# THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE AND THE ISLAMIC KINGDOM OF BORNO RELATIONSHIPS DURING THE REIGN OF EL MAY IDRIS ALOUMA (1571-1603) IN VIEW OF ARCHIVAL DOCUMENTS

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#### Abstract:

The present study addresses the Ottoman Empire and kingdom of Borno relationships in the 16th century, aiming at figuring out the nature of these relationships, its aspects, and impact on the future of the Sudan region. The study aims equally at denying the opinions saying that the existence of the Ottoman Empire was limited to the coastal areas, not far interior areas. This research paper relies on historical, descriptive, and analytical and comparative method by analyzing and describing documents then putting them in their historical and geographical context related to that period. It depends also on comparing historical sources upon their information and the accuracy of this information.

Methods used in this regard are archives as the first source for investigating the circumstances of bilateral relationships besides historical sources that co-existed with the events from all parts, in addition to the historical sources and specialized reference investigation and interpretation processes. The study concluded that the existence of the Ottoman Empire is a real extension in Sudan and that the kingdom of Borno wad dependent nominally to the Ottoman Empire. The latter had a civilizational role in the Sudan region. Ancient and modern Moroccan literature is unfair in describing the relationship between the Ottoman Empire and kingdom of Borno.

**Keywords**: Ottoman Empire; Borno; Relationships; Dependency; Idris.

### I - INTRODUCTION

Either after the Ottoman Empire went well in widening domination on the Arab Maghreb, in direct or in an indirect way, just as the Far Maghreb during the reign of Sultan Abdelmalik Al-Saadi, it pursued to enlarge its domination toward the south. It endeavored to make contact with kingdoms of Sudan, notably the Middle Sudan, represented by the Islamic Kingdom of Bornu. Within that, the diplomatic movements have started from both sides, particularly from the side of Bornu under the leadership of King Idriss ALOUMAH, at which the first contacts and correspondences have been carried out in 1577. Hence, this provides new interpretations on the issue of Ottoman-African relations in the 16th century.

In the present paper, we attempted to rely on the strategy of looking for historical documents by interrogating them, as well as investigating the events included in historical resources and the specialized references. Then, we tried to establish a comparison between them in order to provide answers to the issue of Ottoman presence in the Sudan region, mainly the nature of Ottoman relations with the domestic authority, and more accurately the following problematic: Was Bornu an Ottoman caliphate' dependency?.

### 1- Bornu Kingdom definition

Bornu Islamic Kingdom represented one of the greatest Islamic political entities that have outlived in the Middle Sudan region, particularly during the period of Idris ALOUMAH<sup>1</sup>, whereby Bornu was founded on the ashes of Kanem Kingdom, after the latter's kings escaped toward Bornu, currently region west of Lake Chad. It is an area that was grabbed from the SAO tribes (among the Follata

peoples <sup>2</sup>), where its giant and peak power was known during the reign of Sultan Idris (979-103H/1571-1596)<sup>3</sup>. At which Kantam rulers were able to transfer their capital Njimi to the western part of Lake Chad out of the bats of their Bulala rivals under the reign of Othman Ibn Idris (1390-1398). It was called later the Kingdom of Bornu<sup>4</sup>, King Ali Ghazi Ibn Dounama (1476 AD-1503) is the real founder of the State of Bornu, founding a new capital on the Yola River west of Lake Chad and named it nagazaguamu. After his death (1503-1526), his son as the successor, Sultan Idris ALOUMAH (1570-1603<sup>5</sup>), succeeded him in the time, when the Sufi family witnessed its peak glory<sup>6</sup>.

During the reign of King Idris, the Kingdom of Borno witnessed its peak prosperity, since Sultan Idris was strongly adhering to the Quran and the Sunna, hating the people of fads and contraptions, he ruled by the Quran and the Sunna during his reign, propagate Islam and regulated issues of his Kingdom in all domains and rehabilitated the economy. He passed away in 1603 during his conquest of Cameroon<sup>7</sup>.

Born regions are considered one of the most prominent economic regions in Sudan areas, since Hassan Al-Ouazzan says: "the prettiest country in Sudan is those that extend along the Niger River"8. This means that these lands are fertile land and their economic activity is prospering, and perhaps it constitutes the chief motifs that made Kanem rulers moved to it from the south. Because of its geographical position, it is a major commercial center joining Sudan to North Africa and Bornu appeared in Portuguese maps in 893 Hijir/1487 AC 9.

