

ADVENTURES IN THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE STATES OF THE CHAD BASIN

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INTRODUCTION

I have been teaching a course on the "History of the States of the Chad basin c 1450-1800" to final year students at Bayero University Kano since 1970. In that time the absence of reliable chronologies for the various states of the region has been a major problem. It is a matter of great frustration that while the earliest references to the *Bilad as-Sudan* (excluding the Nile Valley) refer to our area - beginning with HERODOTUS in the 5th century¹ - the chronology of the Niger Bend, what with the aid of the *Tarikh al-Fettash*, *Tarikh as-Sudan* and *Tedskirat en-Nisian*, is so much more advanced.² The chronology of our area is sadly undeveloped. The work of MALEY and others has placed the more recent geological history of the region on a sound footing - as this conference has shown - but the archaeological data, while richer than for many other areas of Africa, is still thin. What evidence we have is extremely difficult to link up into a coherent picture. I remain extremely interested in the foregoing topics but for the purposes of this paper I will concentrate upon the period c 1450-1900.

It must be obvious to all of us here that an accurate, in so far as is possible, chronology for the successive Saifawa states of Kanem and then Borno is essential for an understanding of the chronologies of all the other states in the region. Such knowledge, such a chronology, is not only essential, it is crucial for the period after c 1500. We are fortunate - and, because of the frequent errors, unfortunate - in the number of attempts that have been made to establish a Borno chronology. BARTH obtained a copy of the *Diwan al-Salatin Barnu*, the Saifawa kinglist with regnal years, soon after he arrived in Borno in the 1850's and sent it back to Europe. A translation and annotation by BLAU appeared in German.³ BLAU's work

(1) CARPENTER, R., 1973, "A trans-Saharan trade route in Herodotus", *Am. J. Arch.* (1956), *Beyond the Pillars of Hercules*, London, pp.106-142.

(2) As is the Nilotic Sudan, especially the Sultanate of Sinnar, following the numerous publications of Jay SPAULDING.

(3) BLAU, O., 1852, "Chronik der Sultane von Bornu", *Z.D.M.G.* 6, pp.305-330.

was strongly criticised by BARTH on his return and he in turn produced a version in Volume II of his *Travels and Discoveries*.¹ NACHTIGAL republished the basic material together with data collected by himself.² In the present century BURDON, BENTON, PALMER, URVOY and COHEN have all undertaken adventures in various interpretations of the chronologies.³ However it was not until the 1970's that a truly scholarly edition and annotation of the text of the *Diwan* was undertaken.

D. LANGE first in a doctorat and then in a book introduced us to what at first seemed an outrageous, an unacceptable chronology for the Saifawa Mais. I must admit to my own unease at, to my reluctance to accept his revisions of the old datings.⁴ Now - after many years usage of the same I am a believer, albeit one who still retains some scepticism. We must not relax and accept his views as definitive but until others suggest an obviously more accurate system then LANGE must be accepted. I will now go on to examine certain states and topics. I do not, I cannot attempt to suggest broad, inclusive chronologies. No, I will select certain point, certain topics, that I consider of interest and important information which might not have crossed that infamous Anglophone-Francophone divide. How much time and effort I ask do we waste, in particular in Africa, because of the problems of communication between Africa and Europe and between centres of learning within Africa ?

SAIFAWA BORNO

I have already observed that a reliable chronology for the Saifawa states must be a prerequisite for the understanding of various politics that have existed in the Chad Region. Again, as I have observed, LANGE has provided us with a valuable tool. However, even now, there are certain doubtful points. For example what is the correct date for the fall of the capital of Borno at the time of the Sokoto *jihad* (or Fellata war as the people of Borno prefer to call it) ? LANGE has made many other learned

(1) BARTH, H., 1857-59, *Travels and discoveries in North and Central Africa in the years 1849-1855*, New York : Harper, Vol. II, pp.581-605.

(2) NACHTIGAL, G., 1971-87, *Sahara and Sudan*, (Trad. FISHER, A.G.B. and FISHER, H.J.), 4 vols, London : Hurst, Vol. III, pp.136-139.

