

**Genealogy of the Ancestry of Abdelkader ben Khadda: The
Mokhtari Lineage**

Moussedek Soumia♦

Université Oran 1 Ahmed BEN BELLA

souria.soumia@yahoo.fr

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Abstract

Nobility held great significance for the inhabitants of the Ghriss region, embodying blessing, dignity, and sanctity. The Sharif enjoyed a high social status of esteem and respect, exemption from taxes, and influence with both the authorities and the general population, based on a lineage believed to be connected to the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Among these lineages of the shurafa in the Ghriss region is the lineage of Abdelkader ben Ahmed ben Muhammad ben Abdelkawi, known as ben Khadda, or “the Mokhtari lineage” According to the sources, this status enabled them to play social, cultural, religious, and political roles in the Ghriss region and beyond. It, in turn, led to the emergence of claims to noble lineage by others seeking to obtain the privileges enjoyed by the Sharif to the exclusion of others. The noble families of Ghriss represented the educated class in various sciences and arts compared with the rest of the social groups in the region, and their learning distinguished them, the construction of schools and zawiyas, and their financial support of these institutions; whoever possessed these qualities would inevitably occupy a prominent position in society. Society in Ghriss in general was subject to a social hierarchy in which the noble class controlled authority, the judiciary, and education, and the shurafa, in particular the Mokhtari lineage, formed a group with great and sacred symbolic weight, as most sources on genealogy in Algeria and in the Ghriss region underscore the importance and status attained by the shurafa.

Keywords

Genealogies, lineage, Abdelkader ben Khadda, shurafa, Mokhtari lineage.

Introduction

♦ Corresponding Author

The noble families of Ghriss possessed sacred symbolic authority that no one could violate, whether a makhzen official, an Ottoman authority, or a commoner, and the sources recount how offenders, murderers, highwaymen, and those fleeing punishment by the authorities would take the nobles of Ghriss as their refuge, destination, support, protector, and defender, because they knew they would obtain protection from the shurafa (al-Tujini, n.d., pp. 3–4).

The noble families of Ghriss were respected and honored because they were regarded as descendants of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, and this, in addition to their cultural and religious standing, enhanced their position in the region and made their word effective with rulers and commoners alike (al-Tayyib ben al-Mukhtar al-Ghrisi, n.d., pp. 337–338). On this basis, they obtained the greatest privilege, namely, exemption from taxes, official duties, and public obligations. They were among the most prominent social groups that worked to consolidate security and stability in Algeria during the Ottoman period, for the Ottoman authorities used them as a winning card in their favor, given that their word carried weight in society and they enjoyed a good reputation and intense affection from the people; they thus embodied the symbolic representation and ideal of society (Ben Bakkar, 1961, p. 35; Ibn Zarfa al-Dahawi, 2003, p. 209). Consequently, the Ottoman authorities used them to calm the populace and to silence any rebellion. At the same time, the shurafa worked to promote security and stability by warning the public against disobeying those in authority (al-Rashidi, 1973, p. 233).

The main research question is: What are the origins and branches of the Mokhtari lineage in the Ghriss region, and was there consensus among genealogists concerning the chains of descent, or did significant disagreement exist? (al-Tujini, n.d., pp. 3–4; al-Fasi, n.d., p. 15).

Among the most prominent lineages of the shurafa in the Ghriss region is the lineage of Abdelkader ben Ahmed ben Muhammad ben Abdelkawi, known as ben Khadda, or “the Mokhtari lineage” (al-Tujini, n.d., p. 3). Sources agree on the noble lineage of this family and affirm that it is Idrisid, from the Hasanid branch, and that its genealogy (that is, the Mokhtari lineage) goes back to Muhammad ibn Idris II, such that all Mokhtarais trace back to their

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ancestor Sidi Abdelkader ben Khadda (al-Tujini, n.d., p. 3; al-Jawzi al-Rashidi, n.d., pp. 84–85; al-Fasi, n.d., p. 15).

Abd al-Rahman al-Tujini, when presenting the genealogy of Abdelkader ben Ahmed ben Muhammad ben Abdelkawi, known as Abdelkader ben Khadda, mentions two genealogies for him: a Hasanid and a Husaynid genealogy, though he clearly favors the former (al-Tujini, n.d., pp. 3–4). He describes him as “the eminent scholar, the noble leader, the grammarian, linguist, arithmetician, jurist, monotheist, hadith-scholar, imam, sayyid Abu Muhammad Abdelkader, son of Ahmed, son of Muhammad, from the descendants of Abdelkawi.” Then he raises the question whether this Abdelkawi is “son of Ali son of Ahmed son of Abdelkawi son of Khalid son of Yusuf son of Ahmed son of Bashar son of Ahmed son of Muhammad son of Masud son of Tawus son of Yaqub son of Abdelkawi son of Ahmed son of Muhammad son of Idris son of Idris” (al-Tujini, n.d., p. 3).

