

# Afriques

Débats, méthodes et terrains d'histoire

15 | 2024

Pour une histoire sociopolitique de l'espace sahélo-saharien avant 1850

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## Politico-Theological Debates in Ghadames between the 1770s and the 1850s from a Global Perspective

*Débats politico-théologiques à Ghadamès entre les années 1770 et 1850 dans une perspective globale*

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<https://doi.org/10.4000/12xta>

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### Résumés

English Français

This article aims to shed light on the history of politico-theological debates in Ghadames, focusing on two distinct case studies through discourse analysis. The particular geographical location of Ghadames, situated between two prominent states—Morocco and the Ottoman Empire—each with their respective caliphal claims, has historically enabled the scholars of the city to formulate and substantiate their own political stances. As a result, a substantial body of written materials, including chronicles, biographies, and letters, has emerged from Ghadames, reflecting the political discourse as articulated by its scholars, who adapted their perspectives in response to shifts in regional power dynamics. Notably, this adaptation was facilitated by the active intellectual engagement of the city's scholars. In this context, the article investigates the politico-theological discussions in Ghadames from the 1750s to the 1850s, analysing the persistent yet varied arguments and justifications, as well as the intellectual milieu that intersected with them.

En se concentrant sur deux études de cas distinctes, cet article vise à mettre en lumière l'histoire des débats politico-théologiques à Ghadamès par le biais d'une analyse de discours. L'emplacement particulier de la ville, située entre deux États importants - le Maroc et l'Empire ottoman - et ayant chacun leurs revendications califales respectives, a historiquement permis à ses érudits de formuler et de construire leurs propres positions politiques. C'est ainsi qu'un important corpus de documents écrits, reflétant leurs vues et comprenant des chroniques, des biographies et des lettres, y a vu le jour. Ces érudits ont adapté leurs perspectives en réponse à l'évolution de la dynamique du pouvoir dans la région et cette adaptation a notamment été facilitée par un engagement intellectuel actif. Dans ce contexte, l'article étudie les discussions politico-théologiques à Ghadamès entre les années 1750 et 1850, analysant arguments et justifications, persistants mais variés, ainsi que le milieu intellectuel qui les a engendré.

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### Entrées d'index

**Mots-clés :** Maroc, Empire ottoman, Ghadamès, Kel Tamajeq, Touaregs, Tombouctou

**Keywords:** Morocco, Ottoman Empire, Ghadames, Kel Tamasheq, Tuaregs, Timbuktu, Sahara

**Géographique :** Sahara

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## Texte intégral

# Introduction

- 1 The city of Ghadames, renowned for its historical significance in the trans-Saharan trade, was often overlooked in terms of its political and intellectual dynamics by European travellers in the 19th century and Libyan historians until the 1980s.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the Ottoman administrations in the 19th century and Ottoman historians to this day have not extensively studied the complexities of the city.<sup>2</sup> It was not until the 1980s that Bashir Qasim Yusha began shedding light on Ghadames' history by examining local letters and court records.<sup>3</sup> While he revealed a number of crucial details about the dynamics of trade and the activities of the merchants in Ghadames during the 19th century, it was only in 2004 that the political and intellectual complexity of the city came to light through Abdaljabbar Assaghir's edition of a local chronicle with a biography written by Muhalhil Al-Ghadāmisī (d. 1780) around the 1770s.<sup>4</sup>
- 2 Unlike the other important cities in the central Sudanic Sahara, such as Murzuq, Agadez, and Zinder, Ghadames never established a sultanate within its territory. Furthermore, historians mistakenly overlooked the political role of Ghadames, especially from the perspective of its scholars, focusing mainly on the role of the city in trans-Saharan trade.<sup>5</sup> Hence, despite the availability of primary sources, including both edited texts and numerous personal letters housed in local archives, the politico-theological debates in Ghadames from the 1770s to the 1850s have not been thoroughly investigated. However, the analysis of these sources presents additional challenges due to their varied formats. While a chronicle from the 1770s offers insights into the politico-theological discussions of the time, the materials from the 1790s to the 1850s predominantly consist of personal correspondence authored by merchants and the *qādī* of Ghadames. Nevertheless, a discursive analysis of the materials spanning the 1770s to the 1850s reveals both intellectual continuity and differentiation concerning the political stance of Ghadames. Furthermore, such examination also reveals the epistemological connections between Ghadames and the broader Islamic world.

## A Chronicle of Ghadames as a Politico-Theological Manifestation

- 3 One of the unique historical texts that survived in Ghadames is *Taḍkīr al-Nāsī wa-Talyīn al-Qalb al-Qāsī*, primarily a chronicle of Ghadames, written by Mūsā ibn Muhalhil Al-Ghadāmisī around the 1770s and containing a long biographical section about 'Abdallāh b. Abī Bakr Al-Ghadāmisī (d. 1719). The chronicle portion of the text reveals extensive scholarly networks connecting Ghadames to Tunis, Fes, Cairo, Agadez, and Timbuktu during the 17th and 18th centuries.<sup>6</sup> It was customary for students to travel to these cities to seek knowledge from esteemed teachers and scholars. In the biographical section, Muhalhil Al-Ghadāmisī recounts specific anecdotes illustrating the significant roles played by Abī Bakr Al-Ghadāmisī both in political and intellectual spheres. This part of the text also delves into the detailed arguments allegedly presented by Abī Bakr Al-Ghadāmisī to contest the authority of the Ottoman Empire and the Kel Tamasheq (Tuareg) groups in the Sahara. In this regard, the text conveys a succinct message in its entirety. On the one hand, Muhalhil Al-Ghadāmisī highlights the vibrant intellectual life within the city, suggesting that its scholars possessed a high level of expertise. On the other hand, he expands upon this initial assertion by detailing the biography of Abī Bakr Al-Ghadāmisī, portraying him as both an intellectual and a political figure who endeavoured to secure the city's independence from Ottoman domination and the involvement of the Kel

Tamasheq communities. The interesting point regarding this person is that, while Muhalhil Al-Ghadāmisī emphasizes Al-Ghadāmisī's political contributions, he characterizes him distinctly as the foremost scholar of the city rather than as a sultan. This characterization reflects a pattern that aligns with the social roles of scholars in the Tuwat region, thereby distinguishing Ghadames from other trade-connected cities such as Murzuq, Agadez, and Zinder.<sup>7</sup> Having a particular political role for scholars is, in fact, a well-discussed issue among classical scholars. For instance, scholars such as Fakhr ad-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1209), Ibn Maṣṣūr ibn al-Ḥaddād (d. 1275), Abū Ḥammū Mūsā l-Zayyānī (d. 1389), Ibrāhīm al-Ḥayrbaytī (d. 1440), and Muḥammad b. Sulaymān al-Kāfiyaḡī (d. 1474) advocated for a concept of governance known as *dā'irat al-siyāsa*, where a ruler's role (be he sultan, imam, *qāḍī*, or scholar) was that of an administrator focused on maintaining power balances among communities for stability, without having any right to hold personal power.<sup>8</sup> This unique concept rendered possible the intersection of political and theological/juridical spheres, as is the case in Tuwat and Ghadames.

