

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.

This is in IASAR/246 "A Dated Chronicle on the Introduction of Islam to the Western Parts" by al-Hājj Muḥammad Marhaba, the present Saghanughu mufti of Bobo-Dioulasso. The reference runs: "al-Hājj 'Umar al-Faṭī was taught *ḥarūd* (rules of Arabic versification), the rhyming systems, logic and rhetoric, by my grandfather, Ibrāhīm al-Mutafannin (the artist). Al-Hājj 'Umar, four months after their coming to Bobo /i.e. the coming of the author's branch of the Saghanughu from Kong to Bobo/, built for his shaykh (tutor) the mihrāb of his mosque which is unchanged to this day".

Al-Hājj thus seems to have been following the classical pattern of Islamic education, which at this time in the early nineteenth century was being given a great impetus throughout the Western Sudan. Piecing together biographical material from several prominent lives, and what we know of the state educational systems of Futa Toro, Futa Jalon, Masina and the Northern Nigerian emirates¹ the following rough schedule emerges. From seven to about ten years the boy would learn elementary reading and writing of Arabic, possibly at home, as did al-Hājj with his father. Then at the age when, in the usual Fulani manner, he would stop sleeping with his mother, he would attach himself to a teacher and begin compulsory prayers and to seriously learn to Qur'ān by heart. On average this would take about four years, though al-Hājj and Shehu Aḥmadu Bari are said to have been able to recite it at twelve, the age at which, incidentally, this recitation is now the entry requirement to several primary sections of Al-Azhar. The following four year period was then spent in comprehension of the text, after which the student would graduate as a ḥafīd.

If a higher level of learning were then sought the student would be expected to travel to seek the most renowned teachers, and in this quest al-Hājj, still in his teens, began to travel extensively in Mauretania, Futa Toro, Futa Bondu and Futa Jalon, in which country he probably received

1. See especially the secondary sources: C. Monteil "Djenne", 1903; Ba and Daget "L'Empire Peul du Macina" 1962. Biographical material is available on all the major jihād leaders of the nineteenth century and on many minor individuals e.g. "Abū Bakr as - Sadik" IAS draft paper by Ivor Wilks.

his initiation into the Tijaniyya.²

Kong is the next place linked with his name, and IASAR/246 provides us with corroboration for this visit mentioned by Muḥammed Aliyu Tyam and the Masina traditions, both of which drew on al-Ḥājj's own biographical work "al-Rimah", which amazingly is still only available in Arabic. At Kong al-Ḥājj pursued an education which was already well advanced. In West Africa at this time Islamic higher education was divided into principal and auxiliary subjects which show little significant difference from the medieval classification of knowledge as used for example at Al-Azhar till the later nineteenth century. In the former category are the Qur'ān itself, tafsīr (Qur'anic exegesis), ḥadīth (the authenticated deeds and sayings of the Prophet), tawḥīd (knowledge of God and his attributes), uṣūl al-fiqh (principles of canon law) and tassawuf (philosophy of mysticism). The second category, which were taught in far fewer schools, and for which the Saghanughu of Kong seemed appropriate, comprised nahw (grammar), sarf (syntax), ma'ānī (rhetoric), bayān (a related subject concerned with public speaking) and mantiq (logic).

The I.A.S. ms collection, the first 500 items of which have been collected more or less haphazardly, contains much further information on the state of Islamic learning in this part of West Africa in the nineteenth century, and would well repay the work of an educationist combing the collection for this purpose. The role of Kong in the diffusion of this learning becomes steadily more apparent.

-
2. This was almost certainly from 'Abd al-Karīm b. Aḥmad al-Naqīl of Timbo, see the long biographical poem by the Tokolor, Muḥammad Aliyu Tyam, translated by Gaden: "Le Vie d'El Hajj Omar", and Ḥājj's own chains listed in "al-Rimah".

Unfortunately, however, this reference in IASAR/246 throws little further light on the chronology of al-Hājj's pre-jihād career, in attempting to establish which, several recent scholars seem to have been tempted into confusion. The author's statement in fact cannot be taken quite as it stands. Al-Hājj's shaykh was not in fact the author's grandfather but his great, great, grandfather, who, the author writes was buried in Bobo in 1224 A.H. (1810). This date is probably several years too early, as al-Hājj would then have been only sixteen,³ and we understand from Ivor Wilks that the author is prepared to revise this particular date.

A fuller timetable of al-Hājj's journey to Mecca and back would provide an invaluable fix for a whole series of events in several major states as his return journey for example brought him into contact, sometimes for long periods, with the political and religious leaders of Bornu, Sokoto, Masina, Timbuktu and Segou, before he established the base for his jihād near Futa Jalon.

An example of recent confusion in this field concerns the tradition that al-Hājj paid a pre-pilgrimage visit to Masina in the birth year of Aḥmadu Aḥmadu, a visit which is denied by Tyam. In an attempt to resolve this contradiction the authors of our major secondary source on Masina, Ba and Daget, go to the rather drastic lengths of making this grandson and second successor of Shehu Aḥmadu live nearly six years longer than the very literate Masina traditions would grant him, and this in a lifetime of only twenty nine years.

Nor is it easy to accept the assertion of recent scholars⁴ that al-Hājj spent the years from 1826 to 1838 in Sokoto while returning from

3. 1794 rather than 1797 seems a better birth date for al-Hājj who died in 1864 aged 70, probably Solar, years (i.e. 70 rainy seasons which was the way his father estimated age) V. Tyam op.cit.

4. Especially H.F.C. Smith "Islamic Revolutions of the 19th century" in Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria II, 2. 1961. and D.M. Last "19th Century Sokoto" Ph.D. thesis 1964. One opposes them on this point with considerable misgivings, not having recently seen the evidence of al-Hājj Sa'īd in Ta'rīkh Sokoto by O. Houdas in "Tadzkirat en-Nisian" Paris 1899).

the pilgrimage. This is based mainly on a reference in Clapperton's second journey which surely must be either wrong in saying that "al-Hājj 'Umar from Futa Toro" whom he met in Sokoto in 1826, was returning from Mecca, or must be referring to a different person, which is perfectly possible. All the other evidence points to one of these conclusions.

And so the search continues, still in its infancy, for material on the early life of the man who, with the possible exception of 'Uthmān b. Fūdī, probably had more political, religious and military influence in shaping nineteenth century West Africa than any other single figure, and whose own biographical works are still almost completely unknown to western scholars.

J.J. Holden.

NEWS FROM OTHER INSTITUTIONS

University of Cambridge

The University of Cambridge Centre of African Studies and le Centre d'Analyse et de Recherche Documentaires pour l'Afrique Noire are publishing jointly BIBLIOGRAPHY CARDS ON CURRENT LITERATURE ON BLACK AFRICA IN THE FIELD OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES: books, theses government documents, conference proceedings, cyclostyled material, and articles from about 800 periodicals, in English and all European languages and it is hoped soon to include material in Chinese and Japanese.

Subscribers will receive about 7000 cards annually, a copy of the classification system used and a list of the 800 periodicals indexed. Cards are dispatched four times a year in the form of sheets, ready to cut up, each containing eight 5" x 3" cards. These sheets come in two thicknesses: ordinary paper, for those who do not wish to cut up the entries; Bristol papers, card weight, for those who intend to file.