

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE AND KANEM-  
BORNU DURING THE REIGN OF SULTAN MURAD III

A Master's Thesis

by

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of  
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MASTER OF ARTS

in

DEPARTMENT OF  
HISTORY  
İHSAN DOĐRAMACI BİLKENT UNIVERSITY  
ANKARA

September 2015

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in History.

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE AND KANEM-BORNU DURING THE REIGN OF SULTAN MURAD III**

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This thesis focuses on the relationship between the Ottoman Empire and Kanem-Bornu during the reign of Sultan Murad III (1574-1595) and that of mai Idris Alooma. It looks at the history of one of the main factors that led the Ottoman Empire in Africa, the Sahara trade. It describes the history of both the Ottomans in Tripoli and that of Kanem-Bornu. It analyses the role that the Ottoman Empire played in Tripoli and the regions south of it during the reign of Sultan Murad III. This research attempts to better contextualize the presence of the Ottoman Empire in Africa during the second half of the sixteenth century.

**Keywords:** The Ottoman Empire, Ottoman-African Relations, Ottoman Africa, Ottomans in North Africa, Kanem-Bornu, Sultan Murad III, mai Idris Alooma, Africa, Sahara Trade, Ottoman Tripoli.

## ÖZET

### SULTAN III. MURAT DÖNEMİNDE OSMANLI İMPARATORLUĞU İLE KANEM-BORNU ARASINDAKİ İLİŞKİLER

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Bu tez Sultan III. Murat ve Kral İdris Alooma dönemlerinde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ile Kanem-Bornu arasındaki ilişkiler üzerine odaklanmaktadır. Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nu Afrika'ya yönlendiren ana faktörlerden birinin tarihi, Sahra ticareti konu alınmaktadır. Osmanlıların ve Kanem-Bornu'nun Tripoli'deki tarihlerine değinilecektir. Sultan III. Murat döneminde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Tripoli ve güneyindeki bölgelerde oynadığı role bakılacaktır. Bu araştırma ile 16. yy'ın ikinci yarısında Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Afrika'daki durumuna genel olarak değinilmeye çalışılacaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Osmanlı-Afrika ilişkileri, Osmanlı Afrika, Kanem-Bornu, III. Murat, İdris Alooma, Afrika, Sahra ticareti, Tripoli.

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## CHAPTER I:

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Mahmut Bey's Expedition

In 1574 a unique event occurred in the history of the Ottoman Empire, under the leadership of Mahmut Bey, the *sancak bey* of the Fezzan, a *sancak* of the Ottoman Empire's *eyalet* of Tripoli, the Ottomans led an expedition south of the Fezzan reaching Lake Chad.<sup>1</sup> Historically the city of Tripoli has always had close ties to the region around Lake Chad, it was able to do so for three important factors. Tripoli had access to the Lake Chad region as a result of the Fezzan, which was a desert with numerous oases and towns. The Fezzan is a desert right to the south of Tripoli; it is to the north of the Kavar oasis, which in turn is just north of Lake Chad. After the Roman era in African history, crossing the Sahara desert became relatively easy and quick as a result of the arrival and use of camels by merchants and travelers. The trans-Saharan trading system, or the Sahara trade was also very attractive for the people living in Tripoli, so much so that they were willing to base a large part of their economy on the caravans that were

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<sup>1</sup> Aziz Samih İter, *Şimali Afrikada Türkler, II* (İstanbul, 1937), 128.

going in and out of the Sahara desert. All of this leads us to Mahmut bey, the *sancak bey* of the Fezzan, who made history by embarking on an expedition south of the Fezzan in 1574. He was the only Ottoman administrator that we know of who went south of the Fezzan and possibly even reached Lake Chad. Mahmut Bey's journey south of the Fezzan was a historical event in Ottoman history as it was the deepest Ottoman incursion in Africa and into the Sahara desert until Emin Paşa's journey to the Congo in the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Although the Ottomans would neither establish a permanent foothold around the Lake Chad region, nor would they ever return to the region; nonetheless the expedition had grave consequences in history as it caused mai Idris Aloom (1564-1596), the ruler of one of the most powerful African kingdoms of the sixteenth century, Kanem-Bornu, to send a diplomatic delegation of five to Istanbul.<sup>3</sup> The delegation of five, headed by Bornu's envoy El-Hajj (El-hac) Yusuf stayed in Istanbul for four years until they went back to Bornu.<sup>4</sup>

## 1.2 Sources and Methods

There are not many documents at our disposal for the document, as a result of the limitations of a master's thesis, the ten documents used and published by Cengiz Orhonlu and the three letters published by B. G. Martin were the basis of the primary sources of this thesis. Cengiz Orhonlu in his article "Osmanlı-Bornu Münâsebetine Âid

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<sup>2</sup> B. G. Martin, "Kanem, Bornu, and the Fazzan: Notes on the Political History of a Trade Route," *Journal of African History*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (1969), 24.

<sup>3</sup> Cengiz Orhonlu, "Osmanlı-Bornu Münasebetine Aid Belgeler," *İstanbul Edebiyat Fakültesi Matbaası*, Sayı 21, (Mart, 1969): 121.

<sup>4</sup> Orhonlu, "Osmanlı-Bornu," 121.

Belgeler,” used ten archival documents from the *Mühimme Defteri*. B. G. Martin the main African historian in the English language during the second half of the twentieth century used three letters or documents from the *Mühimme Defteri*. One of these letters was written in Ottoman Turkish, while the other two, which are the document except one is a longer version of the other was written in Arabic.

In the English language, B. G. Martin is not the only expert on Kanem-Bornu or the reign of mai Idris Aloomaa, but he was the first African historian to have used Ottoman sources when analyzing the reign of mai Idris Aloomaa. Besides B. G. Martin, none of the other African historians who analysed mai Idris Aloomaa’s reign used any Ottoman sources, relying primarily on Bornu’s various chronicles and Arab travelers travel logs. Other African historians who looked at the reign of mai Idris Aloomaa looked at it as a small factor in the Saadi-Ottoman rivalry during the reign of Sultan Murad III (1574-1495), but Bornu was never the focus of the research. On the Ottoman side, Cengiz Orhonlu was the only Ottoman historian who wrote about Kanem-Bornu as the main topic of his research before the nineteenth century. Besides Cengiz Orhonlu, nothing substantial has been written about Kanem-Bornu before the nineteenth century in Ottoman historiography. It is also a result of the documents provided by Cengiz Orhonlu that the year used in this thesis for both Mahmut Bey’s expedition south of the Fezzan as well as the year that mai Idris Aloomaa sent his diplomatic delegation was 1574 and not 1577. Most African historians used the year 1577 as the year that mai Idris Aloomaa sent his delegation to Istanbul, based on the documents provided by Cengiz Orhonlu in his previously mentioned article, that date was wrong and the correct year was not 1577 but in fact 1574.

Other archival materials used in this thesis were taken from the *Osmanlı Belgelerinde: Trablusgarb*. It is a book that only contains material from the Ottoman archives, and it deals solely with the Ottoman province of Tripoli. All of the documents used from this book were from the *Mühimme Defteri*.

Besides the Ottoman sources, the main source for mai Idris Aloomaa's reign is chronology of his reign written by the chief Imam of Bornu during his reign, the imam Ahmet ibn Fartua who wrote the *History of the First Twelve Years of the Reign of Mai Idris Aloomaa of Bornu, 1571-1583*. The edition that was used in this thesis was taken from H. R. Palmer's *Sudanese Memoirs*, who was one of the main translators of Kanem-Bornuan primary sources.

Other things to keep in mind before moving on are that whenever talking about the state that ruled over the region around Lake Chad, Kanem-Bornu is the term. When talking about mai Idris Aloomaa's reign (1564-1596), the term Bornu is used as it was at war against the people ruling over Kanem. Mai Idris Aloomaa's name can either be Aloomaa or Alawmaa, and so I decided to use the former (Aloomaa) since it is the most common and most used by both French and English historians. Finally, like most of Africa's history, the exact dates of mai Idris Aloomaa's reign are still debated, so I decided to use the dating from the *UNESCO GENERAL HISTORY OF AFRICA* books because they are the most thorough and most reliable secondary sources on African history.

### 1.3 Context

The relationship between Bornu and the Ottoman Empire during the reigns of mai Idris Aloomo (1564-1596) and Sultan Murad III (1574-1595) has been adequately researched by African historians, but only from a truly African perspective. It has been researched by only one Ottoman historian, mainly Cengiz Orhonlu, but other than him, it has not been adequately studied by Ottoman historians. African history is still fairly understudied compared to other regions of the world, and Ottoman research on Africa before the nineteenth century is not any different.<sup>5</sup> Much more research into the area is needed to properly understand the relationship between Africa and the Ottoman Empire before and during Ottoman rule over North Africa. The importance of Africa's role in history is slowly being recognized, and one of the ways in which it has played an important role in both world history and Ottoman history is through the trans-Saharan trading system.

The trans-Saharan trading system was the dominant economic system of Africa from the ninth until the end of the sixteenth century. It was an important economic system in the world economy before the Early Modern Era and it helped enriched the regions in which it operated. The trans-Saharan trading system underwent major decline when Europeans started to divert the trading routes from the interior of the continent to the exterior.<sup>6</sup> The trans-Saharan trading system was very vulnerable to and affected by European arrival and penetration of Africa and the Sahara trade. It should also be

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<sup>5</sup> Ahmet Kavas, *Osmanlı-Afrika İlişkileri* (İstanbul: Tasam Yayınları, 2006), 11.

<sup>6</sup> M. Malowist, "The struggle for international trade and its implications for Africa," in *UNESCO General History of Africa volume V: Africa from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, ed. B. A. Ogot (California: Heinemann Educational Books, 1992), 1.



mentioned that when the term “European arrival” is used, it means when Europeans were able to reach coastal parts of West Africa. Therefore, the turning point in the history of the trans-Saharan trading system was around 1450, when the Portuguese had acquired the ability to travel to West Africa without significant barriers.<sup>7</sup> The arrival of the Portuguese in West Africa, would lead to the rise of a new economic trading system based on the Atlantic Ocean.<sup>8</sup> This new Atlantic-oriented geo-economic system would be one of the main reasons for the decline of the trans-Saharan trading system.<sup>9</sup>

The Ottoman Empire played a fairly unique role in world history during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It was an empire on three continents that enjoyed the benefits and the faults of those continents and their respective economic systems. One of the factors that enabled the Ottomans to prosper during the sixteenth century was their close contact with West. During the sixteenth century, another factor that enabled the Ottomans to expand in Africa was the fact that Africa was in a vulnerable economic situation as a result of the changes occurring within the trans-Saharan trading system. As stated above, the Portuguese arrival in the 1450s truly was a pivotal moment in world history. It was the beginning of the end of the trans-Saharan trading system and of Africa’s economy; and it was the beginning of the rise of the West and the apogee of the Ottoman Empire. The Islamic world had a monopoly over the trans-Saharan trading system until European arrival in Africa which broke the Islamic world’s monopoly on African trade, and most importantly African gold. Since the ninth century, when the golden age of the Sahara trade began, the Islamic world, as a result of geography, had a

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<sup>7</sup> J. Devisse and S. Labib, “Africa in inter-continental relations,” in *UNESCO General History of Africa volume IV: Africa from the Twelfth to the Sixteenth Century*, ed. D. T. Niane (California: Heinemann Educational Books, 1981), 666.

<sup>8</sup> Malowist, “International trade,” 1.

<sup>9</sup> E. W. Bovill, *The Golden Trade of the Moors* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 114-115.

monopoly on African goods and so they were able to trade gold for salt. During the golden age of the trans-Saharan trading system, the people of the Sahel region would trade gold; a resource in relative abundance in that region, for salt a resource that was scarce in the Sahel but that was very common in North Africa and the Sahara desert.<sup>10</sup> Along with the trade in slaves and ivory, the trade of gold for salt was the foundation of the trans-Saharan trading system, an economic system that included almost all of the regions of Africa north of the jungle regions. Once Europeans reached the Senegambia, all of the trans-Saharan trading system changed for good, as the Islamic world now had a competitor for African goods in Western Europe.

The Ottoman Empire was also one of the immediate main beneficiaries of the decline of the trans-Saharan trading system. It was one of the main factors that made Mamluk Egypt's economy very vulnerable during the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century. It was also one of the primary factors that made Mamluk Egypt impotent to fight off alone the small kingdom of Portugal's blockade of the Red Sea.<sup>11</sup> In retrospect it seems very odd that such a small kingdom like Portugal was able to have the upper hand over Egypt on the sea, which was and still is one of Africa's and the Middle East's most populous and important countries or states. Clearly something important must have happened to Egypt's economy in order for it to be unable to defend itself. The impact of Portugal's diversion of the Sahara trade was one of the major reasons why the Mamluks were unable to fight off the Portuguese by themselves. In comparison, the rest of North Africa was not doing any better, North

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<sup>10</sup> Jacques Giri, *Histoire économique du Sahel* (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 1994), 112.

<sup>11</sup> Palmira Brummett, *Ottoman Seapower and Levantine Diplomacy in the Age of Discovery* (New York: State University of New York, 1994), 35.

Africa was a region that has few natural resources and yet was able to produce some of the most influential and powerful states in the Classical Islamic period. The decline of the trans-Saharan trading had an even bigger impact on both the rise and fall of North Africa. Less than a century after the Portuguese reached West Africa in the 1450s, that North Africa had become reduced to piracy, banditry, and its states were made or established by corsairs. The Ottomans were able to take advantage of the vulnerable state of all of North Africa in order to conquer and capture almost all of it by 1574. The Ottoman conquest of North Africa would have taken much longer had the entire region not been in a vulnerable state.

The trans-Saharan trading system was one of the main factors that enabled the Islamic world to prosper during the eighth to the sixteenth century. As a result of the decline of the Sahara trade, all of North Africa became significantly more economically vulnerable as a result of the disruption of the Sahara trade and the decrease in value of gold that was traded throughout Africa. It caused North Africa's economy to depend on piracy and slavery instead of building its economy based on the trade in gold. As a result, the Ottomans were in a position to aggressively expand in Africa, as the decline of the Sahara trade was a key factor that enabled them to conquer and occupy the region. However, as a result of the decline of the Sahara trade, a trade that the Ottomans had attempted to acquire a hold of when Mahmut bey went south of the Fezzan in 1574; the Ottoman Empire inherited the problems of the region. With the exception of Egypt, the rest of North Africa contributed very little economically to the Ottoman Empire, the lack of economic contributions from North Africa to the Ottoman Empire was a result of the decline of the region's primary economic system, the trans-Saharan trading system. This

leads to the primary objective of this thesis, mainly to put the Ottoman Empire into the context of Africa, as both Africa and the Ottoman Empire had major impacts on each other. This thesis' goal is to look at how the Ottoman Empire as a result of their *eyalet* of Tripoli, were able to have a major influence on the state of Bornu and the region around Lake Chad. The Ottoman Empire also had a major impact on Tripoli, as after the initial instability of the Ottoman rule, Tripoli became a fairly stable city throughout Ottoman rule. The lasting legacy of Ottoman Tripoli during the sixteenth century was the slave trade between Bornu and Tripoli, the penetration of the trans-Saharan trading system, Ottoman trade in guns to Bornu, and ultimately this thesis demonstrates that the Ottomans had a major impact and influence over the sub-Saharan African state of Bornu during the reign of Sultan Murad III.

#### **1.4 Objectives**

One of the Ottoman *eyalets* was Tripoli, which was what enabled the Ottomans to have friendly relations with Bornu. It enabled the Ottoman Empire to have access to a lot of variety in African slaves, from Bornu to Ethiopia. It helped the Ottoman Empire claim of universality be even greater as a result of having so many different subjects and of having so many different allies and neighbors. It enabled the Ottoman Empire to give what was essentially patronage to a smaller state and kingdom in Bornu. The Ottoman Empire also played a historical role in being the main supplier of firearms to Bornu during the reign of mai Idris Aloom, who was the first sub-Saharan African ruler to

obtain a good amount of firearms.<sup>12</sup>

The role of the Ottoman Empire and its relationship with Bornu during the reign of Sultan Murad III (1574-1595) is neither properly understood by an African nor the Ottoman point of view. This thesis has three primary objectives in answering that problem; the first is to help contribute to increased research into the Ottomans in Africa. The second objective of this thesis is to go in depth into the relationship between the Ottoman Empire during the reign of Sultan Murad III (1574-1595) and the ruler of Bornu mai (king) Idris Aloomaa (1564-1596). The last and main purpose of this thesis is to go in depth into the importance and impact of Africa to the Ottoman Empire in history, and of the Ottoman Empire's impact on Africa through history. All three objectives listed above lead to the following: mainly that the Ottoman Empire was shaped by the events happening in Africa and as a result were able to capture Tripoli in 1551 and so were able to continue the historical relations between Kanem-Bornu and the city and region of Tripoli. All of this led to the eventually proliferation of firearms in Bornu, where mai (king) Idris Aloomaa was able to use firearms in his wars and be the first sub-Saharan African ruler to successfully use guns, thus making him one of the most powerful rulers in sub-Saharan African history.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, the Ottoman Empire greatly expanded their influence in Africa and played a very influential role in sub-Saharan African history during the second half of the sixteenth century as a supplier of firearms.

The first chapter of this thesis is on the history of the trans-Saharan trading

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<sup>12</sup> Robert O. Colins and James M. Burns. *A History of Sub-Saharan Africa, Second Edition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 91.

<sup>13</sup> B. M. Barkindo, "Kanem-Borno: its relations with the Mediterranean Sea, Bagirmi and other states in the Chad basin," in *UNESCO General History of Africa volume V: Africa from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, ed. B. A. Ogot (California: Heinemann Educational Books, 1992), 495.

system. This is arguably the most important chapter of this thesis as it argues that the golden age of the Sahara trade was an important factor in the rise of the Islamic world into one of the most advanced and prosperous regions of the world during the eighth century until the sixteenth century. The trans-Saharan trading system played a key role in enriching Africa during the ninth century until the end of the sixteenth century. It was also a result of the Portuguese arrival in the mid fifteenth century, thus changing the Sahara trade on a permanent basis, which caused the slow decline of Africa and the Middle East, and led to the rise of the West. The decline of the Sahara trade was an important event that played a role in the conquest of Africa by the Ottomans. The role of the Ottoman Empire in Africa would have been fundamentally different had all of North Africa had not been facing the menace of a shrinking economy as a result of the decline of Africa's primary economic system, the trans-Saharan trading system.

The second chapter describes the history of Islam in Africa and the history of Kanem-Bornu. Islam played an important role in both the Ottoman Empire and Kanem-Bornu. It also played an important role in the identity of both states as well as some of the reasoning behind the diplomatic exchange between the two states. Simply put, the Ottomans who were in competition with Saadi Morocco were able to be viewed as the dominant Muslim power in the west, and they were also viewed as giving patronage to another Muslim state. Bornu gained a lot of prestige on the Islamic front, as not only were they historically the defender of the *Sunna* in the Lake Chad region; they were also able to have cordial relations with the most dominant Islamic power in the region, the Ottoman Empire. Finally, the history of Kanem-Bornu is introduced in this thesis and chapter because understanding the impact that the Ottomans had on Bornu is very

difficult if there is no context to, or knowledge of Bornu.

The third chapter is on the Ottoman Empire's *eyalet* of Tripoli. It is a brief history of the city of Tripoli before the Ottoman era and of the first four decades of Ottoman rule and administration in Tripoli. This chapter sets up the Ottoman position before the start of the diplomatic correspondence between Bornu and the Ottoman Empire. It also establishes the role of slavery, camels, and the Ottoman navy's importance to Ottoman control and rule over Tripoli. This chapter argues that Tripoli's most important value to the Ottoman Empire was slavery,<sup>14</sup> and Tripoli's main supplier of slaves was mai Idris Aloomaa's kingdom, Bornu.<sup>15</sup> This chapter also sets up Ottoman mentality towards its border provinces, providing Tripoli as a case in point. The Ottoman conception of the border province is important as one of the reasons why there was initially conflict between Bornu and the Ottoman Empire was over what the Ottomans viewed as being a defining element of their border with Bornu, mainly an important fortress.

The last chapter is about the relationship between Bornu and the Ottoman Empire during the reigns of mai Idris Aloomaa (1564-1596) and Sultan Murad III (1574-1595) as well as both the context of the relationship and the consequences of it. This chapter goes in-depth into guns in the Ottomans Empire and the important expansion of firearms within the Ottoman Empire during the reign of Sultan Murad III (1574-1595). Firearms are the primary reason that the Ottoman Empire made an impact on sub-Saharan African history by having its merchants in Tripoli and the Fezzan trade guns to

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<sup>14</sup> Ehud R. Toledano, *The Ottoman Slave Trade and its Suppression: 1840-1890* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 192.

<sup>15</sup> Murray Gordon, *Slavery in the Arab World* (New York: New Amsterdam Books, 1989) 115.

Bornu. It enabled mai Idris Aloomo to successfully use firearms to his advantage during his many wars and it cemented Bornu's status as the dominant kingdom in the Lake Chad region. This chapter also looks at the diplomatic side of things, mainly how the Ottomans viewed diplomacy and how they conceived Africa. It also goes in-depth into the historical rivalry between the Ottoman Empire and Saadi Morocco, which left Bornu in the middle of the two powers and in a vulnerable position.<sup>16</sup> The rivalry between the Saadis and the Ottomans were also one of the reasons why Bornu wanted firearms from the Ottomans, in case either one of these powers had plans to conquer the region. Mai Idris Aloomo's fears proved to be true with the Saadi invasion and conquest of Songhai, which had major repercussions throughout Africa, and was one of the major elements that ended the golden age of the trans-Saharan trading system. Besides these factors, the last part of the last chapter is an analysis of the three letters that remain from the diplomatic correspondence between Bornu and the Ottoman Empire and archival Ottoman about Bornu, the Fezzan, and Tripoli.

The ultimate purpose of this thesis is to prove that the Ottoman Empire had a lasting legacy in Tripoli. From Tripoli the Ottomans were able to give stability to the entire region surrounding the city and have a major impact on the history of the region surrounding Lake Chad. The Ottoman Empire during the reign of Sultan Murad III (1574-1595) played an important role in the expansion of the kingdom of Bornu under the leadership of its king, mai Idris Aloomo. The Ottoman Empire has played an important role in African history, a role that has largely been under researched; the goal of this thesis is to help fill the void in Ottoman-African relations throughout history.

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<sup>16</sup> Abderrahmane El Mouddeh, "The Idea of the Caliphate between Moroccans and Ottomans: Political and Symbolic stakes in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Century-Maghrib," *Studia Islamica*, No. 82 (1995), 110.



## CHAPTER II:

### THE TRANS-SAHARAN TRADING SYSTEM

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the trans-Saharan trading system which was one of the most important factors that led to the Lake Chad becoming a part of Ottoman sphere of influence. It was the main economic trading system of Africa before the early modern era and its peak was between the ninth to the end of the sixteenth century.<sup>17</sup> This chapter explores the Sahara trade and its impact on both the world and on the Ottomans. The major argument of this thesis is that the importance of the Sahara trade is what led to the creation of this thesis; mainly to demonstrate that a far away region like the Sahara desert had a major impact on the Ottoman Empire and the world. Ultimately, the Ottoman Empire successfully integrated its *eyalet* of Tripoli into the trans-Saharan trading system during the reign of Sultan Murad III. This chapter also introduces and examines the close relations between Tripoli and the Lake Chad region, which were far reaching and ancient. The trans-Saharan trading system enabled both Africa and the Islamic world to prosper and grow, which changed as a result of the gradual decline of

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<sup>17</sup> Bovill, *Golden Trade*, 106.

the Sahara trade after the Portuguese arrival in West Africa in the 1450s. Before the arrival of the Portuguese, the trans-Saharan trading system was based on the trade of gold for salt. The Sahel region of Africa was rich in gold but poor in salt, so they traded with the peoples of North Africa and the Sahara desert in order to get salt, in exchange they traded gold. Although always important and omnipresent in the trans-Saharan trading system, slavery had always been the second most valuable commodity of the Sahara trade. The arrival of the Portuguese in West Africa is what turned slavery into the most important commodity of the Sahara trade, replacing gold as Africa's most valuable resource. The important changes that the Portuguese arrival to West Africa brought about fundamental changes throughout the entire continent of Africa were one of the main factors that led to the Ottoman Empire conquering and capturing Africa.

This chapter is mainly an introduction to the trans-Saharan trading system, the decline of which was an important factor in the Ottoman Empire conquest of North Africa. The first section is on the impact of camels, which is followed by the nature of the trans-Saharan trading system. Those two sections are followed by the early history of the trans-Saharan trading system and the impact of Islam had on it. The next two sections are about the trade routes between Tripoli and the Lake Chad region. Following those sections are on the impact of the Sahara trade, followed by its decline, and the last section deals with the relationship between the trans-Saharan trading system and the Ottoman Empire.

## 2.2 The Arrival of Camels into the Sahara Desert

The golden age of the trans-Saharan trading system was from the eighth century until the sixteenth century.<sup>18</sup> The trans-Saharan trading system began with the slow arrival of the camel to the Sahara desert. Although there was interaction between the regions north and south of the Sahara desert, it was not on an important scale as it would be with the arrival of the camel. E. W. Bovill described the relationship between the regions north and south of the Sahara desert as “for centuries before the introduction of the camel into the Sahara (an event that took place about the beginning of the Christian era) men were accustomed to move about the desert with oxen, in horse-drawn chariots, or on horse-back.”<sup>19</sup>

Regardless if other animals like the horse or the oxen were able to transport people from south to north or from north to south of Sahara desert, none of this was on a large scale. Interaction between north and south of the Sahara only started to become more systematic and large in scale after the arrival of the camel in North Africa and the Sahara desert. The camel first arrived in Africa during the Persian conquest of Egypt in 500 BCE.<sup>20</sup> The arrival of the camel from the Arabian Peninsula into Africa revolutionized the economy of the continent, by enabling the transportation of people and goods on a larger scale. Although the camel was introduced to Egypt as a result of the Persian conquest around 500 BCE, the exact century in which the camel came to North Africa west of Egypt is still a matter of debate. However at some point during the years 46

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<sup>18</sup> Bovill, *Golden Trade*, 106.

<sup>19</sup> Bovill, *Golden Trade*, 15.

<sup>20</sup> J. Ki-Zerbo, “African prehistoric art,” in *UNESCO General History of Africa volume I: Methodology and African Prehistory*, ed. J. Ki-Zerbo (California: Heinemann Educational Books, 1981), 660.

BCE to 363 CE, the camel became common enough in North Africa to be used by the Roman army.<sup>21</sup> The camel enabled nomadism to spread in the Sahara desert and enabled communication and trade to occur between the peoples of North Africa and the Sahel region. The increasingly widespread use of the dromedary, from the second and third centuries, in the regions surrounding the Sahara desert were traversed by routes running southwards and eastwards. This probably had the effect of reviving a nomadic way of life by facilitating travel, so that wandering tribes had less difficulty in finding pasture for their flocks and herds and in plundering caravans and sedentary communities influenced in various degrees by Roman civilization.<sup>22</sup>

In other words, the camel enabled greater communication and contact between nomads and sedentary peoples. It enabled the Romans to participate in and potential help establish some of the trans-Saharan caravan trade.<sup>23</sup> It would appear that the roots of the trans-Saharan trading system were established during the Roman era; however, the Sahara trade never became truly massive or important to the world outside of Africa until the coming of Islam. The significance of this is the following: the resources that the Sahel region of Africa could provide to the Romans like gold, slaves, ivory, and big animals (like lions) were available to the Roman Empire in more accessible locations.<sup>24</sup> For example, the Romans got their gold from the mines in Spain, their slaves from the Black Sea Region, their ivory and big animals from North Africa. They were also able to

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<sup>21</sup> Bovill, *Golden Trade*, 38.

<sup>22</sup> A. Mahjoubi and P. Salama, "The Roman and post-Roman period in North Africa," in *UNESCO General History of Africa volume II: Ancient Civilizations of Africa*, ed. G. Mokhtar (California: Heinemann Educational Books, 1981), 491.

<sup>23</sup> Mahjoubi and Salama, "North Africa," 490-491.

<sup>24</sup> Bovill, *Golden Trade*, 40.

acquire slaves, ivory, and big animals from the trade with Aksum or Ethiopia.<sup>25</sup> Thus, although the Roman Empire did establish trade with the Sahel region of Africa, it was on a much more minor scale than what it would turn into during the Golden Age of Islam (Umayyads and Abbasids). The Romans also expanded into parts of the Sahara deserts like the Fezzan,<sup>26</sup> and so were able to help set-up what would become the trans-Saharan trading. Therefore, the Roman era in North African history, as a result of the expansion of camels throughout North Africa and the advances made under Roman rule enabled the entire region to expand during the centuries that would follow the Roman period.<sup>27</sup>

### **2.3 The Nature of the Trans-Saharan Trading System**

One of the major problems with African history is the lack of written sources before the tenth century, although this is a common problem throughout the history of all regions of the world, the continent of Africa before the tenth century had very little written documentation.<sup>28</sup> Based on the written and on archaeological sources, by the mid-eight century, there was in fact contact, trade, and expeditions between the regions north and south of the Sahara desert.<sup>29</sup> Around the same period of time and within the trans-Sahara trading system there was an important and documented migration of Arabs and Berbers from North Africa into the Sahel region of Africa, notably and including the

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<sup>25</sup> Bovill, *Golden Trade*, 41.