4 Muhalhil's text, while indirectly elucidating the governmental nature of Ghadames, is characterized by significant ambiguity. The absence of any extant writings from Abī Bakr Al-Ghadāmisī complicates the task of distinguishing between his original arguments and those attributed to him. Muhalhil seems to take advantage of this to not only constructs a historical narrative concerning the city but also to articulate a historical politico-theological perspective referencing Abī Bakr Al-Ghadāmisī. Although the specific historical circumstances surrounding Ghadames in the 1770s that may have prompted the emergence of this text remain somewhat unclear—potentially linked to the rising influence of the Qaramanli dynasty in Tripoli under the Ottoman Empire—a discursive analysis of the claims presented in the text reveals a discernible intellectual tradition that had influenced politico-theological discourse by the 1850s.

5 Muhalhil gives considerable space to the alleged views of Abī Bakr Al-Ghadāmisī regarding the Ottoman Empire, presenting two contentions to contest the authority and legitimacy of the empire, thereby elucidating the political standpoint for Ghadames. The first argument challenges the caliphal authority of the Ottomans; the second argument encompasses a complete repudiation of the legitimacy of the Ottoman Empire's and the Kel Tamasheq's political authority. Essentially, Muhalhil's Abī Bakr Al-Ghadāmisī evaluates the authority of the Ottoman Empire from two perspectives: religious (regarding the caliphal title claimed by Ottoman rulers) and political (regarding the sultanate title held by Ottoman rulers), incorporating the Kel Tamasheq within the latter. These two contentions also manifest the political stance that Muhalhil's Abī Bakr Al-Ghadāmisī attributes to Ghadames, which bestows an unchallenged autonomy upon the city.

## First Argument: “The Sultan of Morocco is the only caliph of all Muslims in the world.”

6 Muhalhil's Abī Bakr Al-Ghadāmisī presents an intellectual critique of the caliphal authority of the Ottoman Empire, asserting that the designation “caliph of all Muslims”<sup>9</sup> rightfully belongs to the Sultan of Morocco, thereby refuting the Ottoman Empire's claims to this title.<sup>10</sup> In this regard, as Ghadames had recognised the caliphate of the Moroccan sultan, the possible authority of the Ottomans in Ghadames, asserted by referring to their caliphal claims, is illegitimate.<sup>11</sup> Muhalhil Al-Ghadāmisī does not provide any further detail for this argumentation, such as a clear reference regarding the claims of the Moroccans and Ottomans; nevertheless, an examination of the historical events provides insight into the intellectual context of this discussion.<sup>12</sup>

7 The first official proclamation of a claim to being the “caliph of all Muslims” made by the Ottoman authorities occurred after the death of Al-Mutawakkil III around 1543. Subsequent to this event, no fresh caliph from the Abbasid lineage was introduced. For this purpose, in 1554 the Ottoman *Sadrazam* Lūtfi Pasha (d. 1564)<sup>13</sup> authored an official *risale*<sup>14</sup> under the title *Halasu'l-Ümme fi Marifeti'l-Eimme*.<sup>15</sup> This marked the first endeavour by the Ottoman side to

assert themselves as the “caliph of all Muslims”.<sup>16</sup> In this text, Lütfi Pasha argues that since there is no one from the Abbasid family able to further assume the role of caliph with its meaning as a leader of all Muslims, and since only the Ottoman sultan holds the necessary qualifications for such a leadership, the matter should be approached in accordance with the juristic maxim (*al-qawā'id al-fiqhiyyah*) of “necessity overrules prohibition” (*al-ḍarūrāt tubīḥ al-maḥzūrāt*).<sup>17</sup> Lütfi Pasha invokes this principle to justify the caliphate of the Ottoman sultan in response to a debate asserting that caliphs must belong to the *ṣarīf* lineage, such as the Abbasid family, which is a branch of the Quraysh tribe to which Prophet Muhammad belonged.<sup>18</sup> The Ottoman dynasty did not possess such lineage. Therefore, Lütfi Pasha endeavours to demonstrate that given the existing *ṣarīf* lineages were incapable of assuming the caliph title, the Ottoman authority's assumption of this title should be viewed as a justifiable exception.

- 8 However, Moroccan authorities in the 1580s contested this assertion. The Moroccan scholar and embassy who was in Istanbul, Abū-l-Ḥasan 'Alī al-Tamgrūtī (d. 1595),<sup>19</sup> presents an argument in his *Kitāb al-naḥḥat al-miskiyya fī l-sifāra al-turkīya* suggesting that since the Sa'dī dynasty in Morocco is a *ṣarīf* family, they possessed the right to bear the title of caliph.<sup>20</sup> He viewed the Ottoman Empire's power and authority as a temporary guardianship over the Muslim world, asserting that the Moroccan sultans would eventually assume the exclusive authority as the rightful caliphs. Consequently, al-Tamgrūtī concludes that the Ottoman sultans could not be considered caliphs.<sup>21</sup>

## Debates on Al-Ghazālī's Aṣṣ 'arī Interpretation of Power

- 9 Although the views attributed to Abī Bakr Al-Ghadāmīsī do not explicitly address these various claims, his unwavering support for the Moroccan side of the debate may stem from the necessity to be a *ṣarīf* in order to lay claim to the caliphate. In his following considerations, for instance, he posits that his own family is also related to the Moroccan sultan (i.e. from *ṣarīf* lineage). In this regard, the Ottoman sultan had no right to impose any religious authority on behalf of them.<sup>22</sup> In this point, it is noticeable that Muḥalhil's Abī Bakr Al-Ghadāmīsī makes a very selective argumentation for his claims, because his theological background in the Aṣṣ 'arī doctrine allows him to interpret the situation in a unique way. The presence of several works from Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) in the library of the central mosque of Ghadames, where Abī Bakr Al-Ghadāmīsī was active as imam and *faqīh*, shows Abī Bakr Al-Ghadāmīsī's possible awareness regarding the Aṣṣ 'arī interpretation in the debate over a rightful caliphate. In his voluminous book *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm Al-Dīn*, which is also present in an 18th-century manuscript in the central mosque of Ghadames, Al-Ġazālī argues the issue of the caliphate using the notion of *ṣawka*. By providing a direct reference to Abū al-Ḥasan al-Aṣṣ 'arī (d. 936), he states that the sole force (*ṣawka*) in the world is the will of God, since He is the only creator of all beings and all human deeds.<sup>23</sup> Thus, if there is a powerful sultan who has enough power (*ṣawka*) to rule the Muslims, his authority should be considered as God-given (because *ṣawka* is the will of God), and that makes his authority as caliph legitimate.<sup>24</sup>

- 10 This Aṣṣ 'arī interpretation, as will be seen in the following, was in fact the predominant opinion in Ghadames after 1850. Yet, during the 18th century, Muḥalhil's references to Abī Bakr Al-Ghadāmīsī seems to disregard this line of argumentation, even though he was without doubt aware of it. It is worth noting as well that the Ottoman authorities in their official doctrine did not use this Aṣṣ 'arī interpretation for their claims.<sup>25</sup> The reason for this was a crucial historical, theological, and juristic transformation in the Ottoman Empire. Until the end of the 18th century, the juridical-political impact of Naḡm Al-Dīn al-Ṭarsūsī's (d. 1357) *Tuḥfat al-Turk*<sup>26</sup> held immense influence in any debate in the Ottoman Empire regarding the discussions about the legitimacy of the Ottoman caliphs.<sup>27</sup> As Lütfi Pasha's *risale* did later, juridical argumentations had a more central role in political discussions than did theological debates. Consequently, Aṣṣ 'arī theological interpretations (as well as any Māturīdī interpretation) were not in the scope of the intellectual debates concerning politics.

