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# The Ḥafṣid domination of Northwest Africa in the 15th Century: The reign of Abū ‘Amr ‘Uthmān (1435–1488)

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## Abstract:

In 1427, the Mamlūk Sultanate, ruled by Al-Ashraf Barsbāy (1422–1438), seized Cyprus. In 1453, the Ottoman Sultanate, ruled by Meḥmed II (1444–1446/1451–1481), captured the city of Byzantium, Constantinople. Hence, Western and Eastern historians and scholars have focused their writings on these two states.

This research highlights the efforts of the Ḥafṣid ruler, Abū ‘Amr ‘Uthmān (1435–1488), and clarifies the results of those efforts. This paper also outlines the political statuses of the kingdoms in Northwest Africa. It illustrates how ‘Uthmān exploited the circumstances of the Northwest African kingdoms to extend his influence. Consequently, it affirms that ‘Uthmān was a Majestic sultan in Northwest Africa. This study uses the historical method and examines primary sources on the subject of the reign of Abū ‘Amr ‘Uthmān.

**Keywords:** Ḥafṣids, Tlemcen, Fez, Domination

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## An Overview of the Northwest African Kingdoms during the 15<sup>th</sup> Century

During the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Northwest Africa was ruled by four different dynasties. The Ḥafṣids ruled the Ḥafṣid Kingdom, which was situated in what is now Tunisia and northern Libya (1229–1574). The second, the Zayyānid dynasty, ruled the Kingdom of Tlemcen, located in what is now called the Republic of Algeria (1236–1556). The third and fourth dynasties, the Marīnids (1244–1465) and the Waṭṭāsids (1471–1554), ruled the Kingdom of Fez, cited in the modern-day the Kingdom of Morocco.

The Tlemcen and Ḥafṣid kingdoms were established following the decline of the Muwaḥḥids, a Berber Muslim Empire that once ruled the southern part of the Iberian Peninsula and Northwest Africa (1121–1269). The decline of the Muwaḥḥids began in earnest following their defeat in the Battle of al-‘Uqāb in the Iberian Peninsula in 1212 by the Catholic forces represented by the Catholic crowns in the Iberian Peninsula, Castile, Aragon, Portugal as well as some volunteers from France.

The Ḥafṣids were a Berber dynasty from Hintātah, from the Berber confederation of Maṣmūdah, one of the largest Berber tribes along with the Zanātah and the Ṣinhājah.<sup>(1)</sup> The Ḥafṣids differed from the Zayyānid, Marīnid and Waṭṭāsīd dynasties, who were Zanātah. The Ḥafṣid Kingdom was founded by Abū Zakarīyā Yaḥyā al-Ḥafṣī (1229–1249), the Muwaḥḥid governor in the *Ifrīqiya* region (which included the city of Tunis, the west of Libya and the east of Algeria), after he declared his independence from the Muwaḥḥids in 1229. The Waṭṭāsids were related to the Marīnids in Fez. The Waṭṭāsids effectively shared the responsibility for ruling the Kingdom of Fez with the Marīnids after they assisted the Marīnid Abd al-Ḥaqq II (1420–1465) to victory in the Marīnids’ conflict for the throne of Fez in 1420.<sup>(2)</sup> The last Marīnid emir, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq II, then decided to end the

(1) Harry W. Hazard and Kenneth M Setton, *A History of the Crusades: The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1975), 766.

(2) Aḥmad b. Khālīd al-Nāṣrī, *Al-Istqṣā ĩ akhbār al-Maghrib al-Aghṣā* (Investigation of the News of Morocco) (Casablanca: Dār al-Kitāb, 1954), 4:118.

Waṭṭāsids' sharing of power. He executed most of them in 1458, except for Muḥammad al-Shaykh al-Waṭṭāsī (1471–1504). The latter then established the Waṭṭāsīd dynasty in 1471, a few years after the collapse of the Marīnid rule.<sup>(1)</sup>

Many historians and scholars have concentrated on the biographies of the Mamlūk and Ottoman sultans and their achievements as well as analysing Ottoman-Mamlūk relations, particularly in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>(2)</sup> This is due to their religious and military suzerainty. Other historians and scholars have examined the political and economic circumstances of the Northwest African kingdoms from the 13<sup>th</sup> century to the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>(3)</sup> In addition, many scholars have examined various aspects of the Ḥafṣid Kingdom, such as education, markets, the life of the Ḥafṣid sultans, the Ḥafṣid architecture, and the relations between Tunis, under the Ottoman rule and the Republic of Venice during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>(4)</sup> They have not, however, given

(1) Ibid., 119.

