STUDIES IN WEST AFRICAN ISLAMIC HISTORY

The Cultivators of Islam

Edited by
John Ralph Willis

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Volume 6

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Edited with an Introduction by
JOHN RALPH WILLIS

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Volume 6

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STUDIES IN WEST AFRICAN ISLAMIC HISTORY

Vol. II The Evolution of Islamic Institutions

Vol. III The Growth of Arabic Literature

STUDIES IN WEST AFRICAN ISLAMIC HISTORY

Volume 6

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JOHN RALPH WILLIS

Professor at the Program in Near Eastern Studies, Princeton University

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For
T.L.H.
&
H.F.C.S.

Contributors

R. G. Jenkins (Centre of W. African Studies, University of Birmingham) has conducted research on the nature of Islamic institutions in North and Northwest Africa and the history of education in Ghana since the 1870s.

Nehemia Levtzion (professor in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem) has written on the diffusion of Islam in ancient Ghana and Mali, as well as Upper Volta. His recent work has concerned the phenomenon of conversion to Islam.

A. A. Batran (professor at Howard University, Washington, D.C.) has investigated the role of Sufism and religious brotherhoods in West African Islam and the development of a tradition of scholarship within Muslim communities of the Western Sudan.

H. T. Norris (Senior Lecturer in Arabic, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London) has written extensively on the poetry, folklore, and historical literature of the peoples of Mauritania.

Louis Brenner (sometime professor of African history, Boston University) has pursued research on the early history of the Central Sudan and the influence of Sufism on African Islam.

Ivan Hrbek (Oriental Institute, Prague) has done much to assist the translation and editing of early Arabic texts on the history and diffusion of Islam in Africa, and has published widely on the *jihad* movements of the Western Sudan.

Charlotte Alison Quinn has focused on the history of the Mande-speaking peoples of West Africa in the pre-colonial era, and the impact of Islam during this period.

Yves Person (professor in the University of Paris (I)) has specialized in the pre-colonial history of the Ivory Coast, especially as it concerns the role of the Mande-Dyula in the economic, religious and social activities of the Volta region.

Lucy Creevey (formerly Behrman) (professor, University of Pennsylvania) has contributed numerous publications on the position of religious brotherhoods in the political and economic history of the Senegambian region.

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Preface

This is the first of three volumes* of studies in West African Islamic history. As its sub-title, "The Cultivators of Islam", suggests, this effort is primarily concerned with the activities and achievements of some of the seminal figures associated with the growth of Islam in this region. Though it may be generally agreed that Islam has emerged an "African religion", the centuries of evolution which lay behind this culmination are often lost sight of. Islam did not flower in the Western Sudan in one spontaneous outburst, but was cultivated by many means and individuals over a prolonged period. The ground for conversion was prepared as early as the appearance of the first Arabs in the Maghrib (c.22/642). It is in recognition of this debut in the Islamic "West", and indeed of the continued links between the Maghrib and the Sudan, that considerable attention has been given here to the Maghribian roots of West African Islam.

The strength of any collected work emanates from the combined efforts of its contributors. The scholars attracted to this volume are all "learned" in the best Islamic tradition. Most have travelled widely in the Western Sudan, gathering documents which impinge on their subject—seeking out *shaykhs* who have dedicated their lives to the preservation and cultivation of the West African Islamic tradition. They, perhaps more than their readers, will have appreciated the tentative nature of their research as well as the difficulties which confront outsiders in coming to terms with the intricacies of another religious tradition. Dr. Batran is a notable exception to this observation.

Having grown up in the milieu of Sudanese Islam, and as a member of a long-standing religious family belonging to the Khatmiyya *ṭarīqa*, Dr. Batran can only be considered an "outsider" insofar as he has had to master that range of subtlety which sets off West African Islam from Islam as it developed in his native Republic of the Sudan.

It is customary to register at least one disclaimer in the preface to a new volume. In these presentments of West African Islamic leaders, the objective has been to stimulate research and to present some of the firmer tentative conclusions of the contributors. Certainty is a dangerous objective in any new field, and the contributors are only too fully aware that some of their conclusions may have to be revised in the light of further research. But, if it is permissible to paraphrase the *ḥadīth*, we have all made use of our "*ijtihād*" and will feel ourselves duly

*Further volumes will be issued on the evolution of Islamic institutions and the growth of Arabic literature.

rewarded if what we have uncovered is of benefit to future scholars who may indeed more closely approximate that ultimate and illusive objective of certainty.

Acknowledgement is due Miss Anne Louise Jones and Mrs Helen Baz who contributed tireless hours in assembling the index and standardizing the seemingly endless list of individuals, places, and concepts. We are further indebted to Miss Jones for whatever cartographical merits this volume may possess; to Miss Mary Ann Middleton for very kindly translating the Person chapter from the French; to Dr. Andrew Jameson for illustrative material (now handsomely adapted in our cover); and to Mr. Frank Cass, our enlightened publisher, whose interest in this work has been more than commercial.

J.R.W.

List of Abbreviations

Arch.Maroc.	*Archives Marocaines.*
ANS	Archives Nationale du Sénégal, Dakar.
BCAF	*Bulletin du Comité de l'Afrique française et Renseignements coloniaux.*
BCEHSAOF	*Bulletin du Comité d'Etudes historiques et scientifiques de l'Afrique Occidentale française.*
BGR	Bibliothèque Générale, Rabat.
BIF	Bibliothèque de l'Institut de France.
BIFAN	*Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Afrique Noire.*
BNP	Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.
BSOAS	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (University of London).
CO	Colonial Office, London.
E.I.	*Encyclopaedia of Islam* (first edition, Old *E.I*; second edition, New *E.I.*).
GAL	*Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur* (Carl Brockelmann), two volumes (G.I, II) and three supplements (S.I, II, III).
Index	*Index Général des Manuscrits Arabes Musulmans de la Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris* (George Vajda).
IFAN	Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire, Dakar.
JAH	*Journal of African History.*
JHSN	*Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria.*
RMM	*Revue du Monde musulman.*
Sh. E.I.	*The Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam.*
THSG	*Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana.*


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INTRODUCTION

Reflections on the Diffusion of Islam in West Africa

JOHN RALPH WILLIS

The social structure of ancient Arabia, like that of the Western Sudan, was premised upon blood kinship. Arabs and Sūdānīs alike traced descent from a common ancestor, and stressed the communal ties of the group as against the independence of the individual. It was the genius of Muḥammad that over a remarkably short period he was to transform the basis of Arab society—to mold out of the anonymity of collective life a place for the individual. The ties of Islam and the community of faith were to supersede the old bonds of kinship. The inauguration of the Islamic Dispensation was to prefigure a new relation between men—in the *ḥadīth*'s phrase, 'the white man was not to be above the black nor the black above the yellow; all men were to be equal before their Maker', and equal before His sacred law.[1] Among believers superiority was to be evidenced by priority in the faith or by stricter observance of its precepts.

What was the impact of the Islamic genius upon Western Sudanese culture? Were the remarkable achievements of Islam within the communal context of Arab society to pre-echo an analogous creation among Sūdānīs of diverse ethnic origin? How close did Sūdānī cultivators of Islam approximate the Muḥammadan ideal?

The Cultivators of Islam

Three rather distinct traditions of Islamic diffusion serve to reflect the strikingly different ways in which Islam took root in the Sahara, the Savannah, and the Sudan. These are not the only discernible patterns of diffusion, but they are most surely some of the dominant ones. The first which shall be discussed here had its ancestry in Northwest Africa and sprang forth among the Zawāyā or Berber clerisy of that region. It found its initial and perhaps most forceful expression in the "Almoravid" movement of the eleventh century. One should hasten to add that the Almoravid achievement remains a subject of scholarly contention. Some scholars would disavow a continuity between the Almoravid outburst and the comparatively quietist aspirations of Zawāyā of a later era.[2] They would argue that with the death of the Almoravid leaders, their ideals slipped from the consciousness of African Islam. Others, like the present writer, prefer to view the movement as more than a catalytic factor in Islamic diffusion, indeed as a generating force which echoed down the centuries in an unending impulse. The essays of Levtzion, Norris, and Batran in their own ways cut through this enigma, and the reader will suffer no lack of evidence to plump for his own choice.