As for the Husaynid genealogy, it makes him one of the descendants of “Abdelkawi son of Abd al-Rahman son of Idris son of Ismail son of Sulayman son of Musa al-Kazim son of Jafar al-Sadiq son of Muhammad al-Baqir son of Ali Zayn al-Abidin son of al-Husayn” (al-Tujini, n.d., p. 3). Al-Tujini states that he did not find reliable written sources that clearly trace the genealogy of Abdelkader ben Ahmed ben Muhammad ben Abdelkawi, remarking, “I did not find in that any foundation on which one can rely” (al-Tujini, n.d., p. 3).

Abd al-Rahman ben Muhammad al-Tujini therefore resorted to another source to establish the lineage of Abdelkader ben Ahmed ben Muhammad ben Abdelkawi, namely the oral account he had with one of Abdelkader ben Ahmed's descendants. This descendant gave only a superficial presentation of the genealogy of Abdelkader ben Khadda but traced it back to the Idrisids, that is, the Hasanid branch, and this is what al-Tujini prefers, concluding that “what appears to be stronger is the first genealogy; I discussed the matter with some of his descendants, but he did not answer me with anything except that he said to me: ‘We are Idrisids,’” and explaining that through “Abdelkawi son of Abd al-Rahman son of Idris son of Ismail the lineage of Sidi Yahya ben Rashid is connected,” as “son of Barqan son of Husayn son of Sulayman son

of Abu Bakr son of Muhammad son of Abdelkawi son of Abd al-Rahman,” as he found it written “in the hand of someone trustworthy” (al-Tujini, n.d., pp. 3–4).

Muhammad al-Jawzi al-Rashidi, in his commentary on al-‘Aqd, corroborates this account. He writes that he asked some of Abdelkader’s descendants, and they did not answer him with anything except to say, “We are Idrisids in relation to Imam Idris.” He notes that the lineage of Sidi Yahya ben Rashid is connected to Abd al-Rahman, described as “Abu Rashid ben Barqan, with an open ba and quiescent ra, son of Husayn son of Ismail,” whose genealogy he likewise found in a document written by a reliable scholar, and in the hand of Sayyid Muhammad Abu al-Sadat al-Muzili, both of whom left descendants (al-Jawzi al-Rashidi, n.d., pp. 84–85). Muhammad al-Jawzi al-Rashidi al-Muzili thus confirms this genealogy, favoring the Hasanid Idrisid lineage for Abdelkader ben Ahmed ben Muhammad ben Abdelkawi while reporting two lines for him, first linking him to Muhammad ben Idris and then tracing him back to Abd al-Rahman ben Idris or to Abdelkawi ben Abd al-Rahman ben Idris (al-Jawzi al-Rashidi, n.d., pp. 84–85).

The author of *Tuhfat al-Za’ir* follows the same approach when discussing the genealogy of Emir Abdelkader, whom he considers among the shurafa of the Hasanid Idrisid lineage. However, he omits the name “Ahmed” in one place if we compare his chain with that of al-‘Aqd (Muhammad ben Emir Abdelkader, 1903, pp. 298–300). He describes Emir Abdelkader as “son of Muhyiddin, son of Mustafa, son of Muhammad, son of al-Mokhtar, son of Abdelkader, son of Ahmed al-Mokhtar, son of Abdelkader, known as ben Khadda, who was his wet-nurse, son of Muhammad, son of Abdelkawi, son of Ali son of Ahmed, son of Abdelkawi, son of Khalid, son of Yusuf, son of Ahmed, son of Bashir, son of Muhammad son of Masud son of Tawus son of Yaqub son of Abdelkawi son of Ahmed son of Muhammad son of Idris al-Asghar son of Idris al-Akbar son of Abd Allah al-Mahd, son of al-Hasan al-Muthanna son of al-Hasan al-Sabt son of Ali ibn Abi Talib, whose wife was Fatima al-Zahra, daughter of the master of all beings, Muhammad, the Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him” (Muhammad ben Emir Abdelkader, 1903, p. 298).

The author of *al-Durr al-Nafis wa-al-Nur al-Anis* also considers the Mokhtari family to descend from the Hasanid Idrisids, stating