(2) Shai Har-El, *Struggle for Domination in the Middle East: The Ottoman-Mamluk War, 1485–91* (Leiden: Brill, 1995); Jem Duducu, *The Sultans: The Rise and Fall of the Ottoman Rulers and their World* (Gloucestershire: Amberley Publishing, 2018); Nezar Al-Sayyed, *Cairo: Histories of a City* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013).

(3) Robert Brunschvig, *Tārīkh Ifrīqiya fī al-'Ahd al-Ḥafṣī*, 2 vols (The History of North Africa During the Ḥafṣid Dynasty), translated by Ḥamādī al-Sāhilī (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1988); 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Fīlālī, *Tilimsān fī al-'Ahd al-Zayyānī* (The Kingdom of Tlemcen During the Zayyānid Dynasty) (Algiers: Dār Mūfam, 2002); Jamil Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); 'Abd al-Raḥmān Al-A'raj, *'Alāqāt duwal al-Maghrib al-Islāmī bi dūlat al-Mamālīk siyāsīyan wa thagāfiyan bayn al-qarnayn al-sābi' wa al-tāsi' hijrīn* (Political-Cultural Relations Between the Mamlūk Sultanate and the other North African States Sometime Between the 13<sup>th</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> Centuries) (Ph.D. diss., Tlemcen: Jāmi'at Abī Bakir, 2013); Drīss Muṣṭafā, *Al-'Alāqāt al-siyāsīyah wa al-iqtisādīyah li-Duwal al-Maghrib al-Islāmī fī al-fatrah (13–16AD)* (Political and Economic Relations Between North African Countries in the 13<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> Centuries) (Ph.D. Dissertation in Tlemcen: Jāmi'at Abī Bakir, 2014).

(4) Majānī Būbah, "al-Madāris al-Ḥafṣīyah: Nidāmaha wa Mawāridha," in *Majalat al-'ilūm al-Insāniyah fī Jām'at Mantūrī*, no. 12 (1999):157-164 ; Samīr Sa'ad, "

attention to the efforts of the Ḥafṣid sultan, Abū ‘Amr ‘Uthmān, who made the Ḥafṣid Kingdom strong and stable.

### Internal Issues during the Reign of Abū ‘Amr ‘Uthmān

In 1435, the Ḥafṣid Kingdom was ruled by Abū ‘Amr ‘Uthmān, whose reign extended for half a century. At the beginning of his rule, he suffered through a long period of rebellion that spanned more than a decade and a half, from 1435 to 1452, and that was spearheaded by his uncle, Abū al-Ḥasan b. Abī Fāris (d. 1452). Abū al-Ḥasan was supported by an Arab sub-tribe, the Sons of Abī al-Layl, who were related to the Arab tribe of Banū Salīm.<sup>(1)</sup> This sub-tribe was spreading through the territories of the Ḥafṣid Kingdom; through this sub-tribe, the rebel uncle separated the city of Bougie from the authorities of ‘Uthmān in 1436.<sup>(2)</sup> The inhabitants of Bougie preferred Abū al-Ḥasan, who had been the governor of Bougie since the beginning of the 1430s, to the Ḥafṣid sultan, ‘Uthmān, who was seen as being too young at the time.<sup>(3)</sup> The inhabitants of Bougie put the name of Abū al-Ḥasan on Ḥafṣid coinage, the *dīnār*, during his rebellion against ‘Uthmān.<sup>(4)</sup> Despite the killing of Abū al-Ḥasan in 1452, Bougie

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al- ‘Aāmilūn bi Aswāq al-Dawlah al-Ḥafṣiyah," in *Majalat Kuliyat al-Adāb- Jām‘at al-Fayūm*, no. 17 (2018): 610-638; Šāliḥ Abū Diyāk, " al-Mawākib al-Sultāniyah fī al-Dawlah al-Ḥafṣiyah," *Dārat al-Malik ‘Abd al-‘Azīz* 12, no.1 (1986): 168-181; Ḥusayn Qays, " al-‘Amārah al-Ḥafṣiyah fī al-Maghrib al-Adnah," in *al-Itihād al-‘Aām Il-Athārīm al-‘Arab*, no.20 (2017): 858-883; Al-Shāfi ‘ī Darwish, " ‘Alāqāt Tūnis ma ‘ah Jmhūriyat al-Bunduqiyah Khilāl al-‘Aṣr al-Ḥadīth min al- ‘Adā’ ilā al-Silmiyah," in *Majalat Jām‘at al-Shārqah* 18, no. 1 (2021): 334-356.

