

SAHARAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

Volume 2, No 2, November 1994

INTRODUCTION

The *Newsletter* is the principal organ of the Saharan Studies Association, a body of scholars with common interests, associated with the African Studies Association of the United States. The *Newsletter* will be published twice a year in the Spring and Fall and is designed to be a forum for the exchange of news about publications, projects and scholarly debates in our chosen area.

Broadly speaking, the aim of the Association is to foster collaboration and exchange of information between interested scholars in a variety of disciplines ranging through the arts, the humanities, the social sciences and the natural sciences, as they encounter new research materials, engage with local fieldwork problems and seek avenues for bringing the results of their research to a wider circle of colleagues. Given that French is the *lingua franca* of much of north Africa, the Sahara and West Africa, we shall be happy to publish communications and comments in French as well as English, though we regret that we are not in a position to publish a fully bi-lingual newsletter.

Membership in the Saharan Studies Association is open to all interested persons. The annual dues of US\$10 (or Sponsoring Membership of US\$25) entitle members to

receive the *Newsletter* and any other occasional publications, and to present papers at panels sponsored by the Saharan Studies Association at annual meetings of the African Studies Association and the Canadian Association of African Studies. The annual business meeting is held during the ASA meeting in November/December each year. As of October 1994 membership totalled approximately 65, from the USA, Canada, Gt Britain, France, Norway, Spain, Morocco, Japan and Cameroon. We hope existing members will pass on information about the Association and actively recruit new members. Contributions for the Spring 1995 *Newsletter* should be sent to :

John Hunwick, Department of History, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL 60208, USA (fax: 708 467-1393, email: jhunwick@casbah.acns.nwu.edu), or

Ann McDougall, Department of History, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, CANADA T6G 2H4 (fax: 403 492-9125, email: amcdouga@vm.ucs.ualberta.ca)

It would be extremely helpful if contributors could submit items in both paper and electronic copy. John Hunwick (who will be editing the Spring 1995 issue) would prefer material sent to him by email or, if on disk, formatted in Microsoft Word, though most other programs can be handled.

Membership data forms and dues should be sent to John Hunwick at the above address. Dollar cheques should be made out to "Northwestern University" with the memo "Saharan Studies Association"

THESES IN PROGRESS

LA LITTÉRATURE TIJĀNIYYA EN

AFRIQUE DE L'OUEST*

par

Saïd Bousbina

Après sa fondation à la fin du XVIII^e siècle par Aḥmad al-Tijāni, la Tijāniyya s'est propagée d'une façon spectaculaire, au siècle suivant, dans une grande partie de l'Afrique de l'Ouest ou ce qu'on appelait le Soudan Occidental. Parallèlement à cette propaga-

* C'est le thème d'une thèse de doctorat que je prépare actuellement à l'université de Paris-I, sous la direction de Jean-Louis Triaud.

tion, une littérature qui a pour sujet cette nouvelle *ṭarīqa* s'était développée.¹

Cette littérature avait atteint son apogée avec al-Ḥājj °Umar qui, avant de mener sa guerre sainte (*jihād*) contre les 'infidèles',² avait écrit plus d'une vingtaine d'ouvrages dont une partie ne nous est pas parvenue.³ Cette oeuvre est composée d'un mélange de livres d'opuscules et de poèmes, sans compter les petits textes formés, par exemple, de *fatwās*, de lettres, etc.

Si on peut résumer tout l'oeuvre, et même toute la pensée religieuse d'al-Ḥājj °Umar, on peut dire qu'elles sont contenues dans son livre *Rimāh*.⁴ Ce livre, écrit sur le modèle de *Jawāhir al-ma°ānī*, est aussi la principale référence de la Tijāniyya en Afrique de l'Ouest.⁵

¹ Pour avoir une idée générale sur la Tijāniyya, voir Jamil Abun Nasr, *The Tijaniyya. A Sufi Order in the Modern World*, London, Oxford University Press, 1965.

² Sur cet aspect de la vie d'al-Ḥājj °Umar, voir David Robinson, *La guerre sainte d'al-Ḥājj °Umar: le Soudan occidental au milieu du XIX^e siècle*, Paris: Karthala, 1988.

³ Pour la liste des ouvrages d'al-Ḥājj °Umar, voir notamment:

— Omar Jah, 'Source materials for the career and *jihād* of al-Ḥājj °Umar al-Fūti, 1794-1864', *Bull. de l'IFAN*, sér. B., 41 (1979), 371-97.

— B.G. Martin, 'A Mahdist document from Futa Jallon', *Bull. de l'IFAN*, sér. B., 25 (1963), 47-65.

— Jules Salenc, 'La vie d'Al Hadj Omar. Traduction d'un manuscrit arabe de la Zaouia tidjaniya de Fez', *Bull. d'études hist. et sci. de l'AOF*, 1 (1918), 405-31.

— Amar Samb, *Essai sur la contribution du Sénégal à la littérature d'expression arabe*, Dakar: IFAN, 1972.

— J.R. Willis, 'The writings of al-Ḥājj °Umar and Shaykh Mukhtār b. Wadi°at Allāh: literary themes, sources and influences' in *Studies in West African Islamic History*, Vol. I, *The Cultivators of Islam*, ed. J.R. Willis, London: Frank Cass, 1979, 177-210.

⁴ Le titre complet de cet ouvrage est *Rimāh ḥizb al-raḥīm °alā nuḥūr ḥizb al-raḥīm*. Il a été édité plusieurs fois en marge de *Jawāhir al-ma°ānī* de °Alī Ḥarāzīm.

