

AFTER THE JIHĀD

After The Jihad: the Reign of Aḥmad al-Kabīr in the Western Sudan by John Hanson and David Robinson (with the assistance of Malik Balla, John Hunwick and Malek Towghi). East Lansing: Michigan State University Press (African historical sources no. 2), 1991, pp. xvi, 410.

After The Jihad is an anthology of translated documents dealing with the career of Aḥmad al-Kabīr al-Madanī (c. 1836-97), the eldest son and successor of *al-ḥājj* °Umar Tal al-Futi (c. 1797-1864). In *After The Jihad*, John Hanson and David Robinson introduce, translate, and annotate thirty-seven texts (primarily short chronicles, letters, and poems), the originals of which are reproduced at the end of the book. Thirty-two of the documents are in Arabic and the remaining five are in French. The authors obtained about half of the documents are from the collection of manuscripts seized by Colonel Archinard in Segou in 1892 and now preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.¹ The remaining texts were obtained from the Dépôt des Archives d'Outre-Mer and the archives of the Gouvernement Général de l'Algérie (both in Aix-en-Provence), the Archives Nationale du Sénégal and the Institut Fondamental Cheikh Anta Diop (both in Dakar).

Hanson and Robinson have organized the documents in a loosely chronological fashion, by periodizing Aḥmad al-Kabīr's career into three sections; the early, middle, and later years. Each section begins with an introduction to the period and is followed by the translated documents, each of which is preceded by its own mini-introduction. The three sections of translations are sandwiched between an introduction and epilogue. The introductory sections manage to review briefly the growing literature regarding the careers of °Umar Tal and Aḥmad al-Madanī.

1 For a catalog, see Nur al-Din Ghali, Sidi Mohamed Mahibou, and Jean Louis Triaud, *Inventaire de la Bibliothèque °Umarienne*, Paris: Editions du CNRS, 1985.

The earliest documents translated in *After the Jihad* date from 1855 to 59 and pertain to ʿUmar’s efforts to recruit supporters from Senegambia during his conflict with the Massassi Bambara in the upper Senegal valley. Two additional documents originate during ʿUmar’s life and concern Aḥmad’s installation as his successor. The remainder progress through Aḥmad’s career and end with his flight from Nioro (1891) and Bandiagara (1893). The documents have been selected to provide a sampling of the concerns which characterized the various periods of Aḥmad’s career. For instance, documents #5, 9, and 16 deal with Aḥmad’s struggle with his brothers and his effort to justify his claim to his deceased father’s political authority. Documents #5, 6, 7, 10, 11, and 19 concern Aḥmad’s relations with the North, today’s Mauritania and Morocco. Many of these documents also deal with Aḥmad’s political authority. Documents #8, 8A, 8B, 8C, and 8D deal with Nioro’s relations with the West, that is, with both the French and potential *jihādists* in the Senegambia area. Finally, documents #4, 13A, 13C, and 18B concern Senegambians who tried to use their experience in the East (Karta and Segu) to enhance their status back in Futa Toro.

While Hanson and Robinson have done a very good job translating the documents, there are a few instances for which this reviewer would like to offer a possible alternative reading. On p. 95 (Arabic text p. 322) the authors translate روم as ‘Europeans’, assuming that the original author, ʿUthmān Kusa, meant ‘men of Rome’. It seems unlikely that ʿUthmān, a contemporary of ʿUmar Tal from Futa Jalon, would have referred to Europeans as ‘Romans’ or ‘men of Rome’, which is an expression one might more likely find in North Africa or the Mashriq in much earlier times. If ʿUthmān wanted to refer to Europeans he would have more likely used the name *naṣārā*, which would have emphasized the religious difference between the Europeans and the *jihādists*, or the name *farānsa* which would have been more current and precise. Additionally, the correct Arabic for ‘Romans’ requires that the word end with a *nūn*. Instead, ʿUthmān, used a spelling which seems more appropriate for the descendants of the Moroccan/Andalusian invaders of late sixteenth century Songhay, who were known as the ‘Ruma’, or sometimes ‘Arma’. While the

proper Arabic spelling of 'Ruma' would require a final *tā'* *marbūṭa*, °Uthmān's spelling exactly represents the local pronunciation of the name, and it is quite possible that °Uthmān was not aware of the Arabic origin of the name or its correct Arabic spelling.

The context of the passage that contains the name also suggests that 'Ruma' is more likely the word that °Uthmān intended. In this document °Uthmān praised Aḥmad for his victories over the 'blacks', the 'Arabs', and our uncertain third group in Karta, Segu, and Masina. While there could have been very few Europeans in those regions at the time, it is certain that there were many more people whom °Uthmān may have considered to be Ruma. It is also likely that the Ruma were allied with the forces of Timbuktu and Masina, which opposed °Umar Tal and his successors. If this alternative translation is correct, the Ruma's role in the *jihāds* of °Umar and Aḥmad would constitute a fruitful topic for study.

A second apparent error in translation occurs on p. 120 (Arabic p. 331) where the authors translate *برنقال* as 'Burnuqal'. It seems fairly certain that this should be translated 'Burtuqal' (the Arabic rendering of Portugal), and that the translators have misread the *tā'* as *nūn*. The document in question is a letter from the governor of Nioro, Mustafa Keita, to the French governor of Ndar (Saint Louis). Hanson and Robinson attempted to link 'Burnuqal' to the Wolof word 'Borom', but even they realized that this interpretation did not fit the context. Still, the reviewer's translation is also surprising given that Mustafa referred to the 'Sultan' of Ndar as the 'agent' of Portugal. This seems an unusual association for the period, especially as the letter was addressed to the French governor himself. Could Mustafa have been confused about the connection between France and Portugal, or was he slyly insulting the governor?