- (1) Aḥmad b. ‘Alī al-Qalqashandī, *Nihāyat al-irb fī ma‘rifat ansāb al-‘Arab* (The End of Need in Knowledge about Genealogy of the Arabs) edited by Mufid Qamīḥa and Ḥasan Nūr al-Dīn (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyah, 2012), 113, 150.
- (2) Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-Wazān, *Wasf Ifrīqiya*, translated by ‘Abd al-Rahmān Ḥamīdah (Riyadh: Imām Muḥammad b. Sa‘ūd Islamic University, 1979), 421–422; Al-Sayid ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sālim, *Tārīkh al-Maghrib fī al-‘aṣr al-Islāmī* (The History of al-Maghrib in the Islamic Era) (Alexandria: Mu‘assat al-Shabāb al-Jāmi‘iyah, 1999), 793.
- (3) Robert Brunschvig, *Tārīkh Ifrīqiya fī al-‘Ahd al-Ḥafṣī*, 1:273–274, 276.
- (4) Robert Brunschvig, «Un dinar hafside inédit,» *Bulletin de la Société Historique et Géographique de Sétif*, no.2 (1941), 180.

remained separated from the Ḥafṣid Kingdom.<sup>(1)</sup>

After his uncle’s rebellion, ‘Uthmān did not attempt to subjugate the coastal city, Bougie, for several reasons. ‘Uthmān preferred to focus on controlling other coastal cities in North Africa, such as Tripoli (Ṭarāblus) and Misrata (Miṣrātah) in the north of Libya. The inhabitants of Misrata, particularly the merchants, had effective economic relations with Ottoman merchants.<sup>(2)</sup> Bougie thus became an attractive centre for aspirants to the throne of the Ḥafṣid Kingdom, e.g. Abī Naṣr (d. unknown) in April 1453.<sup>(3)</sup> The inhabitants of Bougie also preferred to remain independent from the authorities of the Ḥafṣid sultan. According to al-Wazān, Bougie was considered a city-state in the last decades of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>(4)</sup>

From 1453 to 1470, the Ḥafṣid Kingdom faced natural disasters and internal issues, such as famines, plagues and two rebellions in 1457 and 1463.<sup>(5)</sup> The rebellions were instigated by several sub-tribes, including the Sons of Muḥalhil and the Sons of Ya‘qūb, who were related to Banū Salīm. Some members of these sub-tribes emigrated from the Arabian Peninsula to North Africa and spread throughout the Ḥafṣid Kingdom.<sup>(6)</sup> These uprisings affected the Ḥafṣid Kingdom’s economy, as ‘Uthmān was obliged to prepare military campaigns to suppress them in the *Ifriqiya* region.<sup>(7)</sup> ‘Uthmān succeeded in halting both uprisings.

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(1) ‘Umar b. ‘Alī al-Jazā’irī, *Makhṭūṭ: Manāqib Sīdī Aḥmad b. ‘Arūs* (Manuscript of the Virtues of Aḥmad b. ‘Arūs) (Tunis: Al-Zaytūnah Mosque), manuscript no. 3/187/ 1598, p. 507.

(2) Al-Wazān, *Wasf Ifriqiya*, 482–483.

(3) Robert Brunschvig, *Tārīkh Ifriqiya fī al-‘Ahd al-Ḥafṣī*, 1:277.

(4) Al-Wazān, *Wasf Ifriqiya*, 421–422.

(5) Robert Brunschvig, *Tārīkh Ifriqiya fī al-‘Ahd al-Ḥafṣī*, 1:286–287.

(6) Muḥammad b. al-Shmā‘, *Al-Adīlah al-nūrānīyah fī maḥākhir al-dawlah al-Ḥafṣīyah* (Transparent Evidences in al-Ḥafṣīyah State’s Feats) edited by Ṭāhir al-Ma‘mūrī (Tunis: Dār al-‘Arabī II-Kitāb, 1984), 209.

(7) *Ibid.*, 132–133, 209.

## Economic Relations between Abū ‘Amr ‘Uthmān and the Italian Republics

The abovementioned events drove ‘Uthmān to enact processes to reinforce his kingdom’s economy. He improved relations with the Italian republics of Genoa and Venice, offering protection for Venetian ships in his kingdom’s ports from 1456 to benefit from the goods they carried from the Italian Peninsula, Egypt and the Levant.<sup>(1)</sup> From 1465, he also offered security for Genoese merchants and their goods while in the cities of the Ḥafṣid Kingdom, although the Genoese did not feel safe.<sup>(2)</sup> One year after the signing of the treaty with the Ḥafṣid authorities, Genoese merchants suffered robberies by the inhabitants throughout the kingdom and floggings implemented by the governor of the city of El Kala (el-Qālah), which was under the Ḥafṣids’ control and located in what is now the Republic of Algeria. Nonetheless, these merchants earned considerable profits, and they revived the economy of Tunis.