Again, one is not on altogether uncontroversial ground in treading through the bewildering mass of Mande Islam. Were the Mande as tepid and accommodationist as the received version of their religious activities would have us believe? Were their efforts largely confined to considerations of a commercial nature and the diffusion of Islam merely an adventitious consequence of these narrowly secular concerns? Or is there some hidden dimension of their record which would overturn this harsh assessment? The recent writings of Wilks certainly incline us in this direction;[3] the essay by Person strongly suggests that Samory was far from compromising in his early efforts to establish Islam among his kinsmen: and if the conclusions of Hrbek have anything to tell us it is that when presented with a vigorous figure of real stature, the Mande were not beyond aggressive action. Yet again, the real nature of the Mande achievement may fall somewhere between the received version and this latter extreme. Military *jihād* was not the only means of action open to fervent Muslims who wished to cultivate Islam. Indeed to interpret the absence of a militant Mande tradition as some sign of religious tepidity may be to miss the strength and special quality of Islam as it flourished among these people.

It is with the cultivation of Islam among the Torodbe or Turudiyya peoples that West African Islam begins to shed some of its ethnic particularism. The eclectic character of Torodbe Islam has not been fully appreciated. No previous distinction has been brought forward between the elements of Fulbe culture which prevailed among these peoples and the Fulbe ethnic element which was by no means prevalent. It will be seen that the militant Torodbe clerisy rose from the rootless beginnings of Senegalese Islam—that the Muslims we have been calling "Fulbe" held this distinction in culture only. It will be shown that the Turudiyya were largely composed of slaves or descendants of slaves drawn from a broad spectrum of Sūdānī society—that Turudiyya was a way of life pursued by any believer willing to disdain the despised crafts and embrace a sedentary existence which espoused the cultivation of Islamic learning.[4] While Zawāyā and Mande Islam retained something of a narrow ethnic appeal, Torodbe Muslims transcended ethnic barriers and in so doing came closest of all Sūdānī Muslims to the realization of the Muḥammadan ideal. Among them, the brotherhood of Islam took precedence over bonds of kinship; despite their dispersion throughout the Western Sudan, the common oppression which they met with forced the different kinds of Torodbe back to the one thread that bound them. Yet ironically, as they achieved power, they became like the Arabs—loathed for their arrogance—despised for their tendency to view the offices of religion and state as a matter of special privilege. And again like the Arabs, the Torodbe encountered a sustained opposition from groups which refused any recognition of the pretensions they put forward. Of the later movements thrown up by this resistance, those led by Muḥamadu Lamīn and Samory, though largely responding to a peculiar kind of ethnic particularism, were in no small measure a forceful reply to what was seen as Torodbe tyranny.

Of the remaining figures, Muḥammad al-Kānimī and Aḥmad Bamba offer striking departures from the patterns drawn above. Their efforts defy any easy categorization. With al-Kānimī we confront one both spiritually and geographically removed from the normal territory of West African Islam. Indeed, his inclusion in the present volume may give pause to one of the more pressing problems in need of research. We have yet to arrive at any precise distinctions

between East and West African Islam. Bornu may very well provide the experimental *milieu* within which these differences and similarities can be worked into shape. Moreover, it may well prove the meeting ground between two apparent religious extremes. "Apparent" because al-Kānimī would seem more comfortably placed in the Turkish sphere of influence. From the sixteenth century onwards (and perhaps even earlier) Bornu engaged in an often frustrating flirtation with the Porte, and it is clear from the rancour of exchange between al-Kānimī and 'Umar b. Sa'īd[5] that Turkish religious leadership still weighed heavily upon Bornu '*ulamā*'. Surely, however, there is more to the story than this. What was the real thrust of al-Kānimī's movement? Is Brenner overly harsh in his characterization of al-Kānimī as "usurper"? What significance must we attach to his adoption of the title "*shaykh*" in preference to the array of secular titles which could have been his for the asking? There are strong hints of a mystical strain coursing through this Kanuri leader's philosophy, and it may be within this context that his religious and political activities will come to be understood. But there is yet another stone which must be overturned—or at least raised up for another look. In the early part of the nineteenth century, Denham detected what looked like a Bornu affiliation to the Ḥanafī *madhhab*.[6] Should not this thread of evidence be pursued to its fullest conclusion? Does it provide a sufficiently convincing reason to confine Bornu once and for all to the Turkish camp? Did such an affiliation affect adversely Bornu's relations with its Mālikī neighbors to the west?

In Aḥmad Bamba's teachings, the Wolof discovered a viable alternative to Qādirī and Tijānī Islam. Bamba's Murīdiyya *ṭarīqa* offered a means of conserving Wolof ethnic solidarity while at the same time presenting an interpretation of Islam more congruous with Wolof needs. There is perhaps the same sort of ethnic particularism at work here as that which was to convey the Yoruba away from the Qādiriyya conviction of their northern enemies and into the ranks of the Tijāniyya. Bamba's career offers an object-lesson in the difficulties of fostering Islam under imperial rule. His was an intolerable position. Unlike so many of the subjects under study, who clashed directly with French military force, Bamba had little opportunity to attract an Islamic army even had he wished to do so. Did he? Behrman is not altogether sure, and her caution in this regard is perhaps well advised. Bamba was caused to be ever so careful. The French kept him under constant surveillance and almost continual detention. Yet he kept on gnawing at their sensibilities, which only cast further doubt as to his intentions. The ambiguous tone of his writings raised more fears than it removed—every attempt at clarification led to further confusion and greater mistrust. But despite these disabilities, few Muslims were to leave a deeper mark on West African Islam than Bamba, and for this history has rightly judged him indulgently.

The Zawāyā Clerisy

In the view of some early authors, Zawāyā tradition was at bottom a continuation of a previous pattern established by their "predecessors", the Almoravids.[7] Before considering the relative merits of this argument, it may prove useful to summarize some features of the Almoravid movement itself, as much controversy persists as to its character and degree of success. Despite earlier efforts to downplay the movement's religious impulse,[8] the recent work of Farias[9] restores to prominence

the spiritual aspect of Murabiṭīn activities. An early link is forged between 'Abd Allāh b. Yāsīn and the *Dār al-Murābiṭīn* of his master, Wājāj b. Zallū;[10] Farias perceives a "striking break" with Berber military techniques in favor of a "re-enactment of the military practices of Muḥammad himself and of early Islam";[11] 'the closed formation is the fighting technique most suitable for one willing to die'—"it was the holiest technique, the very original and sacred pattern of *Jihād*, the most consistent with the Qur'ānic words." And Farias concludes that "this makes us realize again how deeply mingled in the very kernel of the Almoravid movement (and acting on it from the inside) were the religious factors. The view of so many historians ... that these religious factors were only an excuse for pillage, stands in need of revision."[12] Again, Farias' stress on the religious factors underlining the Almoravid *jihād* is somewhat unsympathetic to Levtzion who, in one of these essays, underscores the economic importance of Awdaghust as the principal factor leading to its capitulation at the hands of the Murābiṭīn.[13]

Most important perhaps for the belief in a Zawāyā continuation of the Almoravid tradition, is the recent disclosure linking 'Abd Allāh b. Yāsīn with the so-called "*Dār al-Murābiṭīn*". It is known that the institution or school which became identified with this name came under the supervision of Yāsīn's master, the *shaykh* Wājāj [Wajjāj] b. Zallū [Zalwi], whom Norris accords the distinction of being "the first known Ṣanhāja scholar of repute".[14] The "*Dār al-Murābiṭīn*", located in the Sūs al-Aqṣā (southwestern Sahara), seems to have found its *raison d'ētre* in the indoctrination of students in the religious sciences of Islam. Hence, like the Zawāyā of a later era, the *Murabiṭīn* of 'Abd Allāh b. Yāsīn brought teaching to the forefront of their activities and gave great emphasis to the recitation of the holy Qur'ān.[15] The legendary Sāqiyat al-Ḥamrā' was to give rise to a similar institution which became closely associated with the Zawāyā of another epoch, and their role in the expansion of Islam in the Sahara and the Sudan.[16]