- 11 That changed significantly, however, after the Wahhabi movement (with their fundamental criticism of jurisprudence and emphasis on more canonical sources such as the Qur'an and Hadith) and reformist policies in the Ottoman Empire at the end of the 18th century. Especially around 1810-1840, several Ottoman scholars were tasked by the Ottoman sultans with re-evaluating the basic argument for the legitimacy of the Ottoman sultan as the caliph, to gain additional authority in the face of unpopular reforms.<sup>28</sup> Two specific texts were deemed so influential that they were sent to all the Ottoman cities (including Tripoli) by order of the sultan. These were *Nağāh al-ummah fī tā'tī al-ā'imma*<sup>29</sup> and *Al-Sa'yū al-Maḥmūd fī nizām al-ğadīd*.<sup>30</sup> The first text critically examines the juridical arguments of Lütfi Pasha (with his reference to the juristic maxim of necessity) and instead proposes a theological argument with a direct reference to Manşūr al-Māturīdī (d. 944).<sup>31</sup> Different from the views of Al-Ḥasan Al-Aṣ'arī, who attributes the *şawka* entirely to the will of God (so if someone has great power, then this should be considered as the will of God), Manşūr al-Māturīdī argues that the *şawka* belongs to the combination of God's will and men's will (i.e. crystallization of great power in men cannot be considered as the pure will of God).<sup>32</sup> In this respect, the first of the two aforementioned influential texts states that the Ottoman sultans were not granted power by God but granted success by God as a result of their achievements. This makes the Ottoman caliph legal, not the product of necessity.<sup>33</sup> The second text, on the other hand, criticizes the Aṣ'arī interpretation and again directly refers to Manşūr al-Māturīdī. The author argues that the legality of the Ottoman caliph did not stem up from the power that they had, but from the fact that it was won through their long history of protecting the Muslim community. God granted them success as a result of this history.<sup>34</sup> Both texts similarly conclude that since the authority and legality of the Ottoman caliphs does not rely on the power that they possessed (whether granted by God or not was irrelevant here), but because they deserved to be caliph. Therefore, even if the Ottoman caliphs were to lose their military power, which was the case in the 19th century, people must never cease to obey them.<sup>35</sup> From the Ottoman perspective, an Aṣ'arī interpretation for the legitimacy of the Ottoman caliph had the dangerous implication that if the Ottoman sultans lost their power, then it would be legal to reject their caliphal authority, which is exactly what happened in Ghadames after 1911.

## Debates on the Possibility of More Caliphs at the Same Time

- 12 Returning to the 18th century and Muhalhil's Abī Bakr Al-Ghadāmīsī, another noticeable point regarding his selective argument is his reliance on the view that there is only one caliph for all Muslims, a topic that sparked significant debate in the Sahel-Sahara region during the following century. For instance, in one of his letters written around the 1850s, the prominent scholar Aḥmad Al-Bakkāy (d. 1865)<sup>36</sup> in Timbuktu discusses the issue of declaring jihad.<sup>37</sup> He argues that only the caliph of the Muslims can declare jihad against a "non-Muslim" nation. For him, there are two caliphs for all Muslims in the world: one is in Morocco and the other is in Istanbul. While the caliph in Morocco may have a more justifiable claim to being the sole caliph, it is a fact that the Ottoman sultan possesses the power to protect a significant portion of the Muslim population. In this regard, only both of them can be considered as caliph, and only they have the right to declare jihad. In other words, Al-Bakkāy accepts the arguments of both sides (Moroccan and Ottoman) and resolves the problem with the option of the existence of two caliphs at the same time. The possibility of such an option is, in fact, not a personal invention of Al-Bakkāy. This possibility was discussed and confirmed during the classic age of Islam by some Aṣ'arī scholars such as Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Ğuwaynī (d. 1085) and 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 1037), with a fundamental condition that there must be a very great distance between the two caliphs.<sup>38</sup> The possibility of having multiple caliphs within the Muslim community was well known among the Maliki scholars in Sahel. A significant discussion on this matter took place between Aḥmad Lobbo (d. 1845), the founding ruler of the Caliphate of Ḥamdallāhi (1818-1862) and Muḥammad Belū (aka Muhammadu Bello) (d. 1837), the second ruler of Sokoto (1804-1903), around the 1820s.<sup>39</sup>

13 After the immense expansion of the newly founded caliphate in Sokoto by ‘Uṭmān ibn Fūdī (a.k.a. Uthman Danfodio) in 1804-1815, Aḥmad Lobbo had received a flag to carry the expansion further around Timbuktu.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, following ‘Uṭmān ibn Fūdī’s death in 1817, Aḥmad Lobbo had decided to create his own rule in Ḥamdallāhi and eventually his own caliphate. This decision led to a diplomatic crisis between the Sokoto caliphate and Aḥmad Lobbo, not only politically but also intellectually.<sup>41</sup> When the succession dispute in the Sokoto caliphate between ‘Abdāllah ibn Fūdī (a.k.a. Abdullahi Danfodio) (d. 1828)<sup>42</sup> and Muḥammad Belū finally resolved in 1821, Belū demanded allegiance (*bay‘a*) from Lobbo.<sup>43</sup> However, Aḥmad Lobbo sent a detailed letter to explain why he was not obligated to do so. In his letter, by referring to ‘Abdāllah ibn Fūdī and Aḥmad bin Ghunayim Al-Nafrāwī (d. 1713), Lobbo clarifies that it is not permissible to have more than one caliph for the *umma* (Muslim community); but if there is a very great distance between two Muslim communities, then they are each allowed to have their own caliph, since the orders of the other caliph cannot reach them.<sup>44</sup> Interestingly, at this point Belū turned to Al-Ghazālī’s Aṣṣ’arī interpretation. He stated that “Ottoman Sultan Sulaiman took almost all Muslim lands under his control, and his rule was accepted because of his power (*ṣawka*) ... Then you will have no choice when we show you our power.”<sup>45</sup> In this regard, Belū accepted Lobbo’s argument of “having long distance between them”, but openly threatened him by claiming that, in this case, if one ruler (he) could reach the sphere of the other ruler (Lobbo), then Al-Ghazālī’s Aṣṣ’arī interpretation became valid.

14 It is noteworthy that the fundamental condition of this opinion (“there must be a huge distance between two caliphs”) is also rooted in the legal maxim of necessity. That is to say, there must be a Muslim community that is unable to receive directives from the incumbent caliph in the central part of the Islamic world, thereby necessitating the selection of a caliph within their own domain. Interestingly, this intellectual opinion turned into a political reality between Morocco and the Ottoman Empire after the end of the 16th century, when the Ottomans relinquished their aspirations to control the whole of North and West Africa. In other words, the substantial distance between them allowed for the establishment of caliphal authorities within their respective domains, while still maintaining their official claims as the caliph of all Muslims. Similarly, when ‘Uṭmān ibn Fūdī established the Sokoto caliphate in the beginning of the 19th century, the justification for the rulers of Sokoto assuming the title of caliph was based on this intellectual viewpoint, as they were situated at a considerable distance from both Morocco and Istanbul.<sup>46</sup>

15 In the case of Ghadames, however, this option was more nuanced, because the city lay beyond the direct control of Morocco and the Ottomans but also within the margins of their power until the 1780s.<sup>47</sup> The proposed solution put forth by Sahelian scholars in the 19th century was impractical in the context of Ghadames. This may explain why the notion of two caliphs was never suggested by the Ghadamasiyan scholars, or by Muḥalhil’s Abī Bakr Al-Ghadāmīsī.