As part of ‘Uthmān’s efforts to deal with the natural disasters in his territories, he imported seventy-five thousand quintals of wheat from Sicily in 1455.<sup>(3)</sup> During this period, the Kingdom of Sicily was a subject state of the Crown of Aragon. This importation was likely the prime rationale behind establishing relations with the subject states of the Crown of Aragon in the Italian Peninsula, particularly the Kingdom of Naples. In May 1478, a diplomatic-economic treaty was signed between the Ḥafṣids and the Kingdom of Naples. This treaty allowed the Kingdom of Naples to appoint a councillor in Tunis and also provided protection for the merchants of Naples

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(1) Domenico Malipiero, *Annali Veneti dall’anno 1457 al 1500*, edited by Francesco Longo (Firenze: Vieuusseux, 1844) 2:618.

(2) Louis de Mas-Latrie, «Des Traités existants entre la republique de Genes et le roi de Tunis Abou-Omar-Othman in 1465,» in *Traités de paix et de commerce et documents divers concernant les relations des chrétiens avec les Arabes de l’Afrique septentrionale au moyen âge* (Paris: H. Plon, 1865), 150–151.

(3) Roman Loimeier, *Muslim Societies in Africa: A Historical Anthropology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 62.

while in the Ḥafṣids’ territories.<sup>(1)</sup> However, the political situation in the Kingdom of Sicily was different to that in the Kingdom of Naples resulting in its failure to establish a diplomatic-economic treaty with ‘Uthmān in the 1470s.<sup>(2)</sup> Naples was more independent in its political affairs and external relations and was ruled directly by a member of the House of Trastámara, who ruled the Crown of Castile (1369–1516) and the Crown of Aragon (1412–1516). Ferdinand I of Naples (1458-1494), cousin of Ferdinand II of Aragon (1479–1516), ruled the Kingdom of Naples. Sicily was ruled by the viceroy of the kings of Aragon, John II (1458–1479) and then Ferdinand II, whose attentions were focused on the War of Castilian Succession during the 1470s.

During the 1480s, ‘Uthmān sought to persuade Ferdinand II, a king of Sicily (1479 -1516), to establish relations between Tunis and Sicily to allow him to obtain Sicilian wheat. This wheat was desired by the North African kingdoms, particularly the Ḥafṣids and then the Mamlūks during their conflict with the Ottomans in 1488.<sup>(3)</sup> ‘Uthmān, however, did not obtain this wheat due to Ferdinand II’s preoccupation with the Granada War (1482-1492) and ‘Uthmān’s eventual death in 1488.

### **The Domination of ‘Uthmān on the Kingdom of Tlemcen**

The Kingdom of Tlemcen was ruled by the Zayyānid dynasty, which was also known as Banū ‘Abd al-Wād of the Zanātah tribe. In 1424, the Ḥafṣid kingdom, ruled by Abū Fāris ‘Abd al-‘Azīz II (1394–1434), the grandfather of ‘Uthmān, established dominion over the Kingdom of

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- (1) Julián Ribera Tarragó, "Tratado de paz ó tregua entre Fernando I, el Bastardo, rey de Nápoles, y Abuámer Otmán, rey de Túnez," in *Centenario della Nascita di Michele Amari*, edited by Giuseppe Salvo Cozzo (Palermo: Stab. Tip. Virzi, 1910), 2:373–386.
  - (2) Louis de Mas-Latrie, «Votes du conseil des notables de la ville de Palerme relatifs au traité de paix qu’il s’agissait de conclure avec le roi de Tunis,» in *Traitées de Paix et de Commerce et Documents Divers Concernant les Relations*, 180–181.
  - (3) «la carta de Fernando II a Inocencio VIII (Zaragoza, 3 de enero de 1488),» in *Documentos sobre relaciones internacionales de los Reyes Católicos*, by Antonio de la Torre (Barcelona: CSIC, 1951), 3:9-10.