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that “among them is Abu Muhammad Abdelkader, known as Sidi Qada, son of Ahmed al-Mokhtar, the righteous saint, master of eloquence and rhetoric, who is a noble Hasanid from Ghriss,” and listing his seven sons—Sidi Abd al-Rahman, Sidi Muhammad ben Abdelkader, Sidi al-Mokhtar, Sidi ben Musa, Sidi Hanifi, Sidi al-Awni, Sidi Yahya—before giving the chain of his ancestry (Abu Ras al-Nasiri, n.d., p. 13). He traces it as follows: “Abdelkader son of Ahmed son of al-Mokhtar son of Abdelkader son of Ahmed son of Muhammad son of Abdelkawi the third son of Ali son of Ahmed son of Abdelkawi the second son of Khalid son of Yusuf son of Ahmed son of Bashir son of Muhammad son of Masud son of Tawus son of Yaqub son of Abdelkawi the first son of Ahmed son of Muhammad son of Idris son of Idris son of Abd Allah al-Kamil son of al-Hasan al-Muthanna son of al-Hasan al-Sabt son of Fatima, daughter of the Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him.” He notes that Sidi Abdelkader, known as Sidi Qada, died in 1053 AH, “may God have mercy on him and benefit us by him,” a chain that agrees with al-‘Aqd but omits the name Ahmed (Abu Ras al-Nasiri, n.d., p. 13).

Belhashimi ben Bakkar adopts the same position regarding the Hasanid Idrisid genealogy, saying that “he is Emir Abdelkader, son of Muhyiddin, son of Mustafa, son of Muhammad, son of al-Mokhtar, son of Abdelkader, son of Ahmed al-Mokhtar, son of Abdelkader, ben Khadda, son of Ahmed son of Muhammad, son of Abdelkawi, son of Ali son of Ahmed—here they coincide—son of Abdelkawi, son of Khalid, son of Yusuf, son of Ahmed, son of Bashir, son of Ahmed, son of Muhammad, son of Masud, son of Tawus, son of Yaqub, son of Abdelkawi, son of Ahmed, son of Muhammad, son of Idris, son of Idris, son of Abd Allah al-Kamil, son of al-Hasan al-Muthanna, son of al-Hasan al-Sabt, son of Fatima al-Zahra, the beloved of the best of all creation, peace and blessings be upon him.” He notes that this chain coincides with that of al-‘Aqd (Ben Bakkar, 1961, p. 35).

Muhammad al-Said, the brother of Emir Abdelkader, also gives their genealogical chain: “He is Abdelkader, son of Muhyiddin, son of Mustafa, son of Muhammad, son of al-Mokhtar, son of Abdelkader, son of Ahmed al-Mokhtar, son of Abdelkader, ben Khadda, son of Ahmed, son of Muhammad, son of Abdelkawi, son

of Ali son of Ahmed, son of Abdelkawi, son of Khalid, son of Yusuf, son of Ahmed, son of Bashar, son of Ahmed, son of Muhammad, son of Masud, son of Tawus, son of Yaqub, son of Abdelkawi, son of Ahmed, son of Muhammad, son of Idris, son of Idris,” an account consistent with al-‘Aqd (Boukabir, 2013–2014, p. 63).

Al-Arabi al-Musharrafi classifies the descendants of Sidi Abdelkader ben al-Mokhtar among the shurafa, describing “the descendants of Sidi Abdelkader ben al-Mokhtar, banner-bearers of knowledge and action; no clan of theirs is devoid of them, and their ancestors were kings on earth; their ancestor is Abdelkawi, who founded the city of Dirakzul (Taqdemt)... though their state perished, it was revived by al-Hajj Abdelkader ben Muhyiddin” (al-Musharrafi, n.d., pp. 25–26). Abd al-Rahman al-Fasi also counts Sidi Ahmed ben Khadda among the virtuous shurafa, noting that “among the best of the shurafa is Sidi Ahmed ben Khadda and his brother Sidi Abd Allah ben Khadda, well known in Ghriss, and they are the ancestors of the shurafa of Ghriss” (al-Fasi, n.d., p. 44). Al-Hishlaf follows the same approach and favors the Hasanid Idrisid genealogy for Abdelkader ben Khadda, citing *Tuhfat al-Za’ir* (al-Hishlaf, 1929, p. 111; Muhammad ben Emir Abdelkader, 1903, pp. 298–300).

Muhammad al-Araj al-Ghrisi records the genealogy of Abu Muhammad Abdelkader ben Ahmed ben Muhammad, though a name (Muhammad) is missing from this chain compared with Fath al-Rahman: he describes him as “the eminent scholar, the noble leader, grammarian, linguist, jurist, monotheist, hadith-scholar, imam, sayyid Abu Muhammad Abdelkader ben Ahmed al-Mokhtar ben Muhammad from the descendants of Abdelkawi son of Ali son of Ahmed son of Abdelkawi son of Khalid son of Yusuf son of Ahmed son of Bashar son of Masud son of Tawus son of Yaqub son of Abdelkawi son of Ahmed son of Muhammad son of Idris son of Idris son of Abd Allah al-Kamil son of al-Hasan al-Muthanna son of al-Hasan al-Sabt son of Fatima, daughter of the Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him,” noting that he had many students, including a thousand in the science of tawhid, that they would refer to him as “our shaykh Abu Muhammad Abdelkader ben Khadda al-Rashidi,” with Khadda as his wet-nurse, and that he left

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descendants and his grave is well known (Muhammad al-Araj al-Ghrisi, n.d., p. 401).