16 In short, Muḥalhil’s Abī Bakr Al-Ghadāmīsī uses a subtle discursive strategy to underpin the autonomy of Ghadames. By openly taking a pro-Moroccan stance, in fact, on the one hand he disqualifies Ottoman legitimacy, a legitimacy which was a possible threat to the city; but on the other hand his favour toward Morocco springs from the fact that the Moroccan sultan is entirely unable to practice any rule in Ghadames. Therefore, Abī Bakr Al-Ghadāmīsī’s pro-Moroccan stance served his pro-autonomy intentions.

## Second Argument: “One cannot make *ṣulḥ* with the Ottomans, because their affairs are corrupt.”

17 In his second argument, Muḥalhil’s Abī Bakr Al-Ghadāmīsī criticizes an opinion that was supported by “some scholars”. Unfortunately, the text does not name these scholars. These scholars’ arguments bear a striking resemblance to the considerations of the Ottoman authorities, albeit with a crucial distinction. Muḥalhil’s Abī Bakr Al-Ghadāmīsī states that there are “some scholars” who claim that if people are living in fear due to the “Turkish ruler”, who imposes

arbitrary taxes and dispatches military forces in cases when people fail to pay tribute, then these people can rightfully pay such tribute in accordance with sharia. Otherwise, fear of consequences would prevent them from working, making it legally justifiable for them to comply out of necessity.<sup>48</sup> It seems that these scholars invoked the principle of necessity to justify allegiance to the Ottoman Empire. The debate in this section, however, is no longer about the legality of the Ottoman authorities' claims to the caliphate, but rather about the overall legitimacy of the Ottoman Empire's rule. To counter this argument, Muhalhil's Abī Bakr Al-Ghadāmisī introduces a special notion: *ṣulḥ* (reconciliation).<sup>49</sup> He interprets the reference to the principle of the necessity to obey the rule of the Ottoman Empire in the framework of making *ṣulḥ* with the Ottomans, given that their rule is not compatible with sharia. But for him, one cannot make *ṣulḥ* with the Ottoman authorities, because their affairs are corrupt.<sup>50</sup> Here, Muhalhil Al-Ghadāmisī again does not explain with which references Abī Bakr Al-Ghadāmisī proposes this consideration. However, a *fatwā* issued in the earlier 19th century for a case in Souf valley (northwest of Ghadames) by a Tunisian jurist named Sīdī Ibrāhīm al-Riyāḥsī<sup>51</sup> illustrates the possible background argument to the view attributed to Abī Bakr Al-Ghadāmisī.

- 18 The Souf valley holds particular significance in understanding the scholarly complexity of Ghadames. Its proximity to Ghadames and shared efforts in challenging the legitimacy of the Ottoman Empire make it an important location for scholarly analysis. According to the chronicle of Al-Sāsī al-Awāmīr (d. 1881), in the 1780s a scholar in Souf called Sheikh Farhat declared that the Ottoman Empire had no legal basis to impose tribute on Souf and that such claims were therefore illegal, as was the case in Ghadames.<sup>52</sup> Although al-'Awāmīr does not disclose the exact arguments of Sheikh Farhat, he shares an interesting *fatwā* in his chronicle that sheds light on the consideration of this debate. According to this *fatwā*, which poses a question about the conditions of making *ṣulḥ* (reconciliation), the Tunisian jurist al-Riyāḥsī states that the first condition for making *ṣulḥ* instead of applying the rule of sharia is the principle of necessity: "there is no question that necessity permits the forbidden, and the biggest harm is strife (*fitna*)".<sup>53</sup> In this regard, if the application of sharia were to cause harm or conflict among Muslims, then it is better to make *ṣulḥ*. Nevertheless, he clearly emphasizes that there is also a second condition; and in this point, he names his legal sources for his argumentation:

According to Ḥalīl bin Ishāq [al-Jundī (d. 1365)], it is permissible for the qāḍī to call for reconciliation (*ṣulḥ*) only if the face of truth (*waḡh al-ḥaqq*) appears, but not the point of view (*waḡha*) ... Furthermore, Sheikh 'Abd al-Bāqī [al-Zurqānī (d. 1688)] said in his solution regarding this matter that he supports reconciliation, but there is an obligation to ward off corruption.<sup>54</sup>

- 19 As a result, al-Riyāḥsī concludes that reconciliation (*ṣulḥ*) can take place in cases of necessity only on the condition of uncovering truth and discarding any corruptive affair.
- 20 The presence of the manuscripts of Ḥalīl bin Ishāq al-Jundī and 'Abd al-Bāqī al-Zurqānī in the library of the central mosque of Ghadames, and the entire similarity to Abī Bakr Al-Ghadāmisī's attributed argument, regarding making *sulh*, to the *fatwa* of al-Riyāḥsī—who was relying on the above-mentioned two famous Maliki jurists for his comments—shows the possible background argument of Muhalhil's Abī Bakr Al-Ghadāmisī. In this respect, it seems possible to argue that his rejection of making *ṣulḥ* with the Ottoman Empire because of their corruptive affairs is based on his interpretation of such Maliki texts. However, it should again be stressed that this is a selective interpretation that shows the active intellectual effort attributed to Abī Bakr Al-Ghadāmisī, as he could use a discursive plurality to examine the issue from different viewpoints.<sup>55</sup> For instance, he applies the same argument to the affairs of the Kel Tamasheq in the Sahara before discussing the legacy of the Ottoman Empire. He asserts that as long as raiding caravans or imposing tribute<sup>56</sup> in order to avoid being raided is not a business model but a necessity because of starvation, then this people [the Kel Tamasheq] should not be punished, but their need should be satisfied by paying a tribute so that it would bring safety to travellers.<sup>57</sup> In other words, necessity should not be imposed by one side/perspective as 'Abd al-Bāqī al-Zurqānī warned (because then this is a corruptive affair), since one side uses this as a pretext to make it their economic model to turn a profit. Instead, there must be a general truth, as Khalīl bin Ishāq al-Jundī stated (i.e. it must be a natural condition that imposes the necessity on both parts). Especially in the case of tributes that were imposed by the Kel Tamasheq on the

merchants who were active in the Sahara, this argument was not the only consideration. For instance, a prominent Maliki scholar from Tlemcen, ‘Abd Al-Karīm Al-Maġīlī (d. 1504), categorically rejects such a payment without discussing it even under the principle of necessity.<sup>58</sup> In another example, according to a book of Muḥammad Al-Saghīr al-Kuntī (d. 1826) — *Kitāb al-Ṭarā’if wa-l-Talā’id*,<sup>59</sup> which narrates the biography of Al-Muḥtār Ibn Aḥmad al-Kuntī (d. 1811)—Al-Muḥtār Al-Kuntī defines this tribute already as a business model of the Kel Tamasheq. Yet, for him, if it is impossible to conduct business in the Sahara without paying this tribute, then the entire procedure should be considered under the principle of necessity without any further condition.<sup>60</sup> These various opinions on the same issue among the scholars in Sudan demonstrate the active intellectual efforts to create a special argument while they were still relying on the similar authoritative sources in the Maliki school of law. In other words, while Muḥalhil’s Abī Bakr Al-Ghadāmisī may have drawn inspiration from the views of al-Zurqānī and al-Jundī, his clear endorsement of this perspective represents his personal contribution to this specific case.