The undeniably close relation between 'Abd Allāh b. Yāsīn and his master, Wājāj b. Zallū, makes difficult any argument which would attempt to project the Almoravid leader in a shadow of ignorance. The transmission of Mālikī learning from Abū 'Imrān al-Fāsī, the celebrated master of Wājāj, to 'Abd Allāh b. Yāsīn has been firmly established. Such an impeccable *silsila* supports the belief that the quality of religious instruction within the Almoravid movement must have remained at a high level, at least until the death of its progenitor in 1059. When Yāsīn was driven from the presence of the veiled Ṣanhāja, it was with the *Dār al-Murābiṭīn* that he found a ready refuge. Moreover, Farias argues that "Wājāj's influence may have been decisive" in the course of events which culminated in the Almoravid conquest of Sijilmāsa.[17] Lastly, if one is to include in this learned tradition the rather mysterious figure, the Imām al-Ḥaḍramī, it is possible to postulate the continuation of a scholarly tradition within the southwestern wing of the movement until the death of this *imām* in 1096 A.D.[18]

Farias has suggested that the Imām al-Ḥaḍramī was perhaps a seminal figure in the dissemination of Islamic doctrine and Arabic literacy in the Western Sudan.[19] This is in sharp contrast to writers such as Semonin who would refuse the *Murābiṭīn* any continuous influence in the Islamization of Ghana and its environs during the period 1048–1087.[20] They discount the probability of a prolonged *jihād* against the Sūdānīs in view of the shift northwards after the collapse of Sijilmāsa in 1054. The return of Abū Bakr to the desert, however, (1072 A.D.)

accompanied by the Imām al-Ḥaḍramī, seems to have given a renewed impetus to Islamic diffusion. The Imām al-Ḥaḍramī was appointed *qāḍī* by Abū Bakr, and entrusted with the administration of justice.[21] Oral traditions moreover assign the Imām al-Ḥaḍramī with the specific mission of converting unbelievers to Islam—a reference which suggests a renewal of efforts to convert the Sūdānīs.[22] The Imām al-Ḥaḍramī lived for nearly a quarter of a century in the southwestern Sahara, and Farias is of the belief that "we may surmise that after the death of Abū Bakr the Imām al-Ḥaḍramī continued to teach and to exert his religious influence upon the regions under Almoravid control."[23]

What then is to be said for the Almoravid contribution to the cultivation of Islam in the Western Sudan? Is there any justification for contending that the Almoravid tradition persisted after the death of the Imām al-Ḥaḍramī in 1096 A.D.? Farias is in full agreement with the hypothesis advanced previously by Bivar and Hiskett to wit, "it is a hypothesis of substantial weight that literacy in the Arabic script and the custom of authorship in the Arabic language were introduced to West Africa during the period of the *Murābiṭ* (Almoravid) dynasty."[24] Bivar and Hiskett make reference to Arabic inscriptions preserved at Gao—cogent evidence, they contend, of a "ready communication between Andalusia and the Niger region around the year 1100 ...." And they are quick to observe that the "emphasis on the rulings of authorities, characteristic of an orthodox Mālikism substantially free from innovating tendencies is typical of the West African Arabic literature"[25], as indeed, one might add, it had been characteristic of the Almoravid movement itself.

It has been further argued that the Almoravid movement gave rise to the first wave of fertile and durable conversions in the *Bilād al-Sūdān*.[26] Whether through diplomacy or by dint of force, powerful and influential notables from many great families of the Western Sudan were won over to Islam. Some diffusion of Islam in Takrūr and Mali can be traced to a *Murābiṭīn* origin, and even when particular affiliations appear lacking in historical weight, one cannot help but be struck by the significance which many Sūdānī families attach to the supposed Almoravid beginnings of their devotion to Islam. Tradition holds that Abū Dardai, the legendary forerunner of Ndyadyan Ndyay (founder of the Wolof community in the Walo)[27] was descended from *Murābiṭīn*. Again, Amadu Bubakar b. 'Umar (who took the name "Nydadyan Ndyay"), first *brak* of the Walo, is seen as the son of the Almoravid *amīr* Abū Bakr and a Torodo woman.[28] Delafosse further credits the Almoravids with the conversion of the *dia Kossoi*, who held authority in Gao in the eleventh century. These instances of conversion represent the flowering of Islam among the leading people and their immediate entourage. Delafosse contends that mass conversion might have served to diminish differences between notables and the lesser worthies subject to them.[29]

We should be reminded, however, that the introduction of Islam in *Bilād al-Takrūr* antedates the beginnings of the Almoravid movement, and can be placed before c.1040 A.D. Indeed, we are in possession of a statement attributed to Ibn Yāsīn himself, who is said to have contemplated taking refuge with Sūdānīs "among whom Islam had already appeared." Still further evidence can be seen in the presence of four thousand Sūdānī troops who accompanied Yūsuf b. Tāshfīn in the battle of al-Zalaqa (Spain, 1087), which suggests a possible alliance between the *Murābiṭīn* and their Takrūrī co-religionists.[30]

The suggestion of a continued Almoravid tradition in the southwestern Sahara

remains a vexing question. The central figures in this alleged tradition are the so-called Zawāyā groups. It was Marty who suggested that the formation of the Zawāyā took place before the appearance of large numbers of Arabs in this region during the course of the fourteenth century—the period normally associated with the rise of this important Islamic clerisy. The Zawāyā owed their origin to the oppression which they suffered at the hands of Berber, and later Arab warrior groups, who came to inhabit the Sahara and the Sāḥil as early as the eleventh and twelfth centuries.[31] In an effort to avoid further molestations at the hands of these stronger groups, given to raiding their water points and expropriating their belongings, certain Berber fractions (which had already converted to Islam) voluntarily abandoned the use of arms, and consecrated themselves to a life of prayer, study, and animal husbandry. No longer a military menace by dint of disarmament, the Zawāyā hoped to purchase a degree of tranquility through regular payments to the semi-Islamized warrior groups who oppressed them. Having already suffered a kind of *déclassement* by virtue of their religion, the Zawāyā were further humbled in the eyes of these irreverent warriors precisely because they had abandoned their own defence. In place of violence the Zawāyā counseled patience, charity, and hospitality in coming to terms with aggressive groups which espoused the use of force and encroached upon the property of others.[32] In later times, the career of Sīdī al-Mukhtār al-Kabīr al-Kuntī (who was to commute very successfully between the two worlds of Zawāyā and warrior) would epitomize the kind of skillful diplomacy which won for the Zawāyā a mounting weight of respect.[33] Again, their charismatic powers; magnetic hold over zealous followers; and acquisition of sizeable wealth provided something of a counter-balance to the sometimes harsh political influence of their temporal superiors.[34] Conversely, however, the career of Nāṣir al-Dīn (c.1645–75) was to image the Zawāyā as not entirely disdainful of military *jihād* as a means of unleashing themselves from the yoke of oppression.

