



# Saharan Studies Association

## *Newsletter*

November 2000 Volume VIII Numbers 1-2

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### **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* is 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 bilingual newsletter.

Membership in the Saharan Studies Association is open to all interested persons. Currently membership is free of charge and entitles members to 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. At last count membership totalled approximately 120, from the USA, Canada, Denmark, Gt Britain, France, Norway, Spain, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Japan, Senegal and Cameroon. We hope existing members will pass on information about the Association and actively recruit new members.

**Contributions for the Spring 2001 *Newsletter*** should be sent no later than February 1 to :

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It would be most helpful if contributors could submit items in both paper and electronic copy preferably by email or, if on disk, formatted in Microsoft Word, though most other programs can be handled. Membership data forms (included in this newsletter and available online) should be sent to David Gutelius at the above address.

# NEWS AND RESEARCH REPORTS

## **INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT IN AFRICA (ISITA)**

## **INSTITUT POUR L'ETUDE DE LA PENSÉE ISLAMIQUE EN AFRIQUE**

In May of this year, a conference was convened at Northwestern University for the purpose of establishing an institute for the study of Islamic thought in Africa. The three-day event brought scholars together from all over the world. The outcome of this conference was the founding of ISITA, which will operate under the auspices of the Program for African Studies at Northwestern University.

### ***Objectives***

1. To promote research into the scholarly and literary traditions of African Muslims from earliest times to the present day.
2. To foster collaborative links with scholars in Africa and elsewhere engaged in similar research.
3. To foster study at Northwestern University at both the graduate and undergraduate level of these traditions.

### ***Resources***

#### ***Personnel:***

Director: John Hunwick, Professor of History and Religion, Northwestern University since 1981.

Co-Director: Seán O'Fahey, Professor of Non-European History, University of Bergen, Norway, and Adjunct Professor of History, Northwestern University.

Robert Launay, Professor of Anthropology, Northwestern University, specializing in Muslim Africa.

Carl Petry, Professor of History, Northwestern University, specializing in the Islamic Middle East.

Souleyman Bachir Diagne, Université Cheikh Ata Diop, Dakar, Visiting Professor of Philosophy,

Northwestern University, 2000, 2001, specializing in Islamic Philosophy.

### ***Collaborating Scholars:***

As a result of their work on Arabic Literature of Africa, Hunwick and O'Fahey have established a wide network of scholarly contacts, both in the U.S. and overseas.

In North America they include: Allan Christelow (University of Idaho), David Gutelius (University of Arizona), Valerie Hoffman (University of Illinois), Sherman Jackson (University of Michigan), Beverly Mack (University of Kansas), Mohamed Mahmoud (Tufts University), Al-Amin al-Mazrui (Ohio State University), Scott Reese (Xavier University, New Orleans), David Robinson (Michigan State University), Ahmad Sikainga (Ohio State University), Saadi Simawi (Grinnell College), Charles Stewart (University of Illinois), Eve Troutt Powell (University of Georgia), Mohamed Sani Umar (Arizona State University), Ghislaine Lydon (University of California, Los Angeles).

In Europe they include: Louis Brenner (S.O.A.S., University of London), Nikolai Dobronravin (University of St Petersburg), Paulo de Moraes Farias (University of Birmingham), Albrecht Hofheinz (Wissenschaftskolleg, Berlin), Murray Last (University College, London), Roman Loimeier (University of Bayreuth), Bernd Radtke (University of Utrecht), Ottavia Schmidt (University of Trieste), Stefan Reichmuth (University of Bochum), Philip Sadgrove (University of Manchester), Rüdiger Seesemann (University of Bayreuth), Jean-Louis Triaud (Université d'Aix-en-Provence), Knut Vikør (University of Bergen).

In Africa/Middle East, they include: Dedoud Ould Abdalla (Mauritania), Al-Amin Abu Manga (Sudan), Muhammad Ibrahim Abu Salim (Sudan), Hamadou Adama (Cameroun), Hussein Ahmad (Ethiopia), Hamidu Bobboyi (Nigeria), Mahmoud Mohamed Dedebe (Mali), Fatima Harrak (Morocco), Yusuf Fadl Hassan (Sudan), Haider Ali Ibrahim (Egypt),

Ousmane Kane (Senegal), Nehemia Levtzion (Israel), Khadim Mbacké (Senegal), Ebrahim Musa (South Africa), Abdel Wedoud Ould Cheikh (Mauritania), Awn Al-Sharif Qasim (Sudan), Mark Sey (Ghana), Abdul Sheriff (Zanzibar), Ibrahim Sughayyirun (Oman), Mahmoud Zouber (Mali).

*Material:*

Four collections of manuscripts and rare pamphlets in Arabic and some African languages, housed in the Melville Herskovits Library of Africana, totalling over 3,800 items.

***Ongoing Projects***

1. Northwestern is effectively the home base of the multi-volume work of research and reference "Arabic Literature of Africa". Volumes I and II were published in 1994 and 1995 respectively. Volumes III & IV are in preparation, and publication expected in late 2000/early 2001. The project has received the official support of President Abdou Diouf of Senegal, who has recommended it to the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Organization of African Unity. Application has been made to the National Endowment for the Humanities for funding for the research and writing of Volume V over the period 2000-2003.

2. Establishment of the Mamma Haidara Memorial Library, Timbuktu (5,000 Arabic mss.) under the direction of John Hunwick. The project was initiated by Professor Henry Louis Gates Jr. of the DuBois Institute of African-American Studies, Harvard University, who was instrumental in obtaining a grant from the Mellon Foundation to construct and furnish an archival building to house this family library. A listing of the library's contents, prepared by the curator Abdul Kader Haidara, and edited by John Hunwick, is being published by the Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, London. It is expected that the library will be operational early in 2000. See Web Site: <http://pubweb.nwu.edu/~jhunwick/>

3. In August 1999 John Hunwick was shown some volumes from a rescued 16th century library in Timbuktu totalling some 3,000 Arabic mss. It was once, apparently, the private library of the Timbuktu historian Mahmud Ka'ti, and constitutes an historical treasure that may rightly be dubbed the find of the century in terms of African history. There is an urgent need to restore the manuscripts physically, to catalog them, and to preserve and study their content through digitization. The curator of the library Ismaël Haïdara has asked John Hunwick to assume responsibility for these tasks and to head the team of scholars who will analyse and interpret the content of the manuscripts. Northwestern University would become the locus of this research effort.

