

BIBLIOGRAPHIES

A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE MAHDIST STATE IN THE SUDAN (1881-1898)

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The Sudanese Mahdiyya was a movement of social, economic and political protest, launched in 1881 by Muḥammad Aḥmad b. °Abd Allāh (later Muḥammad al-Mahdī) against the Turco-Egyptian imperialists who had ruled the Sudan since 1821. After four years of struggle the Mahdist rebels overthrew the Turco-Egyptian administration and established their own 'Islamic and national' government with its capital in Omdurman. Thus from 1885 the Mahdist regime maintained sovereignty and control over the Sudanese territories until its existence was terminated by the Anglo-Egyptian imperial forces in 1898.

The purpose of this article is first to give a brief survey of the primary sources of Mahdist history, secondly to trace the development of Mahdist studies in the Sudan and abroad, and finally to present a detailed bibliography of the history of the Mahdist revolution and state, with special reference to published sources (primary and secondary) and conference papers.

Bibliographic overview

The seventeen years of Mahdist rule in the Sudan produced a large number of published and unpublished primary textual sources on the history of the revolution and its state. Contributions from 'Mahdist intellectuals' in the Sudan were products of the state written in defence of the ideals of Mahdist ideology and the achievements of the Mahdi and his successor, the Khalifa °Abdallāhi. The Mahdi himself left a

corpus of literary works, which manifest his own teachings, proclamations, sermons and judgements issued on various occasions. The surviving documents of this collection have recently been edited and published in seven volumes by Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Abū Salīm under the title *al-Āthār al-kāmila li'l-Imām al-Mahdī*.

The Khalifa's rule (1885-98) also produced a considerable amount of official correspondence between the Khalifa and his provincial governors and other major officers. In total, more than twelve thousand of these letters survive and are kept in the National Records Office in Khartoum and other depository centres, mainly in Britain and Egypt. Besides this, there is a series of departmental documents that include for example the registers of the Khartoum dockyards and the financial records of the central and provincial treasuries. In 1996 the present writer and Anders Bjørkelo edited and translated the surviving records of the Public Treasury (*Bayt al-māl*) of the Mahdist state, published in one volume as *The Public Treasury of the Muslims: Monthly Budgets of the Mahdist State in the Sudan, 1897*.

The 'official Mahdist chronicler', Ismā'īl 'Abd al-Qādir al-Kurdufānī, also wrote two major works on the history of the Mahdiyya. The first, *Kitāb sa'ādāt al-mustahdī bi-sīrat al-Mahdī*, is a chronological account with frequent theological and editorial diversions, covering the life and career of the Mahdī and the first years of the Khalifa's rule. His second work, *al-Ṭirāz al-manqūsh bi-bushrā qatl Yuhanna malik al-Ḥubūsh* is on the history of the Mahdist campaigns against Ethiopia (or Abyssinia). These two works were published in 1972, edited by Abū Salīm (with Muḥammad Sa'īd al-Qaddāl as co-editor of *al-Ṭirāz al-manqūsh*).

The other two major contributions of Mahdist intellectuals, both printed by the Mahdist lithographic press, are the works of al-Ḥusayn b. Ibrāhīm Wad al-Zahrā', *al-Āyāt al-bayyināt fī zuḥūr mahdī 'l-zamān wa-ghāyat al-ghāyāt*, and al-Ḥasan al-'Abbādī, *al-Anwār al-saniyya al-māḥiya li-ḡalām al-munkirīn 'alā 'l-ḥaḍra al-mahdiyya*. These two works

were written in defence of the Mahdist ideology and the *mahdī*hood of Muḥammad Aḥmad b. °Abd Allāh. The third pro-Mahdist work that can be classified with this category is the work of the Egyptian nationalist Aḥmad al-°Awwām, *Naṣīḥat al-°Awwām li'l-khāṣṣ wa'l-°āmm min ikhwānī ahl al-°imān wa'l-Islām*.¹ Al-°Awwām's treatise contains some information on the concept of the expected *mahdī* in its wider sense and on the *mahdī*hood of Muḥammad Aḥmad al-Mahdī in the Sudan. In 1971 al-°Awwām's treatise was published in an edition by the Egyptian scholar Ibrāhīm Shaḥḥāta Ḥasan.

