

THE TRANS- SAHARAN BOOK TRADE

*Manuscript Culture, Arabic Literacy
and Intellectual History in Muslim Africa*

Edited by Graziano Krätli and Ghislaine Lydon



The Trans-Saharan Book Trade

Library of the Written Word

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The Manuscript World

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VOLUME 3

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On the cover: Copy of the *Faṭḥ al-ḥaqq*, by Muḥammadhin Fāl b. Muttālī al-Tandaghī al-Agdabījī (d. 1287/1869–70), in the Ahl Shaykh Sīdiyya library in Boutilimit (Bābā w. Hārūn proprietor). Photography by Charles C. Stewart.

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To John O. Hunwick

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FOREWORD

Houari Touati

(translated from the French by Graziano Krätli and Ghislaine Lydon)

This volume is a collection of articles that touch on the history of book manuscripts. These are African stories, such as the one of the Mauritanian scholar who, in the first half of the 19th century, made a trip to Marrakech to return with a caravan loaded with manuscripts and printed books. Throughout his life, this bibliophile continued buying books in the Maghrib and the Middle East with the help of students, scholars and pilgrims who followed his instructions and acted as his agents.

Did he ever read all the books he accumulated in the course of his life? He certainly memorized some of them and consulted many others. But altogether they were too numerous for one person to assimilate. True, books are not made only to be read; they are also meant to be looked at and browsed, and of course they can be used in many other ways. The complexity of the learned man in question is indicative of the multiple ways in which books can be appropriated and consumed. Being a scholar, the study of books was his daily bread. As a prominent figure in his community, the ownership of books was a symbol of power and prestige. As a bibliophile, collecting rare manuscripts and fine examples of calligraphic art—such as, for example, an Egyptian copy of the Qurʾān from the Mamluk period—must have given him the esthetic pleasures of the connoisseur.

From Boutilimit to Kano, by way of Timbuktu, the essays collected in this volume are dedicated to the study of the manuscript book as both artefact, the production of which involves various professions, and form, the graphico-discursive organization of such knowledge. They show how the abstract and textual content and its material support are bound together as body and soul. In this mediatic perspective, the text and its material context substantiate and account for each other. The reader will easily understand how, based on these conditions, the study of a textual tradition can if not attest at least suggest the existence of a book market as well as the formation of a copying industry made possible by a whole network of crafts, skills and

exchanges. The manuscripts preserved in West Africa came from afar, but also were reproduced locally in centers such as Timbuktu. And while they originally were accumulated as an import item, they became sources for the composition of local writings and books. In its own way, this local production, rather than being cut off from international markets and intellectual centers, was part of them, if only because it relied upon the import of paper, at first from North Africa and Spain, and later France and Italy via the Maghrib and Egypt.

The paper trade, as well as the commerce of books in West Africa, is remarkably explored in this volume, which focuses on a region that has been traditionally neglected by historians of the Islamic book. Or, when considered, the study of the book—both manuscript and printed—in this region has not taken full advantage of the range of disciplines dealing with it, such as cultural and intellectual history, textual genetics and codicology, history of art and collections, and in a wider sense involves the study of social and economic history.

This is the lesson to be drawn from this volume, which examines genuine Sahelian and Saharan written cultures that have not been fully appreciated by anthropologists and psychologists of African literacy, probably because of their unfamiliarity with them. Historians of the book in Africa for their part will benefit from the work of social scientists. The question is whether indeed the essays collected in this volume confirm or contradict Jack Goody's notion of "restrictive literacy,"¹ developed on the basis of ethnographic material gathered among the LoDagaa of northern Ghana and the Vai of Liberia. These essays describe a variety of literate situations. While attesting to the existence of a written culture rooted in the *longue durée*, they stress its limits by showing that, if manuscript libraries and collections existed everywhere in West Africa, they have not been always accessible to the public, unlike what happened at least since the 10th century in the Muslim heartland thanks to the widespread use of the juridical institution known as *waqf* (Muslim endowment). Which is what in

¹ Having revisited recently this notion, which he developed in the 1960s, Goody reminds us of the three ways in which he uses it: "First, in relation to systems of writing that do not utilize the full technical possibilities of, for example, an alphabetical system; second, to indicate those systems in which literacy was used in restricted rather than general contexts, for example, predominantly in religious settings; and third, where literacy was restricted to specific social groups or individuals." Jack Goody, *The Power of the Written Tradition* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000), 4.

northern Nigeria, as pointed out in this volume, causes a contradictory situation in which books are present and absent at the same time. Present in the private sphere or in the closed circles represented by the political and religious authority; but out of reach in the public space, until new socio-cultural models are developed and made possible by mass literacy.

This limited accessibility, however, is relative. The general assertion that the spread of Islam has always made possible the development of a book culture and forms of literacy comparable to those recently studied by codicologists and historians in other Islamized areas is confirmed for the case of West Africa, a region that long and erroneously was considered peripheral to the Muslim world similar to Turkey,² India,³ and Central Asia.⁴ The essays collected in this volume are certainly part of this vast investigation of Islamic manuscript culture in socio-historical contexts different from those of the classical Arab and Iranian world long privileged by Orientalists.⁵ Consequently, they make of this volume a precious resource which will not fail to become a milestone. But, far from being only for specialists of the manuscript tradition of Islamic Africa, the volume will appeal to all scholars interested in cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, since the book manuscript has the peculiarity of belonging to both of these categories.

² Frédéric Hitzel, éd., *Livres et lecture dans le monde ottoman*, special issue of the *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 87–8 (September 1999).

³ Shaikh Allauddin and R.K. Rout, *Libraries and Librarianship during Muslim Rule in India* (New Delhi, Reliance Publishing House, 1996); Mandana Barkeshli and O.P. Agrawal, *Conservation of Books, Manuscripts and Paper Documents* (New Delhi, INTACH Indian Council of Conservation Institutes, 1997); Eloïse Brac de la Perrière, Yves Porter, Francis Richard and Marianne Barrucand, *L'art du livre dans l'Inde des sultanats* (Paris: PUPS, 2008).

⁴ Basil Gray, *The Arts of the Book in Central Asia* (Paris; London: UNESCO, 1979); Aširbek Muninov, Francis Richard and Maria Szuppe, eds., *Patrimoine manuscrit et vie intellectuelle de l'Asie centrale islamique*, special issue of *Cahiers d'Asie centrale* 7 (1999).

⁵ Specialists of Arabo-Islamic manuscript culture may regret the fact they were limited to the classic study by Johannes Pedersen, *Den Arabiske Bog* (Copenhagen, 1946), translated in English by Geoffrey French, *The Arabic Book* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984). In the past decade or so, a new history of the book has developed under the influence of the Annales school. A few titles related to our topic are: Houari Touati, *L'Armoire à sagesse. Bibliothèques et collections en Islam* (Paris: Aubier/Flammarion, 2003); Francis Richard, *Le livre persan* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 2003); François Déroche, *Le Livre manuscrit arabe. Prélude à une histoire* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 2004).

As vestiges of the past, book manuscripts increasingly have become objects of cultural appropriation on the part of the countries they represent. Seen as national treasures, they become coveted, exhibited and exposed to the national and international gaze, as one of the many links of a scriptural genealogy to which countries in postcolonial Africa are bound by necessity as well as by choice. Within this political context, they are meant to exalt the past glories of societies and the pride of the people who created and preserved the texts before transmitting them from one generation to the next. Real as well as virtual monuments are built to celebrate them. Whether they consist in the creation of manuscript libraries in Nigeria, Mali and Mauritania, the establishment of national manuscript centers in Algeria, or the use of information technologies to ensure preservation and access to manuscript collections in Morocco, all these initiatives reveal the same political strategy, consisting in the institutional embrace of the African manuscript heritage on the part of states that have neglected it for the longest time, to the point of jeopardizing its survival. Similar to Noah's ark, these initiatives of political and patrimonial appropriation of cultural heritage manifest themselves only in the face of urgent concerns, when such library collections are threatened by engulfing sands.

NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND SPELLING

For the transliteration of Arabic words, we have followed the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd edition (*EI2*), with several exceptions. Letters are not underlined (e.g., “sh” instead of “sh” for ش) and the letter “q” is used for ق (qāf).

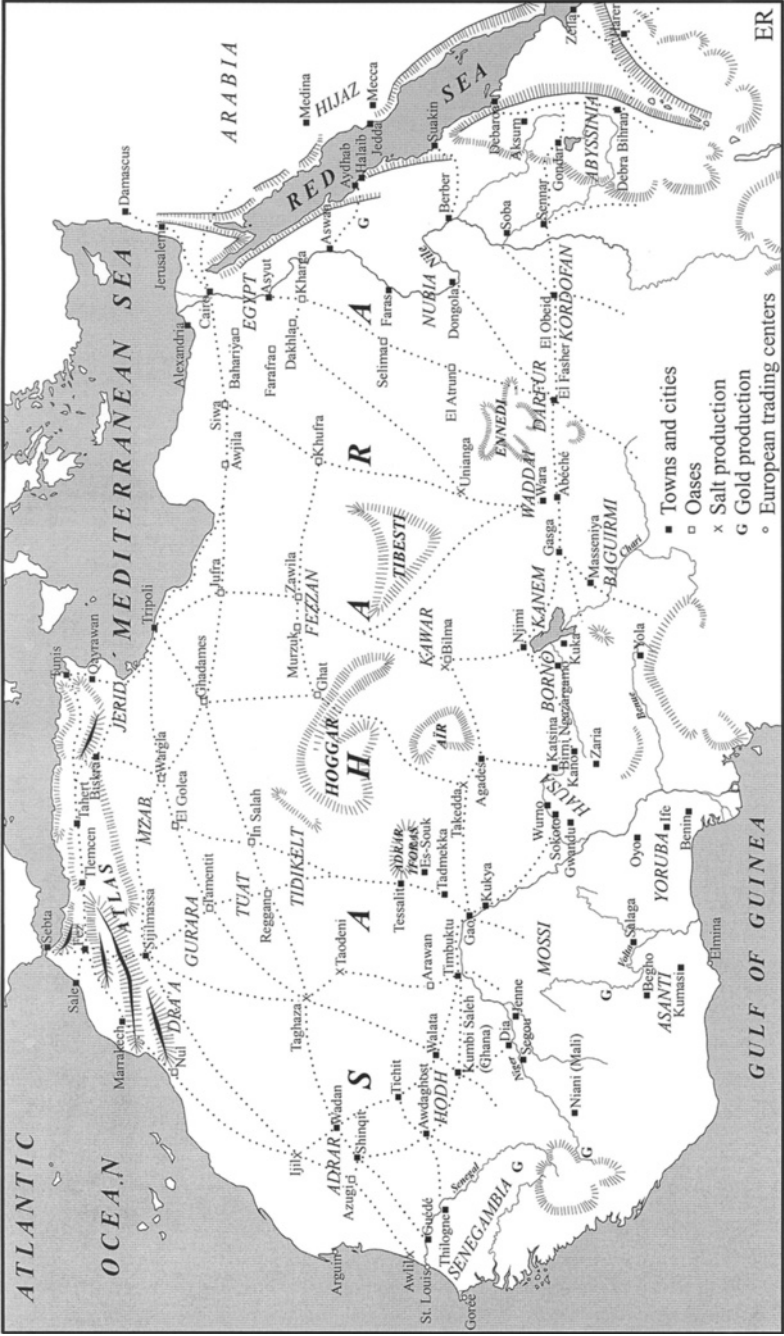
Words that have entered the English lexicon are spelled according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (e.g., fatwa, jihad, madrasah, marabout, shaykh, Sufi, zawayah), but their transliterated form appears in the glossary and is cross-referenced in the index.

Place names are written following the transliteration criteria mentioned above, with a few exceptions (e.g. Timbuktu). Their variant spellings, however, are cross-referenced in the index. All quotations maintain the spellings originally used by their authors.

Whenever relevant, dates are expressed according to the *Hijrī* and Gregorian calendars (e.g., 1431 A.H./2010 C.E., 1431/2010, 14th/20th century).



Map 1. Main manuscript repositories in contemporary West Africa. Map by Eric Ross.



Map 2. Historic routes. Map by Eric Ross.

A HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE TRANS-SAHARAN TRADE

Eric Ross

A strongly held misconception about the Sahara, both in popular culture and in academia, is that this desert constitutes both a physical barrier and a fundamental cultural divide between northern Africa—a constituent part of the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern historical realms—and “sub-Saharan” Africa, a world apart. As a result of this misconception, African Studies, as a field of inquiry, has often been conducted in isolation from the northern, “white,” part of the continent, while Islamic Studies and Middle Eastern Studies, of which the Maghrib is a poor cousin, take little account of links with “Black Africa.” Saharan Studies, which could bridge this epistemological divide, is still in its infancy. So far, only the “Islam in Africa” subfield within African Studies has situated the Sahara as a *space of flows*,¹ a zone characterized by trade and intellectual exchange. Considering the Sahara in the *très longue durée* as a conduit rather than as a barrier, this chapter provides a broad overview of the historical geography of trade from the Neolithic era to the present. Insight is provided into the role played by migration, pastoralism, tribal and caste social structures, transportation technologies, religious scholarship, pilgrimage, warfare and the wider world economy in the configuration of trans-Saharan trade routes. It will be demonstrated that the Sahara has far more often served as a link than as a barrier; and perhaps at no time in its long history has this desert been as closed to trade and travel as it is today.

The Sahara, extending over 9,000,000 square kilometers (or 3,500,000 square miles), is by far the largest desert on Earth. It is larger

¹ The “space of flows” concept was first proposed by urban sociologist Manuel Castells in *The Informational City* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989) to explain capital accumulation in the late 20th century information economy. In Castells’s view, this accumulation relies far more on network connectivity than on classical market areas and hinterlands. Adapted to the historic Sahara, “space of flows” describes the networks of trade, scholarship and pilgrimage that connected Maghribi, Sahelo-Sudanic, Nile valley and Saharan societies.

than the next three largest deserts—the Arabian, the Australian and the Gobi—combined. Straddling the Tropic of Cancer, the Sahara extends 5,500 kilometers across the breadth of Africa from the North Atlantic to the Red Sea (from 17° W to 37° E) and is nearly two thousand kilometers wide (from 15° to 34° N at its widest). Furthermore, the Sahara is but the western lobe of a nearly continuous band of aridity that traverses the Afro-Eurasian continental mass along its widest axis. Eastward, this arid band extends across Arabia and central Iran, through Central Asia to Inner Mongolia.

Prior to the consolidation of global maritime trade routes by European merchants, largely accomplished by the end of the 16th century C.E., this band of deserts was essential to world trade as it afforded nearly continuous terrestrial communication between China, the Indian subcontinent, the Middle East, Russia, the Mediterranean and West Africa. Trade, travel and communications between these world regions was assured by a system of caravans: Bactrian camels in the northern, or “cold,” deserts of Persia and Central Asia, and dromedaries in the southern, or “hot,” deserts of Africa, Arabia and India. By the end of the 10th century C.E., these transcontinental caravan networks were largely in Muslim hands. All the major routes, including those across the Sahara, were manned by Muslim traders, and most lay within or between Muslim states. The Sahara was thus part of a much larger world-system, a system of exchange centered on the Muslim world and which included the Indian Ocean, China and Christian Europe.²

Trans-Saharan trade was particularly important in the medieval and early modern periods (8th to 19th century), when powerful and relatively wealthy states in Egypt, the Maghrib and across the Sahelo-Sudanic zone actively engaged with each other. While the commodities transported across the desert—chief among them gold, salt, iron, copper, leather, horses and slaves—are commonly accounted for in the current economic history literature,³ manufactures such as textiles and manuscripts are not.⁴ The trade in manuscript books flourished

² Janet Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

³ Jean Devise, “Trade and Trade Routes in West Africa,” in *General History of Africa, Vol. III: Africa from the Seventh to the Eleventh Century, 190–215* (London: James Currey; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

⁴ An exception to this trend is provided by Ghislaine Lydon in *On Trans-Saharan Trails: Islamic Law, Trade Networks and Cross-Cultural Exchange in Nineteenth-Century Western Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

during these periods because, as elsewhere in the *umma*, the Muslim societies across the region valued scholarship and were intent upon instilling proper religious practice grounded in the canonical texts (the books of the *Sunna* and *fiqh*). Moreover, literate elites in these societies did not only collect imported books. They authored their own works: chronicles, commentaries, legal arguments, poetry, etc., which also circulated, as shown by several authors in this volume.

THE GREEN NEOLITHIC

The Sahara (*as-Ṣaḥrā'*, literally “the desert” in Arabic) has not always been a desert. In geological time, the area has experienced numerous alternating wet and dry periods, depending on the configuration and temperature of ocean currents and air masses. At the height of the last Ice Age (before about 20,000 B.C.E.), the Sahara may have been as arid as it is today, and there had been even drier episodes before that. But, as the glaciers receded in Europe the climate of the Sahara became significantly wetter. The Intertropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ), responsible for the annual oscillation between summer monsoon rains and dry winters in West Africa, and which sets the southern limit of the desert (currently marked by the Sahel biome at about 15° N), reached much further north than it does today.⁵ The mountainous massifs of the central Sahara: the Hoggar, Tassili, Tibesti and Aïr (25° N), received heavy summer precipitation and constituted veritable water towers; numerous rivers flowed from them northward to the Mediterranean and southward towards the Chad Basin and the Gulf of Guinea.

The mature hydrography of the Early Holocene period (10,000 B.C.E.) is evident today in innumerable dry riverbeds, known as “fossil valleys,” found across the length and breadth of the desert. At least two large inland seas formed in what is today the Sahelo-Sudanic belt. To the west, the upper Niger emptied into an inland sea around present-day Timbuktu and Arawān, both in Mali. To the east, a large inland sea occupied the entire Chad depression; today’s tiny Lake Chad (much smaller now than even a generation ago) is the last vestige of this Greater Chad Sea. Smaller lakes and seas formed in numerous

⁵ Pierre Rognon, *Biographie d'un désert* (Paris: Plon, 1989), 253–67.

shallow depressions further north, including along the southern edge of the Atlas Mountains: in the Jerid depression along the Algerian-Tunisian border, and in the Tidikelt at the southern end of the Saoura-Touat watershed. The southern half of today's Sahara (the area south of the Tropic of Cancer) was covered in high savanna, grasslands lightly wooded with acacia, like that currently found in the Sudanic belt today, while the northern half had a Sahel-type vegetation consisting of intermittent scrub grasses and thorny plants. Three areas of greater aridity probably also existed to some extent in the north, in what is today the Erg Iguidi/Erg Chech region (Algerian-Mauritanian borderland), in the Western Erg (Algerian-Libyan borderland), and in the Libyan Desert (Libyan-Egyptian borderland).