This is a further sign of the relevance of the region, since the Portuguese presence, or at least its endeavors to dominate any region, is after examination of the region state, its economic potentials and the gains it can offer to the colonial state.

### 2/Ottoman-Bornawi communication (1570-1603):

After the Ottomans were stabilized in the Maghreb region, and after Algeria definitively joined in 1520, west Tripoli in 1555, as well as the Far Maghreb as an exceptional case. At least the Ottoman caliphate ensured its loyalty, notably after that the ottoman Sultan installed the Morroccan king Abdelmalek: "And I ordered him: You have to wear the humayuni cloth carved with my good will upon arrival, and you have to do all your abilities in the direction of my eternal state of the King of Karawanite and that matters remain in contact with the muslims prince .... "10.

Based on that aim, the Ottoman ambition begun to enlarge toward the south in direction of Sudan, where the signs of this contact were through Sultan Idris ALOUMAH, besides the high door, which is demonstrated by the two letters saved in the Algerian national archive issued on 05/03/985th/1577. They had the same date and in the same address, Prince of the Princes of Tunisia. However, They were different in the humayuni reign and the content. The first, addressed to the Governor of Tunisia, urged him to provide security protection to the delegation of the Embassy of his country, Bornu. We restated, "As soon as he arrives, there should be a safe and safe receipt with his followers. Don't let anyone get in his the way<sup>11</sup>. In the bilateral message content, it refers to a message from the High Door to Amir Fezzan<sup>12</sup>, bordering the Bornu Kingdom, urging him to protect the borders between the two sides, as follows:" we order to praise the honored princes Mahmoud-Honor lasting-Amir Fezzan, who formed the borders of our protected properties with these numerous countries"<sup>13</sup>.

It is feasible to clarify the reason of sending the Ottoman Sultan's message to Amir Fezzan via the Prince of Tunisia as the position of Ottoman contact or contact with regions. The letters and correspondences of the Ottoman Sultan passed through Tunisia or Tripoli to the west, and this is natural in this case. Choosing Tunisia is because the delegation of the Kingdom of Bornu went through Tunisia's way back to his country.

Talking about the trip circumstances, certain historical writings pointed that it took place after Sultan Idriss ALOUMAH pilgrimage to Mecca, wherein he was impressed by the Ottoman administrative and military organization in the country they governed, from which he learned the firearms' names, and he purchased lot of them<sup>14</sup>.

In the early years of the Ottoman Empire, Bornu was in contact with the Ottoman Empire provinces (eyalet) in the north before and during the Ottoman presence, since the commercial route which begun from West Tripoli's coast represented, Bornu and Ghana was its destination after passing

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via Ghadames and Fezzan<sup>15</sup>. Moreover, Bornu was in contact with the governors of the provinces (Eyalat), since the Italian Giovanni Lorenzo Aniani, pointed out as told by Europeans who were captured in West Tripoli that Idriss Aloumah sent a letter written in Arabic<sup>16</sup> to the Pasha of Tripoli. Discussing the two letters content, under the number 439, addressed to the province of Tunisia (Ayala Tunisia), revealed the Sultan Idris's position at the high door, and the duration of residency, which have clearly lasted for certain period of time for the trip. It was stated as follows: "His Excellency the envoy of his honor, the emirate's ruler, King Idriss, Bornu governor, may his Excellency last, had already visited our province (Eyala) and according to his request for our humayuni holiday to go back to our states, we informed him our humayuni holiday<sup>17</sup>. We notice from the words of the Ottoman Sultan Mourad III the position of Idris Aloumah by qualifying him as a king, and about the objectives and reasons of the trip. The second letter under the decision 480, provides some of the previous facts. It stated as follows: «His honor, the emirate's ruler Idris Aloumah, the ruler of the Bornu, may his Excellency to be continued, expressing his servitude, his loyalty and his allegiance toward our Excellency" 18.

Taking into account this declaration by the Ottoman Sultan, we raise the question and wonder about nature and type of slavery and loyalty that King Idris provided to the Ottoman caliphate.