<sup>26</sup> René Pottier, *Histoire du Sahara* (Paris : Nouvelle Éditions Latines, 1947), 129.

<sup>27</sup> Charles-André Julien. *Histoire de l'Afrique du Nord: des origines à 1830* (Paris: Grande Bibliothèque Payot, 1994), 184.

<sup>28</sup> Bovill, *Golden Trade*, 51.

<sup>29</sup> Bovill, *Golden Trade*, 69.

Lake Chad region during the eighth and ninth centuries.<sup>30</sup> Based on both primary and secondary sources, it was in the eighth century that the trans-Saharan trading system started to become one of the major economic systems that the Islamic world would integrate itself into.<sup>31</sup> The trans-Saharan trading system became crucial to both the growth and prosperity of the Islamic world because it provided the Islamic world with a monopoly of many valuable goods from Africa, most notably gold and slaves.<sup>32</sup> As a result of being the only accessible part of the world on land, as well as eventually dominating the western half of the Indian Ocean trade, the Islamic world was able to have a monopoly over the resources of Africa. The economic system or world that sent African goods and resources from the interior and the heartland of the continent to its edges and then to different continents was called the trans-Saharan trading system.

The most important and most famous of the resources that was exported from Africa to the rest of the world as a result of the trans-Saharan trading system were gold,<sup>33</sup> slaves,<sup>34</sup> and ivory.<sup>35</sup> These commodities, notably gold, were crucial in solidifying the economy of the importing states until the fifteen and sixteenth centuries. One of the most important reasons the Islamic world greatly benefitted from commerce in the trans-Saharan trading system, was the fact that North Africans were able to trade salt for gold.<sup>36</sup> There were many reasons why the Sahelian peoples traded gold for salt, the most

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<sup>30</sup> Jean-Claude Zeltner, *Histoire des Arabes sur les rives du lac Tchad* (Paris : Éditions Karthala, 2002), 9.

<sup>31</sup> I. Hrbek, "Africa in the context of world history," in *UNESCO General History of Africa volume III: Africa from the Seventh to the Eleventh Century*, ed. M. Elfasi and I. Hrbek (California: Heinemann Educational Books, 1981), 8.

<sup>32</sup> Giri, *Histoire économique*, 124.

<sup>33</sup> Giri, *Histoire économique*, 97.

<sup>34</sup> Robert and Burns, *History of Sub-Saharan Africa*, 202.

<sup>35</sup> Giri, *Histoire économique*, 111.

<sup>36</sup> Bernard Nantet, *Histoire du Sahara et des sahariens* (Paris : Ibis Press, 2008), 186.

important of which was that the Sahel region of Africa had a scarcity in salt.<sup>37</sup> Salt is a crucial and fundamental resource that almost every society's needs, the Sahel region of Africa had very little of it, that is why they traded gold for salt. Salt was so important to the peoples living in the Sudan, that many of the Sudanese or Sahelian empires tried to control or acquire the control over the various salt mines or salt producing regions of the Sahara desert and its oases.<sup>38</sup>

One of the states that tried to take control over a salt mine in the Sahara desert was Kanem-Bornu, which throughout its history tried to control and to occupy the oasis of Bilma, which was rich in salt.<sup>39</sup> The oasis of Bilma is located in the Sahara desert, south of the Fezzan and north of Lake Chad; it was a resting place for caravans going between Tripoli and the Lake Chad region.<sup>40</sup> The oasis of Bilma is very similar to many of the oases in the Sahara desert, mainly it either has a lot of salt in the region, or there are salt mines nearby. Unlike the Sahel region of Africa which had very little salt,<sup>41</sup> the Sahara desert was quite the opposite; it had an abundance of salt.<sup>42</sup>

The fact that the Sahara desert has an abundance of salt was one of the crucial elements that ignited the trans-Saharan trading system. It was the one resource that was in high demand in the Sahel region, that North Africans were able to easily get their hands on and trade with them for valuable goods like: gold, ivory, slaves, etc. In the Mediterranean world, salt was not scarce like it was in the Sahel region, therefore an

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<sup>37</sup> Giri, *Histoire économique*, 112.

<sup>38</sup> Giri, *Histoire économique*, 113.

<sup>39</sup> Paul E. Lovejoy, "The Borno Salt Industry," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (1978): 629.

<sup>40</sup> J. Spencer Trimingham, *A History of Islam in West Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 107.

<sup>41</sup> Lovejoy, "The Borno Salt Industry," 112.

<sup>42</sup> Lovejoy, "The Borno Salt Industry," 112.

abundant resource like salt was able to be traded by North Africans with the Sahel region for much more valuable resources like gold. Both north and south of the Sahara desert were winners in the trans-Saharan trading system, but it is absolutely clear that the North Africans were dependent much more on the Sahel region, than the later was on North Africa.

The trans-Saharan trading system proved to be the most important source of gold for not only the Islamic world, but also Western Europe. Europe has historically been one of poorest regions of the world in terms of natural resources, one of the resources that it did not have an abundance of in its history after the fall of the Western Roman Empire, was gold.<sup>43</sup> Besides having a much greater amount of ivory,<sup>44</sup> the Sahel region of Africa had a lot more gold than Europe.<sup>45</sup> The Sahel region's gold has had a huge impact on the world economy before the arrival of the Portuguese in West Africa around 1450. Until the exploitation of the New World in the sixteenth century, the gold for European kings, Arab Sultans, and their merchants came from West Africa.<sup>46</sup>

The gold that was traded in the trans-Saharan trading system played a crucial role in the economic formation of the world, as it was the primary exporter of gold to the world west of China.<sup>47</sup> It was transported and traded both in its natural rocky form and in powder.<sup>48</sup> Gold came from the Western Sahel region and not the central part where

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<sup>43</sup> Giri, *Histoire économique*, 92.

<sup>44</sup> F. Anfray, "The civilization of Aksum from the first to the seventh century," in *UNESCO General History of Africa volume II: Ancient Civilizations of Africa*, ed. G. Mokhtar (California: Heinemann Educational Books, 1981), 377.

<sup>45</sup> Giri, *Histoire économique*, 93.

<sup>46</sup> Colins and Burns, *Sub-Saharan Africa*, 232.

<sup>47</sup> Giri, *Histoire économique*, 92.

<sup>48</sup> Giri, *Histoire économique*, 91.



Kanem-Bornu was.<sup>49</sup> It was transported from the Western Sahel to the north into Morocco and east to the Lake Chad region and the Fezzan, from there it was sent to Tripoli, Egypt, and today's Sudan.<sup>50</sup> Once it reached North Africa, the gold was turned into jewelry and other luxury items as well as into *dinars* and integrated the monetary system of the Mediterranean world.<sup>51</sup> Europeans merchants from Genoa, Majorca, and Barcelona went to Moroccan markets to offer European goods for gold. However, not all the gold that went to Europe stayed there; some of it went back to the Middle East to finance commerce there.<sup>52</sup>

The Islamic world greatly benefitted from the monopoly it had on African gold which was one of the factors that enabled several Islamic states to establish gold currency. For centuries the trans-Saharan trading system was one of the main factors that enabled various Islamic states to prosper and dominate its Christian neighbors as a result of the importation of gold in exchange for salt. There is also a high probability that Europe might never have been able to expand as quickly and as thoroughly had it not been for their penetration and disruption of the trans-Saharan trading system in the second half of the fifteenth century.

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<sup>49</sup> Giri, *Histoire économique*, 92.

<sup>50</sup> Giri, *Histoire économique*, 92.

<sup>51</sup> Giri, *Histoire économique*, 92.

<sup>52</sup> Giri, *Histoire économique*, 92.

### 2.3 The Early History of the Sahara Trade

The importance of the trans-Saharan trading system and the goods that were traded in it has been discussed. In this section the history of the trade and its role in the Lake Chad region will be discussed in greater length. The trans-Saharan trading system and the Lake Chad region have a very long history that predates the rise of Islam.<sup>53</sup> Many historians have argued that the Garamantes (ancient Berbers) from Tripolitania had links with the region south of the Sahara desert.<sup>54</sup> In fact the trade route from the Fezzan to Tripoli (Trablusgarb) was called the Garamantian road.<sup>55</sup> There is only archaeological evidence of pre-Garamantian involvement in the trans-Saharan trading system,<sup>56</sup> so the structure for what would become trans-Saharan trading was established by both the Garamantes and by the arrival of the camels from Egypt to the rest of North Africa. Originally the Garamantes traded with the Carthaginians, the extent of that trade is still poorly understood, but what we do know is that there was important trade occurring between the peoples who lived in North Africa<sup>57</sup> (the Carthaginians) and the peoples of the Sahara (the Garamantes).<sup>58</sup>

Once the Romans invaded and conquered Carthage in 146 BCE, they replaced the role of Carthage<sup>59</sup> and slowly tried to replace the role of the Garamantes.<sup>60</sup> The

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<sup>53</sup> Bovill, *Golden Trade*, 15.

<sup>54</sup> Bovill, *Golden Trade*, 20.

<sup>55</sup> Bovill, *Golden Trade*, 22.

<sup>56</sup> P. Salama, "The Sahara in classical antiquity," in *UNESCO General History of Africa volume II: Ancient Civilizations of Africa*, ed. G. Mokhtar (California: Heinemann Educational Books, 1981), 523.

<sup>57</sup> Julien, *Histoire de l'Afrique du Nord*, 184.

<sup>58</sup> Bovill, *Golden Trade*, 18-20.

<sup>59</sup> Mahjoubi and Salama, "North Africa," 465.

<sup>60</sup> Bovill, *Golden Trade*, 32.

Romans were also actively engaged in the pre trans-Saharan trading system,<sup>61</sup> they built extensive forts and trading posts along the Sahara desert.<sup>62</sup> The Romans had led various military expeditions into the Fezzan,<sup>63</sup> even having a permanent military garrison there.<sup>64</sup>

One of the changes that occurred during the Roman era, that enabled them to have an influence on the future of the trans-Saharan trading system was that by the end of the fourth century, the Romans had adopted the camel as a means of transportation within North Africa and the Sahara desert.<sup>65</sup> Not only did the Romans start using the camels in the region, the camels themselves had finally come to the region both west and south of Egypt during the end of the fourth century.<sup>66</sup> Another important factor besides the arrival of the camels into North Africa and the Sahara desert was the problems and tensions between the Romans and Berbers.<sup>67</sup> The Romans were conquerors who as they did everywhere else, tried to Romanize North Africa.<sup>68</sup> There was a lot of Berber resistance to this, which is one of the reasons why a lot of Berbers migrated to the Sahara desert.<sup>69</sup> Obviously, the arrival and the increasing abundance of the camel in Africa enabled the Berbers to migrate to the Sahara desert and the region south of it.<sup>70</sup> As mentioned earlier, the arrival of the camel within North Africa and the Sahara desert changed everything. It was under the Romans in the fourth century that

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<sup>61</sup> Salama, "The Sahara," 529-530.

<sup>62</sup> Mahjoubi and Salama, "North Africa," 466-468.

<sup>63</sup> Pottier, *Histoire du Sahara*, 129.

<sup>64</sup> Bovill, *Golden Trade*, 32.

<sup>65</sup> Bovill, *Golden Trade*, 37.

<sup>66</sup> Bovill, *Golden Trade*, 38.

<sup>67</sup> Julien, *Histoire de l'Afrique du Nord*, 156.

<sup>68</sup> Julien, *Histoire de l'Afrique du Nord*, 179.

<sup>69</sup> Julien, *Histoire de l'Afrique du Nord*, 192-193.

<sup>70</sup> Julien, *Histoire de l'Afrique du Nord*, 192-193.

the trans-Saharan trading system would truly be established.

The era between the fall of the Western Roman Empire and the rise of Islam is very little understood in North African history. The reason being is that unlike the previous centuries under Roman control, even during the Carthaginian era, there was a relatively small amount of written sources.<sup>71</sup> Regardless during the Vandal and Byzantine era, the trans-Saharan trading system must have expanded both geographically and commercially. When Islam came into the region, the trans-Saharan trading system would explode in importance and be able to sustain North African, Middle Eastern, and Andalusian demands for Sahelian goods. The early version of the trade was begun under the auspices of Carthage and the Garamantes, than under the Romans and the Garamantes, followed by the Vandals and Byzantines, until Islam came into the region and enabled the trade to increase both in size and in importance.

#### **2.4 Rise of Islam and the Trans-Saharan Trading System**

Islam's role in the trans-Saharan trading system was incremental to its rise. It should be said that Islam and the trans-Saharan trading system are interconnected and one needed the other in order to fully expand in Africa. The Islamic world would never have been as prosperous, culturally engaging, and powerful had it not had a monopoly on the trans-Saharan trading system. The relationship between the trans-Saharan trading system and Islam was that the former enabled the Islamic world to prosper, but in order

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<sup>71</sup> Salama, "The Sahara," 529.

to gain access to the Sahara trade, a merchant had to be or appear to be Muslim. Islam also offered a very large market of exportation for the trans-Saharan trading system, since the trans-Saharan trading system's goods would be traded beyond North Africa, the Horn of Africa, and the Swahili coast. Once the goods reached those parts of Africa, they would be sent to different trading systems like the Mediterranean world, the Middle East, the Silk Road, and the Indian Ocean.

Islam initially came into the African continent as a result of the conquest of Egypt in 639-642 and from that point onwards, both north and south of the Sahara would have a similar situation in which the majority of the population would be non-Muslim but the ruling elites were Muslims. It took centuries for the general population to convert to Islam.<sup>72</sup> Thus Islam slowly spread into Africa from the seventh century onwards and by the thirteenth century it became the religion of the aristocracy of many of the kingdoms and empires in the Sahel region of Africa<sup>73</sup> (with the notable exception of Christian Nubia).<sup>74</sup>

One of the first regions and kingdoms from south of the Sahara to have its rulers and ruling dynasty converted to Islam was the kingdom of Kanem in the Lake Chad region.<sup>75</sup> Mai Hummay (c. 1080-1097) was the leader of the Sefuwa dynasty that got rid of a previous state and dynasty that had dominated the Lake Chad region, the Zaghawa

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<sup>72</sup> L. Kropacek, "Nubia from the late 12<sup>th</sup> century to the Funj conquest in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century," in *UNESCO General History of Africa volume IV: Africa from the Twelfth to the Sixteenth Century*, ed. D. T. Niane (California: Heinemann Educational Books, 1981), 407.

<sup>73</sup> Colins and Burns, *Sub-Saharan Africa*, 84.

<sup>74</sup> S. Jakobielski, "Christian Nubia at the height of its civilization," in *UNESCO General History of Africa volume III: Africa from the Seventh to the Eleventh Century*, ed. M. El Fasi and I. Hrbek (California: Heinemann Educational Books, 1981), 211-216.

<sup>75</sup> John Wright, *Libya, Chad, and the Central Sahara* (New Jersey: Barnes & Nobles Books, 1989), 33.

who were a Berber kingdom and dynasty.<sup>76</sup> Mai Hummay was not only the first ruler of the Sefuwa dynasty in Kanem-Bornu's history; he was also the first of its rulers to convert to Islam.<sup>77</sup> By the twelfth century, during the reign of mai Dunama (c. 1210-48), Islam would be cemented as the religion of both the Sefuwa dynasty and its nobility, but also of the Lake Chad region.<sup>78</sup> Mai Dunama would spend numerous military campaigns throughout the Lake Chad region fighting non-Muslim rival kingdoms.<sup>79</sup> He would also be a very big promoter of Islam with his subjects<sup>80</sup> and made various attempts at making the pilgrimage to Mecca.<sup>81</sup> From the reign of mai Dunama (c. 1210-48) until that of mai Idris Aloom (c. 1564-96), Islam would continue to spread, integrate, and cement itself in the Lake Chad region.<sup>82</sup> The rulers of Kanem-Bornu would become patrons of Islam and played a key role in its spread throughout the whole region, including the neighboring Hausa city-states.<sup>83</sup>

Besides starting or being incremental to the start of a new age in the history of Africa, Islam also led to the rise in the amount written sources on and in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>84</sup> The impact of Islam on Africa and the Lake Chad region was very positive on all fronts, but none more so than economical. The conversion of Kanem-Bornu's rulers and elites to Islam enabled them to participate in the trans-Saharan trading system as

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<sup>76</sup> Colins and Burns, *Sub-Saharan Africa*, 89-90.

<sup>77</sup> Colins and Burns, *Sub-Saharan Africa*, 89-90.

<sup>78</sup> Colins and Burns, *Sub-Saharan Africa*, 90.

<sup>79</sup> Jean-Claude Zeltner, *Pages d'histoire du Kanem* (Paris : L'Harmattan, 1980), 49.

<sup>80</sup> Zeltner, *Pages d'histoire du Kanem*, 47.

<sup>81</sup> Zeltner, *Pages d'histoire du Kanem*, 50.

<sup>82</sup> Nehemia Levtzion and Randall L. Pouwels, "Introduction: Patterns of Islamization and Varieties of Religious Experience among Muslims of Africa," in *The History of Islam in Africa*, ed. Nehemia Levtzion and Randall L. Pouwels (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), 5.

<sup>83</sup> M. El Fasi and I. Hrbek, "Stages in the development of Islam and its dissemination in Africa," in *UNESCO General History of Africa volume III: Africa from the Seventh to the Eleventh Century*, ed. M. El Fasi and I. Hrbek (California: Heinemann Educational Books, 1981), 79-80.

<sup>84</sup> Djait, "Written sources," 89.

merchants and traders, which had been slowly turning into a Muslim dominated commercial and economic region.<sup>85</sup> The reason for the trans-Saharan trading system's Islamic overtones is quite simple; it was dominated by both North African (Muslim) merchants<sup>86</sup> and Berbers who over time slowly converted to Islam.<sup>87</sup> Throughout the history of the trans-Saharan trading system, North African and Berber merchants lived and traded on both sides (north and south) of the Sahara desert.<sup>88</sup>

Although initially some of the Berbers were not necessarily Muslim, or Sunni Muslim, eventually by the eleventh and twelfth century the majority of them became Sunni Muslims.<sup>89</sup> In fact, the Sahel region of Africa's first contact with Islam was probably by Khariji merchants.<sup>90</sup> Overall, it was a result of the expansion of the trans-Saharan trading system by North African merchants that both spread Islam throughout Sahelian Africa, but also made it the religion of the trading system. The trans-Saharan trading system had highly organized external commercial links across the desert. These highways, though slow and hazardous, connected the region to the international economy centuries before the industrial revolution enabled the major European powers to increase their penetration of the underdeveloped world.<sup>91</sup>

Islam via the expansion and demand by North African merchants for Sahelian goods like gold, slaves, ivory, and other resources led to the dramatic expansion of this trading system. North African and Berber merchants were well-connected in North Africa, with

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<sup>85</sup> Levtzion and Pouwels, "Introduction," 2.

<sup>86</sup> Colins and Burns, *Sub-Saharan Africa*, 81.

<sup>87</sup> Peter von Sivers, "Egypt and North Africa," in *The History of Islam in Africa*, ed. Nehemia Levtzion and Randall L. Pouwels (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), 25.

<sup>88</sup> Sivers, "Egypt and North Africa," 24.

<sup>89</sup> Levtzion and Pouwels, "Introduction," 2.

<sup>90</sup> Sivers, "Egypt and North Africa," 24.

<sup>91</sup> A. G. Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa* (Harlow: Longman, 1993) 78.

the Sahara desert, and the Sahel region. The North Africans had merchants' colonies of sorts in both the Sahara desert and the Sahel region of Africa.<sup>92</sup> Being Muslim in Africa during the seventh to sixteenth centuries was like being a privileged member to a society in which very few outsiders were able to have access to it. Overall, Islam played a key role in the expansion of trade in Africa and the increased prosperity of Sahelian Africa during the seventh to sixteenth centuries.

Although an important percentage, if not a majority of merchants came from North Africa, there were also Sahelian or black merchants that traded and went to the Sahara desert and North Africa.<sup>93</sup> There was even Sahelian or black merchant colonies in both North Africa and Egypt.<sup>94</sup> Evidence or proof of this is the various pilgrimages done by both the rulers and subjects of the Sahelian kingdoms and empires<sup>95</sup> (like mai Dunama),<sup>96</sup> as well as the various *madrassa* for Sahelian people established in both North Africa and Egypt.<sup>97</sup> The establishment of *madrassa* for the people living south of the Sahara implies that there would have been a steady colony of Sahelian or Sudanese people living in both North Africa and Egypt.<sup>98</sup>

There were three primary reasons why people from the Sahel region of Africa would live and establish themselves in and north of the Sahara desert. The first was for trade, mainly that there was an important advantage in trading north of the Sahel region of Africa, which is why there were various colonies of Sahelian people throughout the

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<sup>92</sup> Giri, *Histoire économique*, 35.

<sup>93</sup> Zeltner, *Pages d'histoire du Kanem*, 61

<sup>94</sup> Zeltner, *Pages d'histoire du Kanem*, 61.

<sup>95</sup> Spencer J. Trimingham, *A History of Islam in West Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 107-108.

<sup>96</sup> Zeltner, *Pages d'histoire du Kanem*, 50.

<sup>97</sup> Trimingham, *Islam in West Africa*, 107-108.

<sup>98</sup> Trimingham, *Islam in West Africa*, 107-108.



Sahara desert and the region north of it. The second was for religious education, mainly that North Africa; especially Egypt was a place where men of the Sahel could go to get a religious education.<sup>99</sup> The third reason was the pilgrimage to Mecca, which often, but not always, went through Egypt, thus creating an incentive for the previously mentioned two points to occur. The pilgrimage to Mecca made the peoples from the Sahel travel to Egypt and North Africa, thus creating an incentive for those people to have people of their community living there. An example of this would be the Dyula people who were the main merchants in the Western Sudan,<sup>100</sup> they played a key role in the gold trade,<sup>101</sup> and they were the ones who brought the gold from the mines on the Upper Niger to various towns and cities in the Sahel and the Sahara desert.<sup>102</sup>

## **2.5 Links between Tripoli and Lake Chad**

Tripoli has been called the gateway to the Sahara desert and the trans-Saharan trading system.<sup>103</sup> In the classical era, it had links with the Garamantes and their various commercial endeavors in the Fezzan. The Fezzan has been a region that Tripoli has been very close to commercially.<sup>104</sup> The Fezzan has also been a region of Africa that was not

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<sup>99</sup> Roland Oliver, "Introduction: some interregional themes," in *The Cambridge History of Africa, volume 3: From c. 1050 to c. 1600*, ed. Roland Oliver (London: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 1.

<sup>100</sup> Colins and Burns, *Sub-Saharan Africa*, 81.

<sup>101</sup> Colins and Burns, *Sub-Saharan Africa*, 81.

<sup>102</sup> Colins and Burns, *Sub-Saharan Africa*, 81.

<sup>103</sup> Bovill, *Golden Trade*, 21.

<sup>104</sup> Gustav Nachtigal, *Sahara and Sudan IV: Wadai and Darfur*, trans. Allan G. B. Fisher and Humphrey J. Fisher (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1971), 8.

only close to Tripoli, but also to the Lake Chad region.<sup>105</sup> The Lake Chad region was ruled by some of the first Muslim rulers in Sahelian history, mainly mai Hummay (c. 1080-1097),<sup>106</sup> which occurred as a result of the close proximity and already well-established trading system between Lake Chad region, the oasis of Kawar, the Fezzan, and Tripoli. Kanem-Bornu's first ruler was Muslim as a result of the close proximity that the Lake Chad region had to the Fezzan and Tripoli, which was ruled by Muslim states in North Africa.

Unlike West Africa where most of the gold came from in the trans-Saharan trading system, the Lake Chad region did not have an abundance of gold and gold mines like the rest of the Sudan. It did have a considerable amount of gold imported and transported from West Africa,<sup>107</sup> with which it had very close ties and a long history of commercial relations.<sup>108</sup> In fact the maïs of Kanem-Bornu were known by both medieval Arab geographers and nineteenth century European explorers like Guvtav Nachtigal<sup>109</sup> as being extremely rich in gold.<sup>110</sup> Although they did not have an abundance of gold as a regional natural resource like West Africa did, the rulers of Kanem-Bornu did have a substantial amount via trade, much of which they also traded north to the traders in the Fezzan and Tripoli.<sup>111</sup> Unlike the Western Sudan, the Lake Chad region's main commodity to send up north to Tripoli was not gold; it was in fact

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<sup>105</sup> Nachtigal, *Sahara*, 6.

<sup>106</sup> Wright, *Libya*, 33.

<sup>107</sup> Giri, *Histoire économique*, 92.

<sup>108</sup> Y. Urvoy, *Histoire des populations du Soudan central (Colonie du Niger)* (Paris : Librairie Larose, 1936), 159.

<sup>109</sup> Nachtigal, *Sahara*, 15.

<sup>110</sup> Wright, *Libya*, 41.

<sup>111</sup> Y. Urvoy, *Histoire de l'empire du Bornou* (Paris : Librairie Larose, 1949), 35-36.

the Sahara trade's second most valuable commodity slaves.<sup>112</sup> Although the earliest accounts of the slave trade from the Lake Chad region to the Fezzan and Tripoli dates to the seventh century,<sup>113</sup> it is highly probable that the slave trade between the Lake Chad region and Tripoli dates back much earlier; because written sources were not common before the seventh century, and they would have been about notable events, of which slavery would not have been. Since the beginning of its existence, the trans-Saharan trading system transported and exported a lot of African slaves to the rest of the world, and the rulers of Kanem-Bornu were some of the main slave traders within the region.<sup>114</sup>

Slaves were so valuable that they became a kind of currency in the trans-Saharan trading system. Throughout the history of the trans-Saharan trading system, there were various ways or means of currency. Keeping in mind that the word currency is being used very loosely here, what it means is that throughout its history, the trans-Saharan trading system had various ways to put a standard value to key resources. One measurement was slaves; the amount of slaves bartered for another resource generally indicated the overall value of that source. An example of this is that Bornu during the reign of mai Idris Alooma (c. 1564-96) traded approximately 15 to 20 slaves per war horse from North Africa.<sup>115</sup> That means that in the second half of the sixteenth century, horses were at the very least ten times of greater value than a slave. This is important for three reasons: the first was that the North African merchants made a huge amount of profit from trading horses for slaves with sub-Saharan Africans, as they would and could never have gotten a similar price for their horses from people living in the

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<sup>112</sup> Giri, *Histoire économique*, 80.

<sup>113</sup> Colins and Burns, *Sub-Saharan Africa*, 202.

<sup>114</sup> Wright, *Libya*, 41.

<sup>115</sup> Humphrey J. Fisher, "'He Swalloweth the Ground with Fierceness and Rage': The Horse in the Central Sudan," *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (1972): 382.

Mediterranean world. The second is that many powerful African kingdoms like that of Kanem-Bornu had a relatively large cavalry force. A case in point was that of mai Idris Alooma, he was said to have had over 3,000 horses at his disposal.<sup>116</sup> That means that mai Idris Alooma traded between 45,000 to 60,000 slaves for 3,000 horses. In other words, that means that the Ottomans traded 3,000 horses for a huge amount of slaves and so made an enormous amount of profit from their trade with Bornu.

This piece of information brings us to the last point, mainly that the ubiquitous of slaves in transactions in the trans-Saharan trading system meant that millions of people were turned and sold as slaves throughout the history of the trans-Saharan trading system. It is estimated by some historians that both the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries had each 2 million slaves transported and sold in the trans-Saharan trading system.<sup>117</sup> Besides slaves, the closest thing that came to currency in the trans-Saharan trading system before the coming of Europeans in the mid-fifteenth century was a kind of sea shells from the Maldives.<sup>118</sup> These sea shells were taken from the Maldives and traded throughout all of Africa, from Eastern Africa to North Africa, to the Sahara desert and the Sahel regions of Africa.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Fisher, "He Swalloweth," 382.

<sup>117</sup> Giri, *Histoire économique*, 101.

<sup>118</sup> Giri, *Histoire économique*, 71.

<sup>119</sup> Giri, *Histoire économique*, 71.

## 2.6 The Tripoli-Lake Chad Region Trade Routes

Kanem-Bornu would not have existed had it not been for the trans-Saharan trading system. That economic system enabled the Lake Chad region to trade with West Africa, East Africa, the Sahara desert, and North Africa. Not only was the Lake Chad region able to trade with these various regions as a result of the trans-Saharan trading system, but that system enabled the kingdom that dominated its history, Kanem-Bornu to expand north, south, west, and east and become one of the great powers in African history. Kanem during the reign of mai Dunama (c. 1210-48) and Bornu during the reign of mai Idris Alooma (c. 1564-96), were major powers in Africa,<sup>120</sup> and played a key role in influencing the future of the Sahel region of Africa.<sup>121</sup> The development of the state of Kanem-Bornu cannot be explained without reference to the Sahara trade. It is doubtless no accident that the greatest state of the central Sudan came into being at the southern terminus of the major caravan route passing through Fezzan and the oases of Kavar. This trail was the most direct line of communication between the Lake Chad region and the Mediterranean.<sup>122</sup>

Throughout its history, the bulk of the trade that Kanem-Bornu benefited from it and made others benefit from was the control and influence of Kanem-Bornu had on the trade routes of the Lake Chad region. These trading activities led to the Kavar oasis, then the Fezzan, and finally Tripoli; which made all of those regions, especially Tripoli,

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<sup>120</sup> Urvoy, *L'empire du Bornou*, 35-36.