While this Early Holocene wet period is of great interest to geomorphologists, it is also important for prehistorians as the "green" Sahara was at the forefront of technological evolution during the Neolithic era (9,000 to 3,000 B.C.E.). The Sahara was rather densely populated during this period and its Neolithic inhabitants have left many traces of their activities. The fine stone and bone implements of the period, which are of many types and are found in great quantities throughout the Sahara, but especially in present-day Mauritania,⁶ attest to the relative industriousness and prosperity of the population. The archaeological finds include pendants and bracelets, as well as grinding tools, hand axes, a great variety of arrow heads and fish hooks. Saharans were also producing pottery, evidence of settled life. In fact, tropical cereals, namely varieties of sorghum and millet, were domesticated in the savanna lands of the south Sahara and the areas around its central mountain massifs, while tropical breeds of cattle (akin to the zebu) were also being husbanded across the region by 8,000 B.C.E. Ceramic was being made even earlier still, according to Marianne Cornevin as early as 10,000 B.C.E. in the Aïr.⁷

Perhaps the most impressive legacy of the Neolithic Sahara is its wealth of rock art. Rock faces in the Sahara's central massifs especially, the Hoggar, Tibesti and Tassili, are covered in layered paintings and engravings compiled over thousands of years of habitation. The oldest paintings have been dated to the Pleistocene/Holocene-Paleolithic/

⁶ Robert Vernet, *Préhistoire de la Mauritanie* (Nouakchott: Centre Culturel Français; Saint-Maur: Sèpia, 1993), 87–110.

⁷ Marianne Cornevin, *Archéologie africaine* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1993), 63.

Neolithic threshold.⁸ The images depict a variety of human activities, including the herding of cattle, lion hunting, domestic scenes, tent-making, music-making, dancing, and even swimming. Clothing, weapons such as bows and arrows, instruments, jewelry, adornments and vessels are carefully depicted, as are ostriches, giraffes, elephants, rhinoceroses and other members of the natural fauna. In terms of phenotype, the people responsible for these oldest layers of rock art depicted themselves as “tall round-headed bovidians.”⁹ They are quite possibly the Neolithic ancestors of the cattle-based societies of present-day Sahel, such as the Fulani and Nuer. Moreover, well into subsequent historical eras rocky surfaces in the Sahara continued to be used as supports for artwork and, eventually, writing.

The green Sahara of the Neolithic was thus a rich and active area of cultural and technological innovation. Beginning about 5,000 B.C.E., however, its population gradually had to adapt to increasing desiccation. Desiccation—as opposed to “desertification,” which is an epiphenomenon in comparison—has been a fundamental long-term trend in the Sahara throughout the historic period. The world’s weather patterns continued to change following the end of the last Ice Age. By 5,000 B.C.E. the ITCZ began to recede south, leaving the central Saharan massifs increasingly dryer. The lakes and inland seas shrank and then disappeared altogether as the rivers dried up. Saharan populations adapted to the new climatic and agricultural conditions in a number of ways, but principally by migrating. Many communities must have moved southward over time, following the receding rains into the current Sahelian and Sudanic biomes. Others are thought to have peopled the central Nile Valley, helping to create what would become the Pharaonic civilization in Egypt and Nubia. Others still settled wherever permanent sources of water could be secured, constituting the original populations of Saharan oases such as those in the Fezzan and the Tidikelt, as well as the string of oases at the foot of the Atlas Mountains. This is evidenced by the continuity in Neolithic artifacts found in these regions.

There may thus have been a fundamental cultural communality, or substratum, shared by populations all around the Sahara at the dawn of recorded history which, for the Sahara, begins with Pharaonic,

⁸ Malika Hachid, *Les premiers Berbères, entre Méditerranée, Tassili et Nil* (Aix-en-Provence: Edisud, 2000), 12.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 75.

Phoenician and Ancient Greek texts. A number of scholars, Cheikh Anta Diop and Viviana Pâques¹⁰ among them, have argued that the peculiar “caste” system characteristic of most historical Sahelian and Sudanic societies had its origin in the incipient agricultural societies of the Neolithic Sahara. This system distinguished various social categories on the basis of purity in relation to the transformation of matter. Only “free” people could farm land, raise livestock or fish. “Casted” people worked minerals (smiths), leather, wood or fibers. Working these materials rendered artisans “impure” and precluded them from farming or herding. The resulting castes were endogamous and the social systems largely matrilineal. Until very recently, these were social characteristics shared by settled oasis communities right across the Sahara as well as by many ancient agricultural and pastoral societies further south.

It is at the threshold of recorded history on the African continent, marked by the emergence of writing and states in the Nile valley in the third millennium B.C.E., that the Sahara acquired the physical characteristics we know today. This desert consists of four basic landforms. A *reg* (a Berber term) is a weathered rocky plain, often with a surface of loose pebbles and boulders. It is in the *regs* that most Saharan oases can be found; these oases are created when water from aquifers deep within the bedrock, a legacy of the Sahara’s wet periods, is forced to the surface. It is also in the *regs* that one encounters *chotts* and *sebkhas*, seasonally flooded salt flats once covered by lakes. Similar to the *reg*, a *ḥammāda* is a stony plateau of limestone or sandstone sedimentary beds. Both *regs* and *ḥammādas* are incised with the fossil valleys of Holocene-era rivers. Such valleys offer favorably conditions for digging wells but there are otherwise few oases in *ḥammāda* areas. The central Sahara is dominated by high mountain ranges, the Hoggar, Tassili, Tibesti, Aïr and Adrar des Ifoghas massifs, most of which culminate at about 3,000 meters above sea level. Because of their altitude and fractured structures, which include extinct volcanoes and lava flows, these massifs (*adrār* in Berber) have a great capacity to capture and disburse water. They thus offered enhanced potential for human

¹⁰ Cheikh Anta Diop, *L’Afrique Noire pré-coloniale: étude comparée des systèmes politiques et sociaux de l’Europe et de l’Afrique Noire, de l’Antiquité à la formation des états modernes* (Paris: Présence africaine, 1987), 11–24; Viviana Pâques, *L’Arbre cosmique dans la pensée populaire et dans la vie quotidienne du nord-ouest africain* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1995).

settlement even as desiccation proceeded all around them. Finally, there is the *erg*, or “sand sea”. An *erg* is an expanse of sand created when mobile sediments that accumulated in the lakes and seas of the wet periods dried out and were exposed to the wind. Contrary to popular portrayals of the Sahara, less than ten percent of the great desert is actually covered in sand (most of it being *reg* or *ḥammāda*), and these sandy stretches are the least hospitable to human activities of any type and have thus been rather inert historically. Such is the case of the Libyan *erg* (west of Egypt’s western oases), Algeria’s Eastern and Western *ergs*, the Iguidi, Chech and Waran *ergs* of the Algerian-Mauritanian-Mali borderlands, and the Ténéré and Bilma *ergs* of Niger. Camel caravans tended to avoid *ergs* as much as possible because of the complete lack of vegetation and permanent wells.

THE GARAMANTES

The earliest historical texts, those of the ancient Egyptians and Greeks, describe an inhabited Sahara. The Egyptians called the people of their Western Desert the “Tehenu,” “Rebu” or “Lebu,” from which we derive “Libya.” The Greeks, beginning with Herodotus, distinguished the numerous coastal peoples of the landmass to their south from those of the interior, whom they called “Garamantes.”¹¹ The Garamantes were described as an imperial people centered in Libya’s Fezzan region. The Romans called these people “Gaetuli.” It is generally accepted that the Lebu/Garamantes/Gaetuli were Berber (also known as Tamazight) speakers. The Garamantes period in the northern and central Sahara is marked by the first use of writing there. Once thought to have been derived from the Punic (Phoenician) alphabet, this “Libyan” or “Libyco-Berber” alphabet may have been independently developed by the Garamantes.¹² It is considered the ancestor of the modern Tifinagh alphabet, now used for writing Tamazight (also known as Berber) languages. Various forms of the Libyco-Berber alphabet diffused widely across Saharan regions, as far as the Canary Islands, appearing alongside pictorial elements in the rock art as well as on the dry-stone mortuary monuments associated with the Garamantes civilization.

¹¹ D.F. McCall, “Herodotus on the Garamantes: A Problem in Protohistory,” *History in Africa* 26 (1999), 197–217.

¹² Hachid, *Les premiers Berbères*, 173.

In the Sahara, rock surfaces thus predate parchment and paper as supports for writing.

Depicted by Egyptians as herders of cattle, sheep and goats, as well as warriors, the Garamantes are important for this survey of Saharan historical geography because they adopted the horse, sometime after its introduction to Egypt by the Hyksos, and maintained trans-Saharan routes based on horse-drawn chariots. First mentioned by Herodotus,¹³ most of what we know about the horse-drawn chariots of the first millennium B.C.E. comes from engravings and paintings on rocky outcrops. Beginning in the 1930s Henri Lhote and Raymond Mauny did extensive cartographic inventories of depictions of horse chariots.¹⁴ The largest concentrations of these images occur in the central massifs, in the Tassili especially but also further south in the Hoggar, Adrar des Ifoghas and Aïr mountains. Other concentrations occur all along the Saharan side of the Atlas Mountains, from central Algeria to Morocco's Anti-Atlas chain. Concentrations of chariot images can be found further south, in the *reg* of Zemmour, the Mauritanian Adrar, the Guelb er-Richat and the *dhars* (escarpments) of Tishit and Walata. There is also a concentration in the low-altitude Harūj al-Aswad massif of central Libya.

These images of horse-drawn chariots (some are actually drawn by oxen) tell us several important things about the Sahara of that time. First of all, there was still sufficient water in the Sahara—the great concentrations of images in the Tassili are particularly significant in this regard—to permit horses to routinely cross the desert along two main axes: the central axis through the massifs (modern Libya-Niger) and the western axis through modern Mauritania. Secondly, though the ancient textual sources are virtually silent about it, we can hypothesize that trans-Saharan trade was important to the economy of the Mediterranean basin in the Punic and Roman eras. Such a vast trading hinterland, which may already have included some quantity of gold as well as a semiprecious stone from the continental interior known in ancient times as the “Carthaginian carbuncle,”¹⁵ helps to

¹³ Mario Liverani, “The Libyan Caravan Road in Herodotus IV. 181–5,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 43, no. 4 (2000), 496–520.

¹⁴ Henri Lhote, *Les chars rupestres sahariens, des Syrtes au Niger par le pays des Garamantes et des Atlantes* (Toulouse: Editions des Hespérides, 1982).

¹⁵ R.C.C. Law, “The Garamantes and Trans-Saharan Enterprise in Classical Times,” *Journal of African History* 8, no. 2 (1967), 181–200.

account for the flourishing of so many impressive Roman cities along the Libyan coast (Leptis Magna, Sabratha) and in the eastern Atlas (Thugga, Timgad). On the other hand, the local economies of pastoral and sedentary Saharan communities themselves probably accounted for most of the equestrian activities depicted in the rock art. The chariots depicted appear to be small war chariots and would not have been suitable for the transport of bulk merchandise.

The date palm, essential to any oasis economy, was originally domesticated in the Persian Gulf during the Neolithic era. It probably diffused westward from Egypt in the course of the second millennium B.C.E., as it appears on rock art around the same time as the horse chariots. In fact, entire oases of palm trees are depicted in some Tassili murals of the Garamantes period. Date palm oases are labor intensive. Many man-hours are required to create and maintain them. Irrigation ditches and drainage canals must be built and maintained; the flowers of the date palm must be pollinated manually; even the soil must be manufactured with the addition of organic matter. Historically, the need for intensive labor has translated into slave-holding societies and we can hypothesize that slavery was already a feature of the Garamantes oases.

The Saharan economy of late antiquity was revolutionized by the introduction of another domesticate from the east, the camel (or dromedary). It appears that the camel was introduced in the last few centuries B.C.E., just when the Sahara was getting too dry to support horses and cattle. Systematic use of the camel for pastoralism allowed for much greater exploitation of the vegetation of the increasingly arid Sahara. Seasonal pastures distributed over great distances could be viably included within yearly circuits by camel herders. Such circuits also allowed for increased capacity for transport of goods and provisions, which bestowed both military and trading advantages to camel pastoralists.

By the end of antiquity, and prior to the expansion of Islam in the seventh century C.E., all the technologies essential to the Saharan trading system were already in place. Pastoral Berber groups had effectively harnessed the camel for subsistence, trade and warfare. This gave them power over sedentary groups in the oases, the original agriculturalists, who were enslaved *in situ*. The oases, though tiny in comparison with the vast expanses of surrounding desert, produced a surplus of dates, cereal and fodder. Not only were the camel pastoralists able to control this agricultural surplus, they also controlled

access to wells and water holes across wide regions of *reg* and *ḥammāda*.

It is not clear when these pastoral Berber groups of the Sahara adopted tribal structures, but tribal structures were certainly characteristic of both the settled and pastoral Berbers of North Africa in the Vandal and Byzantine eras. A tribe (*qabīla* in Arabic) is a socio-political entity where authority is exercised according to lineage. Tribes are dynamic in that lineages of descent can be reconfigured according to circumstances (resource allocation, demographic growth, shifts in power and wealth); new tribes can be created while older ones may merge. As political structures, tribal systems are capable of functioning very well—indeed they have flourished—outside of state structures. Inter-tribal relations in the Sahara were often marked by low levels of violence, mostly consisting of chattel raids and disputes over control of water sources. Within tribal polities, on the other hand, agricultural, pastoral and trade activities could be safely conducted. The rights and duties of members and groups were defined and protected by customary law, and there were mechanisms within tribes to settle internal disputes. Occasionally, great tribal confederations could emerge, based on some political consensus (as under Ṣanhāja/Almoravid leadership), and peace would reign over vast areas of the Sahara. Trans-Saharan trade could flourish under such regimes.

The tribal systems of the Sahara, first characteristic of Berbers and then of the incoming Arabs, overlay the older caste structures which persisted in its settled oases. Though remnant Garamantes kingdoms thrived in the Fezzan until the Arab-Islamic conquests, most Saharan populations were subject to tribal rule and were not incorporated into state structures until the colonial era. Societies across the Sahara, from modern Mauritania to the Sudan, are still stratified according both tribe and caste to this day, and they are still grappling with the unresolved legacy of centuries of domestic and agricultural slavery.

TRANS-SAHARAN TRADE PRIOR TO THE RISE OF THE ALMORAVIDS

The Arab-Islamic conquest of Egypt and North Africa, completed in the early 8th century C.E., provided the basis for a new cultural, social and political ordering of Saharan space. First, trans-Saharan trade links were greatly expanded and diversified—fuelled partly by the need for gold in the growing trading economies of the Muslim Middle

East and elsewhere in Asia. Second, the new religion itself progressively transformed the cultures and societies of the Sahara and the Sahelo-Sudanic zone.

The coming of Islam effectively ushered in the heyday of trans-Saharan trade. This trade has often been compared to maritime commerce; the Sahara has “shores” (*sāhil* means shore in Arabic, from which we derive Sahel) and island-like oases. Caravans, consisting of hundreds and even thousands of leaden dromedaries, were outfitted expeditions conveying people and merchandise. They called at “ports” and could be “wrecked” by storms. Dromedary caravans undertook their journeys under the authority and leadership of a shaykh. This leader, who usually belonged to an important Saharan tribe, had not only to navigate the Sahara’s arid physical expanses but to negotiate a way through its shifting politics as well. The routes connecting southern and northern termini varied according to changing political and social conditions in the terminal cities themselves, as well as the tribal territories and oases along the way. Usually, the major pastoral tribes of the Sahara exercised tight control over their territories, charging caravans protection and transit fees and supplying them with guides, scouts and guards.¹⁶ At other times powerful states, in alliance with the Saharan tribes, exercised control over entire trade routes, and merchants and their merchandise would be taxed. This was the case in the 12th–13th century, when the Almoravid Empire exercised complete control of the Ṭarīq Lamtūnī, and in the 15th and 16th centuries when the Songhay Empire controlled the Timbuktu-Taghāza-Touat route. Whereas along Asian caravan routes states built and maintained the principal rest stops (caravan “serails” or “*khāns*”), no such built infrastructure existed in the Sahara. The security and on-site provisioning of caravans in the Sahara depended entirely on the resident pastoral groups.

Merchants, individually or in groups, could choose to join an existing caravan, or else they could commission a caravan of their own by hiring a shaykh. Some merchants owned draught camels but most rented the camels they needed from the caravan shaykh. Typically, merchants in northern termini would have trusted partners—often

¹⁶ For a discussion of the organization of Saharan caravans see: Sebastian Prange, “Trust in God, but Tie Your Camel First,” *Journal of Global History*, no. 1 (2006), 219–39; Mohamed Boughdadi, *Le passé et le présent marocains du Sahara* (Casablanca: Editions Maroc-Soir, 1998), 115–25; and Lydon, *On Trans-Saharan Trails*, Chapter 5.

family members—in the cities along the southern shore where they traded. While commerce along caravan routes was ordered, it was not without risk. Ibn Battuta records how pilgrims and merchants were responsible for packing their own provisions, grain especially; some milk and meat could be bought en route in exchange for cloth. Travelers would get lost and die if they ventured from the caravans. In other cases, couriers and scouts would perish, leaving the caravans “adrift.” Worse still, disaster could strike a caravan, forcing merchants to abandon their wares. Upon excavation, one such “wreck” to the north of Wādān (Ouadane), dating from the 12th century, was found to have been carrying ingots of a copper-zinc alloy from southern Morocco, along with cowry shells.¹⁷

The first comprehensive description of Saharan trade routes was provided at the end of the 10th century C.E. by Ibn Ḥawqal in his *Kitāb ṣūrat al-arḍ* (“Description of the Earth”).¹⁸ A century later, about the time of the Almoravid expansion, Al-Bakrī provided another, more detailed description of these routes in *Kitāb al-masālik wa-l-mamālik* (“Book of Routes and Realms”).¹⁹ Al-Idrisī then revised this description in his *Kitāb al-Rujārī* (“Book of Roger”).²⁰ These three scholarly works of geography enumerate the trading towns on each “shore” of the Sahara as well as the oases, wells and watering holes which separated them. They also provide the distances between these points, calculated in terms of days of travel. Finally, the firsthand accounts of two famous travelers, Ibn Battuta (1304–1378)²¹ and Leo Africanus (1448–1554),²² while less scientific and comprehensive than the early geographers, provide additional insight into the conditions of trade in the late medieval era. Recent archeological endeavors have added

¹⁷ Théodore Monod, “Le ‘Ma‘den Ijāfen’: une épave caravanrière ancienne dans le Majabat al-Koubra,” in *Actes du premier colloque international d’archéologie africaine*. Fort-Lamy (Chad), 11–16 December 1966. Nanterre: Publications de la Société d’ethnologie, 1969.

¹⁸ Muhammad Abū-l-Qāsim Ibn Ḥawqal, *Configuration de la terre*, trans. J.H. Kramers and G. Wiet (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1964).

¹⁹ Abū ‘Ubayd ‘Abd Allāh Al-Bakrī, *Description de l’Afrique septentrionale*, translated by Mac Guckin de Slane (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1911).

²⁰ Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muhammad Al-Idrisī, *La première géographie de l’Occident* trans. Chevalier Jaubert, ed. Henri Bresc and Annliese Nef (Paris: Flammarion, 1999).

²¹ Muhammad b. ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Battūta, “Voyages et périples” in *Voyageurs arabes: Ibn Faḍlān, Ibn Jubayr, Ibn Battūta et un auteur anonyme*, trans. Paule Charles-Dominique (Paris: Gallimard, 1995): 369–1205.

²² Leo Africanus, *Description de l’Afrique*, trans. A. Epaulard et al. (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1956).

much-needed data to complement those of the Arabic primary sources. The cities of Awdaghust (site of Tegdaoust, excavated by Jean Devisse in 1970, 1979, 1983, 1985 and 1989), Kumbi Saleh/Ghana (excavated by D. Robert in 1984), Takedda, Sijilmāsa (excavated by Lightfoot and Miller in 1996) and Azūgī have all been partially excavated.