Commonly known that the Ottoman State utilized several forms of administration and governance in various regions which vary from region to the other, "It exists autonomous states diverse from those under direct Ottoman governance, i.e, the Salayana states and the government states, besides to the Christian and Muslim Emirates as Crimean Khanate, and the Emirate of Kellan"<sup>19</sup>. As for instance, the Alawite State practiced a system of supervision in the Hejaz and it was along with the Ottoman Government as supervision representative in the Hejaz province<sup>20</sup>. India was nominally pro-Ottomans, and this was obviously clear in the Ottoman-Indian alliance to face the Portuguese in the first half of the 16th century, but was not submitted to direct Ottoman domination<sup>21</sup>.

In this regard, we attempt to provide answers or analyze the Ottoman-Burnese convergence, interpreted as a formal recognition by King Idris of his loyalty to the Ottoman caliphate. Notably if we knew that his kingdom's borders, which were adjoining to the borders of eastern Sudan and precisely Darfur, as the other east African regions, are known to have been nominally Ottoman because of the nature of the region and its distance from the seat of Ottoman rule. Furthermore, we make sense from these two letters that historical theories or opinions on the fact that the Ottoman presence in Africa shrank on the coasts not reaching domestic regions<sup>22</sup> needs historical reinterpretation, particularly upon the fact that the Ottoman archive stocks have not yet been explored and discussed.

It is obvious from the historical writings that the objective of the visit or correspondence lies in the need of King Idris Alouma for firearms to struggle against the pagans who were adjoining his kingdom borders. The investigator of the Book of Paths and Kingdoms pointed out that during his pilgrimage, Sultan Idris visited Egypt, purchased large quantities of firearms and brought with him a group of Turkish soldiers to form his army in the use of firearms<sup>23</sup>.

In view of this, we conclude that the high door was always in the service of Islam and Muslims objectives in the propagation and extension and defending it. This is notably as it was in a civilizational conflict with the western world, whose domination started to spread in the coasts of western and eastern Africa, and subsequently the issue of seeking and strengthening allies is major for the international Ottoman strategy. In his letter to Bailee, Bey of Tunisia, the Ottoman Sultan underlined the need of keeping the borders with the Kingdom of Bornu and not compromising its security and its citizens. His declaration was stated as follows: "As well as, warning all border princes actually to good neighborliness, with the reference to King Idris, he had not to harm or assault the subjects or on the subjects of the above-mentioned military"<sup>24</sup>. He strongly and clearly emphasized Sultan Idris's position with the Ottoman Caliphate, the latter's aim is to reinforce and strengthen bilateral relations. In this regard, the Ottoman Sultan stated "Let you know that the thanks and complaints referred to in this regard are fruitful and influencing. We must not wait a moment to be ready to continue working to protect their identity and be warned against

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interference and exposure to that aspect"<sup>25</sup>, thus we wonder and underline the importance of the correspondence or rather its results. The Aliya authority does not make such concern to the regions unless they are subordinate to it or have excellent relations with it, and sub consequently Sultan Idriss Aloumah, has entered under the Ottoman reign, or at least was the largest and closest allies of the High Gate in the region of Sudan.

# -The influence of the Idris Aloummah trip on Ottoman-Bornu relationships after the 16th centuries:

By checking these two documents, it is obvious that the High Door managed to achieve prominent gains via its expansion, even if in a nominal way or at the very least the security of its southern border in the Maghreb, as this trip had an influence on future bilateral relations. Through it, the Ottoman State managed to realize certain gains in the cultural and social field, as was capable to open the doors of SUFI extension to the Qadriyah method, in the region of Sudan.

It' commonly known that the Ottomans in Maghreb region made alliance with the Qadrians, mainly in their fight with Moroccans in particular. Among their honorable positions against the nobles of Saadi is their rejecting of Spanish-Saadi rapprochement intended to nominate one of Al-Saadi's sons in the declined Kingdom of Ziyanis<sup>26</sup>. To pursue the path of the Sufi-Qadri spread in Sudan, excellent relationships between the Ottomans and the Burnoans had participated to this method expansion.