4. Rehabilitation of the Ahmad Baba Center for Documentation and Historical Research, Timbuktu. The center was founded in 1974, following a recommendation of a Unesco Meeting of Experts in 1967 (attended by Hunwick). It now contains some 14,500 Arabic manuscripts, partially cataloged, but lacking any scientific preservation. The collection has been used by several of Hunwick's graduate students, but naturally they have only exploited a small portion of the center's potential as a resource for the intellectual and social history of the Timbuktu region. A project has been proposed to the Norwegian Universities Research Fund to preserve, catalog, and digitize / microfilm the manuscripts, and to initiate research cooperation to exploit the content of the manuscripts. John Hunwick will play a major role in this. Many of the items will be listed in Volume IV of Arabic Literature of Africa, which he is currently preparing.

5. Seán O'Fahey has established a project through the Norwegian Universities Research Fund to restore and catalog the Arabic archives of Zanzibar. This forms part of his larger "Islamic Literatures and Cultures of East Africa" (1995-99) project, for which he is currently seeking renewal and extension to include Ethiopia. The project will also include cataloguing and conservation of the Allen Collection of

Swahili manuscripts. The Allen collection, presently housed at the Library, University of Dar es Salaam, comprises 2,700 items, brought together in 1960s by the late Dr. J.W.T. Allen.

\* \* \*

**THE POSSIBILITIES OF ISLAMIC WELFARE:  
THE CONCEPT OF ZAKÂT IN THEORY AND ITS PRAXIS  
IN VARIOUS MUSLIM COMMUNITIES IN AFRICA**

**Dr. Holger Weiss**

University of Helsinki, Finland

Since the 1960s there has been a critique of both Western economic ideas and socialism in the Muslim countries on how to create a modern welfare state. One part of this critique has been that neither of these two concepts can achieve this goal. Instead, emphasis is put on an Islamic way of taxation on which the just society is to be based. The key idea is that *zakât*, or legal alms, should be the basis of an Islamic welfare system. So far, *zakât* has been expressed mostly by Muslim economists, but Islamist movements in various Muslim countries also have this goal on their agenda.

However, this debate is neither new nor unique. One could argue that the question of a just taxation, the responsibility of the state, the rulers and the rich and the welfare of the subjects and the community within Islam has been a cornerstone, as well as touchstone, since the days of the Prophet Muhammad. I will argue, along with most Western Scholars, that there has been a rift between the ideal model of *zakât* and its reality in the Muslim states. The argument is not that *zakât* never existed, but that its role as a welfare system, upheld and controlled by the state, has to be questioned.

*Zakât* is an obligation which constitutes one of the five pillars of Islam. Although *zakât* is commonly defined as a form of charity, almsgiving, donation, or contribution, it differs from these activities primarily in that they are arbitrary, voluntary actions, known as *ṣadaqa*. *Zakât*, due to it being an obligation sanctioned by the Qur'ân and the Sunna, is a formal duty not subject to choice.

In the ideal Islamic society, *zakât* is supposed to bridge the rift between rich and poor members of the (Muslim) community. As a religious tax *zakât* is thought to be the basis of taxation of Muslims. In theory, the members of the Muslim community were obliged only to pay *zakât*, whereas non-Muslims who accept Muslim over-rule should pay for their protection the *jizya*, capitation or poll tax. However, the intention of *zakât* is primary to purify in the eyes of God the possessions upon which it is assessed. Therefore both the Qur'ân and the Islamic law are more concerned with the aspect of giving and collecting than of receiving of *zakât*. To make things more complicated, there is a basic problem with regard to *zakât* in the Qur'ân and Islamic law: the term is used synonymously with *ṣadaqa*. Even in the most central verse for the disbursement of *zakât*, in *sura* 9:60, *ṣadaqa* and not *zakât* is used, although later Muslim scholars and lawyers refer to this *sura* as being the basis of *zakât*. The problem gets more complicated, as *zakât* (and not *ṣadaqa*) is thought to be a religious tax, besides being a religious and moral duty, whose collection and disbursement should be performed and controlled by the head of the Muslim state.

The recipients were the poor and the needy as well as those persons who collect the *zakât*, whose hearts are reconciled to Islam, who are in captivity, who are in debt, who fight for the sake of Islam and the wayfarers. However, neither the Qur'ân, nor the collections of the Prophet's tradition (*ḥadīth*), describe in detail the conditions and qualities of the recipient. Instead, emphasis is put on the collection of *zakât*. These rules are said to have been first laid out by the first Caliph Abu Bakr and were codified by later jurists.

*Zakât* became a legal obligation in the year 9 AH (630-31). By this time, *zakât* was part of the public sphere as it laid down the rules of taxation of the Muslims, and it became part of the *bayt al-mâl*, the state treasury. However, very soon the rules of taxation had to be changed several times. The outcome of the various tax reforms was that the Muslim state was no longer concerned with the collection and disbursement of the *zakât*. One reason for this was the various public expenditures (court,

administration, army) could not be met by *zakât* income. Instead the collection of *zakât* was transferred to the local Muslim community and its leader, the *imâm*. One could say that with the continuing disintegration of the Caliphate, the question of the *zakât* became a matter of the private sphere of every Muslim and the Muslim state had little to do with the matter. Studies of public incomes in the Abbasid Caliphate confirm this picture (Shimizu 1966).

On the other hand, *zakât* and the role of the state was often debated. Various revivalist and reformist movements, especially, used the question of the collection of the *zakât* in their critique against unpopular Muslim rulers. Taxation was condemned as non-Islamic and a return to early Islam was propounded. Such movements could be found, among others, in West Africa (Last 1994). Another outcome of the various tax reforms was a rising discrepancy between fiscal reality and religious legal principles. This has been clearly laid out by Shemesh (1958, 1965, 1969) in his studies of three early Muslim corpora on taxation, the *Kitâb al-kharâj* of Yahyâ ibn Âdam, Qudâma ibn Ja'far and Abû Yûsuf.

The history of Islam in Africa started during the tenth century AD. Since then, Muslim states have with more or less success tried to enforce the ideals of Islam. The interface between local African traditions and Islam resulted in varied syncretism in Muslim communities. During the Muslim militant reform movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the ideal was to establish "pure" Muslim societies and states. Taxation, among others, should be guided according to Muslim law. However, it is by far not clear, whether the Islamization of nineteenth century society in (Sudanic) Africa ever resulted in an ideal Islamic state and the ideal collection and distribution of *zakât*. Instead, one finds a whole variety of different notions of *zakât* among Muslim societies and communities in West Africa (Sanneh 1997; Van Hoven 1996). One crucial matter was that the books and pamphlets that West African Muslim literatis, among others, used, mainly reflected the situation and legal position during the early Abbasid Caliphate, i.e. a period when the rift between public and private already had begun.