The first systematically maintained caravan trade routes of the Muslim period were established by Berber groups based along the desert's north shore. The form of Islam practiced by these groups at that time was Kharijism—and specifically the 'Ibādī form of Kharijism—a politically egalitarian and puritanical form of the religion which was actively repressed in the early Abbasid Caliphate (750–945). In the course of the second half of the 8th century, Khārijī refugees from Arabia, Iraq and Syria, fleeing persecution, established a string of independent polities among the Berbers of the Maghrib. In the two centuries prior to Almoravid expansion, such 'Ibādī-Khārijī states thrived in the Fezzan, in Jabal Nafūsa and in Ghadāmes (Tripolitania), in the oases of Sūf, Wādī Rīgh, Wargla and the Mzāb (modern-day Algeria), in Sijilmāsa (Morocco), as well as further north, in Tiaret (Tahert, Algeria) and among the Barghawata of the Chaouia Plain (Morocco). Little was recorded of the trans-Saharan trade routes maintained from these north Saharan Khārijī positions. This is because the Khārijīs, being a persecuted minority in the larger Muslim world, were not keen to publicize their activities to outsiders. Also, sub-Saharan gold was already an important part of the commodities traded and the Khārijī traders probably deliberately left outsiders in the dark about the logistics involved.²³ Consequently, little precise information about these commercial relations was available to 'Abbāssid-era scholars such as Ibn Abī Ya'qūbī (died c. 897), al-Maṣ'ūdī (896–956), Al-Ishtākhrī (died c. 951), and al-Maḡdīsī (946–1000), authors of the first geographical descriptions of the Muslim world. Of these early geographers, only Ibn Ḥawqal (died c. 988) actually traveled to the Maghrib, recording first hand information in places like Sijilmāsa.²⁴

²³ Devisse, "Trade and Trade Routes in West Africa," 193.

²⁴ André Miquel, *La géographie humaine du monde musulman jusqu'au milieu du 11^e siècle: géographie et géographie humaine dans la littérature arabe des origines à 1050* (Paris: Mouton, 1967).

Jewish Berber traders were also active in the Sahara from an early date, possibly before the Arab-Muslim conquest of the Maghrib.²⁵ Some local Jewish traditions date the arrival of Jews in North Africa to the time of Solomon,²⁶ i.e., the Phoenician period, while others relate their arrival to the destruction of the first Temple by Nebuchadnezzar (586 B.C.E.). By the time of the Arab conquest, there were Tamazight-speaking Jewish communities in Cyrenaica, Jabal Nafūsa, the Mzāb, Touat (Tuwāt), the Tafilalt, the Dar'a and the Moroccan Sous.²⁷ These are some of the very same areas which adopted Kharijism and Jewish communities continued to thrive in these places under Kharijī rule. Further south, across the Sahara and along the Sahel, references to Jews are found in numerous Arabic sources; Ibn Ḥawqal wrote of Jewish merchants in Awdaghust, while the 17th century author Maḥmūd-Ka'ti said they could be found in all regions of the Sahara.

From the scant data available for the 8th–10th centuries, it is clear that the busiest and most lucrative of the trans-Saharan routes linked the Kharijī city-state of Sijilmāsa, in Morocco's Tafilalt oases, to the Soninke Empire of Ghana, and to the city of Awdaghust in particular; Ibn Ḥawqal reports a bill of exchange (or check) worth 42,000 dinars drawn on Awdaghust by a merchant in Sijilmāsa.²⁸ The Empire of Ghana was at the height of its power at that time and it controlled virtually all the trade in gold from Bambuk and Bure. The gold, smelted into ingots or blank coins, was traded north as a commodity. By the mid-10th century it was being minted into coin in the cities of the Maghrib and Fatimid Tunisia before circulating eastward through the Middle East and beyond, providing currency for the famed silk roads of Central Asia and spice routes of the Indian Ocean. In exchange for sub-Saharan gold, North Africa exported wheat, dates and raisins. Salt from Saharan deposits at Ijil and Awlil was also exchanged for gold and other sub-Saharan products from this early date. Finally, cowries, a shellfish from the Indian Ocean, are found in great numbers in Sahelian cities as early as the 9th century,²⁹ earlier

²⁵ Lydon, *On Trans-Saharan Trails*, 65–70.

²⁶ Jamal Bellakhdar, Abdelmalek Benabid, Jacques Vittoz and Jean Marechal, *Tissint, un oasis du Maroc présaharien* (Rabat: Al Biruni, 1992), 67.

²⁷ Jacob Oliel, *Les Juifs au Sahara* (Paris: CNRS, 1994), 13–8.

²⁸ Nehemia Levtzion, "Ibn Hawqal, the Cheque and Awdaghust," *Journal of African History* 9, no. 2 (1968), 223–33.

²⁹ Devisse, "Trade and Trade Routes in West Africa," 208.

than at sites north of the Sahara. This indicates that the longitudinal, east-west trade routes across the Sahara, along its southern Sahel, were as important to the trading system as the more studied latitudinal, north-south routes.

The far western route between Sijilmāsa and Awdaghust, which passed through the Adrar region of present-day Mauritania, lay entirely within the territory controlled by the Ṣanhāja Berbers, a large confederacy over which the Lamtūna tribe exercised political hegemony; this westernmost axis was even referred to as the *Ṭarīq Lamtūnī*, or the Lamtūnī “Route”. The Lamtūna maintained direct control of an important trading center at Nūl (also called Nūl Lamta) in Morocco’s Anti-Atlas region. Moreover, the early rulers of the southern terminus city of Awdaghust were originally of Ṣanhāja lineage.

In the early sources, Tādmekka also appears as a major trading city, with a number of resident Khārījī merchants, which indicates that the more easterly route through Touat and the Tidikelt was operating in parallel with the far western *Ṭarīq Lamtūnī*. Sijilmāsa, at the northern terminus of both these trans-Saharan routes, also had a commanding position in the west-east, or longitudinal, caravan route connecting oases all along the northern edge of the desert eastward to Egypt. This over-land route was far more secure for North African merchants and pilgrims than the parallel maritime route through the Mediterranean, which was subject to storms and the attacks of Christian ships.

The only route comparable to the *Ṭarīq Lamtūnī* in the pre-Almoravid period was the old Garamantes axis linking Libya’s Fezzan region with the Chad basin through Kawār, the Fezzan itself being linked to both Egypt (through Siwa) and Tripolitania. Another old Garamantes route, between Egypt’s Kharga Oasis and the Chad basin, had been abandoned by this time. The Fatimid State, which first arose in Tunisia, was never able to wrest control of the Fezzan-Kawār axis from the Khārījīs, but it did manage, briefly, to occupy Sijilmāsa.

By the fourth century of the Muslim era, regular commercial activities had fostered the adoption of Islam (in both its Sunnī and Khārījī forms) in the southern termini cities of Awdaghust and Tādmekka. Ibn Ḥawqal reports that Kumbi Saleh, the capital of Ghana, had a Muslim neighborhood where the merchants lived. West of Ghana the king of Takrūr (located on the middle Senegal River) is reported to have converted to Islam c. 1040 C.E. To the east, the King of Songhay adopted Islam when he moved his capital upstream, from Kukya to

Gao, c. 1009, and the Kingdom of Kanem had adopted Islam by 1085.³⁰ These conversion events are the earliest benchmarks we have of the spread of Islam beyond the Saharan merchant milieu.

Several aspects of the spread of Islam across the Sahara need to be highlighted. First, Islam was spread through long-distance trade, and not through military campaigns as had been the case north of the desert. Second, Khārijī-ʿIbāḍī Islam was initially a major form of the religion in the central and western Sahara as it thrived in principle northern termini such as Sijilmāsa and the Jabal Nafūsa; Sunnī Islam only became hegemonic in the region due to Almoravid rule. Thirdly, as elsewhere in the expanding *umma* of the time, the adoption of Islam by Saharan and Sudanic societies required the fulfillment of a variety of religious duties, one of which was *ḥājj* (pilgrimage). In order to reach Mecca, Saharan and Sudanic pilgrims used the trade routes described above.

Furthermore, and most importantly for the aims of this volume, the growth of Muslim communities in the trading emporia and royal courts south of the Sahara created a new need there, namely that for books. It has often been pointed out that, historically, Islam was most fully developed in a literate, urban environment. Like Judaism and Christianity, it is a “religion of the book,” and its normative principles and practices are codified in canonical texts. The proper application of Islamic principles at home, in a business or trade, in matters of governance, slavery and taxation, for example, requires recourse to textual sources. At the very least, these written sources include books of the *sunna* (such as the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Al-Bukhārī and Mālik b. Anas’ *Muwattāʾ*’ which contain the authenticated sayings and deeds of the prophet Muhammad) and of *fiqh* (legal jurisprudence such as Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī’s *Risāla*, which has been used as a textbook for religious instruction throughout the Sahara and western Sudan until today). However, acquiring a sound understanding of these sources and the ability to use them in argumentation requires a complete education, including in Arabic grammar, Islamic history, theology and mathematics, to name only the major scholarly fields. In short then, the need for books of these sorts must have arisen as soon as Muslim communities were established, and this need would have grown as the community expanded spatially and demographically, and as it diversified its activities. Yet, notwithstanding the underlying argument, there is

³⁰ Mervyn Hiskett, *The Development of Islam in West Africa* (London: Longman, 1984).

no historical reference to books being traded in and through the Saharan before Leo Africanus' 16th century account of the book trade in Timbuktu.

THE ALMORAVID ERA

The Almoravid conquests of the mid-11th century have long been viewed as a watershed event for Islam in Africa, though our understanding of the significance of this event has changed over time. To begin with, we can no longer credit the Almoravids with introducing Islam to Ghana and Takrūr; this had been accomplished prior to their expansion. Nor did the Almoravids create the trans-Saharan gold trade; they simply extended their sovereignty over pre-existing commercial networks. The Almoravids consolidated a tribal politico-military system based on a Ṣanhāja alliance and solidified it with a reformed Mālīkī legal doctrine. Centered in Azūgī, in the Mauritanian Adrar, the movement expanded rapidly, taking both Sijilmāsa and Awdaghust by 1059 C.E., and thus securing the crucial western Saharan trade routes. Moreover, both Ghana and Takrūr were forced into the Almoravid imperial system, a system which extended to northern Spain. The economic rationale and success of this system is indicated by the sharp increase in the number of Moroccan and Andalusian cities minting gold coins while under Almoravid rule.³¹

The Almoravid movement had a religious rationale from its inception: that of establishing proper Sunnī-Mālīkī practice. The movement extinguished remnant Kharijī polities and actively combated Fātimid influence emanating from Egypt. The hegemony of Mālīkī jurisprudence throughout the Maghrib, the Sahara and West Africa can be attributed to their endeavors. The intellectual foundation of the movement lay with two religious scholars from Ifrīqiyah (Tunisia) who had been brought to the Sahara for this purpose: 'Abd Allāh b. Yāsīn (d. 1059) and Muḥammad Ḥasan al-Hadrāmī (d. 1095–96).³² Al-Ḥadrāmī wrote a political treatise called *al-Ishārah ila tadbīr al-īmārah* ("Counsel for the Instruction of [those in] Authority") which is the first work on record known to have been written in the Sahara.³³

³¹ Devisse, "Trade and Trade Routes in West Africa," 199.

³² Izibdiḥ Ould Mohamed Mahmoud, "Ouadane et Chinguetti: deux exemples de rayonnement de villes sahariennes," in *Les Bibliothèques du désert*, ed. Attilio Gaudio (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2002), 91.

³³ Mohamed Moustapha Ould Neda, "Recherches, sauvegarde, classement et études des manuscrits mauritaniens" in *Les Bibliothèques du désert*, 75.

The trans-Saharan routes of the Almoravid era are also better documented than those of the previous period as both Al-Bakrī and Al-Idrīsī wrote of them. A greater number of routes in the western Sahara were now open to trade. The westernmost routes, through the Mauritanian Adrar and the Almoravid base at Azūgī, were still the most important ones. In the north, these routes led to a string of towns and oases along the southern fringe of the Atlas, between Nūl in the Anti-Atlas and Sijilmāsa. At the southern end, they culminated at Awdaghust and Kumbi Saleh, as well as at several towns along the Senegal River (Ṣanghāna, Takrūr, Sillā, Barīsā and Qalanbū).³⁴ Further east, just three routes are reported: Wargla-Awdaghust, Wargla-Tādmekka-Gao and Ghadāmes-Tādmekka-Gao. Both Al-Bakrī and Al-Idrīsī also mention the Fezzan-Kawār routes, with offshoots to Ghadāmes.

While distances between towns along these routes are frequently provided in the geography books, the authors rarely report on the goods actually traded. Al-Bakrī informs us that Morocco's Souss region was producing copper for export to the Sudan, while Al-Idrīsī reports that Aghmāt (near Marrakech) was producing copper and brassware, fabrics, iron tools, woven cloth, turbans, cloaks, prayer beads made of glass, mother of pearl and semiprecious stone, various spices, perfumes and wrought iron utensils for export to the "lands of the Blacks."³⁵ Most of these items are luxury manufactures but books are not listed among them. Though books and manuscripts are not mentioned in contemporary sources, there is circumstantial evidence to their being traded. The oldest dated manuscript in the Ahl Ḥabut Library in Shinqīṭī (Chinguetti) is a work of *tafsīr* (Qur'ānic commentary), dated 480 *hijrī* (1087–88 C.E.) and written by the hand of its Andalusian author, Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī.³⁶

Specifically Saharan products were also traded both north and south. These included salt, but also indigo and dates (produced in the oases), copper (mined in the Mauritanian Adrar and in the Aīr), another mineral commonly called "alum," and hides. In addition, semiprecious stones such as amazonite, garnet, agate, and chalcedony were

³⁴ These places are described as cities by al-Idrīsī but they do not figure in the local historiography of the Senegal valley. Nor have these "cities" been identified archeologically.

³⁵ Al-Idrīsī, 140.

³⁶ Ahmed Ould Mohamed Yahya, "Les manuscrits arabo-islamiques au Sahel," in *Les Bibliothèques du désert*, 61.

mined for export at various places across the desert, but principally in the central massifs.

THE MALIAN AND SONGHAY ERAS

The political and commercial hegemony of the Almoravids waned in the mid 12th century. Yet the trans-Saharan trading system, dependent as it was on tribal structures rather than the state, continued largely as it had before. In fact, the 12th through the 16th centuries mark the “golden age” of this trade. For one thing, demand for West African gold was at its height as the economies of the Mediterranean Sea, the Middle East, Central Asia, the Indian Ocean and Ming China expanded. The only other global supplier of gold at this time was Monomotapa (modern-day Zimbabwe), also in Africa. Secondly, despite a few major political upheavals, such as the replacement of the Almoravids and the Fatimids by the Almohads and the Mamluks respectively, and the rise of the Malian and then the Songhay empires, the trade routes and trading cities of the African continent were relatively secure, and therefore prosperous. The situation in Africa contrasts with that in Muslim Asia at that time, where first the Crusades and then the Mongol and Timurid conquests wrought much destruction and havoc to cities and commercial networks.

By far the greatest upheaval to affect the Sahara was its progressive Arabization due to the advance of tribes of Arabian origin: the Banī Hilāl, Banī Sulaym and Banī Ma‘qil. First settled in Upper Egypt, these tribes were sent west in the 11th century by the Fātimids in order to destabilize the Zirid dynasty in Tunisia. They continued to move westward across the northern Sahara, taking control of the best pasture lands from Berber pastoralists as they went. In his *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldūn describes the advent of these “Arabs”³⁷ in wholly negative terms, as bringers of devastation to civilized lands. By the beginning of the 15th century, these Arab tribes had brought the areas traversed by the westernmost routes—the Tafilalt, the Dar‘a, the Mauritanian Adrar—under their control. The Berber Ṣanhāja and Zanāta tribes were largely assimilated into the new power structure and the foundation of the modern-day Hassani culture of Mauritania was laid.

³⁷ For Ibn Khaldūn, ‘*arab* is a social, not an ethnic designation. It refers to pastoralists and nomads, equivalent to *badawī*, as opposed to settled agriculturalists. Ibn Khaldūn, *Discours sur l'histoire universelle*, trans. Vincent Monteil (Beirut: UNESCO, 1967), I: 243.

The central Sahara was spared the Arab invasion and remained under the control of Berber tribes. The Tuaregs established a sultanate in the Aïr in 1449. The central Saharan routes through the Hoggar and Kawār to the Fezzan and Ghadāmes developed greatly thereafter. The 16th century was characterized by the growth of Hausa commercial networks to the south, in Kano and Katsina especially, and by stable Ottoman control to the north. Textiles and leather goods from Kano were being traded in Cairo along with the usual Sudanic commodities: ivory, gold and ostrich feathers.³⁸

The activity of the Saharan trade routes of the Malian/Songhay period is exemplified by two famous travelers: Ibn Battuta and Leo Africanus. They crossed the Sahara in 1352–3 and 1511–2 respectively, and both left written accounts of the routes and places they visited. When Ibn Battuta headed to Mali he traveled directly south from Morocco, using what was probably the best route at that time: from Sijilmāsa to the salt mines of Taghāza and then on to Walāta. His return journey took him through the principal commercial cities of the Niger Bend: Timbuktu and Gao, and then eastward to Takedda and the Aïr. Takedda is described as both a copper mining center and a commercial emporium for Egyptian goods, principally cloth. From the Aïr Ibn Battuta crossed the Hoggar and returned to Sijilmāsa through Touat and Gourara.

The great activity of this period is also manifest in the pilgrimages of West African monarchs to Mecca. The Malian emperor Mansa Wali, son of Sunjata, was the first monarch to perform the *ḥajj*, sometime in the 1260's. He was followed at the end of the 13th century by Mansa Sakura, who died during the return journey, and then by Mansa Kankan Musa in 1324. This Malian emperor and his retinue traveled first north, through Walāta and Touat to Morocco.³⁹ They then traveled east overland, along the northern shore of the Sahara, to Cairo where they had high-level relations with the Mamluk court and where they liberally disbursed gold onto the currency market. This visit was chronicled by al-'Umarī,⁴⁰ who appears to have quizzed the visitors

³⁸ Djibou Hamani, "Le Hausa entre le Maroc et le Songhay à la fin du XVI^e siècle," in *Le Maroc et l'Afrique subsaharienne aux débuts des temps modernes* (Rabat: Institut des Etudes Africaines, 1995), 68.

³⁹ Adamou Aboubacar, *Les relations entre les deux rives du Sahara du XI^e au début du XX^e siècle* (Rabat: Institut des Etudes Africaines, 2005), 20.

⁴⁰ Ibn Fādl Allāh Al-'Umarī, *Masālik al-absār fī mamālik al-amṣār*, trans. Maurice Gaudefroy-Demombynes (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1927).

about conditions in the Empire of Mali, which he called Takrūr. The nearly contemporaneous accounts of al-ʿUmarī (written c. 1345) and Ibn Battuta (1355) greatly influenced knowledge of Africa in western Europe in the next century. Later, in 1497, we have record of the Songhay emperor Askiya Muḥammad's *hajj*. Like Kankan Musa before him, this emperor too passed through Cairo.

