

Religious transmission in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

تسديد تبليغ الدين في زمن الذكاء الاصطناعي

Dr. Othman SQALLI HOUSSAINI

Expert in African Affairs and Cultural Management

Introduction

Religious transmission has always relied on the communication means available at the time. From oral recitation to manuscript culture, from the invention of the printing press to the rise of radio and television, each era brought new tools that reshaped how the message of faith was taught and disseminated.

Today, humanity has entered a new phase. Indeed, digital tools and artificial intelligence (AI) are now transforming communication on an unprecedented scale¹. Religious discourse is no longer confined to mosques, madrassas, and books; it circulates instantly across social networks, digital platforms, and intelligent systems that can answer questions, translate sacred texts, or even generate sermons.

This transformation presents both opportunities and risks. In the Kingdom of Morocco, the religious identity is anchored in time-

1- Campbell, Heidi A., and Stephen Garner. 2016. *Networked Theology: Negotiating Faith in Digital Culture*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.

honored, immutable values and fundamentals determined by the Commandership of the Faithful, the Maliki school of law, the Ash'ari Dogma, and Junaydi Sufism.¹

The challenge, however, is to remain faithful to tradition while embracing innovation. The Kingdom of Morocco, through its religious institutions, which are acting in accordance with the enlightened vision of His Majesty King Mohammed VI - May God assist Him - has adopted a structured communication approach known as the Plan of Orientation and Rationalization of Religious Transmission (خطة تسديد التبليغ). This plan reflects a conscious effort to use modern communication technologies responsibly, while ensuring that the integrity of the Islamic message is preserved.²

Morocco's Religious Immutable Values: Anchors of Continuity

Morocco's religious model is founded on four immutable pillars, often called Religious Immutable Values or Fundamentals. They function as both a doctrinal compass and a framework for governance, ensuring unity and moderation in religious life.³

1. The Commandership of the Faithful – Imarat Al Muminin

As Amir al-Muminin, the Moroccan monarch embodies the historical

1- Toufiq, Ahmed. "The 'Commandership of the Faithful' Institution in Morocco: Pertinent Points for the Debate on the Caliphate (the Khilāfah)." Hespéris-Tamuda LVII (1), no. 2022 (2022): 175–94.

2- "خطة تسديد التبليغ: دليل مرجعي في التأصيل والفهم والتنزيل" Ministry of Habous and Islamic Affairs, 2024.

3- Toufiq, Ahmed. "The 'Commandership of the Faithful' Institution in Morocco: Pertinent Points for the Debate on the Caliphate (the Khilāfah)." Hespéris-Tamuda LVII (1), no. 2022 (2022): 175–94.

institution that is in charge of both political and spiritual guidance. This dual role guarantees that religious authority is not fragmented, and that the official religious discourse reflects moderation and stability.

2. The Maliki School of Law

The Maliki school provides Morocco with a jurisprudential tradition that is both deeply rooted and flexible. Its reliance on the principle of the common good makes it particularly apt for addressing contemporary issues.

3. The Ash'ari Dogma

The Ash'ari theological framework emphasizes a balance between rational reflection and textual compliance. This intellectual tradition protects religious beliefs and practices from literalism and extremism. It also provides the conceptual tools to navigate ambiguity in an era of fast-changing technologies. By grounding discourse in the Ash'ari dogma, Morocco promotes a moderate brand of Islam which is rooted in humility, thus countering both dogmatic rigidity and relativism.

4. Sufism

Finally, religious beliefs and practices in Morocco are deeply marked by Sufi heritage, especially the spiritual sobriety of Junaydi Sufism. This heritage emphasizes inner purification, love, humility, and tolerance.

Together, these four core elements ensure that Morocco's approach to digital and AI-driven communication is not ad hoc but anchored in a coherent and time-tested tradition.

Theological Foundations for Religious Communication in Islam

Conveying the divine message is not an innovation of the digital age. This is a core duty in Islam, grounded in both the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition.

﴿الْمَعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَدِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ خَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُفْتَكِينَ﴾
[النحل: 125].

This verse underlines the importance of wisdom (hikma) and ethical discourse in communication — values equally critical in digital spaces.

﴿وَلْتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ﴾ [آل عمران: 104].

This verse emphasizes the communal duty of invitation, which today extends into online spaces.

﴿الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ﴾ [الرحمن: 1-4].

Here, communication is portrayed as a divine gift, an ennobling faculty entrusted to humanity. On the other hand, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: “Convey from me, even if



it is only one verse.” (Sahih Bukhari). This hadith consecrates every believer’s duty as a communicator of truth, while highlighting responsibility in transmitting knowledge accurately. Another hadith says: “The scholars are the inheritors of the prophets.” (Abu Dawod Thirmidi).

