

RECENT BOOKS

ŠŪFĪ MYSTICS OF THE NIGER DESERT

H. T. Norris has brought out a study of the Maḥmūdiyya *ṭarīqa* in Aïr. The Maḥmūdiyya was created by Sīdī Maḥmūd al-Baghdādī al-Sharīf, who died, apparently at the orders of the Sultan of Agadez, in the first half of the sixteenth century. The book is built around the translation of a manuscript, *Qudwat al-mu^ctaqīd fī siyar al-ajwād*, attributed to a student of Sīdī Maḥmūd, Aḥmad al-Šādiq b. Uways al-Lamtūnī. The manuscript, which Dr. Norris was given access to in Aïr, consists of some seventy folios; of these about a third are reproduced as plates in the book.

Sīdī Maḥmūd came, as his name indicates, from the east to Aïr. He was considered by his followers as a *mujaddid*, renewer, of his time and region. Apparently, he was also considered by some a *mahdī*, as the work makes the point that this was not a status he claimed, nor was entitled to. He set up a community there, and probably had a connection with the Kulumbardo community in Borno.

The *ṭarīqa* has been connected to the Khalwatiyya, and recent Khalwatīs of Aïr trace their chain to Sīdī Maḥmūd, but al-Lamtūnī himself was a Suhrawardī.

The manuscript is sketchy on the biography of Sīdī Maḥmūd, and its main emphasis is on the disciples and doctrines of the community. A special chapter also describes the rules to be applied by the *fuqarā*², the procedure of the *dhikr*, the *wird* and the *khalwa*. However, the work does not seem, according to Professor Norris, to be mainly a manual for students. It seems that the community was in decline at the time the work was written, and that it is rather a somewhat nostalgic retrospect of Sīdī Maḥmūd's Way.

The *Qudwa* was apparently known in the region. Professor Norris demonstrates that the chapter on Sīdī Maḥmūd in Muḥammad Bello's *Infāq al-maysūr* shows very great similarities to the *Qudwa*. Thus Bello probably had access to the manuscript in some form.

While the life of Sīdī Maḥmūd is to some extent shrouded in hagiography, his pupil and the author of the *Qudwa*, Aḥmad al-Šādiq

al-Lamtūnī (d. c. 1090/1680) is better known. He taught for some time in Agadez, and he is mentioned in the biography of the Sudanese/Moroccan scholar Aḥmad al-Yamānī (d. 1113/1712), who travelled through Bornu and Aīr twice. Al-Yamānī apparently also studied with the Kulumbardo community of ʿAbd Allāh al-Burnāwī, thus further indicating a link between the two communities.

H. T. Norris, *Šūfī Mystics of the Niger Desert. Sīdī Maḥmūd and the Hermits of Aīr*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1990.

TWO BOOKS ON THE SANŪSIYYA IN CHAD.

There has recently been published two works presenting the history of the Sanūsī order and its confrontation with the French colonial forces in Chad.

One is written by Jean-Louis Triaud, and is a presentation of a collection of letters to the Sanūsī lodge in Bīr Alālī. It spans the time the lodge was founded in 1898 until it was conquered by the French in January 1902.

The Bīr Alalī lodge was the southern extreme of Sanūsī organized expansion in the Sudan. The material can thus inform of the intentions of the order in its ventures outside the Cyrenaican heartland. One conclusion Triaud feels confident to draw, is that the order did not seek out a confrontation with France; it was ill prepared for the encounter when it occurred. He also contrasts this with French policy over the matter, which was also divided on the correctness of attacking.

The thirty-eight letters partly stem from the Sanūsī capital at Guru in the northern part of Chad, partly from Sanūsī contacts to the south. The former include letters from the head of the order, Muḥammad al-Mahdī, from his young cousin Aḥmad al-Sharīf (who did not at this time take much interest in the politics of the region) and from the venerated scholar Aḥmad al-Rifī. They discuss the practical affairs of the lodge, but also relations with the French, as well as with the various factions who opposed each other in the area, including the Tuareg and various groups of Awlād Sulaymān Arabs. It also appears from the letters that the lodge, and its head, Sīdī Barrānī, had as its main function the gathering of intelligence about events in the region. However, the replies from Bīr Alalī to the centre have not been preserved, so what intelligence was dispatched does not appear.

The five letters that come from the south also throws light on the close relationship between Sanūsī and the rulers of Baguirmi to the south, showing how they tried to adapt Sanūsī leanings with the French dominant presence in the region.

The letters were found in the French colonial archives, and are given in the translation made by the then interpreter, Joseph Neigel, revised and annotated by Triaud. The original Arabic letters are also reproduced photographically.

Glauco Ciamaichella covers some of the same period in his study, *Libyens et Français au Tchad*. However, his topic is the role of the Sanūsī in the transsaharan commerce in Chad, and the effects of the war upon it. It spans the period 1897-1914, thus from when the French first arrived until they were masters of all of northern Chad. Ciamaichella sees the order mainly as a trading enterprise, and discusses the expansion of the order and its contacts with the rulers to the south of Sahara in that light. Thus, his view is that political expansion was not the driving force, as long as the political order in the south could provide the stability necessary for trade. This evidently clashed with French aspirations, which were mainly political, and also saw the Sanūsī in the same light.

Ciamaichella includes about twenty telegrams and letters from the French archives in Aix or at the Institut de France in Paris. They include correspondence between Largeau and other French officers on the ground and the Sanūsī. Among the topics taken up are the possible cooperation or delimitation of the region between the French and the Sanūsī in 1913. The latter claimed to have received an affirmation by the French consulate in Cairo that a division could be drawn between the two forces near Arada, leaving the Sanūsī centres at °Ayn Galaka and Guru in their hands. This would have allowed them to pursue their trade with Waday. However, the French at this time had no reason to give concessions to the Sanūsī, and denied that any such agreement was made.

Together, the two volumes enhance greatly the amount of documentary evidence we have for Sanūsī activities south of the Sahara.

Jean-Louis Triaud, *Tchad 1900-1902. Une guerre franco-libyenne oubliée?, Une confrérie musulmane, la Sanūsīya face à la France*, Paris, 1987; Glauco Ciamaichella, *Libyens et Français au Tchad (1897-1914), La Confrérie senoussie et le commerce transsaharien*, Paris, 1987

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