If the western Sudan was the "land of gold," it was also a land of Islamic scholarship. Scholars from the Maghrib, Egypt and the Hijaz were invited to Mali to settle and teach. They came with their books. Other books were ordered by the Emperors, or else were brought back from the *hajj* by returning pilgrims. Meanwhile, West African students were sent to places like Fez and Cairo to study.⁴¹ Ibn Battuta mentions the names of the *qādīs* and imams he met in each Sudanic city, many of them Moroccan. He also reports that the inhabitants of Zāgha (most probably equivalent to the town of Dia, or Diakha, near the inland Niger Delta) showed great zeal for the study of Islamic sciences.⁴² Timbuktu, on the other hand, did not strike this traveling scholar as being particularly engaged in intellectual endeavors at this time. Timbuktu's rise as a center of Islamic scholarship occurred later, under the Songhay Empire.

Scholarship thrived in the Sahara as well. The city of Wadān, in the Mauritanian Adrār, was established in 536 *hijrī* (1141–2 C.E.) by four religious scholars.⁴³ Wadān became the principle center of religious scholarship in the western Saharan regions in the 16th and 17th centuries, with numerous scholars and authors among its inhabitants. It was also a major trading city, though what relations were entertained between scholars and merchants has yet to be determined. Neighboring Shinqīṭī, founded in 660 *hijrī* (1262 C.E.), also thrived through scholarship and trade. It is reported that even its girls were educated and literate, and the city was the starting point of an annual *hajj* caravan.⁴⁴

The Songhay Empire exercised hegemony over the principal Saharan trade routes between the Aïr and the Mauritanian Adrar during the 15th and 16th centuries. Its capital was Gao, a large trading

⁴¹ Aboubacar, *Les relations entre les deux rives du Sahara du XIe au début du XXe siècle*, 17.

⁴² Ibn Battuta, "Voyages et périples," 1030.

⁴³ Ould Mohamed Mahmoud, "Ouadane et Chinguetti," 89.

⁴⁴ Ould Mohammed Mahmoud, 95.

city with privileged relations with Egypt. The intellectual capital of the empire however was Timbuktu, also a major trading city but one with close links to Morocco. Timbuktu had three Friday Mosques, one of which, the Sankoré, was also a university. The struggle between the political authorities in Gao and scholars of Timbuktu, Walāta, and Jenné is well documented, principally in the two *tarikhs*, or “histories:” ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sa‘dī’s *Ta’rikh al-sūdān*,⁴⁵ and Maḥmūd Ka‘tī’s *Ta’rikh al-fattāsh*,⁴⁶ written in Timbuktu in the mid-17th century.

There is indeed a wealth of surviving texts from the Songhay period. These include legal rulings, scholarly missives, biographies of leading scholars, and diplomatic correspondence. The Moroccan jurist Muḥammad al-Maghīlī (d. 1505), who first gained prominence for persecuting Touat’s Jews in the 1490s, served as *faqih*, or jurisconsult, in the Hausa city-states of Kano and Katsina, as well as at the court of Askiya Muḥammad in Gao. He was in regular correspondence with the Egyptian jurist al-Suyūṭī.⁴⁷ Leo Africanus’ *Cosmographia dell’Africa* (written in 1526) also dates from this period. Still a Muslim named Hasan al-Wazzān at the time, Africanus traveled to Songhay c. 1511 as an ambassador of the Wattasid sultan of Fez. In Timbuktu he noted a large and most lucrative market for manuscript books from the Maghrib.⁴⁸ The trade in valuable manuscripts between Morocco and the Songhay Empire (and Timbuktu in particular) appears to have been very active.⁴⁹ Moreover, the *in-situ* copying of books in Saharan cities, while it offset the need for expensive bound imports, fueled the need for imported paper, mostly of Italian manufacture.⁵⁰

THE SAHARA IN THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD

The nature and role of trans-Saharan trade changed under the new conditions created by global oceanic trade beginning in the 15th century. Controlled by western European naval powers—primarily

⁴⁵ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Imrān b. ‘Amīr Al-Sa‘dī, *Tārīkh al-Sūdān*, translated by Octave Houdas (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1964).

⁴⁶ Maḥmūd b. al-Hājj al-Mutawakkil Al-Katī, *Tārīkh al-Fattāsh*, translated by Octave Houdas & Maurice Delafosse (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1964).

⁴⁷ John Hunwick, “Religion and State in the Songhay Empire, 1464–1591,” in *Islam in Tropical Africa*, 124–43 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980).

⁴⁸ Leo Africanus, 468–9.

⁴⁹ Lydon, “Inkwells of the Sahara,” 52–3. See also Terence Walz’s chapter in this volume.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 54–5.

Portugal, Spain, England, the Netherlands and France—the mercantilist system consisted of chartered national companies attempting to monopolize trade over specific seas and coasts through a network of overseas “factories” (or trading posts manned by company agents). Eventually, this maritime system circumvented and short-circuited the older continental caravan system. The Portuguese initiated Europe’s overseas expansion by occupying Şabṭa (Ceuta), on the Strait of Gibraltar, in 1415. In 1445 they established a trading post on the island of Arguin, off the Saharan coast, and another at Elmina, along what would become the “gold coast” (modern Ghana), in 1482. Both fortified posts, and other smaller ones beside, were intended to tap into West Africa’s gold market. While that at Elmina was successful in this regard, little gold was to be had at Arguin. In 1487, in an attempt to stimulate purchase of gold there, the Portuguese set up a factory in the inland caravan city of Wadān. But this was to no effect; trade at Arguin was mainly in slaves and gum arabic and the factory in Wadān was soon abandoned. Furthermore, by the 16th century the quantity of gold and silver bullion extracted from Mexico and Peru had made the more expensive African gold less relevant to the European trading powers.

West African gold, however, did not become irrelevant to trans-Saharan relations, or at least not yet. Unable to dislodge the Portuguese from its Atlantic ports, the Moroccan Sultan Aḥmad al-Manṣūr (reigned 1578–1603) turned his army south, defeating the forces of Songhay Empire in 1590–92.⁵¹ Ostensibly, the *casus belli* for this war was control over the mid-Saharan oases of Touat and the Taghāza salt mines, but it is clear that the underlying issue was Morocco’s drive to take control of the dwindling gold trade; Aḥmad al-Manṣūr added the title “al-Dhaḥabī” (“The Golden”) to his name after defeating Songhay.

The Moroccan conquest of Songhay, though it was of only short-term benefit to the Moroccans, marks a major watershed in the history of the region. First, the event closes the era of great territorial empires, both north and south of the Sahara. Secondly, in order to completely subjugate Songhay, and the independently minded scholars of Timbuktu in particular, its leading intellectuals, including Aḥmad Bābā (1556–1627), were exiled to the court in Marrakech.

⁵¹ Ismael Diadié-Haïdara, *Jawdar Pasha et la conquête Saādiennne du Songhay, 1591–1599* (Rabat: Institut des Etudes Africaines, 1996).

Moreover, Timbuktu's famous libraries were confiscated and the books, like the scholars, were taken to Marrakech.⁵² Also included in the war booty was the royal library from the court in Gao.⁵³

After the era of gold, slavery came to dominate trans-Saharan trade in 17th and 18th centuries. While trade in slaves had been a feature of trans-Saharan caravan trade since its inception, until this period slaves had been but one commodity among many. The Sa'dian dynasty first invested in the trans-Saharan slave trade in the early 16th century, well before its military expedition against Songhay. The Sa'dians had established a sugar industry in southern Morocco (in the Souss, Chichaoua, Essaouira and the Haouz) based on irrigation and slave labor. With industrial production of sugar, the provisioning of slaves from sub-Saharan Africa became a principal concern. Aḥmad Bābā, exiled in Marrakech, was driven to write a treatise, entitled *Mi'rāj al-ṣu'ūd*, spelling out the licit and illicit conditions under which these slaves were procured.⁵⁴ In the long run, for the Sa'dians, the sugar policy failed. Their arch-enemy the Portuguese began producing cheaper sugar in Brazil and this undercut Moroccan sugar on the European market. Consequently, Morocco's sugar production collapsed, as did the dynasty itself, early in the 17th century.

The collapse of Morocco's sugar industry did not, however, herald the end of the trans-Saharan trade in slaves. By the 1660s the 'Alawī dynasty had reestablished a centralized state in Morocco and had decided to modernize it on the Ottoman Janissary model, that is by creating a slave-based army and civil service. Sultan Moulay Ismail (reigned 1672–1727) first enslaved the Black populations in Morocco's Saharan oases.⁵⁵ This population, called *Ḥarātīn* locally and descendant from the Sahara's Neolithic-era inhabitants, was already of slave status and was principally employed in agriculture. Though the *Ḥarātīn* were Muslims, they became slaves of the sultan and were transferred to the capital. When this policy was criticized by the

⁵² It is reported that Ahmad Bābā's 1600 volume personal library was confiscated and taken to Marrakech. Zakari Dramani Issifou, "Les manuscrits arabes dans l'histoire des relations entre l'Afrique de l'ouest et la Méditerranée (XV^e et XVII^e siècles)," in *Les Bibliothèques du désert*, 29.

⁵³ John Hunwick, "Arabic Manuscripts in the Niger Bend," in *Les Bibliothèques du désert*, 131.

⁵⁴ John Hunwick and Fatima Harrak, *Mi'rāj al-ṣu'ūd: Aḥmad Bābā's Replies on Slavery* (Rabat: Institut des Etudes Africaines, 2000).

⁵⁵ Bellakhdar, 139.

religious scholars in Fez, Moulay Ismail set about purchasing sub-Saharan slave boys instead. Horses and firearms were provided to the Ḥasānī tribes of Bilād Shinqīṭ, the “Lands of Shinqīṭ” (i.e., the Mauritanian Adrar). These tribes then either raided for slaves in Sahelian areas directly, or else purchased slaves at the emporia there, particularly in the emirates of Brakna, Trārza and Tagant, which were allied with Morocco. Moroccan armies intervened constantly in these emirates, and even further south in the Senegal valley, in support of this policy until 1740.⁵⁶ The Moroccan state also purchased directly from the slave market in Timbuktu, which was still nominally under its sovereignty. In the end, though, the ‘Alawī slave army proved a failure. A slave army whose members were affiliated neither to domestic tribe nor to home province was expected to be faithful only to the sultan and the central state. Yet, following Moulay Ismail’s death, his sons fought for the throne and the new slave army became embroiled in the ensuing civil wars. The cultural legacy of Moulay Ismail’s slave policy is evident today in the sub-Saharan cultic and musical practices of several Moroccan Sufi groups: the Gnāwa, the Aïssāwa and the Hamadsha in particular.

SUFI NETWORKS

Sufi networks, and the scholarship and exchanges they fostered, began to play an important role in trans-Saharan relations in the 18th century and they had become essential social and political institutions throughout the Sahara by the time of the European colonial conquests. Cutting across tribal networks and affiliations, and able to operate without state structures, Sufi orders proved to be highly flexible means of assuring long-distance links, including in commerce. Sufi centers, or *zāwiyahs*, disseminated religious education to a broad cross-section of the male population. Invariably, they possessed libraries and they promoted the copying of manuscripts—on paper imported from Europe. Not only did the Sufi shaykhs collect religious texts, they fostered writing and some of them were prolific authors in their own right. The al-Kuntī shaykhs of Timbuktu, for instance, produced

⁵⁶ Oumar Kane, “Les relations entre le Maroc et les états riverains du fleuve Sénégal de la fin du XV^e au milieu du XVIII^e siècle” in *Le Maroc et l’Afrique subsaharienne aux débuts des temps modernes* (Rabat: Institut des Etudes Africaines, 1995).

many original works of scholarship over three generations (c. 1760–1870).⁵⁷

The earliest Sufi networks in the Saharan zone consisted of *maḥaḍras*, teaching encampments which moved along with the pastoral activities of the headmasters. Such loosely structured networks of peripatetic *maḥaḍras*, usually affiliated to a particular tribe, had long constituted the basis of religious instruction for the Sahara's pastoral groups. With the growth of Sufi *ṭarīqas* (variously translated as “orders” or “brotherhoods”), these dispersed schools were integrated into networks based on master-student relations, and often consolidated through marital links.

The first Sufi order to diffuse through the *maḥaḍra* system was the Qādiriyya, diffused through the Kunta tribal confederacy. The Kunta claimed an Arab, Qurayshī, origin and an orthodox scholarly pedigree from Qayrawān in Tunisia. They specialized in Islamic scholarship and esoteric knowledge and maintained *maḥaḍras* widely across the western parts of the Sahara: in Tuat, Zemmūr, Hodh, Walāta and Azawād.⁵⁸ The Kuntī-Qādiriyyah provided virtually the only inter-tribal and inter-state organization in this zone following the decline of Moroccan influence there.

The Tijāniyya order, established in Fez in the late 18th century, diffused through the Sahara in a similar way, by means of the Idaw ‘Alī tribe. The Idaw ‘Alī were influential in the commercial cities of Shinqīṭī and Tidjikja, and they controlled important trade routes in the Adrar and Tagant.⁵⁹

The Sanūsiyya was the most politically ambitious of the Saharan Sufi orders. This order was established by Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Sanūsī (d. 1275/1857) in Cyreneica and Tripolitania. By the end of the 19th century, it had consolidated a network of *zāwiyas* which stretched west to the Jerid oases of southern Tunisia and on to Wargla, eastward to all of Egypt's western oases, and south through the Fezzan and Kufra Oasis to Kanem, Waddai and Darfur. Though the Sanūsiyya order was not directly involved in commerce, it did provide security for the trade

⁵⁷ Mohammed Ibrahim El-Kettani, “Les Manuscrits de l'occident africain dans les bibliothèques du Maroc” in *Les Bibliothèques du désert*, 68.

⁵⁸ Aziz Batran, *The Qādiriyya Brotherhood in West Africa and the Western Sahara: The Life and Times of Shaykh al-Mukhtar al-Kunti (1729–1811)* (Rabat: Institut des Etudes Africaines, 2001).

⁵⁹ Rahal Boubrik, *Saints et société en Islam: La confrérie ouest-africaine Fādiliyya* (Paris: CNRS, 1999), 55.

routes across this vast track of desert by securing peace between the powerful tribes in its midst and between the states to the north and south.⁶⁰ Moreover, in the first decades of the 20th century the Sanūsiyya was able to marshal sufficient material and human resources to lead resistance to French and Italian colonization in the Central Sahara.

Sufism was by no means limited to pastoral groups. It prospered in Saharan cities as well. Agades began attracting Sufi shaykhs from north of the Sahara, mostly affiliated to the Qādiriyya, as early as the 16th century. Similarly, Shinqīṭī, a major center of religious scholarship considered the “seventh holy city of Islam,” was home to numerous Sufi masters and their libraries.⁶¹ Tishīt and Walāta, whose scholars had maintained close relations with those of Timbuktu, both became centers for the dissemination of the Shādhiliyya order in the late 18th century.⁶² Kuntī shaykhs of the Qādiriyya order had been active in Walāta since the 15th century. Timbuktu became an important center for the Qādiriyya when a revered Kuntī shaykh, Sīdī al-Mukhtār al-Kuntī al-Kabīr (1729–1811), settled there. He had numerous students and disciples, some of whom, like Shaykh Sidiyya al-Kabīr (1780–1868) and Shaykh Muḥammad al-Faḍl (1797–1869), later established their own branches of the Qādiriyya.⁶³

A number of Sufi *zāwiya*s on the north shore of Sahara were also very influential during this period. These included the *zāwiya* of Sīdī Aḥmad-u-Mūsā in the Tazerwalt,⁶⁴ the *zāwiya* at Mghimima in Agadir-Tissint,⁶⁵ the Qādirī *zāwiya* in Akka, the Naṣirī-Shādhilī *zāwiya* in Tamgrūt,⁶⁶ and the *zāwiya* of Sīdī al-Bakrī in Tamentit (Touat). The Naṣirī *zāwiya* in Tamgrūt is especially famous for the manner in which it later managed to conceal its 4,000-volume library from

⁶⁰ Jean-Louis Triaud, *Les chemins de la Sanūsiyya en Afrique* (Rabat: Institut des études africaines, 1996), 17.

⁶¹ Aboubacar, 35.

⁶² Boubrik, 50.

⁶³ Charles Stewart, *Islam and Social Order in Mauritania* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).

⁶⁴ Paul Pascon, *La Maison d'Iligh et l'histoire sociale du Tazerwalt* (Rabat: Emer, 1984).

⁶⁵ Bellakhdar, *Tissint*, 140.

⁶⁶ David Gutelius, “Sufi Networks and the Social Context for Scholarship in Morocco and the Northern Sahara, 1660–1830,” in *The Transmission of Learning in Islamic Africa*, and Latifa Benjelloun-Laroui, *Les bibliothèques au Maroc* (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 1990).

colonial authorities.⁶⁷ The educational activities and libraries associated with these northern Sufi centers attracted students from right across the western Sahara. So too did their commemorative festivals. These religious events, called *mawsims*, were part pilgrimage, part commercial fair. The spiritual links between the southern Moroccan *zāwiyas* and communities across the Sahara meant that Saharan and sub-Saharan goods continued to be traded at these fairs long after other commercial trading ventures had ceased. At the same time, slave markets thrived at these fairs well into the 19th century.

The Sufi era was the last period of trans-Saharan relations prior to European colonization. Sufi institutions and networks provided the ideological framework and, in some cases, the network infrastructure for continued trans-Saharan trade, especially with regard to books, paper, binding leather, and related materials. Most of the surviving volumes in the libraries of Wādān, Shinqīṭī, Walāta, Timbuktu, etc., date from this Sufi period. Moreover, in the second half of the 19th century Sufism greatly expanded south of the Sahara, in Senegal, Mali, Guinea and Nigeria in particular. West African Sufi orders—first the Qādiriyya, then the Tijāniyya—depended heavily on their Saharan counterparts for access to books from the Arab world, which means that at the onset of colonization in the Sahara the zone was still important to the book trade.

COLONIZATION

European colonization of the Sahara, principally by the French but also the Spanish (in Río de Oro), Italians (in Libya) and British (in Egypt and the Sudan) had contradictory effects on trans-Saharan relations. In some cases, as with the Sanūsiyya in Libya and Shaykh Mā' al-'Aynān's Qādirī movement in the western Sahara, Saharan populations, mobilized through Sufi networks, offered some of the fiercest resistance to European conquest. In others, as with the Tijāniyya *zāwiyas* in the Algerian Sahara and the Fādhiliyya and Sīdiyya branches of the Qādiriyya in southern Mauritania, the Sufi orders facilitated the imposition of colonial rule.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Latifa Benjelloun-Laroui, "Les bibliothèques de l'extrême-sud marocain," in *Les Bibliothèques du désert*, 230–6.

⁶⁸ David Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation: Muslim Societies and French Colonial Authorities in Senegal and Mauritania, 1880–1920* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000).

The colonial powers, especially the French, had big plans for the Sahara, none of which materialized. Once “pacified” (armed resistance to colonial encroachment continued in some cases until the 1930s), the Sahara was to be “opened” to economic exploitation (*mise en valeur*). For example, French engineers projected several transcontinental railways: from Alger to Timbuktu, from Dakar to Lake Chad, as well as a number of vast irrigation schemes in the Chad basin and Tunisia’s Jerid. Lack of capital and poor prospects for profitable returns meant that these ambitious projects were neither approved by the authorities nor implemented. By the early 20th century, international trade, especially in the types of bulky commodities produced in African colonies, was the preserve of maritime shipping lanes. Railways and paved roads were built only where they were required to transport such commodities to a sea port. Until the eve of decolonization, the Sahara produced nothing requiring such infrastructure.