The discrepancy between the ideal and reality of *zakât* is evident in African Muslim societies. For

example, tax reforms in Northern Nigeria during the colonial era, where *zakât* is said to have been abolished, have been criticised both by local Muslim literati and later researchers. However, this critique is problematic, as it is not clear what actually was abolished - the tithe on grain or legal alms (Weiss 1997). Investigations of today's Nigeria show clearly that both *zakât* and *ṣadaqa* still constitute a part of the religious sphere (Blankmeister 1992). The role of the sufi brotherhood cannot be overemphasised; they control and disburse a major part of these alms. However, the political and socioeconomic crisis in Nigeria has led to a rise of critical Muslim movements, among others, Islamists and pseudo-Mahdist ones, who criticise the lax following of the rules concerning the payment, collection and disbursement of *zakât* (Loimeier 1997).

The basic question to be addressed in my research project is whether *zakât* was levied in precolonial Muslim states in Africa and what has been its fate during in colonial and postcolonial Africa. Who organized its collection, who controlled it and who redistributed the collected payments? Who benefitted from its collection - the poor or somebody else? To be able to investigate these questions, the concept of *zakât* has to be studied. Has *zakât* been the basis of a public Islamic welfare system or not? How would such a system have functioned - if it ever had existed? The focus of the research will be on Muslim communities in Northern Ghana (Dagomba and Gonja).

#### Literature

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Van Hoven, Ed, “Local Tradition or Islamic Precept? The Notion of Zakât in Wuli (Eastern Senegal)”, *Cahiers d’Etudes Africaines*, 144, XXXVI:4, 1996, 703-722

Weiss, Holger, “A Tentative note on Islamic Welfare: Zakât in Theory and Praxis in the Sokoto Caliphate,” Working Paper, Institute of Development Studies, Helsinki 1997

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**NEWLY DISCOVERED 10TH/16TH C. AJAMI  
MANUSCRIPT IN NIGER AND KEL TAMAGHEQ  
HISTORY**

David Gutelius  
SRI International

The recent discovery in Niger of a 500-folio manuscript dating from the 1500s may be one of the most significant of the past decade. Together with other Tamashek/Ajami documents, it will also likely raise a number of interesting questions for historians—questions regarding sixteenth century desert society, Tuareg culture, and the state of politics and trade in the southern Sahara during a pivotal period in Saharan history.

The work was written in Tamashek and transliterated into Arabic. According to Dr. Moulaye Hassane, Director of the Department of Arabic and Ajami Manuscripts at the University of Niamey, the

manuscript deals with pharmacopoeia, among other topics. For Dr. Hassane, the work calls into question the assumption that Ajami was used exclusively for the proselytization of Islam.

A number of so far unexploited Tamashek/Ajami manuscripts are currently housed at the Centre d’études, de documentation et de recherche Ahmad Baba (CEDRAB) in Timbuktu. Center staff have catalogued quite a few of these in the al-Furqan Foundation’s multi-volume catalog.<sup>1</sup> More are available at the Human Science Research Institute (IRSH) in Niamey. In addition, it is highly probable that more Tamashek documents have survived and are currently part of private libraries in Mali, southern Algeria, Niger, and Chad.

The most recent find in Niger, combined with other Tamashek manuscripts (both Ajami and Tifnagh), provide an unparalleled opportunity for scholars piecing together pre-modern Saharan history from the perspective of nomadic and semi-nomadic Tamashek speakers. A team of scholars will likely be required to mine these documents for the information they can provide. But used in conjunction with the extensive collections of oral histories collected over this century, these manuscripts can help describe changes in Saharan societies over time from a different perspective—a perspective that is most often denigrated in the Arabic manuscripts of the region. There has likely been no better opportunity for studying undertaking Imazaghen history. It has the potential of adding tremendously to our understanding of Saharan history.

<sup>1</sup> Sīdī ‘Umar ibn ‘Alī, et al., eds., *Fihris makhtūāt Markaz Ahmad Bābā lil-tawthīq wa al-buḥūth al-ta’rīkhiyya bi Tinbuktū*, five vols., (London: Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, 1995-).



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# RECENT PANELS

## AFRICAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION PANEL: ISLAM AND TRADE IN THE SAHARA

### “Honor, Tribute and Trade in Nineteenth Century Mauritania”

**Raymond Taylor**

Saint Xavier University

### “A *Qāḍī* from Shinqit and the Question of Salt: the *Nawāzil* of Mohammed bin al-Mukhtar bin La’amech (late 17<sup>th</sup> C.)”

**Ann E. McDougall**

University of Alberta

This paper will revisit some familiar territory but from a perspective I have not previously explored, namely that of the *nawāzil* (the presentation of an actual case demanding the interpretation of a *qāḍī* and the inclusion of that interpretation). In this case the *qāḍī* is one Mohammed bin al-Mukhtar bin La’amech, of the Idaw-Ali clan of Shinqit (d. 1691/1102). And the *nawāzil* is one of the first of its kind in the region, serving as a kind of “model” for others in other southern Saharan towns (eg. Tidjikja, Tishit, Walata) over the next two centuries. Like most of its genre, it treated many different subjects, reflecting the wide range of concerns expressed by people at the time. That these sources are marvelous reflections of social and religious issues is not a new observation; but that they can also be used to push further our understanding of commerce, in this case Saharan commerce as well, is perhaps a subject less widely explored and certainly less widely understood (especially by non-Arabists who have hitherto remained largely confined by the much milked medieval travellers’ accounts, valuable though they are, in translation and by European travellers’ observations). I count myself among the latter and would like to take this opportunity to push further some of my own interpretations on Saharan trade to

date.

Bin La’amech spoke to, among other things, several issues concerning matters of commerce. Those which interest me in this paper are the questions dealing with the salt trade. I plan to explore his information from two perspectives. First, the contributions made by information concerning the kinds of salt being traded and their origins which complements and challenges earlier material I presented on the “Myths and Mysteries of Saharan salts,” as well embellishments it provides to our current understanding of the networks supporting the larger desert-side trade. As I discussed some years ago in an article dealing with the mysterious Zara/Tarra (specifically mentioned by bin La’amech), clearly the Saharan salt trade underlay the larger trade in grain, gold and slaves which drove the desert edge economy and attracted the European traders of the day. This *nawāzil* opens yet another window on this essential dynamic. This is largely using this ‘Islamic’ document to extract what we have tended to refer to as ‘economic history’.