Al-Tayyib ben al-Mokhtar al-Ghrisi describes his own genealogy, which he traces back to the Hasanid Idrisids, stating that “some of them moved to this Ghriss region; among them is our uppermost ancestor, Sayyid Ahmed, known as al-Mokhtar; then his son, Imam Sayyid Abdelkader, known by his wet-nurse Khadda, succeeded him; he is the first of the men of al-‘Aqd, and he was among the firmly grounded imams and practicing scholars in whom the leadership of Ghriss ended; he occupied the highest ranks and was among the sons of princes; his state is witness to all that” (al-Tayyib ben al-Mokhtar al-Ghrisi, n.d., pp. 337–338). Then his son, Sidi Ahmed al-Mokhtar, succeeded him and followed his father’s path in seeking knowledge, acquiring an abundant share of it and taking up teaching, with a share in composing poetry. He was in turn succeeded by his son, Shaykh Sidi Abdelkader ben al-Mokhtar, “widely renowned and far-famed,” who is “our nearer ancestor, in whom the branches of the descendants of Sidi Qada now present are united,” and who “grew up on his well-known mountain, adorned with tranquility, characterized by chastity and detachment, firmly established in position, accompanied by purity and restraint, far removed from its opposite, combining the leadership of the East and West and winning the palm of precedence among his contemporaries; he alone held the grand shaykhship over his peers; every leader compared to him is led” (al-Tayyib ben al-Mokhtar al-Ghrisi, n.d., pp. 337–338).

Emir Abdelkader took pride in his noble lineage and composed a poem entitled “Our Father is the Messenger of God,” in which he says: “Our father is the Messenger of God, the best of all creation; who among creation can rival us in rank?” (Ben Bakkar, 1961, p. 39). Muhammad ben Emir Abdelkader likewise sets out his genealogical chain alongside his forefathers, describing “the exalted pole, the felicitous Abd al-Qawi, master of Tafersit, whom he considers the ancestor of the shurafa, then his son Muhammad, a man of learning and piety; when he died, his son Ahmed, known as ben Khadda, migrated and settled in Oued al-‘Abd near Ghriss; he was the first to gain renown in the Mokhtari family in this region through his knowledge and piety; he died in Oued al-‘Abd and was

buried in the cemetery of Sayyid Abd Allah ben Abd al-Razzaq” (Muhammad ben Emir Abdelkader, 1903, pp. 299–300). After his death, his son, Sayyid Abdelkader, moved to Nasmout and settled in Kachrou al-Fouqani al-Kabir, where people came from every direction to seek knowledge and the spiritual path; Abu Muhammad Abdelkader ben Khadda was born in the tenth century and died in that century, and he was succeeded by his son, Sayyid Ahmed al-Mokhtar, then by his son, Sayyid Abdelkader, known as Sidi Qada, then by his son, Sayyid al-Mokhtar, and finally by Sayyid Muhammad, known as al-Mujahid, and Sayyid Mustafa, and then Shaykh Sidi Muhyiddin, father of Emir Abdelkader (Muhammad ben Emir Abdelkader, 1903, pp. 299–304).

L. Guin also sets out the genealogical chain of Abdelkader ben Khadda, listing the sequence “Ali – al-Hasan al-Sabt – al-Hasan al-Thani – Abd Allah al-Kamil – Idris al-Akbar – Idris al-Asghar – Muhammad – Ahmed – Abdelkawi the first (known as al-Nassabi) – Yaqub – Tawus – Masud – Muhammad – Bashir – Ahmed – Yusuf – Khalid – Abdelkawi the second – Ahmed – Ali – Abdelkawi the third – Muhammad (the first of this branch, who settled in the Maghrib, in al-‘Aussat near Sidi Bouzid, in Jabal Amur) – Abdelkader, known as ben Khadda – Ahmed, known as al-Mokhtar – Mustafa – Muhyiddin – Emir Abdelkader” (Guin, 1913, p. 10).

The Lineage of Abdelkawi

Many sources discuss the genealogy of Abdelkawi, ancestor of Abdelkader ben Khadda ben Ahmed ben Muhammad. The author of *Jawharat al-‘Uqul* describes Abdelkawi as descending from the Hasanids, stating that “as for Abdelkawi, lord of Tafersit, a well-known city in the Rif region, he left four sons: Muhammad, Ahmed, Abd al-Salam, and Abdelkawi; among them are the people of the Rif, whose ancestor is Sayyid Abdelkawi son of Ali son of Ahmed son of Abdelkawi son of Khalid; we shall continue the lineage back to al-Hasan, may God be pleased with him,” a chain which matches that of al-‘Aqd (al-Fasi, n.d., p. 15; al-Tujini, n.d., pp. 3–4).