⁵ Pour avoir une idée sur le contenu du *Rimāh*, voir J. O. Hunwick, 'An introduction to the Tijāni Path: being an annotated translation of

Les grands thèmes de cette littérature tijāniyya peuvent être résumés en deux grands points:

1. **La propagation de la *ṭarīqa*.** On peut grouper dans ce point tous les ouvrages qui expliquent ce qu'est la Tijāniyya: ses règles, ses principes, ses conditions d'affiliation, ses *wirds* et *dhikrs*, mais surtout ce qui la différencie et ce qu'elle apporte de nouveau par rapport aux autres confréries qui existent dans la région, notamment la Qādiriyya. Le *Rimāh* d'al-Ḥājj °Umar est le meilleur exemple de ce type d'ouvrages, ainsi que *Mizāb al-raḥma al-rabbāniyya fi'l-tarbiya bi'l-ṭarīqa al-Tijāniyya* de °Ubaya b. Muḥammad al-Ṣaghīr b. Anbūja.

2. **L'éloge et la défense d'Aḥmad al-Tijānī.** Le fondateur de la Tijāniyya est omniprésent dans toute cette littérature. On fait sa biographie, on montre ses *karāmāt*, on énumère ses qualités—en insistant beaucoup sur celle de 'sceau des saints' (*khatm* ou *khātam al-awliyā°*)—et on le défend contre ses adversaires et ses ennemis.

Comme exemple des écrits de ce genre, nous citons le livre d'al-Ḥājj °Umar, *Suyuf al-sa°id*,⁶ le long poème de °Ubayda b. Muḥammad al-Ṣaghīr b. Anbūja, *Riḥlat al-tahānī fi ḥilyat al-shaykh al-Tijānī*, et la lettre d'al-Mukhtār b. Wadi°at Allāh (Yirkoy Ṭalfi) à Aḥmad al-Bakkāy, intitulée *Tabkiyat al-Bakkāy*.

D'autres thèmes sont aussi abordés dans cette littérature comme l'éloge d'al-Ḥājj °Umar, le *khalīfa* (représentant) d'Aḥmad al-Tijānī (ex. *Shams al-qaṣā°id al-ghurar fi tahni°at al-shaykh °Umar* de °Ubayda b. Muḥammad al-Ṣaghīr b. Anbūja) ou l'établissement des biographies des 'grands hommes' de la Tijāniyya (ex. *Rawḍ*

the chapter headings of the *Kitāb al-rimāh* of al-Ḥājj °Umar', *Islam et Sociétés au Sud du Sahara*, 9 (1992), 17-32. *Jawāhir al-ma°ānī wa-bulūgh al-amānī fi fayḍ Abi'l-°Abbās al-Tijānī* est "la" référence de la confrérie Tijāniyya, puisque c'est le fondateur, Aḥmad al-Tijānī, qui l'avait dicté à Sidī °Alī Ḥarāzīm Barrāda. Il fut achevé en 1800.

⁶ Le titre complet est *Suyuf al-sa°id al-mu°taqid fi ahl Allāh ka'l-Tijānī °alā raqabat al-shaqī al-ṭarīd al-muntaqid al-jānī*.

shamā'il ahl al-haqīqa fi'l-ta'rif bi-akābir al-tarīqa d'Ahmad b. Maḥamm b. al-Abbās al-^cAlawī).

Bien qu'elle défende la Tijāniyya, cette littérature est restée ouverte aux influences extérieures. Tous les auteurs tijānīs n'hésitent pas, pour argumenter leurs dires, à citer d'autres auteurs qui n'appartiennent ni à leur région (on y trouve des Maghrébins, des Andalous, des Egyptiens, etc.), ni à leur *madhhab* (toutes les écoles juridiques sont représentées), ni à leur *tarīqa* (notamment des Khalwatīs, des Shādhilīs et des Qādirīs).

Signalons à la fin que l'étude de cette littérature est importante dans la mesure où elle permet de connaître les arguments que la Tijāniyya a utilisés pour se propager et pour occuper le champ religieux en Afrique de l'Ouest durant le XIXe siècle.

*Islamic Faith and Practice in
19th Century Mauritania:
the Ṣūfī Way of Muḥammad Fādīl (d. 1870)
and its Legacy*
by
Glen McLaughlin
(Ph.D Candidate, Northwestern University)

My dissertation focuses on issues of Islamic faith and practice in nineteenth and early twentieth century Mauritania. However, commerce and at times aggressive proselytizing (often associated with the former) during the period under scrutiny suggest a wider West and North African dispersion of these ideas among peoples throughout much of modern Senegal, Gambia and Mali, Morocco and the Western Sahara, and to a lesser extent Guinea and Guinea-Bissau.

Scholarship on Islam in Africa has largely touched on the type of concerns brought out in the present study only peripherally to discussions of broader social, economic and political issues. This has led to a continued reliance on French colonial period literature with particular attention to external phenomena in assessing the nature of Islamic beliefs and practices rather than detailed examination of relevant extant manuscript sources. The study of Islamic mysticism, or Sufism, in the region has been especially neglected or in some cases

misinterpreted in the wider context of African Muslim societies. R.S. O'Fahey and Bernd Radtke have traced the progress of the term *neo-Sufism* from "an undocumented assertion to a self-evident cliché" to this continued uncritical acceptance of colonial sources or secondary works based on them. Briefly, Sufi movements classified by various authors as *neo-Sufi* share certain supposed traits, most important among them the rejection of ecstatic practices and the spiritual master/disciple relationship, the substitution of mystical union with the spirit of the Prophet Muhammad for union with God, and the creation of mass social organizations with reformist social and political agendas, the Sufi 'orders' or 'brotherhoods'. The indiscriminate application of the *neo-Sufism* label to most modern Sufi manifestations has resulted in seriously flawed generalizations about nineteenth century Sufism, its theoretical bases and its motivations and O'Fahey and Radtke call upon scholars to discard it as a classificatory term. They attribute its longevity to a general lack of access to the relevant indigenous sources or the expertise to work with them.