Finally, this reviewer would like to make a minor suggestion concerning the place name 'Bark', which appears in English translation on p. 247 and in a French translation of a lost Arabic original on p. 396. Hanson and Robinson are unsure about the identity of the name, but suggest that perhaps it applies to the Awlad Mubarak, a tribal confederation whose name is often writ-

ten as 'Awlad Embarek'. This seems unlikely because the document discusses territories seized by the French, not population groups. Besides, the Awlad Embarek had already been reduced to near insignificance before French conquest by the combined forces of a similar confederation called the Meshdouf (Mashzūf) and Aḥmad's *jihādists* in Karta. Instead, 'Bark' may refer to a region located south-east of Nema named Archan al-Barouk, but which is often referred to simply as 'Barouk' by Mauritanian Arabic speakers.² The difference between 'Bark' and 'Barouk' might only be variant pronunciations between the Sahara and Savanna. Unfortunately, the lack of the original Arabic document makes any interpretation rather speculative.

As a researcher whose focus is Walata and the Mauritanian Hodh, this reviewer was most interested in three translated documents concerning relations between Walata, Aḥmad's forces in Karta, and the Meshdouf. The introductions and translations of these documents were quite good considering that they concern an area that is not the expertise of either Hanson or Robinson and that there is relatively little secondary literature available to guide the authors. The reviewer's only quibble is with the authors' interpretation of Walata's interests and concerns. The authors state that,

The Walata community wanted to see Aḥmad's influence extended into the southern Sahara, to secure the trade routes leading into the Western Sudan and to contain the 'robbers' and 'dissolute folk' who made passage difficult. Concern over the rise of Mashzūf influence over the affairs of Walata may have also have influenced their decision to submit to Aḥmad al-Kabīr.

Walata often tried to address regional political relations as a community, though this was at times quite difficult to do. The various families and clans in Walata shared many interests and were loosely bound by ties of kinship, affinity, and community, and they had long endeavored to retain for their community as much independence from large political formations (kingdoms

2 See Paul Marty's *Les Chroniques de Oualata et de Nema*, Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1927, 374

and empires) as was possible. °Umar Tal and Aḥmad both caused problems for Walati commerce and were viewed with suspicion. But Walati merchants were nothing if not pragmatic, and therefore cultivated relations with the major forces which came and went in the regions most important to them, such as Karta, Baghana, Masina, and Segu.

Walata's shifting relations with the Awlad Daoud and Meshdoug illustrate the complexity of Walata politics. Though Walatis had enjoyed very close relations with the Awlad Daoud for a century, they quickly curried favor with the leaders of the Meshdoug when they replaced the Awlad Daoud as the regional power in the second half of the nineteenth century. However, Walatis were not able to negotiate with the Meshdoug as a single community. Instead, rival factions in Walata backed rival factions within the Meshdoug leadership, and so it is difficult to generalize about Walata's relations with the Meshdoug. It is nevertheless unlikely that Walatis viewed relations with Aḥmad as particularly useful in regard to the Meshdoug. Instead, Aḥmad and his followers were important because of their influence in Karta and more specifically in the rising trade town of Nioro, and later as a possible block against the French effort to take possession of Karta and lands beyond.

Certainly much more work remains to be done concerning the relations between the Sahara and Aḥmad. Although *After the Jihad* is quite a substantial monograph, it is, of course, only a selection of the relevant documents that the authors have located in the previously mentioned archives. The monograph does not include documents from the administrative records in the Segu/Paris collection, nor does it contain material from other large archives such as the Centre Ahmad Baba in Timbuktu, the Institut Mauritanien de Recherche Scientifique in Nouakchott, or the Royal Library of King Hassan in Rabat. Resources in these archives and others could be organized into a very informative companion volume to *After the Jihad*. A companion volume might focus more closely on the relations between Aḥmad al-Kabīr and the Saharans, notably trade towns such as Tichit, Walata, and Timbuktu as well as important tribal confederations such as the Awlad Embarek, the Meshdoug, and the Kunta. In

addition to the wealth of documents in the archives of Timbuktu and Nouakchott, there are considerable holdings in private collections in Mauritania and Mali. For instance, there are several documents concerning the relationship between Aḥmad and Walata in private libraries in Walata. The former library of Talib Bubakar,³ who was a close relative of Mahjoub, the author of documents 11A and 11B, is particularly rich. Included in this library is a letter from Aḥmad (bearing his seal) to Talib Bubakar, which was written at Nema during Aḥmad's flight from the French. The library of Talib Bubakar and other late nineteenth century Walatis is now housed in a single building in Walata and is open to scholars.

In summation, *After the Jihad* is a well written and well researched collection of translations. In addition to its focus on the career of Aḥmad al-Kabīr, it also makes an important contribution to the unfolding story of the rise of Islam in West Africa, and is particularly useful in regard to the phenomenon of the nineteenth century *jihāds*. The present reviewer has already used translations from *After the Jihad* in undergraduate seminars dealing with Islam in Africa and with nineteenth century West Africa. In general, the students appreciated the opportunity to read in translation some of the sources of the secondary studies. Works such as *After the Jihad* and Kane and Robinson's *The Islamic Regime of Fuuta Tooro* are not only valuable to researchers of West African history, but are also important resources for undergraduate teaching.

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3 'Talib Bubakar' is the informal Walati pronunciation of 'al-Ṭālib Abū Bakr', and is similar or identical to forms used by many Fulbe and Soninke groups.