Intra and trans-Saharan trade continued, but only for local markets. Salt was still mined and taken south by camel, and Saharan and sub-Saharan medicinal products (herbs, barks, leaves, mammal pelts, reptile skins, feathers, ostrich eggs, etc.)⁶⁹ were still traded north, often by pilgrims touring the *zāwiyas* there. Trade in slaves was definitively brought to an end, but slavery itself remained a feature of oasis economies and Saharan societies. Religious books, now printed in Lebanon, Egypt and French North African territories, like other industrial manufactured goods, were now being *shipped* to colonial port cities like Dakar and Lagos for distribution inland. Titles being imported into Muslim colonies could thus be monitored and controlled by the colonial authorities. Also, the pilgrimage to Mecca was now conducted by steam ship, from West African ports through the Strait of Gibraltar and the Suez Canal to the port of Jeddah. This, too, made it easier for the colonial authorities to control Muslim subjects, and especially the educated elites who could afford the *ḥājj*.

One of the most important transformations provoked by colonialism was the introduction of the modern territorial state. Up until then, political power across the Sahara had depended on social structures, principally tribal ones. The pre-colonial Saharan emirates, such as Adrar, Trārza, Brakna and Agadez, had been archaic polities, exercising sovereignty over populations rather than territories *per se*.

⁶⁹ Traditional medicine markets in Moroccan cities still carry these sub-Saharan articles.

On occasions when powerful states such as the Almoravid, Malian and Songhay empires exercised control over vast areas of the desert, they did so through tribal alliances, not by military occupation. Even the French forces, advancing south from Algeria and north from the Senegal and Niger rivers, managed to establish their authority only by bringing the tribes, peacefully or militarily, to a political accommodation. Once armed resistance had ceased, however, the colonial regimes set about creating a modern type of territorial administration, defined by policed borders and a centralized bureaucracy.

The borders which distinguished colonial jurisdictions in the Sahara were originally conceived for the convenience of administrators in the metropolises or in the colonial capitals. They were quite literally created as straight lines drawn on (imperfect) maps for the purpose of delimiting spheres of administrative jurisdiction. They invariably cut across the "real" geography of grazing patterns, tribal affiliations, ethno-linguistic affinities, Sufi networks and local market areas. Problems for Saharan populations arose when these jurisdictional borders began to be monitored and restrictions enforced. Not only were "international" borders (between French, British, Italian and Spanish territories) policed by officials, so too were the internal administrative boundaries within the French sphere. For example, the French administration in the Algerian Sahara could pursue policies at great variance from those of the French administrations in neighboring AOF (the colonial federation of French West Africa), or those in Tunisia and Morocco (which were technically French "protectorates"). The same was true for Khedival Egypt (a British protectorate) and the Anglo-Egyptian condominium of Sudan (and within the Sudan between the "Arab" North and the "animist" South). Thus, despite the illusion of vast empire, represented by the pink and blue-colored territories on colonial-era maps of the continent, the Sahara was beginning to resemble a patchwork of closed territories, a process which greatly accelerated following independence.

DECOLONIZATION

Independence came rapidly to the countries of the Sahara in the course of the 1950s and 1960s. By 1962 the entire zone, with the exception of the Spanish colony of Río de Oro, had been freed of European rule. Independence greatly consolidated the emerging territorial states

and reinforced the system of international borders cutting through the Sahara. In effect, since independence, most Saharan countries have not had amicable relations with their immediate neighbors, resulting in most borders being closed most of the time. In 1963 Morocco and Algeria fought a three day “sand war” along their disputed Saharan border. This border dispute is still unresolved, as is the status of the disputed Western Sahara territory vacated by Spain in 1975, and it remains closed. In 1977 Libyan and Egyptian forces clashed across their border. Libya and Chad also came to blows in 1978–87 over the disputed Aouzou Strip. This dispute was resolved in 1994 by a ruling of the International Court of Justice, but the border is still closed. Civil conflicts between the Tuareg and the Niger and Malian governments, which raged off and on from the mid-1980s to the late 1990s, also resulted in border tensions, including with neighboring Algeria. Mauritania and Senegal had a serious cross-border conflict in 1989, as have Chad and Sudan more recently. Egypt disputes Sudan’s sovereignty over Helayib, and Algeria and Libya have yet to complete the demarcation of their common border.

Even in the absence of armed conflict, poor neighborly relations between Saharan countries have meant that cross-border exchange, individual travel and trade are generally curtailed and difficult. In the best cases, only a select few border crossing points are open and the many restrictions and controls discourage, rather than encourage crossing. In the worst cases, as between Morocco and Algeria, the border has remained closed, virtually uninterrupted, since independence. As a consequence, Morocco’s Tafilalt oases, home to historic Sijilmāsa and long a major transit point for the Sahara, has been turned into a dead-end and has withered. Similar observations hold for Ghadāmes, Ghāt, Siwa, Walāta and any number of Saharan communities now isolated from each other by international borders. Saharan countries, like most other African countries, trade almost entirely through maritime ports (even in the case of the landlocked states of Niger and Chad) and have done little to encourage cross-border trade with their continental neighbors. Attempts at unity, whether through the African Union (formerly the Organization of African Unity) or the Union du Maghreb Arab (UMA), have yet to redress this situation.

Ironically, decolonization occurred just at the time when the Sahara’s commercially viable resources were being brought into the production cycle; oil was discovered in Algeria in 1956 and in Libya

in 1959, Mauritania began exporting iron from the Fdèrik-Zouérat mines in 1963 and phosphate deposits in the Spanish Sahara began to be exploited in the 1960s. Yet, despite these new-found riches, Saharan communities have experienced unparalleled impoverishment and isolation in recent decades. Environmental degradation and prolonged droughts began afflicting many Saharan communities in the late 1960s. Part, perhaps, of the continuing desiccation of the Sahara since the Neolithic, these droughts have completely ruined age-old pastoral economies and lifestyles. Hardest hit have been the Ḥasānī pastoralists of Mauritania and the Tuaregs of the central Sahara. In many cases, these populations have had to settle in shantytowns, eking a living at the edge of the already impoverished cities of some of the world's poorest countries. Moreover, the environmental degradation and attendant competition for resources (water, grazing) may be fueling some of the regions civil conflicts.

Another phenomenon characterizing independent states in the Sahara has been the forced sedentarization of nomads. The modern, territorial, bureaucratic state has been generally hostile to nomadic groups the world over. This is partly due to the fact that nomadic groups, having for the most part tribal structures, can thrive quite well outside of state structures. But it also has to do with the need modern states have to control their "national" territory and population. As the pastoral peoples of the Sahara generally straddle international borders, their continued freedom to move was seen as a threat to the stability of states. This tendency was reinforced by development policies which equated "development" in pastoral areas with the settlement or sedentarization of pastoralists. The Tuaregs of Niger and Mali in particular have been subjected to resettlement campaigns in the name of development.

More recently still, international security issues have come to dominate trans-Saharan relations. The Sahara is now an important transit space for sub-Saharan migrants trying to reach Europe. It has even been argued that current trans-Saharan routes used to transport contraband and migrants illegally across borders have "re-activated" the trade routes of old.⁷⁰ The Sahara is also seen as an arena in the U.S.-led "Global War on Terrorism." Since 2004 the U.S. Congress has approved

⁷⁰ Olivier Pliez, "Nomades d'hier, nomades d'aujourd'hui: les migrants africains réactivent-ils les territoires nomades au Sahara?" *Annales de géographie* 115, no. 652 (2006), 688–707.

a number of pan-Sahel and pan-Saharan initiatives, allowing U.S. military/security experts and materiel to flood into Mauritania, Niger, Chad, Algeria, Morocco and Nigeria, among others. Moreover, a separate U.S. military command for the African continent (minus Egypt, which is part of USCENTCOM), called USAFRICOM, was briefly (2006–08) attempted by the Pentagon. These developments augur ill for the populations of the Sahara. Long ignored by world powers, they now find themselves the center of unwelcomed attention. The most likely outcomes in the short term are increasingly closed borders, more closely monitored populations, and a growing likelihood of the militarization of conflicts. Poverty alleviation and sustainable environmental management are not likely to be fostered.

CONCLUSION

To look at the Sahara today is to observe a bleak situation. Its population of between ten and twenty million (depending on what areas are included) is amongst the poorest in the world, despite its mineral wealth and its fossil fuel reserves. Its arid environments have been stressed by climatic changes and grazing pressures. Most of its borders are closed and its internal problems are increasingly being seen in terms of international security concerns. The high-profile kidnapping of Western tourists, general highway banditry, and drug and people smuggling have combined with the lingering issue of slavery, unresolved ethnic tensions and the historic misconception of the Sahara as vast isolated backwater to produce a mass mediated image of a space of lawlessness, “otherness” and danger. Yet, whatever its current situation, in the past the Sahara was a very active zone for long-distance trade and cultural exchange.

Nowhere is the connectivity of the Sahara more clearly discernable than in the domain of religion and Islamic scholarship. That the entire western lobe of the Muslim world adheres to the Mālikī school of jurisprudence is testament to the intensity and constancy of relations between Qayrawān, Fez, Timbuktu, Shinqīṭī, Agadez, Cairo and other towns and cities bordering the great desert. To some significant extent, books and manuscripts have been integral to these relations. Moreover, the recent rediscovery of this material and intellectual heritage by African and Western scholars has heralded one of the few unambiguously positive social and economic developments in the vast region.

The Sahara's "desert libraries" came to international attention in the 1990s, when a number of international scientific conferences were held in Mauritania, Mali, Italy and France.⁷¹ In 1996, the four historic caravan cities of Mauritania: Wādān, Shinqīṭi, Tīshīt and Walāta, were listed by UNESCO as World Heritage sites for the tangible and intangible heritage represented by their numerous private libraries. These cities joined Timbuktu, which was listed by UNESCO in 1988. Since then a number of actors, and principally the national governments of Mali and Mauritania, UNESCO, ISESCO, the universities of the developed world, European international cooperation agencies, private-sector corporations, international NGOs and local civic associations have concentrated efforts on preserving and restoring the manuscripts. The major libraries have seen their collections inventoried and catalogued and, where funding has been secured, some of these libraries have been given new homes and their holdings have begun to be digitized. Meanwhile the arts of calligraphy and book binding, the later often executed by women, have found new patronage as old manuscripts are in the process of being restored. These library preservation projects are being implemented in conjunction with urban revitalization and tourism promotion schemes—it is just as easy now for a European to book a weekend excursion to the Mauritanian desert as to a Canary Island beach resort. These economic and social development programs are meant to inject new life into desert cities which have experienced decades of neglect and atrophy.

⁷¹ Attilio Gaudio, "Introduction," *Les bibliothèques du désert*, 7–8.

A THIRST FOR KNOWLEDGE:
ARABIC LITERACY, WRITING PAPER AND SAHARAN
BIBLIOPHILES IN THE SOUTHWESTERN SAHARA*

Ghislaine Lydon

Praise God for the one who brought us the pens that spared us from
having to use our feet and replaced the need for speech with words
(*al-ḥamdullillah al-lathīna ja'ala al-aqlām rāḥatan al-āqdām wa
nā'ibatan 'an al-mushāfahati bil-kalām*)

What left the head does not leave the paper (*illī marrga ar-ra's mā
yumarrg ak-kurrās*)

A Saharan saying nineteenth-century writers commonly used to introduce their letters gives praise to the one who invented pens and allowed people to dispense with the need to rely on their feet to exchange words. It implicitly conveys the immeasurable advantages of literacy, and the use of both paper and messengers that rendered possible communications across long distances.¹ In the region of western Africa, where once flourished the Empire of Ghana, literacy in Arabic would have extended beyond the individual Muslim traveler and local scholars sometime before the Almoravid reform movement of the eleventh century.² Among the legacies of the Almoravids, aside from

* For their precious assistance in researching this article I express my deepest gratitude to Fatimatu Mint Abd al-Wahab and Mohamedou Ould Meyine, Abdallahi Ould Mohamed Fall, Mohamed Mokhtar Ould Bah, Mohamedou Ould Ichiddou and Abdel Kader Haïdara.

¹ The French colonial officer Louis-Gustave Binger (*Niger au Golfe de Guinée par le pays de Kong et le Mossi*, vol. I, Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1892, 331–2) obtained a letter of introduction produced by a Muslim scholar for safe passage to the Mossi capital of Ouagadougou in the 1880s which begins with a variant of the same saying in Arabic (“Praise God for the one who gave us the paper (*al-qirtās*) as a messenger and the pen as a tongue”). See below for a discussion of the variety of Arabic terms used for paper in western Africa.

² It is worth pointing out that linguistic evidence in the form of *Znāga* (the ancient “Berber” spoken in Southwestern Mauritania) indicates that Islamic institutions, including names for prayers and holidays (e.g. *tabaski* [for *īd al-aḍḥā*]) were expressed in this language before the spread of the Arabic-based *Ḥasaniya*.

the development of a distinct educational tradition, was the increased study and application of Mālikī law, the Islamic legal doctrine practiced in several parts of the Muslim world, especially Muslim Africa and Spain. In time, this sparsely populated region would become home to groups of highly literate individuals, organized in institutions shaped by Islamic legal codes and guided by the activities of nomadic and sedentary learned scholars. There is little doubt that western Africa once was a fountain of literacy and learning in the Muslim world. These Saharan communities quenched their thirst for knowledge by acquiring literature by way of caravan merchants and pilgrims. At the same time, they expended sizeable sums for precious writing paper to run their affairs as much as to pen their own works of scholarship.

This chapter highlights the development of literate societies in the southwestern Sahara, a region encompassing most of present-day Mauritania, northern Mali and northern Senegal. It describes the development of a distinct schooling system and the impact of Arabic literacy, considering, on the one hand, the intellectual and practical motivations for acquiring literacy, and the multiple domains of its usage on the other. I examine how writing paper, the indispensable complement to the writing implement, was first imported into the region, underlining the importance of writing to both the production of literature and the organization of the economy. Finally, I discuss the activities of Saharan bibliophiles and book merchants focusing on the remarkable case of Aḥmad Būla'rāf of the Wād Nūn, in what is today southern Morocco, who settled in Timbuktu in the late nineteenth century.

SAHARAN SCHOOLING AND THE IMPACT OF ARABIC LITERACY

From the very birth of the religion of Islam in the first half of the seventh century, literacy became an integral trait of the new faith. Indeed, the first words of the first divine message passed on by Angel Gabriel to the Prophet of Islam, known to have been illiterate, as stated in the Qur'ān's *sūrat* entitled 'The Pen' (*al-qalam*), were the following:

Read! In the name of thy Lord and Cherisher who created; He created the human being (*al-insān*) out of a mere clot of congealed blood; Read! And thy Lord is most bountiful; He who taught (the use of) the pen

(*al-lathī 'alama bil-qalami*); Taught the human being that which he knew not.³

Muslims turned the imperative to read into a vocation, and they dedicated themselves to generating a considerable written body of scientific, literary and practical knowledge. These Qur'ānic verses probably were the source of inspiration for the first Saharan saying quoted above.

Unlike practitioners of other monotheistic religions, Muslims devoted themselves to dispensing Arabic to their followers in what was perhaps the earliest grassroots literacy campaign in world history. For while Jews also attained high levels of literacy per capita, conversion restrictions limited the expansion of their religious community. Historically literacy has tended to emanate from a religious source. This was the case in Judaism (Hebrew), Confucianism (Chinese script), Hinduism (Sanskrit and other languages recorded in various scripts, such as Brahmi, Devanagari and Perso-Arabic) and Christianity (Greek, Latin). However, religious practice did not always lead to a widespread distribution of general literacy, religious literacy or even limited literacy.

In addition to supplying literacy and producing scholarship, many religious systems generated knowledge of the law or legal literacy. Students in Buddhist monasteries learned legal codes as did those in Rabbinical and Qur'ānic schools.⁴ The Qur'ān, the basic text of Islamic education, contains instructions on how to draft, date and certify written contracts, directly or through scribes. In a previous study I examined how Islamic legal sources provided an institutional framework for the conduct of commerce.⁵ Because of the commercial culture embedded in the Qur'ān, on the one hand, and the teaching

³ Qur'ān, 96:1–5. All translations of this source are based on A. Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Brentwood, MD: Amana Corporation, 1983).

⁴ See Gregory Schopen, *Buddhist Monks and Business Matters* (Honolulu: Hawai'i University Press, 2004), Menachem Elon (trans. Bernard Auerbach and Melvin J. Sykes), *Jewish Law: History, Sources, Principles* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1994); George Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981).

⁵ G. Lydon, *On Trans-Saharan Trails: Islamic Law, Trade Networks and Cross-Cultural Exchange in Western Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 247–339. See also "A Paper Economy of Faith without Faith in Paper: A Contribution to Understanding Islamic Institutional History," *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization* 71, no. 3 (2009), 647–59.

of literacy and computation skills, on the other, many Muslims came to possess what Brian Street termed “commercial literacy.”⁶ Rather than simply consisting of basic writing skills for the drafting of commercial records, I propose that in the Muslim case legal literacy was integral to commercial literacy.

It is not unreasonable to suggest that in Islam as in other religious traditions, commerce was probably a driving force in the spread of literacy. Reflecting on the earliest written sources for the greater Muslim world, Nelly Hanna posits that the volume of documentation “suggests how literacy and writing were linked to trade and commerce.”⁷ Following Street, Hanna proposes that historians take a more “flexible” approach to Muslim literacy by differentiating between literacy’s functions and purposes and between degrees of literacy from the highly educated to semi-literate traders. Based on these considerations, it seems plausible that functional literacy (in the Arabic and Hebrew scripts) was more widespread in the Middle East and Africa than in Western Europe in the early modern period.

Islam’s fast conversion rate led to the spread of Arabic literacy across the Mediterranean and the northern half of the African continent by the eleventh century. With good reason, John Hunwick once referred to Arabic as the “Latin of Africa” that connected Africa and the Middle East, and, for several hundred years, these two regions to mainland Spain.⁸ By acquiring Arabic literacy, Muslims across ethnic groups and diverse cultural spaces could exchange, converse, and expand their access to information. Abdelkadri Idrisse Arboune makes this point succinctly about the evolution of the Arabic language in western Africa until the seventeenth century.⁹

Islam’s pedagogical message, focused on the study of theology and the Arabic language, was for Muslims to seek knowledge as a matter of course. Muslim education was religious in nature, with the Qurʾān,

⁶ B. Street, *Literacy in Theory and in Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 158–80.

⁷ N. Hanna, “Literacy and the “Great Divide” in the Islamic World,” *Journal of Global History* 2 (2007), 179.

⁸ J. Hunwick, “Literacy and Scholarship in Muslim West African in the Pre-Colonial Period,” Occasional Paper Publication, The Institute of African Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka (1974).