(3) BURDON, J.A., 1909, *Northern Nigerian historical notes*, Waterlow, London ; SCHULTZE, A., 1914, *The Sultanate of Bornu* (Trans.), P.A., Oxford : Benton ; PALMER, H.R., 1941, numerous versions ; URVOY, Y., "Chronologies du Bornou", *Jour. Soc. Afr.* 11, pp.21-31 ; COHEN, R. 1966, "The Bornu Kinglists", *Boston University papers on Africa* (BUTLER, J. ed.), Boston University Press, pp.41-83.

(4) LANGE, D., 1977, *Chronologie et histoire d'un royaume africain*, Wiesbaden : Franz Steiner.

contributions that have added to our knowledge of the area, one of the most recent is his edition and translation of the *Kitab Barnu* by Imam Ahmad b. FARTU, an account of the first part of the reign of Mai Idris b. Ali, known as Alauma (1564-1596), which is now presented, insofar as is possible, in a proper chronological context.¹ Certainly the events of the earlier years of Mai Idris are now more precisely known to us. Certain periods and events both before and after this are also more accurately fixed in time.

The issue of the Caliphate in Borno has interested historians for many years. I have written about it as has Father ZELTNER among others. Ali b. Dunama, known as Ghaji (1465-1497), has been credited with the assumption of an office that was claimed by his successors down to the 19th century.² ZELTNER indicates that earlier Saifawa Mais did from time to time, claim to be *Khalifa* or *amir al-muminin*, but as an 18th century version of the *Diwan* puts it – with Ali “the count of the sultans ceases and that of the Khalifas who built the city begins”³ SARTAIN, in her article on the Egyptian polymath Jalal ad-Din al-Suyuti’s relations with the land of the western Sudan, quotes from his autobiography :

“Then in the year eighty nine (889 AH) the pilgrim caravan of Takrur arrived and in it were the Sultan, the Qadi, and a group of students. They came to me and acquired knowledge... The Sultan of Takrur asked me to speak to the Commander of the Faithful about him delegating his authority over the affairs of his country... I drew up the diploma of investiture”⁴

While Borno is not mentioned by name in the extract there can - by the logical elimination of other suitable candidates - be little doubt that Mai Ali b. Dunama is referred to.

An important source for the history of both Fezzan and Borno in the 16th and 17th centuries is the *Histoire chronologique du royaume de Tripolie de Barbarie* and the appendix the *Chronologie des rois de Borno de 1512-1677* by the French Surgeon GIRARD⁵ held prisoner in Tripoli for several years in the 1660’s and early 1670’s and later surgeon to Louis XIV’s Swiss Guard. This contains much interesting material

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- (1) LANGE, D., 1987, *A Sudanese chronicle : The Borno expeditions of Idris Alauma, 1564-96*, Stuttgart : Franz Steiner.
- (2) LAVERS, J.E., 1971, “Islam in the Bornu Caliphate”, *Odu* 5, pp.27-53 ; “Borno under three dynasties”, 1985, *The Evolution of Nigerian Political Culture* (AJAYI, J.A. and IKARA, B. eds), Ibadan : University Press, pp.18-32 ; ZELTNER, J.C., 1982, *Pages de l’histoire du Kanem, pays tchadien*, Paris : L’Harmattan.
- (3) PALMER, H.R. (ed.), 1932, “The shorter Diwan”, *Ta’ rikh mai Idris wa ghazawati*, Kano : Emir of Kano’s Press.
- (4) SARTAIN, E., 1971, “Jamal ad-Din al-Suyuti’s relations with the peoples of Takrur”, *J. Sem. St.*, XVI.
- (5) GIRARD, D., Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, manuscrit n°12219 & 12220.

albeit that the chronological data - especially in relation to the regnal years of the Mais is of very uneven reliability. However dates relating to specific events seem to be more acceptable. For example the very first entry in the *Chronologie* makes reference to a mission to the Spaniards in Tripoli in 1512, that is the year after their occupation, again there is reference to an agreement between Borno and Turghut Rais in 1554 about the time the latter seized Tripoli for the Ottomans.

We are fortunate that there is a considerable body of chronological date for the reign of Idris b. Ali, both from internal and external sources. However his reign begins with a problem. According to tradition in his early years he ruled with a regent - the *magira* - or queenmother Aisha. The Arabic *Diwan* makes no reference to this arrangement. Why should Idris need a regent? He was in his twenties - his father Ali b. Idris (1538-1539) had died before his birth but thereafter nearly 25 years elapsed before his accession. Perhaps the answer lies in the event described below - his pilgrimage. The *hajj* to Mecca normally took almost a year. It would be very necessary to leave a trustworthy representative to rule in his absence and who better than the person said to have looked after him and his interests during his youth.