## Ottomans and Kel Tamasheq

21 It is also important to note that Muḥalhil’s Abī Bakr Al-Ghadāmisī examines the cases about the legality of the Ottomans and the Kel Tamasheq within the same argumentative debate, while he does not imply any clear connection between them. This unmentioned connection, however, was a significant item of discussion in the Sahel-Sahara region during the 18th and 19th centuries. According to the chronicle of Abduljabbar Alqadir regarding the history of Essouq, the scholars of the city received a *ferman* (an order with the official seal of Ottoman sultans) from the Ottoman sultan, which entitled them to establish an Islamic emirate among the Kel Tamasheq in the 17th century.<sup>61</sup> In another example, an Ottoman merchant called Mehmed Baṣāla (d. 189?), who travelled from Tripoli to Kuka and returned through Zinder, Ghat, and Murzuq around the 1870s, encountered some elders of the Kel Hoggar in the south of Ghat. When they heard that Baṣāla came from the Ottoman domain, they told him about a *ferman* that they received from Sultan Selim (d. 1520) that defined the Kel Tamasheq as subjects of the Ottomans and entitled them to create an Islamic emirate on behalf of the Ottoman sultan.<sup>62</sup> Although no such *fermans* exist in the Ottoman archives, the account of Mehmed Baṣāla suggests the fact that it was not rare in the domain of Tripoli for the local governors or some special agents to issue some supposed *fermans* to expand their control in the distant regions by taking the advantage of the title of the Ottoman sultans.<sup>63</sup> The connection between the Kel Tamasheq and Ottomans was not confined to these supposed *fermans* as an effort of Ottoman officers to expand the influence of the empire, but also various Kel Tamasheq groups created their own attribution to the Ottoman Empire to legitimize their position. For instance, there is also a well-known oral narrative regarding the ruling dynasty in Agadez called Istanbulawa. According to this local narrative, in the late 15th century various Kel Tamasheq communities in Air desired to raise a sultan in their domain but could not reach a consensus. As a result, they decided to send an envoy in a caravan to Istanbul to ask the Ottoman sultan to give one of his sons to them. According to the narrative, the Ottoman sultan agreed to their demand and gave one of his sons, whose mother was an enslaved woman from Sudan, to be declared the Sultan of Agadez upon their return. His family was named Istanbulawa.<sup>64</sup> Although there is no record in the Ottoman archives, numerous historical and diplomatic connections existed between Istanbul and the Kel Tamasheq community.<sup>65</sup> For instance, after the Ottomans took Ghadames by force in 1843 (struggling until the 1850s with the civil disobedience of its inhabitants), the Kel Tamasheq elders of Ghat sent an official letter to Tripoli in 1849 to demand Ottoman rule in their city.<sup>66</sup>

22 Even Muḥammad Belū in Sokoto was aware of such stories that implied a deep connection between the Kel Tamasheq and the Ottomans. However, he presents this connection in a different and negative light. In his chronicle on Sudan, *Infāq al-maysūr fī tāriḥ bilād al-takrūr*, he states:

it is said that they [the Kel Tamasheq] are from Yağūğ and Mağūğ, those who were blocked by Dhū l-Qarnayn [according to Qur’ān, 18: 83-11]. Some of them had escaped

and continued with their evil. There they remained and intermarried with the Turks and the Tatars.<sup>67</sup>

23 Since Yağūğ and Mağūğ are described in the *Qur'ān* as devil creatures who will cause the end of the world, and presumably were blocked in Caucasia, Belū relates them to Turks and connects the story of the Kel Tamasheq to this negative imagination.<sup>68</sup>

24 Although Abī Bakr Al-Ghadāmīsī does not clearly refer to any of these narratives or to any possible connection between the Kel Tamasheq and Ottomans, in the 1870s some Ghadamesian merchants informed with great dissatisfaction their agents in Tripoli that some Kel Tamasheq communities around Ghat began to speak Turkish in their diplomatic affairs rather than Arabic.<sup>69</sup> Regardless of whether or not the Ghadamesian scholars were aware of these stories or took them seriously, their political and intellectual challenges with the Kel Tamasheq and the Ottomans remained within the same framework. Yet, the interaction of the city inhabitants with these two authorities were more complex.

## Historical Change in the Political and Intellectual Debate after 1843

25 Historical conditions had a decisive impact on the intellectual views of Ghadamesian scholar families and the inhabitants of the city in their relations with the Ottomans and the Kel Tamasheq. The political conditions for the city did not greatly change between the 1770s and 1810s. In 1810 and in 1830, however, Yusuf Paşa dispatched troops to Ghadames to force the inhabitants to pay an excessive tribute to him. The inhabitants resisted, calling Yusu Pasha a “despot”, and most of them temporarily left the city to avoid making the payment.<sup>70</sup> In 1835, the Ottoman Empire took Tripoli under its direct control, and in 1843 Ghadames was compelled to submit to direct Ottoman rule when a third-ranking governor, known as a *mūdūr*, was appointed from Istanbul. Thus, for the first time in pre-modern history, Ghadames received a foreign officer as administrator.

26 This greatly marked the politico-theological debates in the city. In fact, during the Qaramanli era, the previous opinions about the illegality of Ottoman rule were still present in the personal letters of the city inhabitants. The same tendency is also evident in the year 1843. Two private letters from 1843 indicate that the inhabitants of the city received the *mūdūr* with considerable discontent. In the first letter, the author says to his correspondent in Kano that the city is under the occupation of “despot Turks”.<sup>71</sup> The author of the second letter states to his relative in Timbuktu that he was considering leaving the city because of the “Turkish oppression”.<sup>72</sup> The central reason for these reactions was the fact that the city had lost its autonomy with the arrival of an Ottoman *mūdūr*. It is still unknown how many families and merchants (if any) left Ghadames because of the Ottoman presence. However, this clear civil resistance against the renewed and more direct rule of the Ottomans, which appears consistent with the old intellectual tradition that challenged the legitimacy of the empire, changed rapidly in the course of the 1850s.

27 Three private letters from 1850 and 1853 indicate that the inhabitants of the city began to recognize the benefits of living under Ottoman administration. In one letter, the author encourages his friend, who complains about a contractual conflict with another merchants, to go to the “*bayy*” (Tr. *Bey* [used for Ghadamesian *mūdūr*]) to request confiscation.<sup>73</sup> The author of the second letter informs his partner in Ghat that the “*bāsh agha*” (Tr. *Baş ağa* [used for Ghadamesian *mūdūr*]) promised him to get his caravan back, which had been stolen by bandits.<sup>74</sup> In the third letter, the same author relates his satisfaction that the *mūdūr* successfully retrieved his caravan.<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, a letter from 1853 demonstrates the high level of concern exhibited by Ottoman officers for the interests of the Ghadamesian merchants. In his letter, the *kaymakam* of Fezzan informs the *vali* (first-ranking governor) in Tripoli regarding some rumours that he received from the merchants about the Sudan; according to these rumours, there were massive military activities occurring around Hadeja Emirate in the Sokoto Caliphate, which lies between Kano and Bornu, and people were concerned about a possible invasion of Kano.