Tlemcen. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz II had exploited the continued conflict for the throne of Tlemcen between Zayyānid family members.<sup>(1)</sup> According to al-Wazān, this domination resulted in Tunis’ annexation of Bougie, which had been part of the Kingdom of Tlemcen since the 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>(2)</sup> This domination continued in the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The emir of Tlemcen, Muḥammad III al-Mutawakil (1461–1468), seized the throne of Tlemcen via a military coup in 1461. He temporarily declared his submission and obedience to the Ḥafṣid sultan, ‘Uthmān, in 1462 to prioritise dealing with an internal conflict<sup>(3)</sup> – the continued rebellion against his rule by members of the Zayyānid dynasty, including a deposed emir of Tlemcen, Abū ‘Abbās Aḥmad al-‘Aqīl (1431–1461), in 1462 and Muḥammad b. Ghālīyah in 1463.<sup>(4)</sup>

In 1466, the Ḥafṣid sultan, ‘Uthmān, lay siege to al-Mutawakil for providing asylum to some Arab sub-tribes, in particular the Dhawdah, who had spread throughout the Ḥafṣid and Tlemcen kingdoms and who rejected obedience to ‘Uthmān.<sup>(5)</sup> During ‘Uthmān’s siege of Tlemcen, al-Mutawakil apologised to ‘Uthmān and presented him with a gift in the form of his older daughter as a wife for ‘Uthmān’s grandson, Abī Zakarīyā b. Mas‘ūd. This ended the siege.<sup>(6)</sup>

Following the death of al-Mutawakil, the throne of Tlemcen was transferred to his son Abū Tāshfīn III, who ruled for a month before being

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- (1) Muḥammad al-Tinsī, *Tārīkh Banī Zayyān muqtaṭaf min nuḥm al-dur wa al-‘uqyān fī bayān sharaf Banī Zayyān* (The History of the Zayyānid Dynasty), edited by Maḥmūd Bū ‘Ayād (Algiers: Mufim, 2011), 235, 241–243.
- (2) Al-Wazān, *Wasf Ifrīqiya*, 421.
- (3) Abī ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad al-Zarkashī, *Tārīkh al-dawlatayn al-Muwaḥḥidīyah wa al-Ḥafṣīyah* (The History of Two States: Ḥafṣid and al-Muwaḥḥid) edited by Muḥammad Mādūr, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed (Tunis: al-Maktabah al-‘Aṭṭah, 1966), 152–153.
- (4) Ibid., 152–153.
- (5) Al-Fīlālī, *Tilimsān fī al-‘Ahd al-Zayyānī*, 73.
- (6) Al-Zarkashī, *Tārīkh al-dawlatayn*, 158.

deposed by his brother, Abū 'Abd Allāh IV (1468–1504).<sup>(1)</sup> The latter did not concentrate on ending Ḥafṣid dominance at the beginning of his reign as he was more concerned with internal issues, such as the emergence of thieves on the roads between the cities of Tlemcen and Fez in 1463.<sup>(2)</sup> This emir also faced discontent, particularly from the tribe of Banī 'Aām, an Arab tribe settled in Tlemcen and Oran. This tribe had been allied with earlier emirs of Tlemcen since the establishment of the Kingdom of Tlemcen and had helped them combat both internal and external threats to the kingdom.<sup>(3)</sup> Hence, the emir himself worked to satisfy this tribe by providing them with money and agricultural lands in various territories of the Kingdom of Tlemcen.<sup>(4)</sup>

Throughout Abū 'Abd Allāh IV's reign, the Ḥafṣid Kingdom did not attack or besiege the Kingdom of Tlemcen, as had happened during the rule of his father al-Mutawakil in 1466. Two possible reasons led 'Uthmān to avoid launching an offensive on the Kingdom of Tlemcen during the reign of Abū 'Abd Allāh IV. First, it seems that Abū 'Abd Allāh IV did not anger 'Uthmān, as he did not intervene in 'Uthmān's internal affairs.<sup>(5)</sup> Perhaps Abū 'Abd Allāh IV feared that 'Uthmān could reignite internal political issues in his kingdom by, for example, inciting quarrels between the Zayyānid family members for the throne of Tlemcen.<sup>(6)</sup> Second, trade was one of the primary sources of revenue for the Kingdom of Tlemcen. The profits Tlemcen obtained from trade had declined due to tensions in the Mediterranean between Tlemcen merchant ships and those belonging to the

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(1) *Tilimsān fī al-'Ahd al-Zayyānī*, 74.

(2) 'Abd al-Bāsiṭ b. Khalīl, "Riḥlat B. Khalīl ilā al-Gharb al-Islāmī," (The Journey of B. Khalīl to North Africa) published by Robert Brunschvig, *Deux Récits de Voyage Inédits en Afrique du Nord au XVe Siècle* (Paris: Larose, 1936), 42.

(3) Yaḥya b. Khaldūn, *Baghīyat al-ruwād fī dhikr mulūk Banī 'Abd al-Wād* (The Desire of Pioneers in the Mention of the Emirs of 'Abd al-Wād) edited by Bū Zayyān al-Drājī (Algiers: Dār al-Amal, 2007), 2:59–60.