F. de la Chapelle in his masterly essay, "Esquisse d'une Histoire du Sahara Occidental", put forth most convincingly the argument in favor of a continued Almoravid tradition under the leadership of the Zawāyā clerisy. De la Chapelle perceived a resurgence of Ṣanhāja influence under the Sa'dī regime in Morocco, whose rise to power coincided with the expulsion of the "Moors" from Spain in 1492.[35] For Chapelle, the latter event was of momentous consequence. He ascribed a preponderant role in the recrudescence of Islam and the reassertion of Ṣanhāja influence to religious figures uprooted from Spain and exiled in the Sāqiyat al-Ḥamrā.[36] According to Chapelle, C. Trumelet was the first to draw attention to the Sāqiya as a chief *foyer* for the dissemination of Islam in the southwestern Sahara and Sudan from this period onwards. Trumelet depicted the Sāqiya as a haven for religious devotees—a semi-desert area remote from wordly concerns and consecrated to the life of prayer and study. Its *zāwiya* was described as a "religious university", and Trumelet suggests that these learned Iberian refugees added a new dimension, that of "science", to this vibrant centre of Muslim learning.[37] Importantly, the *zāwiya* was also an enclave of the Qādiriyya *ṭarīqa*, and hence might have been one of the earliest centres for the dissemination of the Qādirī *wird* in the Western Sudan. The newcomers from Spain do not appear to have been Qādirīs before their arrival in the Sāqiya, for Trumelet expressly mentioned their adoption of the *wird* as a new factor in their religious development.[38] He maintained that Qādirīs had long been active in the

mountainous reaches of the Sūs, but had not hazarded to venture much beyond its confines. It was indeed the Andalusians who would assume the arduous task of cultivating Islam amongst the Kabyle peoples hitherto resistant to all previous efforts directed at their conversion. The Andalusian Qādirīs travelled in groups of five and six to the mountains of Kabyle, and at the behest of Qādirī authorities in the Sāqiya, established Islamic schools for the first time among these people.[39]

Blanchet and Dereims, who visited the Adrār in 1900, claimed that the influence of the Andalusian *shaykhs* was felt as far as Shinqīt, though Chapelle himself had difficulty verifying their findings on a subsequent visit to the region. According to Blanchet and Dereims, many inhabitants of the Adrār conserved keys to Granadan abodes, previously occupied by their Andalusian "ancestors".[40]

Chapelle again challenged controversy when he took exception to some of the views expressed by M.Cour, an earlier authority on Moroccan history.[41] Cour had attached little importance to traditions which stressed the role of these Andalusian *shaykhs*—the silence of Ibn Khaldūn and Mármol on their supposed activities seems to have given his skepticism an extra severity. Indeed, neither author had signalled the existence of a *ribāṭ* or *zāwiya* in the Sāqiyat al-Ḥamrā'. Cour's review of this problem provoked the eighth part[42] of Chapelle's discussion of western Saharan history, and in an argument recalling debate over the so-called Almoravid "*ribāṭ*", he sought to pose an alternative thesis. Given the nearly two hundred years which separated the works of Ibn Khaldūn (d.1406) and the Spaniard, Mármol Carvajal, writing in 1573, Chapelle contended that the silence of these works on the matter under review could not be construed as evidence against the alleged activities of the Spanish refugees. Moreover, he maintained that if by "Sāqiyat al-Ḥamrā" one understood more than the streamlet itself, and included adjacent regions, it would not be far fetched to conceive of an Islamic revivalist movement emanating from that area. And it is at this juncture that Chapelle begins to speak of an Almoravid tradition.

What had in fact happened to the Almoravids who returned to the desert after the demise of their dynasty in 1147? While constrained to admit that this was perhaps a question doomed to uncertainty, Chapelle perceived a form of protest—an expression of fervour—that was recognizably in the old *Murābiṭ* tradition. He drew attention to the preponderant role of Zawāyā groups throughout the history of the Mauritanian region—the cradle of the *Murābiṭīn*. Local chronicles, he observed, attested to the importance—indeed reverence—in which the pious and learned were held in that area in particular.[43] Hence he went on to postulate both a pacific and militant continuation of the Almoravid tradition from the outbreak of the original movement; the arrival of the Andalusian *shaykhs* in the Sāqiyat al-Ḥamrā', to the *jihād* of the *shaykh* Mā' al-'Aynayn al-Qalqamī (d.1910).

Chapelle argued that descendants of the Ṣanhāja confederates could be discovered in the Sāqiyat al-Ḥamrā'. Among these he reckoned the Lamtūna Tājakānt of Tīndūf and the 'Arūsīyn of the Imrikli. Others included the Massūfa (or Mashḍūf) of the Adrār; the Gudala (Judala), who became tributaries; the Lamṭa, who had representatives in the Wādī Nūn, and the Idaw Mribit of Bani—linked by Benitez with the "people of the *ribāṭ*".[44] Levtzion notes that "some Zawāyā trace their genealogy back to Abū Bakr b. 'Umar, or to his followers (such as the Imām al-Ḥaḍramī)." And he concludes that "the Almoravids' religious heritage therefore survived the extinction of their political and military power."[45]

Interposed between the zone of the camel and that of the horse, the Sāqiyat occupied a strategic location. Its convenient access to Moroccan markets attracted trans-Saharan caravans thrusting in two directions: from Wādī Nūn to the Senegal (by way of Adrār and the Ḥawd); from Tīndūf en route to Timbuctu.[46] Batran and Jenkins[47] underscore the importance of Kunta activities in this region, notably those of Muḥammad al-Kuntī and his celebrated son, Aḥmad al-Bakkā'ī. The latter was born in the Sāqiyat, and Jenkins notes that seven of the eight brothers of Ibn 'Isā ("founder" of the 'Isāwiyya) met their death there while in *jihād* against Christians.[48] And Jenkins cautions that "the Maghribian tradition which held that *walīs* came from the Muslim West at this time, particularly from the Sāqiyat al-Ḥamrā', should not be lightly dismissed. Nor should Delafosse's belief that these *walīs* dispersed to the south, as well as to the north."[49]

But Chapelle had still to dismiss Cour's doubts as to the existence of a *ribāṭ* or *zāwiya* in the region of the Sāqiyat al-Ḥamrā'. He observed that it had never been the practice of religious men in this area to position themselves permanently in such institutions, but to pursue the lives of universal ambulants—hardly less motive than nomadic warriors. Sīdī Muḥammad al-Kuntī ranged outside the Sāqiyat to create an important clientele in the western Sahara which was to prosper under his progeny. Before raising the *qaṣaba* (citadel) in the village of Ṣmāra (not far from the Sāqiyat), Mā' al-Aynayn experienced a prolonged period under the tent either in that area or in the Tīris. Nor was his experience exceptional—the Qādirī, Shaykh Sīdyā; the early Kunta *shaykhs*; and the Ahl Muḥammad Salim were never fixed.[50]

These assertions accord well with the recent discoveries of Batran relating to the time-honoured practice of *siyāḥa*. Traditions recall how "sometime before their death the Kunta *shaykhs* carried out their longstanding custom of *siyāḥa*"—their peripatetic travels in pursuit of knowledge and the propagation of Islam. Sīdī Aḥmad al-Bakkā'ī (to whom Batran attributes the earliest dissemination of the Qādirī *wird* in the Sudan), chose to undertake his *siyāḥa* "without staying in ... settled communities or populated areas". Later, he was to give way to the wishes of the people of Walata who pleaded with him to become their *shaykh* and instruct them in the demands of the *Sharī'a*.[51]

There is, however, one other element in Chapelle's compelling thesis that begs explanation. One must account for Ṣanhāja attraction to the movement initiated by Sa'dī *sharīfs*, and the aversion to the claims of the Banū Marīn dynasty. Here, one must recall the events of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries which witnessed a dissipation in Ṣanhāja influence. As the Arab presence during this period grew massive, it resulted in a Ṣanhāja reduction to servile status. Indeed, by the mutations of fashion the term itself became synonymous with servitude. A rigid social hierarchy, which was to persist into modern times, was thrust upon Berber groups under Arab dominance. At the summit of this hierarchy were the warrior descendants of the Banū Ḥassan Arabs. Next in rank came the Zawāyā clerisy of Ṣanhāja origin placed above non-Zawāyā Berbers in varying degrees of subservience to their Ḥassanī superiors. At the base of this social edifice could be found blacksmiths, reputedly of Jewish origin, and *ḥarāṭīn*, offspring of racial mixture between Sūdānīs and other groups.[52]

Cour and Chapelle remained in agreement that at least a portion of the Ṣanhāja sought a way out of their dilemma in the rising fortunes of the Sa'dī *sharīfs*. It had been Cour's view that the Zawāyā groups specifically had ranged behind the Sa'dī

banner, refusing to obey Arabs incorporated into the Banū Marīn armies, and revolting against them in favor of the new dynasty. Chapelle was confirmed in his belief that it was possible to find convincing proof of a religious movement originating in the Saharan oasis and linked to Sa'dī power, and he sought to discourage any absolute denial of the existence of such a movement.[53]