This study relies almost exclusively on indigenous Arabic language manuscripts written during the period under investigation and collected in Mauritania in 1991-92 while conducting research funded by Fulbright-Hays. The materials incorporated in the dissertation (and at times directing it) are a diverse lot, ranging from short correspondence of a few pages to a five hundred page hagiography. Together they constitute the substantive teachings of and about Shaykh Muḥammad Fādīl b. Māmīn (d. 1285 A.H./ 1870 C.E.), whose mystical Way spread through the proselytizing efforts of numerous descendants and spiritual heirs from the Hawd region of southeastern Mauritania throughout West and North Africa, even following disciples on pilgrimage to Islam's holy cities.

Muḥammad Fādīl b. Māmīn is known primarily in the West as the father and shaykh of the man who focused resistance to French colonial endeavors in Morocco and Mauritania until his death in 1328 A.H./ 1910 C.E. Shaykh Mā' al-^cAynayn. Shaykh Mā' al-^cAynayn was but

the best known of Muḥammad Fāḍil's several sons and grandsons to emigrate from the Ḥawḍ. The vastly different experiences of these equally committed adherents of Muḥammad Fāḍil's Way make it clear that one's decision to resist, coexist with, or actively assist European penetration of the region was completely divorced from the spiritual concerns embodied in the Way. Colonialism impacted at times dramatically on the lives of the practitioners and believers. Its impact upon the practices and beliefs was far less dramatic.

Invoking the internal logic present in the texts serves to explain at once local and universal core concepts in nineteenth century West African Islam. First, and perhaps foremost, is that of *wilāya*, sanctity or holiness. Following both etymologically and epistemologically is the concept of the *walī* (pl. *awliyā*³) often rather misleadingly translated as saint. In the period under study, holiness was inextricably tied to a mastery of practices which enabled the practitioner to experience a deeper, more intimate relationship to the Deity. Transmission of this knowledge (gnosis) depended on the preparedness of the seeker to grasp it, a determination made not by the aspirant, but by his guide along the path. This mystical *Ṣūfī* path or Way (*tarīqa*) was thus individualized to a greater or lesser extent depending on the progress made, yet all sharing common ground in the association to the living and dead masters of the Way.

This intimacy or proximity to God (again found in the etymology of the term *walī*) was recognized to be present in certain individuals to such a degree that they, like the long since mythologized persona of the Prophet Muḥammad whose spiritual heir they represented, became the mediums for God's direct intervention in earthly matters. Also, in the tradition of the Prophet, these individuals served both as exemplars and as mediators of temporal matters, typically manifested in their command of the Islamic legal sciences. Thus, the oft-repeated orthodox (legalistic)/popular (mystical) dichotomy does not exist here. Rather more appropriate is the division between the *khāṣṣa* and the *ʿamma*, the elect who strive along the path toward the godhead and the masses seeking merely to gain God's

blessings and benefits through contact with His representatives.

The sources further demonstrate the inseparability of these beliefs from genealogical concerns (particularly descent from the Prophet Muhammad), and mystical expressions of faith. In the context of patriarchal *Bīdān* society, one inherited in principle the social rank of one's patriline ancestors. Likewise, one might inherit a spiritual ancestry of adherence to a particular *Ṣūfī* Way. By the nineteenth century, it was not uncommon to find that a *Ṣūfī* chain of transmission mirrored one's genealogy for several generations. This spiritual inheritance could further enhance an individual's (and through him his family, clan or tribe) social status, while high ranking social status might serve to enhance one's spiritual prestige. This was particularly true in the case of claimed genealogical descent from the Prophet. Yet Muḥammad Fāḍil's claim of sharifian descent had its detractors and the sources reveal that his defenders engaged in an ongoing dialectic lasting decades after his death over the veracity of his, and in some cases, their birthright. Discussions during my stay in Mauritania make it clear that differences of opinion on this subject continue today.

Texts collected during the fieldwork, besides providing a much more complete history of the shaykh and mystic Muḥammad Fāḍil and his Way, provide insights into the state of beliefs about life, death, the place of the Prophet, prayer, the pursuit of knowledge—being Muslim in the milieu of nineteenth century Mauritania. Though they are written texts, the oral transmission of information and ideas resonates throughout them, whether in the gathering of anecdotal information about one's spiritual master, responding in writing to a rumor that has come to one's attention, or crafting a response to questions posed by a circle of followers but of benefit to the wider community of believers. The resulting picture proves an alternative view of West African Sufi affiliation from that of the mystical order or brotherhood and a greater convergence of Sufism and the wider Muslim community.

PUBLICATIONS

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY PRESS

SERIES: ISLAM AND SOCIETY IN AFRICA

General Editors: John Hunwick & Robert
Launay

**Enigmatic Saint: Ahmad b. Idris and the Idrisi Tradition*, by R. S. O'Fahey, 1990. 261 pp. \$49.95. Cloth

Religion and National Integration in Africa: Islam, Christianity and Politics in the Sudan and Nigeria, edited by John O. Hunwick, 1991. 232 pp. \$49.95 Cloth.

Historical Discord in the Nile Valley, by Gabriel Warburg, 1992. 260 pp. \$49.95. Cloth.

**The Sufi Brotherhoods in the Sudan*, by Ali Salih Karrar, introduction by R.S. O'Fahey, 1992. 300 pp. \$39.95. Cloth.

**The Letters of Ahmad b. Idris*, edited, translated and annotated by Einar Thomassen, Bernd Radtke, Rex S. O'Fahey, Ali Salih Karrar and Albrecht Hofheinz, 1993. 184 pp. \$49.95. Cloth.

Assaulting with Words: Popular Discourse and the Bridle of "Shari'ah", by Abdullah Ali Ibrahim, 1994. \$49.95. Cloth.