In his *Kitab Barnu* Ibn FARTU provides us with an account of the first twelve years of Mai Idris. The author makes no attempt to place actions or events in a proper chronological framework. Thus he refers to the pilgrimage of his master towards the end of his introductory section, even though all the indications are that that event took place very early in his reign and that his experiences on that journey had a profound influence upon his later thinking and actions.¹ For example there was his adoption of firearms and their use by trained musketeers but of equal significance there was his adoption of other units of disciplined men and of an attention to the problems of logistics. Surely a consequence of his observation of the Ottoman military machine in Egypt and the Hedjaz. This view is supported by and in turn supports the interpretation of information in a despatch from the Venetian Consul in Cairo to the Senate in Venice.² In this document, dated 26 September 1565, he reported the return from Mecca of "the son of the king of the blacks". He went on to say that since the latter's arrival at the beginning of the month he had spent 300,000 ducats on goods necessary for his country. I would suggest that it is highly improbable that a mere prince would have such a sum available after all the expenses of the pilgrimage proper. The consul also stated that the Prince kept his face covered, as was reported of other Borno leaders. This is not the place to go into details but I hope soon to publish this source in full with more supporting evidence. Suffice now to assert my belief that this can only refer to the pilgrimage of the newly appointed Idris. He would

(1) LANGE, A., *Sudanese chronicle*.

(2) LAVERS, J.E., *The pilgrimage of Idris b. Ali*, forthcoming.

probably have left Borno in January 1565 and Cairo with the Great Caravan towards the end of May and got back to Borno early in January 1566. While returning from the *hajj* he became involved in an attack on the town of Brak in Fazzan, presumably in association with the Awlad Muhammad sultans of Fazzan who were at this time proteges of the Saifawa. Certainly the state was greatly influenced by Borno political culture thus we find the use of such titles as *ciroma* and *kaigama* and at a later date *galadima*.¹ It is generally assumed that Fazzan was brought under Ottoman control about 1578 and the Tripoli historian, Ibn GALBUN, writing in the 18th century certainly preferred this date but he does admit that the occupation might have occurred as early as 1548/9.² This earlier date seems now to be the more probable following the publication of material from the Ottoman archives by the late Cenghiz ORHONLU which refers to the presence of Ottoman officials in Fazzan about 1550.³ In the same article he provides more evidence of Borno-Ottoman diplomatic activity. This makes it possible to advance several motives in addition to the need for firearms that prompted Idris to send a mission to Istanbul under al-Hajj. Yusuf is referred to by name both in the Ottoman sources and in Ibn FARTU while al-FISHTALI states that the Borno ambassador to al-Mansur of Morocco in 1582 was the same man who had earlier visited the Ottoman Sultan.⁴ Al-FISHTALI asserts that Idris turned to Morocco because the Ottomans failed to provide him with the goods he needed. It was rather the breakdown of communications following the rising in the hinterland of Tripoli of the anti-Ottoman Mahdist leader Yahya b. Yahya al-Suwaidi for, following the latter's death in 1589, Idris quickly wrote to congratulate the Ottoman governor and to re-open relations.⁵

It is often claimed that Borno fell apart with the death of Idris. The reality would appear otherwise. Rather the evidence suggests that Borno reached its greatest extent in the later 17th century in the reign of Ali b. Umar (1639-1677). This end was not achieved by military might but rather through the religious position and reputation of Borno and above all by the reputation of Ali for sanctity, piety, scholarship and the gift of miracles leading to the voluntary submission of rulers and states in order

(1) KRAUSE, G.A., 1878, "Zur geschichte von Fesan und Tripoli", *Z.G.E.B.*, XIII, pp.356 ff.

(2) Ibn GALBUN, 1936, "al-Tidbhar", (trans. Rossi E.), *La cronaca araba Tripolina di Ibn Galbun* (sec XVIII), Bologna,.

(3) ORHONLU, C., 1969, "Documents relating to Ottoman-Bornu relations", *Tarih Dergisi*, 23, trans. Brown S.E., pp.111-130.