What this means, in the digital age, is that while technology can assist, the primary responsibility remains with qualified scholars, not machines or unverified sources.

Digital Disruption of Traditional Transmission

Historically, religious knowledge in Morocco has been transmitted through mosques, zawiyas, madrassas, and direct contact with scholars. Authority was structured and relational: the imam in the mosque, the shaykh in the zawiya, the teacher in the madrassa.¹

Digital technology challenges this model in three major ways:

1. Decentralization of Authority: Any individual can publish sermons, fatwas, or religious reflections online, bypassing the established scholarly chain. These risks undermining Morocco’s structured religious institutions.
2. Acceleration of Communication: Messages circulate instantly, often virally. The speed of digital media does not allow for

1- Mervin, Sabrina. “Moroccan Peregrinations. Construction, Transmission and Circulation of Islamic Knowledge (18th-21st Centuries)1.” *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée*, 2021.

traditional deliberative work of fatwa councils, increasing the danger of misinformation.

3. Transformation of Mediums: Written texts, sermons, and lessons are now competing with short videos, and AI-generated responses. The risk is that religious transmission may lose depth and rigor in favor of superficial consumption.

Yet, disruption is not just a threat, it is also an opportunity. By recognizing communication as a religious duty and anchoring it in Morocco's immutable values, digital tools and AI can be repurposed and leveraged to serve the noble goal of religious transmission rather than erode it.

A New Horizon for Religious Transmission: Opportunities offered by digital technology and AI

Digital technology and artificial intelligence (AI) are not just sources of disruption; they also open up new horizons for communication, mainly religious transmission.¹ The Qur'an emphasizes the obligation of spreading knowledge with wisdom:

﴿وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ قَوْلًا مِّمَّنْ دَعَا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا وَقَالَ إِنِّي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ﴾ [فصلت: 33].

The Prophet (peace be upon him) similarly declared: "Convey from me even if it is only one verse" (Sahih Bukhari). These foundational

1- Jacoba, Rico. "Exploring the Role of Artificial Intelligence in Interreligious Discourse." Religion and Social Communication, 2023, 21, no. 2 (2023).

texts legitimize the use of every appropriate means of communication to spread divine guidance. In today's context, digital tools and AI systems can be harnessed to extend the reach of religious transmission, enrich its methods, and increase its impact.

Digital Platforms for Spreading Values

Morocco has invested heavily in traditional media (TV, radio, newspapers) and digital platforms to ensure that official religious discourse reaches citizens.

- Religious television channels and radio programs or live Qur'an recitation contests extend the message beyond mosques.
- Websites and portals provide consultations, khutba texts, and study resources, ensuring consistency with the religious fundamentals.
- Social media presence: younger imams and preachers trained in Morocco use social media, mainly Youtube and Facebook, to broadcast short, accessible reminders (dhikr, lessons, or ethical advice).

This democratization of communication, when framed by Morocco's immutable religious values, enhances visibility and accessibility, ensuring that the authentic message competes effectively with informal - and sometimes - misleading sources.

Artificial intelligence offers a range of new opportunities for religious communication:

1. Instant Translation and Accessibility

- AI-powered translation tools can render sermons, lessons, and fatwas from Arabic into French, English, and African languages, among others.
- This multilingualism directly supports Morocco's mission of religious cooperation across Africa. For instance, a khutba, or sermon, drafted in Rabat can be understood in Abidjan or Dar es Salaam almost instantly.

2. Personalized Learning

- AI tutors can adapt to a learner's pace, providing interactive Qur'an memorization support, vocabulary tools, or tailored explanations of jurisprudence and dogma.
- For youth accustomed to mobile apps and gamified learning, this interactivity increases engagement.

3. Educational Platforms

- Online academies and virtual classrooms allow Moroccan scholars to train imams and students abroad without incurring travel costs.
- AI-based systems can monitor progress, suggest additional readings, and offer quizzes, reinforcing continuous learning.

4. Virtual Companions for Spirituality

- Mobile applications equipped with AI chatbots already exist. They can answer basic religious questions, remind users of prayer

times, and recommend supplications.

- When supervised by qualified Oulema, these tools can act as a first-level companion, especially for young people seeking instant guidance.

Moreover, AI and digital archives also contribute to the preservation of Morocco's spiritual heritage.