The emirate of Massiina in Mali, borderingh the Kingdom of Borno, turned into a stronghold of the Qadiris who struggled against the Moroccan extension under the reign of Ahmed al-Mansour Al-Dhahabi, head by Prince Hamed Amna, who exhausted Moroccan forces led by the commander Moustafa Turki. The latter was appointed by Djouder Pasha, at which battles continued for several years till reconciliation took place after several fights<sup>27</sup>. In the view of this, we extracted that the doctrinal conflict passed from the north to the south between Qadriyah doctrine and the Moroccan Djazoliya, which was considered the backbone of the religious tribalism of the Saadian supervisory state.

Furthermore, Al-Qadriyah doctrine also participated, given its loyalty to the Ottomans, to preserve its interests in Sudan region. In the later periods of the 16th century, Qadriyah represented a problem in the view of Muslim princes influenced by the Sufi doctrine contrary to Qadrians, for instance Hadj Omar Al-Fouti in the 19th century, who adopted the Tidjaini doctrinee in the western Sudan, and subsequently fought against Qadriyah, which was limited in the central and eastern Sudan<sup>28</sup>.

Generally, the bornawi-Ottoman bilateral relationships had greatly influenced the expansion and activity of the pro-Qadiriya doctrine, however, in the political field, the Ottoman-bornawi contact was the vital effect on the aims of the Ottomans to restrain Al-Mansour's ambitions for succession and spread at the expense of the western and Middle Sudan monarchies. After the Moroccan Sultan Ahmed Al-Mansour took the throne in 1578, he adopted an opposite approach to the approach of his deceased brother Sultan Abdelmalik, who was allegiant to the Ottomans, until dependence under his rule. However, Al-Mansour, who holded grudge against of the Ottomans, aimed at emboding his ambition and revive the glory of the caliphate, as the honorable are descendants of the Prophet (Peace be upon him), and they are the first and most worthy of the caliphate from the Ottomans. One of Al-Mansour's letters to the Ottoman Sultan by his writer Alfechtali stated: They are the owners of the garment, and they are the only ones who must be pursued. They are concerned by Allah's verses. "Say, I don't ask him to pay, except for affection in the kinship. So, who was delighted by Allah in their affection, he was granted heavens gardens" 29.

Hence, Al-Mansour worked to gain the allegiance of the kings of Sudan region, in that regard he send letters to the King of Bornu Idris Aloumah and equally to the King Iskia Isaac, king of Sungai Isaac and asked them to pay penance and gold<sup>30</sup>. For Idris Aloumah, he was corresponded in 999 H/1590 by Al-Mansour, as stated by Al-Fechtali:

"In 999, Al- Mansur in the city of Fez was informed by coming of an envoy from the monarchs of the Kingdom of Bornu and bringing in his gift what they usually had to bring from the boys of slaves and maids and clothes Sudan...... The day I met him was a remarkable one..... The envoy recognized to

the great Kingdom her right, demonstrated clarity, attachment, submissiveness, service and the dependency and recommended it by his envoy"<sup>31</sup>.

Out of this point of view, we notice that the Sultan of Bornu Idriss recognized the succession of Ahmed Al-Mansour, given the Moroccan historians, and hence Idris broken his promise with the Ottomans five years after admitting their dominance. It is equally so prominent to satte that the State of Borno, under his reign, has witnessed its peak strength and expansion. It adopted the approach of Islam in its management, and it had also made use from the weapons provided by the Ottomans, thereof we wonder why Idris was doing such, since the Moroccan-historian Alnaciri stated that the circumstances of Idris trip to Al-Mansour came after the failure of its trip to the Ottoman sultan. It aimed equally to benefit from the supply and firearms of the Moroccans<sup>32</sup>. In this regar, we have to wonder about the reasons making idris do this and ask the Moroccans who originally benefited from Ottoman weapons and utilized the Ottoman soldiers in this regard. Subsequently, the circumstances and objectives of the trip had doubts, as stated by the Algerian historian Abdelkader Zebadiya who asserted that Idris trip to Al-Mansour was intending to establish excellent relationships with Kings and Sultans of Islam. It's not about dependency and sworing allegiance, that's why the impact of future relations is destined to be failed<sup>33</sup>.