But the second purpose of the paper is to look at the ways in which what is ‘Islamic’ about it. Deriving ‘answers’ to practical questions from *sharī‘a* is also integral to defining what is economic about Saharan trade. In part, I hope this will speak to questions raised some years ago in a chapter I wrote on “The economics of Islam”. Or put another way, I want to use this exploration of bin La’amech and the *nawāzil* to enrich our understanding of the Saharan salt commerce at a crucial moment in Saharan history. The seventeenth century marked a watershed for many reasons, perhaps most importantly for the role it played in generating constructions of identity among *zawaya* and *hassan* groups following on the war of Shurr Bubba, and the heightened activity of both northern Saharans, ‘Moroccans’ and westerners, Europeans of many nationalities.. In that sense, this window we see opened on the salt trade is equally a window opened on to the essence of Saharan economic strength and power.

**“Caravaniers, Trading Networks and Business Ethics in the Nineteenth-Century Sahara”**

**Ghislaine Lydon**

Michigan State University

In the second half of the nineteenth century, trade along the western routes crossing the Sahara was one of the most important entrepreneurial activities. Based on trading records collected mainly in the commercial centers of Shinqīti and Tishīt, I examine the long distance trading networks which linked North and West African markets. The study is introduced with a long letter written in 1842 by notables of Glaymīm, the caravan terminus on the northern desert edge (southern Morocco) known as ‘the door of the Sahara.’ It is addressed to the “Glaymīm community” residing further south in Saharan towns such as Shinqīti, Tishīt and Wadān. These community members, relatives and trading partners are, for the most part, either Tikna or Awlād Bū Sbā. I argue that these two Saharan groups were dominant players in trans-Saharan trade between Glaymīm and southern markets. This source is a unique snapshot into the inner-workings of trans-Saharan trading networks in the mid-nineteenth century. It informs on questions of credit and finance, as well as matters of inheritance regulating long-distance trade. Based on this and similar trade records, I analyze the operation of trade and explore the contours of Saharan business ethics. I also examine nineteenth century legal records to argue that jurisprudence was central to trading operations in the Sahara where all relationships were governed by Islamic precepts.

**“Practice and Precept: The Nasiriyya and the Social Context for Trade, 1650-1750”**

**David Gutelius**

Johns Hopkins University

The late seventeenth century corresponded to important changes in the structure and character of African sufi orders. Between the late 1600s and middle 1800s, many became increasingly exclusive social organizations, and often substantially more politically activist and commercially involved than

preceding sufi orders. These new sufi-based organizations usually became heavily involved in commercial production and distribution, and the Nāṣiriyya ṭarīqa in southern Morocco constituted one of the most important of these orders.

This paper takes a broad view of how Nāṣiri leaders and followers put their varied understandings of Islamic doctrine into practice in trade, and how these attitudes and practices changed between about 1650 and 1750, through the prism of legal rulings. The Nāṣiriyya provide particularly interesting perspectives on the relationship between commercial practices and the Islamic precepts that guided them. Economic and social change within the Sahara caused considerable differences in legal interpretation even among Nāṣiri leaders, let alone their clients. In some instances, they upheld strict interpretations of Maliki law in contrast to their followers’ wishes, while in others leaders flatly rejected Maliki precepts. Leaders often bowed to community pressures in the decisions they made, reinforcing the point that the juridical process often remained tied to local politics as well as to economic interests. Interpretations of law changed over time, both limiting practice and remaining receptive to it. This paper shows how trade and doctrines, precepts and practices, remained negotiable and linked to broader changes affecting desert society. It explores changes in legal interpretations in their social and economic contexts, focusing on the Nāṣiriyya as an object of social investment.

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**REPORT ON THE “SOCIAL JUSTICE, SOCIAL WELFARE  
AND PRAXIS IN ISLAMIC SOCIETIES IN AFRICA”  
WORKSHOP**

**Holger Weiss**

University of Helsinki, Finland

In April 1999, the University of Helsinki research project “Zakât: poverty, social welfare and Islamic taxation”, together with the Department of Asian and African Studies at the University of Helsinki arranged a two-day workshop, “Social justice, social welfare and praxis in Islamic societies in Africa”. Researchers from the Nordic countries as well as Germany presented papers, dealing with questions such as the possibilities of Islamic economy and Islamic banking as well as case-studies of how various forms of social welfare programmes have worked in Islamic communities in Africa (including North Africa). Papers were presented by seven scholars:

**Holger Weiss** (University of Helsinki, Finland) pointed out that much of the debate in the field of Islamic economics has been dealing with morals and ethics rather than pure economics. He presented in his paper the position of two Nigerian scholars, Sule Ahmad Gusau and Ibraheem Sulaiman, and underlined that most of their writings critique military rulers in Nigeria but are vague on social or economic questions.

**Endre Stiansen** (Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, Sweden) gave an overview of Islamic banking in the Sudan. He also presented an overview of the network of Islamic economics, the problems connected with *riba* and its translation and reflected on the connection of Islamic economics and John Hunwick’s idea of a “moral economy of salvation”. He remarked that the present debate in the Sudan is rather divided, where some of the forms of Islamic banking have been criticised by the Muslims themselves.

**Ruediger Seesemann** (University of Bayreuth, Germany) presented a welfare project run by the Tijaniyya shaykh Ibrâhîm Sîdî in El Fasher, namely a program of social rehabilitation for problem children and street kids. He underlined the problematic attempts by the Islamist government in the Sudan to improve the living conditions of the Northern Muslim population. Instead, the role of the social welfare activities of the various Sufi orders, which have largely remained neglected by scholars, are providing an informal social security system.

**Knut Vikor** (Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, Bergen, Norway) discussed how and why the economic and social effects of the Sanûsiya order was the result of an interplay between choices made by the brotherhood and by the social actors of the surrounding community. The brotherhood’s role in providing “social welfare” was inscribed into this dynamic relationship. For example, for former nomads the brotherhood provided economic aid in terms of lending land for cultivation or by handouts, and also symbolic capital.

**Tuomo Melasuo** (Tampere Peace Research Institute, Finland) gave an overview of the Algerian Ulama Movement and Social Action during French colonialism. The focus of his presentation was on the establishment of schools by the Ulama Movement. In this way, the Ulama Movement sought to restore Muslim society in Algeria as well as the improvement of Islamic community. Thus, the Ulama Movement combined the cultural call with social action but was also, at a later stage, to have political implications as well.