⁹ A.I. Arboune, “Al-lughā al-‘arabiya: thaqāfatihā wa a’lāmihā fī māli ḥatā nihāyat al-qarn al-‘āshar al-hijrī.” Master’s Thesis, Islamic Call College, Tripoli, Libya (1997), 48–9.

written in classical Arabic functioning as the basic text for the teaching of reading and writing.¹⁰ In the Sahara, mothers commonly were and in areas continue to be the primary educators, teaching children about the rudiments of the religion including prayer practice. From the age of four or five, and for about five or six years, children were taught the Arabic language and grammar. They proceeded to memorize the Qurʾān verse by verse, completing each of the sixty sections (*aḥzāb*) that divided the teaching of its one hundred and fourteen sūrats. As Ibn Khaldūn notes, in Muslim Spain, the Maghrib and by extension western Africa students attained Arabic literacy by acquiring full words and not by learning the individual letters of the alphabet, as was the tradition in Cairo and the Middle East.¹¹ What he argued for the North African case, namely that learning was restricted to urban spaces and the “Bedouin” for the most part were illiterate, does not hold for the Saharan regions discussed here.¹² Among the nomadic and semi-nomadic societies of the Sahara, the *zwāyā* or clerical groups were strictly in charge of education, and while they educated their girls and boys, non-*zwāyā* children from among the *hasān* (or *ʿarab*), tributaries, and servile groups less commonly were schooled.¹³ In the wider Muslim world, the region once known as the land of *Shinqīṭ* (*Bilād Shinqīṭ*) encompassing most of present-day

¹⁰ For studies of Mauritanian education, see Mukhtār Wuld Hāmidūn, *Ḥayāt Mūrītāniya: Ḥayāt al-thaqāfiya* (Tunis: Dār al-ʿarabiya lil-kitāb, 1990), Abdel Wedoud Ould Cheikh, “Nomadisme, Islam et Pouvoir Politique dans la Société Maure Précoloniale: Essai sur quelques aspects du tribalisme,” thèse de Doctorat 3ème cycle, Université de Paris V, René Descartes (1985), Vol. II: 376–98; El Ghassem Ould Ahmedou, *Enseignement traditionnel en Mauritanie: La mahadra ou l'école “à dos de chameau”* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1997); Chouki El-Hamel, “The Transmission of Islamic Learning in Moorish Society from the Rise of the Almoravids to the Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 29 no. 1 (1999), 62–87, and *La vie intellectuelle islamique dans le Sahel ouest-africain, XVIe-XIXe siècles: une étude sociale de l’enseignement islamique en Mauritanie et au nord du Mali (XVIe-XIXe siècles) et traduction annotée de Faṭḥ ash-shakūr d’al-Bartilī al-Walātī (mort en 1805)* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2002).

¹¹ Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqadima: An Introduction to History*, trans. Franz Rosenthal (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967).

¹² Nor does it apply to other nomadic Muslims. See, for example, I.M. Lewis, “Literacy in Nomadic Society: The Somali Case,” in *Literacy in Traditional Societies*, ed. Jack Goody (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 266–76. On education in Mali see Louis Brenner, *Controlling Knowledge: Religion, Power and Schooling in a West African Muslim Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001).

¹³ Lydon, *On Trans-Saharan Trails*, Chapter 1, and “Inkwells of the Sahara: Reflections on the Production of Islamic Knowledge in *Bilād Shinqīṭ*,” in Scott Reese (ed.), *The Transmission of Learning in Islamic Africa* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 39–71. For a nineteenth-century description of schooling in *Shinqīṭ*, see Ahmād al-Amīn al-Shinqīṭī, *Al-Waṣīṭ fi Tarājim Udabāʾ Shinqīṭ* (Cairo: Maktaba al-Khānjā, 1911), 517–9.

Mauritania, gained notoriety thanks to its erudite scholars who impressed their hosts on their pilgrimage travels.

Language and religion were not the only subjects dispensed in Saharan primary schools, which included lessons in history and basic mathematics. Pupils internalized the verses through mnemonic traditions of learning. Not every child would become what is known as a *ḥāfiẓ* (plur. *ḥufāẓ*), a word stemming from the verb to save, preserve, safeguard and, by extension, to memorize, to mean one who succeeded in reciting from memory the entire holy book. Depending on what Sunni legal school they followed, Muslims received further instruction in specific law books. The best achievers typically pursued their education at the hands of learned scholars with specialized knowledge of certain texts.

In the southwestern Sahara area, higher education was dispensed in a college-type institution located in both oasis towns and nomadic encampments, known as the *maḥaḍra* (plur. *maḥāḍir*), which was also the name designating primary education schools. Primary schooling elsewhere in Muslim Africa took on different names (*msīd* in Morocco, *kuttāb* in Egypt). Sufi lodges, or *zāwiyas*, were also Muslim centers of higher learning typically focused on the teachings of particular saints (see Ross and Scheele in this volume). Oral traditions, supported by the earliest sources about the region that begin in the eleventh century with the writings of al-Bakri, suggest that the *maḥaḍra* system would have developed sometime before the Almoravid movement. Al-Bakri notes that when ‘Abdallah Ibn Yaṣīn descended on the town of Awdaghust (located to the north of Tamchakett in today’s Mauritania) in 446/1054–5, there were “several mosques and schools where the Qur’ān is taught,” whereas the town he called “Ghana” had twelve mosques and numerous scholars.¹⁴ Ibn Yaṣīn is considered the first learned scholar to have entered Mauritania.¹⁵ Such a statement, however, must be considered alongside the fact that the Almoravids took a stance against ‘Ibādī Muslims who were among the first carriers of Islam into western Africa.¹⁶ It is said in what is today Mauritania that

¹⁴ N. Levtzion and J.F.P. Hopkins, *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources for West African History*, 2nd edition (Princeton: Marcus Wiener, 2000), 79.

¹⁵ Ould Ahmedou, *Enseignement*, 48.

¹⁶ See also Paulo Fernando de Moraes Farias, “The Almoravids: Some Questions Concerning the Character of the Movement,” *Bulletin de l’I.F.A.N.* xxix, B, 29, 3–4 (1967), 794–878.

amid the local founders of Islamic pedagogy were Abū Bakr b. ‘Umar (d. 479–80/1087), the Almoravid leader who settled in Awdaghust, and the Imām al-Ḥaḍramī (d. 489/1096), the scholar of Yemeni origin who was buried in Azūgī (in Mauritania’s Ādrār region).¹⁷ The next generation of learned men also came from the North, including Sharīf ‘Abd al-Mu’min (d. 544/1149), who studied under Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ in Morocco before moving permanently to the oasis of Tīshīt.

Muḥammad Wuld Būnā, a celebrated nineteenth-century Saharan scholar of Arabic grammar, poet and teacher of a *maḥadra*, expressed in verse the nature of this educational system: “We have taken the back of she-camels as a school where we explicate God’s religion.”¹⁸ This “camelback school,” as El-Ghassem Ould Ahmedou termed it, was unique to the region encompassing present-day Mauritania, northern Mali and the Western Sahara.¹⁹ This scholar underscores that it was developed in a context where the absence of a centralizing state rendered this schooling system very “user friendly.”²⁰ He compares the quality of the higher education dispensed in the desert to that emanating from the famed mosques of large urban centers in North Africa such as Fez (*Qarawiyīn*) and Tunis (*Zaytūn*).

Memorization continued to be an important part of the pedagogical method. Naturally, one of the most popular forms of Saharan scholarship was the production of abridgements of larger especially legal works, commonly stylized in poetic meter. According to one learned elder, this literature was designed for the nomadic lifestyle for it could easily be memorized and recited while walking.²¹ In other words texts were condensed for orality and mobility. In the opinion of another elder, the oral transmission of books was the most important means to share and acquire knowledge.²² As articulated in a

¹⁷ Mukhtar Wuld Ḥamidun, *Ḥayāt Mūrītāniya: Ḥayāt al-thaqāfiya* (Tunis: Dār al-‘arabiya lil-kitāb, 1990), 5–6.

¹⁸ Interview with Mohamedou Ould Ichiddou, Nouakchott, Mauritania (30 June 2009). On Wuld Būnā, see Mohamed Moktar Ould Bah, *La Littérature Juridique et l’évolution du Malikisme en Mauritanie* (Tunis: Publications de l’Université de Tunis, Faculté des Sciences et Lettres, 1981); El Ghassem Ould Ahmedou, *Le génie des sables* (Nouakchott: Presses de l’Imprimerie du Maghreb, 1991), 91.

¹⁹ Ould Ahmedou, *Enseignement*, 10, 13.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 24.

²¹ Interview with Mohamedou Ould Ichiddou, Nouakchott, Mauritania (30 June 2009).

²² Interview with Muḥammadhan Wuld Bābā (in the company of Abdallahi Ould Mohamed Fall) in Bū Ḥadīdā, Mauritania (24 June 2009).

well-known Mauritanian proverb, “knowledge is acquired from the mouths of scholars and not from the belly (*baṭn liktub*) of books.” The learning of texts by heart was the cornerstone of this pedagogical tradition, as students first learned to recite before they learned to read. This was of primary importance in a nomadic environment where manuscripts were hard to come by and transporting libraries was cumbersome.

As in the case of primary schooling, the education dispensed at the *maḥaḍra* was both religious and secular in content.²³ Students were trained in the literary arts since poetry and the preservation of oral traditions in verse was among the favorite pastimes of Saharan scholars. They also learned ethics and morals, on the one hand, and computation and commercial law, on the other. In other words, nomadic schooling combined practical knowledge and book knowledge.

Having learned basic algebra in primary school, students were prepared for future engagement in commerce since this was the only profitable occupation in the region outside of camel raising. It is said that in the *maḥaḍra* of the renowned nineteenth-century scholar Muḥammad Wuld Muḥammad Sālim, one studied “Khalīl,” that is to say the most popular abridgement of Mālikī law (*al-Mukhtaṣar* of Khalīl b. Ishāq al-Jundī). But one also learned how to prosper, since this learned family of the Midlish clan was well-known for possessing a large number of camels.²⁴ The preoccupation of nomadic scholars with their herds dictated the organization of the teaching schedule and the extra-curricular activities of students. One early scholar complained that worrying about camels, his family and their safety prevented him from using his pen.²⁵ On a typical day, students were assigned lessons by the teachers of their *maḥaḍra* in the early dawn, and they assimilated these lessons during the daytime as they

²³ Ould Ahmedou, *Enseignement*, 10. For a study of Muslim education in twentieth century Senegal see Rudolph Treanor III, “Knowledge, Faith and Power: A History of Qur’anic Schooling in 20th Century Senegal,” Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania (2004).

²⁴ Personnel communication, Abd al-Qadir Wuld Muḥammad, Nouakchott, Mauritania (June 2009). On this sizeable school see Paul Marty, “Les tribus de la Haute Mauritanie: Étude sur les Ould Delim, les Regueibat et les Tekna.” *Bulletin du Comité de l’Afrique française – Renseignements coloniaux*, no. 5 (1915) and Ould Bah, *Littérature*.

²⁵ Interview with Rājil Wuld Aḥmad Sālim in Tūjnīn, Mauritania (accompanied by Abdallahi Ould Mohamed Fall) (24 June 2009) who was discussing Shaykh Muḥammad al-Yadāli (see below).

performed various chores in and out of the encampment. At night they would continue studying by the light of the moon or the fireplace where each student brought a log of wood to ensure their access to reading light.²⁶

The best students with demonstrable writing skills would be put to work copying manuscripts alongside the scholars of the *maḥāḍir*. Moreover, scholars also taught one another their respective specialties by sojourning in one another's encampments or houses. The exchange of knowledge between scholars was practiced at least since the early seventeenth century when it was known as *tadabaja*, from the Arabic to compose or write down.²⁷ A unique environment developed from these institutions of learning where Arabic literacy became widespread amongst a relatively small Saharan population. By 1905, when the French were in the midst of the conquest of their last western African colony of Mauritania, it was estimated that the region counted no less than 800 *maḥāḍir*, including 45 of graduate university level.²⁸ Nowadays, there are much fewer *maḥāḍir* as most parents choose to send their children to government-run schools, although a new trend in the past ten years is for some desert schools to become centers of Islamic extremist learning.²⁹

Studies of literacy have pointed to the unique technological advantages of the use of the written word. Jack Goody was among the first modern scholars to recognize “the cognitive or intellectual operations” afforded by the adoption of the technology of writing.³⁰ Scholars have struggled conceptually to define the qualitative differences between oral and written forms of expression. For past scholars there was a fundamental cognitive divide setting literate or scriptural modes of expression radically apart from non-literate or oral ones. In the 1980s scholars revised this view and began speaking of a “continuum”

²⁶ Personal communication, Fatimatu Mint Abd al-Wahab in Nouakchott, Mauritania (29 June 2009).

²⁷ Mahmoud A. Zouber, *Ahmad Bābā de Tombouctou (1556–1627), Sa vie et son oeuvre* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1977).

²⁸ Ould Ahmedou, *Enseignement*, 61, citing the unpublished work of Soufi Ould Mohamed Lemine.

²⁹ Ould Ahmed Salem, “Islam in Mauritania between Political Expansion and Globalization: Elites, Institutions, Knowledge and Networks,” in *Islam and Muslim Politics in Africa*, ed. Benjamin Soares and René Otayek (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 27–46.

³⁰ J. Goody, *The Power of the Written Tradition* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000), 140.

between literacy and orality.³¹ New literacy studies recently have taken a critical stance on the “continuum” school, arguing that it overlooks the ways in which both forms “differ from one another in a complex, multidimensional way both within speech communities and across them.”³² There are two main criticisms of literacy studies, aside from the problematic assumption such a discourse entails that literacy represents a “superior technology.” The first is the view that writing was an autonomous cognitive process, distinct from other modes of thinking. The second criticism is that literacy is often de-contextualized from cultural practice, and seen as a neutralizing element when in fact it often is embedded in cultural and social structures of power and authority.

Quite aside from questions about ideological determinism, it remains a powerful argument to point out, as Goody does, that the advances afforded by literacy serve in large part to explain historical “domination of literate cultures” in world history.³³ While economic historians have only recently come to realize the importance of writing to economic development, Goody’s early work on literacy made this point quite succinctly.³⁴ He explains how writing changed the nature of transactions, from production and management to the promotion of new technologies.³⁵ By this logic access to literacy and a regular supply of paper had a significant impact on institutional change and economic administration. Writing also meant that transactions were no longer reliant “upon the memory of witnesses who were subject to the constraints of forgetfulness, mortality or partisanship.”³⁶ By stating that what gets written down is not forgotten, the second Saharan proverb quoted at the beginning of the chapter neatly captures the advantages of using writing paper for recording purposes over the reliance on memory and the mind alone.

³¹ These arguments are summarized by B. Street, “Introduction: The New Literacy Studies,” in *Cross-Cultural Approaches to Literacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 4–10.

³² Street, “Introduction,” 4. The rest of this paragraph draws from this source.

³³ Goody, *Power*, 152.

³⁴ Jan Luiten Van Zanden, *The Long Road to the Industrial Revolution: The European Economy in a Global Perspective, 1000–1800* (Leiden: Brill, 2009). See also Lydon, *On Trans-Saharan Trails* and “A Paper Economy of Faith.”

³⁵ Goody, *The Logic of Writing and the Organisation of Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 46.

³⁶ Goody, *Logic*, 70–71.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF PAPERMAKING IN AND OUT OF AFRICA

The Prophet of Islam is said to have ordered all Muslims to “seek knowledge even as far as China.” Acknowledging the historic role China played in inventing writing paper, which was superior to papyrus in so many ways, places this well-known prophetic saying, or *ḥadīth*, in context. It is paradoxical that while the first writing paper made from the papyrus reeds of the Nile River would have been invented in Africa by Ancient Egyptians, from whom writers of Latin and Greek of the northern Mediterranean lands long obtained their supplies, this paper was supplanted in time with the spread of a new papermaking technique developed in Central Asia.

The technology of papermaking spread from China to Iraq, Syria and Iran, before reaching Egypt, the Maghrib and later Andalusia, thereby entering the rest of western Europe.³⁷ In the twelfth-century reign of the Almohad Empire it was reported, perhaps with some exaggeration, that there were some 400 paper mills in the Moroccan city of Fez manufacturing paper from linen and hemp.³⁸ At this time the other largest paper producing region, besides Cairo, was Tlemcen in northern Algeria. A century later, the best quality paper came from Xàtiva (*Shāṭiba*) in Muslim Spain. It is from here that the rest of Europe would have acquired the papermaking technology. Starting in the first half of the fourteenth century, Germany, France, and Italy began manufacturing paper with the cotton rags technique and water-propelled mills they copied from the Muslims of Spain. French and Italian ports of trade began exporting paper to outlying markets and

³⁷ Bloom, *Paper Before Print: The History and Impact of Paper in the Islamic World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001) and “Paper in Sudanic Africa,” in *The Meanings of Timbuktu*, ed. S. Jeppie and S.B. Diagne (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2008), 45–57. See also Fernand Braudel, *The Structures of Everyday Life: Civilization and Capitalism 15th–18th Century* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 397–99; Robert I. Burns, *Society and Documentation in Crusader Valencia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press) and “Paper comes to the West, 800–1400,” in *Europäische Technik Im Mittelalter 800 bis 1400 Tradition und Innovation*, ed. U. Lindgren (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1996), 413–22.

³⁸ ‘Alī b. ‘Abdallah Ibn Abī Zar’ al-Fāsī (d. 740s/1340s), *Roudh el-Kartas. Histoire des souverains du Maghreb (Espagne et Maroc) et annales de la ville de Fès. Traduit de l’arabe par A. Beaumier* (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1860), 58. For far more conservative estimates, see Leila Benjelloun-Laroui, *Les Bibliothèques du Maroc* (Paris: Editions Maisonneuve et Larose, 1990), 23, and Ahmed-Chouqui Binebine, *Histoire des Bibliothèques au Maroc* (Rabat: Université Mohammed V, Faculté des lettres et des sciences humaines, 1992), 36.

across the Mediterranean, and very soon, southern European centers of paper production had supplanted those of Africa.

Such a shift in the origin of the supply of writing paper caused consternation among Muslims, some of whom began wondering whether relying on writing paper produced by Christians was lawful in the eyes of Islam. This was the case among Muslims of the town of Tlemcen who approached Ibn Marzūq al-Ḥāfiẓ (d. 842/1439), the most reputable local muftī, or legal scholar, on the question of so-called *rūmī* paper, that is to say paper of European make. In his fatwa on “the permissibility of writing on paper made by Christians,” Ibn Marzūq first discussed the question of purity of goods produced by non-Muslims, before reasoning on the basis of the Mālikī principle of public interest (*maṣlaḥa*) that paper was a necessity. He recognized that since it was no longer produced in Tlemcen, Muslims were forced to rely on external sources from the Maghrib, Spain, and beyond for their paper supplies. If the available *rūmī* paper contained openly religious watermarks, such as Christian crosses and the like, that offended Muslims, then they could transform it by literally writing a Qur’ānic verse or something over the watermark to in essence “purify” the paper for use.³⁹ Aside from the fascinating concerns raised by such questions of interfaith trade, Ibn Marzūq’s fatwa points to the collapse of the northern African papermaking industry by the early fifteenth century and the import dependency from European sources that ensued.

By the fifteenth century, Amalfi, Venice, Genoa and Marseille became the most important ports supplying African markets in writing paper. Paper also was imported via eastern trade routes from as far away as India that began manufacturing paper since the late sixteenth century. Paper of French and especially Italian origin would dominate the paper market across the Mediterranean to Africa (see Terence Walz’s chapter in this volume). But since the late seventeenth century, the Dutch Republic, where the Hollander beater for reducing fibers to a pulp was invented, also began to produce fine paper. Oddly, England was late in mechanizing its paper-producing industry. Only in the early nineteenth century did England begin to seriously manufacture large quantities of paper, “an indispensable ingredient in

³⁹ Leor Halevi, “Christian Impurity versus Economic Necessity: A Fifteenth-Century Fatwa on European Paper,” *Speculum* 83 (2008), 917–45. See also Bloom, *Paper*, 86–87. This fatwa is preserved in Al-Wansharīsi’s well-known fifteenth collection.

every industrial and commercial process,” as A. Dykes Spicer recognized over a hundred years ago.⁴⁰ It is most interesting to note that, from the 1850s to as late as 1907, “Algiers, Tripoli, North Africa and Almeria in Spain [were England’s] chief sources of esparto production.”⁴¹ This coarse grass was then the principle material in paper-making in England before wood-pulp prevailed, which contributed to significantly lowering the price of paper. In other words, England depended on southern Spain and northern Africa for supply of its paper-producing material. Other European papermakers were essentially making paper out of recycled textile, namely cotton rags.