- Digitization of manuscripts from libraries such as Al-Qarawiyyin ensures that centuries of scholarship are not lost and are transmitted to new generations.
- AI indexing makes these texts searchable and analyzable, helping scholars and laypersons alike to access authentic sources.
- Virtual museums and digital exhibitions on Moroccan Sufi zawiyas, scholars, and Qur'anic calligraphy extend Morocco's cultural diplomacy abroad.

Thus, AI does not only help in teaching the faith, but also in strengthening Morocco's position as a religious and cultural leader in Africa.

Morocco's Religious Transmission plan: (خطة تسديد تبليغ الدين)

The Plan of Religious Transmission represents a comprehensive project to revitalize the mission of scholars in fulfilling the responsibility of conveying the message of Islam. Its ultimate goal is to ensure that faith and worship are not abstract rituals but

transformative forces that purify the inner self (تزكية الباطن), guide outward conduct (صلاح الظاهر), and contribute to the realization of the Qur'anic promise of the "good life".

At its core, the plan seeks to bridge the gap between the ethical virtues of religion and the everyday actions of individuals. It emphasizes that faith is not complete without deeds, and that actions are right only when grounded in true faith — an understanding deeply rooted in the Sunni tradition. Thus, religious commitment must encompass not only worship but also dealings/conduct, making sure sincerity, honesty, and responsibility turn daily life into an arena of worship equal to that of the mosque.

Furthermore, the plan envisions religion as both a source of spiritual happiness and a driver of social development. By activating the ethical system of Islam across education, economy, family, health, and public life, it aims to reduce social ills such as drug addiction, corruption, dishonesty, and violence. It also nurtures an inner moral compass (الوازع الداخلي) that ensures integrity and excellence in professional and social responsibilities.

Ultimately, the Plan of Religious Transmission is not limited to religious preaching in the narrow sense but constitutes a strategic investment in values and ethics as determinants of human fulfilment and national progress. In this sense, it aligns religion with broader programs of development, positioning it as a civilizational force that fosters stability, reform, and sustainable progress in both worldly and spiritual domains.

In a nutshell, this strategy, adopted by the Higher Council of Oulema and the Ministry of Habous and Islamic Affairs, embodies this proactive vision.¹ Its goals include:

- Simplifying the religious discourse for digital platforms.
- Training imams, murshidin and murshidat to use modern media effectively.
- Producing unified khutba texts that can be broadcast both in mosques and online.
- Partnering with civil society and associations to co-create content for younger generations.

Qur'anic and Prophetic Justification of Digital Outreach

From an Islamic theological and jurisprudential perspective, Morocco's investment in digital religious transmission cannot be reduced to a mere technical adjustment to the digital age; rather, it reflects a continuation of the prophetic mandate to convey knowledge through Transmission and a legitimate application of the principle of renewal.

The Prophetic tradition further reinforces this obligation. The saying: "The best among you are those who learn the Qur'an and teach it" (Sahih Bukhari) establishes a dual responsibility of acquisition and transmission. Likewise, the hadith "Convey from me, even if it is a single verse" (Sahih Bukhari) legitimizes the use of any effective

¹- "خطة تسديد التبليغ: دليل مرجعي في التأصيل والفهم والتنزيل" Ministry of Habous and Islamic Affairs, 2024.

means of communication, provided that the integrity of the message is preserved. In this sense, employing digital platforms - or artificial intelligence - to disseminate Qur'anic teachings is not an illegitimate innovation, but rather the renewal of methods in continuity with the timeless mission of education.

In this light, Morocco's religious institutions, under the guidance of Imarat al-Muminin, have adopted digital outreach as a strategic extension of their mission. Internet-based means and artificial intelligence offer multiple advantages in this regard:

- Accessibility: granting believers in Morocco, the wider Maghreb, and Africa — including remote populations and diasporas — access to reliable religious resources.
- Interactivity: providing dynamic, personalized tools for Qur'an memorization, jurisprudential learning, and ethical guidance.
- Heritage preservation: ensuring that manuscripts, treatises, and spiritual legacies are digitized, indexed, and made available to future generations.
- Global outreach: positioning Morocco as a leading actor in promoting moderation, tolerance, and balanced Islamic scholarship at the international level.

Thus, Morocco's digital transmission strategy represents a conscious theological and civilizational project: it does not merely react to technological change but proactively harnesses to serve its fundamentals. The result is an ethical framework in which modern

tools become vehicles for safeguarding faith, enriching knowledge, and consolidating Morocco's role as a reference in religious governance and spiritual diplomacy.