<sup>121</sup> Austen, *Africa*, 37.

<sup>122</sup> D. Lange, "The kingdoms and peoples of Chad," in *UNESCO General History of Africa volume IV: Africa from the Twelfth to the Sixteenth Century*, ed. D. T. Niane (California: Heinemann Educational Books, 1981), 247-248.

very prosperous.<sup>123</sup> The latter of which gained a reputation both before, and after the Ottoman control of it,<sup>124</sup> as a slave trading city that provided many slaves to the Mediterranean world,<sup>125</sup> including valuable eunuchs.<sup>126</sup>

The nature of Kanem-Bornu's trading system was that most of the valuable resources that they exported to the north of the Lake Chad region (like the Fezzan),<sup>127</sup> came from the south of the Lake Chad region (today's northern Nigeria).<sup>128</sup> In order for them to benefit from their trade with the Fezzan and Tripoli, the rulers of Kanem-Bornu needed to control the oases of Kavar,<sup>129</sup> which was located in between the Fezzan and Lake Chad. Not only was Kavar an extremely strategically placed oasis in the Sahara desert, but its towns of Bilma and Agram were very rich in salt-mines.<sup>130</sup> It should be remembered that salt was the resource most wanted and needed by the peoples living in the Sahel region of Africa, as the region south of the Sahara desert (the Sahel) lacked salt-mines. One of the main reasons for the establishment of the trans-Saharan trading system was the Sahel region's demand and need for salt, which they traded (to the advantage of the northern merchants) for with considerably more valuable (in terms of worth) resources like gold.<sup>131</sup> Therefore, throughout its history, the rulers of Kanem-Bornu controlled or had control over the oases of Kavar, as it was the only important staging post (practically the only region of worth) between the Fezzan and the Lake

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<sup>123</sup> Wright, *Libya*, 44.

<sup>124</sup> Ehud R. Toledano, *The Ottoman Slave Trade and Its Suppression: 1840-1890* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982), 16.

<sup>125</sup> Ehud R. Toledano, "Late Ottoman Concepts of Slavery (1830s-1880s)." *Poetics Today*, Vol. 14, No. 3, *Cultural Processes in Muslim and Arab Societies: Modern Period I* (Autumn, 1993): 483.

<sup>126</sup> David Ayalon, *Eunuchs, Caliphs and Sultans: A Study in Power Relationship* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1999), 340.

<sup>127</sup> Lange, "Chad," 247.

<sup>128</sup> Bovill, *Golden Trade*, 151.

<sup>129</sup> Lange, "Chad," 249.

<sup>130</sup> Lange, "Chad," 249.

<sup>131</sup> Austen, *Africa*, 35-36.

Chad region of Africa.<sup>132</sup>

The Fezzan is a desert with many oases and towns to the south of the city of Tripoli. It played a key role in the trans-Saharan trading system as it was not only the crossroad to Tripoli and Lake Chad trade routes, but also key to the east-west trade routes, which mainly linked Egypt to Tripoli and Lake Chad and these regions to Tunis and the Mali/Songhai empires of West Africa.<sup>133</sup> For Kanem-Bornu, the Fezzan was the only way for its exports to reach both Tripoli and other major cities to the north, west, and east.<sup>134</sup> The importance of the Fezzan in the trans-Saharan trading system is probably what led to the Ottoman occupation of it in 1574. The importance of the region to Kanem-Bornu's interests is also what led mai Idris Alooma (c. 1564-96) to send a diplomatic mission to Istanbul.<sup>135</sup>

## **2.7 Impact of the Sahara Trade on the World**

The trans-Saharan trading system was crucial in the transportation of gold across the entire Sahel region of Africa, the Sahara desert, North Africa, and the Swahili coast of Africa. Two of those regions sent that gold to other economic systems before the coming of the Portuguese in the fifteenth century; mainly the Swahili coast of Africa

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<sup>132</sup> Y. Hakan Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire and its Demise, 1800-1909* (London: MacMillan Press, 1996), 100.

<sup>133</sup> Lange, "Chad," 249.

<sup>134</sup> Patrick Manning, *Slavery and African Life: Occidental, Oriental, and African Slave Trades* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 103.

<sup>135</sup> B. G. Martin, "Mai Idris of Bornu and the Ottoman Turks, 1576-78." *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (Oct., 1972): 471.

sent the gold to the Indian Ocean world trading system,<sup>136</sup> while North Africa and Egypt sent the gold both to the Mediterranean world trading system and the Middle East.<sup>137</sup> Gold was without a doubt the most valuable resource that the trans-Saharan trading system and Africa exported to the world before the discovery and mining of silver in the new world.<sup>138</sup> After the latter's discovery, the importance of Africa's gold started to diminish and in its stead, slaves became the most valuable commodity that Africa and the trans-Saharan trading system exported to the world. It should be kept in mind that in the 1570s until the 1590s, the time period of the topic at hand, these were recent events that had an important impact on both Bornu and the Ottoman Empire, but their impact would be greater in the following century.<sup>139</sup>

Gold was the most valuable commodity of the trans-Saharan trading system from its inception until the end of the sixteenth century, when slavery would replace it. Africa's contribution to world history has always been underestimated, none of which is more clear than its role in providing most of the world's gold west of South-East Asia and China.<sup>140</sup> Between the eleventh and the seventeenth centuries West Africa was the leading supplier of gold to the international economy, and in the later Middle Ages accounted, according to one estimate, for almost two thirds of world production.<sup>141</sup> West African gold flowed to Cairo and the Middle East, where it helped to sustain Arab power until the end of the thirteenth century, when the basis of the monetary system changed to silver. African gold contributed to the functioning of the domestic economy in Europe,

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<sup>136</sup> Giri, *Histoire économique*, 71.

<sup>137</sup> Giri, *Histoire économique*, 92.

<sup>138</sup> Henry Kamen, *Spain's Road to Empire: The Making of a World Power 1492-1763* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 88.

<sup>139</sup> Hopkins, *An Economic History*, 82.

<sup>140</sup> Hopkins, *An Economic History*, 82.

<sup>141</sup> Hopkins, *An Economic History*, 82.



and also helped to settle international debts.<sup>142</sup>

The majority of the gold used and produced in the Islamic world came from Africa and the trans-Saharan trading system,<sup>143</sup> as did most of the gold in the Indian Ocean world.<sup>144</sup> African gold enabled the Middle East, Europe, India, and North and East Africa to become very wealthy and powerful through time. One of the advantages that Europeans got from African gold was that it enabled them to become brokers of international trade.<sup>145</sup> Control over the gold trade also assisted the expansion of Portugal and Spain in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when Seville became, for a while, Europe's 'capital of gold'. Finally, the gold trade was important in Africa itself: it assisted the rise of the ports of North Africa from the end of the twelfth century, and it contributed to the wealth of the great states of the Western Sudan.<sup>146</sup> The trans-Saharan trading system was one of the elements that helped make the Islamic world and later Western Europe very rich and powerful.

The trans-Saharan trading was one of the main factors that enabled both the Islamic world and Western Europe to become very prosperous. In fact, the export of gold from the trans-Saharan trading system into the center of the Islamic world was one of the leading factors responsible for the overall power and influence of the Middle East and the Islamic world throughout the Medieval Ages. The trans-Saharan trading system provided the rest of the world with most of its gold from the eleventh to the seventeenth centuries, thus playing a key role in enriching the world.

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<sup>142</sup> Hopkins, *An Economic History*, 82.

<sup>143</sup> Giri, *Histoire économique*, 87.

<sup>144</sup> Giri, *Histoire économique*, 92.

<sup>145</sup> Hopkins, *An Economic History*, 82.

<sup>146</sup> Hopkins, *An Economic History*, 82.

## 2.8 Change and Decline of the Trans-Saharan Trading System

The golden age of the trans-Saharan trading system was from the eighth century until the sixteenth century. It played a key role in Africa's history and defined the economy of Northern Africa, the Sahara desert, the Sahel region, the Horn of Africa, the Swahili coast and the hinterlands of these regions. The trans-Saharan trading system enabled Africa to send its valuable resources such as gold, ivory, among others to other parts of the world including the Mediterranean world, the Middle East and the Indian Ocean. The trans-Saharan trading system only started to boom or become a major factor in world history around the same time that the regions surrounding Africa started to become ruled by Muslims. Regardless of geography, the peoples trading in and out of the trans-Saharan trading system had to deal with Muslim rulers and elites. That reality meant that the Islamic world more or less had a monopoly over the trans-Saharan trading system until the coming of the Portuguese to West Africa in the middle of the fifteenth century.

Before the Portuguese came to West Africa in the 1450s, the Africans living in the coastal regions of West Africa sent their goods to the interior.<sup>147</sup> Unlike the rest of the world, which typically sends its goods from the interior to the rivers, seas, or oceans; West Africa was unable to do so mainly because the Atlantic Ocean was and still is a very inhospitable ocean and very difficult to maneuver through.<sup>148</sup> The difficulty of the maneuverability of the Atlantic Ocean is one of the reasons why the Portuguese and

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<sup>147</sup> Ralph Austen, *Africa an Economic History: Internal Development and External Dependency* (London: Heinemann Educational Books Inc., 1987), 34-35.

<sup>148</sup> Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade: 1440 – 1870* (New York: First Touchstone Edition, 1999), 50.

other Europeans never reached and returned from West Africa before the 1450s.<sup>149</sup> They were able to reach and return from West Africa as a result in improvements of both ships and navigational technology.<sup>150</sup>

The importance of the arrival of the Portuguese in West Africa in the 1450s cannot be underestimated, they changed everything. By reaching West Africa, the Portuguese were able to end the Islamic world's monopoly on the trans-Saharan trading system. The Islamic world was no longer the only part of the world able to enjoy very cheap prices for slaves, ivory and most important of all for gold. Europeans were now able to compete with Muslim merchants and elites from North Africa, Egypt, and the Indian Ocean world; they were now able to directly trade their resources with local African merchants south of the Sahara desert.<sup>151</sup> This was a major breaking point in world history, as it enabled Europeans to trade just as cheaply with sub-Saharan African traders as the Muslim merchants did, and it slowly took away some of the trade that used to go from the West African coast into the interior.

The Portuguese arrival in West Africa also had a ripple effect; it enabled the Portuguese to trade their goods, such as horses for really advantageous prices. To illustrate how advantageous the trade was for the Portuguese, they only traded one horse for 10 to 15 slaves.<sup>152</sup> They acquired an immense amount of profit from trading with West Africa, while undermining the trans-Saharan trading system.

The Portuguese arrival in West Africa undermined the trans-Saharan trading system

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<sup>149</sup> Thomas, *Slave Trade*, 51.

<sup>150</sup> D. T. Niane, "Conclusion," in *UNESCO General History of Africa volume IV: Africa from the Twelfth to the Sixteenth Century*, ed. D. T. Niane (California: Heinemann Educational Books, 1981), 662-664.

<sup>151</sup> Niane, "Conclusion," 664.

<sup>152</sup> Thomas, *Slave Trade*, 60.

in three ways, the first was that there was slowly less goods going from the West African coast to the interior (Sahel region and Sahara desert) of Africa. That meant that those regions would slowly become poorer as a result of less trade. These regions would also have fewer resources to trade with North African traders, which would also make North Africa and Egypt poorer as a result of less trade. This would also led to a slow decrease in European demand of those goods via North African traders, thus the North African merchants, the people sending sub-Saharan goods to Europe would slowly see a drop in demand of their services. Europeans could bypass the North African merchants and go directly to the region were the resources they wanted could be traded for a much cheaper price. Overall what the arrival of the Portuguese to West Africa in the fifteenth century meant that it made the continent of Africa's and the Islamic world's economies much more fragile and vulnerable. Today's Africa in many ways emerged when the Portuguese reached the coast of West Africa, as the vulnerable and slave trade based Africa emerged as a result of the direct contact between sub-Saharan Africans and Europeans.

## **2.9 The Trans-Saharan Trading System and the Ottomans**

The importance of all this to the Ottoman Empire was that the decline of the trans-Saharan trading system gave the Ottomans an opportunity to conquer and occupy North Africa. As a result of the decline of the trans-Saharan trading system, North Africa and Egypt to a lesser extent were either in economic decline or at the very least in an economic recession, meaning that their economies were shrinking. The economies of

these regions became much more vulnerable as a result of the Portuguese arrival in West Africa, which was an important factor that enabled the Ottomans to conquer North Africa. The problem was that once the Ottomans took over North Africa, they also inherited those regions problems, mainly a diminishing amount of trade each year.

Another important factor about the decline of the trans-Saharan trading system was that it forced the Sahelian kingdoms and empires to depend on the slave trade even more than before, as they now had less natural resources to trade with North Africa, so they relied on selling slaves to try and maintain their profits. It is estimated that both the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries each had over 2 million slaves sold and transported throughout the trans-Saharan trading system.<sup>153</sup> Thus when the Ottomans occupied Tripoli, besides its strategic importance in the Mediterranean Sea, its main purpose and use to the Ottomans became the slave trade.<sup>154</sup>

The most important aspects of this chapter are the following: without the trans-Saharan trading system, Tripoli is of no value. North Africa as a whole went into economic and political crisis as a result of the decline of the trans-Saharan trading system, thus giving the Ottomans a great opportunity to conquer the region. The Ottomans as a result of being the rulers of Tripoli had to have some kind of diplomatic relations with the rulers of Bornu because of the close relations between the Lake Chad region and Tripoli.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Giri, *Histoire économique*, 101.

<sup>154</sup> Selim Deringil, “‘They live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery’: The Late Ottoman Empire and the Post-Colonial Debate.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (Apr., 2003), 321.

<sup>155</sup> Nihat Engin, *Osmanlı Devletinde Kölelik* (İstanbul: M. Ü. İlahiyat Fakültesi Vakfı Yayınları Nu. 158, 1998.), 91.

## **CHAPTER III:**

### **ISLAM IN AFRICA AND KANEM-BORNU**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter deals primarily with two subjects, which are the history of Islam in Africa and the history of Kanem-Bornu. This thesis has two primary purposes, the first is to help fill in the gap on Ottoman history in Africa, and to contextualize the influence and impact that Africa and the Ottoman Empire had on each other. In other words, there is a need for much greater research into the history of the Ottomans in Africa before the nineteenth century. The goal of this chapter is give the context and background information to describe the history of Islam in Africa and the history of Kanem-Bornu. The latter is not a well-known entity outside of African studies, and yet it and the Ottoman Empire had fairly significant relations that played a major role in the destiny of one of the Ottoman *eyalets* in Africa, Tripoli. The first sections of this chapter is on the arrival of Islam in Africa and of nomadic Arab tribes, notably that of the Banu Hilal and Banu Sulaym. The next sections are about the early history of Kanem-Bornu as well as the reign of two of the most important mais (kings) in Kanem-Bornu's history. The next

part is on the important changes that the arrival of the Bulala brought within the Lake Chad region in the fourteenth century and how that led to the fall of Kanem and the rise of Bornu. The last section is on the reign of mai Idris Alooma, the ruler of Bornu who began the diplomatic exchange between the Ottomans and Bornu. It should be remembered that having a basis of both Islamic history in Africa and a basic understanding of the history of Kanem-Bornu will give better context and comprehension to the diplomatic correspondence between the Ottomans and Bornuans.

### **3.2 The Arrival of Islam in Africa**

The topic of Islam in Africa has already been described briefly in the previous section of this chapter; this section will go in depth into the role of Islam in Africa, the trans-Saharan trading system, Kanem-Bornu, and the role that Islam played in the Bornuan-Ottoman diplomatic exchange. Islam came into Africa as a result of the conquest of Egypt in 639-642. Islamic warriors and states quickly rose in the region, even though the majority of the population did not convert to Islam until much later.<sup>156</sup> Even though the intent of the Arab conquerors was not to convert their new subjects to Islam, gradually over time the majority of the urban population converted to Islam.<sup>157</sup>

Islam was initially a tribal religion that eventually acquired many new and non-Arab converts in the following centuries. By the year 1100, Islam had become the

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<sup>156</sup> Hrbek, "Africa in the context of world history," 2.

<sup>157</sup> Hrbek, "Africa in the context of world history," 2.

dominant religion of North Africa and the Middle East.<sup>158</sup> After the seventh century, whenever there was an Arab expansion in history, Islam would spread.<sup>159</sup> Although Muslim leaders did at various times make excursions into the Sahara desert,<sup>160</sup> and the land south of it,<sup>161</sup> it was only in the second half of the eleventh century that Islam began to spread south of the Sahara desert.<sup>162</sup>

After the conquest of Egypt in 639-642, the Arabs led by Uqba ibn Nafi invaded coastal Tripolitania in 642-643, and in 666-667 established the province of Ifriqiya.<sup>163</sup> In 670 he conquered and founded the city of Qayrawan (today's Tunisia) and thus created both a military base for Arab expansion in North Africa, but also an "important center for the radiation and propagation of Islam."<sup>164</sup> The foundation of Qayrawan would enable both the establishment of Ifriqiya as a province of the Umayyad Caliphate, but also make that province considerably more stable than the rest of North Africa.<sup>165</sup> Although rural and Berber North Africa was very strongly opposed to Islam,<sup>166</sup> and still mainly Christian,<sup>167</sup> the majority of the urban population of the Maghreb converted to Islam within the first century of its arrival in the region.<sup>168</sup> Islam was thus able to establish itself fairly quickly in urban North Africa, specifically the towns or cities of

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<sup>158</sup> Levtzion and Pouwels, "Introduction," 1.

<sup>159</sup> H. J. Fisher, "The eastern Maghrib and the central Sudan," in Oliver, Roland ed. *The Cambridge History of Africa, volume 3: From c. 1050 to c. 1600*, ed. Roland Oliver (London: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 313.

<sup>160</sup> Ulrich Rebstock, "West Africa and its early empires," in *The New Cambridge history of Islam, volume 2: The Western Islamic World, Eleventh to Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. Maribel Fierro (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 146.

<sup>161</sup> Nehemia Levtzion and Randall L. Pouwels (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), 63.

<sup>162</sup> Fisher, "Eastern Maghrib," 312.

<sup>163</sup> Wright, *Libya*, 26-27.

<sup>164</sup> Fasi and Hrbek, "Development of Islam," 62.

<sup>165</sup> Fasi and Hrbek, "Development of Islam," 62.

<sup>166</sup> Sivers, "Egypt and North Africa," 25.

<sup>167</sup> Fasi and Hrbek, "Development of Islam," 62-63.

<sup>168</sup> Fasi and Hrbek, "Development of Islam," 63.



Qayrawan, Tunisia, and Tripoli.

It took Islam a considerable greater amount of time to convert rural Berber North Africa, the majority of Berbers living in North Africa probably converted to some form of Islam by the end of the twelfth century, because the last remnants of Christian North Africa ended in the thirteenth century.<sup>169</sup> One of the reasons why the rural Berbers resisted Islam for a considerable amount of time was that they eventually realized that the Arab were not just attacking the Byzantines, but also planning on invading the entire region including those held by Berbers.<sup>170</sup> One way in which the Berbers continued their resistance to Islam was their adoption of the Khariji sect of Islam in the pre-Almoravid era of North Africa, which was only really popular with the Berbers, due to its appeal as an egalitarian and anti-establishment sect of Islam.<sup>171</sup> Overall, the first two centuries of Islamic rule in North Africa was very similar to Byzantine rule in the region, mostly coastal and urban base, with very limited control of the periphery and rural areas of the region.<sup>172</sup>

Until the Almoravids came into the picture in the eleventh century,<sup>173</sup> North African Islam was dominated by various non-Sunni sects.<sup>174</sup> The most common of which was the Khariji sect with the nomadic Berbers,<sup>175</sup> while the most famous would

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<sup>169</sup> Levtzion and Pouwels, "Introduction," 2. Eduardo Manzano Moreno, "The Iberian Peninsula and North Africa," in *The New Cambridge History of Islam, volume 1: The Formation of the Islamic World, Sixth to Eleventh Centuries*, ed. Chase F. Robinson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 599.

<sup>170</sup> H. Monès, "The conquest of North Africa and Berber resistance," in *UNESCO General History of Africa volume III: Africa from the Seventh to the Eleventh Century*, ed. M. El Fasi and I. Hrbek (California: Heinemann Educational Books, 1981), 236.

<sup>171</sup> Monès, "Conquest of North Africa," 244.

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<sup>173</sup> Levtzion and Pouwels, "Introduction," 2.

<sup>174</sup> Levtzion and Pouwels, "Introduction," 1-2.

<sup>175</sup> Monès, "Conquest of North Africa," 244.

be the Shiism of the Fatimids both in North Africa and Egypt.<sup>176</sup> Not to mention that there was also an Ibadite dynasty called in Tahert (today's Algeria) during the eighth and ninth centuries.<sup>177</sup> Overall, it was only in the eleventh century that North Africa would slowly turn into a Sunni bastion, most of which was a result of the orthodoxy of the Almoravid and their successors the Almohads.<sup>178</sup> Egypt only turned into a bastion of Islamic orthodoxy when the Fatimids were replaced by Saladin and his short-lived dynasty, the Ayyubids in 1171.<sup>179</sup> Another reason for the change to orthodoxy in both Egypt and North Africa in the eleventh century was a result of the Banu Hilal and Banu Sulaym migration into Africa.<sup>180</sup>

### 3.3 The Banu Hilal and Banu Sulaym

Before talking about the role of both Tripoli and the Fezzan had on the islamization of Kanem-Bornu, a few words needs to be said on the Banu Hilal and the Banu Sulaym migration of the eleventh century. The arrival of these nomadic Arabs was a turning point in North African history,<sup>181</sup> which was called by some historians as the

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<sup>176</sup> T. Bianquis, "Egypt from the Arab conquest until the end of the Fatimid state (1171)," in *UNESCO General History of Africa volume III: Africa from the Seventh to the Eleventh Century*, ed. M. El Fasi and I. Hrbek (California: Heinemann Educational Books, 1981), 180.

<sup>177</sup> Moreno, "The Iberian Peninsula," 596-598.

<sup>178</sup> I. Hrbek and J. Devisse, "The Almoravids," in *UNESCO General History of Africa volume III: Africa from the Seventh to the Eleventh Century*, ed. M. El Fasi and I. Hrbek (California: Heinemann Educational Books, 1981), 343-344.

<sup>179</sup> Sivers, "Egypt and North Africa," 26.

<sup>180</sup> I. Hrbek, "The emergence of the Fatimids," in *UNESCO General History of Africa volume III: Africa from the Seventh to the Eleventh Century*, ed. M. El Fasi and I. Hrbek (California: Heinemann Educational Books, 1981), 332.

<sup>181</sup> Fisher, H. J., "Eastern Maghrib," 233.

most important event in the history of Medieval Maghreb.<sup>182</sup> The Banu Hilal and Banu Sulaym arrived in Egypt from Arabia in the early eleventh century, around the year 1050 they expanded westward into the Maghreb.<sup>183</sup> These Arab nomadic tribes devastated the Maghreb; they conquered and settled most of the major North African cities such as Cyrenaica, Tripolitania, Tunisia, among others.<sup>184</sup> The Banu Hilal and Banu Sulaym invasion of the Maghreb is estimated to have had over a million people move from Egypt to the Maghreb during the first century of the Banu Hilal and Banu Sulaym migration.<sup>185</sup>

The migration had three major impacts on the Maghreb. The first was the sheer devastation and destruction that North Africa underwent as a result of the migration.<sup>186</sup> The second was that many of the rural Berber population became Arabicized as a result of the Banu Hilal and Banu Sulaym invasion.<sup>187</sup> Arabic slowly started to become the dominant language in both urban and rural North Africa.<sup>188</sup> Lastly, the last major impact of the invasion was the Arab migration towards the Sahara and Sahel. The Arabs moved into the Fezzan, undefined in its extent and always defenseless against invaders. From the Banu Sulaym descended many of the main Arab tribes that later dominated southern Tripolitania and the Fezzan, and thus the northern stages of the Tripoli-Chad trade routes. By the end of the fourteenth century, when the first Muslim Arab nomads were penetrating the Chadian lands from the north, Arabs were also coming in from the north-

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<sup>182</sup> Julien, *Histoire de l'Afrique du Nord*, 414.

<sup>183</sup> Wright, *Libya*, 37.

<sup>184</sup> Wright, *Libya*, 37.

<sup>185</sup> Wright, *Libya*, 37.

<sup>186</sup> Wright, *Libya*, 37.

<sup>187</sup> Julien, *Histoire de l'Afrique du Nord*, 414.

<sup>188</sup> Julien, *Histoire de l'Afrique du Nord*, 414.

east, following the Muslim conquest of Christian Nubia.<sup>189</sup>

The invasion of the Arab tribes into Tripoli and the Fezzan would have a big impact on the Sahara and on the Sahel. The Arabic tribes pushed the Tebu and the Kanuri south, the latter of which was one of the main groups that founded the state of Kanem.<sup>190</sup> It is also further evidence of the importance of the Tripoli-Fezzan-Chad Lake trading route that was established in Antiquity and would flourish during the Islamic period. Overall, the Banu Hilal and Banu Sulaym migration to Africa was one of the major events in North African and Saharan history; it was arguably just as important as the coming of Islam into the region, as the invasion cemented both the religion (Islam) and the Arabic language within the region.

### **3.4 The Early History of Kanem-Bornu**

The city of Qayrawan was mentioned earlier as being one of the main Islamic influences in North Africa. The city of Qayrawan is located in between both Tunisia and Tripoli which enabled it to have a considerable influence on both.<sup>191</sup> Of the three cities, Tunisia was the most influential in the Mediterranean world and on the North African coasts,<sup>192</sup> while Tripoli was the most influential in the interior of Africa, or in the trans-

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<sup>189</sup> Wright, *Libya*, 37-38.

<sup>190</sup> *The Bornu Girgam*, trans. H. R. Palmer, *Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol. 12, No. 45 (Oct., 1912): 73.

<sup>191</sup> Fasi and Hrbek, "Development of Islam," 62-63.

<sup>192</sup> Fish, "Eastern Maghrib" 237.

Saharan trading system.<sup>193</sup> As mentioned earlier, “Tripoli has been called the gateway of the Sahara,”<sup>194</sup> meaning that it has a very long history with the Fezzan.<sup>195</sup> The importance of this is very simple, once the Arabs took Tripoli in 643; they quickly made raids in the Fezzan.<sup>196</sup> The city of Tripoli was economically and commercially linked to the Fezzan, the later had many commercial activities throughout Africa,<sup>197</sup> including Egypt<sup>198</sup> and West Africa,<sup>199</sup> but its most important commercial partner (besides Tripoli) was the Lake Chad region.<sup>200</sup> The Lake Chad region was able to have a close connection to the Fezzan as a result of the Kawar oasis, which were oases in between the Fezzan and the Lake Chad region.<sup>201</sup>

Throughout history, both the rulers of the Fezzan and Tripoli, and Kanem-Bornu had control over the oases of Kawar.<sup>202</sup> What all of this leads to is that as a result of proximity of the Lake Chad region to Tripoli, via the Fezzan and Kawar, the Lake Chad region was one of the first regions of sub-Saharan Africa that Islam reached,<sup>203</sup> which has been estimated as being during the eight century.<sup>204</sup> The rulers of Kanem-Bornu

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<sup>193</sup> Fish, “Eastern Maghrib” 237.

<sup>194</sup> Bovill, *Golden Trade*, 21.

<sup>195</sup> Bovill, *Golden Trade*, 22.

<sup>196</sup> Julien, *Histoire de l’Afrique du Nord*, 344.

<sup>197</sup> Lisa Anderson, “Nineteenth-Century Reform in Ottoman Libya,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Aug., 1984): 333.

<sup>198</sup> Dennis D. Cordell, “Eastern Libya, Wadai and the sanusiya: A Tariqa and a Trade Route,” *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (1977): 27.

<sup>199</sup> Charles Wellington Furlong, “Tripoli Barbary: Including an Insight into North Africa and the Sahara and a Brief Comment on the French Scheme of Empire in Africa,” *The Journal of Race Development*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Jul., 1911): 31.

<sup>200</sup> Dennis D. Cordell, “The Awlad Sulayman of Libya and Chad: Power and Adaptation in the Sahara and Sahel,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies/Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (1985): 321.

<sup>201</sup> Knut S. Vikor, “An Episode of Saharan Rivalry: The French Occupation of Kawar, 1906,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (1985): 701.

<sup>202</sup> Vikor, “Saharan Rivalry,” 702.

<sup>203</sup> Zeltner, *Pages d’histoire du Kanem*, 33.