Chapelle's theories went largely unchallenged until a fresh offensive was mounted by H.T. Norris.[54] Norris cautioned that the theory advanced by Chapelle was apt to put his readers on a false scent—that parallels drawn with the Almoravid movement were pressed too hard. He noted that contemporary Mauritanian scholars were rather skeptical of Chapelle's pronouncements—that while "they could concur with the view that an ethical or spiritual Islamic ideal is always present, any notion of an Almoravid 'Berber revival' linked to Ṣanhāja liberation from the Arab Banū Ḥassan, is in their view, misleading." Qādirī influence, at least until the eighteenth century, is also disavowed.[55]

According to Norris, the Shādhiliyya *ṭarīqa* prevailed in Shinqīṭ until the time of the Qādirī *shaykh*, Sīdī al-Mukhtār al-Kuntī (d. 1811). The pupils of this much-venerated *shaykh*, especially Shaykh Sīdyā al-Kabīr, succeeded in supplanting Shādhilī influence in that area.[56] Moreover, Norris seriously questions whether "the average Saharan" had ever had a clear awareness of the existence of Almoravid leadership.[57] In short, he takes exception to the notion which "... links eleventh century saints and teachers such as Abdullah b. Yāsīn with those of fifteenth and sixteenth century in the Sāqiyat al-Ḥamrā', and then to the Imām Nāṣir al-Dīn, and finally to Shaykh Mā'al-'Aynayn." He is in doubt whether all of these "warrior saints" were in fact protagonists of an inherited ideal or tradition, and an Islamic ideology, both pacific and militant, "which sought to preserve and propagate the Sunna ... as the only acceptable way of life among all classes of the Saharan community".[58]

Norris then raises the intriguing question whether "... the ever returning scholar or warrior saint is simply the projection of a religious and social idea to which the mental outlook of the Saharan tribes has become increasingly conditioned or, whether some truly historical factor is also present".[59] Some "truly historical factor" may very well be present. Traditions collected in Tèlimelé (Futa Jallon) attempt to link the Deniankobé dynasty with a certain Yāsīn Dédé (Yāsīn the elder). According to the researchers, "ici le nom Yacine nous fait penser au Chef Almoravide Abn Yacine du XIe siècle. On peut admettre que les Tenguella [Deniankobé] aient voulu se rattacher à ce chef musulman. Dans tous les cas ce tableau dynastique ne semble pas remonter au dela du XIe siècle".[60] Such traditions lend weight to the notion of the continuing importance of the Almoravids *per se* in the evolution of an Islamic ideal in the Western Sudan. Norris is in fact willing to concede the possible presence of some "conscious ideological association" with the *Murābiṭīn* (but not necessarily the Almoravid) tradition in the careers of Nāṣīr al-Dīn and the *shaykh*, Mā' al-'Aynayn.[61]

Yet is Nāṣir al-Dīn merely longing for some image of the Islamic past lent brilliance by a distance of several centuries? Is there some Saharan appreciation of the *Murābiṭīn* ideal which lacks a channel to the Almoravid experience? Norris is oddly dismissive of Nāṣir al-Dīn's remarks (on being asked the first sign of the "hour of destiny") that it would be preceded by the appearance of a youth from the veiled 'Arabs' who would endeavour to revive the faith. Nāṣir al-Dīn had maintained that only the Lamtūna, or the Almoravids, prayed with their faces

veiled in a *lithām*—that is to say, only the Lamtūna were permitted to do so by the *fuqahā'*.[62] At least this was Nāṣir al-Dīn's opinion. Despite this, however, Norris is of the belief that "... there is little to indicate that Nāṣir al-Dīn deliberately intended to represent his movement in any way as an historical Almoravid revival, nor does it appear to have begun as a 'pan-Berber revolt' as is frequently suggested." Norris' skepticism is rooted in what he terms the unlikelihood that the Lamtūna, heavily under Arab influence, would have continued to wear the veil. And he sees little resemblance in Nāṣir al-Dīn's movement to the doctrinal issues stressed by 'Abd Allāh b. Yāsīn.[63]

As regards alleged Almoravid influence on the career of Mā' al-'Aynayn, Norris is equally confirmed in his skepticism—notwithstanding his recognition that Mā' al-'Aynayn's family alone continued to transmit the veil as an emblem of sanctity. In his view, "all these details favor the thesis that there is an Islamic tradition among the Zawāyā which places certain saintly persons outside the limits of everyday human life and experience, and which endows such persons with the status of *murābiṭūn*, yet not necessarily 'Almoravid' in any historical sense."[64]

Out of the failure of Nāṣir al-Dīn's *jihad* sprang a new conveyance for Saharan life. Once again the Zawāyā were constrained to restrict their activities to religious and economic affairs. Paradoxically, however, they became in time the preservers of the language and literature of Arab culture. The Banū Ḥassan, who had defeated them, would not be seen as propagators of religion—the sons of Arabs originally responsible for the introduction of Islam would henceforth be looked upon as infidels.[65] Ḥassanī warriors agreed to render protection to their Zawāyā clients, and to respect their pacifistic mode of existence. In return, the Zawāyā would be responsible for the education of Ḥassanī children. But in every sphere the Zawāyā were to give way to the comforts and conditions insisted upon by their superiors. Ḥassanī warriors reserved the prerogative to draw the first bucket from communal wells; to be supplied with milk from Zawāyā flocks; to receive saddles from Zawāyā craftsmen and lodgement for their women in time of need.[66] Yet the primary vocation of Zawāyā peoples, from which they have never shrunk, was the religious instruction of the young. Upon mastering the elementary essentials of the Qur'ān, which normally occurred round the age of puberty, many young people channelled their energies into religious studies, while others sought to augment their patrimony through commerce, pastoral endeavors, and agriculture. Some were allowed to accept work as hired hands, as long as such engagements were not at odds with Islamic law, and were unlikely to interfere with their spiritual well-being.[67]

Such then, was the humiliation of the Zawāyā. According to Marty, it was from this period forward that a division was effected among them which led to their affiliation with various Hassanī fractions.[68] By their attachment to Hassanī superiors, each Zawāyā group became subject to the fullest glare of scrutiny and compelled to turn over specified contributions[69] as an overt mark of subservience. Thus it was from 1674, with the collapse of Nāṣir al-Dīn's *jihād*, that the quasi-vassal, quasi-client relationship developed between the Zawāyā and Arabo-Berber warriors.

The repercussions of the Zawāyā movements in the Western Sudan have yet to be fully measured. The geographical import of the Sāqiyat al-Ḥamrā' has already been signalled, and one need only mention that the region of the Wādī Nūn was

of no less strategic significance. This great stretch in the southwest of Morocco, between the western Anti-Atlas and its Saharan outliers (twenty miles from the sea), had a history largely dictated by its geographical position.

One of those rare groups of oases which throughout the centuries had communicated to its south with the Mauritanian Adrār and the Senegal, and to its southeast with peoples of the Niger Bend, it posed the exit of the easiest route between the desert and the northern slope of the Atlas, and presented a natural corridor flowing as far as Mogador. Importantly, its proximity to the Atlantic Ocean had enabled its inhabitants to effect commercial relations with Europe, while at the same time attracting the most valuable of the Sudan's rich produce.[70]

Farther south, in the Adrār, Norris stressed that "Shinqīṭī fulfilled a role ... similar to that of Tīshīt in the east of Tagānit,[71] and Walāta in the Ḥawḍ. Certain groups such as the Idaw 'Alī, the Aghlāl and the Shamāsīd (Shams al-Dīn) enjoyed a local reputation. From these centres there was a constant emigration of scholars towards the Senegal river, among them teachers, *qāḍīs*, grammarians and calligraphists."[72]

Montagne also postulates a gradual progression southwards of Arabo-Berber nomads and their Zawāyā clients toward the Bilād al-Sūdān. The prosperous agricultural lands cultivated by Sūdānī sedentaries must have posed an unending attraction to nomadic groups confronted with the slowly dessicating areas of the Sāḥil, unblessed with a substantial rainfall. The push southwards was further generated by the ruthless way in which pastoralists ignored the ecological laws of nature. The destruction of trees severely inhibited the Sāḥil's productivity, and tended to quicken the southward encroachment of the desert.[73] Montagne maintained that racial admixture with Sūdānī concubines allowed descendants of these nomads to adjust to climatic changes from the semi-desert Sāḥil to savannah grasslands.[74]

Marty uncovered traditions which spoke of an early Sarakholle dominance of the Tagānt. Sarakholle, or proto-Sarakholle groups were driven out of the area by rapid incursions of Berbers who themselves appear to have been dislodged by Arabs. According to Ibn Khaldūn, several Sūdānī groups submitted to the Ṣanhāja, paid them a capitation tax, and became Islamized through contact with them.[75] Many Zawāyā preferred to take up residence among the Sūdānīs, however, injecting a leavening influence which had effect over a wide area.