Among the anti-Mahdist works sponsored and circulated by the Turco-Egyptian regime in the Sudan one can single out the works of Aḥmad al-Azharī, *al-Naṣīḥa al-°amma li-ahl al-islām °an mukhālafat al-ḥukkām wa'l-khurūj °an ṭā°at al-°imām*; al-Amīn al-Ḍarīr, *Hudā 'l-mustahdī °alā bayān al-mahdī wa'l-mutamahdī*; and the Egyptian mufti Shākīr al-Ghuzzī, *Buṭlān da°wat Muḥammad al-Mahdī*. The authors of these three treatises directed their concern mainly towards the fundamental religious and mystical principles of Mahdist ideology, and strongly refuted the claim of Muḥammad Aḥmad al-Mahdī as the expected *mahdī* who would fill the earth with justice as it had been filled with oppression and tyranny.

Abroad, the issue of the Sudanese Mahdists preoccupied the Colonial Office in London and the Department of Military Intelligence in Cairo. Thus the European sources that were published on this issue were mostly concerned with the officials of the Khedival regime in Egypt, who were actively engaged in propagating a military campaign against the Mahdist state in the Sudan. Scholars like P.M. Holt,² Yūsuf Faḍl Ḥasan,³ Abbas Ibrahim Muhammad Ali,⁴ and Gasim

1 ALA, I, 332f.

2 P.M. Holt, 'The source material of the Sudanese Mahdia', *St. Antony's Papers*, 4: Middle Eastern Affairs, 1, London 1967, 107-18.

3 Yūsuf Faḍl Ḥasan, 'Some aspects of the writing of history in modern Sudan', University of Khartoum: Institute of African and

Yusuf Badri⁵ have criticised these propagandist products, considering them as works biased against the Mahdist revolution and the Mahdist state. Their argument is that the works in question were heavily influenced by the war propaganda to prepare the British public opinion for the eventual 'reconquest' of the Sudan.

The best examples of such works are the four accounts of the European prisoners Slatin, Ohrwalder, Guzzi and Rosignoli, who had been in the custody of the Mahdist regime for varying lengths of time. The two most famous are the accounts of Father Joseph Ohrwalder and of Rudolf Slatin, both translated into English and edited by Francis Reginald Wingate under the titles *Ten Years' Captivity in the Mahdi's Camp* (1892) and *Fire and Sword in the Sudan* (1886), respectively. Wingate's own famous book, *Mahdism and the Egyptian Sudan*, published in 1893, can also be classified in this category, considering that it was written on the basis of intelligence reports and interviews with Egyptian, Sudanese, and other eyewitnesses who had either visited or resided in the Mahdist Sudan.

Besides these five European accounts, one can add three other propagandist works published after the breakdown of the Mahdist state in 1898. The first was the account of the German trader Charles Neufeld, who had been on a commercial visit to the Sudan in 1887. He was captured by the Mahdists and transferred to Omdurman, where he spent twelve years in prison. His account, written in German, was translated into English under the title of *A Prisoner of the Khaleefa: Twelve Years' Captivity at Omdurman*. The second was the account of Ibrāhīm Fawzī, secretary of Charles Gordon, who had been captured by the Mahdists

Asian Studies (Occasional Paper 12), 1978.

- 4 Abbas Ibrahim Muḥammad Ali, 'Contemporary British views on the Khalifa's Rule', *Sudan Notes and Records*, li, 1970, 31-46.
- 5 Gasim Yusuf Badri, 'A critical analysis of British historical writings on the Mahdiyya of the Sudan', MA Thesis, American University of Beirut 1971.

after the liberation of Khartoum in 1885. After being released by the Anglo-Egyptian imperialist forces he published *al-Sūdān bayna yaday Ghurdūn wa-Kitshanar* in 1902. In this book he attempted to show his Arabic readers the terrorism of the Mahdist regime and from this point to justify the occupation of the Sudan in 1898. The third was the work of Na[°]um Shuqayr on the history and geography of the Sudan (*Ta[°]rīkh al-Sūdān al-qadīm wa'l-ḥadīth wa-jughrafiyyatuhu*) published in 1903. Its section on the history of the Mahdiyya was drawn largely from primary textual material, intelligence reports, personal observations, and on-site interviews of eyewitness and Mahdist survivors.