*Kaymakan* of Fezzan states that since Kano is the most important trade hub of the Ghadamesian merchants, and since these merchants have many properties in the city, such an invasion could have devastating consequences for them. Thus, the *vali* of Tripoli should take measures to address this possibility.<sup>76</sup> In another example around 1862, the *vali* of Tripoli even removed income tax in Ghadames as a privilege for the city inhabitants, since, for the *vali*, they were securing the flow of trans-Saharan trade to Tripoli.<sup>77</sup>

28 Yet, this harmony between Ottomans and Ghadamesians was quite tenuous, as Ottoman authorities regularly levied taxes that relied on Ottoman state tradition rather than *šari‘a* such as *inayat sultan* (war tax).<sup>78</sup> As a result, the *qāḍī* of Ghadames, who was traditionally always from the Awlad Yunus family, whose members intermarried with Awlād Abūbakr (the family of Abī Bakr Al-Ghadāmisī),<sup>79</sup> began to receive questions after the 1850s regarding the legality of the current political situation. These letters provide an insight into the politico-theological debates among the scholars of the city almost eighty years after the text of Muhalhil.

29 According to one of these letters (from 1855), the author, a Ghadamesian merchant, suffered under the war-tax collection of the newly appointed Ottoman *müdür*. He asked the *qāḍī* of Ghadames, Muḥammad bin Yūnus, whether he could do something about it. The *qāḍī*, unlike the argumentation that arises in the text of Muhalhil, justified the legitimacy of the Ottoman Empire with Al-Ghazālī’s Ash‘ari interpretation and stated: “since God granted power (*šawka*) to Turks to rule us, we should accept their oppression as an examination from God”. Similarly, using the same reasoning, the *qāḍī* of Ghadames preferred to be neutral when prominent Arab leader Ghuma rebelled against Ottoman rule around the 1850s. Ghadames neither revolted against Ottoman rule nor rejected the rebellion of Ghuma.<sup>80</sup> In one of his undated private letters, the *qāḍī* of Ghadames, again referring to Al-Ghazālī’s Ash‘ari interpretation, states, regarding the rebellion of Ghuma, that “everything is in the hand of God; whatever will come [from this war] will come from Him”.<sup>81</sup>

30 In this regard, although the political position of Ghadames between 1843 and 1850 radically turned in an opposite direction from the longstanding position supported by the local scholars, the new generation of scholars was still addressing the new reality with an intellectual response. However, it was not about justifying this new political situation at any price. The *qāḍī* of Ghadames sought to explain the new reality within the framework of Ash‘ari discourse, which most of the Maliki scholars follow theologically. The argument put forth by the *qāḍī* was no longer purely juridical but rather had a more theological basis. In accordance with this new intellectual framework, the inhabitants of the city even accepted the arbitrary taxes of the Ottomans around the end of 1850s.

31 In the case of the Kel Tamasheq, the city inhabitants’ reliance on the opinion of the scholars of the city was weaker. Although Muhalhil’s Abī Bakr Al-Ghadāmisī strongly argued that the tribute that the Kel Tamasheq levied from the merchants who were travelling in their territory in the Sahara was illegal as long as it served as a business model for them, the private letters in Ghadames demonstrate that the merchants were aware that it was the business model of the Kel Tamasheq; nevertheless, they did not raise resistance against this practice. Their term for this tribute, on the other hand, was interesting: instead of calling the payment a “tribute” or “tax” (or *mudāra* as Al-Muḥtār Al-Kūntī called it),<sup>82</sup> the Ghadamesian merchants called it a “fine” (Ar. *garāma*).<sup>83</sup> According to Bashir Yusha, this payment was in practice not a fine in the literal sense but more a “benevolence business fee of custom” (*rusūm maṣlaḥa al-ḡumrukiya*).<sup>84</sup> However, the merchants considered this payment necessary but apparently also insulting; that is to say, their understanding of this payment did not rely on the opinion of Abī Bakr Al-Ghadāmisī or of Al-Muḥtār Al-Kūntī in Timbuktu, and the term they used illustrates that they found a middle way between the views of Al-Ghadāmisī and Al-Kūntī.

## Conclusion

32 The chronicle of Mūsā ibn Muhalhil Al-Ghadāmisī, through a comprehensive historical and discursive analysis, reveals significant insights into the intellectual and political discourse in Ghadames prior to the 1850s. Through a thorough analysis of this chronicle and several letters, this article has explored how leading scholars/*qāḍīs* of the city intellectually justified their

rejection of the legitimacy and the authority of the Ottoman Empire and of the Kel Tamasheq prior to the 1850s. These scholars drew upon a complex intellectual tradition, using Maliki texts prevalent in West Africa and referencing the Ash‘ari doctrine and interpretations of renowned scholars such as Al-Ghazālī from the 12th century. Furthermore, there was a complex continuation and differentiation in the politico-theological debates among the scholars of Ghadames from the 1770s to the 1850s. The article has also highlighted how Ghadamasian scholars were part of a global intellectual interconnectedness in the Islamic world in the 18th and 19th centuries, in their references to Morocco and Istanbul but also in their shared context with Sahelian scholars. In addition, several private letters from Ghadames reveal the social dimensions of the intellectual and political challenges faced by the community. While the residents of Ghadames held the scholars’ opinions about the Ottoman Empire in high regard, the merchant community exhibited a preference for navigating their own course concerning the authority of the Kel Tamasheq. This transformative period, spanning from the 1770s to the 1850s, transitioned into a new phase with the emergence of French colonial agents in the Sahara around the 1860s. In this regard, the politico-theological debates in Ghadames following the 1860s remain an area ripe for further scholarly investigation.

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## Notes

1 In 1983, Rifaat Abou-El-Haj openly criticized the existing literature, claiming that the history of societies beyond Tripoli and Benghazi is still waiting to be written about (R. ABOU-EL-HAJ, 1983).

2 In recent years, Muhammed Tandoğan, Ahmet Kavas, Abdullah Özdağ, and Cemal Atabaş have published the most comprehensive works in Turkish languages on the history of Tripoli and the Sahara. Yet, they also did not pay attention to the history of Ghadames. For instance, see M. TANDOĞAN, 2015; A. KAVAS, 2018; A. ÖZDAĞ, 2020; C. ATABAŞ, 2021.

3 Some of these texts include Fihris makhtutdt Ghadamis. Tripoli: Markaz jihad al-libiyyin 1986; Ghadamis: Watdh'iq tijdriyya tarikhiyya ijtimd'iyya (1228-1310 hijri). Tripoli: Markaz jihad al-libiyyin 1983; "al-Ghadamisiyyun fi rihlat al-Hasha'ishi", Majallat al-buhuth al-tdrikhiyya: 5 (1983), p. 239-256; "al-Ilm wa'l-'ulama' bi-Ghadamis fi 'asr Ibn Ghalbun", Majallat al-buhuth al-tdrikhiyya: 4 (1982), p. 181-219.

4 MUHALHIL AL-GHADAMISI, 2004.

5 For recent examples, see R. DEWIERE, 2017; N. LAFI, 2006.

6 MUHALHIL AL-GHADĀMISĪ, 2004, p. 28.

7 I. WARSCHIED, 2017.

8 See: FAKHR AD-DĪN AL-RĀZĪ, 1905, p. 218; IBRĀHĪM AL-ḤAYRBAŸTĪ, 1996, p. 15; IBN MAṢṢŪR IBN AL-ḤADDĀD, 1983, p. 67; MUḤAMMAD B. SULAYMĀN AL-KĀFIYĀĠĪ, 2015, p. 124; ABŪ ḤAMMŪ MŪSĀ L-ZAYYĀNĪ, vol. 2, 2019, p. 138.