Traditions concerning a certain *sharīf*, Sīdī Ilāyas, serve to illustrate ways in which the Zawāyā clerisy cultivated Islam in the Bilād al-Sūdān. The descendants of this *sharīf*, who appears to have lived initially in Timbuctu, and later in Wādān, attached themselves to various ethnic groups. One son and his family became incorporated in the Idaw al-Ḥājj, while another passed over the Senegal at Walalde and proselytized amongst Siratik "Tokolors" who were pagan. He married a pagan woman of the country, and though most of their children seem to have been pagan, it is implied that others became converted to Islam. Six or seven generations later, the entire family is said to have emigrated to the Cayor, and established itself in the village of In Daguel, near Mgaye-Mekhe. At that point the family appears to have become fully Islamized, and its leader was 'Abd Allāh Dieng.[76] Of his sons, six continued to live among the Wolof and inter-marry with them. A seventh, however, Mudi Mālik, joined the Awlād Daymān of the Tashumsha—one of the five Zawāyā groups who had gone down to defeat with Nāṣir al-Dīn in the battle of Shurbubba (1674). Mudi Mālik became a master of

religious studies, and instructor of Awlād Daymān children. A skillful calligrapher, he did not speak Arabic and was obliged to make use of an interpreter. He took a woman from the Awlād Daymān, and raised his children within that group. His five sons became renowned for their piety and scholarship. One of them, called Aḥmad Bu Ras, was placed in charge of an orphanage, where he instructed numerous children of the Zawāyā after their defeat at the hands of the Ḥassanīs.[77]

Wolof communities such as Cayor had been under the close influence of Zawāyā Islam at least from the time of Cadamosto, writing in the fifteenth century. Cadamosto spoke of Zawāyā "priests" who were "constantly on duty in the mosque". The *jihād* of Nāṣir al-Dīn spilled over into the Senegal region, some areas of which were placed under the command of two Senegalese *amīrs* who had supported his cause.[78] Indeed Marty observes that the Senegal river had never been as much a barrier for Berbers, as it was for Sūdānīs—the former had never hesitated to cross it. Many individuals of Berber origin sought assimilation within the Wolof majority. Wolof clans such as the Darmankur of Jolof and Cayor have undeniably, according to Marty, had their origin amongst the Berber Idaw al-Ḥājj. They took up residence in the villages of Wasane, Keur Bati, Mqalil, and Khadie in the provinces of Cayor and Jolof. They achieved a revered reputation within these countries because of their scholarship and sanctity, and due to their Zawāyā tradition, more highly developed than the learning which prevailed amongst their Wolof co-religionists. The Idaw al-Ḥājj were especially responsible for the dissemination of the Shādhili *wird* among the Wolof.[79] A sedentary group of so-called "black *sharīfs*", though Qādirī, also affiliated with the Shādhiliyya, while linking themselves with their more powerful neighbors, the Idaw al-Ḥājj. These "black *sharīfs*" were active preachers and propagators of Islam in the Senegal region, particularly among the Wolof with whom they intermarried. The *imārat* of Trarza came to include several predominantly Wolof areas, notably N'Diago, Dār al-Salam, Keur, Mūr, and Thiekane, the noted birthplace of the important Senegalese Muslim family, the Kane.[80]

Another Zawāyā group, the Ahl al-Aqīl, also maintained links with the Sudan. Aḥmad al-Aqīl is said to have pursued religious studies with his sister, Khadīja. Later, he was sent to Futa Jallon where tradition claims he learned "cryptography" and the magical "sciences" under the tutelage of a certain Shaykh Alfa Brāhim. The case of Aḥmad al-Aqīl might not have been isolated, as it is unlikely that the flow of teachers and scholars between the southwestern Sahara and Sudan was entirely one-sided.

Tradition claims that Khadīja had many students, among whom was the celebrated 'Abd al-Qādir, who in 1775 opened the "*bāb* of *jihād*" for the people of Futa Toro; united the Muslims; and furthered the Islamization of the area.[81] Another Senegalese to draw profit from a Zawāyā education was the so-called "Mahdī of Podor" (b. 1803), who after distinguishing himself as a student of two local scholars, al-Ḥassan Tierno, and Abū Bakr (the Imām of Dimar) pursued his studies in the Sahara where *shaykhs* of various Zawāyā groups provided a more comprehensive education.[82]

The Idaw al-Ḥājj seem to have held a prominent role in the cultivation of Islam among the Senegalese. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, under the leadership of Hamdi b. Mukhtār Maḥjūb, the Zawāyā fraction of the group became well known as scholars and holy men. Hamdi b. Mukhtār Maḥjūb, who

died in 1802, left three sons. One of them, Bābā Wuld Muḥammadan, inherited his father's *baraka* and gained many disciples among Zawāyā groups of the Trarza, throughout the villages of the lower Senegal, up to and including Cayor.[83]

Finally, one must not overlook the activities of the Kunta. The influence of Sīdī al-Mukhtār al-Kabīr and his predecessors amongst the Sudanese is well established by Batran.[84] Nor does Kunta prestige seem to have suffered appreciably by the end of the nineteenth century. According to Behrman, Aḥmad Bamba's desire for religious knowledge carried him to Mauritania, where he received further instruction under the renowned Qādirī, Shaykh Sīdyā. And Behrman observes that even in contemporary times the Muridiyya retains close links with the Mauritanian followers of Shaykh Sīdyā's teaching.[85]

The Mande Clerisy

There is substantial evidence to suggest that the Mande and Torodbe clerisies took shape in the Western Sudan as a special group which, having denied its ethnic heritage, could not avoid the obloquy that went with it. Among Mande Muslims, what one believed came to overshadow where one originated; relations with co-religionists loomed larger than links with ancestral spirits; scarification and adherence to totemic beliefs no longer mattered as marks of distinction;[86] Islamic identity began to rival ethnic consciousness. Indeed, it was precisely for these reasons that throughout the early history of the Western Sudan, those Muslims who successfully shrugged off the older traditions were in some respects looked down upon by non-Muslims, and in many regions considered a caste apart. This was especially apparent with the Zawāyā, Mande, and Torodbe clerisies, which were held in condescension by the warrior groups to whom they were attached. Nearly always pagan, or prone to make only slight gestures to Islamic observance, warriors remained the rulers of society—the inheritors and custodians of ancestral tradition. It is against this historical backcloth that their fears and suspicions of Muslim intentions must be understood.

