

These works provide accounts of his education, disputes, institutional affiliations, and reputation among contemporaries. Additional institutional sources, (such as descriptions of the 'Aḍudī Bimāristān, waqf records referenced in later compilations, and early madrasa histories) offer insight into the bureaucratic and educational structures through which he moved. These primary materials are cross-compared to identify convergences, contradictions, and silences that reveal both historical detail and the biases embedded in medieval scholarly memory.

Analytically, the study proceeds in three steps. First, textual interpretation is used to trace patterns in narrative construction, accusations, praise, and silence in the biographical tradition, paying particular attention to how different chroniclers positioned Ibn al-Māristānīyah within the intellectual hierarchies of Baghdād. Second, these patterns are contextualized using Weberian concepts of status groups and rationalization, Bourdieusian notions of symbolic capital, field, and habitus, and Foucauldian ideas of disciplinary power and regimes of truth; together, these frameworks illuminate how social mobility, legitimacy, and intellectual conflict were structured in the Abbasid scholarly world. Third, Skocpol's emphasis on institutional embeddedness and state-society relations is applied to explain how broader shifts in political authority and institutional organization shaped the constraints and opportunities that defined Ibn al-Māristānīyah's career. This combined methodological approach, in primary-source reconstruction and guided by sociological theory—allows for a transparent, theoretically grounded reassessment of his intellectual trajectory and its broader implications for the sociology of knowledge in both medieval and

modern contexts.

9. CONCLUSION

This study has reassessed Ibn al-Māristānīyah's life and intellectual legacy by tightly integrating socio-historical analysis with sociological theory. Addressing the first research question, the findings show that his trajectory cannot be understood apart from the institutional and political structures of twelfth-century Baghdād.

The interplay between madrasas, Bimāristānāt, waqf-financed institutions, and patronage networks shaped not only his opportunities for social mobility but also the constraints on his scholarly autonomy. His movement from medicine to historiography illustrates how individuals converted technical expertise into symbolic capital in pursuit of legitimacy within a hierarchical intellectual field.

The second question revealed that Ibn al-Māristānīyah's historiographical practices were deeply embedded in the competitive dynamics of the Abbasid intellectual arena. His emphasis on critical method, empirical detail, and narrative precision reflected a deliberate attempt to position himself within a rationalist tradition that challenged prevailing orthodoxies. This positioning exposed him to symbolic violence, reputational attacks, and ultimately imprisonment—demonstrating how power, authority, and knowledge were negotiated within cultural fields where legitimacy was continually contested.

The third question highlighted the sociological processes of remembering and forgetting that shaped Ibn al-Māristānīyah's long-term legacy. His partial disappearance from the canon, followed by modern scholarly recovery, exemplifies how cultural memory is shaped by institutional fragility, political upheaval, and shifting epistemic priorities. These processes mirror contemporary Iraqi challenges, where intellectual erosion, institutional rupture, and the struggle for academic autonomy echo the dynamics of medieval Baghdād.

Taken together, the refined research questions and their corresponding findings underscore a central insight: intellectual life is inseparable from the social structures that enable, constrain, and remember it. Ibn al-Māristānīyah's career, conflicts, and fragmented legacy illustrate how knowledge is not only produced within fields of power but is also vulnerable to loss and subject to reconstruction. His story serves as a bridge between past and present, illuminating the enduring tensions between autonomy and authority, innovation and orthodoxy, and memory and erasure. In both medieval Baghdād and modern Iraq, the pursuit of knowledge

remains a deeply social, often contested, yet profoundly resilient endeavor.

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