<sup>204</sup> Zeltner, *Pages d’histoire du Kanem*, 33.

were some of the first in sub-Saharan African history to convert to Islam.<sup>205</sup> The exact time period and who was the first mai or king of Kanem to convert to Islam is still a hotly debated topic in African history.<sup>206</sup> Most of the medieval sources state that the first ruler of Kanem-Bornu to convert to Islam was mai Hummay (c. 1075-86).<sup>207</sup> Mai Hummay was not only the first Muslim ruler in Kanem-Bornu's history, but he was also the founder of the longest Muslim dynasty in African history,<sup>208</sup> the Sefuwa dynasty (1075-1846) which under the leadership of mai Hummay had removed and replaced the Zaghawa dynasty as the rulers of the Lake Chad region.<sup>209</sup>

The Zaghawa were Berbers who established the first state in the Lake Chad region,<sup>210</sup> the kingdom of Kanem around the second half of the ninth century.<sup>211</sup> The role of the Zaghawa and the nature of Kanem before the rise of the Sefuwa dynasty in 1075 is still unclear, what is known is that the Zaghawa were still "pagan" and not Muslim.<sup>212</sup> They were also "outsiders", meaning people who did not originally come from the Lake Chad region;<sup>213</sup> they probably came from the Fezzan.<sup>214</sup> Eventually they settled in the Lake Chad region and established the kingdom of Kanem in the eighth century.<sup>215</sup> However, the link between the Zaghawa and the kingdom of Kanem are still not clear, there is still a considerable amount of debate about the relationship between the two. Some historians argue that the Zaghawa were a foreign aristocracy that played a

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<sup>205</sup> Lange, "Chad," 453.

<sup>206</sup> Dierk Lange, "Progrès de l'Islam et changement politique au Kanem du XIe au XIIIe siècle : un essai d'interprétation." *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (1978): 495-496.

<sup>207</sup> Fisher, "Eastern Maghrib," 288.

<sup>208</sup> Trimingham, *Islam in West Africa*, 107-108.

<sup>209</sup> Lange, "Chad," 454.

<sup>210</sup> Lange, "Chad," 445.

<sup>211</sup> Zeltner, *Pages d'histoire du Kanem*, 29.

<sup>212</sup> Zeltner, *Pages d'histoire du Kanem*, 32.

<sup>213</sup> Zeltner, *Pages d'histoire du Kanem*, 29.

<sup>214</sup> Zeltner, *Pages d'histoire du Kanem*, 29.

<sup>215</sup> Lange, "Chad," 445.

crucial role in the state of Kanem, that was eventually replaced by another aristocracy, the Sefuwa, in the eleventh century.<sup>216</sup> In the early stages of Kanem, or at the very least of the early history of the Lake Chad region, there was an aristocracy based on the Zaghawa that had probably established a state in the region in the eight century.<sup>217</sup> The Zaghawa aristocracy were pagans that would be replaced by a new dynasty called the Sefuwa, whose first mai, mai Hummay (c. 1075-86) was the first Muslim ruler of Kanem-Bornu, and one of the first Muslim rulers of sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>218</sup>

### **3.5 Mai Hummay's Conversion to Islam**

The conversion of mai Hummay (c. 1075-1086) had a big impact on the region and on the kingdom of Kanem-Bornu, because it led to the rise of Muslim elites in Kanem-Bornu<sup>219</sup> by the first half of the twelfth century.<sup>220</sup> It is the result of the close relations between the Lake Chad regions and both the Fezzan and Tripoli that made Kanem-Bornu and the Lake Chad region into one of the first areas in sub-Saharan Africa to have its rulers and elites convert to Islam.

The relatively early conversion of the rulers of Kanem-Bornu at the end of the eleventh century also demonstrates just how well established and important the trading route of Tripoli-Fezzan-Kawar-Kanem had been for a long period of time. The early

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<sup>216</sup> Lange, "Chad," 448.

<sup>217</sup> Lange, "Chad," 447.

<sup>218</sup> Trimmingham, *Islam in West Africa*, 107-108.

<sup>219</sup> Levtzion, "Bilad al-Sudan to 1800," 80.

<sup>220</sup> Trimmingham, *Islam in West Africa*, 115.

islamization of Kanem-Bornu's rulers is evidence of the antiquity of the Lake Chad-Kawar-Fezzan-Tripoli trading route. Had the trading route been a recent phenomenon, than Islam would not have been able to come in and spread itself throughout the region as quickly as it did; as there would have been greater resistance by the rulers of Kanem-Bornu against foreigners and their religion. The early islamization of the Lake Chad region is another piece of evidence of the importance of the trans-Saharan trading system in the central Sahara and Sahel region of Africa.

Regardless of mai Hummay's conversion to Islam, it took centuries before the majority of the population living in the Lake Chad region became Muslim.<sup>221</sup> By the sixteenth century, the majority of people living in both Kanem-Bornu were Muslims.<sup>222</sup> Before the year 1100, the majority of the rulers and aristocracy (not to mention the people) of the Sahel were still pagan.<sup>223</sup> The conversion of mai Hummay demonstrates that Kanem-Bornu was one of the earliest African states to have its rulers converted to Islam. Through time the majority of the population of the Lake Chad region became Muslim, however it was in the interests of the rulers of Kanem-Bornu to have a considerable pagan population living in proximity because of the advantages of slavery. Around Lake Chad, the trade of Kanem to North Africa was mainly in slaves. As a result, Islam did not spread to the lands south of Lake Chad, which remained hunting grounds for slaves.

When its power grew, Kanem expanded northward to the Sahara and as far as

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<sup>221</sup> Lange, "Progrès de l'Islam," 499.

<sup>222</sup> H. R. Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs: Being mainly translations of a number of Arabic Manuscripts relating to the Central and Western Sudan*, trans. H. R. Palmer (London: Frank Cass & CO. LTD, 1967), 19-29.

<sup>223</sup> Wright, *Libya*, 34.



Fezzan. In Kanem, and in its successor state Bornu, Islam was not restricted to the court but reached out to the whole population. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Birnin Gazargamo, the capital of Bornu, was an important center for Islamic learning. Quranic manuscripts from Bornu dating from as early as the seventeenth century had interlinear translations and glosses in the local language.<sup>224</sup> Regardless if the rulers of Kanem-Bornu at various times throughout history made sure that their subjects followed Muslim practices, nonetheless Kanem-Bornu still took advantage of their non-Muslim neighbors to the south by having slave raids.

### **3.6 Mai Dunama and Islam**

Mai Hummay's conversion to Islam may have been the beginning of Kanem-Bornu's long history with Islam; however it was only much later that Islam was cemented as the dominant religion of the elites in the region. It was during the reign of the sixth mai of the Sefuwa dynasty, mai Dunama Dibalami (c. 1210-1248),<sup>225</sup> that Islam was made the dominant religion of his family and of the elites of Kanem-Bornu.<sup>226</sup> Mai Dunama (c. 1210-1248) was able to cement Islam within the court of Kanem by his many expansions in the Lake Chad region and beyond.<sup>227</sup> He used Islam as a political tool by waging jihad against his mostly non-Muslim neighbors to the

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<sup>224</sup> Levtzion and Pouwels, "Introduction," 5.

<sup>225</sup> Zeltner, *Pages d'histoire du Kanem*, 47.

<sup>226</sup> Zeltner, *Pages d'histoire du Kanem*, 49.

<sup>227</sup> Lange, "Chad," 254.

west,<sup>228</sup> the neighbors to the south,<sup>229</sup> and the Tebu nomads living in the Lake Chad region.<sup>230</sup> He was also viewed as a Muslim reformer<sup>231</sup> and is credited with both making the pilgrimage to Mecca and the founder of a *madrassa* in Cairo for his subjects living or travelling to Egypt.<sup>232</sup> Mai Dunama's pilgrimage to Mecca and travels to Egypt demonstrate that the Lake Chad region of Africa and the kingdom of Kanem-Bornu not only had close ties to Egypt, but that the routes between the Lake Chad region and Egypt must have been both very safe for a mai of Kanem to travel through, but also frequently used by countless people. Ultimately, what mai Dunama's pilgrimage to Mecca shows is that Kanem-Bornu was an integral part of the trans-Saharan trading system, an economic system that was able to bring a ruler of Kanem-Bornu to Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula without any harm done to that him. It demonstrates that the rulers of Kanem in the thirteenth century were both devout enough to want to make the pilgrimage to Mecca,<sup>233</sup> as well as powerful and rich enough to be able to travel through the Saharan desert and Egypt without being harmed.

Mai Dunama was one of the most powerful and influential mais in Kanem-Bornu's history and he established a great many precedents in the history of the kingdom of Kanem-Bornu. One of the precedents that he established was the beginning of Kanem-Bornuan relations with the rulers of Tripoli (the Hafsid).<sup>234</sup> Mai Dunama was able to establish contact between Kanem and Tripoli because his reign saw the

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<sup>228</sup> Bovill, *Golden Trade*, 151.

<sup>229</sup> Zeltner, *Pages d'histoire du Kanem*, 49.

<sup>230</sup> Zeltner, *Pages d'histoire du Kanem*, 49.

<sup>231</sup> Lange, "Chad," 254.

<sup>232</sup> Lange, "Chad," 254.

<sup>233</sup> Lange, "Chad," 243.

<sup>234</sup> Zeltner, *Pages d'histoire du Kanem*, 50.

addition of Kawar and the Fezzan to Kanem.<sup>235</sup>

Mai Dunama was thus able to add and control two key components of the north-south route from Tripoli to the Lake Chad region during his reign. The importance of this is that Kanem was very powerful in the thirteenth century, as it was able to control all of the key locations and trade spots on the Tripoli-Lake Chad trade route. The only other major trading station or place that remained on that route that was not a part of Kanem was Tripoli. Therefore in the thirteenth century, the city of Tripoli was extremely depended on the actions of the rulers of Kanem.

The overall importance, closeness, and former possession of Kanem-Bornu's that is the Fezzan may have been one of the major reasons for the conflict between Bornu and the Ottomans. In 1574, the Ottomans conquered various towns, cities, and fortresses in the Fezzan, making the Ottomans direct neighbors to Bornu. Some of the fortresses seized by Ottoman forces were viewed by mai Idris Alooma and Bornu as being their property or belonging to them.<sup>236</sup> The Ottoman arrival in the Fezzan, along with their hold of Tripoli and Tunis, and the competition between the Ottomans and Saadi Morocco<sup>237</sup> were critical factors that led to mai Idris Alooma's diplomatic initiative.<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Zeltner, *Pages d'histoire du Kanem*, 50.

<sup>236</sup> B. G. Martin, "Kanem, Bornu, and the Fazzan: Notes on the Political History of a Trade Route," *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (1969): 24.

<sup>237</sup> Abderrahmane El Moudden, "The Idea of the Caliphate between Moroccans and Ottomans: Political and Symbolic Stakes in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Century-Maghrib," *Studia Islamica*, No. 82 (1995): 107.

<sup>238</sup> Stephen Cory, "The Man Who Would Be Caliph: A Sixteenth-Century Sultan's Bid for an African Empire," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (2009): 187-188.

### 3.7 From Kanem to Bornu

The reign of mai Dunama is generally considered as being one of the greatest in the long history of Kanem-Bornu.<sup>239</sup> There are only two other mais who are as famous and praised as mai Dunama, the first was the founder of the Sefuwa and the first Muslim mai of Kanem-Bornu, the previously mentioned mai Hummay (c. 1075-1086), and the other was one of the key players in the history of Ottoman-Bornuan relations, mai Idris Aloomaa (c. 1564-1596). In between the reign of mai Dunama (c. 1210-1248) and mai Idris Aloomaa (c. 1564-1596), Kanem-Bornu underwent many major changes that fundamentally changed the kingdom. It was during the end of the fourteenth century that Kanem-Bornu changed from Kanem to Bornu.<sup>240</sup> In other words, there was a power shift in the Lake Chad region, where the center of the kingdom used to be in Kanem, the north-east part of the Lake Chad region; it changed to Bornu, the south-west part of the Lake Chad region.<sup>241</sup> An example of this is that Kanem's most famous capital in its history was Djimi.<sup>242</sup> It was the capital of Kanem before and during the reign of mai Dunama (c. 1210-48), and it was one the few capitals in the history of Kanem-Bornu's history to have a long lifespan.<sup>243</sup> However, like the Sefuwa dynasty itself, it ceased to be the capital of Kanem when the Sefuwa left Kanem for Bornu at the end of the fourteenth century.<sup>244</sup>

What happened at the end of fourteenth century to force the Sefuwas to move from Kanem to Bornu? Many things occurred, the first of which is that “between the

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<sup>239</sup> Zeltner, *Pages d'histoire du Kanem*, 51.

<sup>240</sup> Lange, “Chad,” 258-260.

<sup>241</sup> Lange, “Chad,” 263-265.

<sup>242</sup> Zeltner, *Pages d'histoire du Kanem*, 50.

<sup>243</sup> Lange, “Chad,” 244.

<sup>244</sup> Lange, “Chad,” 244.

beginning of the thirteenth century and the end of the fourteenth, Bornu gained in relative importance.”<sup>245</sup> In fact in the fourteenth century, Bornu may have either been an independent kingdom or an autonomous province of Kanem.<sup>246</sup> Another reason is that the Sahara desert made the north-east region of Lake Chad less wealthy and more difficult to settle in and produce agriculture.<sup>247</sup> Kanem was also “mostly desert and semi-desert, lacked the primary resources needed to support such a large system.”<sup>248</sup> The north-eastern part of the Lake Chad region was obviously more strongly hit by desertification than the south-eastern region (Bornu),<sup>249</sup> which was closer to the African jungles and the rising Hausa city states.<sup>250</sup> Another reason is that Bornu was agriculturally more productive and better placed as a trading centre than Kanem, with richer sources of slaves immediately to the south, and more direct access to the northern trade route through the Fezzan.<sup>251</sup>

There were many reasons for the changes from Kanem to Bornu that have been mentioned above, but there were two very important factors that have yet to be mentioned. The first is something very common in Africa, and that would continue in the Lake Chad region until the colonial era, mainly migration.<sup>252</sup> The peoples from Kanem slowly migrated to Bornu from the twelfth until the start of the colonial period at

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<sup>245</sup> Lange, “Chad,” 256.

<sup>246</sup> Lange, “Chad,” 256.

<sup>247</sup> B. M. Barkindo, “Kanem-Borno: its relations with the Mediterranean Sea, Bagirmi and other states in the Chad basin,” in *UNESCO General History of Africa volume V: Africa from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, ed. B. A. Ogot (California: Heinemann Educational Books, 1992), 492.

<sup>248</sup> Barkindo, “Kanem-Borno,” 492.

<sup>249</sup> Barkindo, “Kanem-Borno,” 492.

<sup>250</sup> M. Adamu, “The Hausa and their neighbours in the central Sudan,” in *UNESCO General History of Africa volume IV: Africa from the Twelfth to the Sixteenth Century*, ed. D. T. Niane (California: Heinemann Educational Books, 1981) 280.

<sup>251</sup> Wright, *Libya*, 42.

<sup>252</sup> Zeltner, *Arabes sur les rives du lac Tchad*, 7.

the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>253</sup> Various tribes, groups of people, or ethnic groups left Kanem for Bornu throughout the history, slowly making Bornu more populous and more powerful. Bornu became more powerful than Kanem by the end of the fourteenth century.<sup>254</sup> The second factor that forced the Sefuwas to migrate from Kanem to Bornu was an event that completely changed the dynamics of the entire region. This event led to the regional power shift from the north-east (Kanem) to the south-west (Bornu), mainly the Bulala wars.<sup>255</sup>

### **3.8 The End of Kanem and Rise of Bornu**

The change in the center of power is why the most dominant kingdom of the Lake Chad region has been called Kanem-Bornu, because it was essentially the same kingdom that changed its center of power from the north east to the south west. It is very similar to what the Roman Empire underwent in the fifth century, with the notable exception that the history of Kanem-Bornu has not been politicized the way the Roman Empire has been. That is why when dealing with the general history of Kanem-Bornu, the term Kanem-Bornu is used, anything specific before the fourteenth century the term Kanem is used, and anything specific after the fourteenth century the term Bornu is used.

The Bulala were a pastoral people<sup>256</sup> who had lived in the Lake Chad region

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<sup>253</sup> Lange, "Chad," 255.

<sup>254</sup> Lange, "Chad," 256.

<sup>255</sup> Zeltner, *Pages d'histoire du Kanem*, 63.

<sup>256</sup> Urvoy, *L'empire du Bornou*, 59.

before the fourteenth century.<sup>257</sup> Besides that, not much is known about the Bulala<sup>258</sup> other than the fact that they were still fairly resistant to both Sunni Islam and Islam as a whole.<sup>259</sup> The major difference between the Bulala and the Sefuwa rulers of Kanem-Bornu is that by the fifteenth century, Bornu would become dominated by two ethnic or tribal groups, mainly the Kanembu<sup>260</sup> and the Kanuri.<sup>261</sup> Overall, the Bulala would remain in Kanem and the north-east part of the Lake Chad region throughout history, while Bornu would become dominated by the Kanuri.<sup>262</sup>

A quick word needs to be said about the relationship between the Kanembu and the Kanuri. Basically the Kanuri people are descendants of the Kanembu people (original inhabitants of Kanem) intermarrying with the local population (notably the So people) of Bornu.<sup>263</sup> Although there are still Kanembu people today,<sup>264</sup> the Kanuri people, or the people or culture who came about as a result of the intermarriage between the Kanembu and the So people led to the Kanuri people to dominate Bornu from the end of the fifteenth century onwards.<sup>265</sup> To summarize, Kanem used to be run by the Kanembu people, however when a different group of people, the Bulala came into the region of Kanem, war came and eventually through time many if not most of the Kanembu migrated from the north-east (Kanem) part of the Lake Chad region to the south-west (Bornu) part of the Lake Chad region. The result of these migrations led to the creation of a new culture and group of people known as the Kanuri people, and they

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<sup>257</sup> Lange, "Chad," 258.

<sup>258</sup> Zeltner, *Pages d'histoire du Kanem*, 107.

<sup>259</sup> Zeltner, *Pages d'histoire du Kanem*, 107.

<sup>260</sup> Zeltner, *Pages d'histoire du Kanem*, 109.

<sup>261</sup> Barkindo, "Kanem-Borno," 496-497.

<sup>262</sup> Barkindo, "Kanem-Borno," 496-497.

<sup>263</sup> Lange, "Chad," 256.

<sup>264</sup> Barkindo, "Kanem-Borno," 498.

<sup>265</sup> Barkindo, "Kanem-Borno," 496.

would dominate the history of Bornu until the French colonization of the region.

Like the Bulala, the history of the Sefuwa's and the Kanembu's migration from Kanem to Bornu is obscure.<sup>266</sup> What is known is that the Bulala invasion and migration to Kanem from Lake Fitri was successful in occupying Kanem and removing the Sefuwa from the region as a result of internal problems that the Sefuwa were facing. The state of Kanem at the end of the fourteenth century was undergoing internal troubles among which the most known was the dynastic problems. The Sefuwa dynasty was in a kind of crisis and civil war, in which many of the various members claimed the throne over each other.<sup>267</sup> The various civil wars that Kanem was undergoing were worsened by the arrival of the Bulala, who they were unable to contain; thus causing various members of the Sefuwa dynasty to move to the south-west, Bornu. Until the start of the sixteenth century, the whole situation in the Lake Chad region was in flux, and throughout that time period, the Bulala rulers of Kanem were more powerful than the Sefuwa dynasty in Bornu.<sup>268</sup>

The fifteenth century, like many centuries in the history of Kanem-Bornu is not well known. What is known is that throughout the century, the Sefuwas at Bornu were continuously fighting the Bulala of Kanem.<sup>269</sup> Although the conflict would never truly be solved in the fifteenth century, by the end of that century, during the reign of mai Idris Katakarmabi (c. 1497-1519), Bornu became more powerful than Kanem and was able to have the advantage for rest of the history of the Lake Chad region.<sup>270</sup> In fact, mai

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<sup>266</sup> Lange, "Chad," 256.

<sup>267</sup> Lange, "Chad," 258.

<sup>268</sup> Lange, "Chad," 260.

<sup>269</sup> Zeltner, *Pages d'histoire du Kanem*, 111.

<sup>270</sup> Urvoy, *L'empire du Bornou*, 73.



Idris Katakarmabi was able to capture the old Kanemi capital of Djimi near the beginning of his reign.<sup>271</sup> The Sefuwa dynasty was able to recapture Kanem at the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries.<sup>272</sup> They made Kanem into a tributary state, but they never resettled in Kanem again.<sup>273</sup> From mai Idris Katakarmabi's reign leading to the reign of mai Idris Aloomaa (c. 1564-1596), Bornu underwent enormous amounts of growth,<sup>274</sup> peaking or achieving its greatest lengths during his reign.<sup>275</sup> As a result of mai Idris Aloomaa many achievements, Bornu was able to continue to prosper in the seventeenth century,<sup>276</sup> even if the rest of Africa entering into a period of decline. Not only did Bornu become victorious over Bulala Kanem, but it was also able to acquire the reputation as the defender of the *Sunna* within the region as a result of its growth in power and its opposition to Bulala Kanem.<sup>277</sup>

Before the reign of mai Idris Aloomaa (c. 1564-1596), a summary on the rise of the state of Bornu in the fifteenth and sixteenth century is necessary. After the Sefuwa dynasty had resettled itself from Kanem into Bornu, it took a period of time, in this case almost a century until Bornu was able to become a major regional power.<sup>278</sup> Mai Ali Ghadjideni (c. 1465-1497) was able to stabilize the internal political dynamics and situation within Bornu, his two greatest achievements were the foundation and establishment of the city of Gazargamo as the capital of Bornu,<sup>279</sup> and the other was that

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<sup>271</sup> Lange, "Chad," 260.

<sup>272</sup> Wright, *Libya*, 42.

<sup>273</sup> Wright, *Libya*, 42.

<sup>274</sup> Urvoy, *L'empire du Bornou*, 74.

<sup>275</sup> Urvoy, *L'empire du Bornou*, 80.

<sup>276</sup> Barkindo, "Kanem-Borno," 511-512.

<sup>277</sup> Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs*, 19-20.

<sup>278</sup> Urvoy, *L'empire du Bornou*, 73.

<sup>279</sup> Lange, "Chad," 265.

he successfully established and stabilized the rules succession,<sup>280</sup> which had been one of the main reasons for the downfall of Kanem.<sup>281</sup> The reign of mai Katakarmabi (c. 1497-1515) was the beginning of the rise of Bornu as the dominant local power in the Lake Chad region. One of the notable achievements of mai Katakarmabi was his reconquest of Kanem.<sup>282</sup> Although Bornu would become sovereign over Kanem, its hold on it was very precarious until the reign of mai Idris Alooma.<sup>283</sup> From mai Katakarmabi to mai Idris Alooma, Bornu increased both its power and influence in the region. However, it was during the reign of mai Idris Alooma that Bornu would become the dominant power in the Sahel region of Africa.

During the sixteenth century, Bornu would become extremely influential throughout the Sahel region of Africa.<sup>284</sup> Kanem-Bornu was very influential throughout history; it played a key role in the Islamization of the Sahel region of Africa.<sup>285</sup> Today's Libya,<sup>286</sup> Chad,<sup>287</sup> Niger,<sup>288</sup> Nigeria (especially Northern Nigeria),<sup>289</sup> Southern Sudan (Darfur based Sudan),<sup>290</sup> and the Central African Republic<sup>291</sup> were all influenced either directly or indirectly by Kanem Bornu. It should be remembered that many of the Hausa city-states rulers have claims to Kanem-Bornuan ancestry and that throughout

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<sup>280</sup> Lange, "Chad," 265.

<sup>281</sup> Zeltner, *Pages d'histoire du Kanem*, 63-65.

<sup>282</sup> Urvoy, *L'empire du Bornou*, 73.

<sup>283</sup> Barkindo, "Kanem-Borno," 494.

<sup>284</sup> Barkindo, "Kanem-Borno," 495.

<sup>285</sup> Levtzion and Pouwels, "Introduction," 5.

<sup>286</sup> Wright, *Libya*, 38.

<sup>287</sup> Lange, "Progrès de l'islam," 495-496.

<sup>288</sup> Colins and Burns, *Sub-Saharan Africa*, 234.

<sup>289</sup> Adamu, "The Hausa," 269.

<sup>290</sup> Trimingham, *Islam in West Africa*, 108.

<sup>291</sup> Dennis D. Cordell, *Dar al-Kuti and the Last Years of the Trans-Saharan Slave Trade* (London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 117-120.

their history,<sup>292</sup> the Hausa city states were heavily influenced by Kanem-Bornu.<sup>293</sup> One of the most influential and powerful Hausa city-state was the state of Kano.<sup>294</sup> Throughout its history, Kano had been heavily influenced by Kanem-Bornu,<sup>295</sup> in fact it was through the state of Kano that Kanem-Bornu was able to influence the rest of the Hausa city-states.<sup>296</sup> Besides being heavily influenced by the state of Bornu, the Hausa city-states were also a kind of buffer state between the kingdoms or empires of Bornu and Songhai.<sup>297</sup> The empire of Songhai was located on the Niger River and was alongside Bornu the most dominant Sahelian state of the sixteenth century. Songhai would remain a dominant force throughout the sixteenth century until the Saadi invasion and conquest of Songhai in 1591.<sup>298</sup>

The historical and extremely important Saadian invasion of Songhai and its impact on Bornu, Africa, and the Ottomans will be discussed in greater detail in the fourth chapter. Suffice it to say, that the Saadi military ambitions played a key role in mai Idris Alooma's diplomatic initiative with the Ottomans,<sup>299</sup> and the Saadian conquest of Songhai was also an event that precipitated the decline of the trans-Saharan trading system.<sup>300</sup> It did so by weakening the Western Sudan's political, social, and economic structures and failing to replace it with a viable Saadian or Moroccan alternative.<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>292</sup> Adamu, "The Hausa," 269.

<sup>293</sup> Adamu, "The Hausa," 279.

<sup>294</sup> Adamu, "The Hausa," 271.

<sup>295</sup> Adamu, "The Hausa," 280.

<sup>296</sup> Adamu, "The Hausa," 280.

<sup>297</sup> Adamu, "The Hausa," 280.

<sup>298</sup> Julien, *Histoire de l'Afrique du Nord*, 584-585.

<sup>299</sup> Barkindo, "Kanem-Borno," 503.

<sup>300</sup> Julien, *Histoire de l'Afrique du Nord*, 585.

<sup>301</sup> M. Abitbol, "The end of the Songhay empire," in *UNESCO General History of Africa volume V: Africa from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, ed. B. A. Ogot (California: Heinemann Educational Books, 1992), 304.

### 3.9 The Reign of Mai Idris Aloomma 1564-1596

Mai Idris Aloomma's reign is viewed as a golden age in the history of Kanem-Bornu and the Lake Chad region.<sup>302</sup> The exact dates of his reign are still debated, as there is no clear consensus as to when his reign began and ended.<sup>303</sup> What is clear is that mai Idris Aloomma reigned over Bornu for over thirty years. This thesis uses the dating used in the fifth volume of the *UNESCO General History of Africa*, mainly due to its consistency with Ottoman archival information and the accessibility of these books. Concerning his name, the name Aloomma instead of Alawma is used mainly because Aloomma is used much more frequently with African historians than Alawma.<sup>304</sup> The last technical aspect about mai Idris Aloomma is the fact that he was one of the few rulers of a Sahelian kingdom or empire to have had a court historian, whose works on his ruler still survive to this day.<sup>305</sup> The name of mai Idris Aloomma court historian, who was also his chief Imam, was the Imam Ahmed ibn Fartua and he wrote *History of the First Twelve Years of the Reign of Mai Idris Aloomma of Bornu, 1571-1583*. Ibn Fartua's chronology of mai Idris Aloomma's reign along with the documents concerning Bornu and the Ottoman Empire's relations are about the only concrete primary written sources we have on the reign of mai Idris Aloomma.<sup>306</sup> So not only is the relationship between the Ottoman Empire and Bornu important during the second half of the sixteenth century, but it is also very important in terms of information on Bornu and African history for the second half of the sixteenth century.

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<sup>302</sup> Barkindo, "Kanem-Borno," 498.

<sup>303</sup> Colins and Burns, *Sub-Saharan Africa*, 90-91.

<sup>304</sup> Zeltner, *Pages d'histoire du Kanem*, 117.

<sup>305</sup> Palmer, *Sudanese Memmoirs*, 15-76.

<sup>306</sup> Barkindo, "Kanem-Borno," 503.