Holy men of the Blue Nile: the Making of an Arab Islamic Community in the Nilotic Sudan, 1500-1850, by Neil McHugh, 1994. \$49.95. Cloth.

The Sword of Truth, by Mervyn Hiskett, second edition with a new preface by the author, 1994. \$19.95. Paper.

An Islamic Alliance: 'Ali Dinar and the Sanusiyya, 1906-1916, edited and translated with an interpretive essay by Jay Spaulding and Lidwien Kapteijns, forthcoming. \$49.95. Cloth.

**Sufi and Scholar on the Desert Edge: the Heritage of Muhammad b. 'Ali al-Sanusi*, by Knut S. Vikør, forthcoming. \$54.95. Cloth.

*Jointly published with Christopher Hurst, London.

AL-MAGHRIB AL-IFRIQI

NO. 3 JANVIER-JUIN 1993

The following items from the contents of the third issue of *al-Maghrib al-Ifriqi*, the newsletter of the Institute of African Studies, Muhammad V University, Rabat, will be of special interest to readers of the Saharan Studies Association Newsletter:

—Yahia Abou-el-farah, Abdelouahed Akmir & Abdelmalek Beni Azza, *La communauté marocaine en Afrique de l'ouest*

—Ismail Haidara, *Du nouveau sur la fin du Pachalik Arma de Tombouctou. Une lettre de Sheïck Sidi Mohammed al-Kunti à Ahmad Lobbo de Macina*

—Paco Claisse, *Répères bibliographiques sur les Gnawa*

—Hassan Sadki, *Manuscrits sur l'Afrique de l'ouest à l'Institution Allal El-Fassi de Rabat*

—Bouchra L'Badaoui, Review of *Le mouvement intellectuel à Bilād Shinguît pendant les XIe et XIIe siècles de l'Hégire (17ème et 18ème siècles)* by Deddoud ould Abdallah [Mémoire D.E.S., Département d'Histoire, Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines-Rabat].

—Abstracts of the following theses:

“Rituels et matières oblatoires au Maroc. Les Idaw Martini de l'Anti-Atlas”, by Narjys El Alaoui, Thèse de Doctorat en Anthropologie, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences sociales.

“Contribution à l'étude de l'histoire de la zaouia Semlali (1460-1564)”, by Khadidja Rajy, Mémoire de D.E.S., Faculté des Lettres, Rabat, Département d'Histoire, 1993.

“La polygamie en droit marocain et sénégalais à la veille de l'année internationale de la famille (1994)”, by Seynabou Diaw, Mémoire de Licence en Droit Privé, Faculté de Droit, Rabat, 1992.

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Contents include:

- Lidwien Kapteijns & Jay Spaulding, *Women of the Zar and Middle-Class sensibilities in Colonial Aden, 1923-1932*.
- B.W. Andrzejewski and I.M. Lewis, *New Arabic Documents from Somalia*.
- Carl Petry, *From Slaves to Benefactors: The Habashīs of Mamluk Cairo*.
- Heather J. Sharkey, *Aḥmad Zaynī Dahlān's al-Futūḥāt al-islāmiyya: A Contemporary View of the Sudanese Mahdi*.
- Neil McHugh, *A Bill of Sale from the Heartland of Sinnar*.
- °Alī Šālīḥ Karrār, *Three Traditional Prescriptions from the Nineteenth Century Sudan*.
- Heather J. Sharkey, *Mahdist Oral Praise Poetry as a Historical Source: Qurashī Muḥammad Ḥasan's Qaṣā'id min shu'arā al-Mahdiyya*.
- G. Makris, *Creating History: A Case from the Sudan*.
- John Rowe, *Rinderpest in the Sudan 1888-1890: The Mystery of the Missing Panzootic*, Comments by Kjell Hødnebo.
- John O. Hunwick, *Falkeiana III: The Kitāb al-tarsīl, an Anonymous Manual of Epistolary and Notary style*
- Philip A. Afeadie, *Adamu Jakada's Intelligence Reports, 1899-1901*.
- Humphrey J. Fisher, *Text-centred Research: Fitna as a Case Study and a Way Forward for Guests in the House of African Historiography*

RESEARCH NOTES

RESEARCH ON THE SAHEL IN THE 11TH CENTURY

There has been an upsurge of interest in, and publication on, the Sahel in the 11th century, especially focussed on the problem of the Almoravid movement and its engagement with Sahelian polities. Some of this takes as its starting point the paper of John Hunwick 'Gao and the Almoravids: a hypothesis' (in

B. Swartz & R. Dumett, *West African Culture Dynamics*, The Hague, 1980, 413-30), or the two articles of Humphrey Fisher and David Conrad, 'The conquest that never was: Ghana and the Almoravids' (*History in Africa*, 9 (1982) 19-59 & 10 (1983), 53-78). Dierk Lange took up the question of the royal tombstones of Gao-Sané and the possible connection of the Almoravids to them in his article 'Les rois de Gao-Sané et les Almoravides' (*Journal of African History*, 32 (1991), 251-75), to which Hunwick responded with a paper entitled 'Gao and Almoravids revisited: ethnicity, political change and the limits of interpretation' (*Journal of African History*, 35 (1994), 251-73). In the same issue of the *Journal of African History* Dierk Lange presented a defence of his original article (entitled 'From Mande to Songhay: towards a political and ethnic history of medieval Gao', pp. 275-301) and further pursued theories of what he called 'the Sango kingship and Songhay ethnicity' as well as the later history of the Middle Niger under the Sunnis. In 1992 Sheryl Burckhalter took up the arguments of Fisher and Conrad in her paper 'Listening for silences in Almoravid history: another reading of "The conquest that never was"' (*History in Africa*, 19 (1992), 103-31). A new member of the Saharan Studies Association, Pekka Masonen of the University of Tampere, Finland, has written to say that he is writing a Ph.D. thesis to be entitled 'Ancient Ghana and the Almoravids: myths and realities in West African historiography'. He gave some foretaste of this in a seminar paper delivered at the School of Oriental & African Studies, University of London on 25th May, on the subject 'Ancient Ghana in European thought'. Finally, we note the appearance of two articles by Harry Norris in the new *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. VII: 'al-Murābitūn' and 'Mūrītāniyā', both relevant to the above discussions.

