

A DOCUMENT OF PERSONAL EXEMPTION FROM THE KINGDOM OF SINNAR

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Following is a document issued in the °Abdallāb sphere of the Funj kingdom of Sinnār establishing the immunity from tribute of clients of a family line of Muslim holymen, the °Arakiyyūn, and dated Ramaḍān 1199/8 July–7 August 1785. Written in Arabic on a single quarto-sized sheet, without any ring-seal, the original was in the possession of the late Shaykh °Abd Allāh Hamad al-Nājī of Abū Ḥarāz (on the Blue Nile near Wad Medani) when he graciously allowed it to be copied by the author in 1981.

Most of the extant documents from the territories of the Funj state record the exemption of specific landholdings from various taxes and encumbrances, or court decisions relating to disputes over such status, while the present document deals with the immunity of persons.¹ Allusion is made in the text to an earlier deed issued by the °Abdallāb ruler (*mānjil*) Shaykh °Ajīb b. al-°Ajayl (d. 1193/1779-80) and his son Shaykh °Abd Allāh decreeing that they were in a state of consecration (*jāh*) to ‘God and His Messenger’ and to Shaykh Daf° Allāh—presumably Daf° Allāh ‘al-Maṣūbin’ b. Muḥammad Abū Idrīs (d. 1049/1683-4), the most eminent of a long line of °Arakī holymen at Abū Ḥarāz and a leading

1 See Jay Spaulding and Muhammad Ibrahim Abu Salim (eds.), *Public Documents from Sinnar*, East Lansing: Michigan State University Press 1989, 16-17, and Neil McHugh, *Holymen of the Blue Nile*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press 1994, 91-2. For examples in the kingdom of Taqali see Janet J. Ewald, *Soldiers, Traders, and Slaves*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press 1990, 113, 147 & 149.

seventeenth-century figure of the Sufi brotherhood al-Qādir-iyya in the Nilotic Sudan.² The holder of the present document was a direct descendant of Daf[°] Allāh and his brother the incumbent of a line of succession (*khilāfa*) from Daf[°] Allāh.

The place of issuance is not stated but there are indications that it may have been Abū Ḥarāz, a community strongly associated with the °Arakiyyūn and their shrines. The presiding authority in the gathering at which the document was drafted, and its first signatory, was Abū Bakr b. °Abd Allāh whose title *arbāb* suggests that he was of the °Abdallāb ruling family, perhaps the son of °Abd Allāh b. °Ajīb who later served briefly as *mānjil*. A document produced at al-Ḥalfāya, the seat of °Abdallāb government, would likely have been attested to by the *mānjil* himself. Moreover the preponderance of *fuqarā'* (religious specialists) in the relatively short list of witnesses, and the inclusion of a student of the prominent °Arakī *faqīh* Muḥammad wad al-Ṭirayfī (d. c. 1750), who drafted the document, and of an apparent member of the Sharaf al-Dīnābī family—associates of the °Arakiyyūn at Abū Ḥarāz—also point to Abū Ḥarāz as the probable locale.

I wish to thank Jay Spaulding and °Alī Ṣāliḥ Karrār whom I consulted on aspects of this document.

2 There is an extended biography in Daf[°] Allāh in Muḥammad al-Nūr b. Ḍayf Allāh, *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt fī khuṣūṣ al-awliyā' wa'l-ṣāliḥīn wa'l-ulamā' wa'l-shu'arā' fī 'l-Sūdān*, 2nd edn., ed. Yūsuf Faḍl Ḥasan, Khartoum: University of Khartoum Press 1974, 206-10. In this biographical/hagiographical work, reference is made to other examples of *jāh* pertaining to classes of individuals and their property. The Funj monarch Bādī II b. Rubāṭ wrote for the holyman Muḥammad b. °Isā 'Suwār al-Dhahab' a seal (*khatim*) with the words: 'All who read under Shaykh Muḥammad are consecrated [*jāh*] to God and His Messenger, their land and their slaves' (p. 348). The household of the *faqīh* Abū Diliq of Dongola was 'one of the seven households [*zarā'ib*] which Shaykh °Ajīb [°Abdallāb *manjil*, d. c. 1611] consecrated to [°Abd al-Raḥmān] Walad Jābir', the teacher of Abū Diliq (p. 49).