Abd Allah ben Ahmed al-Iskandari records that Abdelkawi was “lord of Tafersat” and that he had four sons, who are considered the ancestors of the people of the Rif (al-Iskandari, n.d., fol. 22r). Abd al-Rahman ben Muhammad al-Fasi likewise mentions him as “the

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exalted pole, Abd al-Qawi, lord of Tafersat, who is the ancestor of the shurafa of the Rif" (al-Fasi, n.d., p. 24).

Al-Ashmawi, however, traces Abdelkawi to a Husaynid genealogy, stating that "the descendants of Abdelkawi, lord of Taqdemt, go back to Abd al-Rahman son of Idris son of Idris son of Ismail, from the offspring of Zayn al-Abidin; his origin was Meccan, but he concealed himself for fear of conflicts; he left three sons: Abdelkawi, Muhammad al-Sharrat, and Ziyen; Abdelkawi ruled in Taqdemt after his father's death; Muhammad al-Sharrat ruled in the city of Tajra; and Ziyen ruled in the city of Tiaret; Abdelkawi fathered eight sons: Muhammad al-Tair, Ahmed, Ali, Abd al-Salam, Abd al-Razzaq, Ziyen, Muhammad the Younger, and Abdelkawi the Younger; all belong to a single tribe" (al-Ashmawi, n.d., pp. 314–315).

Giacobetti, in his publication of al-Ashmawi's genealogical work, mentions "Abdelkawi al-Qabitini from Tafersat," who left four sons—Ahmed, Abd al-Salam, and Abdelkawi—who settled in al-Kaf, and states that their ancestor is "Abdelkawi son of Ali son of Abd al-Ghufur son of Ahmed son of Abdelkawi son of Khalid son of Yusuf son of Ahmed" (Giacobetti, 1930, pp. 44–45). He also mentions, in another passage, the people of Chlef, among whom are the descendants of "our master Abdelkawi, buried in Taqdemt, a village of Mascara," and explains that after their father's death, Abdelkawi remained in Taqdemt, while his brothers—one of them, Muhammad al-Sharrat, remained in Tajrat as ruler, and the other, Ziyen, remained in Tiaret; Abdelkawi had eight sons: Muhammad, Ahmed, Ali, Abd al-Salam, Abd al-Razzaq, Ziyen, Muhammad II, and Abdelkawi the Younger; Ahmed and Ziyen went to the area around Tunisia; Ali went to the area around Chlef; and Muhammad II, Abd al-Salam, and Abd al-Razzaq remained, in a region where "Taqdemt is a city close to Mascara, which Emir Abdelkader made his capital" (Giacobetti, 1930, pp. 44–46).

It is worth noting that North Africans tended to show humility in naming their children, unlike some easterners who favored grandiloquent names, and they would drop certain letters from names as a sign of modesty; Muhammad al-Jawzi al-Rashidi explains in al-Fath that Duh is actually Abd al-Rahman, Al is Abd Allah, Hamu is Muhammad, Hamd is Ahmed, Yuswa is Yusuf, and

Aqwa is Abdelkader, illustrating a distinctive onomastic practice (al-Jawzi al-Rashidi, n.d., p. 94).

Settlement of the Mokhtari Lineage in the Ghriss Region

The ancestors of Sidi Ahmed ben al-Mokhtar had been settled in the far Maghrib (Morocco), and after the persecution and expulsion that afflicted the Idrisid shurafa at the hands of Banu al-Afiyya, they moved to Tunisia; from among them, Sayyid Ahmed, known as al-Mokhtar, moved to Ghriss and made it his homeland, as their tribal genealogy “traces back to our master Idris, may God be pleased with him,” and their first ancestor left during the turmoil of Musa ben al-Afiyya, settled in Ifriqiya (Tunisia), honored and revered until his death, with his descendants remaining there “honored with leadership and shaykhship,” until “our uppermost ancestor, Sayyid Ahmed, known as al-Mokhtar, moved from there to this Ghriss region” (al-Tayyib ben al-Mukhtar al-Ghrisi, n.d., pp. 337–338). Muhammad ben Emir Abdelkader describes this genealogical path, beginning from Abd al-Qawi of Tafersit, passing through Taqdemt, Oued al-‘Abd, and Nasmout, and ending in Ghriss (Muhammad ben Emir Abdelkader, 1903, pp. 299–304).

Examples of Roles Played by the Mokhtari Lineage

1. Political Role of the Mokhtari Lineage

The Ottoman authorities drew the shurafa close and granted them many privileges, most notably exemption from taxes, state-service duties, and levies and burdens, as well as surrounding them with respect and reverence (Ben Bakkar, 1961, p. 35). What mattered most to the Ottoman authorities, however, was the smooth collection of taxes, and the sharifs played an essential role in this by raising public awareness about the magnitude of their responsibility and the religious and legal duty involved in paying taxes; the noble families of Ghriss thus helped maintain the continuity of Ottoman authority by safeguarding one of the state’s most important financial resources (Ibn Zarfa al-Dahawi, 2003, p. 209).