Mai Idris Alooma is one of the most famous and defining rulers in the history of Kanem-Bornu. He was a very successful and very ambitious man;<sup>307</sup> he was a military man who sponsored various Islamic, cultural, and scholarly endeavors.<sup>308</sup> However, he is most famous for being the first ruler to introduce and bring guns to sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>309</sup> Not only did he import guns into his kingdom of Bornu, it is also believed that he brought “Turkish” mercenaries as both soldiers<sup>310</sup> and instructors to his army.<sup>311</sup> It seems fairly obvious that the majority of guns that mai Idris Alooma imported must have come from Ottoman Tripoli for two reasons. The first is that as it has been repeatedly mentioned before, Tripoli and the Lake Chad region have had extremely close relations since Antiquity. It would only be natural that guns would come from Tripoli, as Ottoman Tripoli would obviously have had a fair amount of guns and it would only be natural for the traders in Tripoli to sell some of those guns to merchants in the Fezzan and Bornu. The second reason is if mai Idris Alooma did not get most of his guns from Ottoman Tripoli, than from where did he get them? Saadi Morocco seems too improbable for two important reasons, the first is that the Saadis had interests in the Sahel and would eventually conquer most of the Niger River region. It would be ludicrous for them to trade guns to a potential threat to their grand ambitions in the Sahel region (see chap. 4). Not only is it improbable in that sense, but geographically speaking, Morocco and the Lake Chad region are very far from each other, meaning that even though there was trade going on between the two, it could not have been Bornu’s primary distributor of guns, as it would be too unreliable. Morocco would be too unreliable as the primary gun

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<sup>307</sup> Zeltner, *Pages d’histoire du Kanem*, 118.

<sup>308</sup> Zeltner, *Pages d’histoire du Kanem*, 118-119.

<sup>309</sup> Colins and Burns, *Sub-Saharan Africa*, 91.

<sup>310</sup> Barkindo, “Kanem-Borno,” 496.

<sup>311</sup> Colins and Burns, *Sub-Saharan Africa*, 91.

supplier to Bornu because very few of the quality guns departing from Morocco would reach Bornu. It is far more likely that the Moroccan traders would have sold guns to closer regions instead of faraway Bornu. The exact nature of the “Turkish” gunmen and instructors, as well as the amount of guns imported into the Bornuan military will be discussed later in chapter 4. For now, suffice it to say that guns have played an important role in African history,<sup>312</sup> and that guns without a doubt played a role in mai Idris Aloomaa many military victories.<sup>313</sup>

Mai Idris Aloomaa’s reign was marked by many military campaigns throughout the Lake Chad region and the surrounding areas. Besides the eventual addition of guns into his army, mai Idris Aloomaa’s military was made up of primarily with heavy cavalry<sup>314</sup> wielding spears and sabres,<sup>315</sup> and infantry who wielded traditional military equipment.<sup>316</sup> One of the striking things about mai Idris Aloomaa’s army was that it was very well organized and fairly modern (for the times), especially compared to Kanem’s military force.<sup>317</sup> Kanem was the primary enemy of mai Idris Aloomaa’s throughout his early reign,<sup>318</sup> it took the mai of Bornu seven military campaigns to bring down opposition from Kanem.<sup>319</sup> The reasons for the constant fighting between Kanem and Bornu are not totally clear, what is clear is that there was always a rivalry between the two,<sup>320</sup> and that there was probably a struggle between two rival branches of the Sefuwa

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<sup>312</sup> Gavin White, “Firearms in Africa: An Introduction,” *Great Britain Journal of African History*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (1971): 178.

<sup>313</sup> Humphrey J. Fisher and Virginia Rowland, “Firearms in the Central Sudan,” *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (1971): 216-217.

<sup>314</sup> Colins and Burns, *Sub-Saharan Africa*, 91.

<sup>315</sup> Zeltner, *Histoire du Kanem*, 132.

<sup>316</sup> Zeltner, *Histoire du Kanem*, 132.

<sup>317</sup> Zeltner, *Histoire du Kanem*, 133.

<sup>318</sup> Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs*, 1.

<sup>319</sup> Zeltner, *Histoire du Kanem*, 135.

<sup>320</sup> Barkindo, “Kanem-Borno,” 492.

dynasty,<sup>321</sup> although this is also still not totally clear.

Mai Idris Alooma led seven campaigns against Kanem within the span of three years 1574-1578.<sup>322</sup> Idris' main opponent was the ruler of Kanem, Abdul Jalil, and the main cause of conflict was Bornu's claim to sovereignty over Kanem, which Abdul Jalil rejected.<sup>323</sup> The most important campaign was the fifth one 1576-1577, which was the campaign described in greater detail by ibn Fartua.<sup>324</sup> Mai Idris Alooma not only fought the elite aristocracy of Kanem, he also fought their allies, the Tebu.<sup>325</sup> But he also gained new allies in the local Arab tribes who allied themselves with the mai of Bornu,<sup>326</sup> thus potentially giving mai Idris Alooma a greater control over the trans-Saharan trade. Overall, the Kanem wars proved successful for mai Idris Alooma as his goal was to have local ruler of Kanem as his close ally if not his puppet, which he was finally able to do in the fifth campaign.<sup>327</sup> He was therefore able to exert both a lot of direct and indirect control over Kanem, and have a local ruler very amenable to him; his goal was very similar to Ottoman intervention in Morocco during the second half of the sixteenth century.<sup>328</sup> Besides the Kanem wars, not much else is known about the reign of mai Idris Alooma, other than the fact that he led numerous ruthless expeditions against the peoples to the south.<sup>329</sup> These expeditions resembled much more slave raidings than military campaigns, not to mention that besides getting a lot of slaves,<sup>330</sup> mai Idris

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<sup>321</sup> Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs*, 1.

<sup>322</sup> Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs*, 67.

<sup>323</sup> Zeltner, *Histoire du Kanem*, 141.

<sup>324</sup> Zeltner, *Histoire du Kanem*, 135.

<sup>325</sup> Zeltner, *Histoire du Kanem*, 177.

<sup>326</sup> Zeltner, *Histoire du Kanem*, 177-178.

<sup>327</sup> Zeltner, *Histoire du Kanem*, 181.

<sup>328</sup> Julien, *Histoire de l'Afrique du Nord*, 575.

<sup>329</sup> Zeltner, *Histoire du Kanem*, 178.

<sup>330</sup> Barkindo, "Kanem-Borno," 499-500.

Alooma devastated the region.<sup>331</sup>

The history of Kanem-Bornu up to the second half of the sixteenth century is one in which Islam played a key role in the identity and policy of the rulers of Kanem-Bornu. Kanem-Bornu throughout its history was one of the most important exporters of slaves in Africa, getting mainly their slaves from the region south of the Lake Chad region,<sup>332</sup> mainly today's Nigeria. Throughout Kanem-Bornu's history, the importance of both the trans-Saharan trading system and the trade route between the Lake Chad region and Tripoli were apparent. Throughout its long history, the rulers of Kanem-Bornu claimed sovereignty over both the oasis of Kawar and the Fezzan.

In 1574, when the Ottomans conquered the Fezzan, they went into conflict with the ruler of Bornu, mai Idris Alooma (c. 1564-1596). One of the key demands by Mai Idris Alooma to the Ottoman Sultan Murad III was that the Ottomans return certain castles and towns back to Bornu, which mai Idris Alooma claimed to be his land and property.<sup>333</sup> Another factor that is important to the topic at hand that was discussed in this section was the role of Islam in the history of Kanem-Bornu. The Sefuwa dynasty was not only the longest dynasty in African history, but it was also one of the earliest to adopt Islam as the religion of its members.<sup>334</sup> Therefore, throughout its history, Kanem-Bornu's rulers have always viewed themselves as being Muslim rulers. One of the things requested by mai Idris Alooma from the Ottoman Sultan was an Islamic title,<sup>335</sup> because the Ottoman Sultan was both the Caliphate (a title that meant something in Africa) and

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<sup>331</sup> Zeltner, *Histoire du Kanem*, 184.

<sup>332</sup> Levtzion, "Bilad al-Sudan to 1800," 81.

<sup>333</sup> Martin, "Mai Idris," 471.

<sup>334</sup> Trimmingham, *Islam in West Africa*, 107-108.

<sup>335</sup> Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs*, 19-20.



the most powerful Muslim ruler in the region.<sup>336</sup> The diplomatic mission had Islamic undertones to it, as the religion of the Ottoman Sultan was an important aspect in the diplomatic mission's goals.

Besides wanting an Islamic title and certain fortresses and towns back from the Ottomans, mai Idris Aloomaa and his diplomatic mission to Istanbul wanted three other things that will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, mainly: more horses, more guns with skilled gunmen, and diplomatic and border security. The second half of the sixteenth century was the end of the Golden Age of the trans-Saharan trading system, as a result of that fact; the entire regions of the Sahel, Sahara desert, and North Africa were in a state of flux and insecurity. Mai Idris Aloomaa feared either an Ottoman invasion of his lands,<sup>337</sup> or something far more likely a Saadi invasion.<sup>338</sup> His fears proved to be partially right, since the Saadis would do something that had never truly been done before in African history,<sup>339</sup> mainly that a state from North Africa would successfully invade and conquer the Songhai Empire, a Sahelian state in 1591.<sup>340</sup> Overall, the history of Kanem-Bornu demonstrates that when the Ottomans advanced south of the Fezzan in 1574, regardless of how long ago the rulers of Kanem-Bornu might have ruled over the region, in the mind of mai Idris Aloomaa many parts of the Fezzan were still a part of his kingdom. It caused border conflicts between the two, which is why mai Idris Aloomaa sent a delegation to Istanbul. Another important reason for sending a delegation to the capital of the Ottoman Empire was so that they could obtain greater prestige in the Islamic world, by getting a new Islamic title for their ruler, mai Idris Aloomaa.

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<sup>336</sup> Wright, *Libya*, 45.

<sup>337</sup> Abitbol, "End of Songhay," 301.

<sup>338</sup> Barkindo, "Kanem-Borno," 503-504.

<sup>339</sup> Abitbol, "End of Songhay," 319.

<sup>340</sup> Julien, *Histoire de l'Afrique du Nord*, 584.

### 3.10 Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated the long history of Kanem-Bornu and the role that it played in the history of Africa and of Islam. It also described in detail how close and interconnected Kanem-Bornu's history was with Islam, as well as how most of the rulers of the Sefuwa dynasty identified themselves as Muslim rulers and the defenders of the *Sunna*. This chapter also went in depth into important changes that the Lake Chad region and Kanem-Bornu underwent in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. As well as the rise of Bornu as a major power within Africa during the sixteenth century, climaxing during the reign of mai Idris Alooma who brought Bornu to new heights of fame for the extent of its power.<sup>341</sup> This section also demonstrates that Kanem-Bornu played an influential and key role in the spread of Islam throughout sub-Saharan Africa. The fact of the matter is that Kanem-Bornu was a very influential state in African history and it played a major role in the formation of Africa. Similar to the Ottoman Empire, Kanem-Bornu was one of the primary defenders of the *sunna* throughout the history of the Sahel region of Africa.

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<sup>341</sup> Barkindo, "Kanem-Borno," 499-500.

## CHAPTER IV:

### THE OTTOMANS IN TRIPOLI

#### 4.1 Introduction

The relationship between Africa and the Ottoman Empire has not been adequately studied. Africa had a great impact on the Ottoman Empire; in fact, the Ottoman conquest of Africa played a role in the transition of the Ottomans from a regional power into a major world empire.<sup>342</sup> The Ottoman Empire was able to conquer all of coastal North Africa, with the notable exception of Morocco, as a result of its strong navy, which would play a dominant role throughout Ottoman North Africa.<sup>343</sup> Adding North Africa enabled the Ottomans to control the eastern Mediterranean and stabilize their economy and the Ottoman state as a whole.

The Ottoman Empire also had a big impact on Tripoli and the Lake Chad region. In fact, as a result of the diplomatic discourse between mai Idris Alooma's diplomatic envoys and Sultan Murad III, the Ottoman Empire extended its influence the furthest

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<sup>342</sup> Salih Özbaran, *Ottoman Expansion Towards the Indian Ocean in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century* (Istanbul: Istanbul Bilgi University, 2009), 165.

<sup>343</sup> Kavas, *Osmanlı-Afrika*, 38.

south and deeper in the interior of the Africa in its entire history.<sup>344</sup> Before discussing the influence and impact that the Ottomans had on Bornu and the Lake Chad region, their role and administration in Tripoli needs to be addressed. The goal of this chapter is to look into the Ottoman role and administration in Tripoli during the reign of Sultan Murad III (1574-1595). Although the city of Tripoli would be captured during the reign of Murad III's grandfather, Süleyman the Magnificent (1520-1566), it was during the reign of Sultan Murad III that the Ottomans consolidated and stabilized their rule over the city and its surrounding area. To say that the beginning of Ottoman rule over Tripoli was unstable is an understatement as until the 1580s; the Ottomans were unable to have a firm hold over the province and were faced with near constant insurrection as well as the threat of Spanish attack.<sup>345</sup>

The Ottoman administration in Tripoli during the reign of Sultan Murad III (1574-1595) was mostly a period of transition in which the Ottomans were trying to rid themselves of local and foreign resistance to their newly established *eyalet*, while at the same time trying to lay the foundation for their rule in Tripoli. Part of establishing their rule was occupying the various hinterlands of Tripoli, including the Fezzan and its main commercial center, Marzuq (Merzuk) in 1574.<sup>346</sup> The event is pivotal for two reasons; the first is the fact that the Ottoman occupation of the Fezzan is what caused mai Idris Alooma's diplomatic initiative to the Ottomans. The second is that by 1574 the Ottomans rule in Tripoli was comfortable and confident enough to expand itself to the south into the desert, meaning that their rule over the new *eyalet* of Tripoli was

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<sup>344</sup> Aziz Samih İltter, *Şimali Afrikada Türkler*, II (İstanbul, 1937), 128.

<sup>345</sup> *Osmanlı Belgelerinde: Trablusgarb*. İstanbul: T. C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü: Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, Yayın Nu.: 125, 2013, A. DVNS. MHM. D, 62/276, 80-81.

<sup>346</sup> Cengiz Orhonlu, "Osmanlı-Bornu Münâsebetine Âid Belgeler," *İstanbul Edebiyat Fakültesi Matbaası*, Sayı 23, (Mart, 1969): 119-120.

stabilized.

Tripoli was a frontier province of the Ottoman Empire and the role of the janissaries was important in establishing Ottoman rule over the *eyalet*. This chapter outlines the history of the Ottomans in Tripoli, the instability of the early years of their rule over the city and their governance and administration of the region. It then looks at the Fezzan and the role of the slave trade played in Tripoli, as well as the role of camels and their trade to other regions within the Ottoman Empire. The last section of this chapter analyzes the role of the Ottoman navy in the Ottoman occupation and rule of Tripoli.

#### **4.2 Tripoli and North Africa as a Frontier in the Ottoman Empire**

The *eyalet* of Tripoli was the very definition of the frontier in the Ottoman Empire. Both the Mediterranean Sea and the whole of North Africa were viewed as frontiers, the Mediterranean was a frontier because the Ottomans, and practically anyone else could never truly put an end to the corsairs and banditry.<sup>347</sup> North Africa was a frontier because none of the borders were ever really stable because with the exception of major cities like Tripoli, Tunis, Constantine, and Algeria; the rest of North Africa was made up of deserts with small towns and oases surrounded by nomadic tribes.<sup>348</sup> The

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<sup>347</sup> Molly Green, "The Ottomans in the Mediterranean," in *The Early Modern Ottomans*, ed. Aksan, Virginia H. and Daniel Goffman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 104.

<sup>348</sup> Dariusz Kolodziejczyk, "Between Universalistic claims and reality: Ottoman frontiers in the early modern period," in *The Ottoman World*, ed. Christine Woodhead (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis

North African provinces were unusual Ottoman frontiers because cities, towns, and fortresses constituted the border. The way the Ottoman Empire established frontiers was based on a region,<sup>349</sup> a town,<sup>350</sup> a natural barrier like rivers or mountains,<sup>351</sup> and notably fortresses.<sup>352</sup> The natural barrier of the Sahara desert easily defined the frontier for the Ottomans, as anywhere that was not Tripoli, Murzuk (the main town of the Fezzan),<sup>353</sup> or a major town or city were the frontier.<sup>354</sup>

The other major element that defined the Ottoman conception of the frontier was also one the key points of arguments between the Ottomans and the Bornuans, mainly fortresses.<sup>355</sup> The fortress defined what belonged to the Ottoman Empire both on land and on water.<sup>356</sup> Generally speaking, whatever was being capable of being shot by a fortress' canon was considered as being Ottoman water.<sup>357</sup> Fortresses were the end point of the Ottoman frontier, meaning that the land beyond the fortress might belong to the Ottomans and it might belong to a neighboring state.<sup>358</sup> The fortress "was the quintessential marker of frontier space; it marked the edge of the empire as points of control in both land and seascapes."<sup>359</sup> The only way that one could tell if the land beyond a fortress was Ottoman land or not was the Ottoman Empire's ability to levy

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Group, 2012), 208.

<sup>349</sup> A. C. S. Peacock, "Introduction: The Ottoman Empire and its Frontiers," in *The Frontier of the Ottoman World*, ed. A. C. S. Peacock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 11.

<sup>350</sup> Palmira Brummett, "Imagining the early modern Ottoman space, from world history to Piri Reis," in *The Early Modern Ottomans*, ed. Aksan, Virginia H. and Daniel Goffman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 26.

<sup>351</sup> Brummett, "Imagining," 25-26.

<sup>352</sup> Palmira Brummett, "The Fortress: Defining and Mapping the Ottoman Frontier in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in *The Frontier of the Ottoman World*, ed. A. C. S. Peacock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 31.

<sup>353</sup> Orhonlu, Cengiz. "Osmanlı-Bornu," 117.

<sup>354</sup> Orhonlu, "Osmanlı-Bornu," 117-118.

<sup>355</sup> Peacock, "Introduction," 19.

<sup>356</sup> Kolodziejczyk, "Between Universalistic claims," 215.

<sup>357</sup> Kolodziejczyk, "Between Universalistic claims," 215.

<sup>358</sup> Brummett, "Imagining," 48.

<sup>359</sup> Brummett, "The Fortress," 31.

taxes and soldiers from that land.<sup>360</sup> Even though the *eyalet* of Tripoli was geographically big, it was in fact a fairly small province, since most of it was desert, and so the Ottoman state would not have been able to levy a lot of taxes and soldiers from its nomadic populations. Most of the land in Tripoli was not Ottoman land since they could neither levy soldiers or taxes. What defined Ottoman land in Tripoli was not the geography of the province, but instead the towns, cities and fortresses that the Ottomans held and could impose taxes on.

The fortresses that the Ottoman Empire used, whether it was in Anatolia or in Tripoli, was usually based off of an earlier fortress that the Ottomans modified and reused, which means that there were no standard Ottoman fortresses throughout the empire.<sup>361</sup> Although fundamental to the Ottoman Empire's ambitions towards its borders, these fortresses were very expensive to man and maintain.<sup>362</sup> In Tripoli, like many frontier provinces of the Ottoman Empire, the central government encouraged the native population to take responsibility for the construction and maintenance of frontier fortifications.<sup>363</sup> Nevertheless, these fortresses and cities within the *eyalet* of Tripoli also required Ottoman soldiers from outside the region.

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<sup>360</sup> Brummett, "Imagining," 15.

<sup>361</sup> Peacock, "Introduction," 19.

<sup>362</sup> Peacock, "Introduction," 19-20.

<sup>363</sup> Peacock, "Introduction," 19-20.

### 4.3 Janissaries in Tripoli

The extent of janissary soldiers within the eyalet of Tripoli is still not fully known, it is estimated that the *ocak* of Tripoli consisted of approximately 1,500 soldiers.<sup>364</sup> In the sixteenth century and the two centuries that preceded it, outside of war, the janissaries were used primarily for policing<sup>365</sup> and as fire-fighters in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>366</sup> Both the military experience and their distinctive uniforms made the janissaries ideal “police officers” in Ottoman cities.<sup>367</sup> It only seems natural, that a province as unstable as Tripoli (in the first three decades) would have had a good amount of janissary soldiers sent to the region to pacify it. The time period in which Tripoli was added to the Ottoman Empire was also a time in which the janissary corps was increasing substantially, especially in the 1570s and 1580s during the reign of Sultan Murad III, whose reign arguably saw the biggest change and increase to the janissary corps in Ottoman history.<sup>368</sup> It was during the reign of Sultan Murad III that the every janissary in the Ottoman Empire became equipped with firearms.<sup>369</sup> This was important for multiple reasons, one of which was that janissary presence in Tripoli was over 1,500, which meant that over 1,500 men from Tripoli had firearms at their disposal.

The dramatic increase in the number of janissaries during Sultan Murad III’s (1574-1495) reign had an important impact on the local aristocracies, as these would either fight against the janissaries for power, or in the case of Tripoli, the janissaries

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<sup>364</sup> Houari, “Ottoman Maghrib,” 530.

<sup>365</sup> Godfrey Goodwin, *The Janissaries* (London: Saqi Books, 1994) 88.

<sup>366</sup> Goodwin, *Janissaries*, 97.

<sup>367</sup> Goodwin, *Janissaries*, 88.

<sup>368</sup> Goodwin, *Janissaries*, 147.

<sup>369</sup> Gabor Agoston, *Guns for the Sultan: Military Power and the Weapons Industry in the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 24.



would eventually become the local elites of the city.<sup>370</sup> It is very probable that the janissaries became the dominant force in Tripoli; over time the local dominant militias in the city were the Kuloğlu,<sup>371</sup> which heavily implies janissary roots. The expansion of the janissaries in the second half of the sixteenth century had major repercussions in the regions south of Tripoli as numerous sources about the Bornuan military mention both Turkish mercenaries who wielded guns<sup>372</sup> and “Turkish” advisors that were used by mai Idris Aloomo to train his military and gunmen.<sup>373</sup> The janissaries had an important role in Ottoman rule over the *eyelet* of Tripoli during the reign of Sultan Murad III, they also played a role in sub-Saharan African history as either the suppliers of firearms to mai Idris Aloomo, or as mercenaries within the Bornuan army.

#### 4.4 The Ottomans in Africa before 1551

The Ottoman presence in Africa began when Sultan Selim I destroyed the Mamluks in 1517. The Ottomans would establish and administer *eyalets* in Egypt until the era of European colonialism in Africa,<sup>374</sup> and the Ottomans from the Egyptian conquest until the Italian colonization of Libya would always have a presence in Africa.

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<sup>370</sup> Faroqhi, *Ottoman and World Around It*, 82.

<sup>371</sup> Faroqhi, *Ottoman and World Around It*, 83.

<sup>372</sup> B. G. Martin “Mai Idris of Bornu and the Ottoman Turks, 1576-78.” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (Oct., 1972): 471-472.

<sup>373</sup> Martin, “Mai Idris and Ottoman Turks,” 471.

<sup>374</sup> Cengiz Orhonlu, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Güney Siyaseti: Habeş Eyaleti* (İstanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Matbaası, 1974), 103.

Egypt was used as a stepping stone by the Ottomans for further conquest in Africa.<sup>375</sup> The Ottoman Empire's reasons for the conquest of Egypt were very different from their reasons in their occupation of the rest of North Africa. Although there are many reasons for Selim I's conquest of Egypt, one of the reasons was competition and rivalry between the Ottomans and the *Mamluks*.<sup>376</sup> The Ottoman reasoning for the occupation and conquest of the rest of North Africa was not rivalry, but rather local African forces inability to contain or fight off the Spaniards invasion and occupation of North African coastal towns and cities.<sup>377</sup>

After Egypt, the first region of North Africa to become a part of the Ottoman Empire was Algeria 1517. It was originally a *sancak* but turned into an *eyalet* in 1535, Algeria famously became a part of the Ottoman Empire as a result of the military expeditions of two corsairs Oruç Reis and Hayrettin Barbarossa. The addition of Algeria to the Ottoman Empire greatly helped it to expand its reach in the Western Mediterranean and North Africa. For the first half of the sixteenth century, the Spaniards were the Ottoman Empire's biggest rival and enemy in North Africa and the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>378</sup> By 1525 most of today's coastal Algeria had become a part of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>379</sup> In 1534 Hayreddin Barbaros Paşa briefly conquered Tunis from the

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<sup>375</sup> Y. F. Hasan and B. A. Ogot, "The Sudan, 1500-1800," in *UNESCO General History of Africa volume V: Africa from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, ed. B. A. Ogot (California: Heinemann Educational Books, 1992), 176-177.

<sup>376</sup> Palmira Brummett, *Ottoman Seapower and Levantine Diplomacy in the Age of Discovery* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994) 6-7.

<sup>377</sup> Touati Houari, "Ottoman Maghrib," in *The New Cambridge History of Islam, v. 2: The Western Islamic World Eleventh to Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. Maribel Maribel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 506.

<sup>378</sup> *Osmanlı Belgelerinde: Trablusgarb*, A. DVNS. MHM. D, 10/14, 34-37.

<sup>379</sup> Julien, *Histoire de l'Afrique du Nord*, 633.

Hafsids, but in 1535 the Spaniards conquered Tunis.<sup>380</sup> Spanish Tunis would be a constant threat to the Ottomans in both the Mediterranean Sea and North Africa, especially on their hold over Tripoli.<sup>381</sup> The Ottoman Empire was able to successfully conquer and rule over North Africa, and they were successful at defending it against the Spanish Empire.

#### 4.5 The History of Tripoli

Tripoli was briefly conquered by the Normans in 1146 but they were unable to hold on for a significant amount of time against the Almohad forces and surrendered the city to them in 1160.<sup>382</sup> Tripoli remained a part of the Almohad Empire until their fall and the people who replaced the Almohads as rulers of Tripoli were the Hafsid dynasty in 1229.<sup>383</sup> Tripoli would be a part of the Hafsid kingdom for the centuries to come until it was sacked by the Genoese in 1354.<sup>384</sup> The Genoese gave the city to one of their local allies, who in term lost it to another local rival, and so the city was out of the control of the Hafsids until 1401, when they (the Hafsids) took it back.<sup>385</sup> The Hafsids were unable to hold on to Tripoli for a very long time as a local chief revolted against them and took the city in 1460. This local ruler and his three successors were able to rule the city until

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<sup>380</sup> Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib, second edition* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 177.

<sup>381</sup> *Osmanlı Belgelerinde: Trablusgarb*, A. DVNS. MHM. D, 14-2/1532, 38-39.

<sup>382</sup> Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib, second edition*, 191.

<sup>383</sup> Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib, second edition*, 191.

<sup>384</sup> Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 189.

<sup>385</sup> Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period*, 189.

1510, when Pedro Navarro, a Spanish general working for the Spaniards, conquered the city. Eventually the Spaniards lost interest in Tripoli and gave it to the Knights of Malta in 1535.<sup>386</sup>In 1551 a corsair working for the Ottomans, Turgut Pasha captured Tripoli from the Knights of Malta.<sup>387</sup>

Two things should be remembered about Tripoli, the first is that as mentioned above, the city and its immediate surrounding has economic value as a result of its close relations with the Fezzan, the Lake Chad region, and the trans-Saharan trading system.<sup>388</sup> Another important element about Tripoli is that historically speaking it was and has been much closer to Tunis than to Benghazi.<sup>389</sup> Throughout its history, the city of Tripoli has been dominated and ruled by the rulers of Tunis, generally speaking, those who ruled Tunis, also ruled Tripoli.<sup>390</sup>

One of the important reasons for the resistance against Ottoman rule in the first three decades of Ottoman Tripoli was the fact that Tunis was still a Spanish controlled city. The Spaniards both in Spain and in Africa were also increasingly acquiring a greater understanding of the Ottoman Empire,<sup>391</sup> and so were able to cause a great amount of instability for Tripoli.<sup>392</sup> Tunis has always had a great impact on Tripoli, which was why it was very important to Ottoman North Africa. It should also never be forgotten that Tripoli was economically depended on Tunis, as the trade between Tunis

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<sup>386</sup> Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period*, 189-190.

<sup>387</sup> Celal Tevfik Karasapan, *Libya: Trablusgarp, Bingazi ve Fizan* (Ankara: Resimli Posta Matbaası, 1960), 108-109.

<sup>388</sup> B. G. Martin, "Kanem, Bornu, and the Fazzan: Notes on the Political History of a Trade Route." *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (1969): 15-16.

<sup>389</sup> Fisher, "Eastern Maghrib," 258.

<sup>390</sup> Moreno, "The Iberian Peninsula," 615.

<sup>391</sup> Palmira Brummet, "The Lepanto Paradigm Revisited: Knowing the Ottomans in the Sixteenth Century," in *The Renaissance and the Ottoman World*, ed. Anna Contadini and Claire Norton (Burlington: ASHGATE, 2013), 73.

<sup>392</sup> *Osmanlı Belgelerinde: Trablusgarp*, A. DVNS. MHM. D, 61/34, 78-79.

and Tripoli was arguably the latter's second most important trading partner after the trans-Saharan trade.<sup>393</sup> However, Tripoli was also important to the Ottomans and their plans and ambitions for the Sahara trade. It was only after the Ottoman reconquest of Tunis in 1574 and under the leadership of the *sancak bey* of the Fezzan Mahmut bey, which the Ottomans in the very same year went south of the Fezzan and reached the Lake Chad region.<sup>394</sup> Mahmut Bey's expedition south of the Fezzan was the farthest into the interior of the African continent that the Ottomans had reached before Emin's paşa's expeditions in the 1880s.