(4) *Tilimsān fī al-'Ahd al-Zayyānī*, 74.

(5) *Ibid.*, 73-74.

(6) Robert Mantran, *Les Grandes Dates de l'Islam* (Paris: Larousse, 1990), 74.

Crown of Aragon, which had begun in 1464.<sup>(1)</sup> However, during the period of Ḥafṣid dominance over the Kingdom of Tlemcen's political authorities, the emir, Abū 'Abd Allāh IV, was obliged to pay tribute to the Ḥafṣids of half of the profits earned through trade.<sup>(2)</sup> The Kingdom of Tlemcen likely depended on the wealth of its Jewish inhabitants, who lived close to the emir's palace in the city of Tlemcen, to revive its treasury when the profits obtained from trade decreased. The Jews in the Kingdom of Tlemcen were divided into the native Jews, who had been settling in the kingdom since 973, and the Iberian Jews, who had begun to emigrate to Tlemcen in 1400.<sup>(3)</sup> The political authorities of Tlemcen had settled the Iberian Jews in the proper and safe places in the city of Tlemcen beside the native Jews to benefit from the Iberian Jews' craftsmanship and money, which had been acquired from the Iberian Peninsula.<sup>(4)</sup>

### The Domination of 'Uthmān on the Waṭṭāsid Dynasty

The revolution in Fez in 1465 resulted in the collapse of the Marīnid rule and the execution of its last emir, 'Abd al-Ḥaqq II. Following the revolution, the inhabitants of Fez first chose as leader Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-'Umrānī (1465–1471), who was related to the Adrīsid Shī'ī family, who had ruled the Moroccan and some Algerian territories (788–974).<sup>(5)</sup> Al-'Umrānī faced many internal challenges. Ongoing Portuguese colonisation in Ceuta (Sabtah) and al-Kasir al-Saghīr (al-Qasir al-Ṣaghīr) along with the

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- (1) Charles André Julien, *Histoire de L'Afrique du Nord: Tunisie, Algérie, Maroc*, translated by Muḥammad Mazālī and al-Bashīr b. Salāmah, (Tunis: Dar al-Tūnisīyah, 1978), 2:326.
  - (2) Al-Wazān, *Wasf Ifrīqiya*, 380.
  - (3) Al-Fīlālī, *Tilimsān fī al-'Ahd al-Zayyānī*, 194.
  - (4) Fāṭimah Bū 'Amāmah, *Al-Yahūd fī al-Maghrib al-Islāmī fī al-qarnayn 13–15* (The Jews in al-Maghrib During the 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Centuries) Ph.D. dissertation (Algiers: Jāmi'at Yūsuf b. Khadah, 2008), 236.
  - (5) Amira K. Bennison, *Jihad, and its Interpretation in Pre-Colonial Morocco: State-Society Relations during the French Conquest of Algeria* (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 2004), 19.

colonists' plundering of surrounding towns were weakening the Kingdom of Fez. Moreover, he was unable to offer the inhabitants any change for the better. He was thus unable to defend himself and his throne against Muḥammad al-Shaykh al-Waṭṭāsī, who had ambitions to become the sultan of the Kingdom of Fez. Consequently, al-Waṭṭāsī deposed al-'Umrānī, who fled to Tunis in 1471, and gained the throne of Fez.<sup>(1)</sup>

At the beginning of the rule of Muḥammad al-Shaykh al-Waṭṭāsī, the inhabitants of the Kingdom of Fez witnessed the peak of Portuguese colonisation of their territories. The Portuguese seized Asilah (Aṣīlah), a town in the northwestern Kingdom of Fez, on 24 August 1471, while Tangier (Ṭanjah), another northwestern city, was seized on 28 August 1471.<sup>(2)</sup> The consequence of the Portuguese colonisation of Asilah and Tangier was that the Waṭṭāsīd sultan was obliged to sign a peace treaty with the Portuguese in 1471. This treaty forced the sultan of Fez to recognise Asilah, Tangier and Larache (Al-'Arā'sh) as Portuguese colonies.<sup>(3)</sup> The primary reason the sultan signed the treaty was because the Portuguese soldiers had kidnapped his wife and sons. However, following the signing of the treaty, the Portuguese delayed the release of his son, Muḥammad al-Purtughālī (Portuguese), in order to compel the sultan to prevent the inhabitants of Fez from attacking the Portuguese garrisons.<sup>(4)</sup>

'Uthmān exploited these events in Fez and worked to dominate the Waṭṭāsīds by providing asylum to Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-'Umrānī, who was the political challenger of the first Waṭṭāsīd sultan, Muḥammad al-Shaykh