Text

فهذه حجة قاطعه ووثيقه مانعه مما ثبت وتقرر انا واولاد³
 كنجين كولو فضل ا جميع الحقوق محفوظة مجاهد مروان كجك ولد حمد وابن اخيه محمد
 ولد بلول ادعو اولاد / شمومه محمد ولد عبد الرحمن
 واخوانه اولاد حبيب ا جميع الحقوق محفوظة مجاهد مروان كجك قالوا / عربنا وقال لهم الفقيه حمد
 النيل جاه ا جميع الحقوق محفوظة مجاهد مروان كجك ورسوله وجاه الشيخ جميع الحقوق محفوظة مجاهد مروان كجك ما لكم عليهم
 وجه وبقيا متنازعين ثم بعد ذلك قعدوا اولاد / كنجس
 بوجه ابوا بكر ولد عبد ا جميع الحقوق محفوظة مجاهد مروان كجك وقالوا عرضوا مكتوب جاهكم
 واتا / لهم الفقيه حمد النيل بمكتوب للشيخ عجيب ولد
جميع الحقوق محفوظة مجاهد مروان كجك ورسوله وجاه
 الشيخ جميع الحقوق محفوظة مجاهد مروان كجك دفع ا لما نظروا / اولاد برنكو في المكتوب قالوا
 سمعا وطاعة لمكتوب اولاد عجيب / فوجدنه⁴ صحيح
 وقطعنا نزاعنا منهم ما لنا عليهم وجه واتمنا / القديم
 وصاروا اولاد برنكو مقطوعين النزاع ما لهم دعوه ولا / طلب
 ولا فضة ولا ذهب ولا يمينا با جميع الحقوق محفوظة مجاهد مروان كجك اذا وجب حضر ذلك /
 وشهد به الارباب ابوا بكر ابن الشيخ عبد ا جميع الحقوق محفوظة مجاهد مروان كجك والارباب
 عجيب / ولد قدوره ولد زمزم والارباب البر ولد عبد الصمد

3 . ان اولاد . I.e.,

4 . فوجناه . I.e.,

obeying the document of the Awlād °Ajīb. We have found it to be authentic and have cut off our claim on them. We have no right over them and we ratify what was before [*al-qadīm*].’ The Awlād Barankū became cut off from their claim. They have no claim—neither levy [*ṭalab*] nor silver nor gold nor oath by God if required.⁷ There attended and witnessed that the *arbāb* Abū Bakr b. Shaykh °Abd Allāh and the *arbāb* °Ajīb walad Qadūra walad Zamzam and the *arbāb* al-Barr walad °Abd al-Ṣamad [al-°Usharābī?] and the *faqīh* Zayn al-°Ābidīn b. Balīla and al-Ḥājj Aḥmad walad Sharaf al-Dīn and the *faqīh* al-Amīn b. Ḥassān and the *faqīh* Qarar and the *faqīh* °Alī b. Abū ’l-Zayn and I am the poor before God Aḥmad b. al-Faqīh °Umar, student [*ṭilmīdh*] of Shaykh Muḥammad b. al-Ṭirayf,⁸ scribe and witness, and God is the best of witnesses. Written in the month of God Ramaḍān, year one thousand one hundred and ninety-nine after the Prophet’s *hijra*, upon its Lord be the best of blessings and the purest of salvation.

7 This phrase appears in Spaulding & Abu Salim, *Public Documents*, Document 4, pp. 45 & 47 and Document 67, pp. 369 & 371.

8 This is an apparent reference to Muḥammad wad al-Ṭirayfī, whose biography is in Ibn Ḍayf Allāh, *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt*.