#### **4.6 The Early Years of the Ottomans in Tripoli**

The Ottoman presence in Tripoli began when Turgut Reis captured the city from the Knights of Malta in 1551. Although the Ottomans may have seized Tripoli in 1551, they were constantly fighting local opposition<sup>395</sup> and resistance from the remaining Knights of Malta throughout the second half of the sixteenth century.<sup>396</sup> One of the reasons why the Ottomans had a hard time controlling and ending local opposition to their rule was the fact that like the Knight of Malta before them, the Berber tribes outside of the cities were initially very resistant to Ottoman rule.<sup>397</sup> Not only was the local rural population of Tripoli resistant to the Ottomans, but so was the population of

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<sup>393</sup> Houari, "Ottoman Maghrib," 513-514.

<sup>394</sup> İltter, *Şimali Afrikada Türkler*, II, 128.

<sup>395</sup> *Osmanlı Belgelerinde: Trablusgarb*, A. DVNS. MHM. D, 3/578, 24-26.

<sup>396</sup> Karasapan, *Trablusgarp, Bingazi ve Fizan*, 108-110.

<sup>397</sup> Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period*, 189.

Tripoli and other cities in the region.<sup>398</sup> The city of Tripoli itself had been the stronghold of the Knights of Maltese,<sup>399</sup> and the local Muslim population that lived in Tripoli had greatly benefitted from their occupation of the city.<sup>400</sup> It meant that for most of the sixteenth century, the Ottomans did not have a true hold over Tripoli. The Ottomans faced both local resistances,<sup>401</sup> and rebellions to their rule in Tripoli.<sup>402</sup> The Ottomans in Tripoli were also in constant dread of potential Spanish attacks on the city.<sup>403</sup> The city of Tripoli itself seems to have been very vulnerable to Spanish attacks and invasions, as the walls of the city were stated as being very weak.<sup>404</sup> The fear of Spanish attacks on Tripoli seems to have heightened right before the Ottoman reconquest of Tunis in 1574.<sup>405</sup> Before unifying their hold over all of Ottoman North Africa, the Ottomans in Tripoli were constantly on the look-out for potential Spanish invasions from Tunis.<sup>406</sup>

The first three decades after the capture of Tripoli in 1551 were very tumultuous times in the history of that region. There seems to be three main reasons for the instability that Ottoman Tripoli underwent from 1551 to the 1580s. The first is like any newly captured and conquered region added to a kingdom or empire, there is a time of adaptation that oftentimes has a period of instability. The second important factor, is that there were constant rebellions in the *eyalet* of Tripoli, many of which, as mentioned above, was due to both local tribal resistance and local supporters of the previous

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<sup>398</sup> Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib, second edition*, 193.

<sup>399</sup> Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib, second edition*, 193.

<sup>400</sup> Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period*, 189.

<sup>401</sup> Abou-l-Hasan Ali ben Mohammed Et-Tamgrouti, *Relation d'une ambassade marocaine en Turquie 1589-1591*, Trad. Henry de Castries, (Frankfurt am Main: Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, 1994), 34.

<sup>402</sup> Karasapan, *Trablusgarp, Bingazi ve Fizan*, 108-110.

<sup>403</sup> *Osmanlı Belgelerinde: Trablusgarb*, A. DVNS. MHM. D, 10/14, 34-37.

<sup>404</sup> Sir Godfrey Fisher, *Barbary Legend: War, trade and Piracy in North Africa 1415-1830* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1974), 35.

<sup>405</sup> *Osmanlı Belgelerinde: Trablusgarb*, A. DVNS. MHM. D, 21/526, 42-44.

<sup>406</sup> *Osmanlı Belgelerinde: Trablusgarb*, A. DVNS. MHM. D, 21/526, 38-39.

regime.<sup>407</sup> The third important factor that contributed to the instability of Ottoman Tripoli in the first three decades of its existence was the Spanish threat, which was very real as Tunis was a Spanish held city from 1535 until 1574. In all respects, the Ottoman conquest of Tunis in 1574 was a turning point in Ottoman Tripoli's history, as it enabled the *eyalet* to be surrounded by Ottoman held territory in North Africa. When the Ottomans conquered Tunis from Spain, not only were they putting an end to Spain's grand ambitions of building an empire in Africa.<sup>408</sup> It also enabled both Tripoli and Tunis to stabilize them, as Tunis was able to have more cohesive relations with Tripoli, which historically had been a hinterland of sorts to Tunis. And no city can prosper if they have bad relations with their hinterlands.<sup>409</sup> The conquest of Tunis more or less guaranteed the security of Tripoli and the Ottoman Empire's hold on the city, because in 1580, during the reign of Murad III (1574-1595), the Ottomans were able to make a peace treaty with Spain, thus guaranteeing the safety and security of the lands held by both empires.<sup>410</sup>

The Ottoman Empire played a key role in the shaping of modern Tripoli and Libya's identity. The area forming present-day Libya begins to have its own political identity after the Arab conquest only with the establishment of Ottoman rule in it at the middle of the sixteenth century. Between the seventh and the fifteenth centuries it was a passageway for conquerors, merchants, and pilgrims, but little besides that.<sup>411</sup> The Ottomans eventually established stability in Tripoli and the regions surrounding it,

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<sup>407</sup> Jane Hathaway, *The Arab Lands under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1800* (London: Pearson Education Limited, 2008), 52-58.

<sup>408</sup> Houari, "Ottoman Maghrib," 513-514.

<sup>409</sup> Elena Frangakis-Syrett, *Trade and Money: The Ottoman Economy in the Eighteenth and Early nineteenth Centuries* (Istanbul: ISIS Press, 2007), 40.

<sup>410</sup> Adrian Tinniswood, *Pirates of Barbary* (London: Vintage Books, 2011), 10.

<sup>411</sup> Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib, second edition*, 189-190.

giving the place stability and a greater identity. Through time the capture of Tripoli by the Ottoman Empire would eventually give the region a lot of peace and stability while eliminating the threats of invasion by both Muslim and Christian powers.<sup>412</sup> Ottoman Empire rule over North Africa lasted for centuries and in that time period, North Africa was divided into *eyalets* that brought a considerable amount of cohesiveness and stability to the region.<sup>413</sup> Overall, based on both primary and secondary sources, Tripoli from Turgut Paşa capture of the city in 1551 until the 1580s was very unstable if not constantly under threat from Spanish invasion and in a state of almost constant rebellion against the Ottomans.<sup>414</sup> The Ottomans, based on their own efforts and on the capture of Tunis in 1574, were able to stabilize Tripoli and start undertaking adventurous enterprises like the expansion into and south of the Fezzan in the second half of the 1570s.<sup>415</sup> Regardless of the overall importance of Tripoli, it is clear that the Ottoman Empire played a crucial role in shaping and stabilizing the city after the 1580s.

#### **4.7 Ottoman Expansion in the Fezzan**

The Fezzan's importance to Tripoli cannot be overstated, it was literally one of the centers in the trans-Saharan trading system,<sup>416</sup> enabling Tripoli to exports many of the goods from that region. It held an important position within the trans-Saharan

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<sup>412</sup> Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib, second edition*, 189-190.

<sup>413</sup> André Raymond, "Les provinces arabes (XVIe-XVIIIe siècle)," in *Histoire de l'Empire ottoman*, ed. Robert Mantran (Paris : Fayard, 1989), 344.

<sup>414</sup> *Osmanlı Belgelerinde: Trablusgarb*, 24-57.

<sup>415</sup> Martin, "Kanem, Bornu, and the Fazzan," 24.

<sup>416</sup> Abun-Nasr, *A History of Maghrib in the Islamic Period*, 192.



trading system was the reason the Ottomans would turn it into a *sancak*.<sup>417</sup> The center or capital of the *sancak* of Fezzan was Murzuk, the heart of the Fezzan and one of the most important cities in the trans-Saharan trading system.<sup>418</sup> Whenever the word Fezzan is used in this section of this thesis, it generally means Murzuk, as it was the economic capital of the central Sahara,<sup>419</sup> all the goods that came from Bornu went through both the Fezzan and its capital, Murzuk.<sup>420</sup> It was so important to Tripoli's economy that as soon as the Ottomans captured Tripoli, they started making incursions into the Fezzan.<sup>421</sup> There seems to be no clear consensus as to when the Ottomans seized it, but it is very clear that the Ottomans had major problems with the Fezzan in the 1570s, causing them to use greater military force there in 1574.<sup>422</sup> Based on both secondary and primary sources,<sup>423</sup> what caused a major rift between the Ottomans and the people in the Fezzan were the Ottomans levying too many taxes on the local population around the year 1574.<sup>424</sup> The rift between the Ottomans and the local population of the Fezzan, along with their incursions throughout the Fezzan caused mai Idris Aloomaa to send a six-man embassy to Istanbul in 1574.<sup>425</sup>

After capturing Tripoli, the Ottomans expanded into the Fezzan and tried to establish control over the trans-Saharan routes leading to Tripoli.<sup>426</sup> All of Tripoli's

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<sup>417</sup> Orhonlu, "Osmanlı-Bornu," 117-120.

<sup>418</sup> Fisher, H. J., "Eastern Maghrib," 263.

<sup>419</sup> T. Lewicki, "The role of the Sahara and Saharians in relationships between north and south," in *UNESCO General History of Africa volume III: Africa from the Seventh to the Eleventh Century*, ed. M. Elfasi and I. Hrbek (California: Heinemann Educational Books, 1981), 304.

<sup>420</sup> Bernard Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: An Historical Enquiry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) 73.

<sup>421</sup> Abun-Nasr, *A History of Maghrib in the Islamic Period*, 192.

<sup>422</sup> Wright, *Libya*, 44.

<sup>423</sup> Barkindo, "Kanem-Borno," 502.

<sup>424</sup> *Osmanlı Belgelerinde: Trablusgarb*, A. DVNS. MHM. D, 23/698, 52-53.

<sup>425</sup> Barkindo, "Kanem-Borno," 503.

<sup>426</sup> Abun-Nasr, *A History of Maghrib in the Islamic Period*, 192.

major trading partners with the exception of the Italian cities and Bornu were a part of the Ottoman Empire. In order to acquire a stranglehold on the trade between the two states, the Ottomans needed suitable control over the Fezzan. In many ways the relationship between the Fezzan and the trans-Saharan trade is similar to Istanbul's role with the Black Sea. If a Mediterranean city or state wanted to trade with the Black Sea region, it needed to go through Istanbul, but since the city of Istanbul was so important and traversed, most of the time, the state wanting goods from the Black Sea could probably get those goods in Istanbul. That was exactly how the relationship between the Fezzan the Central trans-Saharan trade worked, if you wanted slaves, gold, or ivory from the Central Sahel or Sahara desert, you had to get it either at Murzuk (economic center of the Fezzan), or you had to pass by the city in order to go further south. Sometime between 1551 and 1574, the Ottomans had acquired sovereignty over the Fezzan, we know that they had accomplished that as they had been able to impose taxes on the local population and had a *sancak bey*. The fact that the Ottomans were able to impose taxes on the Fezzan meant that they had sovereignty over the land.<sup>427</sup>

#### **4.8 Slavery**

Slavery had always been a part of life in Bornu, the Fezzan, and the Bornu-Fezzan-Tripoli trade route,<sup>428</sup> but both the decline of the trans-Saharan trade and the fall

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<sup>427</sup> *Osmanlı Belgelerinde: Trablusgarb*, A. DVNS. MHM. D, 23/698, 52-53.

<sup>428</sup> Manning, *Slavery and African Life*, 29.

of Songhai caused the Sahara trade to rely even more on the slave trade.<sup>429</sup> Tripoli was along with Ethiopia one of the major exporters of African slaves to the rest of the Ottoman Empire;<sup>430</sup> it was the primary exporter of slaves from Bornu and the rest of the Central Sahel.<sup>431</sup> The state of Bornu throughout its history acquired a large portion of its state revenue by slave raiding other countries to its south.<sup>432</sup> Once these slaves were captured, they were transported from Bornu, through the oases of Kawar, then to the Fezzan. The first Ottoman territory in which the slaves would be transported from Bornu to Ottoman Tripoli would have been the *sancak* of Fezzan,<sup>433</sup> and its center, Murzuk.<sup>434</sup>

Murzuk was one of the great entrepôts of the overland slave trade like other towns in the Sahara; it was generally one of the first markets in which slaves from the Sahel arrived.<sup>435</sup> In Murzuk, slaves would continue with their caravan, be sold to another caravan, or sold to locals. From Murzuk, some of the slaves would stay in the city and the Fezzan and become workers in the caravans,<sup>436</sup> others would be sent to Egypt (although they were in the minority),<sup>437</sup> while the vast majority would be sent to Tripoli.<sup>438</sup> Slaves in Murzuk or the Fezzan were much cheaper to buy than in Tripoli, in fact it is estimated that a slave in the Fezzan cost around half the price of a slave in Tripoli.<sup>439</sup> The prices for slaves were cheaper in the Fezzan than in Tripoli because the Fezzan would have been one of the main slave entrepôts in Africa. It should also be

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<sup>429</sup> Murray Gordon, *Slavery in the Arab World* (New York: New Amsterdam Books, 1989), 115.

<sup>430</sup> Lewis, *Race and Slavery*, 73.

<sup>431</sup> Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire*, 57.

<sup>432</sup> Fisher, "He swalloweth," 382.

<sup>433</sup> Toledano, *Ottoman Slave Trade*, 212.

<sup>434</sup> Orhonlu, "Osmanlı-Bornu," 118.

<sup>435</sup> Toledano, *Ottoman Slave Trade*, 49.

<sup>436</sup> Gordon, *Slavery*, 115.

<sup>437</sup> Barkindo, "Kanem-Borno," 499.

<sup>438</sup> Lewis, *Race and Slavery*, 161.

<sup>439</sup> Toledano, *Ottoman Slave Trade*, 77.

mentioned that taxes on slaves were the primary revenue and income of the customhouses of the Ottoman *kaza* of the Fezzan.<sup>440</sup> It took approximately three months for slaves to march from the Lake Chad region to reach the Mediterranean coast.<sup>441</sup> It was a very difficult route for slaves, whose standards of living during the march were brutal.<sup>442</sup> Usually during the march to Tripoli from Bornu, there would be numerous slaves who would die on the caravan routes.<sup>443</sup> If a slave reached Tripoli intact and with very little damage to the value of that slave, the owner of that slave would get around twenty percent profits from selling the slave.<sup>444</sup> The slave trade was very profitable for the cities of Murzuk and Tripoli, slave traders made a great amount of money, assuming that most of their slaves survived the harrowing journey of the Bornu-Fezzan-Tripoli route in relatively good conditions.

From Tripoli, the information gets a little complicated for the simple reason that most of the information about Tripoli's slave trade routes is based on nineteenth century Ottoman Empire sources or travel logs. In the nineteenth century, most of the slaves from Tripoli would be sent to Crete;<sup>445</sup> some of the other primary destinations of slaves from Tripoli would be Janina,<sup>446</sup> Malta, Rhodes, Izmir, Salonica, Istanbul, and various Aegean islands.<sup>447</sup> Crete, being the primary destination for the slaves from Tripoli, who in turn would be sent from Crete to other regions in the Ottoman Empire,<sup>448</sup> was not a part of the Ottoman Empire during the reign of Murad III (1574-1595). Malta was never

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<sup>440</sup> Toledano, *Ottoman Slave Trade*, 70.

<sup>441</sup> Toledano, *Ottoman Slave Trade*, 29.

<sup>442</sup> Lewis, *Race and Slavery*, 161.

<sup>443</sup> Lewis, *Race and Slavery*, 161.

<sup>444</sup> Toledano, *Ottoman Slave Trade*, 77.

<sup>445</sup> Toledano, *Ottoman Slave Trade*, 21.

<sup>446</sup> Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire*, 107.

<sup>447</sup> Toledano, *Ottoman Slave Trade*, 21.

<sup>448</sup> Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire*, 107.

a part of the Ottoman Empire, however in the nineteenth century, Malta was neither hostile towards the Ottomans, nor was it under the threat of the Ottomans;<sup>449</sup> which was not the case in the sixteenth century, as Malta and the Ottomans were enemies during the reign of Sultan Murad III. Izmir only started becoming one of the biggest and most important cities in the Ottoman Empire during the eighteenth century,<sup>450</sup> so although slaves from Tripoli most likely did end up going there, it was probably marginal in number during the sixteenth century. Therefore, the only major destinations for Tripoli's slave trade during the sixteenth century would have been: Istanbul, Salonika, Janina, and possibly the Aegean Islands.

The exact nature of African slaves in both the Mediterranean Sea and the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century is not totally clear. It seems that when it came to the slaves from the Bornu-Fezzan-Tripoli route, most of them were used as domestic servants,<sup>451</sup> some were very unfortunate and turned into eunuchs,<sup>452</sup> and some of them were used as caravan workers.<sup>453</sup> An important amount of slaves in the Bornu-Fezzan-Tripoli route stayed within the region, either as workers or domestic slaves. In Bornu, the Fezzan (notably Murzuk) and Tripoli, slaves were sold for Ottoman and European goods like salt, arms, and liquor. Starting with the reign of mai Idris Alooma, we know that the Ottoman Empire sold guns and their expertise on guns to Bornu for slaves.<sup>454</sup> It should also not be forgotten that slaves were also used as a sort of currency in order to

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<sup>449</sup> Toledano, *Ottoman Slave Trade*, 264.

<sup>450</sup> Frangakis-Syrett, *Trade and Money*, 20.

<sup>451</sup> Manning, *Slavery and African Life*, 36.

<sup>452</sup> Ehud R. Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition in the Ottoman Middle East* (London: University of Washington Press, 1998), 162.

<sup>453</sup> Gordon, *Slavery*, 134.

<sup>454</sup> Engin, *Osmanlı Devletinde Kölelik*, 91.

barter and trade in the Bornu-Fezzan-Tripoli trade route.<sup>455</sup> As stated previously, bartering slaves for items had been widely practiced throughout the history of not just the Bornu-Fezzan-Tripoli trade route, but also throughout the history of the trans-Saharan trading system.<sup>456</sup>

Tripoli along with Egypt and the Hejaz would become through time one of the most important African slave trade entrepots in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>457</sup> The Ottoman occupation of Tripoli and the creation of the *sancak* of the Fezzan would establish a new entrepot of slavery within the Ottoman Empire mainly that of African slaves whose primary supplier was the kingdom of Bornu. Bornu played a crucial role in the African slave trade within the Ottoman Empire, as it was the primary supplier of African slaves to the Ottoman Empire along with Ethiopia and the Sudan (Darfur). It is estimated that around 7, 220, 000 slaves were exported from Africa between 600-1600, and that around 2/3 of those slaves, meaning 4, 820,000 came from the trans-Saharan trading system.<sup>458</sup> Some historians also estimate that the trans-Saharan trading system was trading and exporting around 2 million slaves during the sixteenth century.<sup>459</sup> The overall importance of all of this is the following; the Bornu-Fezzan-Tripoli trade route after the fall of the Empire of Songhai in 1591 became the most important trade route in the trans-Saharan trading system.<sup>460</sup> It is estimated that the collapse of the Songhai Empire in 1591 caused the slave trade in the Sahara desert to increase from 550,000 to 700,000

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<sup>455</sup> Toledano, *Ottoman Slave Trade*, 49.

<sup>456</sup> Gordon, *Slavery*, 134.

<sup>457</sup> Toledano, *Ottoman Slave Trade*, 192.

<sup>458</sup> Gordon, *Slavery*, 134.

<sup>459</sup> Giri, *Histoire économique*, 101.

<sup>460</sup> Gordon, *Slavery*, 115.

in the seventeenth century.<sup>461</sup> What that means, is that Bornu arguably became the biggest slave contributor to the Ottoman African slave trade since it was the primary supplier of African slaves to the Tripoli-Lake Chad trade routes which had become the most important trade route in the Sahara trade. Slavery was also becoming increasingly important to the Sahara trade, which means that Bornu's role to Tripoli's economy only increased in importance throughout the centuries.

#### **4.9 Tripoli and Camels**

The *eyalet* of Tripoli had numerous nomadic tribes living within the hinterland of the province. Most of North Africa had numerous nomadic tribes living within the region, being dominated by deserts; it was only natural that the region had many nomads. These nomads would obviously ride camels, as it was the preferred means of transportation in North Africa and the Sahara desert.<sup>462</sup> This all leads to the following point, mainly that the Ottoman Empire used an enormous amount of camels in its military campaigns, in fact it is estimated that the Ottomans used around 40,000 camels in their military campaigns.<sup>463</sup> The camels were not only used in war,<sup>464</sup> they also became the primary means of transportation in the Ottoman Middle East, replacing the

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<sup>461</sup> Gordon, *Slavery*, 134.

<sup>462</sup> Kavas, *Osmanlı-Afrika*, 96-97.

<sup>463</sup> Reşat Kasaba "Nomads and tribes in the Ottoman Empire," in *The Ottoman World*, ed. Christine Woodhead (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2012), 15.

<sup>464</sup> Agoston, *Guns for the Sultan*, 34.

wheel.<sup>465</sup> The people who took care of camels and other transportation animals such as mules and horses, were for the most part nomads,<sup>466</sup> which meant that the Ottoman Empire dependent heavily on the cooperation of nomadic peoples.<sup>467</sup> All of this means that Tripoli must have contributed to the export of camels for Ottoman commerce and military campaigns. Essentially, people living in North Africa west of Tripoli generally had to go to Tripoli in order to go to Istanbul,<sup>468</sup> which meant that Tripoli was the last stop in North Africa before going to Istanbul.<sup>469</sup> Therefore, it seems only logical that Tripoli would have contributed to the camel trade in the Ottoman Empire, for it had an abundance of camels, it had numerous nomadic tribes who could raise them and sell them, and the city was fairly close to Istanbul.

#### **4.10 Ottoman Naval Force**

One of the key factors that defined the Ottoman Empire's relations with Tripoli was its navy. Although Tripoli was linked to other Ottoman territories by land, when it came to its relationship between itself and the Ottoman heartland (Istanbul, the Balkans, western Anatolia), what enabled the center to have a big influence on a distant province like Tripoli, was its navy.<sup>470</sup> In fact, "Sea power was a vehicle for developing Ottoman trading interest, securing the Ottoman coasts, and supporting the transport and

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<sup>465</sup> Hathaway, *Ottoman Rule, 1516-1800*, 143.

<sup>466</sup> Kasaba "Nomads and tribes," 15.

<sup>467</sup> Kasaba "Nomads and tribes," 15.

<sup>468</sup> Et-Tamgrouti, *Relation d'une ambassade*, 9.

<sup>469</sup> Et-Tamgrouti, *Relation d'une ambassade*, 18.

<sup>470</sup> Veinstein, "L'empire dans sa grandeur," 203-204.



provisioning activities required for Ottoman territorial expansion.”<sup>471</sup> In other words, the navy was used by the Ottomans to consolidate its territory surrounding the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>472</sup> It is not a coincidence that the Ottoman Empire became arguably the most powerful naval power in the Mediterranean Sea in the 1540s.<sup>473</sup> It was the fact that the Ottomans were a seaborne empire during the sixteenth century that they were able to rule over most of North Africa during the second half of the sixteenth century.<sup>474</sup>

“Due to its naval commercial power, the Ottoman Empire was able to dominate the trading routes between Asia and Europe until the last decades of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>475</sup> This quotation summarizes the power of the Ottoman Empire during the sixteenth century, mainly that its navy and economic output were so powerful and attractive,<sup>476</sup> that the empire was able to dominate trade between the Middle East and the rest of the world. The same idea can also be applied to North Africa, with the exception of Saadi Morocco, by being the dominant sea power in the Mediterranean.<sup>477</sup> Having a powerful navy enabled them to have quick communication and transportation between Istanbul and the border provinces, like Tripoli. The Ottoman Empire was very wealthy in the sixteenth century, which made it a very valuable trading partner, which was one of the benefits of being a vassal of the Ottomans. The end result of all this is that as a result of its commercial and naval power, the Ottoman Empire was able to make the Eastern Mediterranean into an internal lake that linked all of the various parts of the empire

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<sup>471</sup> Palmira Brummett, *Ottoman Seapower and Levantine Diplomacy in the Age of Discovery* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994), 90.

<sup>472</sup> Brummett, *Ottoman Seapower*, 89-90.

<sup>473</sup> Tinniswood, *Pirates of Barbary*, 9.

<sup>474</sup> Andrew C. Hess, “The Evolution of the Ottoman Seaborne Empire in the Age of the Oceanic Discoveries, 1453-1525,” *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 75, No. 7 (Dec., 1970), 1915.

<sup>475</sup> Bulut, “Ottomans and Dutch,” 198.

<sup>476</sup> Faroqui, *Ottoman Empire and the World Around It*, 28.

<sup>477</sup> Hess, “Ottoman Seaborne Empire,” 1892.

together.<sup>478</sup>

Arguably Ottoman North Africa is most famous for being made up semi-autonomous corsair states. Tripoli, like the rest of North Africa, was no exception, besides the strategic importance of Tripoli in North Africa and the trans-Saharan trade which included slavery, the gun trade, and the trade in ivory; the *eyalet* of Tripoli also got a lot of its finances from pirating.<sup>479</sup> There are many reasons why Tripoli, like the rest of North Africa, started to depend increasingly on pirating in order to acquire greater wealth. The first of which was that pirating was very similar to slave raids, in fact some of the pirating done by the North African corsairs was slave raiding.<sup>480</sup> But essentially both pirating and slave raiding are almost one in the same; the main difference being one is done on water while the other is done on land. Both are the pursuit of stealing goods from others, both involve the enslavement of the victims of their steals, although this is not always the case, and both can be attributed to poverty.

The second half of the sixteenth century saw a North Africa not only in economic troubles as a result of the decline of the Sahara trade, but also the entire region was devastated by the Spanish-Ottoman wars.<sup>481</sup> North Africa was destroyed by the numerous wars between the Ottomans and the Spaniards,<sup>482</sup> and the various rebellions that occurred in Tripoli.<sup>483</sup> The *eyalet* of Tripoli was also devastated by the decline in trade, added to this, was a grain crisis that occurred in Tripoli in the 1580s and 1590s

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<sup>478</sup> Green, "The Ottomans," 107.

<sup>479</sup> Panzac, *Barbary Corsairs*, 222-223.

<sup>480</sup> Tinniswood, *Pirates of Barbary*, 77.

<sup>481</sup> Et-Tamgrouti, *Relation d'une ambassade*, 10-33.

<sup>482</sup> Et-Tamgrouti, *Relation d'une ambassade*, 33.

<sup>483</sup> *Osmanlı Belgelerinde: Trablusgarb*, A. DVNS. MHM. D, 7/250, 30-31.

when it had numerous shortages in grain supplies.<sup>484</sup> The Ottoman Empire supported the corsairs when they were helping them fight their enemies,<sup>485</sup> but during the 1550s and 1560s, the Ottomans also tried to fight piracy and the corsairs from raiding Ottoman ships without much success.<sup>486</sup>

The Ottoman Empire was able to change the balance of power in the eastern Mediterranean as a result of the rise of its navy<sup>487</sup> and the economic decline of North Africa<sup>488</sup> and the Middle East.<sup>489</sup> It was also located in a key strategic region, mainly that its center, Istanbul was located between the Black Sea and the Aegean Sea, thus enabling it to have control over a crucial maritime commercial region in the Mediterranean.<sup>490</sup> Istanbul being next to three seas enabled it to have a naval culture and helped it led to the rise of the Ottoman navy.<sup>491</sup> Ottoman naval dominance and naval expansion began with the reign of Sultan Bayezid II (1481-1512).<sup>492</sup> Before the reign of Sultan Bayezid II, the Ottomans had never been one of the great naval powers in the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>493</sup> After his reign the Ottomans would continue to be one of the great naval powers in the Mediterranean until the eighteenth century.

When Sultan Murad III reign began, the Ottomans had acquired a naval empire

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<sup>484</sup> *Osmanlı Belgelerinde: Trablusgarb*, A. DVNS. MHM. D, 67/61, 84-85.

<sup>485</sup> Idris Bostan, "The establishment of the province of Cezayir-i Bahr-i Sefid," in *The Kapudan Pasha his Office and his Domain*, ed. Elizabeth Zachariadou (Greece: Crete University Press, 2002) 243.

<sup>486</sup> Colin Heywood, "The Kapudan Pasha, the English ambassador and the *Blackham* Galley: an episode in Anglo-Ottoman maritime relations (1697)," in *The Kapudan Pasha his Office and his Domain*, ed. Elizabeth Zachariadou (Greece: Crete University Press, 2002), 405.

<sup>487</sup> Brummett, *Ottoman Seapower*, 3-5.

<sup>488</sup> Et-Tamgrouti, *Relation d'une ambassade*, 12-14.

<sup>489</sup> Stripling, *The Ottoman Turks*, 15.

<sup>490</sup> Svat Soucek, "Introduction," in *Studies in Ottoman Naval History and Maritime Geography* (Istanbul: The ISIS Press, 2008) 7.

<sup>491</sup> Soucek, "Introduction," 7.

<sup>492</sup> Brummett, *Ottoman Seapower*, 89.