Research on this area and period will certainly be advanced by the publication of the corpus of inscribed tombstones from Gao-Sané, Es-Souk (Tādmakka) and Bentia (Kukiya) which Paulo de Moraes Farias (University of Birmingham) has been working on for many years. This is now almost

complete and he expects publication to take place in 1996, as he explains below.

MEDIEVAL ARABIC INSCRIPTIONS
FROM ESSUK,
GAO, SANEY AND BENTIYA

I am completing a book on the medieval Arabic inscriptions from the sites at Essuk (which corresponds to the medieval trading city of Tadmekkat), Gao and Saney (i.e. medieval Gawgaw or Gao), and Bentiya (medieval and early-modern Kukiya). This epigraphic material dates from the period extending between the early fifth century AH /eleventh century AD and the early (and possibly the late) ninth century AH/fifteenth century AD.

Twentieth-century Sahelian writing has clear links with that old epigraphic tradition. This is particularly clear in the case of the calligraphies used on paper by the Kel-Essuk scholars, who are specialists of Islamic culture among the Tuareg of West Africa. But it is also clear in the case of the *ejwel* (camel brands) used by the Iwellemeden and other Tuareg groups. Some of these *ejwel* are clearly reminiscent of plain-Kufic Arabic letters in styles of lettering that recur in sites like Essuk, and Saney, as early as the fifth century AH/eleventh century AD.

The earliest among the inscriptions of Essuk and Saney are the oldest extant examples of West African writing of any kind (see P.F. de Moraes Farias, "The Oldest Extant Writing of West Africa", *Journal des africanistes*, 60, ii, 1990, 65-113). Some of the inscriptions from Gao and Saney (and a few from Essuk and Bentiya) were published in the late 1940s, and in the 1950s, by Sauvaget and Vire, and later by P.F. de Moraes Farias ("Du nouveau sur les stèles de Gao", *Bulletin de l'IFAN*, séries B, 36, iii, 511-24). But Farias' book examines these inscriptions again and, in the case of those of which only fragments survive, attempts the reconstruction of the original shape of the stelae concerned.

However, the book's main task is to place these inscriptions in the new context created by the discovery, in recent years, of a large number of new inscriptions. In the

case of Saney, several of these yet unpublished inscriptions commemorate royal personages bearing the Arabic titles *malik* (king) or *malika* (queen). Others commemorate office holders bearing the Songhoy royal title *Zaa/Zuwa/Juwa*. Hence they provide new evidence for the discussion of early dynasties that ruled the Gao-Saney region, and for the study of practices of succession to kingship at the time, and the position of women in local political structures.

The book demonstrates that al-Andalus (Muslim Iberia) was not the only source of the medieval epigraphic tradition of the Niger valley and the Adagh-n-Ifoghas (though inscriptions made in al-Andalus have been found at Saney). Rather, that the West African tradition is also linked to the medieval epigraphy of Tripoli and Qayrawan—two Maghribi cities with which Tadmekkat and Gawgaw had regular commercial links, in the fourth and fifth centuries AH/tenth and eleventh centuries AD.

The study situates the development of Arabic epigraphy in medieval West Africa within a much larger process, through which the Sahel "imaged" itself into the geography and chronology of the Muslim world at large, while this external Muslim world incorporated the Sahel into existing "image-of-the-earth" and "routes-and-kingdoms" geographical systems, and integrated the Sahel into pre-*hijra* time cycles defined by conflicts between Prophets and anti-Prophets (Moses vs. Pharaoh, etc.), as well as into the post-*hijra* era. It book reanalyses the descriptions of the Niger valley and the Adagh-n-Ifoghas in a number of Arabic medieval sources, to show how these descriptions were shaped by paradigms of time and space that organised the experiences of travellers in sometimes unexpected ways. This type of analysis opens up new perspectives for the understanding of difficult texts like al-Idrisi's and others. As a result of this, descriptions of particular areas (Tadmekkat, Kugha, etc) may now be seen in a new light.

Finally, the book shows how some of these external paradigms of time and space were appropriated by the West African Muslims themselves, and were used by them for the description of their own countries,

not only in the Middle Ages but also later, in the seventeenth century, and even as late as the nineteenth century. Thus the study of medieval epigraphy reveals itself as an avenue into wider issues, having to do with the construction of the knowledge of Africa outside the African continent, but also with Africa's construction of its knowledge of itself.

PAULO F. DE MORAES FARIAS

A FURTHER NOTE ON IVORY

In the last issue of the *Newsletter* I surmised that hippopotamus tusks may have become export items from Gao to North Africa because of the legal disapproval (*karāhiyya*) of the use of elephant tusks. At the time I had no direct evidence that this legal point had any impact on actual practice, though I suggested that the trans-Saharan merchants may have felt uncomfortable dealing in ivory because of it. Since then I have come across a reference in the *Riyād al-nufūs* of Abū Bakr °Abd Allāh b. Abī °Abd Allāh [Muhammad] al-Mālikī (d. after 453/1061), as translated by J.F.P. Hopkins in the *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources for West African History* (Cambridge, 1981), 61:

I was told on the authority of Sa°id the companion of Saḥnūn: "This Abū'l-Faḍl left behind more than 1,000 dinars from his father's estate which he had not touched. They said to him: 'What prevented you from taking it?' He replied: 'It comes from trading in ivory and I was loath to be involved in something which had received adverse comment from men of learning.' So he left it out of piety and asceticism."