As stated by the Moroccan historical sources, on the Idris position against Al-Mansour ambition to succession, Idris recognized Al-Mansour's succession to Muslims and sent an envoy, but the envoy passed away on the way in Tikorarin, however the letter of recognition and devotion arrived to Al-Mansur from the Tikorarin people to use it in devotion<sup>34</sup>. In front of this historical Moroccan situation, it is inquiry to examine the facts at that period so as to figure out the truth about Idris's denunciation of his devotion to the Ottomans and his devotion to Al-Mansour. By investigating the historical writings on this issue, we notice that Sultan Idriss, as stated by Alimam Ahmed Ibn Fartewa was, according to the Imam, a brave king who saved his cousins, the people of Sungai, in distress while defending their region from the Moroccan invasion<sup>35</sup>.

Given these facts, if Idris was allegiant to Al-Mansour Morocco, he would not face them and Al-Mansur would not attack them at all. Confirming these facts, certain historical writings acknowledged that Al-Manssi Mohamed attempted to retrieve the greatness of the Sangai Kingdom after the decline of the reign of Iskia Isaac. He collected a number of heads of the Niger Turn and joined him to face the Far Morocco, whose armies had ravaged the Qaw Kingdom<sup>36</sup>.

It is known that the Niger River was the homeland of the Bornu Kingdom and in view of these historical facts; we refuted the viewpoints of Moroccan historians who confirmed that the Kingdom of Bornu was under the succession of Al-Mansour. Bornu kingdom expanded from the ocean from the far Morocco to Keno region, bordering the region of Bornu, ending up in the adjacent Nubian lands that bordered Egypt Sayeed. Al-Feshtali stated: "The word Al-Mansour is a window between the Nubian countries and the ocean sea from the west<sup>37</sup>."

This is an exaggerated statement, especially by those closest to the palace, resulting from the tradition of holiness and the exalted people, mainly the kings. Moreover, Ottoman-Bornawi relationships were excellent on the economic side and had a vital influence for long decades. As Damraco in the Kingdom of Bornu represented the terminal or the third site after Ghat Agadis for trade convoys from eastern Algeria, where it was a transit route to Campoh, Kano in the south, Kacha and Skatou in the west likewise Novi in the southwest<sup>38</sup>. By that, The Ottoman Empire realized a part of its political ambition in the region of Sudan, and it equally restricted Al-Mansour's dream of expansion and succession.

### **CONCLUSION:**

The Ottoman-African relationships during the 16th century are featured by a certain ambiguity given the lack of historical writings on the issue. Certain historians justified it by the lack of historical events that date relations between the two sides, and others justified it by the Ottoman lack of interest in the region and its absence of Ottoman strategic agendas, in front of these viewpoints, and via this simple research paper, we concluded the following findings:

Given the Ottoman relationships nature with the countries of Central Sudan, "Bornu" and throughout these two documents, we should make calls for reconsideration and paying part of the attention on the subject. This is given that the policy of the Ottoman succession and its political relationships within the framework of the Islamic caliphate and loyalty had been diverse from one region to another, notably in those distant regions in Africa and Asia. The latter declared allegiance

to the succession, though not directly related and hence the nature of the relationships between the Ottoman State and the Kingdom of Bornu, was in this regard. The Ottoman civilization role in the region of Sudan had to be reconsidered and its contribution in

the spread of Islam by upholding and providing military assistance to Islamic monarchies in their

fights against the pagans in Africa, and by conserving the safety of Muslims in the region of Sudan and expand Islam in Africa and organize Djihad issues.

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The Ottoman intentions of expansion in the region of Sudan came within the framework of the Ottoman global strategy against the Western world, which started to expand to Muslim countries in western and eastern Africa by dominating the resources of energy and precious materials. Consequently, the Ottomans had to find a strategic ally in the region of Sudan to fight the western invasion and limit its extensions.