(4) Al-FISHTALI, 1973, *Manahil al-safa*, HODGKIN T., *Nigerian Perspectives*, 2nd Edn, Oxford University Press, pp.147-148; trans. Abdullahi Smith, Zaria, 1971.

(5) FAROQHI S., 1971, "Der Aufstand des Yahaya ibn Yahaya as Suwaidi", *Der Islam*, 47, pp.67-92; Girard: *L'histoire chronologique*.

to share in the accumulated *baraka* of Borno ; in the event a patron and client relationship arose between the Khalifas and the subordinate rulers. Ali performed the *hajj* on five occasions. He first went as a prince with his father Umar b. Idris (1619-1639) ; probably in 1637. It was Umar, incidentally, who killed a Sultan of Fazzan with his sons by having them drowned in the River Komadugu in 1620, an event recorded by Mustafa Khoja in his *Chronicle of the Fazzan* compiled early in the 18th century.¹ Ali undertook his second pilgrimage in 1647 and the third in 1657/8. A recently discovered series of glosses in the margins of a Ms in the Bibl. Nat. informs us that :

“Widespread death also occurred among the people of the Sudan when they came on the pilgrimage with the ruler of Borno. He came in the year 1068. This was his third pilgrimage”.²

His fourth *hajj* was in 1667 and during his absence rebels invaded metropolitan Borno in alliance with Muhammad al-Mubarak Sultan of Agades. They only narrowly failed to take the capital Birni Gazargamu.³ His last pilgrimage took place in 1677 and it was while he was in Cairo that he was seen by the Turkish traveller Ewiliya Celebi.⁴ He died just east of Cairo on his return from Mecca. His tomb was later described at a place of local pilgrimage due to the miracles that occurred there.⁵

It was during his reign that several famous religious communities flourished, enabling us to at least begin dating the development of such communities. Among the more famous was the great Sufi scholar Shaykh Abdullahi b. Muhammad Abd al-Jalil al-Barnawi al-Himyari. The Shaykh lived at Kalumbardu, just north of Birni Gazargamu, he was visited by students from Sinnar in the Nile valley to the east and from Morocco in the west. Traditions collected by LANDFEROIN, interpreter with the Mission Tilho, place his death in the 1680s close to the year 1100 AH⁶. Muhammad al-Qadiri in his biographical dictionary *Nashr al-Mathani* quotes Al-Halabi's lost *Raihan al-Qulub* (recently a copy has been located in the library of the University of Leiden) as saying the Shaykh died at the

(1) KRAUSE, “Zur Geschichte.”

(2) O'FAHEY, R.S. *et al.*, 1979, “Two glosses concerning Bilad al-Sudan on a Ms of al-Nuwayri's *Nihayat al-arab*”, *Bulletin of Information, Fontes Historiae Africanae* 5, pp.16-24.

(3) GIRARD, *Chronologie*.

(4) CELEBI, E., 1937, *Seyahatname*, X, Istanbul, p.73 ; HODGKIN, 1973, *Nigerian Perspectives*, Oxford : University Press, pp.184-185.

(5) BECCARI, C. (ed.), 1914, “*Rerum Aethiopicarum Scriptores occidentales*”, vol. XIV, *Relation et Epitôlae variorum*, pars II, Liber I.

(6) LANDFEROIN M.A., 1911, “Notice historique”, *Document scientifique de la mission Tilho, 1906-1909*, Paris : Imprimerie Nationale.

hands of the Tuareg on Monday 16 Rabi II 1088AH *ie* 18th May 1677/8.¹ Another valuable dating aid relating to this period was published as long ago as 1960 although little use has been made of it. This refers to the colophon of a copy of the Quran together with a marginal copy of al-Qurtubi's commentary *jami ahkhan al-Quran* in the same hand. There are also marginal glosses in Kanembu *ajami* -- possibly the oldest example of a local language in Arabic script from our area. The copiest, who names himself as Muhammad b. Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Abd al-Quwwa b. Ahmad and of Kakudi bnt. Masfarma Umar b. Uthman al-Hashimi al-Waddani, states that he completed his task in the "forenoon on Sunday 1 Jumada II of the year eighty after 1000 of the Prophets flight" that is 20 October AD 1669.² His ancestry is of significance as Abd al-Quwwa accompanied Mai Ali Ghaji on his pilgrimage in 1484 while Umar b. Uthman was an equally famous advisor to that ruler and author of a history of the reign of his son Idris, a work that Ibn FARTU claimed inspired him to undertake his histories of Mai Idris.