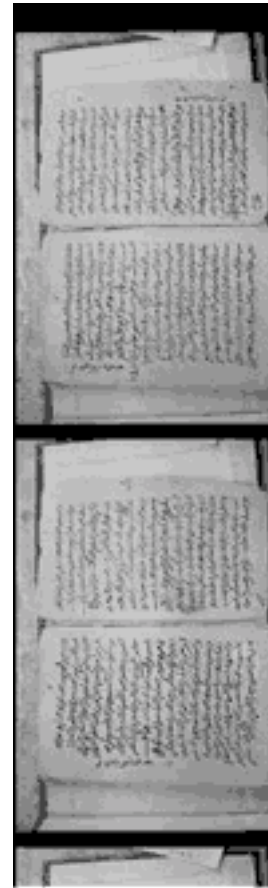
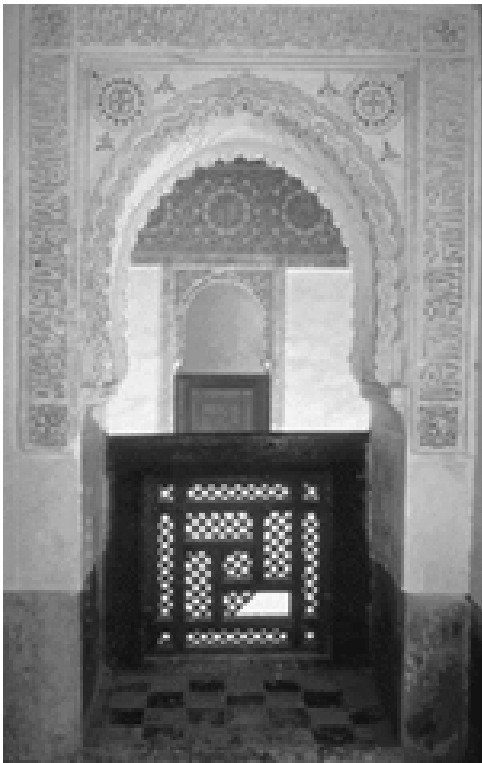
**Franz Kogelmann** (University of Bayreuth, Germany) discussed the possibilities of religiously-motivated welfare institutions, such as pious endowments (*waqf*) in pre-modern societies. His case study was the development of Sidi Fredj in Fez, which was formerly the most important endowment complex in Morocco and devoted itself exclusively to social welfare activities. He pointed out that under French colonial rule, the pious endowments became more tightly

organised and economically efficient. However, the administrative centralisation process meant that this previously highly autonomous form of social welfare now fell outside the area of responsibility of the local community.

**Roman Loimeier** (University of Bayreuth, Germany) gave an analysis of the campaign against the Quranic schools in Senegal between 1992 and 1996. The secular state and global development agencies (such as UNICEF), as well as Islamic reformers were united in their attempts to dissolve the existing Islamic system of socialization maintained by the Quranic schools. They were all of the opinion that the autonomy of the Quranic school as a central institution of Islamic society had to be destroyed and the social and political influence of the marabouts, the established religious scholars, must be eliminated.

Most of the papers will be revised by the authors for a separate publication on social justice and social welfare in Muslim societies in Africa, including contributions from African scholars who could not participate in the workshop.

\* \* \*



# NEW BOOKS

## ***Saints et société en Islam: La confrérie ouest-saharienne Fadiliyya***

Boubrik Rahal

Collection : CNRS Histoire

ISBN : 2-271-05695-0

1999 - 15,5 x 24 - 256 p - br.

On ne saurait réfléchir sur l'islam, dans son état actuel, sans appréhender son histoire, ses formes et ses représentations dans les différentes sociétés musulmanes. Le modèle confrérique reste l'expression historique de certaines représentations et pratiques de l'islam, et l'on peut dire qu'il est une manifestation sociale majeure du fait religieux.

L'étude de cas développée ici est à replacer dans cet esprit : le rôle d'un homme de religion dans une dynamique sociale. Muḥammad Fadīl, né en 1797, va ainsi, d'une part, construire un personnage sur 3 traits symboliques : origine cherifienne, capital culturel et mystique, pouvoir charismatique; d'autre part va étendre son action aux affaires temporelles, système dont devront tenir compte ses "héritiers".

\* \* \*

## ***Becoming Walata: A History of Saharan Social Formation and Transformation***

Timothy Cleaveland

Heinemann. Portsmouth, NH. 2001

LC 00-061331. ISBN 0-325-07027-X. E07027

Price not yet set, Available 04/30/2001

"Becoming Walata" is the long-anticipated published version of Cleaveland's superb 1994 doctoral thesis. The publisher's description follows.

Cleaveland traces the history of Walata's changing identities over the last millennium and then focuses on the 18th and 19th century. Originally a Mande agricultural settlement on the periphery of Old Ghana, Walata became involved in trade and attracted settlers from the desert and savanna. In the 14th century

Walata became a cosmopolitan town dominated by Berbers, but in the 17th and 18th centuries nomadic Arabs sedentarized in Walata and transformed it again. By the 19th century all the town's free families claimed Arab descent. So, what became of the Mande of old Walata? The scholarly Mande families began to disappear in the mid-17th century, but their disappearance was largely a social illusion. The Arabs who acquired power in Walata did so by assimilating the elite Mande and Berber families.

Becoming Walata reclaims the southern Sahara as an integral part of West Africa and reveals the 'Black' African contribution to Walata's history, even as it emphasizes the socially constructed quality of ethnic and racial categories.

### Table of Contents

Introduction: The Journey to Walata

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"Representation, Identity, and the Formation of the Lemhajib"

Conclusion

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## ***Groupes serviles au Sahara: Approche comparative à partir du cas des arabophones de Mauritanie.***

Sous la direction de Mariella Villasante-De Beauvais, Paris:CNRS Editions, 2000, pp. 359.

Contents

Mariella Villasante-De Beauvais: Introduction

James Searing; “Aristocrates, esclaves et paysans: puouvoir et dépendence dans les Etats *wolof*, 1700-1850”.

James L. Webb: “L’échange commercial de chevaux contre esclaves entre le Sahara occidental et la Sénégalie, XVII<sup>e</sup>-XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle”.

Raymond Taylor: “Statut, médiation et ambiguïté ethnique en Mauritanie précoloniale (XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle): le cas des Ahl al-Gibla et des Abd Gannâr”.

Benjamin Acloque: “Embarras de l’administration coloniale. La question de l’esclavage au début du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle en Mauritanie”.

Ann McDougall: “Un monde sens dessus dessous: esclaves et affranchis dans l’Adrar mauritanien, 1910-1950”.

Olivier Leservoisier: “Les *hrâtîn* et le Fuuta Tooro, XIX<sup>e</sup>-XX<sup>e</sup> siècle: entre émancipation et dépendence”.

Urs Peter Ruf: “Diguettes, barrages, bétail: les enjeux de l’émancipation des *hrâtîn* et des *’abîden* Mauritanie centrale”.