Moreover, it is perhaps not too far fetched to suggest that we are here dealing with something of a warrior syndrome. Ibn Khaldūn, with his customary perspicacity, made clear the contempt in which scholars were held in the early days of Islam, an attitude which derived in large measure from Arab ethnocentrism and known mistrust of sedentary culture. As will be seen, a similar attitude could be discerned among warrior classes of the Western Sudan. The religious sciences of Islam, according to Ibn Khaldūn, fell under the category of crafts—"only non-Arabs engaged in the task of preserving knowledge and writing systematic scholarly works."[87] But, he notes, "men who lived in luxury and were in control of ... government were too proud to do any teaching. Teaching came to be an occupation restricted to weak individuals. As a result, its practitioners came to be despised ...."[88] He continued, "the Arabs who came into contact with ... sedentary culture and exchanged their Bedouin attitude for it, were diverted from occupying themselves with scholarship and study by their leading position in the 'Abbāsid dynasty and the tasks that confronted them in government. They were the men of the dynasty, at once its protectors and the executors of its policy. In addition, at that time, they considered it a contemptible thing to be a scholar, because scholarship is a craft, and political leaders are always contemptuous of the crafts and professions and everything that leads to

them. Thus, they left such things to non-Arabs and persons of mixed Arab and non-Arab parentage (*muwallad*)."[89]

No clearer statement can be offered to explain the situation which obtained between Arabo-Berber warriors and their clients (*muwallad*) among the Berber Zawāyā. And, as Wilks has shown, the '*ulamā*' in Sūdānī societies were similarly unregarded. According to him, the '*ulamā*' "may be seen ... as exercising control over a field of technological enterprise—writing: the alphabet, pens, ink, paper, etc.—and as organized under the ritual authority of their *imāms*." Thus scholars came to be ranked below warriors of the ruling groups, who, as Wilks notes, exercised "managerial skills", but above griots and artisan groups of specialized craftsmen, such as weavers, leather-workers, and smiths.[90] This view is reinforced by Person, who notes that Muslim "customs and living habits—influenced by the *Sharī'a* to a greater or lesser extent—set them apart from the other members of society. Yet Muslims were no more isolated than *griots* and blacksmiths (members of the *nyamakala* or artisans' class who, unlike the Muslims, were forbidden sexual contact with those outside their group)."[91] All of this arouses the conjecture that this peculiar system of social organization might have diffused with Arab (or for that matter, Berber and Fulbe) culture. In any case, it appears to have halted abruptly at the beginnings of the forest belt, where it failed to penetrate appreciably until modern times.[92]

Traders and agriculturalists were disparaged as well. It was held, for example, that the "character qualities" of merchants were inferior to those of noblemen and rulers; merchants were taken up with buying and selling—an effort which required cunning; the continued indulgence in cunning became a constant ingredient of their lives. Ibn Khaldūn went on to observe that cunning was estranged from that quality of manliness which was the crowning feature of rulers and noblemen: it was because of the character acquired through commerce, he concluded, "that political leaders avoid engaging in it."[93]

The attitude of rulers towards agriculturalists was not dissimilar—it was viewed as a means of livelihood for the weak, for Bedouins in search of subsistence. Those who practiced it, observed Ibn Khaldūn, were characterized by a humility disdained by sedentary peoples, and those who lived in luxury.[94] Importantly, however, Zawāyā such as Sīdī al-Mukhtār al-Kabīr al-Kuntī were to justify their engagement in commerce on grounds that it was *Sunna*—the Prophet himself, a merchant before his calling, having elevated it to an honourable profession.[95]

In summary, it can be said that warriors tended to form a low view of all other classes of society. Artisans were particularly looked down upon, as were Muslims, who were seen to hold a brief within their own area of specialization. Conversely, however, acceptance of Islam among Mande and Torodbe served to break the distance between the social classes of Sudanese peoples. Membership in Islamic communities, in theory, was open to individuals from all levels of society—slaves, artisans, the poor, and the rich. Increasingly, status in these societies came to be based on service to the faith; in the ultimate, the veritable aristocracy among Islamic peoples took its shape in the form of the '*ulamā*' or "learned" class. Even the continued existence of slavery and other forms of social servitude did not preclude aspirations to the highest echelons of Islamic society. For slavery in Islam was a personal matter between master and slave—as indeed clientage was a matter between patron and client. Though the client found

himself locked into a system in which he would seem to fetter any future freedom (for he was still the freedman of his former master), such arrangements need not have interfered with his freedom in other areas, nor with his relations with other individuals. It is this fact which perhaps accounts for the remarkable number of individuals of humble circumstance who were able to gain prestige, respect, and even power because of their learning and reputation for sanctity. And there is some evidence to suggest that perhaps the majority of the leading Muslim families of the Western Sudan were of less than modest origin.[96] Islam might have been far more attractive to lesser worthies, often the offscourings of humanity, than to the warrior leaders of society, who bore the responsibility of preserving a pagan tradition. Ruling groups tended to accept those aspects of Islam which would enhance their political and religious authority, and reject those elements which might have undermined their superior positions in society.[97]

The Mande-speaking peoples, known variously as Manding, Mandingo, Mandinka, and Malinka, comprised one of the largest linguistic groupings in the Western Sudan. Though for the most part a pagan and agricultural people, the Mande possessed a significant and influential Muslim minority. Muslim Mande, who differed in name according to their region of residence, were nevertheless quite similar in cultural characteristics. Mande traders of the Middle Niger region were called *Marka* by the Bambara of that area, themselves Mande-speaking. Round the bend of the Upper Black Volta these traders were known as *Dafin*; to the Mole-Dagbane-speaking peoples as *Yarse*; and in Arabic sources they are called *Wangara*. To the Mande-speaking peoples of the Upper Niger region, however, Mande traders were known as *Dyula*—a term which fell into some ambiguity through its abuse by European writers.[98]

The Mande Islamic clerisy evolved mainly in trading villages established in the midst of animist cultivators. Most authorities are agreed that these itinerant merchants organized themselves in political and social groupings which differed markedly from those prevailing amongst Mande-speaking peoples in general, and that they represented the most ancient Muslim tradition among the Sudanese. According to Binger, "the spirit of caste" had nearly vanished in the Mande-Dyula villages he observed in the region of Kong towards the close of the nineteenth century. Not a single *griot* was discovered among them, and all members of Dyula society eagerly engaged in weaving and dyeing. This was in sharp contrast to non-Dyula groups which he had visited, wherein these and other occupations had been accorded to specialized groups regarded scornfully, and considered inferior. Moreover, Binger maintained that among non-Dyula groups he had observed, those who were neither warriors nor cultivators were consigned to the ranks of the socially degraded.[99] In addition to their freedom from the "tyranny of *griots*", the Mande-Dyula, according to Binger, did not adhere to the totemic institution and its attendant practices.[100]

It should not be assumed, however, that all Mande-Dyula were traders, or indeed Muslims. Binger observed that the term "Dyula" did not imply any obligation to engage in trade.[101] Tauxier noted that the Mande-Dyula were above all cultivators, and that only a very important minority were traders. Those who engaged in commerce did so on behalf of other members of the Mande-Dyula community. In addition, Tauxier asserted that trading was not a full-time occupation. In these communities the rainy season was devoted to agriculture, and only the dry season was set aside for commerce—it remained to the village

custodians[102] to determine which members of the community should engage in trade for the others. And it was the custodians who provided the means, often considerable and beyond the reach of any one individual, through which these trading expeditions were undertaken.[103] Furthermore, it is important to emphasize that these warrior groups remained unconverted to Islam. That this was so is seen from Binger's statement that the Mande-Dyula of Kong consisted of both Muslims and pagans. The former had their *imām*, who ruled over the religious affairs of the Muslims, and the latter included warriors who were in full control of the secular affairs of the entire community. The Muslims of Kong belonged to the Saghanughu or Sanokho family, and the pagans seem to belong to the Wattara family which had established Kong towards the end of the seventeenth or the beginning of the eighteenth century. According to Tauxier, the Wattara took the pagan titles "*mansa*", and "*fāma*", though they were also known in Arabic documents as "*amīr al-bilād*", "commander of the country".[104]

Gonja seems also to have been established by Mande warriors. The military expedition illuminated in the conquest of Gonja included Muslims, one of which acted as a principal advisor to pagan Mande warriors. A tradition developed in which the descendants of this warrior became the *imāms* of the Muslim community, and the successors of the warriors continued as a ruling elite.[105] According to Levtzion, although there is some reference to an early "conversion" of the warriors to Islam, they were not Muslims at the time of his field work, and they had not been so within living memory.[106] In Dagomba, Levtzion noted that the status of a Muslim rested between that of a ruler and a commoner, but conversion to Islam could save the sons of rulers from becoming mere commoners, upon their elimination as possible successors of their father.[107]