Dates for events in the eighteenth century are rare. There is the poem describing the Borno-Mandara war of 1781 but there is little else of value as a chronological aid. It is only when we come to the early nineteenth century and the events associated with the *jihad* of Uthman dan Fodio that a reasonable body of material comes to hand. Perhaps reasonable body is a misnomer in so far as much of the data is contradictory, especially that relating to the capture of Gazargamu by the Fulani. Henry BARTH is very positive that - "This happened in 1224, or 1809 of our era, on a Sunday but I cannot say what month". Others sources are equally certain that it occurred in the dry season of 1808, others that it occurred during the harvest. LAST and AL-HAJJ, BRENNER *et al.* have examined the problem without exhausting the possibilities.³ Nobody so far seems to have taken into account that the Fulani leader, Goni Mukhtar, had very few men when al-Kanemi and the Kanuri returned to the attack, the greater number of his followers had had to return to their homes for the seasonal migration with their cattle, a pointer to the season of the year. BARTH also provides information on the final demise of the Saifawa Mais. Shehu Umar b. Muhammad al-Kanemi had Mai Ibrahim executed two days after the battle of Kusseri where Borno was defeated by the invading forces of Wadai, this event occurred 11 Rabi I or 8 March 1846.⁴

(1) Muhammad al-QADIRI, 1917, "Nashr al-Mathani", *Archives marocaines*, XXIV, pp.251-280.

(2) BIVAR, A.D.H, 1960, "A dated Koran from Bornu", *Nigeria* 65, pp.199-205.

(3) BARTH, *Travels*, II, p. 599 ; LAST, D.M. & AL-HAJJ M.A., 1965, "Attempts at defining a muslim in XIXth century Hausaland and Bornu", *Jour. Hist. Soc. Nigeria* 3 (2), pp.23- 40 ; BRENNER L., 1973, *The Shehus of Kukawa*, Oxford : Oxford University Press, p. 32, fn 18.

(4) BARTH, *Travels* : vol II, p. 602.

KANAMYYIN BORNO

We have noted the dating problems associated with the *jihad* in Borno. Surprisingly problems continue throughout the century. Whereas Sokoto and the major Emirates such as Kano and Zaria have detailed kinglists providing day, month and year information the generally available lists for the al-Kanemi family only provide us with the year. Muhammad al-Amin al-Kanemi having come to the aid of the Saifawa gradually took over power. About the year 1814 he took the title Shaykh, in its Kanuri form Shehu, and built his own capital of Kukawa. However it was not until "the year 1235" that is 1819/20 that he had his own seal engraved. Seals are often useful guides to regnal years although unfortunately not all seals are dated. According to BARTH al-Kanemi died in 1835, the date has been accepted and is even now being used by some historians even though the late Abdullahi SMITH published a note nearly thirty years ago drawing attention to a fragment of poetry by the Shehu's close friend al-Imam Yusuf b. Abd al-Qadir in which he gives the date as 1253 AH or AD 1837/8.¹ Significantly this corresponds with the date on Umar al-Kanemi's seal. Umar's own death is usually given simply as 1881. It is now possible to be more precise and state that it probably occurred in the second week of December 1881. This has come about due to the publication of a letter from the new Shehu, Bukr b. Umar informing the Pasha of Tripoli that he had just been appointed to succeed his father. The letter is dated 15th December.² In addition there is a copy of a *mahram* or grant of exemption from obligations such as tax and hospitality to state official indicating that it was renewed by Bukr on the 18th December 1881³; anxious owners of such grants always rushed to get them renewed at the beginning of each new reign. Precise dates for the reigns of Ibrahim and Hashim, brothers and successors of Bukar are not at present available. Hashim was displaced by Rabih in 1893. Events associated with the latter will be discussed below.

BAGIRMI

The first precise date in the regnal chronology of Bagirmi is the death of Mbang Burkumanda who died, according to BARTH, in the last month of the year 1240 AH or the end of 1844.⁴ The most comprehensive king

(1) SMITH, A., 1962, *Bulletin Hist. Soc. Nigeria*; Brenner, Shehus, p. 63, fn. 49.