The Ottomans showed great concern for the shurafa, who were a pillar of the Ottoman state in Algeria. Sidi Ahmed ben Khadda attained the leadership of Ghriss, or was at least among the leaders appointed by the Ottoman authorities in Algeria; al-Tayyib ben al-Mokhtar al-Ghrisi states that “our uppermost ancestor, Sayyid Ahmed, known by his wet-nurse Khadda, moved to this Ghriss region, and he is the first of the men of al-‘Aqd; he was among the

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firmly grounded imams and practicing scholars, and the leadership of Ghriss ended with him” (al-Tayyib ben al-Mukhtar al-Ghrisi, n.d., p. 337).

Sidi Qada ben al-Mokhtar distinguished himself by lofty ideals and high qualities, in addition to holding leadership and authority. The Ottoman authorities entrusted the noble families of Ghriss with key positions in the state, such as the local leadership; as al-Tayyib ben al-Mukhtar al-Ghrisi notes, “Sidi Qada grew up on his well-known mountain, adorned with tranquility, characterized by chastity and detachment, firmly established in position, accompanied by purity and restraint, far removed from its opposite; he combined the leadership of the East and West and won the palm of precedence among his contemporaries, and he alone held the grand shaykhship over his peers; every leader compared to him is led; people unanimously agreed on his virtue and majesty, and they all acknowledged his shaykhship and leadership” (al-Tayyib ben al-Mukhtar al-Ghrisi, n.d., pp. 337–338).

The noble families of Ghriss played a major role in liberating Oran and Mers el-Kebir from Spanish occupation in 1708 and 1791; Ibn Zarfa al-Dahawi, for example, praises the Muhammadiyya school and indicates that it played a major role in preparing its students for participation in the second and final liberation of Oran (Ibn Zarfa al-Dahawi, 2003, p. 209). Among those who took part in the jihad against the Spanish from the Mokhtari lineage was Muhammad, known as al-Mujahid, who is described as “the most complete man of his time with no opponent, the most famous in virtue with no rival,” born in Kachrou in 1095 AH and martyred in 1163 AH in the war between Spain and the Muslims, carried from the battlefield of Oran to the cemetery of his ancestors in Ghriss despite the distance (Muhammad ben Emir Abdelkader, 1903, p. 302).

1. Scholarly Role of the Mokhtari Lineage

Sidi Abdelkader ben Khadda

Al-Tayyib ben al-Mokhtar al-Ghrisi praises the scholarly role of Abdelkader ben Khadda, who was among the imams and scholars in whom the leadership of Ghriss culminated, noting that among his works is a marginal commentary (hashiya) on al-Sanusi’s al-Sughra and that among his students were Said Qaddoura and Abdelkader

ben al-Rashidi (al-Tayyib ben al-Mukhtar al-Ghrisi, n.d., p. 337). Abd al-Rahman al-Tujini describes him in al-‘Aqd as “the eminent scholar, the noble leader, grammarian, linguist, arithmetician, jurist, monotheist, hadith-scholar, imam, sayyid Abu Muhammad Abdelkader ben Ahmed ben Muhammad from the descendants of Abdelkawi” and notes that he had a large number of students, some of whom wrote in the science of tawhid and other disciplines, and that his students relied on his commentary on al-Sughra of Shaykh Abu Abdullah Muhammad ben Yusuf ben ‘Amr al-Sanusi al-Hasani (al-Tujini, n.d., p. 3).

Sidi Abdelkader ben Khadda is further described as “a scholar of high rank, of sharp mind and penetrating insight, knowledgeable in logic, well versed in dialects and grammatical rules; he was trained in jurisprudence and belief in the oneness of God... he lived in the tenth century and is considered one of the most revered people in the region; his shrine is in Kachrou” (Ben Bakkar, 1961, p. 40).

Abdelkader ben al-Mokhtar (Sidi Qada)

Abdelkader ben al-Mokhtar (Sidi Qada) is the ancestor in whom all branches of Sidi Qada’s current descendants unite. Al-Tayyib ben al-Mokhtar al-Ghrisi writes that “Sidi Qada grew up on his well-known mountain, adorned with tranquility, characterized by chastity and detachment, firmly established in position, accompanied by purity and restraint, far removed from its opposite; he combined the leadership of the East and West and won the palm of precedence among his contemporaries, and he alone held the grand shaykhship over his peers; every leader compared to him is led; people unanimously agreed on his virtue and majesty, and they all acknowledged his shaykhship and leadership, and the Ottoman sultans seated him on their sofas, and the jinn, including Shamhurush, served him” (al-Tayyib ben al-Mukhtar al-Ghrisi, n.d., pp. 337–338).