Constraints and Ethical Issues

While digital technology and AI provide unprecedented opportunities for religious transmission, they also involve significant constraints that Morocco must address with vigilance. The Qur'an warns:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ بِشِيرٌ مِّن بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ فَاصْبِرُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهْلَةٍ فَتُصْعِقُوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَادِمِينَ﴾ [الحجرات: 6].

This verse directly resonates with the risks of misinformation in the digital age. It underscores that discernment and verification are not merely optional; they are religious obligations.

Digital spaces host countless voices, many lacking legitimacy.

- Misinformation: AI tools can generate false religious texts, misattributed fatwas, or distorted hadiths, confusing laypersons.
- Extremist exploitation: Radical groups use social media algorithms to recruit, creating echo chambers that bypass Morocco's balanced Maliki-Ash'ari-Sufi discourse.

This threatens the unity of reference that Imarat Al Muminin guarantees. As the Prophet (peace be upon him) warned: "There will come to the people years of deception, when the liar will be believed, and the truthful will be disbelieved..." (Musnad Ahmad).

Furthermore, AI-driven recommendation systems create filter bubbles:

- A youth who clicks once on an extremist preacher may be bombarded with similar content.
- Others may be drowned in secular or materialist feeds, ignoring spiritual content altogether.

The Qur'an commands balance:

﴿وَكَذَٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا﴾ [البقرة: 143].

Morocco's religious unalterable values aim to counteract imbalance, but algorithms push toward polarization.

In addition to that, AI chatbots can simulate muftis, answering questions on prayer, fasting, or morality. While useful for reminders, they lack juridical reasoning (Ijtihad) and compassion (Rahma) of human scholars. Thus, this may create an erosion of trust in Oulema, as people turn to virtual guides. This challenges the hadith: "The scholars are the heirs of the prophets" (Abu Dawod). Machines cannot inherit prophecy; they are tools, not authorities.

However, not all Moroccans have equal access to digital tools. Rural areas, elderly populations, and the poor risk being excluded from online Transmission, in addition to the over-reliance on digital platforms which could unintentionally marginalize vulnerable groups, contradicting the Qur'anic principle:

﴿لَا يَكْلَبُ اللَّهُ تَبَعًا إِلَّا وَسْعَةً﴾ البقرة: ٢٨٦

Thus, Morocco must strike a balance between traditional, structured modes of communication (mosques, zawiya, direct teaching) and modern digital tools.

Ethical Governance of AI in Religious Transmission

Islamic ethics of Sharia provide a framework for guiding AI use:

1. Protection of the faith, ensuring authentic transmission of creed and values.
2. Protection of the intellect, preventing confusion, misinformation, and intellectual manipulation.
3. Protection of lineage and dignity, shielding society from indecent or corrupting content.
4. Protection of life, combating online radicalization that can lead to violence.
5. Promotion of welfare, maximizing the benefits of AI for education and cohesion.

These objectives remind us that technology is value-neutral; its ethical weight depends on the intentions and frameworks governing its use.

Conversely, Morocco's immutable religious values form a shield against the pitfalls of the digital world:

- Imarat Al Muminin ensures unity and legitimacy of religious authority.
- Maliki jurisprudence offers adaptable rulings for new digital phenomena.
- Ash'ari theology inoculates against literalism and intellectual chaos.
- Sufism reminds believers of inner ethics when engaging online.

Together, these inalienable values make it possible for Morocco to adopt technology without losing its religious soul.

The Moroccan Religious Model in Africa

Morocco's engagement with the rest of Africa in the field of religious transmission is neither accidental nor peripheral; it is a deliberate strategy rooted in the country's historical, spiritual, and geopolitical vocation. Through institutions such as the Mohammed VI Foundation of African Oulema and the Mohammed VI Institute for the Training of Imams, Murshidin and Murshidat, the Kingdom has positioned itself as a continental reference in matters of religious governance, spiritual security, and intercultural dialogue.

This model rests on several pillars. First, the training of African imams and religious leaders in Morocco ensures that the principles of moderation, balance, and tolerance—hallmarks of the Maliki-Ash'ari-Sufi tradition—are transmitted to communities across the continent. Hundreds of imams from countries such as Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, and Chad have been trained at the Rabat

Institute, benefiting from both classical Islamic science training and courses in communication, comparative religions, and modern pedagogical methods. This dual curriculum prepares them to address contemporary challenges, including the rise of radical discourse online.

Second, Morocco has invested in sharing religious and academic resources under the supervision of Moroccan scholars. These resources are disseminated to African counterparts, ensuring consistency in messaging while respecting local cultural specificities. Digital libraries, online platforms, and Qur'anic archives are also made available. This policy democratizes access to authentic sources of learning and reduces reliance on unverified or extremist sources that proliferate online.