By the 1860s, England joined France and Italy as the leading exporters of writing paper to the four corners of the world. Then, the United States, Germany and several Nordic countries began producing paper with their large supplies of wood pulp which by then had become the preferred material for paper production, except in England (esparto grass until the 1890s) and Italy (cotton rags). The nineteenth-century growth in the European production and global exportation of industrial writing paper provoked a veritable revolution in world literacy and economic organization. It is precisely in this century that trans-Saharan caravan trade experienced growth, and, not coincidentally, those engaged in this commercial world were Muslims and Jews.⁴²

By the eighteenth century, European ships were transporting writing paper regularly into Al-Ṣawīra (Mogador), Ndar (Saint-Louis), Banjul (Bathurst) and other Atlantic ports, as well as Tangier, Algiers, Tripoli and Cairo on the Mediterranean side (see map). Now Muslims acquired writing paper in outposts along the Senegal and Gambia rivers supplied by French and British commercial intermediaries. Saharans in particular demanded paper in exchange for gum arabic, which became a sought-after “legitimate trade” good. Indeed, this natural resin from the hardened sap of the *Acacia senegalensis* tree became of primary interest to Europeans who required it for industrial processes. Until the second half of the nineteenth century, when gum arabic was exported from the eastern Sudan (and shortly thereafter a synthetic replacement was discovered), the southwestern Sahara was

⁴⁰ Dykes Spicer, *The Paper Trade: A Descriptive and Historical Survey of the Paper Trade From the Commencement of the Nineteenth Century* (London: Methuen & Co., 1907), 1–2, and Richard L. Hills, *Paper Making in England, 1488–1988: A Brief History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

⁴¹ Dykes Spicer, *Paper*, 34–5, 89.

⁴² Lydon, *On Trans-Saharan Trails*, Chapters 2, 4 and 7.

the only known source. Interestingly, gum arabic in Europe was used not only as a solvent in the textile and printing industries, but also as an adhesive in bookbinding. With the increased availability of writing paper at these trade fairs, Saharan clerics became the main suppliers of gum arabic. The enterprising Sufi scholar Shaykh Sīdiyya al-Kabīr (d. 1284–5/1868) put his followers, students and slaves to work harvesting gum.⁴³ Moreover, as part of their negotiations with French (and at times British) officials stationed in Saint-Louis du Sénégal (Ndar), the emirs of southwestern Sahara regularly demanded paper be part of tribute arrangements. Residents of the Trārza and other Saharan regions also traveled to Ndar in order to purchase paper directly from known suppliers.

Since it was imported from faraway, and via the perilous activities of caravaners, paper was a luxury good. The cheapening of paper and its increased distribution led to a revolution in writing and administration, however few data are currently available on these linked processes. Murray Last in this volume also makes this point, relying on figures generated by Philip Curtin who, forty years ago, made the astute remark that “[p]aper consumption is an index of literacy and hence of Islamic learning.”⁴⁴ Based on a French survey dating to 1718 of the demand for imported merchandise in Senegal, he calculated that paper accounted for roughly 1.5% in the coastal towns of Saint-Louis (Senegal) and Banjul (Gambia), and up to 3.5% in the interior region of Gajaaga (or Ngalam) along the Senegal River.⁴⁵

By the late eighteenth century, paper had become more readily available in southwestern Sahara. Yet paper imported from northern markets by way of the caravan trade continued to meet the needs of Muslims of the interior. Given its position as a major market at the crossroads of both western and eastern trans-Saharan trade routes, Timbuktu was the earliest distribution center for paper in West Africa. The name of Shāṭiba, the Spanish papermaking city, is remembered in the oral traditions of Mauritania as an early source of the best quality

⁴³ Stewart, *Islam*, 121.

⁴⁴ Curtin, *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa: Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade*, vol. 1 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975), 314.

⁴⁵ Curtin, *Economic Change*, 314, 316–7. I cite these percentages for the sake of illustration, noting the discrepancy between the text and the Table 8.2 where these figures are cited not simply for paper, but also for bundles of miscellaneous imported goods. In a subsequent Table 8.3 the percentage of paper to major imports cited for the region of Senegambia is 0.5% in the 1730s (318).

paper. For later periods, oral sources claim that paper was imported from the Indian peninsula and northern Africa, namely Morocco, Libya and Egypt.⁴⁶ Today elders remember especially seeing the paper of Italian origin in their youth.⁴⁷ The preference in Africa for the cotton-based and very durable paper from Italy, where mechanization was very late in replacing handmade papermaking processes, endured for centuries.

By the second half of the nineteenth century, the paper revolution was worldwide. The availability of paper goes a long way in explaining the remarkable growth of library collections, scholarly production and paper economies in northwest Africa. It may well be that Libya was comparatively a larger source of Italian paper than Morocco.⁴⁸ To be sure, large quantities of writing paper were transiting through Tripoli where it was transported on camelback to areas radiating out of Timbuktu and Kano. In the year 1309/1891 a caravan left Tripoli with 19 of its total of 81 camels loaded with writing paper (*kāghiṭ*), which gives a sense of the weight of paper in trans-Saharan trade at this time.⁴⁹

European explorers seeking to trace Africa's routes and realms were well aware of Muslim Africans' appetite for writing paper. Already in the late eighteenth century, Mungo Park noted instances when local Muslims came to "beg [for] paper to write."⁵⁰ In the 1820s, René Caillié systematically gifted to his guides and assistances pairs of scissors and sheets of paper.⁵¹ So prized was paper that at some point his supply was stolen from his bags during transportation. Throughout his long trek

⁴⁶ Interview with Muhammad Wuld Aḥamdi in Tishit, Mauritania (21 April 1997).

⁴⁷ Interview with Muhammad Mukhtar Ould Bah in Nouakchott, Mauritania (21 June 2009). This informant had heard of the paper mills of Fez, which is an indication of the prominence of this paper in oral history, but the oldest paper he ever saw was of Italian origin.

⁴⁸ Surprisingly, paper does not feature on the tables and lists of European imports published for the nineteenth century by the economic historian of Morocco Jean-Louis Miège (See *Le Maroc et l'Europe (1830-1894)* [Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1961], 135). Besides, he was mainly concerned with importations from western Africa to Morocco and not with what European products were imported into the African interior.

⁴⁹ Inheritance Document, Family Library of Al-Ḥājj Ibrāhīm al-Anṣārī (Ghāt, Libya).

⁵⁰ M. Park, *Travels in the interior districts of Africa performed in the years 1795, 1796 and 1797* (London: John Murray, 1817), 76 (also 83).

⁵¹ Caillié, *Travels through Central Africa to Timbuctoo; and across the Great Desert, to Morocco, performed in the years 1824-1828* (London: Colburn & Bentley, 1830), I: 48, 146, 149, 213, 221 II: 256, 260, 311, 315, 446.

across the Sahara and in western Africa, Heinrich Barth used paper as a currency and on occasion he also handed out scissors, which were recognized to be “excellent for cutting paper.”⁵² By the last decades of the nineteenth century, firearms and paper were among the most important trade items transported by way of caravan by local merchants.⁵³

THE DEMAND FOR WRITING PAPER IN WESTERN AFRICA

Muslim societies consumed, produced and imported large quantities of writing paper since Arabic literacy was a quintessential part of the faith. From the early centuries of Islam, as Jonathan Bloom explains, “books and book knowledge became the aim of Islamic society.”⁵⁴ Because paper tended to be imported at great distances, this literate world was sustained by the entrepreneurial activities of Muslims and their promotion of homegrown industries of manuscript-copying and bookbinding, as seen below. The growth in the demand for paper in western Africa can also be explained by the growth of Islam in the nineteenth century. Then, interactions intensified between Muslims linked to the spread of Sufi orders, the organization of Islamic states, and the expansion of trans-Saharan trade. At the same time, the encroaching European presence in the region also led to an escalation of diplomatic negotiations held in Arabic, Africa’s first written diplomatic language. Such activities provoked a growth in correspondence requiring a stable paper supply.

As the contributions of Last and Walz in this volume indicate, very little is known of the internal dynamics of the paper trade in Africa, and indeed, whether one can speak of a regular commerce in this mighty commodity until the nineteenth century. Yet it is altogether peculiar that neither writing paper nor parchment was discussed in local fatwa literature.⁵⁵ Without a doubt the need for paper to document economic and social transactions, on the one hand, and the pursuit of cultural capital in the form of manuscripts and pamphlets,

⁵² Barth, *Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa (1849–1855)*, vol. 2 (London: Frank Cass, 1965), 153.

⁵³ A. Coyne. *Journal de Route des Adrariens Etude Géographique sur L’Adrar et une partie du Sahara Occidental* (Alger, 1889), 25–8.

⁵⁴ Bloom, *Paper*, 11.

⁵⁵ Interviews with Muhammad Mukhtar Ould Bah in Nouakchott, Mauritania (21 June 2009) and Muḥammadhan Wuld Bābā (in the company of Abdallahi Ould Mohamed Fall) in Bū Ḥadidā, Mauritania (24 June 2009).

on the other, fueled the commercial activities of a majority of Saharan and Sahelian entrepreneurial scholars. Although the pre-colonial history remains sketchy, some random observations from local and foreign sources inform about paper transactions across the ages. Oral traditions about Mauritania's first prolific scholar, Muḥammad al-Yadāli, give a sense of the early demand for writing paper in the region, discussed below.

Since it was not produced locally, Muslim western Africa was paper hungry. In a previous publication, I described the manuscript culture of western Saharans, from the production of their ink and inkwells, to their sparing use of precious paper.⁵⁶ The rarity of vellum suggests that it was the less-preferred medium, even though, in the Saharan case, its fabrication at times may have been cheaper than the price of imported paper. Bloom makes the important point that one of the great advantages of paper over papyrus and parchment was that documents written on this medium could not easily be forged since writing paper fully absorbed ink and could not be erased easily.⁵⁷

Some very basic linguistic evidence seems to suggest that the words used locally for paper varied according to the source of origin, which in turn varied across the ages. The generic *waraq*, from the Arabic for foliage or leaves, and *waraqqa*, for a single sheet of paper, came to be used throughout much of the Muslim-speaking world, including Africa. However, the word does not appear in the holy book of Muslims, which might suggest that it was coined later. There are, however, two instances where parchment and possibly paper or papyrus are mentioned in the *Qur'ān*. The word vellum or leather parchment (*riqq*) appears just once.⁵⁸ In the western Sahara a small number of manuscripts was written on vellum made from the tanned skins of animals, namely antelopes such as gazelles (*riqq al-ghazāla*).⁵⁹ The second mention is the word *qirtās* (plur. *qarātīs*), a loan word shared with the Greek (*khartes*) and the Latin (*charta*). In the last two and possibly all of these cases the term was used originally for a sheet

⁵⁶ Lydon, "Inkwells."

⁵⁷ Bloom, *Paper*, 49.

⁵⁸ *Qur'ān*, 53: 2. Some interpreters of the *Qur'ān* translate *riqq* as scroll, and others as parchment.

⁵⁹ In early fifteenth-century Maghrib the rather confusing expression 'paper leather parchment' (*ruqā'a kāghaṭ*) was used by a fatwa writer to describe an old will (see Aḥmad b. Yaḥya al-Wansharīsī [1430–1508]. *Kitāb al-Mi'yār al-mu'rib wa al-jāmi' al-mughrib 'an fatāwā ahl Ifriqiya wa al-Andālūs wa al-Maghrib* (Rabat: Ministry of Awqāf, 1981–3), vol. 10, 377–9).

of papyrus.⁶⁰ The exact origin of the word is unknown, although there are suggestions that it may be ancient Egyptian.

In any event, *qirtās* was not the only term for paper prevalent in Muslim Africa. The word *kāghit* is a common term, and is, in all likelihood, the etymological source of *keyit*, the word for paper in the Wolof language of Senegal.⁶¹ The very same word for paper exists in many semitic and Asian languages, including Turkish (and Ottoman), Persian/Farsi, Urdu and Kurdish. Bloom suggests that “*kaghad*” is somehow “derived from the Chinese word *gu-zhi*, meaning ‘paper made from paper mulberry [bark].’”⁶² It certainly makes perfect sense that there would be an etymological link pointing to the East where writing paper was invented. It is interesting to note that just as there was a set of Muslim families named ‘the paper-maker’ (*al-warrāq*), so too is there still a family in Fez known as *al-kāghid*.⁶³ This word as well as *qirtās* were once current in Ḥasaniya, the Arabic-based lingua franca of the western Sahara, to designate paper, but the most common term was *kurrās* (from the Arabic word for quire, notebook, fascicle) used generically for writing paper.

As noted above, Saharans exchanged their gum arabic for imported European goods including writing paper at the regular fairs held in trade posts along the Senegal River. Then, the unit of account was the fistful (*al-qabḍā*) and five fistfuls equaled a ream of paper.⁶⁴ In the early days, a ream was about 480 sheets of paper, but with the spread of the metric system it was standardized at 500 sheets, or the equivalent of 20 quires. According to Bloom, the word ream (*rame* in French, *risma* in Italian, *resma* in Spanish) is derived from the Arabic *rizma* meaning a bale or bundle, which is not surprising given the role Muslims played in the diffusion of the papermaking technology.

The earliest known western African manuscripts date from the late fifteenth century, and the earliest imported manuscripts would date

⁶⁰ *Qur’ān*, 6:7; 6:91. See Bloom, *Paper*, 27. In light of the fact that Italy became the main supplier of paper to Africa, as Walz explains in this volume, it is interesting to note that *carta* is “paper” in Italian.

⁶¹ This word was prevalent in western Africa and the Maghrib (plur. *kawāghit*). In Tunisia it is spelled with a dhal instead of a ṭa at the end of the word. In the Ḥasaniya language (see below) the plural is in a different form (*tuwākghit*), but few elders know the term nowadays.

⁶² Bloom, *Paper*, 47.

⁶³ Interview with Mawlāy Ḥāshim al-‘Alāwī in Fez, Morocco (11 June 2009). See also Bloom, “Paper in Sudanic Africa,” in *Meanings of Timbuktu*, 45–59.

⁶⁴ Personal communication, Mohamed Saïd Ould Ahmedou (17 June 2009).

from the twelfth century, although epigraphic sources precede this period by more than three centuries.⁶⁵ The above-mentioned eleventh-century scholar Imām al-Ḥadrāmī wrote a treatise on the legal framework of the Almoravids, although the original has apparently been lost. It is from the sixteenth century onwards that date the Timbuktu chronicles, but it is not until the eighteenth century that Saharan writings become more frequent.

Shaykh Muḥammad b. al-Mukhtār b. Muḥammad Saʿīd al-Yadālī (d. 1166/1752–3), known as Muḥammad al-Yadālī, is one of the earliest writers in what is today Mauritania. Born in a learned family of the Awlād Daymān clan, he followed a peripatetic education, becoming a scholar in his own right. His legendary encounter with a Dutch merchant ship on the Atlantic coast is part of the oral traditions. He is most remembered for writing the first account of the Shurr Bubba war, also known as the jihad of Nāṣir al-Dīn, of the seventeenth century, in which his father played a part.⁶⁶ According to Rājil Wuld Aḥmad Sālīm, the custodian of the *zāwiya* of Muḥammad al-Yadālī in Tūjnīn, his ancestor authored at least fifty known works, although just over thirty have been located so far. He has dedicated his life to assembling Muḥammad al-Yadālī's writings. Few manuscripts by his own hand have survived, but there are many copies most of which were generated in the 12th century (1780s–1880s) at a time when paper was more readily available.⁶⁷

Sometime in the early part of his career, Muḥammad al-Yadālī (who was born in 1096/1684–5) took a trip to the coast, in what appears to be an act of desperation by a paper-hungry scholar. He headed towards the small coastal outpost known as Agādīr Dūm (or Duma),⁶⁸ now an

⁶⁵ The earliest document that I have come across was a colophon dating from 14 Dhū al-Qaʿda 963 (18 September 1556) by the hands of Limān Muḥammad Wuld Limām Aḥmad of Tishīt from a copy of a document dating 18th Shaʿbān 885 (Sunday 22 October 1480). For the best study on Mali's epigraphic sources, see De Moraes Farias, *Arabic Medieval Inscriptions from the Republic of Mali Epigraphy, Chronicles and Songhay-Tuareg History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁶⁶ On Sharr Bubba see Muḥammad al-Mukhtār Wuld Saʿād, *Ḥarb Shar Bubbah au āzmat al-qarn 17 fī al-janūb al-gharbi al-mūrītānī* (Nouakchott, 1993); Ismaʿl Hamet, *Chroniques de la Mauritanie Sénégalaise—Nacer Eddine/Nubda fī taʿrikh al-ṣaḥrāʾ* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1911) and Ould Cheikh, "Nomadisme."

⁶⁷ Interview with Rājil Wuld Aḥmad Sālīm in Tūjnīn, Mauritania (accompanied by Abdallah Ould Mohamed Fall) (24 June 2009).

⁶⁸ According to Francisco Freire ("The Narziguas and Southwestern Saharan history in the mid-sixteenth century" (*Islamic Africa*, forthcoming)), Duma is the name of a leader who may have commanded the fort of Agādīr sometime in the seventeenth century.

abandoned port located to the north of Arguin that in the early eighteenth century was taken over by the French during the “gum wars,” fought between the French, the Dutch and the British along the coast of Mauritania and northern Senegal.⁶⁹ While he feared being seized or otherwise mistreated by the foreigners, and although rough seas apparently caused concern during his time on board the ship, Muḥammad al-Yadālī would forever cherish the memory of this experience. This is because he received a substantial amount of writing paper from the Dutch merchants which he exclaimed to be a “divine gift” for the material was the best known quality of paper, generally known as “Shāṭiba,” from the Andalusian paper manufacturing center. It is uncertain exactly how many reams of paper he received, but it was substantial enough for an entire camel load, that is to say between 150 and 200 kilograms of paper.