<sup>493</sup> Green, "The Ottomans," 106.

in the Mediterranean that held 2/3 of the Mediterranean as Ottoman waters.<sup>494</sup> Ultimately, the Ottomans were able to acquire naval dominance in the Mediterranean Sea as a result of a combination of both standard organized naval power and corsairs who (like the *akıncı*) prepared the ground for naval expansion by causing disturbances with the Ottoman Empire's enemies.<sup>495</sup> The strength of the Ottoman navy enabled the Ottomans to capture, rule over, and successfully defend North Africa against Spain. However, the inhabitants of these provinces also played a crucial role in helping the expansion of and increased strength of the Ottoman navy, as the North African corsairs constantly attacked the Ottoman Empire's enemies.<sup>496</sup>

The Ottoman navy was strong enough throughout the sixteenth century to defend and impose Ottoman administration over Tripoli. The Ottoman navy was the primary tool in which the Ottomans dealt with rebellions in Tripoli, mainly by bringing both the navy itself and extra soldiers.<sup>497</sup> In many ways, the rise of janissary rule<sup>498</sup> and of the various local dynasties throughout North Africa during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries might be an indicator of the importance of the Ottoman navy on their rule over Ottoman Africa. The Ottoman navy was one of the primary factors that enabled the Ottomans to maintain their rule and sovereignty over Tripoli and the rest of North Africa.<sup>499</sup>

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<sup>494</sup> Svat Soucek, "Naval Aspects of the Ottoman Conquest of Rhodes, Cyprus and Crete," in *Studies in Ottoman Naval History and Maritime Geography* (Istanbul: The ISIS Press, 2008) 133.

<sup>495</sup> Soucek, "Naval Aspects," 123.

<sup>496</sup> Hess, "Ottoman Seaborne Empire," 1905.

<sup>497</sup> Faroqhi, *Ottoman Empire and the World Around*, 83.

<sup>498</sup> Michael Brett, "State formation and organization," in *The New Cambridge History of Islam, v. 2: The Western Islamic World Eleventh to Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. Maribel Maribel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 577.

<sup>499</sup> Ahmet Kavas, *Osmanlı-Afrika İlişkileri* (İstanbul: Tasam Yayınları, 2006), 96.

#### 4.11 Conclusion

Tripoli is generally associated with the Ottoman Empire during the end of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century in the context of European colonialism of Africa. Besides that, Tripoli is not often associated with the Ottoman Empire, even though the Ottomans ruled over the city and its surrounding region for almost four centuries. In fact when looking over the history of the city, it is clear that it was shaped by Ottoman rule. Even though throughout the centuries the Ottoman Empire's rule over the city and its surrounding may have been strenuous, the Ottoman Empire was finally able to exert influence and to impose its rule over the *eyalet* of Tripoli throughout the reign of Sultan Murad III. The period in which Ottoman rule was most influential before the nineteenth century was during the reign of Sultan Murad III. Ottoman rule during the first three decades after the capture of the city may have been hectic, but once neighboring Tunis had been conquered in 1574, the Ottomans were able to exert their influence over the *eyalet* and were even able to start doing military expeditions south of the Fezzan. All of this was possible as a result of the Ottoman navy, which throughout the sixteenth century, was very strong and powerful; thus enabling the Ottomans to exert a lot of influence over the region. Besides being a frontier and a strategic location in the Mediterranean for the Ottomans, the *eyalet* of Tripoli was an important center for camels. It was also, as a result of the diplomatic correspondence between the Ottoman Empire and Bornu, able to maintain good ties with the kingdom south of the Sahara, and so Tripoli became one of the main exporters of slaves throughout the Ottoman Empire. Finally, the Ottoman Empire shaped the city of Tripoli by giving it centuries of stability once they were able to stabilize their rule over the city.

## CHAPTER V:

### MAI IDRIS ALOOMA AND SULTAN MURAD III

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the diplomatic relations between mai Idris Aloomaa and Sultan Murad III, the context of the diplomatic relations, and the impact of the diplomatic relations between the states of Bornu and the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire had expanded its influence and legacy south of the Sahara by being the primary and the first distributor of firearms to Bornu.<sup>500</sup> In order to understand how the Ottomans could have been in a position to introduce firearms into Bornu, the first section of this chapter deals with guns in the Ottoman Empire. In order to have a better understanding on the primary sources, a brief look on Ottoman conception of Africa and Ottoman views on diplomacy will be the subject of the second section of this chapter. The third section of this chapter will look at the last element that made the second half of the sixteenth century unique, mainly Saadi and Ottoman competition in Africa and the Saadi invasion and conquest of Songhai. The fourth section is an analysis of the Ottoman archival documents and the three letters of the diplomatic correspondence

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<sup>500</sup> Colins and Burns, *Sub-Saharan Africa*, 91.

between Bornu and the Ottomans. The last section analyses the consequences of the relationship between the Ottomans and Bornu.

## 5.2 Guns and the Ottoman Empire

The Ottoman Empire had a major impact on the Lake Chad region and on Bornu as a result of the exportation of guns to the region. The exact nature of the trade, as well as the overall amount of guns sent by the Ottomans to Bornu during the reign of Sultan Murad III (1574-1595) is still not clear. Before going on the possibilities of the overall amount of firearms sent by the Ottomans to Bornu, a brief overview of firearms in the Ottoman Empire should be stated. In the sixteenth and seventeenth century the Ottoman Empire had the most technologically advanced military in Europe and in the Middle East.<sup>501</sup> From the sixteenth century until the end of the seventeenth century, the Ottoman Empire had superior firearms and artillery than Europe,<sup>502</sup> and was the most successful at using them in wars.<sup>503</sup>

During the reign of Murad III (1574-1595), the Ottoman Empire saw an important increase in guns throughout the empire.<sup>504</sup> Both the janissary corps increased by a large margin during this time, but also all of these new janissaries were equipped

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<sup>501</sup> Özbaran, *Ottoman Expansion*, 277.

<sup>502</sup> Agoston, *Guns for the Sultan*, 194.

<sup>503</sup> Agoston, *Guns for the Sultan*, 60.

<sup>504</sup> Gabor Agoston, *Osmanlı'da Strateji ve Askerî Güç*, trans. M. Fatih Çalışır (İstanbul: TİMAŞ Yayınları, 2012) 231.

with guns, thus increasing the amount of firearms throughout the entire empire.<sup>505</sup> The Ottoman Empire sold guns and their expertise of guns to Bornu for slaves.<sup>506</sup> Bornu was not an exception; during the sixteenth century the Ottomans had a tendency to sell guns for other goods. When it came to the spice trade in the Indian Ocean world, whether it was in the Red Sea or the Persian Gulf, the Ottomans paid for spices with guns.<sup>507</sup> If the Ottomans were able to trade firearms for slaves and spices, it means that they had a surplus of guns throughout the empire during the end of the sixteenth century.

The Ottomans most likely discovered or became acquainted with gunpowder and gunpowder technology during the end of the fourteenth century.<sup>508</sup> The evidence suggests that the Ottomans acquired gun technology from its rivals and enemies in the Balkans.<sup>509</sup> It is well known that the Ottomans had mastered gunpowder technology and cannons during the fifteenth century, using them to conquer the city of Constantinople in 1453. It is estimated that the Ottomans had employed on a permanent basis cannoneers (topçular) who were well-trained and versed in cannons since the 1390s.<sup>510</sup> Although the presence and trade of cannons from North Africa to sub-Saharan Africa during the sixteenth century is not fully known, what is clear is that with the exception of the Moroccan invasion of Songhai, cannons played a negligible role in the Sahel.<sup>511</sup>

The Ottomans were major leaders in the production and use of firearms during the sixteenth century. During the reign of Sultan Murad III, the Ottoman Empire had

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<sup>505</sup> Agoston, *Osmanlı'da Strateji ve Askerî Güç*, 31.

<sup>506</sup> Engin, *Osmanlı Devletinde Kölelik*, 91.

<sup>507</sup> Giancarlo Casale, "Sokollu Mehmed Pasha and the Spice Trade," *The Arab Lands in the Ottoman Era.*, ed. Jane Hathaway (Minnesota: CEMH, 2009), 79.

<sup>508</sup> Agoston, *Guns for the Sultan*, 16-17.

<sup>509</sup> Agoston, *Guns for the Sultan*, 17.

<sup>510</sup> Agoston, *Guns for the Sultan*, 20.

<sup>511</sup> Joseph P. Smaldone, "Firearms in the Central Sudan: A Reevaluation," *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (1972): 596.



greatly expanded the amount of firearms within the janissary corps.<sup>512</sup> It was during the reign of Sultan Murad II (1421-1451) that the Ottomans began using firearms,<sup>513</sup> it was around the year 1532 that most of the Ottoman Empire's janissaries had guns,<sup>514</sup> and it was the reign of Sultan Murad III that all janissaries became equipped with firearms.<sup>515</sup> The rise of firearms throughout the Ottoman Empire during the sixteenth century is a natural phenomenon since the firepower of the janissaries themselves was generally enough to turn the tide of battle in the favor of the Ottomans.<sup>516</sup>

The Ottoman Empire during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was one of, if not the major exporters of the technological diffusion of gunpowder.<sup>517</sup> They were also both the biggest producer and manufacturer of gunpowder in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa during these two centuries.<sup>518</sup> Besides Istanbul, there was approximately ten other powder works (*baruthane*) in the Ottoman Empire during the reign of Sultan Murad III.<sup>519</sup> The two most important powder works in the Ottoman Empire to the African provinces would have been the one in Cairo and the one in Istanbul.<sup>520</sup> Although the powder works in Cairo obviously supplied Tripoli and other African provinces, the one in Bagdad also supplied Tripoli; thus showing that the empire was producing enough gunpowder and munitions to export it throughout the Ottoman Empire.<sup>521</sup> The Ottoman Empire throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries consistently produced

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<sup>512</sup> Goodwin, *Janissaries*, 147.

<sup>513</sup> Agoston, *Guns for the Sultan*, 23.

<sup>514</sup> Agoston, *Guns for the Sultan*, 24.

<sup>515</sup> Agoston, *Guns for the Sultan*, 24.

<sup>516</sup> Agoston, *Guns for the Sultan*, 24.

<sup>517</sup> Agoston, *Guns for the Sultan*, 48.

<sup>518</sup> Agoston, *Guns for the Sultan*, 134-135.

<sup>519</sup> Agoston, *Guns for the Sultan*, 152.

<sup>520</sup> Agoston, *Guns for the Sultan*, 152.

<sup>521</sup> Agoston, *Guns for the Sultan*, 148.

the highest amount of guns,<sup>522</sup> cannons,<sup>523</sup> ammunitions,<sup>524</sup> gun powders,<sup>525</sup> and saltpeter than anywhere else in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa.<sup>526</sup> The Ottomans had the resources and infrastructures to become one of the primary exporters of firearms, guns, and military technology throughout Europe, the Middle East, and Africa.

The increase in the number of mercenaries, in addition to the increase in guns throughout the Ottoman Empire may explain the use of “Turkish” mercenaries in Bornu’s army.<sup>527</sup> Most primary and secondary documents that deal with the reign of mai Idris Alooma (1564-1596) mentions either that the Sultan either used Turkish gunmen or had Turkish military instructors.<sup>528</sup> The Turkish soldiers stated to have been used by mai Idris Alooma are either described as being mercenaries<sup>529</sup> or as Turkish adventurers.<sup>530</sup> It is most likely that janissaries or former janissaries from Tripoli or neighboring Ottoman African provinces may have gone to Kanem-Bornu either as traders or as Ottoman officials following the Sahara trade. Once they got to Kanem-Bornu, many of them turned into mercenaries or potentially became military teachers to the Bornuan army. It is also not clear by the sources’ use of the term “Turks,” as the word could have designated either local janissaries or janissaries from the Ottoman heartland. What is clear is that there were Ottoman subjects who took part in mai Idris’ wars and helped arm and train his army. The amount is not clear but it would not be unreasonable, given the population of both Tripoli and its surrounding regions and that of the Lake Chad

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<sup>522</sup> Agoston, *Guns for the Sultan*, 91.

<sup>523</sup> Agoston, *Guns for the Sultan*, 24.

<sup>524</sup> Agoston, *Guns for the Sultan*, 194.

<sup>525</sup> Agoston, *Guns for the Sultan*, 147.

<sup>526</sup> Agoston, *Guns for the Sultan*, 156.

<sup>527</sup> Agoston, *Guns for the Sultan*, 95.

<sup>528</sup> Colins and Burns, *Sub-Saharan Africa*, 91.

<sup>529</sup> Barkindo, “Kanem-Borno,” 496.

<sup>530</sup> Barkindo, “Kanem-Borno,” 496.

region during the sixteenth century; that the Turkish mercenaries would have been close to a hundred. Regardless of how small their size might have been, they did play an important role in the Bornuan army which was in full expansion during mai Idris' reign.<sup>531</sup>

### **5.3 Ottoman Conception of Africa and Ottoman Diplomacy**

The Islamic world had a better understanding of Africa than anywhere else during the sixteenth century. Being the dominant religion of Africa until colonialism, Islam enabled Muslims from North Africa and Andalus as well as those from the Middle East to travel and trade throughout Muslim Africa. These various travelers helped the Islamic world have a relatively good understanding of the Sahel region, Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa, and the coast of East Africa.<sup>532</sup> The Islamic and Ottoman geographers and travelers had a relatively good understanding of the Sahel region of Africa as a result of greater travel and commerce between the various regions of the Islamic world. As a result of this, the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century was very knowledgeable of the world around it.<sup>533</sup>

The Ottoman geographers combined the traditional Islamic accounts of the world along with their own observations, and they also used some of the recent European

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<sup>531</sup> Zeltner, *Histoire du Kanem*, 133.

<sup>532</sup> Sayyid Maqbul Ahmad, *A History of Arab-Islamic Geography (9<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. )* (Amman: al-Bayt University Press, 1995), 331-332.

<sup>533</sup> Agoston, "Information," 82.

accounts that were widespread in the Mediterranean.<sup>534</sup> The expansion of the Ottoman Empire during the sixteenth century meant that they had new territories to govern, about which they needed a better understanding of.<sup>535</sup> Their new avowed interest in geography included translating Arabic and Persian geographic works,<sup>536</sup> copying western cartography,<sup>537</sup> having regular and relatively systematic land/revenue surveys *tahrir* of the various Ottoman provinces,<sup>538</sup> and they had their vassal states provided information on neighboring states.<sup>539</sup>

The main focus of Ottoman conception of both geography and cartography in the sixteenth century was the Mediterranean world.<sup>540</sup> North Africa being a part of that world also got a fair amount of cartographical and geographical attention by Ottoman map makers like Piri Reis.<sup>541</sup> The Ottoman Empire had a very good understanding of the geography and the cartography of North Africa and Tripoli when it conquered these regions throughout the sixteenth century.<sup>542</sup> It also had an idea about Bornu, having been described by numerous Arab explorers throughout history,<sup>543</sup> as well as being the major partner of Tripoli, the Ottomans at the very least on a local level were aware of Bornu.

Ottoman expansion south of the Fezzan in 1574 demonstrates that they would have had knowledge of Kanem-Bornu. The reason is that the Fezzan was a place that

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<sup>534</sup> Pinar Emiralioğlu, *Geographical Knowledge and Imperial Culture in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Burlington: ASHGATE, 2014) 4.

<sup>535</sup> Emiralioğlu, *Geographical Knowledge*, 13.

<sup>536</sup> Emiralioğlu, *Geographical Knowledge*, 6.

<sup>537</sup> Svat Soucek, "Ottoman Cartography," in *Studies in Ottoman Naval History and Maritime Geography* (Istanbul: The ISIS Press, 2008) 225.

<sup>538</sup> Agoston, "Information," 80.

<sup>539</sup> Agoston, "Information," 89.

<sup>540</sup> Emiralioğlu, *Geographical Knowledge*, 132.

<sup>541</sup> Emiralioğlu, *Geographical Knowledge*, 101.

<sup>542</sup> *Osmanlı Belgelerinde: Trablusgarp*, 45.

<sup>543</sup> Zeltner, *Histoire du Kanem*, 49.

had historical links and relations with Kanem-Bornu; meaning that the inhabitants of the Fezzan would have had knowledge and dealings with Kanem-Bornu. One of the ways that the Ottomans gathered intelligence on their neighbors and rivals was information-gathering by local Ottoman authorities at the empire's frontier.<sup>544</sup> The local Ottoman authorities in both Tripoli and the Fezzan fit that profile; which means that they would have had reports and dealings with subjects and officials from Kanem-Bornu. Before the Bornuan embassy reached Istanbul, Ottoman officials from Tripoli would have had to deal with that very same embassy and would have been aware of Kanem-Bornu's existence and the approximate whereabouts of that kingdom. Proof of all this is the following, shortly after the capture of Tripoli, sometime in the 1550s, a Bornuan embassy made contact with Turgut Pasha, and came to satisfactory agreement with him.<sup>545</sup>

The purpose of this section is to show whether or not the Ottomans treated the Bornuan embassy like they would have other embassies. Although there are no court documents that detail the exchange between the Bornuan embassy at the Ottoman court, several things can be surmised based on both the primary sources and secondary sources. The Bornuan delegation was treated like an obedient vassal, which was how the Ottomans treated most delegation from smaller foreign states.<sup>546</sup> This piece of information is important as even though Bornu was clearly not a vassal of the Ottomans, the Ottoman conception of Bornu as being like any other foreign states, meant that in the nineteenth century, many people viewed Bornu as being a kind of vassal or client

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<sup>544</sup> Agoston, "Information," 81-82.

<sup>545</sup> Wright, *Libya*, 44.

<sup>546</sup> Faroqhi, *Ottoman Empire and the World Around It*, 4.

kingdom of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>547</sup>

This brings us to the letters, they do not state anything that happened at court, what they do indicate, is that the Bornuans had to deal with the local *beylerbeyi* of Tripoli.<sup>548</sup> In other words, the Sultan gave the local officials the authority to deal with the situation.<sup>549</sup> Based on the letters sent by Sultan Murad III to his *Kapudan Paşa*, the diplomatic procedure between the Ottomans and the Bornuans seem to have been standard for that period in Ottoman history.<sup>550</sup> The Bornuan embassy was accepted and greeted by officials from *Bab-i Ali*,<sup>551</sup> and most of the Bornuan request seemed to have been acquiesced. The Ottomans seem to have treated the Bornuan delegation with the proper decorum and Ottoman diplomatic conventions. The Ottomans treated the Bornuan delegation like they would most minor sovereign states.

#### 5.4 Saadi Aggression in Africa

One of the key aspects about mai Idris Alooma's diplomatic initiative to the Ottomans was to eliminate any potential threat from the Ottomans, continue commercial relations with Tripoli and try to obtain firearms from the Ottomans. Mai Idris Alooma was successful in his endeavor as he was able to maintain trade between Tripoli and the Lake Chad, secure his borders with the Ottomans, and he was able to obtain an

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<sup>547</sup> Lewis, *Race and Slavery*, 161.

<sup>548</sup> Martin, "Mai Idris," 481.

<sup>549</sup> Faroqhi, *Ottoman Empire and the World Around It*, 29.

<sup>550</sup> Namık Sinan Turan, *İmparatorluk ve Diplomasi: Osmanlı Diplomasisinin İzinde* (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2014), 190-191.

<sup>551</sup> İbrahim Yıldırım *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Elçi Kabulleri* (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2014), 31

important amount of firearms from the Ottoman Empire.<sup>552</sup>

One of the interesting things about the history of the diplomatic relations between the Ottoman Empire and Bornu during the end of the sixteenth century was that there had been an intense rivalry between the Ottomans and Saadi Morocco for North Africa. Not only had there been a rivalry for who would be the dominant power in the region, but mai Idris Alooma had also attempted to get guns and diplomatic friendship from Saadi Morocco.<sup>553</sup> Although mai Idris Alooma was able to acquire some guns from al-Mansur,<sup>554</sup> the Saadi Sultan, the overall amount seems to have been negligible because the Saadis had major reservations about sending guns to a Sahelian state.<sup>555</sup> The Saadis did not send guns to Bornu because they had ambitions over the Sahel region of Africa and they eventually invaded and conquered the Songhai Empire in 1591.

The time period during the reign of Sultan Murad III (1574-1595) was very unique in the history Africa. It saw the last remnants of an aggressive Ottoman Empire and Saadi Morocco in Africa and the golden age of the trans-Saharan trading system was coming to an end. Bornu and the Lake Chad region would undergo its golden age, and Morocco under the Saadis would make history. Before the reign of Ahmed al-Mansur (1578-1603), no major power from North Africa had successfully led a full fledged invasion of a sub-Saharan African state. But in 1591, the Saadis successfully conquered the Songhai Empire.<sup>556</sup> The Songhai Empire (1464-1591) was the successor state of the Empire of Mali (c. 1230-1600), the most famous of the empires and kingdoms of the

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<sup>552</sup> Martin, "Mai Idris," 471-472.

<sup>553</sup> Fisher and Rowland, "Firearms in the Central Sudan," 216.

<sup>554</sup> Abitbol, "End of Songhay," 301.

<sup>555</sup> Cory, "The Man Who Would Be Caliph," 189.

<sup>556</sup> Julien, *Histoire de l'Afrique du Nord*, 584-585.

Sahel. Both states had been located around the Niger River, Mali's capital had been Timbuktu while that of Songhai had been Gao,<sup>557</sup> and both states dominated West Africa during their heydays.<sup>558</sup> They were arguably the most important exporters of gold in Africa during their apogees,<sup>559</sup> which was one of the primary reasons why al-Mansur, the Saadi ruler of Morocco decided to invade and conquer Songhai, to get a hold on Sahelian gold.<sup>560</sup> Al-Mansur wanted to control the gold trade and build an empire in the Sahel region of Africa that would rival both the Iberian states and the Ottomans.<sup>561</sup>

Mai Idris Aloomu was fortunate at being both too far away for al-Mansur to be able to invade Bornu,<sup>562</sup> and the fact that he was in the middle of the Saadi-Ottoman rivalry of the second half of the sixteenth century.<sup>563</sup> The origin of the Saadi-Ottoman rivalry is pretty simple, in 1549-1550 when the leader of the Saadis, Muhammad ash-Shaykh occupied Fez; the Saadis became the immediate neighbors to the Ottomans in Algeria.<sup>564</sup> Besides the fact that they were immediate neighbors, one of the primary reason that the Saadis and Ottomans were extremely hostile toward each other, is the fact that the Ottomans had supported the Wattasid. The Wattasids were the former rulers of Morocco and the dynasty that was deposed by the Saadis,<sup>565</sup> thus not only were the Ottomans a threat to the Saadis, they were supporters of the Saadis enemies. In order to

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<sup>557</sup> Humphrey J. Fisher, "Leo Africanus and the Songhay Conquest of Hausaland," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (1978), 99.

<sup>558</sup> Bovill, *Golden Trade*, 117-118.

<sup>559</sup> Bovill, *Golden Trade*, 132.

<sup>560</sup> Cory, "The Man Who Would Be Caliph," 180.

<sup>561</sup> Cory, "The Man Who Would Be Caliph," 184.

<sup>562</sup> Fisher, "Leo Africanus," 105.

<sup>563</sup> Abderrahman El-Moudden, "The Sharif and the Padishah: Some Remarks on Moroccan-Ottoman Relations in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century," *Studies on Ottoman Diplomatic History V: The Ottomans and Africa*, ed. Selim Deringil and Sinan Kuneralp (Istanbul: ISIS Press, 1990), 29-30.

<sup>564</sup> Cook, *The Hundred Years War for Morocco*, 219.

<sup>565</sup> Cook, *The Hundred Years War for Morocco*, 218.



make the argument against the Ottoman Empire, the Saadis, already claiming Quraysh ancestry,<sup>566</sup> challenged the legitimacy of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>567</sup>

The second half of the sixteenth century was defined by the stabilization of North Africa under Ottoman rule. The Spaniards were aggressively attacking North Africa for most of the first half of the sixteenth century.<sup>568</sup> However by the time of Sultan Murad III's reign (1574-1595), the Ottomans had firmly established themselves as the main power in all of North Africa, with the notable exception of Saadi Morocco. Being enemies, led both the Saadis and the Ottomans to look south for potential allies and lands of conquests.<sup>569</sup> One of the primary reasons the Ottomans never conquered Saadi Morocco was the distance of Morocco to the Ottoman heartland.<sup>570</sup>

Both the Saadis and the Ottomans at various times tried to attack and conquer the lands of their neighbors,<sup>571</sup> but ultimately both were unsuccessful.<sup>572</sup> The military hostilities between the two powers occurred before the reign of Sultan Murad III and may have had to do with the results of the battle of Lepanto.<sup>573</sup> In 1578 the Saadians had successfully used firearms to defeat the Portuguese.<sup>574</sup> Like the Ottoman Empire, the Saadis had successfully established a gun based military system. One of the reasons why they gave very little guns to Bornu was that the Sharif al-Mansur understood the importance of them, and did not want guns going into the hands of potential future

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<sup>566</sup> Abderrahmane El-Moudden, "The Idea of the Caliphate between Moroccans and Ottomans: Political and Symbolic Stakes in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Century-Maghrib," *Studia Islamica*, No. 82 (1995): 106.

<sup>567</sup> El-Moudden, "Idea of Caliphate 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Century," 107.

<sup>568</sup> Kamen, *Spain's Road to Empire*, 41.

<sup>569</sup> Barkindo, "Kanem-Borno," 503.

<sup>570</sup> Cook, *The Hundred Years War for Morocco*, 258.

<sup>571</sup> Cory, "The Man Who Would Be Caliph," 179.

<sup>572</sup> Cory, "The Man Who Would Be Caliph," 179.

<sup>573</sup> Cook, *The Hundred Years War for Morocco*, 230.

<sup>574</sup> Cook, *The Hundred Years War for Morocco*, 2.

enemies like the Songhai or Bornu.<sup>575</sup>

It was under al-Mansur's reign that Morocco invaded and conquered Songhai in 1591, one of the most unprecedented and important events in the history of Africa.<sup>576</sup> It was the first time in the history of the Sahel in which a North African kingdom conquered a Sahelian state.<sup>577</sup> The conquest of Songhai had three major consequences in Africa; the first is that it further devastated the trans-Saharan trading system by completely destabilizing West Africa,<sup>578</sup> causing the trans-Saharan trading system to become even more dependent on the slave trade.<sup>579</sup> The second is that it made the Tripoli-Fezzan-Bornu route the most important trading route in the trans-Saharan trading system following the devastation enacted upon West Africa.<sup>580</sup> The third is that it vindicated mai Idris Alooma's fears of northern invasion, whether by the Ottomans or Saadiens.<sup>581</sup>

The trans-Saharan trading system had already been undergoing decline before the Saadian invasion of Songhai, but that invasion further exacerbated the economic decline of the region and put the economy of the rest of Africa in a very dire situation. The collapse of the Songhai Empire caused the trans-Saharan trading system to become even more dependent on slavery as a means to profit. The destruction of Songhai was one of the main events that heightened the collapse of West Africa and was the final blow to sub-Saharan Africa, from which it would be unable to recover from.

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<sup>575</sup> El-Moudden, "Idea of Caliphate in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Century," 110.

<sup>576</sup> Julien, *Histoire de l'Afrique du Nord*, 582.

<sup>577</sup> Cory, "The Man Who Would Be Caliph," 184.

<sup>578</sup> Julien, *Histoire de l'Afrique du Nord*, 584-585.

<sup>579</sup> Gordon, *Slavery*, 148.

<sup>580</sup> Gordon, *Slavery*, 115.

<sup>581</sup> El-Moudden, "Idea of Caliphate in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Century," 110-111.

The second impact, and arguably the only positive to have come out of the Saadi invasion of Songhai was that it made the Tripoli-Fezzan-Bornu trading route even more important.<sup>582</sup> The increased traffic in the Bornu-Fezzan-Tripoli route and dependence of the trans-Saharan trade on slavery turned Tripoli into one of the primary slave ports in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>583</sup> The possible threat of either the Saadis or the Ottomans, or both of them combined was one of the primary reasons for mai Idris Alooma diplomatic missions to both states.<sup>584</sup> In the end, the diplomatic mission to al-Mansur proved to be inconclusive,<sup>585</sup> while the one with the Ottomans proved to be much more fruitful.<sup>586</sup>

North Africa and the Sahel region were in an odd situation during the era of Sultan Murad III (1574-1595). Besides the fact that the Saadis were Spain's ally against the Ottomans during the reign of Sultan Murad III,<sup>587</sup> it was the last time that African Empires would be able to compete against the West over control of Africa. It was an era that saw a strong Morocco, and a strong Ottoman presence in Africa,<sup>588</sup> Bornu at the peak of its power, and the remnants of one of the last great West African Empire Songhai. The political tensions between rivals is one of the key factors that led to the diplomatic mission by mai Idris Alooma, and the competition between the Ottomans and the Saadis played a key role in the Ottoman Sultan's and his entourage's response to the Bornuan delegation. Most of the guns that mai Idris Alooma was able to purchase and

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<sup>582</sup> Gordon, *Slavery*, 115.

<sup>583</sup> Ehud R. Toledano, *As if Silent and Absent: Bonds of Enslavement in the Islamic Middle East* (London: Yale University Press, 2007), 115.

<sup>584</sup> El-Moudden, "Idea of Caliphate in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Century," 110.

<sup>585</sup> Cory, "The Man Who Would Be Caliph," 187-188.