Third, this model emphasizes the promotion of tolerance and moderation across linguistic and cultural boundaries. By offering resources in Arabic, French, English, and African languages, Morocco recognizes that effective transmission requires cultural sensitivity and accessibility. In doing so, it contributes to an inclusive model of religious communication that transcends national borders and strengthens African unity around shared spiritual and ethical values.

Fourth, Morocco actively integrates digital tools into its outreach. Online training platforms and virtual archives extend the reach of Moroccan religious institutions, making it possible for a khutba delivered in Rabat to resonate simultaneously, for instance, in

Abidjan, Ndjamena, or Dar es Salaam. Importantly, these digital tools are used under ethical and theological oversight, ensuring fidelity to Morocco's unwavering religious values and principles, and guarding against misuse.

Ultimately, the Moroccan religious model in Africa shows that the digital revolution is not just a threat to religious communication; it can also be an opportunity. When anchored in shared values—moderation, coexistence, authenticity—and governed by ethical oversight, digital technologies can serve as instruments of African unity. They allow Morocco to extend its influence not through coercion, but through fostering solidarity, countering extremism, and nurturing a pan-African network of scholars and institutions committed to peace and human development.

In this respect, Morocco's experience offers a blueprint for ways in which tradition and modernity, faith and technology, national identity and continental solidarity can converge in a coherent project of religious transmission adapted to the 21st century.

Conclusion

The Qur'an reminds us:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغَيِّرُ مَا يُقِيمُ حَتَّىٰ يَغْيِرُوا مَا بَأْنَفْسِهِمْ وَإِنَّا أَرَأَىٰ اللَّهَ
يَقْوِمُ سُوءًا قَلِيلًا مَرَّةً لَهُ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ أَمْنٍ مِّنْهُ مِن وَآلٍ﴾ [الرعد: 11]

The transformation of religious communication through digital means and artificial intelligence is not an isolated phenomenon but a reflection of a broader civilizational shift in how knowledge, values, and authority are mediated. For Morocco, a country whose religious identity is deeply rooted in the enduring foundational principles of the Commandership of the Faithful, the Maliki school of law, Ash'ari theology, and Junaydi Sufism, the challenge is not to reject technology but to use it purposefully within this coherent framework.

This exercise involves three interlinked responsibilities. First, protecting society against misinformation, extremism, and exclusion, which proliferate on digital platforms through unregulated voices and algorithmic bias. Second, leveraging the potential of AI and digital tools for education, accessibility, and heritage preservation, ensuring that authentic Islamic teachings reach broader audiences, particularly youth, women, and communities in Africa. Third, reaffirming the role of qualified scholars and institutions as the legitimate heirs of the prophetic mission, ensuring that religious authority remains anchored in knowledge, ethics, and accountability rather than outsourced to algorithms or anonymous online figures.

By combining spiritual authenticity with technological innovation, Morocco is demonstrating that tradition and modernity are not mutually exclusive but mutually reinforcing. Its strategy of integrating digital communication under the guidance of Imarat Al Muminin offers a model that balances continuity with renewal. This model, which is both anchored in country's immutable religious values and responsive to global technological transformations, has the capacity

to inspire the wider Muslim world — especially Africa — where Morocco plays a leading role in promoting peace, moderation, and inter-faith dialogue.

Ultimately, Morocco's experience illustrates that AI and digital platforms, when harnessed ethically and strategically, can serve as tools for the transmission of faith rather than distortion; they can be instruments of unity rather than fragmentation, and bridges of cooperation rather than barriers of misunderstanding.

References:

Al-Mushaf al-Muhammadi, Ministry of Habous and Islamic Affairs.

Sahih bukkari

Campbell, Heidi A., and Stephen Garner. 2016. Networked Theology: Negotiating Faith in Digital Culture. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.

Toufiq, Ahmed. "The 'Commandership of the Faithful' Institution in Morocco: Pertinent Points for the Debate on the Caliphate (the Khilāfah)." Hespéris-Tamuda LVII (1), no. 2022 (2022): 175–94.

“خطة تسديد التبليغ: دليل مرجعي في التأصيل والفهم والتنزيل” Ministry of Habous and Islamic Affairs, 2024.

Mervin, Sabrina. “Moroccan Peregrinations. Construction, Transmission and Circulation of Islamic Knowledge (18th-21st Centuries)1.” Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée,



2021.

Jacoba, Rico. "Exploring the Role of Artificial Intelligence in Interreligious Discourse." *Religion and Social Communication*, 2023, 21, no. 2 (2023).