(2) GWARZO, H. I., 1967, "Seven letters from the Tripoli Archives", *Kano St.*, 4.

(3) PALMER's Army Book, Palmer Papers, National Museum, Jos.

(4) BARTH: *Travels*, vol. II.

list is that published by Gustav NACHTIGAL which he collected when visiting the camp of the fugitive Mbang Muhammad Abu Sekkin in early 1871.¹ Protocol was at a minimum in the harsh conditions of the time and he made good the opportunity to gather information. Of all the attempts that have been made to put together a coherent list I find that NACHTIGAL's list "works" best. There are a number of events in Bagirmi history that can be, deserve to be, examined in their own right. Among such events was the first Wadaian invasion under Abd al-Karim Sabun. Various dates have been suggested but at the present time the dry season of 1803/4 or that of 1804/5 seem more probable than the later dates usually put forward. The invasion took place on the orders, not of Muhammad al-Kanemi as suggested by BARTH but on those of Mai Ahmad b. Ali in his capacity as khalifa of the region in response to the incestuous marriage of Abd al-Rahman Gawarang with his sister Tamar, an event that excited and horrified an audience spread from Sokoto to the Nile.² This event in itself displays chronological problems. Their father, Mbang Muhammad al-Amim, died c 1785. She would have therefore been in her later teens at the time of the invasion. Why did Borno take so long to object? Sabun was at this time still a loyal client of Borno, however his decision to obey was perhaps stimulated by his annoyance at Bagirmi incursions at this time into his client state of the Bulala of Fitri, another happening without a date. The earlier date is based upon an interview in Cairo in October 1808 carried out by the young German traveller Ulrich Jasper SEETZEN with a pilgrim from Wadai who claimed to have accompanied Sabun on the expedition some four years earlier.³ Later events in the reign of Burkumanda b. Gawarang include the confrontations with al-Kanemi including those in which Borno was joined by forces - including Awlad Sulayman - from Fazzan an Tripoli. Masenya was again laid waste as was much of Kanem while the ancient state of Babaliya vanished from the scene. BRENNER in his study of the Shehus and BOVILL in his edition of DENHAM and CLAPPERTON both examine the chronology of the conflict as did Rennel of RODD in the 1920's⁴; Kola FOLAYAN has also published an account of Tripoli-Borno relations in this

(1) NACHTIGAL, *Sahara and Sudan*, vol. III, pp.396-397.

(2) LAVERS, J. E., 1982, "An introduction to the history of Bagirmi", *Annals of Borno* 1.

(3) SEETZEN, U.J., 1810, "Information on the Negro country of Mobba and some neighbouring countries", *Von Zach's Monatliche Correspondenz*, XXI, pp.137-155.

(4) RODD, F., 1926, *The People of the Veil*, London; "A Fezzani military expedition to Kanem and Bagirmi in 1821", *Jour. Royal African Soc.* XXXV, 1936, pp.153-68.

period.¹ Burkumanda's son and successor was killed c 1857 when opposing the advance of the proto-Mahdist leader from the Western Sudan, Abu Shair or the Hairy Mallam or more correctly Sharif ad-Din. The career of this man, which impinged upon the affairs of Sokoto, Kano, Borno as well as Bagirmi has still to be placed in a proper context and to be better dated.² The chronology for the years that followed is as obscure as that of the eighteenth century. When did Muhammad Abu Sekkin b. Abd al-Qadir die ? When did Gawrang II come to power ? How long was the interregnum in the 1880s ?

WADAI

It is now nearly 30 years since M.J. TUBIANA published her article on the genealogy of Wadai together with what chronological data was then available.³ More recently she has, with others, published a study of Abd al-Karim b. Jami founder of the state.⁴ BARTH was the first to advance a specific date for this event : 1020 AH. NACHTIGAL, on the other hand, suggested a later set of dates 1635-55.⁵ His dating now seems the more probable following O'FAHEY's discovery of the marginal glosses in the ms. in the Bibl. Nat. (see above). In the second gloss the commentator wrote :

