

MORE ON THE IDRĪSĪ TRADITION IN THE SUDAN

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The influence of Aḥmad ibn Idrīs and his students upon Sudanese Islam is well known; an increasing number of studies are available both on Ibn Idrīs himself¹ and on the brotherhoods that are linked to his tradition.² The Idrīsī influence manifested itself either in newly founded brotherhoods, or it found expression within the framework of established clans of religious leaders. In the latter case, Idrīsī ideas were adopted by and integrated into an existing structure which was primarily ethnically based; in the former, a new, supra-ethnic structure was created which was based primarily on religious affiliation. As ideal-types, one can distinguish the *fakī*, the religious leader in an ethnic formation, and the *shaykh*, the leader of a supra-ethnic religious formation.³ I would also propose the hypothesis that the new formations were initially more successful in areas peripheral to the old centres of religious life along the Nile and in the Gezira where religious families were more entrenched.

In real life, these patterns interacted, and the change of paradigm from *fakī* to *shaykh* that is discernable after 1800 is never clear-cut. Attention has so far focussed on the newly established brotherhoods. However, while Idrīsī influence on

- 1 See R. S. O'Fahey, *Enigmatic Saint. Ahmad Ibn Idris and the Idrisi Tradition*, London 1990, with further bibliography.
- 2 E.g., °Alī Šālih Karrār, *Āthār al-ta°ālīm al-Idrīsīyya fī 'l-turuq al-šūfiyya fī 'l-Sūdān*, M.A. thesis, University of Khartoum, 1977; John O. Voll, *A History of the Khatmiyyah Tariqah in the Sudan*, Ph.D. thesis, University of Harvard, 1969; Mahmoud Abdalla Ibrahim, *The History of the Isma°iliyya Tariqa in the Sudan, 1792-1914*, Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1980.
- 3 The two terms, of course, have other meanings as well, according to the context in which they are used. The subject will be elaborated in my Ph.D. thesis on Muḥammad Majdhūb (forthcoming).

one end of the spectrum resulted in a major reorganization of religious life (as effected by the Khatmiyya), on the other end it was fully integrated into the existing, ethnically based structure. This latter case is much less well studied. It should, however, not be disregarded; otherwise our picture of what the Idrīsī influence meant for a country like the Sudan will be distorted.

One of the groups continuing the ‘ethnic paradigm’ while adopting an Idrīsī affiliation lives in the Shandī area of northern Sudan, more specifically in Salawa, to the West of the Nile opposite the railway station of Wad Bān al-Naqā. They keep a library containing manuscripts (both books and letters) relating to the Rashīdī and Dandarāwī branches of the Idrīsī tradition. The data I was able to gather on this group are published here to direct the attention of researchers to this possible source of information.

The family of *fakīs* I am referring to belong to the Tiweymāb, a section of the Ja[‘]aliyyīn – [‘]Awaḍiyya.⁴ In a distant past, various groups of Tiweymāb emigrated from their homeland around Shandī.⁵ One of these groups settled among the Shāyqiyya in the area of Jabal Barkal, in the village of al-Kuray.⁶ Through intermarriage they became integrated into local society and ethnically identified as Shāyqiyya.

In the mid-19th century, a group of Shāyqiyya living in al-Diweymāb south of Shandī turned to these people when they were looking for Qur[’]ānic instruction, and brought al-Amīn w.

4 The [‘]Awaḍiyya are descendants of [‘]Awaḍ b. Rubāt b. Musmār ([‘]Awn al-Sharīf Qāsim, *Qāmūs al-lahja al-‘ammiyya fi ‘l-Sūdān*, Cairo 1985, 807).

5 Other than to Jabal Barkal, they moved to al-Rufā[‘]a, or the White Nile, for example.

6 The name of the village is taken from Ali Salih Karrar, *The Sufi Brotherhoods in the Sudan until 1900, with special reference to the Shāyqiyya region*, Ph.D. thesis, University of Bergen, 1985, 121. — The emigrés to al-Kuray are sometimes linked to one Madanī al-Ḥajar, who can *not* be identical to Madanī ‘al-Ḥajar’ b. ‘Umar b. Sarḥān (fl. c. 1625), teacher at al-Fijeyja/Qōz al-‘Ilm, where he died (cf. Muḥammad al-Nūr b. Ḍayf Allāh, *K. al-Ṭabaqāt fi khuṣuṣ al-awliyā’ wa ‘l-‘ulamā’ wa ‘l-shu‘arā’ fi ‘l-Sūdān*, ed. Y. F. Ḥasan, Khartoum, 1971, 360).

Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ b. al-Tiweym⁷ back to al-Diweymāb as their teacher. Al-Amīn had taken the *ṭarīqa* from Ibrāhīm al-Rashīd (1813-74), one of the principal propagators of the Idrīsī tradition in the northern Sudan, and he kept this affiliation when he moved to his ‘uncles’, the °Awāḍiyya of Salawa-Ṭabqa, whose religious leaders are the Qādiriyya of Umm Ḍubbān.⁸ A little south of Ṭabqa, al-Amīn established a mosque; he died in 1885, shortly after the Mahdi.

His and his brother Nūr al-Hudā’s descendants continue to live in what is called *Hillat al-Fuqarā* in Salawa. Their mosque is attended by °Abd al-Raḥīm b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Amīn b. Sa°id b. al-Amīn (born c. 1969; his father died c. 1989); they also maintain a *khalwa* (attended by Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm b. Nūr al-Hudā, c. 55-60 years old). They preserve links with the Adārisa of Omdurman.

Some other families in the area are affiliated to the Idrīsī tradition: south of the Tiweymāb there is a settlement of the Jābrāb (or Bawālīd), descendants of Ibrāhīm al-Bōlād and the Awlād Jābir. The majority of them belong to the Khatmiyya, but there is also an Idrīsī minority among them.

- 7 Karrar, *Sufi Brotherhoods*, 121 confuses him with the famous Mahdist poet, Muḥammad °wad al-Tiweym°, who belonged to a different branch of the Tiweymāb. The poet’s exact name is Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. °Abdallāh b. Ṣāliḥ b. °Abd al-Razzāq al-Naḥlān b. al-Faraḍ b. Mūsā b. Muḥammad b. [al-]Tiweym (cf. Qurashī Muḥammad Ḥasan, *Qaṣā°id min shu°arā° al-Mahdiyya*, Khartoum 1974, 177). Al-Faraḍ, who appears in all Tiweymābī genealogies, was named after Ibrāhīm °al-Faraḍ[ī]° b. °Abbūd[ī], the eponymous ancestor of the Faraḍiyyīn of the White Nile, who lived in the early 17th century (cf. Ibn Dayf Allāh, *Ṭabaqāt*, 79; H.A. MacMichael, *A History of the Arabs in the Sudan*, Cambridge, 1922, II, 246 no. 135, and the table after p. 272).
- 8 The school of Umm Ḍubbān, to the east of the Blue Nile, is one of the most famous centres of Islamic learning in present-day Sudan. It was founded by Muḥammad w. Aḥmad Badr (c. 1810-84) and is run by his descendants, the Badrāb. The influence of this school is analyzed—from a Marxist point of view—by Idris Salim El Hassan, *On Ideology: The case of religion in northern Sudan*, Ph.D., University of Connecticut, 1980.

(This information was recorded in Berlin from al-Shaykh Muḥammad °Abd al-Raḥmān, a great-grandson of Nūr al-Hudā, on 13 August 1990, 27 June 1991, and 27 November 1991).