After the establishment of the Anglo-Egyptian colonial administration in 1898 a number of popular and academic descriptive accounts dealing with the history of the Mahdiyya were published in the Sudan and abroad. Most of them were opposed to the Mahdists and their heritage and tried to justify the cultural, social, moral and political ideals that led to the overthrow of the 'Dervishes' regime'. Besides these works there are a number of serious studies on the Mahdists based on the accounts of some Mahdist survivors. These studies were conducted by British colonial administrators and published in the journal *Sudan Notes and Records*.

The reconstruction of Mahdist history

In the 1950s the large amount of published and unpublished primary textual material on the Mahdiyya drew the attention of professional historians such as Makkī Shibayka and P.M. Holt, and enabled them to present a chronological account of the major political events and processes, as well as the structure of the Mahdist state in the reigns of the Mahdi and the Khalifa [°]Abdallāhi.⁶ In the course of time, the attention of Mahdist studies has gradually shifted from the political to the

6 Faḍl Ḥasan, 'Some aspects', 5.

intellectual, social, economic and regional histories of the Mahdiyya. A large number of historical studies have been made on such topics, such as those of Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Abū Salīm on the intellectual aspects of Mahdist ideology, by Muḥammad Saʿīd al-Qaddāl on the economic policy of the Mahdist state, ʿAbdallāhī ʿAlī Ibrāhīm on the intellectual struggles between the Mahdi and the Turco-Egyptian scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*), Robert Kramer on the social and political history of Omdurman, and Mūsā al-Mubārak on the political history of Darfur during the Mahdiyya.

The contributions of these professional historians have greatly enriched the historiography of state and society in the Mahdist Sudan and emphasised that the reconstruction of the Mahdist history is in a steady and continuous process of development. For the sake of further development, this process has to be continued by making available historical data and discovering new techniques of research and unrestrained by the claims of politicians who would like to ‘politicise’ the Mahdist history to make it more in line with their personal and political aspirations.

The bibliography of the Mahdist state

As part of this development, the intention here is to present a detailed bibliography of the history of the Mahdiyya. The bibliography is divided into broad subject areas, including:

- A. Nineteenth-century colonial propagandist literature
- B. Mahdist published primary sources and memoirs
- C. The Mahdiyya in the general history of the Sudan
- D. Regional works (provinces, cities)
- E. Military activities and related topics
- F. Social structure and social change
- G. Internal politics and tensions
- H. Economy and finance
- I. Administration and related topics

- J. International relations and inter-borders tensions
- K. The Mahdist ideology and related topics
- L. Biographical works
- M. Bibliographies and works of reference

The entries (books, articles, or conference papers) under these subject areas are listed in serial order and arranged alphabetically. For each entry the subsequent abbreviations mean:

- BSOAS* *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, University of London.
- ICHM* The International Conference on the History of the Mahdiyya, Khartoum, 29 Nov.–2 Dec. 1981. [A selection published in °Umar al-Naḡar (ed.), *Dirāsāt fī ta’rīkh al-Mahdiyya*, Khartoum 1982. Cf. details in section C.]
- JAH* *Journal of African History*.
- KUP* Khartoum University Press.
- MDI* *Majallat al-Dirāsāt al-Ifriqiyya*, Intentional Islamic University, Khartoum.
- MDS* *Majallat al-Dirāsāt al-Sūdāniyya*, The Institute of African and Asian Studies, University of Khartoum.
- MK* *Majallat al-Khurṭūm*, Khartoum.
- MW* *The Muslim World*.
- NRO* The National Records Office, Khartoum.
- SAD* Sudan Archives Durham, University of Durham.
- SNR* *Sudan Notes and Records*, Khartoum.

A. Nineteenth-century colonial propagandist literature

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