"This year... Travelling (to Bilad al-Sudan) by way of Nubia was taken up by and Tunjur (?) merchants and this year a group (of them) travelled from Egypt through the land of the Nubians making for Borno via the land of al-Sulayah whose people were recently converted to Islam".⁶

Elsewhere in this particular gloss "this year" is identified as 1068 - 1657/8. All sources agree that Abd al-Karim was the Islamizer of Wadai while we also know from several sources that he was also known as al-Saliyih or Salih. If this were not enough his teacher Mahammad ibnou Dirmi or Mahammad al-Djirmi mentioned by TUBIANA can be identified with Muhammad b. Jarmiyu al-Tarqi, that is the Tuareg, who was a partner of the Fulata Bagirmi Shaykh Waldede in the famous school at

(1) FOLAYAN, K., 1971, "Bornu-Tripoli Relations, 1817-1825", *Jour. Hist. Soc. Nigeria* V, pp.463-476.

(2) MARTIN, B. G., 1963, "A Mahdist document from Futa Jallon", *Bull. I.F.A.N.*, XXV, ser. B, Nos 1-2 .

(3) TUBIANA, M.J., 1960, "Un document inédit sur les sultans du Wadday", *Cah. Et. Afr.* 2, pp. 49-112.

(4) TUBIANA, M. J. et al. , 1978, *Abd al-Karim, propagateur de l'islam et fondateur du royaume du Ouaddai*, Paris : C. N. R. S.

(5) NACHTIGAL, *Sahara and Sudan*, vol. IV, pp. 205-208.

(6) O'FAHEY, "Two glosses", pp. 17-18.

Kalumbardu at its first foundation. Sultan Muhammad Bello in his *Infaq al-Maisur* records that the two men were brought before Mai Umar (1619-39) and accused of plotting against the state, Shaykh Muhammad was killed and Waladede escaped back to Bidderi in Bagirmi.¹ The Wadai - Dar Fur Wars of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries also present problems compounded to some extent by O'FAHEY's revised and very plausible chronology for Dar Fur². When we come to the beginning of the nineteenth century we are faced with the question : what was the date of Kolak Abd al-Karim Sabun's appointment ? He is said by BURKHARDT and BARTH to have died in 1815³ and as all sources credit him with a reign of 10 years he would on this reading have succeeded in 1805 a date too late to fit with our other information. For the later parts of the century the newly published collection of translations of the correspondence of Wadai, Tama, Sila, Massalit etc. *After the Millenium* by KAPTEIJNS and SPAULDING (1988) provides a very useful guide.⁴

RABIH B. FADLALLAH

Although Rabih was killed as recently as 1900 there still remains considerable confusion over the chronology of his career. Born in Halfaya al-Muluk, today a suburb of Khartoum, in "about 1842"⁵ he served in the Egyptian irregular cavalry in the Ethiopian campaign but was soon discharged because of a wound, he then joined the merchant adventurer Zubayr. Becoming a senior commander he took part in the occupation of Dar Fur in 1874. A close adviser of Sulayman Zubayr, he was for a time "Governor" of the eastern parts of what is now the Central African Republic. He played a leading part in the revolt against Egyptian authority as represented by GORDON. It is generally stated (based upon the romantic account of Slatin Pasha) that he left Sulayman the night before the latter surrendered to Gessi, that is 15 July 1879. Gessi's letters show otherwise and that Rabih, having lost most of his regiment in covering the rear

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- (1) LAVERS, 1981, "Diversions on a journey ; the travels of Shaykh Ahmad al-Yamani", *The Central Bilad as-Sudan* (HASAN, Y.F. and DOORNBOS, P. E. eds), Khartoum : Khartoum University Press.
 - (2) O'FAHEY, R. S. & SPAULDING, J. L., 1974, *Kingdoms of the Sudan*, London, Methuen.
 - (3) BARTH, 1819, *Travels*, Vol. II, p. 644, follows BURKHARDT's dating, *Travels in Nubia*, Murray, London, App. II.
 - (4) KAPTEIJNS, L. & SPAULDING, J., 1988, *After the Millenium : Diplomatic correspondence from Wadai and Dar Fur*, Michigan : African Studies Centre, Michigan State University.
 - (5) BABIKIR, A. 1954., *L'empire du Rabih*, Paris, p. 1.