Meskerem Brhane: “Histoires de nouakchott: discours des *hrâtîn* sur le pouvoir et identité”.

Hélène Claudot-Hawad: “Captif sauvage, esclave enfant, affranchi cousin. La mobilité statuaire chez les Touaregs (*Imajaghen*)”.

Giles Boetsch & Jean-Noël Ferrie: “De la modernité paradoxale, du point de vue de l’anthropologie physique sur les groupes serviles au Sahara”.

Mariella Villasante-De Beauvais: “La question des hiérarchies sociales et des groupes serviles chez les *bidân* de Mauritanie”.

Julio Caro Baroja: “Hiérarchies sociales et esclaves noirs au Sahara Espagnol, 1952-1953”.

The contributions by James Searing, James L. Webb, and Ann McDougall are all translations of articles previously published in English. The contribution of Julio Caro Baroja, which forms a “Supplément” was translated from Spanish by Mariella Villasante-De

Beauvais, who also wrote an introduction to it. The book was produced through the Institut de Recherches et d’études sur le monde Arabe et musulman, Aix-en-Provence.

\* \* \*

***Difficult and Dangerous Roads: Hugh Clapperton’s Travels in Sahara and Fezzan (1822-25)***

Edited by Jamie Bruce-Lockhart and John Wright.

Published by Sickle Moon, the travel imprint of Baring and Rogerson Books, ISBN 1-900209-06 (3).

This book has its origins in the research for a general study on Commander Hugh Clapperton’s life and travels. Clapperton took part in the Borno Mission of the British Government from 1822 to 1825. The journey is documented by Clapperton’s diaries which provide a rewarding account of the processes and circumstances - and the effects on an individual explorer - of travel in a land then almost wholly unknown to the outside world. The strengths of these diaries as source material lie in the vividness, the spontaneity and, above all, the manifest objectiveness of Clapperton’s visual observations.

The present study goes beyond a simple text edition. Following a description of the Borno Mission, Lockhart deals with the biography of Clapperton in detail and comments on the approach and style of the journals. The fourth chapter deals with problems Lockhart encountered when editing and transcribing Clapperton’s handwritten diaries which had not been published hitherto. Today, the reassessment of the history of Kanem-Borno is highly estimated and therefore widely followed up in university research and teaching in Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, and Chad. This edition hopes to form a valuable contribution to this academic discussion.

\* \* \*

# ON THE WEB

## **Saharan Studies Association Website**

<http://ssa.sri.com:8002/>

The Association launched its first website earlier this year. We have recently updated it, adding a search capability, a message board, and direct news feeds on Sahara- and Africa-related issues from media outlets around the world. Members are welcome to add news or projects to the site. Contact David Gutelius ([dpg@sri.com](mailto:dpg@sri.com)) for more information.

## **A Thematic Bibliography of the Kel Adagh, by Pierre Boilley**

<http://www.sedet.cicrp.jussieu.fr/sedet/Afrilab/Biblios/BibAdagh.htm>

For researchers needing materials on this well-known Imazaghen group, Boilley's 1995 bibliography is a must. Boilley is one of the most knowledgeable Kel Imazaghen researchers in the world, and his specialty is the Kel Adagh. Some books and articles have been published since this list was last updated. But it remains an especially useful resource for those needing background and secondary information on the Kel Adagh and on the territories in which they live.

## **Ecological Anthropology of oases of Maghreb and Sahara, by Vincent Battesti**

<http://anthropoasis.anotherlight.com/index.htm>

Vincent Battesti has posted the results of his comparative research on the relations between desert environment and the organization of society in the Jerid (Tunisia), Djanet (Algeria), and Zagora (Morocco). The French version of the site is more complete, but both English and French versions include links to Battesti's articles, with abstracts. For a summary of his recent thesis see page 14 of this *Newsletter*.

## **Sahara - The PBS Special**

<http://www.pbs.org/sahara/>

The official website of PBS's *Sahara*, like the film itself, is meant more to confirm the exoticism of the Sahara than to inform or educate. The project has redeeming qualities, however, including a basic introduction to the desert and its people and environment that would be useful for secondary-level students. But the unwillingness on the part of PBS producers to present a more diverse, realistic picture of the desert and the people who live in it is disappointing. Ignore most of the resources pages.

## **Africultures**

<http://www.africultures.com/>

While not geared specifically to Saharan issues, this French site provides an exceptionally good way to keep abreast of cultural happenings in Africa and among African communities overseas (particularly francophone communities). It provides weekly announcements of television, gallery, theater, conference and concert events around the globe. Search capabilities on the site are superb. A journal and newsletter are also available for subscription. These include critical reviews and interviews with African artists, and many of the Africultures journal articles are available via download directly from the site.

# THESES

## **LES RELATIONS ÉQUIVOQUES : APPROCHES CIRCONSPECTES POUR UNE SOCIO-ÉCOLOGIE DES OASIS SAHARIENNES**

**Vincent Battesti**

Thèse en anthropologie sociale.  
Université R. Descartes Paris V - Sorbonne/Muséum  
national d'histoire naturelle, laboratoire  
d'ethnobiologie-biogéographie.  
Soutenue le 28 septembre 1998.  
Bibl., 47 fig., 10 photog., 14 tabl. + annexes, 357 p.

Entre images d'Epinal et découpages théoriques savants, l'oasis, si bien isolée au milieu du vide, du rien désertique, qui semble attendre qu'on la cueille, qui paraît si facile à circonscrire comme une tache verte sur fond jaune, sans cesse échappe à la définition. Cette illusion de facilité à saisir l'objet, dans le temps et dans l'espace, et finalement sa fuite sempiternelle, c'est par ce paradoxe frustrant que l'on vient à douter de sa méthode ; frustrant, car on sait aujourd'hui le formidable enjeu social et économique que représentent ces oasis, associations d'une agglomération humaine et d'une zone cultivée (souvent une palmeraie) en milieu désertique ou semi-désertique. L'objectif premier du travail porte sur les relations entre les sociétés et leur milieu naturel. L'ubiquité d'un déconcertant exotisme dans l'analyse scientifique, ainsi qu'une tendance simplificatrice à concevoir l'oasis comme un "point fertile dans le désert" et comme définie exclusivement par une approche essentialiste de l'élément rare, l'eau, tout cela incite à travailler sur un modèle plus complexe de l'oasis, à définir une démarche originale.

Le travail consacré spécialement aux palmeraies et en particulier celle de la région du Sud tunisien, le Jérid, mais aussi sur Djanet, dans le Sud de l'Algérie, et Zagora au Maroc dans une perspective comparative, perspective seulement amorcée.