Al-Arabi al-Musharrafi describes him in his Yaquta as “Sidi Abdelkader ben al-Mokhtar, banner-bearer of knowledge and action; no clan of theirs is devoid of them,” and notes that Sidi Qada specialized in transmitting the Qadiri wird (litany) in his era and that his zawiya was the first to teach all the scholars of the zawiyas that later appeared (al-Musharrafi, n.d., pp. 25–26). Al-Tayyib ben al-Mokhtar al-Ghrisi adds that the zawiya of Sidi Abdelkader ben al-Mokhtar trained all the scholars of the zawiyas existing in his

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time, that Sidi Ahmed al-Mokhtar established his mosque and retreat in the village of Baba Ali in Mascara, and that Abu Muhammad Abdelkader ben Khadda founded his own institute in Ouad al-Hammam in al-Qaytana (al-Tayyib ben al-Mokhtar al-Ghrisi, n.d., pp. 337–338).

Muhammad al-Araj al-Ghrisi discusses the role of the zawiya in spreading knowledge and making it famous for producing many scholars of Ghriss, noting, for example, that among the descendants of Sidi Ahmed ben Ali is Sidi ben Abd Allah, who founded his zawiya in Mascara, which attracted many students from al-Burj, al-Qal'a, Relizane, Ayn Kerman, Amm Moussa, and Tiaret (Muhammad al-Araj al-Ghrisi, n.d., p. 401).

Sidi Mustafa ben al-Mokhtar

Al-Tayyib ben al-Mokhtar al-Ghrisi writes that “among those who inherited the station of Shaykh Sidi Abdelkader ben al-Mokhtar from his children was his grandson, the greatest shaykh and red sulfur, Imam Sidi Mustafa ben al-Mokhtar, who was among the shaykhs of the path that combined sharia and haqiqa, and he was a sign among the manifest signs of God and an exemplar among the proverbial examples for following the Sunna, struggle against the self, and earnestness in worship,” and that he was well grounded in many disciplines, such as Arabic grammar and the branches of jurisprudence “with all their complex and wide-ranging questions,” being “a sea without shore” (al-Tayyib ben al-Mokhtar al-Ghrisi, n.d., pp. 338–339). When he performed the pilgrimage, he went on to Baghdad to visit the shrine of Shaykh Abdelkader al-Jilani and to seek blessing from it and to visit the shaykhs of Baghdad; among the descendants of Sidi Qada ben al-Mokhtar, he was responsible for the expansion of the mosque of Sayyid Abdelkader al-Jilani in Baghdad, known as the “Mustafa al-Maghribi expansion” (al-Tayyib ben al-Mokhtar al-Ghrisi, n.d., p. 339).

Upon returning from the pilgrimage, he founded his own zawiya in Darb al-Hammam in al-Qaytana, where he devoted himself to teaching and transmitting litanies and remembrances; the bey frequently visited him and never rejected his requests, and on his last pilgrimage, he died in Barqa, where his shrine is known (al-Tayyib ben al-Mokhtar al-Ghrisi, n.d., p. 339).

Shaykh Sidi Muhyiddin

Muhyiddin succeeded his father in managing the affairs of the zawiya and caring for it. Al-Tayyib ben al-Mukhtar al-Ghrisi describes him as “Shaykh al-Islam, the model of humankind, refuge of elites and commoners, seal of the great imams, and last of the practicing scholars in Ghriss,” in whom “were gathered all the qualities that had been dispersed among his forefathers: knowledge, understanding, chastity, and self-control,” and notes that he was given the title “the shaykh” while still young, that delegations came to his door from every direction, that shaykhs, emirs, military leaders, and ministers served him, that “the greatest kings served him,” and that his intercession was accepted with the Ottoman rulers (al-Tayyib ben al-Mukhtar al-Ghrisi, n.d., pp. 339–340). When he performed the pilgrimage, he went on to the Levant, visited Jerusalem, and then passed through Damascus, where he met Shaykh al-Islam Imam al-Kuzbari and attended his lessons, accompanied by his son, Emir Abdelkader, then about twenty years old (Ben Bakkar, 1961, pp. 42–43).

Sidi Muhammad ben Abdelkader, known as Shayb al-Dhira Sidi Muhammad ben Abdelkader, known as Shayb al-Dhira, inherited the station of his grandfather Sidi Qada and “managed the Qadiri order in the best way, with extensive wealth, great prestige, abundant real estate, wide-ranging agriculture and livestock, and far-reaching fame, combining leadership,” thus continuing the political and spiritual influence of the Mokhtari lineage (al-Tayyib ben al-Mukhtar al-Ghrisi, n.d., p. 340).