I also asserted that Gao was very distant from elephant country, but on this score prudence is preferable. Not only is it possible that c. 1000 A.D. a wetter climate provided suitable vegetation farther north than it does today, but as recently as the early twentieth century elephant were being hunted in the area between the Hombori mountains and the lacustrine region of the Inland Delta of the Niger. A British military officer came across a large herd there and shot one with tusks weighing 52 lbs and

another with tusks of 45 lbs. See A.H.W. Haywood, *Through Timbuctu and across the Great Sahara*, London, Seeley Service and Co., 1912, pp. 210-16. [Less substantially, I have heard of a recent TV program which featured elephants in Tuareg country, though I do not have precise details. This may refer to the same herds, since Tuareg nomadize in that general area. Any information on this topic would be welcome.]

JOHN HUNWICK

EVERYDAY LIFE, STRESS AND CRISIS IN THE CENTRAL SUDAN: ECOLOGICAL, POLITICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC STRESS IN HAUSALAND AND BORN (NORTHERN NIGERIA) IN THE 19TH CENTURY

The following is an English summary of an M.A. thesis written in German, presented at the Institute of Development Studies/Institute of History, University of Helsinki *

by
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The history of hunger and famine in the Central Sudan (Hausaland and Bornu) have been somewhat neglected part of the study of this region. There have been some attempts in the past to study the interaction between drought and famine in this region from a historical perspective. Indeed, the mainstream of the research has been from a political perspective—the ideological, political and socio-economic background of the militant reform movement of Usman dan Fodio which resulted in the collapse of the former Hausa city-states and the emer-

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gence of the Sokoto caliphate, the political and economic development of this Sudanic state based on a quasi-islamic concept of a state blended with the former praxis of the Hausa city-states. Also much attention has been directed to the question of the collapse of the Caliphate at the beginning of the 20th century. Here again the focus has been on the whereabouts of the centrifugal forces within the Caliphate, and on a minor scale the economic development prior to the British conquest. A third category of studies of historical processes and problems in the Central Sudan have focussed on the political and (sometimes) economic development on the Emirate level.

This short survey of the research of the history of Hausaland and Bornu (Northern Nigeria) shows, that while the political history of the 19th century is fairly well known, and the main outlines of the economic development in the 19th century are laid out, there are more 'black holes' concerning the socio-economic structures and especially the ecological aspects in the Central Sudan.

The starting-point of this study of ecological, political and socio-economic stress in Hausaland and Bornu was the statement by Michael Watts, that 'nevertheless, *drought* seems to have been the closest kinship with famine throughout the Central Sudan during the 18th and 19th centuries'.¹ In his discussion about the various stress factors, i.e. ecological and political, he concluded, that although political stress, i.e. war and strife, was a problem in some regions during some parts of the 19th century, this was, by all means, overshadowed by the ecological stress, i.e. drought. This statement, though, seems problematic in the light of the oral literature from the 19th century, where the various political and socio-economic structures and situations were the main stress situations which people had to face in their everyday life and were aware of. This meant that war and strife, taxation and poverty especially (or, as Watts and Bohle, following Chambers, put it: vulnerability),² besides drought, locust invasions and rinder-epidemics, have to be part of a research agenda, where one wants

to study stress factors and their impact in the everyday life of people in the Central Sudan. Following this agenda, there turned out to be a huge gap in information and a lack of attempts among historians to tackle these problems. So, the outcome of this study will only be able to enlighten some trends and interactions and will not in any way be able to give a thorough picture of 'a century of uncertainty' in the Central Sudan.

The study is divided into three parts for practical reasons. In the first part the ecological stress factors are identified and analysed, mainly drought and rinder-epidemics. The second part deals with the appearance and impact of political stress, especially war and strife. Poverty and other aspects of vulnerability is the focus of the third part of the study.

Stress is defined in this study as a situation, in which peoples' known concepts are called in question and where the danger arises of not being able to continue with one's ordinary life. In this sense, stress is both of typical as of unique appearance, typical in the sense, that it may be a part of one's everyday life, as the socio-economical stress for the poor or the variability and the duration of the rains, or also the yearly strifes. But stress may also be unique, as rinder-epidemics harrass one region but not another and civil war may cause distress in one emirate but not in its neighbours.

Stress is understood in the study as a situation which may or may not lead to a crisis and (very seldom) to a catastrophe. There are various factors, which are connected with stress appearance and how people were able to cope with these situations. The outcome of a stress situation depends on whether one has the capability to cope with this particular situation. This again depends on one's political, social and economic background and status in society. The capacity of a person to be exposed to stress is therefore also linked to the capability of the society to cope with stress. Coping with and reacting to stress is on one hand based on the capacity of an individual as well as the capacity of society to be able to do this in various situations. Emphasis is put on the question of hunger, the study follows here the path laid out by Spittler

¹ Watts, 1983: 103-104

² Watts, M.J. and H.G. Bohle, 1993: 43-67

(1989a and 1989b) and De Waal (1989), who both state in their research on famines and hunger, that hunger might also be an option during stress situations and crises, not a result.

The focus on stress and not on crises or famines in the study is inevitable, because the historical material about famines in the Central Sudan is insufficient and there seems to be a lack of "hard" data and facts about crises and their appearance in this region during the 19th century. If one would study only famines or crises in the Sokoto caliphate, one would be tempted to conclude that there was no larger crisis in the caliphate and absolutely no catastrophe during the 19th century. Even the appearance of famine is very uncertain for the whole of this region, although there are "famine chronicles" for some areas. This picture of a relatively stable region must in the light of a stress approach be modified, as this study will hopefully be able to demonstrate.