9 Ar. *al-ḥilāfa al-‘uzmā*, Tr. *hilafet-i kübra*.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 27.

11 Here the reason the author defines Ghadames as a city that recognizes the caliph of Morocco is to disqualify the caliphal claims of Ottomans for a possible invasion. However, this does not imply that the city was actually controlled by Morocco. The author presents a nuanced argument by suggesting that the Moroccan caliph alone possesses the legitimate right to rule Ghadames, even though, for unspecified reasons, he does not exercise any rule over it—a situation the author views favourably.

12 The dispute between the Moroccan and Ottoman authorities over the legitimate caliphate emerged during the period spanning the 1540s to the 1580s (A. MOUDDEN, 1992). It is important to highlight that the Ottoman sultans had assumed the caliph title prior to their conquest of Mecca and Medina, as well as before their victory over the Mamluk Sultanate in 1517, which had been safeguarding the Abbasid caliphs in Cairo following the Mongol capture of Baghdad in 1258 (F. SÜMER, 1992, p. 675-701). However, this designation was primarily used as an honorary title rather than a formal claim. Consequently, even after the fall of Cairo in 1517, the Ottoman sultan permitted Al-Mutawakkil III, the 17th Abbasid caliph in Cairo, to retain the caliph title (T. BUZPINAR, 2004, p. 113-131).

13 For more details on this person, see *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, cilt 27, Ankara, 2003, p. 234-236.

14 Tr. treatise.

15 The original manuscript can be found in *Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi* in Istanbul, under the *Ayasofya Bölümü*, with no. 2877.

16 For more details, see H. YAVUZ, 1991, p. 73-110.

17 *Halasu’l-Ümme fi Marifeti’l-Eimme*, folio 2b.

18 *Ibid.*, folio 3a.

19 For more details on this person, see K. DİNE, 2002.

20 ABŪ-L-ḤASAN ‘ALĪ AL-TAMGRŪTĪ, 1929.

21 ABŪ-L-ḤASAN ‘ALĪ AL-TAMGRŪTĪ, 1929, p. 1-2.

22 MUHALHIL AL-GHADĀMISĪ, 2004, p. 27. Here, the author stresses his imam role in the city to grant his family privilege on behalf of the city’s inhabitants. Yet, it is important to emphasize that he never implies any political authority over the city apart from his religious role. In other words, as the imam of the city and in the absence of any secular rulership, he frames the whole political discourse through juristic and theological arguments.

23 See A. RAHMAN, 2002, p. 116-117.

24 ABŪ ḤĀMĪD AL-GHAZĀLĪ, 1933, vol. 1, p. 116.

25 Although Ottoman sultans sometimes used similar arguments in their letters to other countries, such as saying “I received my power from God”, that was not about any juridical or theological debate. See E.A.E. TAŞ, 2020, p. 1084.

26 The primary objective of this text was to persuade the Ottomans and Mamluks of the superiority of the Hanafi school of law as the most suitable legal framework for governance. In this discourse, Nağm Al-Dīn al-Ṭarsūsī conducts a comparative analysis of the Shafi’i and Hanafi perspectives on matters pertaining to state governance and the rights of rulers. He ultimately concludes that Turkish rulers who adhere to Hanafi jurisprudence will be equipped with the most compelling arguments to support their legacy. See NAĞM AL-DĪN AL-ṬARSŪSĪ, 1997. Consequently, any additional theological discourse on the matter was deemed unnecessary.

27 Ö. KAVAK, 2022, p. 46-51.

28 See S. KENAN (ed.), 2010.

29 Here, I am referring to the manuscript that is present in the Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi in Istanbul. S.K. Esad Efendi Koleksiyonu, no. 1856. Interestingly, the author of this manuscript is unknown, but it was written in 1831.

30 Here, I am referring to the manuscript that is present in the Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi in Istanbul. S.K. Esad Efendi Koleksiyonu, no. 2363. The author of this text is Ibn Al-‘Annābī, and it was written around 1828-29.

31 S.K. Esad Efendi Koleksiyonu, no. 1856, f. 22a.

32 *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Cilt 28. Ankara, 2003, p. 151-157.

33 S.K. Esad Efendi Koleksiyonu, no. 1856, f. 20b-21a.

34 S.K. Esad Efendi Koleksiyonu, no. 2363, f. 53a-53b.

35 See S.K. Esad Efendi Koleksiyonu, no. 1856, f. 46b; S.K. Esad Efendi Koleksiyonu, no. 2363, f. 65a.

36 One the foremost scholars of Timbuktu of his time. See A. ZEBADIA, 1974.

37 BNF, Département des manuscrits : Manuscrits d'Afrique subsaharienne, Tombouctou ; Arabe 6756.

38 See 'IMĀM AL-ḤARAMAYN AL-ĞUWAYNĪ, 1938, p. 239; 'IMĀM AL-ḤARAMAYN AL-ĞUWAYNĪ, 1979, p. 257; 'ABD AL-QĀHIR AL-BAGHDĀDĪ, 1928, p. 274-275.

39 For more details, see U. DALHATU, 2016.

40 See M. TAHIR, 2023.

41 See C.C. STEWART, 1976 and M. NOBILI, 2020.

42 'Abdāllah ibn Fūdī was the brother of Uṭmān ibn Fūdī and assigned to rule in the western part of the Sokoto caliphate. He was the most prominent jurist in Hausaland of his time. M.U. BUNZA, 2016.

43 N.H.R.S., Muḥammad Belū, MS. I4a.

44 I.F.A.N., Fond Brevié, MS. 7. Also see: M. NOBILI, 2020. However, Nobili does not analyse the epistemological background of this argument, such as the intellectual origin of the debates on the existence of two caliphs at the same time.

45 N.A.N. O/AR, 12, "Ġawāb Šāfin li-l-Murīd".

46 For more details, see M.T.M. MINNA, 2013.

47 Morocco's authority reached far into the desert to the Tuwat oases, while before the 1780s the Ottoman authority was a reality on the Tripolitan coast. Thus, Ghadames was in a position that enjoyed the political void between both imperial powers.

48 MUHALHIL AL-GHADĀMISĪ, 2004, p. 9.

49 Regarding the political role of the concept of *sulh*, see L. BERNARD, 1991.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 10.

51 The author does not clearly disclose the personality of this jurist. It seems possible that he was Tunisian scholar Ibrāhīm ibn 'Abd al-Qādir al-Riyāhī (d. 1850).

52 AL-SĀSĪ AL-AWĀMIR, 2007, p. 276.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 292.

54 *Ibid.*, p. 293.

55 Furthermore, there is a second layer of selection, as the arguments of Abī Bakr Al-Ghadāmisī are related by Muhalhil Al-Ghadāmisī. In this regard, the text presents the selection of Muhalhil Al-Ghadāmisī regarding the arguments of Abī Bakr Al-Ghadāmisī.

56 Some scholars contend that Arab travellers and intellectuals perceived the Sahara as an uninhabited and non-political expanse, thereby undermining the legitimacy of the political and governmental activities of nomadic groups, such as the imposition of tribute on merchants and travellers. See C. CAPEL, E. VOGUET and C. AILLET, 2021. However, local historical accounts from regions such as Ghadames, Ghat, Agadez, and Sokoto indicate that these scholars, primarily from the 18th and 19th centuries, did not characterize the desert as an empty, non-political space; rather, they dismissed the legitimate authority of nomadic communities. Central to this dismissal was the argument that nomadic lifestyles were incompatible with an authentic Islamic way of life. Consequently, various nomadic groups in West Africa, including certain Fulani communities that did not inhabit desert regions, were similarly excluded from recognized political and governmental practices.