### **FOOTNOTES:**

- 1-Abdelkader Zebadiya, study on sub-Saharan Africa in the works and books of Arabs and Muslims, University Publications Office, Algeria, p191.
- 2- Sau people: One of the branches of the Falani people living in the Lake Chad region formed their country in the 3rd century and were constantly in conflict with the country of Bornu. For more information, see: Yakout Al-Hamwi, Countries' Dictionary, part 4, Dar Sader, Lebanon, 1995, p 01.
- 3-Ahmed Yaghi Ismail, Shaker Mahmoud (1993), History of modern and contemporary Islamic science, Africa, part 2, Saudi Arabia, Mars House.
- 4-Abou-oubeid Allah Al Bekri, Morocco, in works of the countries of Africa and Morocco, Edited and presented by Oueld Al-Salem, Scientific books house, Lebanon, 1971. P62.
- 5-The period after Idris Ibn Ali's reign (1503-1526) from 1526 to 1570 was a vacuum, as Idris was a young, under-age to assume the throne of the Kingdom, where at this time his mother was guarding him.
- 6-Mohamed Ali Bari Mohamed Fadel, Karbadiya said Ibrahim, Muslims in West Africa, Scientific books house, Lebanon, 2007, P13. For more information see: Mustafa Anjay, "From Kanam to Sokoto, Summary of political History of the Middle Sudan", Historical Readings, issue 35, 2018, p 6
- 7-Ali Abdalzaher Ali, what history has hidden: Forgotten stories of mythical battles, Dar Almaarifa, Egypt, 2017, P 135. For more information see: Abdellah Abd Alrezzek Ibrahim, spread of Islam in West Africa, Dar al-Akhbar, Egypt, DT, Egypt. P64.
- 8-Hassan Al-Wazzan, Description of Africa, translated by Abdelrahmane Hamida, Ali Abdelwahed, part 1, Morocco, P34.
- 9-Elbekri. Op-cit, p09
- 10- National Archives of Algeria, a book Dafter muhim n°7, Hukm(Judgement) to Amir of the Emirs of Algeria, Hukm n° 2481, in 1568.
- 11-The National Archives of Algeria, a book Dafter muhim  $n^{\circ}30$ , Hukm (Judgement) to Amir of the Emirs of Tunisia, Hukm  $n^{\circ}440$ , 1577, p188.
- 12- Ibn Ghalboun Al-Tarablssi, History of Tripoli West Called Memorial in from the King of Tripoli and the news, edited by Tahir Ahmed Al-Tarabassi, Egypt, 1930, p114.
- 13-The National Archives of Algeria, Opcit, Hukm n° 440, p188.
- 14 Ali Bari Kourdiya, op. cit, p26.
- 15- Mabkhout Boudaouya, "Cultural and Trade Relationships between the Middle Maghreb and Western Sudan during the reign of the Beni-Zian State, PhD thesis, Algeria, 2006, p311.
- 16-Zebadiya, Op.cit. For more information on this thesis see:
- B. Martins, "Mai Idris and ottoman Turks 1576-1578", journal of Middle East, 1972, p 90-460
- 17-Algerian National Archive, Op.cit, judgment n° 439

- 18-The National Archives of Algeria, Op.cit, judgment n° 440.
- 19-Khalil Enjalik, history of the Ottoman State from evolution to decline, translated by Mohamed Al-Arnaout, , Dar Al-Madar Al-Islami, Lebanon, Lebanon, 2022, p109.
- 20-Amira Ali Wasafi, Ottomans and Imam Kasim Mohamed Ibn Ali 1598-1620, Magister thesis on Modern History, Saudi Arabia, 1980, p. 84
- 21-Youcef Bek Asaf, History of Othman Sultans from the first to the present, presented by Mohamed Zinoma, Mohamed Gharb, 1st Edtion, the Madboli Library. Egypt, 1995, p12.
- 22-Djamel Zakariya Kassem, the historical origins of Arab-African relationships, Dar Al-Fikr Al-Arabi, Egypt, 1996, P315.
- 23- El-Bekri, Op.cit, for more information about the travel of the kings of the Bornu to Mecca for the pilgrimage, see: Reni Dewaere, From Chad to Mecca: Borno king and his world (16-17 centuries), Edition Sorbonne, 2017.
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- 25- Idem .
- 26-Sabah Ba'arasia, Movement of Sufism in Algeria during the 10th Century, Magister thesis in Modern History, University of Algeria, 2006, p 84.
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- 29-Abdellah Kenoun, Letters Saadiya, Moroccan Printing House, Morocco, p20.
- 30- Hajj Benired "The History of Timbuktu from its establishment to the 11th Century of Hijri, Historical Cultural Study," Kahn Historical Periodical, n° 28, p78
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- 32-Aboualabbas Ibn Ahmed Khaled Al-Naciri, Investigation of Far Morrocco news, Edited and commented by Djaafar Al-Naciri, part05, Book House, Morocco, 1955, p05.
- 33-Zebaidiya, op.cit, p93
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