The first part of the study is mainly a discussion of the appearance of famines, rinder-epidemics and locust invasions in the 19th century in the Central Sudan. Due to some difficulty in evaluating the material used here, mainly because the data used in this analysis consists of information from European travellers and official chronicles, the outcome was very uneven. For the period between the jihad and the *banga-banga* famine in *ca.* 1855, the lack of data was problematic, because the latter period, between 1855 and 1899, seemed to give a picture of increased ecological stress in the Central Sudan. As pointed out in the study, this might rather be a result of the unevenness of the data than of the actual situation. European books of travel can give only a slight and often very subjective glimpse of an actual situation, and the official chronicles are more than once silent about this type of stress. So, comparing with the "famine or drought chronicles" presented in the article of Lovejoy and Baier (1975) and in the study of Watts (1983), the conclusion of this study is that ecological stress, especially rinder-epidemics, but also famines and locust invasions, had a great impact on at least some groups in society, although it is underlined that drought seems *not* to have

been the main stress factor in the Central Sudan.

This argument was further emphasised in the follow-up analysis of the impact of drought and rinder-epidemics in the Central Sudan. Sharon Nicolson's study (1976) has served as groundwork for the impact and appearance of drought in West Africa, but checking her data from Hausaland and Bornu, her argument must be re-evaluated. As a matter of fact, the chronicles drawn on in her study do *not* directly define drought as the reason for famines in Hausaland and Bornu, although there are some passages in the chronicles which mention the appearance of famines during the reign of some kings. Geological and other scientific analysis of the water-level of lake Chad and the rivers Senegal and Niger give the basis for her argument, thus stating that there were low water-levels in the middle of the 18th century and in the 1820s and 1830s and at the end of the 19th century. Compared with the new chronology of the rulers of Bornu given by Lange (1977) for the 18th century, it is amazing that the occurrence of famines in Bornu in the 18th century does not directly match with the occurrence of the low water-levels of lake Tchad, and that low precipitation and the low water-level of lake Chad in the 19th century is rarely recognized as a problem in the chronicles and other literature from that period. This must, however, not lead to the assumption that drought was neither a problem nor a stress factor, but it is more likely that this type of stress was not regarded by the chroniclers as a stress situation. The argument that follows is that either the available data is biased, reflecting only the interests of the 'well-off'—the aristocracy and the rulers—and not the life of the ordinary people, who might or might not have suffered during these periods. The other possibility is that drought and low or irregular precipitation as such was not a problem, i.e. it didn't lead to any serious crisis, but might still have been a source of stress, which people were aware of (i.e. it was not regarded as unique but as part of peoples' everyday life) and which they had to cope with in various ways.

Rinder-epidemics on the other hand have been a neglected area in the study of the history of the Central Sudan. Only the

rinderpest of 1887-91 has been given some attention. The various rinder-epidemics in the Central Sudan before that event have been totally forgotten, and there has been no attempt to analyze the occurrence and impact of these rinder-epidemics. My study has been able to detect various rinder-epidemics due to contagious pleuro-pneumonia, the first mentioned in the Sokoto area as *balagiro* sometimes during the reign of the Caliph Ali b. Bello (1842-59). Next it appeared in Kano under the name *ragaza* (also mentioned as *rangaza* or *araganza*) in 1865/1866. There might be some connection between this rinder-epidemic and the (rinder)epidemics in Sokoto during the Caliph Ahmad b. Atiku (1859-66) and the rinder-epidemic in the south of Birnin Gwari in 1862. The third occurrence of contagious pleuro-pneumonia, and the first description of the cattle-death resulting from it, is given in Nachtigal's travels in Bornu, where he stated that contagious pleuro-pneumonia ravaged Hausaland (where he never was!), Bornu, Baghirmi and the western parts of Wadai during 1867-71. From Sokoto we hear, that an epidemic called *araganza* ravaged the area during the reign of the Caliph Ali b. Bello (1866-67). It is obvious, that this epidemic was again due to pleuro-pneumonia. The last mention of contagious bovine pleuro-pneumonia comes from Katagum, where an epidemic ravaged the cattle herds in the late 1870s.

This relatively frequent occurrence of rinder-epidemics in the Central Sudan, notably in the Sudan savanna and, as it seems, not in the Sahel savanna, leads to the conclusion that rinder-epidemics had a much greater impact than has been assumed. The question arises, whether the rinderpest in the 1890s (first mentioned in 1885, but this data is very weak, last mentioned in 1897, and again several times at the early colonial records in the beginning of the 20th century) really was the great (and only) cattle killer, or if, seen from a 50-year perspective, there had been a continuous balance if not a decline of cattle in the Central Sudan in the latter part of the 19th century. The reasons for this are not clear, but for some parts the political stress in the Central Sudan seems to have had a great impact, at least the uncertain situations in the 'frontier' regions of the

emirates led in several parts of the Caliphate to a concentration of cattle near walled villages and towns, giving the best surroundings for the viruses and bacteria to ravage the herds. The connections between the cattle-deaths and prophetic reactions are also discussed, following here the example given by Ranger (1992), although only some slight indications of connections could be found between Mahdism, migrations and rinder-epidemics. An open question is also, whether the cattle deaths had some implications for the agricultural production in the Central Sudan. One has to remember, that cattle manure was used very extensively at least in some parts, not to speak about the implications of the settlement of the pastoralists who had lost their cattle and turned to agriculture for at least some years. Do we find a decline in agricultural output and the beginning of what one would call environmental stress due to the extension of agriculture into new areas?