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- (1) Amira K. Bennison, "Liminal States: Morocco and the Iberian Frontier between the Twelfth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Journal of North African Studies* 6, no.1 (2001): 21.
  - (2) Martin Malcolm Elbl, *Portuguese Tangier (1471–1662): Colonial Urban Fabric as Cross-Cultural Skeleton* (Peterborough: Baywolf Press, 2013), 10.
  - (3) Ambrosio Huici Miranada, "Al-'Arā'sh," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, edited by Hamilton Alexander Rosskeen Gibb (Leiden: Brill Press, 1967), 1:605.
  - (4) Shawqī 'Aṭā Allāh al-Jamal, *Al-Maghrib al-'Arabī al-kabīr fī al-'asr al-ḥadīth: Lībyā, Tūnis, al-Jazā'ir, al-Maghrib* (Arab Maghreb in the Modern Age: Libya, Tunisia, Algeria Morocco) (Cairo: Maktabat al-Anjlū al-Miṣrīyah, 1977), 49.

al-Waṭṭāsī, for the throne of Fez.<sup>(1)</sup> ‘Uthmān dominated the Kingdom of Fez because he was preferred by its inhabitants. He raised religious awareness among them, which encouraged the *jihād* (struggle against non-Muslims) to resist Portuguese colonialism.<sup>(2)</sup> This stopped the Portuguese expansion in the Kingdom of Fez until the death of ‘Uthmān in 1488. In 1488, the Portuguese occupied Asfi (Aṣṣfī), a coastal city in the western Kingdom of Fez on the Atlantic Ocean.

The transfer of political authority in Fez between the Adrīsids and the Waṭṭāsids, occurring over only a few years from 1465 to 1471, weakened the economy of Fez. Additionally, the existence of the Portuguese in the north of the Kingdom of Fez probably ended economic relations between the European states and the Waṭṭāsids. ‘Uthmān did not, therefore, take a tribute from the Waṭṭāsids.

### ‘Uthmān’s Relations with Other Islamic States

Notwithstanding Abū ‘Amr ‘Uthmān was working to keep the Ḥafṣid’s domination on the Islamic polities in Northwest Africa, he created diplomatic relations with the Islamic states in the Near East, such as the Ottoman Empire and the Mamlūk Sultanate. In addition, he kept the links with the Islamic polity in the Iberian Peninsula, the Emirate of Granada. In 1453, ‘Uthmān received a delegation from the Ottoman sultan, Meḥmed II, to inform him of the conquest of Constantinople.<sup>(3)</sup> ‘Uthmān congratulated Meḥmed II by sending two men from Tunis carrying a congratulatory letter to Meḥmed II in 1454. The two men were captured by the Kingdom of Naples on their way to Constantinople, but the king of Naples, Alfonso I (1442–1458), ordered his authorities to release them, and they arrived Constantinople.<sup>(4)</sup>

- (1) Abī ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad al-Zarkashī, *Makhṭūṭ: Bulūgh al-amānī* (The Manuscript: Achieving Wishes), Algiers: National Library, Manuscript no. 239, p.108.
- (2) Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 328.
- (3) Shai Har-El, *Struggle for Domination in the Middle East*, 77.
- (4) Robert Brunschvig, *Tārīkh Ifrīqiya fī al-‘Ahd al-Ḥafṣī*, 292.

In 1464, the Emirate of Granada sent an appeal to ‘Uthmān because the forces of the Crown of Castile had seized Granadan towns and cities, Gibraltar and Archidona. ‘Uthmān sent financial support to the emirate.<sup>(1)</sup> He continued to send financial support to the emirate to help it combat the attacks from the Crown of Castile until his death.<sup>(2)</sup>

With regards to the relations with the Mamlūk Sultanate, ‘Uthmān sent gifts, including horses and fabrics, to the Mamlūk sultans in 1446, 1454 and 1468 because pilgrims had been able to safely cross from the Ḥaḫṣid Kingdom to Mecca (Makkah). The Mamlūks were highly respected due to their control over the holy sites of Muslims and Christians, namely Mecca and Medina (al-Madīnah) in the Arabian Peninsula and Jerusalem (al-Quds) in the Levant.

The Ḥaḫṣid sultan, ‘Uthmān, did not seek to stop the conflict between the Ottomans and the Mamlūk, which lasted for six years from 1485 to 1491, because he had fallen into a state of despair. He had lost his son, Abū Sālim Ibrāhīm, the alderman of Annaba (‘*Anābah*), as well as his grandson, al-Muntṣir Mas‘ūd, in 1485. ‘Uthmān then lost his crown prince, his elder son, Mas‘ūd, in 1487.<sup>(3)</sup> The death of the latter likely caused ‘Uthmān to neglect external affairs.