<sup>586</sup> Barkindo, "Kanem-Borno," 496.

<sup>587</sup> Julien, *Histoire de l'Afrique du Nord*, 693.

<sup>588</sup> El-Moudden, "Idea of Caliphate in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Century," 111.

used in his wars of conquest and slave raiding came from the Ottomans.<sup>589</sup>

### 5.5 Mai Idris Aloomaa and Sultan Murad III

In 1574 mai Idris Aloomaa sent an embassy to Istanbul, of which about ten archival documents,<sup>590</sup> and three letters sent to the *Kapudan paşa` s kethüdası* are what remains of the diplomatic correspondence between Bornu and the Ottomans.<sup>591</sup> The context and history of the factors that led to the embassy's arrival to Istanbul has been dealt with extensively throughout this thesis, this is the section in which the correspondence itself as well as the results and consequences of the diplomatic and commercial relations between Bornu and the Ottoman Empire during the last three decades of the sixteenth century will be dealt with.

The first documents to be analyzed will be the three letters that an official of the Sublime Porte sent to the *kethüda* of the *Kapudan Paşa*.<sup>592</sup> Before going into the contents of the three letters, it should be noted that it was ultimately the *Kapudan Paşa` s* and his office's responsibility to enact the will of the Sultan concerning Bornu. The fact that the *Kapudan Paşa* would have been the primary official to deal with things concerning Bornu is both consistent with Ottoman practices and unexpected at the same time. The role of the *Kapudan Paşa* demonstrates the importance of the Ottoman navy

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<sup>589</sup> Zeltner, *Pages d'histoire du Kanem*, 123-124.

<sup>590</sup> Orhonlu, "Osmanlı-Bornu," 124-130.

<sup>591</sup> Martin, "Mai Idris," 470-471.

<sup>592</sup> Martin, "Mai Idris," 479.

to its African provinces.

Two of the three letters are written in Arabic and the third letter is written in Ottoman Turkish. The Arabic letters were written in *naskhî* while the Ottoman Turkish is written in *ruq'a* script.<sup>593</sup> The two letters written in Arabic are two different versions of the same thing, one is a long version and the other is a short version of the long letter.<sup>594</sup> All of the archival documents come from the *Mühimme Defterleri*.<sup>595</sup>

The short Arabic letter is typical of Ottoman decorum as it has sentences worth of titles and epithets when referring to Sultan Murad III, mai Idris Aloomaa, and the officials dealing with the diplomatic exchanges. It refers to mai Idris Aloomaa as Malik Idris, which would be normal since Idris Aloomaa was in fact a king. It also refers to his domain as the *vilayet* of Bornu<sup>596</sup> which reinforces a previously mentioned notion that the Ottomans looked at smaller states as vassals. The letter talks about how the Bornuan embassy came in good intentions, wanting to establish and improve relations between the two states, something that the Ottomans approved.<sup>597</sup> The letter also states that the Ottomans agree with Bornu and will allow Bornuan subjects to come into Ottoman land for travel, trade, and diplomacy.<sup>598</sup> The letter then goes into why the Ottomans refused the Bornuan request of obtaining the fortress of *Kıran* from the Ottomans, using a supposed Ottoman custom to justify their refusal.<sup>599</sup> The fortress of *Kıran* which still has

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<sup>593</sup> Martin, "Mai Idris," 471.

<sup>594</sup> Martin, "Mai Idris," 471.

<sup>595</sup> Martin, "Mai Idris," 470-490.

<sup>596</sup> Orhonlu, "Osmanlı-Bornu," 126.

<sup>597</sup> Martin, "Mai Idris," 474.

<sup>598</sup> Martin, "Mai Idris," 474.

<sup>599</sup> Martin, "Mai Idris," 474.

not been identified today,<sup>600</sup> it must have been located somewhere either in southern Fezzan or a region just south of the Fezzan. It would have to have been a strategic fortress since both the Bornuans and Ottomans wanted to keep it. The short letter ends by stating that mai Idris Aloomaa needs to protect his borders and continue on being a good Islamic leader.<sup>601</sup> Overall the short Arabic letter is very similar to Ottoman protocol, even though it is written in Arabic. It is an extremely formal letter with numerous titles to everyone involved and it briefly summarizes the Ottoman response to the Bornuan delegation.

The second letter written in Arabic is a longer version of the first letter; it is in many ways almost the same document, but with certain important additions. It goes into greater detail about the commerce between the two states, mostly mentioning the various caravans going between the two states, and stating that the Ottomans want to continue the caravan trade.<sup>602</sup> The other element that was in the longer version that was not in the first letter was the fact that if another group occupied Ottoman territory in Africa, then Bornu would have an obligation to support local Ottoman forces and resistance.<sup>603</sup> Overall, the second letter is more or less the same as the first with added details.

The Ottoman letter is meant for the *beylerbeyi* of Tunis who again mentions mai Idris Aloomaa as Malik (king) Idris and describes the ruler of Bornu as a vassal,<sup>604</sup> something that as previously mentioned, was typical of Ottoman diplomacy, as the

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<sup>600</sup> Martin, "Kanem, Bornu and the Fazzan," 24.

<sup>601</sup> Martin, "Mai Idris," 476.

<sup>602</sup> Martin, "Mai Idris," 478.

<sup>603</sup> Martin, "Mai Idris," 479.

<sup>604</sup> Martin, "Mai Idris," 471.

Ottomans in the sixteenth century viewed smaller states as a kind of vassal.<sup>605</sup> The letter requests from both the *beylerbeyi* of Tunis and the *sancak bey* of the Fezzan to protect and not to harass the Bornuan delegation on its journey back to the Lake Chad region.<sup>606</sup> It also specifies to the *sancak bey* of Fezzan, Mahmud Bey that he is to continue maintaining good relations with Bornu and not disturb the peace.<sup>607</sup> But at the same time, Mahmud Bey is ordered to maintain the Ottoman frontiers and protect Ottoman subjects from Bornu, if anything were to happen.<sup>608</sup> It is implied, but not stated in the Ottoman letter that the *sancak bey* of the Fezzan is to hold on to the fortress of *Kıran*. The Ottoman letter shows that the Ottoman Empire had in fact established a *sancak* in the Fezzan, whose *bey* most likely went further south than he should have and took a fortress either belonging to Bornu or having belonged to Kanem-Bornu. Either way, the Ottoman Empire was never going to give away the fortress, since it served strategic purposes to the Ottomans in the Fezzan.

There were ten other Ottoman archival documents on the Bornuan mission to Istanbul, all of which were written in the 1570s. Some of these documents deal with the Bornuan delegation, but most of these documents deal with the day-to-day elements of being neighbors. The first two documents described the ruler of Bornu as being from the tribe of blacks (*karalar*) whose diplomatic delegation of six people had reached Istanbul from Tripoli (*Trablus*).<sup>609</sup> These two documents were written in 1574,<sup>610</sup> and they deal primarily with the Ottoman initial reaction to the coming of the Bornuan delegation.

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<sup>605</sup> Martin, "Mai Idris," 479.

<sup>606</sup> Martin, "Mai Idris," 479-481.

<sup>607</sup> Martin, "Mai Idris," 481.

<sup>608</sup> Martin, "Mai Idris," 481.

<sup>609</sup> Orhonlu, "Osmanlı-Bornu," 124-125.

<sup>610</sup> Orhonlu, "Osmanlı-Bornu," 124-125.

The next four documents were written in 1577, the first of which is meant for the *Sancak Beyi* of the Fezzan and it orders him to maintain good relations with Bornu.<sup>611</sup> The fourth document is more or less the same as the Ottoman letter sent to the *Kethudasi of Kapudan Paşa*, the only difference are that the instructions to the officials (to whom the letter is meant for is not mentioned) are much more in depth. The letter is like the fourth with the notable exception that the Ottomans specified to the official (not mentioned) that the Ottoman Empire will fulfill all of the wishes of the Bornuan delegation except for things concerning the fortress of *Kıran*.<sup>612</sup> The sixth document is an order from Mahmud the *Kapudan Paşu kethüdası* to the *beylerbeyi* of Tunis.<sup>613</sup>

The last four documents were written in 1579, the first two are written to the *beylerbeyi* of Egypt by *Kapudan Paşu kethüdası*. In the first of these two letters, Bornu asked that its populations and diplomatic envoys would be protected and if a fatal incident occurred with Bornuan subjects that proper Bornuan rituals be done with them.<sup>614</sup> The other letter is mainly concerning the protection of trade routes between Bornu and the Ottoman Empire as well as making sure that the Bornuan delegation is able to make it back to their homeland safely.<sup>615</sup> The ninth document is meant for Sinan Bey, the new *Sancak beyi* of the Fezzan and the last letter is meant for the *beylerbeyi* of Tripoli. In both documents, the states orders the *sancak beyi* and *beylerbeyi* to keep the peace between the Ottoman Empire and Bornu, as well as make sure that any Bornuan

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<sup>611</sup> Orhonlu, "Osmanlı-Bornu," 125.

<sup>612</sup> Orhonlu, "Osmanlı-Bornu," 127.

<sup>613</sup> Orhonlu, "Osmanlı-Bornu," 127.

<sup>614</sup> Orhonlu, "Osmanlı-Bornu," 127-128.

<sup>615</sup> Orhonlu, "Osmanlı-Bornu," 128.



travelers, especially those doing the Hajj should be protected by the Ottoman state.<sup>616</sup>

The archival documents demonstrate that the Ottoman Empire during the reign of Sultan Murad III had a fairly good understanding of where Bornu was located. It shows a fair amount of respect for the Bornuans and mai Idris Aloomu and is very similar to how the Ottomans would have treated minor states and kingdoms. The Ottomans agreed to most of what the Bornuan delegation wanted, with the notable exception of giving back the fortress of *Kıran*

The archival documents strongly indicate the interconnectedness of all of Ottoman North Africa during the second half of the sixteenth century. It was not just the duty of the *sancak beyi* of the Fezzan or of the *beylerbeyi* of Tripoli to make sure to maintain relations with Bornu; it was also the duty of the *beylerbeyi* of Egypt and Tunis. The *Kapudan Paşa Kethüdası* was in charge of all operations related to Bornu. It was the *Kapudan Paşa* who was giving orders to the *beylerbeyis* and the *beys* of Africa and was ultimately the official responsible for Ottoman-Bornuan relations.<sup>617</sup>

## 5.6 Analysis of the Diplomatic Correspondence

The Ottoman Empire gained a lot from the Bornuan delegation to Istanbul; it enabled the empire and its cartographers to have a better understanding of Africa. It gave greater value and importance to the *eyalet* of Tripoli. Good relations with Bornu

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<sup>616</sup> Orhonlu, "Osmanlı-Bornu," 129.

<sup>617</sup> Orhonlu, "Osmanlı-Bornu," 127-128.

enabled the caravans and the Sahara trade to run smoothly between the Lake Chad and Tripoli, which helped the economy of the entire region. The establishment of good relations between the Ottoman Empire and Bornu would also have helped to make the caravans routes between Ottoman Tripoli and the Lake Chad region more secure. The trade between the Lake Chad region and Tripoli was still a part of the trans-Saharan trading system, which during the second half of the sixteenth century was still an important economic system. The trans-Saharan trading system may have been in decline in terms of overall global importance, but it was still crucial to the economic viability of most of North Africa. The Sahara trade was still greatly coveted by most states within both North Africa and the Sahel regions of Africa. The Ottomans and the Saadis were both trying to acquire a hold over the Sahara trade.<sup>618</sup> By establishing friendly relations with Bornu, the Ottomans were able to have access to the Sahara trade by having a reliable trading partner in Bornu. It enabled them to have access to the almost infinite supply of slaves that Bornu had a hold over, and it enabled some of its merchants to sell horses, salt, and firearms for Bornuan slaves. The Ottoman Empire benefitted from establishing diplomatic relations with Bornu during the reign of Sultan Murad III.

The Bornuan delegation to Istanbul accomplished many things, the most important of which was to establish good relations with both Istanbul and the *eyalet* of Tripoli. It was crucial to Bornu's economy that the commerce between the Fezzan and Tripoli, and that of Bornu should not be interrupted. It was also really important for Bornu to make sure that the Ottomans viewed them as friends, so as not to get attacked by the Ottoman Empire. Mai Idris Alooma got everything that he could have gotten

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<sup>618</sup> El Moudden, "The Idea of the Caliphate," 109-110.

except for either possession of the fortress of *Kiran* or greater access to the Fezzan. Mai Idris Aloomaa was also able to associate himself if not to ally himself with the strongest Muslim power in Africa and the Middle East, which also helped his credential as a Muslim ruler and defender of the *Sunna*.

Overall, mai Idris Aloomaa became a much more powerful ruler after the successful diplomatic mission that he sent to Istanbul. The biggest reason of the success of his diplomatic initiative was the maintenance of the historical trade routes between Tripoli and the Lake Chad region. The commerce between those two regions was what enabled him to acquire access to one of the most important commodities in history, firearms.

### **5.7 Impact of Gun Trade**

One of the most important results and consequences of the diplomatic relations between Bornu and the Ottoman Empire during the 1570s until the 1590s was that Bornu was able to acquire a substantial amount of firearms from the Ottomans.<sup>619</sup> By acquiring firearms from the Ottoman Empire, mai Idris Aloomaa was not only the first sub-Saharan African ruler to use firearms in war;<sup>620</sup> he was also the first to successfully use them.<sup>621</sup> It is beyond a doubt that mai Idris used guns and firearms in his wars, and besides the Ottomans the only other potential supplier of firearms would have been the

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<sup>619</sup> Colins and Burns, *Sub-Saharan Africa*, 91.

<sup>620</sup> Fisher and Rowland, "Firearms in the Central Sudan," 215.

<sup>621</sup> Fisher and Rowland, "Firearms in the Central Sudan," 216-17.

Saadis who would never have agreed to send a significant amount of firearms to Bornu. Even if the Saadis had wanted to, they could not have sent a large amount of firearms to Bornu, and it would have been dangerous for them had those firearms fell into the hands of Songhai. The long distance between Bornu and Morocco is the main reason why the Lake Chad region never had as extensive relations with Morocco as it did with the rest of Africa. In addition, the Saadis had ambitions to build an empire in the Sahel, and Bornu would have been an eventual target of Saadi expansion.

It was the Ottoman Empire who became the primary provider of firearms to Bornu during the reign of mai Idris Alooma. The men who supplied firearms to Bornu were most likely the local officials in both Tripoli and Fezzan, along with those regions' merchants. Mixed to the equation would have been Ottoman subjects who went into the region with their firearms, either acquired because they were a local Janissary or because during the reign of Sultan Murad III guns became so widespread that an Ottoman subject who was a member of the *reaya* could have purchased a firearm.

In conclusion, the Ottoman Empire's conquest of Tripoli and North Africa enabled mai Idris Alooma to acquire a substantial amount of firearms and thus was successfully able to use them in his wars of expansion. Indirectly, Ottoman military might enabled Bornu to greatly expand its size at the end of the sixteenth century as a result of the kingdom's close proximity and relations with the *eyalet* of Tripoli. The Ottoman Empire during the reign of Sultan Murad III helped change the balance of power in the central Sahel region. The ruler of Bornu was able to use guns acquired from the Ottomans to beat and conquer his enemies and dominate the entire Lake Chad region of Africa. Mai Idris Alooma was the man who introduced guns to Africa and his

main supplier was the Ottoman Empire and so history changed because the Ottomans were in Africa.

## **CHAPTER VI:**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **6.1 General Overview**

The Ottoman Empire`s rule over Africa had a great impact over the history of that continent and one of the unexpected regions of Africa to have been heavily influenced by the Ottoman Empire was the region surrounding Lake Chad. The Ottoman Empire`s role in Africa and the latter`s impact on the Ottoman Empire still needs a greater amount of research in order to more fully understand relations between the two. One of the objectives of this thesis was to demonstrate that Africa in fact played an important role in Ottoman history in several ways. Another objective was to demonstrate that during the sixteenth century, Ottoman influence reached sub-Saharan Africa.

The second chapter of this thesis was primarily to demonstrate the importance of the trans-Saharan trading system to the world. It also served to establish the fact that whoever ruled over Tripoli had to deal with Kanem-Bornu and the Lake Chad region. The Ottoman Empire inevitably had strong trading relations with Bornu. The third

chapter attempted to show the links between Lake Chad and Tripoli, as throughout the history of Kanem-Bornu, Tripoli and its surrounding regions played an important role in the rise and development of the Lake Chad region.

The fourth chapter dealt with the dynamics of the Ottomans in Tripoli during the first three to four decades of Ottoman rule over Tripoli. It demonstrated just how difficult it was for the Ottoman Empire to establish a firm grip over Tripoli. With the help of its navy and the Ottoman conquest of Tunis in 1574; the Ottomans were able to establish their rule in Tripoli and its surroundings. This chapter also shows that Tripoli was in fact a typical border province of the Ottoman Empire. One of the sections of that chapter is on the Fezzan as a center of the slave trade in the trans-Saharan trading system, which only furthers the argument that the Ottoman Empire and Bornu had important relations, for Bornu was one of the main suppliers of African slaves to the Ottoman Empire. This chapter also demonstrated that the Ottomans ultimately played a stabilizing role for Tripoli, as the region would no longer face the threat of constant foreign invasions as a result of Ottoman rule.

The last chapter deals with the diplomatic correspondence between mai Idris Aloomaa and Sultan Murad III. This chapter raises the importance and rise of firearms in the Ottoman Empire during the second half of the sixteenth century, notably during the reign of Sultan Murad III, thus setting the Ottoman Empire up as the biggest supplier of firearms to Bornu. Besides the analysis of the correspondence and archival documents, the last chapter deals with the unique political context of Africa during the second half of the sixteenth century, mainly Saadi aggression in Africa. Sixteenth century Africa was unique for two reasons which are that the end of a golden age in African history, and it

was a period in African history in which the Saadis and Ottomans were in a rivalry, which ultimately led the former to invade and conquer Songhai in 1593. Finally, this chapter discussed the importance of guns to the expansion of Bornu during the reign of mai Idris Alooma. The Ottoman Empire during the reign of Sultan Murad III introduced firearms to sub-Saharan Africa, thus enabling Bornu to become the Lake Chad region's most dominant power.

## **6.2 The Ottoman Legacy in Africa**

The Ottoman Empire's influence on the world is still not as well understood as it should be, and one of regions of which Ottoman influence is still little understood is Africa. This thesis demonstrated that the Ottoman Empire played a major role in the history of Tripoli, the Lake Chad and the region surrounding it. Ottoman influence on the course of events in sub-Sahara Africa like on Bornu is proof of the power and the extent of the influence that the Ottoman Empire had on the world during the reign of Murad III. The Ottoman Empire was such a powerful state during the sixteenth century that it could have a major role in the history of such far away regions as the Crimea, the Lake Chad, or Basra. Before Europe was able to build trans-continental empires on water, the Ottoman Empire had built an empire based on three continents and extended its influence beyond the borders that the Ottomans had defined for themselves.

One of the regions profoundly changed by the presence of the Ottomans in North Africa was the Lake Chad region of Africa. The Ottoman Empire during the sixteenth



and seventeenth centuries were the most dominant military power west of China and they were also the biggest producer and manufacturer of firearms. Having established good relations with the Ottoman Empire, mai Idris Alooma was able to continue the historic trade between the Lake Chad region and Tripoli, thus giving himself access to a lot of firearms. The Ottoman Empire during the reign of Sultan Murad III had seen a dramatic rise in both production of and the availability of firearms to the general public. These factors played a key role in Bornu`s use of firearms in its wars, as it could easily buy guns from merchants and janissaries from Tripoli. Unlike Saadi Morocco who had limited military power and had ambitions for the Sahel, the Ottoman Empire had none of those issues and so it would not have been very strict on having its subjects sell firearms to Bornu.

All of this led us back to Mahmud Bey`s expedition south of the Fezzan in 1574, and why did it occur? The most probable reason is that it was a reconnaissance mission, mainly to figure out and understand the extent of the trade routes between the Fezzan and its supplier, mainly the Lake Chad region. The *sancak bey* of the Fezzan would have needed to have an understanding of any potential threat as well as figure out if the Ottoman Empire could have expanded its borders further south.

The Ottoman Empire never expanded its borders to the south of the Fezzan on a permanent basis. However, the Ottoman Empire was able to integrate itself within the remnants of the trans-Saharan trading system. It was the Sahara trade that the Ottomans were after and it was primarily because of the Sahara trade that the *eyalet* of Tripoli was valuable. During the second half of the sixteenth century, as a result of the decline of the trans-Saharan trading system, slavery rather than gold and ivory became the dominant

commodity of the Sahara trade. The slave trade throughout all of Africa would explode in importance during the end of the century, and one of the main suppliers of African slaves to the Islamic world for the following centuries would be Bornu. Bornu was able to put itself in a position of power and as a result of being the permanent supplier of slaves, which resulted in it being the first sub-Saharan African state to acquire a large quantity of guns in Africa.

Mahmud Bey's expedition south of the Fezzan was the deepest Ottoman incursion into the interior of Africa before the nineteenth century. It brought Ottoman influence to sub-Saharan Africa, a region of the world rarely identified with the Ottomans. The Ottoman Empire extended its influence on the central region of the Sahel during the reign of Murad III, besides Ethiopia, the Ottoman Empire has never been as deep into the interior of the African continent until the nineteenth century. It means that the Ottoman Empire had knowledge and an understating of Lake Chad, the regions surrounding Lake Chad, Bornu, and the Sahara desert that would only be acquired by Europeans during the second half of the nineteenth century or towards the end of the nineteenth century. The Ottoman legacy in Tripoli, the Fezzan, and Lake Chad enabled African historians to have a better understanding of the region and of the reign of mai Idris Alooma.

One of the reasons why Ottoman-Bornuan relations may not be as well-known by Ottoman historians is a result of Tripoli. It is a well-known fact that the Ottoman Empire during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had limited control over its African provinces, Tripoli included. Being the smallest of the four in North Africa (this does not include *Habeş Eyaleti*), Tripoli has also often been overlooked and when it is

analyzed in the Ottoman context, it is generally within the context of the Italo-Turkish War of 1911-1912. The fact of the matter is that the Ottomans during the reign of Sultan Murad III were able to impose taxes on the local population in the *eyalet* of Tripoli, which is one of the ways that the Ottomans imposed their rule on a population. If the Ottomans were able to levy taxes on a region, whether it be the Fezzan or Tripoli, than they are sovereigns over that territory, which means that Sultan Murad III was in fact the Sultan of Tripoli and the Fezzan. Not only were the Ottomans able to impose their rule over Tripoli, they had a major impact on the history of the city as a provider of peace and stability to Tripoli. Before the Ottomans, Tripoli was constantly being invaded by foreign forces. However, with the arrival of the Ottomans, Tripoli would rarely be invaded by foreign powers for the rest of its history.

Today almost the entire populations of the region surrounding Lake Chad are Muslims; most of them owed their faith the Islamic state of Kanem-Bornu. Kanem-Bornu played an important role in the history of Africa; it was ruled by the longest Muslim dynasty in African history, the Sefuwa. It played a key role in influencing the Hausa city-states, notably spreading Islam into that region. Kanem-Bornu had notable rulers including mai Hummay (c. 1075-1086) and mai Dunama (c. 1210-1248), but it was mai Idris Alooma who is famous. It was during mai Idris Alooma that most African historians argue that Kanem-Bornu underwent its golden age, and one of the reasons mai Idris Alooma was able to bring Kanem-Bornu into a golden age was a result of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire changed African history when it captured and conquered most of North Africa in the sixteenth century, and it changed sub-Saharan history when it became the main provider of firearms for Bornu. Mai Idris Alooma is

most famous as the first sub-Saharan African ruler to have successfully used firearms in his wars to extend his kingdom's power and borders. As a result, the region surrounding Lake Chad changed, and the Ottoman Empire played an important role in that change. In conclusion, this thesis demonstrated that the Ottoman Empire was able to have a major impact on a region outside of their direct control. It also demonstrated the extent and potential that the Ottoman Empire had on being able to influence the world around it. If the Ottomans could bring about great change in sub-Saharan African history, imagine what kind of impact they must have had on the rest of the world.

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## APPENDIX: FIGURES

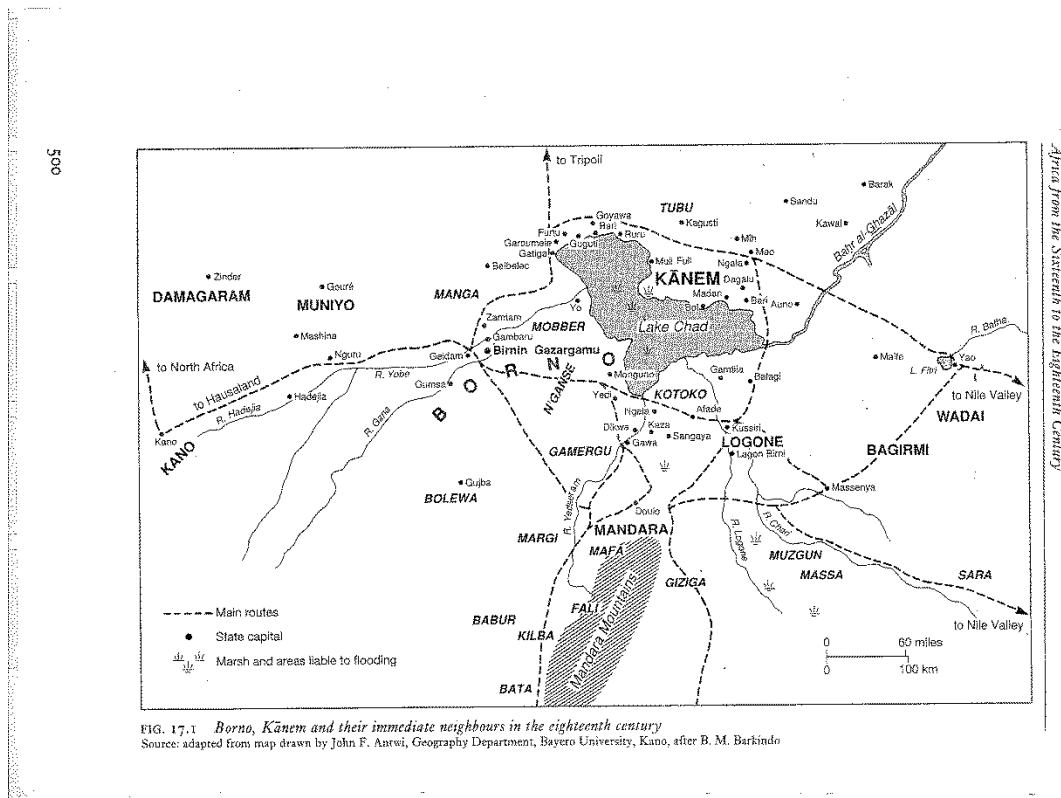
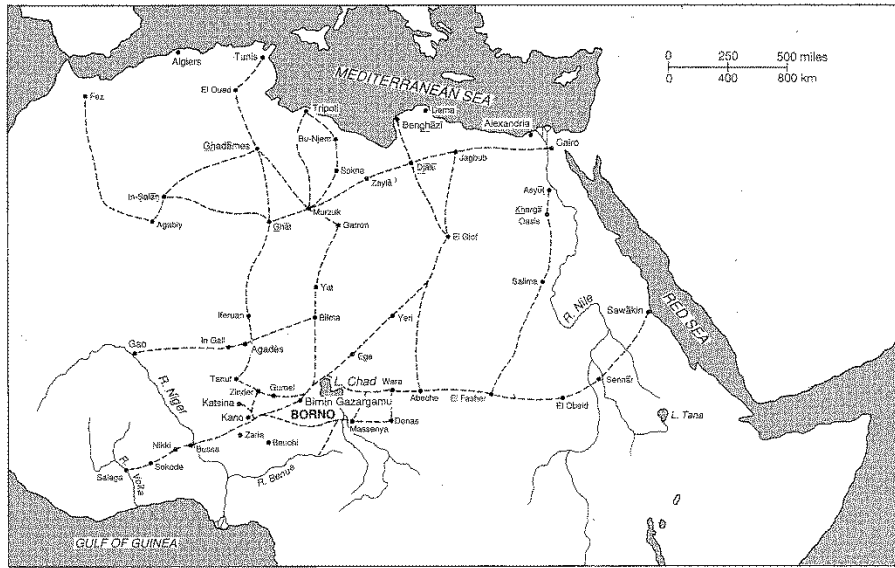


Figure 1: Kanem-Bornu and Lake Chad

Taken from *UNESCO General History of Africa volume V: Africa from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth*.







Africa from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century

FIG. 17.3 Borno's links with North Africa and the Nile valley in the eighteenth century  
Source: adapted from map drawn by John P. Antwi, Geography Department, Bayero University, Kano, after B. M. Barkindo

### Figure 3: Eastern Part of the Trans-Saharan Trading System

Taken from *UNESCO General History of Africa volume V: Africa from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth.*



Figure 4: The Ottomans in Africa

Taken from *Osmanlı Belgelerinde: Trablusgarb*. İstanbul: T. C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü: Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, Yayın Nu.: 125, 2013.