Sidi Abu al-Mokhtar

He is one of the sons of Shayb al-Dhira and devoted himself to serving knowledge. He studied grammar, jurisprudence, and tawhid under Shaykh Muhyiddin at the Qaytana zawiya, then traveled to Tlemcen to study the rational sciences, reading Mukhtasar al-Sa’d and Jam’ al-Jawami’ under the scholar Abu Ziyān, and studied prosody and metrics under Shaykh Abdelkader al-Mujawi, combining advanced training in both transmitted and rational disciplines (Ben Bakkar, 1961, pp. 43–44). His strong passion for reading contributed to the breadth of his knowledge (Ben Bakkar, 1961, p. 44).

Healing Illness and Infertility through the Shurafa

The Mokhtari family became well known in Ghriss for treating infertility. Belhashimi ben Bakkar mentions the baraka associated

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with Sidi Muhyiddin and recounts an incident concerning the father of the guide Shaykh Sidi Adda ben Ghulam Allah al-Bu‘abdli, who was childless: he and his wife went to the zawiya of Sidi Muhyiddin, and though elderly, they asked him, through God, for a male child; he placed his staff on the woman’s belly and told them, “When you arrive home, wash yourselves, and God will grant you a child from whom ten descendants will come,” and they were indeed blessed with Sidi Adda (Ben Bakkar, 1961, p. 46).

Emir Abdelkader

Emir Abdelkader is one of the most prominent noble figures of Ghriiss, whose actions transcended the local level to assume global and humanitarian significance, and he is widely regarded as an exemplary figure whose genius hardly needs introduction (Messadi, 1993, pp. 21–25). From the perspective of nobility, he exemplifies how the Sharif enjoys obedience and is predisposed to rule and decision-making in a society that holds noble lineage in the highest regard, for he descends from a noble line whose ancestors sat on the throne and founded a state (Ben Bakkar, 1961, pp. 35–39).

Given that many conditions converged in the person of Emir Abdelkader, among them his noble lineage, he was able to play a pioneering role in founding a state that came to be ranked among the modern states of his era. He is frequently described as the founder of the modern Algerian state (Messadi, 1993, pp. 35–40). Noble lineage appears to have been one of the factors behind the people’s rallying around him and pledging allegiance to him as their leader (Ben Bakkar, 1961, pp. 38–39).

The features of Emir Abdelkader’s state were marked by modernity at the Arab level, characterized by ministries that some consider among the best of the nineteenth century. He worked to unify the politically fragmented regions of the country, to unite the tribes and abolish tribalism, replacing it with a centralized system of governance and the creation of a regular army modeled on European armies; he also sought to win over leaders and tribal chiefs and secured French recognition of his state through the Desmichels Treaty (26 February 1834) and the Tafna Treaty (30 May 1837), by which France recognized his authority over about two-thirds of Algeria, while he sought to establish good relations and strengthen commercial and diplomatic ties with Mediterranean

countries, Britain, and the United States (Messadi, 1993, pp. 40–55).

The city of Taqdemt was founded, according to several sources, by one of Emir Abdelkader's ancestors, Abdelkawi, who is said to have had a kingdom there; al-Arabi al-Musharrafi affirms that "Abdelkawi founded the city of Dirakzul, that is, Taqdemt; their state perished, but Emir Abdelkader revived it thereafter" (al-Musharrafi, n.d., pp. 25–26). Al-Mazari traces the reasons for Emir Abdelkader's choice of Taqdemt as his new capital to its earlier status as an important homeland and civilizational center and records that when the captive A. De France asked him why he chose Taqdemt as his capital, he replied, "I want to build up this city and make it larger and more prosperous than it was in the days of my forefathers, the sultans" (al-Mazari, 1980, pp. 112–114).

Emir Abdelkader's Sufism had multiple dimensions; it went beyond the relationship of shaykh and disciple to embody a civilizational and human dimension. He rejected extremism and embraced tolerance, calling for openness toward religious others; he entered churches and expressed his respect for the Christian faith, and from his Sufi perspective, he called for interfaith dialogue based on the idea that religions share a common essence, which corresponds to the higher objectives of Islamic law—preservation of religion, life, and property; his Sufi orientation was grounded in cultivating virtue and moral excellence, sincerity in work, and avoidance of vice (Messadi, 1993, pp. 85–103).

Conclusion

The learned shurafa of Ghriss "the Mokhtari lineage" held prominent positions with the Ottoman authorities, and their support for the state is evident in the sources, which show that the noble families of Ghriss represented the educated elite. The Ottoman authorities drew them close and entrusted them with many sensitive state functions, such as leading the naqaba (guild of shurafa), holding the imamate, issuing fatwas, preaching, serving in the judiciary, conducting diplomatic missions, and writing history, and this allowed them to mobilize the populace for jihad against the Spanish in Oran and Mers el-Kebir, as well as to resist French colonialism.

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