Among the Sarakholle-Dyula, a similar situation obtained. Traditions collected by Saint-Père for Guidimaka mention that each Sarakholle warrior family had attached to it a Muslim family ("*famille Modi*").[108] Similarly, Raffenel, who assembled traditions for the Sarakholle of the Senegal, Bondu, and the Galam, noted that they were divided into warrior groups, called "*Bakiris*", and Muslims, called "*Saybobes*". The Bakiris provided the ruling elite, and the Saybobes were entirely devoted to religion, though he mentioned (somewhat in contradiction) that they also comprised half the governing council of the region.[109] Bérenger-Féraud claimed that the Saybobes were primarily cultivators who sought refuge in Islam as a safeguard against the reprisals of stronger groups. Others of them, however, particularly the younger members, engaged in commerce over great distances. In contrast to the Saybobes, the Bakiris are imaged as wanting in reverence and given to heavy drink. They appear to have been powerful enough to withstand the pressures of outside forces[110] establishing themselves in many areas of the desert and savannah. Mage traced their beginnings to the great Cissey family, and claimed that in his day (c.1864) they "commanded" at Sansanding (an *imārat* of the 'Umarian *Jamā'a*). Wagadu seems to have been their principal center of influence, though branches of the Bakiri could be found in the Bakhūnū, Nyamina, Jenne, Kankan, as well as Sokolo, Jallonkadūgū, Guoy, Kemera, and Diombokho.[111]

All these warrior groups tended to treat harshly the Muslims who were attached to them. Raffenel observed that among the Mande-speaking peoples of Wūli, the warrior faction oppressed the Muslims, mocked their religion, yet at the same time remained dependent on their contributions as traders.[112] A similar

pattern could be perceived among the warriors and Muslims of the Galam (c.1833). Raffenel recounted how the warrior N'Diayebes became divided into contending factions—one falling under the weight of its Saybobe Muslim advisors, and hence drawing condemnation from its opposite which remained free of Muslim influence. The warrior-leader of the non-Saybobe faction berated his opponent for heeding the advice of low caste Muslims: "It is a disowning of your father", he said, "to select as your counsellors men who know nothing other than prayer"—a reference, according to Raffenel, which appealed to caste distinctions and aristocratic snobbery.[113] And again, Quinn maintains that not only did the Soninke warriors "refuse to convert to Islam, but they moved about the country in armed bands harassing the Muslims continually, stealing the Muslims' wives, properties, and slaves. The Soninkes restricted the use of land and imposed heavy taxes on strangers, often stripping them of their possessions. Often the last to settle in an area, Muslims were given the poorest quality land to farm, and excessive and unusual dues were levied on them".[114]

Indeed, the leading men of these societies had not perceived in Islam an alternative to paganism—rather they plundered those qualities which appeared to conquer the "life forces", rendering them congruous with the pagan tradition, forging them into one condominium of spiritual expression. And if these notables tended to become initiated into things Islamic concurrent with their introduction to the occult rituals of animist religion, they perceived no contradiction in the retention of pagan practices alongside the newly-acquired Islamic ones.

The delicate balance in dualistic belief was sustained in every situation which demanded occult knowledge. In Bambara-dominated Segu (c.1800), the rituals of the distinctly Muslim feast of *Bairam* (*'Id al-Fiṭr*) were merged with cultural offerings to *Nyana*, the spiritual protector of the ruling clan. It was the practice of these Marka Muslims to offer prayers during the feast for the custodian's continued vitality and the prolonged prosperity of his tenure. And as a sign of favor and gratitude, the custodian was known to confer riches upon these religious leaders.[115]

That Segu was not the only pagan-dominated area in which non-Muslims took an active part in Muslim ceremony is given point by Levtzion's comments on Mossi. He notes that the synchretist character of Mossi leaders was evident during *'Id al-Fiṭr* (*nolokre*) and *'Id al Aḍḥā'* (*Kisha*): "the Moro Naba and his entourage take part in the communal prayer, becoming Muslim for the occasion. The Moro-Naba is expected to fast in *Ramaḍān*, but instead of fasting himself, it is said, he hires someone else to fast for him. His own fast is a ritual fiction, the Muslims usually flattered him and the other chiefs by pretending to believe that they observed the fast."[117] Levtzion is not in sympathy with the view that "the religious character of the *nam* (chiefship), based on a ritual between the living chief and his ancestors, is incompatible with Islam". Proponents of this view had argued that conversion to Islam necessitated an abandonment of the rituals which sustained the Mossi system. Skinner, for example, had maintained that "although the rulers permitted their younger sons to adopt Islam, they themselves and the heirs to the throne remained pagan in order to maintain the bonds with the ancestors". That such a firm rule was ever in existence is questioned by Levtzion: "A survey of the history of the Moro-Nabas since Naba Dulugu", who reigned in the second half of the eighteenth century, "does not prove this rule, but indicates a certain tension (probably raised by the more conservative elements in the court, representatives

of the traditional religion), and a concern to avoid the interference of Islamic influence in the functioning of the political system."[118]

Hence, it must be concluded that acceptance of Islamic elements in these pagan-controlled communities did not go unqualified. Whenever promotion of Islamic interests threatened to mitigate the essential interests of the ruling dynasty, and indeed traditions which it was obliged to defend, the delicate balance between Islam and paganism was apt severely to be disjointed. Thus we find that the growth and influence of Islam in Ashanti was arrested as it posed a threat to the social, political and religious foundations of the Ashanti state.[119] In Mossi, Naba Dulugu, regarded as a syncretist pagan, was said to have banished his own son, Sawadogo, because he pressed Islam to its extreme. Though this son is said to have later succeeded his father, the previous censure doubtless chastened his attitude.[120] Two instances of a similar nature occurred in Segu, and here the principals were not so fortunate. Bakari, a devout Muslim and student of Sīdī al-Mukhtār al-Kuntī, and Tūro-Koro Mari, who sided with al-Ḥājj 'Umar b. Sa'īd against his own clansmen, were both terminated by assassination, and replaced by individuals who would be less inclined to sabotage the balance between Islam and paganism.[121]

The net impression left by the preceding is that the Mande Islamic tradition was decidedly syncretist and accommodationist. Still to be found are traces of a once dominant pagan persuasion, though these can be seen retreating before the refluent wave of an ever sharpening Muslim perspective. Yet unlike their Torodbe and Zawāyā brethren, Mande Muslims seem to have embraced a more cautious approach to Islam. Indeed, had we not information to the contrary, we might be tempted to conclude a reluctance to pursue any policy of prosyletization which might have put at risk a vested interest in trade and commerce.[122] Again, though they emerged a special group within warrior-dominated pagan societies, considerable care seems to have been taken not to differ too radically from their pagan neighbors. Binger, for example, was able to note that the Mande-Dyula of Kong were "politic" enough to adopt the scarifications of their compatriots, an act which seems to have drawn precedent from the Mande Muslims of Follona and Worodūgū. The Dyula of Kong scarified themselves on the cheeks and abdomen, so that outwardly they did not differ from the Komono, Dokhosie, and Tiefo; and the Mande-Dyula of Mossi adopted similar customs in taking on marks characteristic of the autochthons.[123] Delafosse pointed somewhat unclearly to the "purest" Dyula as those most fully Islamized and hence, disinclined to practice the custom of scarification. Those Dyula who did posed an embarassing affront to their religious principles, and were denounced as "Sonongui" or "Sorongui" (that is, "Soninke") for their affiliation with local religions, and their addiction to the *dolo*—that fermented drink often linked with pagan ritual.[124] It is interesting to note that the *dolo* also found favour with the Bakiri Mande warriors, who grew notorious for their heavy imbibing. The Diawara of Kaarta were, according to Lasnet, the only "Soninke" of that region to persist in the practice of scarification.[125]

Whatever their difficulties in establishing Islam, Mande Muslims were undeniably accomplished in the skills of trade and commerce. Mauny has rightly observed that Mande-Dyula prestige and influence stemmed not only from their wealth and religion, but also from that network of communications which they so cleverly effected along the strategic commercial arteries of the Western