Dans cette quête des relations dynamiques entre les sociétés oasiennes et leur environnement, on a essayé d'évacuer l'éternel débat nature/culture, issu d'une dichotomie cartésienne sujet/objet et de la concurrence entre sciences de la nature et sciences humaines. Fusionner ces catégories en faveur d'une approche non-duale, circonspecte et pluridisciplinaire semble plus à même de poursuivre l'ambitieux projet d'établir une socio-écologie oasienne. Les matériaux mis à contribution sont autant du registre des représentations et des savoirs (locaux ou non) que de celui des pratiques observées, et voire minutieusement quantifiées (suivis technico-économiques des jardins d'oasis). En partie développée dans le cadre du développement de l'agriculture, ce travail lui consacre une large part avec une lecture critique des diverses pratiques et pensées sur l'oasis qui se veut aller au-delà du stérile : comme se complaire à souligner les erreurs de l'Etat par exemple si l'on ne cherche pas à comprendre son action, à comprendre quel est le modèle suivi (sciemment ou non) de relation à la nature, quel est l'idéal-type de sa praxis. D'abord, l'approche de la construction de la nature oasienne se base ici sur sa structure spatiale à trois niveaux, le large (l'oasis en général), l'intermédiaire (le parcellaire) et le restreint (le jardin). C'est une logique d'emboîtement qui préside à cette construction des espaces. Ces différents espaces sont alors des niveaux d'organisations, car la possibilité de praxis (façonnant des lieux à partir d'espaces) varie selon cette localisation. Cette distinction ternaire s'accompagne des niveaux correspondants de temporalités (de temps façonné), le temps historique, le temps naturel et le quotidien, distinction qui autorise les différentes praxis, pratiques et perceptions de l'environnement, car à chaque niveau d'organisation possède ses propres mesures.

Choisissant de varier constamment les points de vue et les niveaux de grossissement de manière à appréhender les articulations à chaque fois différentes des facteurs écologiques, économiques et sociaux que chacun de ces niveaux autorise ou rend possible, ce travail dévoile des couches de sens différentes, des

stratégies contrastées, des types de pratique parfois contradictoires, selon les niveaux où les oasis sont vécues et perçues par des individus et des institutions aux intérêts souvent divergents. Ces niveaux emboîtés d'organisations espaces-temps des praxis de l'oasis ont aussi une cohérence entre eux qui est d'ordre hiérarchique (au sens de la théorie hiérarchique). Cela n'est pas sans importance pour les dynamiques d'évolutions de ces milieux anthropisés et conduit à parler de "révolutions permanentes" dans les oasis.

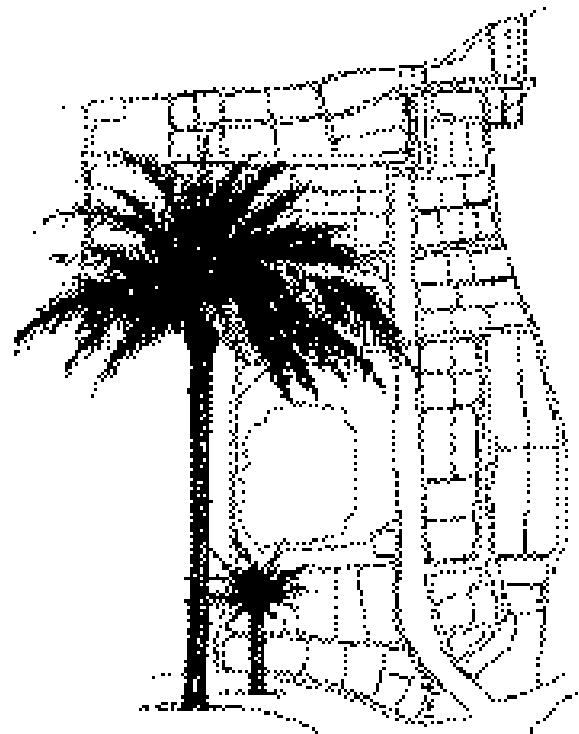
D'autre part, la définition d'une "norme" des procès socio-écologiques dans l'oasis est illusoire : ce serait réitérer l'idée de "traditionalisme", oublier la diversité des situations sociales et écologiques internes et méconnaître la participation "extérieure" à l'oasis. Les praxis varient aussi selon les différents acteurs. Penser en termes d'idéaux-types de praxis est plus satisfaisant. Les acteurs du monde oasien alors trouvent leurs coordonnées polaires dans un espace conceptuel défini par les idéaux-types de la relation société-milieu (qui seront "autochtone", "orientalisme" et "paternalisme"). Ces idéaux-types ne sont pas exclusifs, mais s'intègrent, en des degrés respectifs variables, dans chaque acteur, institution ou individu.

L'idéal-type "autochtone" n'est pas encore une norme (une typologie des systèmes d'exploitations le démontre) dont la praxis serait déterminée strictement par le milieu ou la société: il n'y a pas de préséance de la société ou du milieu comme facteur déterminant, même dans le "cas d'école" de l'oasis souvent décrite comme "conditionnée" par l'aridité. Il y a conjugaison des deux, l'un se fonde dans l'autre, interactions en causalités réciproques, même si on peut évaluer leur influence relative selon la trame oasienne d'espace et de temps et définir finalement des paradigmes des relations au milieu.

La référence aux différentes échelles de temps et d'espaces ne dépend pas seulement des acteurs envisagés, mais plutôt des situations envisagées des agents. Puisqu'il faut réfléchir à partir "d'archétypes d'agents" (agronome, touriste, jardinier, etc.), on a pu par simplification abusive (toujours soulignée)

accorder que tel était davantage à la praxis de tel niveau d'organisation (telle échelle spatio-temporelle) : implicitement à un agent archétypal correspond une situation archétypale. L'ambition anthropologique d'aborder avec circonspection les "objets complexes" (l'oasis en est une bonne figure) nous permet d'envisager une analyse plus fine, esquissée dans ce travail, dans laquelle la référence aux échelles – qui est un appel réfléchi ou non réfléchi à des ressources, construites et données - dépend de la situation, du contexte de l'agent, donc affirmativement variable et non figée pour un agent donné.

Cette approche circonspecte de la complexité oasienne éclaire les relations équivoques du chercheur à son objet, de l'individu à sa société et de la société à son milieu.