‘Uthmān died in 1488 and was succeeded by his grandson, Abū Zakarīyā Yaḥyā III (1488–1489). However, Yaḥyā III could not thwart his uncle’s desire to inherit the throne of Tunis and was killed in 1489.<sup>(4)</sup> The

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(1) Ana Echevarría, *Knights on the Frontier: The Moorish Guard of the Kings of Castile (1410–1467)*, translated by Martin Beagles (Leiden: Brill Press, 2009), 79–80.

(2) Muḫammad b. al-Shmā‘, *Al-Adilah al-nūrānīyah fī mafākhīr al-dawlah al-Ḥaḫṣīyah*, 126.

(3) Edouard Fagnan, *Extraits inédits relatifs au Maghreb (géographie et histoire), traduits de l’arabe et annotés* (Alger J. Carbonel, 1924), 322.

(4) Muḫammad ibn Aḫmad b. Iyās, *Badā’i’ al-zuhūr fī waqā’i’ al-duhūr* (Beautiful Flowers in the Events of Ages), edited by Muḫammad Muṣṭafā (Cairo: al-Hay’ah al-Miṣrīyah al-‘Aāmah II-Kitāb, 1984), 3:256.

Ḥafṣid Kingdom thus entered a period of conflict, which only ceased in 1490 when the son of Yaḥyā III, Zakarīyā II (1490–1494), came to control the throne of Tunis.

## Conclusion

Notwithstanding the famines and rebellions the Ḥafṣid Kingdom suffered during the rule of Abū ‘Amr ‘Uthmān, it managed several achievements. The Ḥafṣid sultan, ‘Uthmān signed several treaties with the Italian republics Genoa, Venice and Naples. These treaties improved diplomatic relations between his realm and these Italian states, which were considered the most powerful trading countries. In addition, the ships and merchants of Venice and Genoa improved the economy of the Ḥafṣid Kingdom with the goods they carried.

In terms of political achievements, ‘Uthmān continued the Ḥafṣid Kingdom’s dominance over the Kingdom of Tlemcen. This domination began in the reign of his grandfather, Abū Fāris ‘Abd al-‘Azīz II, in the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century and resulted in the Ḥafṣids receiving a tribute from Tlemcen. Furthermore, ‘Uthmān controlled the Waṭṭāsids’ Kingdom in 1471. ‘Uthmān’s domination of the Waṭṭāsids temporarily stopped the Portuguese expansion in their realm.

Given these achievements, we can conclude that ‘Uthmān was indeed a Majestic sultan in Northwest Africa from 1435 to 1488. In addition, he had friendly relations with the Islamic states in Near East that had religious and military suzerainty, such as the Mamlūk Sultanate and the Ottoman Empire. Further research relating to the period and area of the current research should be undertaken. Studies on the relations between ‘Uthmān and the Ottomans from the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, should be studied in the future.

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## الهيمنة الحفصية على شمال غرب أفريقيا في القرن الخامس عشر: عهد أبي عمرو عثمان (-1435 1488)

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ملخص البحث:

في النصف الأول من القرن الخامس عشر، استولت السلطنة المملوكية، التي حكمها الأشرف برسباي (1422-1438)، على قبرص في عام 1427. وفي النصف الثاني من القرن الخامس عشر، استولت السلطنة العثمانية، التي حكمها محمد الثاني (1444-1446/1451-1481)، على القسطنطينية، عاصمة الإمبراطورية البيزنطية، في عام 1453. لذلك، ركز المؤرخون الغربيون والشرقيون في كتاباتهم على هاتين الدولتين.

يسلط هذا البحث الضوء على جهود السلطان الحفصي أبو عمرو عثمان (1435-1488)، ويوضح نتائج تلك الجهود. كما يعرض الأوضاع السياسية للممالك في شمال غرب أفريقيا. ويوضح هذا البحث أيضا كيف استغل أبو عمرو عثمان ظروف الممالك في شمال غرب أفريقيا لتوسيع نفوذه. ومن ثم، فإن هذا البحث يؤكد أن أبا عمرو عثمان كان سلطانا مهيبا في شمال غرب أفريقيا. وتسير هذه الدراسة وفق المنهج التاريخي، الذي يبحث في المصادر التاريخية التي تناولت عهد أبو عمرو عثمان.

الكلمات الدالة: الحفصيين، تلمسان، فاس، الهيمنة

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