guard, broke away much earlier perhaps as early as the end of June.¹ Any system of dating the events of the next few years must be suspect, only a system in the broadest terms is possible. The first fixed dates are associated with the correspondence between Rabih and the Khalifa Abdullahi in 1888. Unfortunately much of this is undated on Rabih's side and can only be fixed in relation to the Khalifa's letters.²

A Kano pilgrim, Isa Hassan, met Rabih on the upper Shari in 1892 and carried letters from the latter to Zubayar Pasha in Cairo helping us date Rabih's activities in the area.³ Again there is a break until the siege of Mbang Gawrang in Manjaffa which seems to have taken some 3 or 5 months apparently in the period late November to early March 1892-3. He then advanced to occupy Karnak Logone, which he took by a ruse, on *sallah* day.⁴ But which *sallah* - Id al-Fitr or Id al-Kabir ?

His first confrontation with Borno took place at Am Hobbio in the Firki lands south of Dikwa. Several "precise" dates have been collected placing the encounter in May or September, the former being the more likely insofar as tradition speaks of an unexpected rain storm the night before the battle. The fact that it was unexpected suggests it might be the short early rains that often occur in April and early May. It is known that he rested in Ngala for some time awaiting a response from Borno. This duely occurred and the battle of Legarwa took place. Shehu Hashim abandoned Kukawa and fled north to the River Komadugu. Here the annual flood had come down making crossing difficult. This flood usually occurs sometime after the 20th August.⁵ The Mandara campaign, the Bade campaign, the Koyam revolt can only be dated approximately. Rabih's confrontations with the French are fairly well dated from French sources although even here there are contradictions. The career of the children of Rabih after his death is laid out in a map I published in AJAYI and CROWDER's *Historical Atlas of Africa*.⁶

(1) ZAGHI, C., GORDON, 1947, *Gessi a la reconquista de la Sudan*, 1874-1881, Centrale de studi coloniale, Firenze, pp.398-399.

(2) AL-HAJI, M. A., 1971, *Hayatu B. Said : a revolutionary Mahdist in the Western Sudan*, (HASAN, Y. F. ed.) ; *Sudan in Africa*, Khartoum : Khartoum University Press, pp.128-141.

(3) LAVERS, J. E., 1969, "The adventures of a Kano Pilgrim, 1892-3", *Kano St.* 4, pp.69-78.

(4) LEMOIGNE, J., 1918, "Le pays conquis de Cameroun du nord", *L'Afrique Française, Rens. coloniaux*, pp.94-114, 457-453.

(5) Or rather it used to before modern irrigation schemes in Kano State brought it to an end.

(6) AJAYI, J.F., & CROWDER, M. (eds), 1985, *Historical Atlas of Africa*, Longmans, London.

Let us finish this tale of chronological woe with yet another puzzle. In 1923 Shehu Sanda Kore (he was appointed by the French early in 1900 then was deposed -- but when ? Was it in late July, in August or in September 1900 ?) showed H.R. PALMER, Resident of Borno, a treaty between Sanda (Borno) and Gawrang (Bagirmi). It was dated 18 January 1900 but at that date Sanda was with Foureau and Lamy just east of Zinder while Gawrang was with Gentil and the Mission L'Afrique Centrale on the Chad-Congo divide, several hundred kilometers apart. They did not meet until the night before the battle of Lakhta (Kusseri) 21 April 1900. Very strange. The answer almost certainly lies in the fact that it was on that day, 18th January, that Joalland and Meynier led their men across the Shari into what was technically German Territory.¹

CONCLUSIONS

I suspect that the main result of our coming together will have been to bring home to us all the scale of the problem facing all those trying to develop a chronological framework for the Chad region. Perhaps this is no bad thing. Perhaps by the laying out our problems we will have prepared a foundation and hopefully through continued cooperation will be able start afresh. It will surely be through external references or from internal written documentation rather than by scientific methods that we will finally advance. In Northern Nigeria what dating is available for the last few centuries has largely been derived from Arabic documentation. To the best of my knowledge little or no systematic collection of Arabic materials of any kind has been undertaken within the borders of Chad. It is to be hoped that a serious attempt will be made in the next few years to bring the Arabic documentation of the Chad area up to the level of Sudan, Nigeria and Niger and from this body of material make a contribution to the chronology of the region.

(1) LAVERS forthcoming.