**ON TRANS-SAHARAN TRAILS: TRADING NETWORKS  
AND CROSS-CULTURAL EXCHANGE IN WESTERN  
AFRICA, 1840s-1930s**

**Ghislaine Lydon**

Ph.D. Thesis

Michigan State University

2000

This dissertation explores the long-distance trading networks of families who, across three generations, organized camel caravans on trans-Saharan trails. It covers a period of about 100 years, from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries, and a large area encompassing Mauritania and the bordering regions of northwestern Mali, southern Morocco and northern Senegal. The spatial and temporal breath allows me to follow the migration patterns of traders between North and West Africa, as they relate to both the pursuit of economic opportunities and interactions with local and colonial states. The study is based on a wide variety of sources ranging from oral histories and colonial archives, to Arabic trading records found in private libraries.

The ‘trading diasporas’ of two groups, the Tikna and the Awlād Bū Sbā’, are examined to reconstruct this history of long-distance trade. Both groups of Berber origin and tended to be commercially successful because they formed tight-knit corporate associations based on trust. Islamic law provided an institutional framework for the purposes of accounting and accountability, with Muslim scholars acting as arbiters in legal disputes. These traders used their multiple skills to maneuver across several states and currency zones, and engage in arbitrage between western African markets. They were professional stranger traders who tapped into local networks to transact in all kinds of merchandise including, slaves, gold and salt. With the coming of colonial rule, these traders took advantage of opportunities in the new economic order. They offered their transportation services to the French colonial administration, opened general-purpose stores, while continuing to organize trans-Saharan caravans across the desert.

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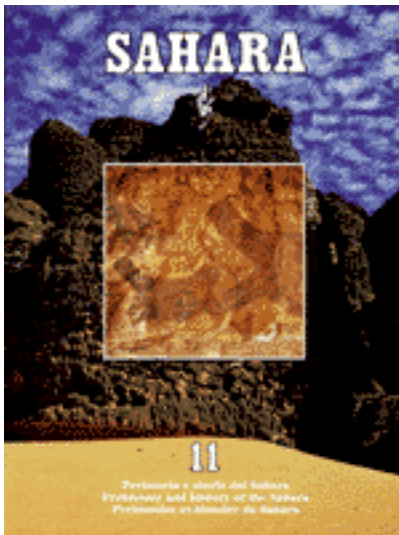


# RECENT JOURNALS

## SAHARA JOURNAL

*Sahara* is an international, yearly journal. Its aim is to spread information and opinions concerning the prehistory and history of the Sahara, the Sahel, and neighbouring regions. It was founded in 1988 with the purpose of acting as a link between scholars and experts of all countries.

*Sahara* deals mainly with archaeology, anthropology, desert environment, prehistoric rock art, ancient history, pre-Islamic monuments, ancient writings, archaeozoology, geology etc.



### **Contents of Volume 11, 2000**

160 pages, 127 b/w illustrations, 21 colour plates

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Savino Di Lernia, "Discussing pastoralism. The case of the Acacus and surroundings (Libyan Sahara)"

Augustin F.C. Holl and Stephen A. Dueppen, "Iheren I: Research on Tassilian Pastoral Iconography"

Richard Wolff, "Remarques sur des pièges gravés du Sud marocain"

Ralf Vogelsang, Klaus-Dieter Albert et Stefanie Kahlheber, "Le sable savant: les cordons dunaires sahéliens au Burkina Faso comme archive

archéologique et paléoécologique du Holocène"

Christian Dupuy, "L'art rupestre à gravures naturalistes de l'Adrar des Iforas"

Yves et Christine Gauthier, "Orientation et distribution de divers types de monuments lithiques du Messak et des régions voisines"

#### Amenti / Ament / Amentet

Vincenzo de Michele e Benito Piacenza, "L'amazonite di Eghei Zuma" (Tibesti settentrionale, Libia)

#### Documenti rupestri / Documents of rock art / Documents rupestres

Karl Heinz Striedter, "Gravures rupestres de Dadafuy" (Niger nord-oriental)

Alain Rodrigue, "Quelques données statistiques sur les gravures rupestres du Haut Atlas marocain"

Yves et Christine Gauthier, Pascal Lluch, "Nouvelles peintures rupestres de l'Immidir" (Algérie)

Aldo e Donatella Boccazzi, "La fauna selvaggia nelle pitture della regione di Ouri" (Tibesti orientale)

Bouchra Kaache, "Bestiaire gravé et environnement du Présahara marocain"

Lorenzo De Cola, "L'ostentazione della virilità. I risultati combinati della Pulizia Elettronica (P.E.) e del rilievo tradizionale applicati a un dipinto di Sefar"

Jean-Loïc Le Quellec, "Un nouveau bélier orné au Sahara"

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Guido Faleschini, "La «stele» dell'ippopotamo" (Fezzan, Libia)

#### Scritture / Writings / Écritures

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Libri ricevuti / Books received / Livres reçus

Recensioni / Reviews / Compte-rendus

\* \* \*

### **SUDANIC AFRICA: A JOURNAL OF HISTORICAL SOURCES**



**A note to our readers:** the journal was misnamed "Journal of Sudanic Studies" in the Volume 7 nos. 1-2 issue of Saharan Studies Association *Newsletter*. This was an error in this Newsletter; the journal has not changed its name from Sudanic Africa. The error has been corrected and a new version of that Newsletter is available on the SSA website at

<http://ssa.sri.com:8002/news/>

#### Contents of Volume 10, 1999

"A Tale of Three shambas: Shafi'i-Ibadi legal cooperation in the Zanzibar Protectorate, Part I": Anne K. Bang and Knut S. Vikør (1-26) \*

"The Defeat of the Infidels': A Poem by Sayyid Muhammad 'Abd Allah Hasan of Somalia": Mursal Farah Afdub and Lidwien Kapteijns (27-47) \*

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Jamie Bruce-Lockhart and John Wright (eds.), *Difficult and Dangerous Roads: Hugh Clapperton's Travels in Sahara and the Fezzan* (Knut S. Vikør) (173-7) \*

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### **SAJHS: TEN-YEAR INDEX 1990-1999 (180-213)**

As this is the tenth-anniversary volume of the journal *Sudanic Africa*, it contains a complete cumulative index of articles, authors, and subjects of articles, notes and book reviews in the ten volumes so far. An online-version of this index is placed on the journal's web page,

<http://www.hf.uib.no/smi/sa>.

The journal has also placed selected articles as well as notes and book reviews on the same web page for free download. The items marked with asterisks above are those available online from vol. 10.

\* \* \*

**L'OUEST SAHARIEN / THE WESTERN SARAH**

Cahiers d'études pluridisciplinaires / International  
Multidisciplinary Studies

Rédaction: Pierre Boilley, Rahal Boubrik, Emmanuel  
Martinoli, Ali Omar Yara

Directeur: Emmanuel Martinoli

Vol. 2, 2000

L'Harmattan, Paris, 208 p., ISBN 2-7384-9304-1

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