The discussion of political versus ecological stress is followed up in the second part of the study. Here the emphasis is laid on war and disorder, and it is stated that neither drought nor any other ecological stress but rather political disorder and *uncertainty* in the Central Sudan led to crises throughout the whole of the 19th century. Ecological stress and political stress are very closely connected, often one of them serves as the trigger for a crisis resulting from this combination, although one should not get the impression that there is a given order, e.g. due to political stress a drought leads to . . . , or due to a drought the political stress leads to . . . Crises are unique in that sense, but the stress situations lying behind them might be more or less typical.

In part two I have chosen two regions, western Hausaland (Kebbi, the Sokoto area, Zamfara and Gobir) and eastern Hausaland (Maradi, Katsina, Daura, Zinder, Kano, Hadejia and Katagum) in which political stress, mainly due to war and strife, is studied. It is pointed out that war and especially strife and slave razzias (but, as it seems, also rinder-razzias) were endemic in the Central Sudan, thus leading to, what I call, 'a century of uncertainty'. Not taken up, but indicated in the text, was the political stress due to taxation and slavery, this being still un-

clear. For example, Murray Last assumes that the basic agricultural tax seems to have been relatively low ('the level of tax generally on free men was acceptably low'), thus questioning, whether taxation was really a stress factor for the people.¹ On the other hand, there is some oral evidence to the contrary.

Following up the comparison between ecological and political stress, it seems that people's protest was due to political rather than ecological stress. One can, of course, put down the reasons behind flight, migration and Mahdism to the outcome of ecological stress, but more likely it seems to be a combination of political and ecological stress. It is, however, stated that the concentration of people in various densely populated regions, such as the close-settled zones of Kano, Katsina and Sokoto, were at least in the 19th century an outcome of political uncertainty. Moreover, the depopulation of some areas or migration from some regions in the Central Sudan has to be seen as one result of the political uncertainty. These movements and concentrations of people (and cattle) gave way to new stress situations, as has been pointed out in the interaction between political and ecological stress and rinder-epidemics. It is suggested, therefore, that one can pinpoint core areas with dense settlement and relatively low political stress (i.e. strife and war) and peripheral regions, the outskirts of the emirates, with low or no settlement at all and high political stress. Last but not least, it is underlined that this conclusion should in no way give the impression of a 'declining' empire, i.e. the political structure of the Caliphate (and also of Bornu) was intact during the 19th century and the centrifugal forces did not result in a breakdown of the Caliphate at the end of the 19th century, as has been clearly shown already by Last (1967) and Adeleye (1971).

The third and last part of the study is about poverty and vulnerability in the Central Sudan in the 19th century, i.e. socio-economic stress. In one sense it is a continuation of John Iliffe's (1987) work on the history of the poor in Africa. The study starts by pinpointing various reasons, i.e.

stress factors behind poverty in the Central Sudan—economic as well as political factors (the fluctuations of commodity prices in the market, marginalization in both economic and political terms, exclusion from political power), ecological factors (drought, rinder-epidemics), socio-economic factors (cost of living and possibilities and non-possibilities of making one's living) and socio-cultural factors (costs due to ritual and religion, e.g. clothing). The question is raised as to whether one should use the term 'social inequality' instead of poverty, or vulnerability, because in the eyes of both Hausa and Bornu society, poverty was more a social than an economic problem.

The study continues by identifying the 'poor' in the Central Sudan, emphasis is laid here on the fact that, for example, a beggar or a poor person in the eyes of a European explorer was very seldom de facto 'poor' as per the definition in Hausaland (or in Bornu). This argument is further elaborated in an attempt to analyze the connotations of the different words for poor people and poverty, i.e. *talaka* and *matsiyaci*. It was discovered that the semantic fields of these words are much larger and wider than a simple direct translation as poor or poverty would imply. It seems preferable that one should use the expression 'lack of' combined with different connotations, e.g. lack of political power/ social status /privilege /economic resources etc, or 'being subordinated'. It is therefore no wonder that the term *talaka* is usually translated into English as 'commoner', losing thereby several aspects of 'lack of', as well as being sometimes used as an equivalent for 'poor', putting too much stress on the socio-economic aspect.

The next two sections of the study discuss oral literature and the image and picture of the poor and poverty in (mainly) Hausaland. Various sources of published oral traditions are used, ranging from proverbs and their moral and ethical codes (poverty as a reality) to Muslim texts using poverty in a very abstract language (poverty as an ideal) and stories and tales (poverty as both ideal and reality). It is assumed here that oral literature can be used in an attempt to describe the image and mentality of people in the 19th century. This assumption

¹ Last, 1989: 578-579.

is based on the hypothesis that an oral text serves as a mirror of society as long as it is told publicly. Therefore proverbs, stories and tales etc. are, the moment they are written down by some European ethnographer, a living part of society and thus a possible source even for the historian when he tries to analyze the image of poverty.

The last section of the study deals with the Islamic concept of poverty and the duties of the Muslim ruler and the Muslim community towards the poor. Tracing the Islamic concept of poverty to the Qur'an, the study continues with an investigation of the Islamic texts produced in Hausaland, noting especially the great influence of al-Maghili on Usman dan Fodio and his writings on the duties of the ruler in an Islamic state, but also drawing on some texts from Abdullahi dan Fodio and Muhammad Bello on the same theme. All writers are clear about the role for the Muslim ruler vis-à-vis the poor (in the Muslim community): help should be given to the needy. However it is not clear, if one could speak of some kind of 'Muslim social assistance' and if the caliphs, mais and emirs in the Central Sudan followed up this task. Again, both the official chronicles and the oral traditions indicate that there were also Muslim rulers who did not observe this duty. Poverty, i.e. vulnerability, might then also be seen as a force behind migration and Mahdism, or even rebellion (?), as it was through these means one could protest against the abuse of the ruling class (and their own misery). If this is correct, then we find here a third factor behind these movements over and above ecological and political stress.

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