

drum history. Additions have been made to the Arabic MS in the Institute's collection.

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Jack and Esther Goody.

A NOTE ON THE ARABIC MS IASAR/298, AND OTHERS
FROM WA

The manuscript IASAR/298* is a short work in Arabic entitled Al-Akhbār Saltanat Bilad Wā, 'Information on the sultanate of the town of Wa'.

Wa, in the north-west of Ghana, is a town of great ethnographic complexity. Briefly, the Nabihī or princes, of Mamprussi-Dagomba origins, provide the Wa Na who is secular ruler of the whole state, and also chiefs

*All IASAR references are to the Arabic collection, Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana (xerox copies).

for a number of the subordinate towns. The Yerihi or Muslims, largely of Malian Dyula origins, provide first the Shehu Wangara (or Yeri Na), who is amīr al-mu'minīn, leader of the faithful; secondly the imām al-jum'ā, who leads the Friday prayer and is responsible to the community of the faithful as such; and thirdly the imām al-bilad, the town imām, who is directly responsible to the Wa Na. Finally, the Tindamba or landowners, of mixed and largely 'autochthonous' origins, provide the priests of the land-shrines. The Nabihi are mostly Muslim, the Yerihi of course entirely so, and the Tindamba mostly pagan. Each of these three major components of Wa society is itself heterogeneous. The Muslim estate, for example includes inter alia Kabanye - Dyula Kunatay settlers of perhaps five hundred years standing in Wa; Tagarayire - Dyula Taraūray of comparable antiquity; Limamyire - also Taraūray settlers but probably of the late 17th century; and Dzangbeyire - Hausa immigrants of a still more recent period.

The manuscript IASAR/298 deals with the relationship between the Nabihi, the Tindamba of Suriyire (Suri's quarter), and the Muslims of Limamyire (the Imām's quarter). It should be considered in conjunction with other manuscripts, in Arabic script and in Arabic or Hausa language, which are extant in Wa, all of which appear in some way concerned with the definition and regulation of the relationships between the various component communities of Wa town. These include the Hausa work Labarin Wala Kasamu, 'Information about Wa, our land' (IASAR/21;45); the Ta'rikh Ahl Wala, 'History of the People of Wa' and the Ta'rikh al-Muslimīn, 'History of the Muslims', both of which exist also in Hausa versions (IASAR/152); another and different Al-Akhhār Saltanat Bilad Wā, and the Ta'rikh Tadhkirat al-Imāmiyyīn fī Biladīna Wa, 'History in memory of the imāms of our town of Wa' (IASAR/151); and a Ta'rikh Ahl Tariwar min Mandī 'History of the Taraūray people from Mande', which I was shown recently.

These works are all built around a consideration of the origins of the component communities of Wa and of the order and circumstances of their arrival there. They are not chronicles, but rather compilations of oral tradition. Yet, though historical in content, they are legalistic by intent. They form a corpus of constitutional documents, utilized in the determination of claims to office, rights in land, etc. They are kept by the ḥulamā' of the town, who are also responsible for their interpretation. Karamoko Ṣiddīq b. Sa'id, from whom IASAR/298 was obtained, had as a youth to

learn this work, and recited it before his grandfather on many occasions, when various points would be elucidated and elaborated. Karamoko Siddīq is thus able to provide what is in effect a commentary upon the basic work, and in virtue of this and similar endowments is generally considered one of the leading authorities upon constitutional matters.

The utilization of oral traditions in the definition of socio-political relationships is, of course, very general in West Africa. Attempts, however, to commit such materials to writing - to produce (rudimentary) codifications of customary constitutional law - are unusual, though one may perhaps view in a similar light the industry of colonial District Commissioners in recording local traditions. Indeed, in Wa itself, around 1922, Commissioner Whittall called upon the local ʿulama to produce for him written accounts of the history of Wa. IASAR/152 may have been compiled in its present form under this stimulus, whilst IASAR/22 bears the inscription:

"Dec. 1922. This book is given to Malam Isaka on condition he writes the History of the Walas in it in Hausa. P.J. Whittall, D.C., Wa".

(In the event, Malam Isaka simply brought together a number of earlier manuscripts on a variety of topics, including accounts of relations of Wa with both Babatu and Samori.)

IASAR/298 is of special interest in that its history is reasonably well-known. The copy in the possession of Karamoko Siddīq b. Sa^cīd was made by him, about thirty years ago, from an old and decaying manuscript owned by his father. The author of the work was Karamoko Siddīq's great-grandfather, Sa^cīd the ninth imām al-bilad of Wa, son of ʿAbd al-Qādir, the sixth imam. Sa^cīd b. ʿAbd al-Qadir is remembered in Wa as a mujaddid, a renewer of Islam, and as a man of considerable learning. He is said by Karamoko Siddīq to have spent twelve years in Kong studying under ʿAbbās Saghanughu, and this receives some confirmation from the Arabic manuscript IASAR/18, which contains an incomplete silsila also recording Imām Sa^cīd's affiliation with Kong. Many local silsilas - chains for the transmission of learning - pass through ʿAbbās b. Muhammad al-Mustafā Saghanughu of Kong (e.g. IASAR/49; 50; 141; 175; 339; 427): the Saghanughu family has through several centuries produced generation after generation