57 MUHALHIL AL-GHADĀMISĪ, 2004, p. 18.

58 For more details, see M. HISKETT, 1962, p. 585.

59 This manuscript can be found in Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal under the M.S. Arabic 6755.

60 *Kitāb al-Ṭarā'if wa-l-Talā'id*, folio 300.

61 U.L.A., Aduljabbar Alqadir, *Al-Ğawhar al-Ṭamīn fī Aḥbār Šaḥrā' al-Mulattamīn*, Unedited manuscript, f. 2.

62 B.O.A., Yıldız Perakende Evrakı Arzuhal Jurnal, 13/56, f. 3.

63 *Ibid.*, f. 4.

64 For more details, see D. HAMANI, 2006.

65 At this juncture, it is crucial to emphasize the absence of archival documents within the Ottoman archives pertaining to the narrative of Istanbulawa. While this narrative is likely a myth, it is noteworthy that there were numerous direct diplomatic interactions between Istanbul and various Kel Tamasheq communities. Throughout the 19th century, many Ineslemen agents from different Kel Tamasheq groups, predominantly from Kel Hoggar and Kel Azgher, resided in Istanbul. These individuals not only engaged in scholarly pursuits but also served as special envoys for their communities, facilitating communication with the Ottoman government; see S. ÇÖLGEÇEN, 2014. It appears that the strategy employed by Kel Air may have involved the fabrication of this narrative as a means to counter the *fermans* issued to other Kel

Tamasheq communities; therefore, it is important to highlight that this narrative extends beyond mere imaginary geographies.

66 This manuscript, presented in the form of a petition, is housed in the private family archive of Abubakr Ag Ghali in Ghat. To comprehend the connection between the narrative of Istanbulawa and Ghat's request for Ottoman governance, it is essential to consider the historical context. The transition of Ghadames to Ottoman control did not occur in 1843, but rather in the 1780s under the Qaramanli dynasty. From 1780 to 1830, Tripoli conducted regular missions to collect annual tribute from Ghadames, a portion of which was subsequently forwarded to Istanbul. However, during the civil war from 1830 to 1835, Ghadames ceased its tribute payments. Following the restoration of Ottoman control in 1835, the rebellion of Ghuma was quelled. Consequently, Ghadames did not acknowledge the newly appointed *vali* in 1835 until 1843, as Ghuma obstructed the route between Tripoli and Ghadames. It was only in 1843 that the Ottomans compelled Ghuma to vacate the region and subsequently dispatched an army to Ghadames, operating under the belief that the inhabitants of Ghadames were supporting Ghuma. Unlike the Qaramanli dynasty, the Ottomans appointed a *müdür* from Istanbul to govern the city, marking the first instance of external governance for the city's residents, although it was not their first experience under Ottoman rule. See AL-NAIB AL-ANSARI, 2008; NEHICÜDDİN EFENDİ, 1867. This distinction is significant when comparing Ghat and Ghadames: while Ghadames had been under Ottoman rule since the 1780s, Ghat had never experienced such governance. Therefore, the arrival of the Ottoman army in Ghadames was perceived not as a conquest but as the conclusion of a civil war, after which the Ottoman forces returned to Tripoli. Consequently, Ghat had no reason to fear a potential Ottoman invasion, as there were no claims or preparations from the Ottomans in that regard. Furthermore, when Ghat sought Ottoman rule, the Ottomans declined the request, asserting that Ghat had never been under their control. It appeared to the Ottoman authorities that Ghat's demand was motivated by the conflict between the Kel Hoggar and Kel Azgher. See B.O.A., İrade Dahiliye, 18969. Apparently, Ghat sought Ottoman protection in its struggle against Kel Hoggar. In this context, Ghat's request is pertinent to the narrative of Istanbulawa, as Ghat endeavoured to politically and militarily align itself with the Ottomans to counter the influence of Kel Hoggar, mirroring the earlier attempts of Kel Air in the Istanbulawa narrative.

67 MUHAMMAD BELU, 2013, p. 173.

68 Although the Ottoman Empire and the Turks (who were non-Muslim nomads in the medieval context) represent distinct issues, both epistemologically and historically, the local sources in the central Sudan barely considered this complexity. For instance, correspondence from Ghadames indicates that, during the 19th century, merchants consistently referred to the Ottoman Empire simply as "Turks". In one account, Belu recounts that his father requested him to compose a letter to Istanbul to express allegiance to the Ottoman caliph. However, Belu found this request to be illogical and questioned his father's reasoning: "Should we not write this letter to Fez, since they are from Qurayshi, while he who is in Istanbul is just a Turk?" See: N.A.N. O/AR, 12, "Çawāb Şāfin li-l-Murīd", f. 37..

69 B.Q. YUSHA, 2007, p. 333. At the first glance, speaking Turkish may appear to be expected behaviour for the Kel Azgher, as they were under Ottoman rule. Yet, it is noteworthy that within the entirety of Tripolitania, the Kel Azgher were the sole community to use Turkish, as the language was not a requisite for any local administrative matters. In this respect, there was no compelling incentive for other communities to adopt Turkish. In fact, it is arguably more surprising that the Kel Azgher would speak Turkish, considering that the Ottoman presence in Ghat was largely symbolic compared with other regions in Tripolitania. For instance, one of the *kaymakams* (second-ranking governor) of Ghat, who was an army commander dispatched from Istanbul, once attended a ceremonial event in the city. The female relatives of the amonakl of Kel Azgher frequently visited the city, where they would expect a tea ceremony from local inhabitants, predominantly merchants. The kaymakam observed that these women visited nearly all residents except for him. Consequently, he inquired as to why they did not expect a tea ceremony from him. The women responded, "You are sultan, we are sultan; who serves whom? For this reason, we do not visit you." This exchange led the kaymakam to recognize that their relationship in Ghat was characterized more by mutual respect than by obligation on the part of the Kel Azgher. See C. BAYKURT, 2009.

70 See B.Q. YUSHA, 2011, p. 21.

71 L.Y., Letter no. 2.

72 L.Y., Letter no. 4.

73 L.Y., Letter no. 15.

74 L.Y., Letter no. 129.

75 J.G.T.M., unclassified letter from 1853.

76 D.M.T., unclassified, in the section of the 19th century.

77 B.O.A., İrade Mesail-i Mühimme, 21578.

78 This tax was levied when the Ottoman sultan decided to go to war and assemble the army. The idea behind this tax was to support to sultan in the war.

79 For this information, see: U.L.A., Interview No. 5, with the elders of Ghadames in Ghadames, 2023.

80 For more details, see C. ATABAŞ, 2021.

81 This letter is in the private family archive of Muhammad al-Faqih in Tarhuna.

82 See the arguments regarding this concept in A. BATRAN, 1971, p. 268, fn 4.

83 See. L.Y., Letter no 10.

84 B. YUSHA, 2011, p. 20.

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### ***Pour citer cet article***

#### *Référence électronique*

Kerem Duymus, « Politico-Theological Debates in Ghadames between the 1770s and the 1850s from a Global Perspective », *Afriques* [En ligne], 15 | 2024, mis en ligne le 15 décembre 2024, consulté le 19 décembre 2024. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/afriques/5041> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/12xta>

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