of scholars whose influence in West Africa has yet to be adequately assessed. The father and teacher of ʿAbbās Saghanughu, Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafa, himself a scholar of repute, is recorded in IASAR/246 as having died in AH 1190, AD 1776-7, a date which seems quite acceptable. It is therefore likely that Saʿīd b. ʿAbd al-Qādir of Wa was a student in Kong during the later years of the 18th, or the early years of the 19th century. IASAR/298 was presumably written later, probably during Saʿīd's imāmate, though possibly as a result of stimulus from Kong. What is clear is that the Wa literary tradition exemplified by IASAR/298 reaches back at least to the earlier 19th century.

The information in this note from Karamoko Siddīq was recorded in a series of interviews between 28 June and 1 July, 1964.

I append a check-list of the manuscripts in the IASAR collection (as at March 1966) which are of importance for a study of the history of Wa, with some indication of content. An edition of these MSS, with translations into English, is in course of preparation. Such works are frequently consulted in Wa, and new copies are often produced. Re-copying a manuscript is regarded as an occasion for bringing it up to date. Many of the manuscripts listed below are known to be recent and revised copies of older works.

Check List

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| IASAR/17 | - | List of nineteen imams of Wā from Yaʿmuru to Ṣāliḥ. |
| IASAR/18 | - | <u>Ibtidā' dīn Wā fī ʿām 875 ilā ʿām 1382</u> . An account of the state of Islam in Wa with references to the connection between the ʿulamā' of Wa and those of Kong (apparently abstracted from a longer work). |
| IASAR/20: | - | <u>Al-akhbaru Samūrū</u> . Account in Hausa of the relations of Wā with Samori and Babatu. |
| IASAR/21 | - | <u>Labarin Wafa Kasamu</u> . Account in Hausa of the <u>Widana</u> section of Wā, and of its relationship of the Nabihī. |

- IASAR/22 - Collection of miscellaneous documents in Arabic and Hausa, including lists of the imams and chiefs of Wa, accounts of Samori and Babatu, various letters, etc.
- IASAR/45 - Identical with IASAR/21.
- IASAR/46 - List of twenty-eight(?) imāms of Wa from Ya^cmuru to Sa^cṬd.
- IASAR/61 - List of twenty-four imāms of Wa from Ya^cmuru to al-Ḥājj Sa^cṬd.
- IASAR/151 - Al-Akhbār Salṭanat Bilad Wā: Account of the origin of the chiefdom and of the four 'gates', with a list of kings. Ta'riḥ Tadhkirat al-Imamiyyīn fī Biladinā Wā. Account of the ancestry of the Taraury of Wa, with a list of imāms.
- IASAR/152 - Ta'riḥ Ahl Wālā and Ta'riḥ al-Muslimīn: Accounts in both Arabic and Hausa of the origins of the main sections of Wa, with lists of kings and imāms.
- IASAR/296 - List of twenty-seven imāms of Wa from Ya^cmuru to Sa^cṬd, with genealogical notes.
- IASAR/297 - Obscure fragment apparently having reference to the ancestry of al-Ḥājj Maḥmūd b. ^cUthmān, from whom Taraury families in Wa descend.
- IASAR/298 - Al-Akhbār Salṭanat Bilad Wā: Account of the relationship between the Nābihi, the Tindamba of Suriyire, and the Muslims of Limamyire.
- IASAR/343 - List of twenty-nine imāms of Wa from Ya^cmuru to Sa^cṬd.

IASAR/383 - List of eighteen imāms of Wa from Yaʿmurū to ʿUthmān.

In addition the following two works contain references to Wa:

IASAR/77 - Account of the jihād of al-Ḥājj Maḥmūd Karantaw (with mention of participants from Wa).

IASAR/246 - A general account of the spread of Islam in West Africa (with some incidental references to Wa).

In addition I have been shown the following:

Ta'rikh Ahl Tariwar min Mandi: Account of the arrival in Wa of the people of Limamyire, and of their relations with the princes: with a section on the Watara, Karanta, Karanbiri, and Saghanughu.

Ivor Wilks.

NOTE ON THE EDUCATION AND EARLY LIFE OF AL-ḤĀJJ
ʿUMAR TALL

The Institute of African Studies Arabic collection continues to throw out interesting new material on the major figures of nineteenth century West Africa. In addition to a hitherto unknown letter from ʿUthmān b. Fūdī (Dan Fodio) calling upon Shaykh Adam of Admawa to join the jihād (IASAR/128), and a Tijani poem (IASAR/72) spuriously ascribed to his son Muḥammad Bello, the fact of which forgery adds weight to the evidence against Bello's membership of the Tijaniyya (despite Abun-Nasr's recent heavy-handed decision the other way, "The Tijaniyya" Oxford 1965), we have also an interesting reference to the higher education of "the Great Conqueror" al-Ḥājj ʿUmar Tall.