Undoubtedly it was thanks to his prodigious paper supply that Muḥammad al-Yadālī was able to be so productive as a scholar. It is most telling that his last and most voluminous work was a Qurʾānic exegesis (*tafsīr*) in four volumes, which he completed in the year 1160/1747 after working on it for a decade. The largest volume was over 470 pages, for a staggering total of about 1,600 folios. Rājil Wuld Aḥmad Sālīm is aware of at least seven copies of this work. From his numerous references, it is clear that al-Yadālī had access to a fair amount of written material, and indeed owned a sizeable reference library as a source for his own writings. By comparison, the most celebrated scholar of Timbuktu, Aḥmad Bābā (d. 1036/1627) of the Aqīt family is known to have produced at least 68 writings, including 40 lengthy manuscripts.⁷⁰ Two reasons explain Aḥmad Bābā’s access to writing

⁶⁹ The rest of this section is informed by interviews with Rājil Wuld Aḥmad Sālīm in Tūjnīn, Mauritania (24 June 2009) and interview with Muḥammadhan Wuld Bābā in Bū Ḥadīdā, Mauritania (24 June 2009). Both interviews were in the company of Abdallahi Ould Mohamed Fall. This second informant is a local historian who specialized in the life and times of Muḥammad al-Yadālī. See Muḥammadhan Wuld Bābā, *Al-Shaykh Muḥammad al-Yadālī: nūṣūṣ min al-taʾriḫ al-Mūrītānī, taqdīm wa-taḥqīq* (Carthage: Al-Muʾassasah al-Ḥaṭānīyah lil-Tarjamah wa-al-Taḥqīq wa-al-Dirāsāt, Bayt al-Ḥikmah, 1990). Louis Massignon (“Un poète saharien: la qaṣīdah d’al Yedālī.” *Revue du monde musulman* 8, no. 6 [June 1909], 203) notes that Al-Yadālī’s successful mission and the fact that he survived the ordeal on a European ship was considered so miraculous that people believed that to safeguard from the dangers of sea trips it sufficed to take along a piece of writing containing a certain set of Qurʾānic verses.

⁷⁰ John Hunwick et al., *Arabic Literature in Africa*, Vol. IV: *The Writings of Western Sudanic Africa* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 17–31 and Mahmoud A. Zouber, *Aḥmad Bābā de Tombouctou (1556–1627), Sa vie et son oeuvre* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose,

paper. The first is the role of his native Timbuktu as an international crossroads benefitting from caravan connections to most of the northern African points of trade, from Fez and Tripoli to Cairo. The second is the fact that this scholar sojourned in Morocco for several years, first as a political prisoner after the Moroccan invasion of Songhay in the late sixteenth century, and later as an independent and venerated scholar who provided lessons in legal studies to many Moroccans in Marrakech.⁷¹ Living in Morocco where paper was by then imported from Europe facilitated his scholarly productivity, to be sure. But it must be noted that when he was taken as political prisoner to Morocco, Aḥmad Bābā scorned the Moroccans for pillaging his library, lamenting that his was the most modest of the collections of his fellow learned men in Timbuktu, with only (!) about 1,600 manuscripts.⁷²

Bruce Hall and Charles Stewart in this volume provide a comprehensive accounting of the titles of works and literary subjects contained in the private libraries of Mali and Mauritania. To illustrate the scholarly demand for writing paper, Table 1 is a general summary of the range of literary works.

Table 1. Scholarly demand for paper⁷³

Bio-Bibliographies (among the most popular authors are Aḥmad Bābā of Timbuktu (d. 1036/1627) and al-Ṭālib Muḥammad al-Bartili (d. 1219/1804–5)
Copies of the Qurʾān and local and foreign manuscripts
Islamic theology (Qurʾānic exegesis, commentaries, <i>ḥadīth</i> manuals, and so forth)
Language and Grammar (Arabic grammar, syntax, and morphology)
Legal manuals (legal commentaries, commentaries on the commentaries, fatwa collections)
Sufi literature (hagiographies, correspondence)

1977), 82–127. Unfortunately, neither author includes the size of each work in page numbers.

⁷¹ Of his erudition, one of Aḥmad Bābā's disciples is recorded as having said: "I did not cease to visit him constantly for several years, tapping with full hands into the mine of his erudition in order to quench my thirst" (cited in Zouber, *Aḥmad Bābā*, 63).

⁷² Zouber, *Aḥmad Bābā*, 25 (fn2). This same source notes that Aḥmad Bābā's grandfather's library contained 700 manuscripts (20).

⁷³ Based in part on the chapter by Bruce Hall and Charles Stewart in this volume.

It is worth noting that while there are over three hundred manuscript libraries of a notable size between Mauritania and Mali, some were privately owned while others became family property endowments (*waqf*).⁷⁴ Moreover, books were so valued that they could be co-owned. One elder remembers hearing about as many as five individuals sharing ownership of a single book manuscript.⁷⁵

Aside from the demand for paper to compose and copy works, there were other non-scholarly uses for the precious material (listed in Table 2). These included the production of local histories and chronicles, pilgrim travelogues, letter-writing and the use of pieces of paper for the creation of amulets.

Finally, paper was in constant demand on the part of trans-Saharan merchants and their agents, a majority of whom tended to be literate in Arabic, or at least possessed sufficient writing skills to produce rudimentary commercial records. Operating in what can best be described as a “paper economy of faith,” they drafted contracts, recorded property rights, held business correspondence and kept

Table 2. Social, Religious and Political Paperwork

Chronicles and registries (such as the town annals of Tishit or Walāta)
Correspondence (diplomatic, familial, letters of introduction or passports)
Legal paperwork (fatwas and shorter legal replies (<i>nawāzil</i>), treaties, inheritance computations, contracts)
Occult Sciences (amulets ortalismans, pharmacopeia, medicinal works, incantations and the like)
Travelogues (pilgrims’ diaries, known as <i>rihlāt</i>)

⁷⁴ For a general study of private libraries in Muslim Africa, see Houari Touati, *L’armoire à sagesse: bibliothèques et collections en Islam* (Paris: Aubiers, 2003). For a study of the libraries of Mali and Mauritania, see Abdel Kader Haïdara in this volume; *Les bibliothèques du désert: recherches et études sur un millénaire décrits*, ed. Attilio Gaudio (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2002); Ismaël Diadié Haidara and Haoua Traoré, “The Private Libraries of Timbuktu,” in *Meanings of Timbuktu*, 271–6. For a comparative study on Algeria, see Judith Scheele’s chapter in this volume, and for Niger see Seyni Moumouni, “Les bibliothèques sahariennes: circulation de manuscrits et pratiques culturelles,” Paper presented at the “Saharan Crossroads: Views from the North” Conference (Tangier, Morocco, June 2009).

⁷⁵ Interview with Muḥammadhan Wuld Bābā (in the company of Abdallahi Ould Mohamed Fall) in Bū Ḥadidā, Mauritania (24 June 2009).

trade records.⁷⁶ Many trans-Saharan traders followed the Qur'an to the letter by committing commercial transactions to writing. They also relied on legal literature and the opinions of jurists to organize their activities. In the course of the nineteenth century, when paper was more readily available and Arabic literacy was widespread among long-distance traders, oasis, town and city dwellers, and nomadic scholarly communities, proportionally more trans-Saharan traders than in the past recorded in writing their business transactions. Based on a survey of nineteenth-century records, Table 3 summarizes the range of uses of writing paper for the operation of the caravan trade.

Table 3. Paper Economy of Caravanning⁷⁷

Account Books and Ledgers (accounting and recordkeeping)
Caravan, Ship or other Venture Lists (participants and their merchandise)
Contracts (agency contracts, labor contracts, leasing contracts, debt and equity contracts, storage contracts, forward-purchase contracts, commission contracts, <i>commenda</i> -type contracts and other partnership agreements)
Correspondence (information flows and financial transfers)
Financial Instruments (bills of exchange, money orders, debt-swapping, traveler's checks)
Shopping Lists (with purchasing instructions)
Waybills (lists of goods to establish ownership of dispatched parcels and loads)

At the same time that trans-Saharan trade grew in volume and value, western Africa experienced a veritable boom in the production of Islamic knowledge. Muslim intellectuals and scholars of Islamic law doubled as caravan merchants to sustain their livelihoods while building their symbolic capital by acquiring manuscripts and writing paper. The fact that both scholars and traders used paper to record their transactions, and to otherwise operate in a paper economy, is extremely significant to understanding the organization of caravan trade. Besides, to engage in their intellectual pursuits, scholars

⁷⁶ Lydon, *On Trans-Saharan Trails*, especially Chapter 6; also Lydon, "A Paper Economy of Faith without Faith in Paper."

⁷⁷ This table is reproduced from Lydon, *On Trans-Saharan Trails*, 243.

necessarily had to engage in caravan trade, as caravaners or investors, in order to sustain their families and to meet their need for paper and books.

MANUSCRIPT CULTURE AND EXCHANGE

Acquiring manuscripts for western African Muslims represented an investment in what Bourdieu calls “cultural capital,” which strengthened reputations that in turn could be lubricated to produce economic capital.⁷⁸ Saharan scholars’ thirst for knowledge led them to expend sizeable sums in search of manuscripts. In former times, they depended on caravan traffic and the arrival of pilgrims for their supplies of paper and new book manuscripts. But from the seventeenth century onwards, as described above, paper became increasingly common in local markets.

It is not known precisely when the trans-Saharan book trade began in earnest, but clearly copies of the Qur’an and classic Islamic literature were in circulation by the eleventh century C.E. In the mid-fourteenth century, when visiting the capital of the Empire of Mali, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa witnessed the strict schooling of children trained to memorize and recite the Qur’an. So expensive were book manuscripts that they were exchanged for hefty amounts of gold. A copy of the twelfth-century Moroccan jurist Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ’s *Kitāb al-shifā* was originally purchased in Tuwāt by Mahmūd Ka’ti’s father on his way to Timbuktu in 1468 for no less than 45 mithqāls (approx. 191 grams) of gold.⁷⁹ By the time Leo Africanus reached Timbuktu in the early 1500s he marveled that “many book manuscripts coming from *Berbérie* (i.e. North Africa) are sold. More profits are realized from this sale than any other merchandise.”⁸⁰ This was after he had traveled through Marrakech, where he lamented about the dearth of books for sale in the market.⁸¹ Several decades later, the Songhay emperor Askiya Dāwūd (d. 990–1/1583) apparently purchased a copy

⁷⁸ Lydon, “Inkwells.”

⁷⁹ Albrecht Hofheinz, “Goths in the Land of the Blacks: A Preliminary Survey of the Ka’ti Library in Timbuktu,” in Scott Reese (ed.), *The Transmission of Learning in Islamic Africa*. Leiden: Brill, 2004, 154–83.

⁸⁰ Jean-Léon L’Africain, *Description de l’Afrique*, II, trans. A. Épaulard (Paris, 1956), II.

⁸¹ L’Africain, *Description*, I, 194.

of *al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṭ*, the first encyclopedia compiled by the fourteenth-century Persian scholar Muḥammad b. Ya‘qūb al-Firūzābādī, for 80 pieces of pure gold.⁸² This emperor, who followed a policy of promoting Islamic learning and Arabic literacy, encouraged the manuscript copying business in Timbuktu by hiring numerous scribes to produce works to gift to local scholars.

Similar examples of hefty prices paid for books can be found for later periods as well. The renowned legal scholar Sīdī ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Ḥājj Ibrāhīm al-‘Alawī (d.1234/1818) exchanged his thoroughbred horse for a copy of a popular commentary of Khalīl’s *Mukhtaṣar* by the Mālikī jurist Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ḥaṭṭāb. He returned home from pilgrimage with three camel-loads of books.⁸³ Several decades later, an unidentified book was valued at 15 mithqāl or approximately 64 grams of gold in an inheritance proceeding from mid-nineteenth century Tishit.

Because they were so valuable and relatively easy to transport, book manuscripts functioned as a valuable currency. In the mid-nineteenth century the German explorer Barth was on his way to Maiduguri in Northern Nigeria, and recorded meeting a caravan of pilgrims from the Masina Caliphate in present-day Mali. The leader of the group “was carrying a large number of books which he has bought in the East more for the purposes of trade than for his own use.”⁸⁴ Book manuscripts would have been especially valuable exchange items in areas where they were rare, such as along the southern route to reach Mecca via the Sudan. In this reported instance, the pilgrim suffered a tremendous loss when some of his manuscripts got water-damage during a river crossing.

For the most part, Saharan pilgrims, such as Shaykh Sīdī ‘Abd Allāh, typically return from the Hijaz with as many books as they could, acquired in Mecca, Cairo, Fez and elsewhere. The demonstrable

⁸² Maḥmūd b. al-Ḥājj al-Mutawakkil Ka‘ti, *Tarikh El-Fettach, ou chronique du chercheur pour servir à l’histoire des villes, des armées et des principaux personnages du Tekroun*, ed. and trans. Oscar Houdas and Maurice Delafosse (Paris: Leroux, 1964), 180, 210. According to Paulo Fernando de Moraes Farias (“Intellectual Innovation and Reinvention of the Sahel: The Seventeenth-Century Timbuktu Chronicles,” in *The Meanings of Timbuktu*, 97), the decades that followed the Moroccan occupation of Songhay of 1591 saw the birth of the chronicle (*ta’rikh*) genre in the region, a literary movement that he believes was politically driven.

⁸³ Wuld Ḥāmidun, *Hayāt*, 13.

⁸⁴ Barth, *Travels*, II, 96.

eloquence, legal knowledge and scholarly excellence for which pilgrims from Bilād Shinqīṭ were reputed often earned them the generosity of wealthy Muslims along the way who occasionally bestowed upon them large gifts of books. The mention of a few anecdotes will suffice to illustrate the place of pilgrims' acquisitions in the total volume of literature imported into western Africa. In his pilgrim's diary (*riḥla*), Al-Ṭālib Aḥmad Wuld Ṭiwayr al-Janna (d. 1265/1849) took special care to note in gratitude the names of those who gave him such gifts, including the Sultan of Morocco.⁸⁵ Several of the thirty camels carrying his loads on his return to his native Wādān, to the northeast of Shinqīṭī, were required to transport the 400 manuscripts. For sure he returned with reams of writing paper, which he could have purchased directly in Livorno, Italy, where he visited. In the late nineteenth century, when Muḥammad Yaḥya al-Walāti (d. 1330/1912) was passing through Tunis on his return from Mecca, he received a gift of more than one hundred books.⁸⁶ Muḥamadhan Wuld Bābā explains that southwestern Saharan scholars infrequently received collective gifts of books from North African leaders, such as the Sultans of Egypt and Morocco.⁸⁷ There are instances when the distribution of these gifts led to local disputes, such as when Mulāy Ismā'īl sent a collection of books to the Awlād Daymān clan and somehow Shaykh Muḥammad al-Yadāli was excluded from receiving his share.

Saharan scholars with means organized special caravan trips northbound to Morocco. According to Ahmed-Chouqui Binebine, the book market of Fez was held every Friday morning in front of the Qarawiyīn mosque, and that of Marrakech was on Thursdays next to the Kutubiya, a mosque so-named because of the market of books (*kutub*).⁸⁸ In both cases books were sold on auction as was the practice in Spain. It is interesting to note that booksellers were prohibited from selling to non-Muslims. Based on Stewart's work, I have already described the case of Shaykh Sidiyya al-Kabīr (d. 1284–5/1868) of the Gibla region of southwestern Mauritania who purchased about 200

⁸⁵ H.T. Norris, *The Pilgrimage of Ahmad, Son of the Little Bird of Paradise. An Account of a 19th Century Pilgrimage from Mauritania to Mecca* (Warminster: Aris & Philips, 1977), 102.

⁸⁶ Al-Walāti, *Al-Riḥla al-Ḥijāziya, 1330–1912* (Beirut: Dār al-gharb al-islāmī, 1990).

⁸⁷ Interview with Muḥammadhan Wuld Bābā (in the company of Abdallahi Ould Mohamed Fall) in Bū Ḥadidā, Mauritania (24 June 2009).

⁸⁸ Binebine, *Bibliothèques*, 62.

manuscripts in Fez in the year 1830.⁸⁹ The learned poet Bābā Wuld Aḥmad Beyba dedicated the following verses to pay tribute to Shaykh Sīdiyya's voyage:

The Maghrib brightened upon your arrival
and it darkened when you departed.
Your books, your camels are unable to transport them,
and your knowledge, your books are not able to contain it.⁹⁰

Following the pattern of other Saharan bibliophiles described above, and in other contributions to this volume, works on jurisprudence formed the largest portion of book acquisitions.

From an early period, skilled calligraphers and professional transcribers copied manuscripts locally. In Timbuktu there was a veritable manuscript industry by the sixteenth century where copyists, proof-readers, and editors were well known for their skills, a tradition that endured into the twentieth century, as seen below. The artful craft of copying manuscripts was also carried out in Saharan oasis towns and nomadic encampments, where certain families and even clans were renowned for their special skills in calligraphy. In Tishit, for example, one family of the Idaw al-Ḥājj, the Ahl al-Najim, had such a reputation that they used to receive orders to copy works from far and wide. As noted above, *maḥaḍra* students with good handwriting were put to work copying manuscripts and the best among them became professional calligraphers.

While Saharans exerted themselves to acquire precious writing paper, they produced ink and inkwells locally. Elsewhere, I explained how Saharans produced remarkably durable and waterproof inks of the finest quality. Here I add a few more details about the production of Saharan ink based on more recent research. The most basic jet-black ink recipe was to mix crushed charcoal and gum arabic with saliva or water.⁹¹ Gum arabic (*ilk*) was an essential ingredient

⁸⁹ Lydon, "Inkwells," based on Stewart, "A New Source on the Book Market in Morocco in 1830 and Islamic Scholarship in West Africa," *Hesperis-Talmuda* 11 (1970), 209–46. See also Massignon, "Une bibliothèque saharienne," *Revue du monde musulman* 8, no. 7–8 (July–August 1909), 409–18. See also Graziano Krätli's chapter in this volume.

⁹⁰ Mohamedou Ould Mohameden Meyine, "La sauvegarde des bibliothèques mauritaniennes: un défi majeur à relever (l'exemple des bibliothèques de Chinguetti)," Paper presented at the "Saharan Crossroads: Views from the North" Conference (Tangier, Morocco, June 2009).

⁹¹ Ould Cheikh, "Nomadisme," II, 375–6.

because without it, the ink would not slide properly on the paper. The aforementioned traditional scholar, and descendent of Shaykh Muḥammad al-Yadālī, who prepared ink in his youth, described another technique.⁹² A large chunk of iron-ore, along with special seeds (known as *salāh*), also used in the process of leather tanning, and the leaves of a certain acacia tree (*tamāt*) wrapped in cloth, were placed in a pot of water and boiled for three days straight. Gum arabic was added at the end of the process to produce black ink with a distinct bronze shimmer. This same informant remembers his mother making green ink from fresh melons seeds (*shirkāsh*). Red ink was also fabricated in southwestern Sahara, but I have yet to find information on this. The seventeenth-century Muḥammad al-Yadālī once complained about the lack of good quality ink in the Tiris region, where he sojourned several months out of the year to graze his camels, but at the same time he rejoiced at the abundance of a special plant (*tarthūth*) used to manufacture a certain type of ink.⁹³ Students typically used a diluted form of ink to write on their wooden learning tablets (*lawḥ*).

Once a manuscript was copied and then properly corrected, it needed a cover for protection and portability. Western African tanned leather was imported into northern Africa, from Morocco to Libya, and sold to European merchants by the 1100s and possibly since earlier times when Cordova became a recognized center for European bookbinding made of the finest of skins.⁹⁴ By at least the sixteenth century, the cities of Sokoto and Kano specialized in crafting the best quality tanned-leather, namely goatskin but also sheepskin. There, a sophisticated industrial procedure involving timed soaking, scudding, liming, processing, tanning (with *Acacia niloticus* pods), drying and dyeing (with organic colors found nowhere else) was applied to produce fine and firm tanned leather that long was the standard against which western European tanning-industries measured quality.

Western African tanned hides and skins were one of the most constant items sold in trans-Saharan trade, together with indigo and indigo-dyed cotton from the same manufacturing regions. Because this soft tanned goatskin made its way into European markets via Moroccan ports of trade, it was dubbed ‘morocco’ leather by the

⁹² Interview with Rājil Wuld Aḥmad Sālim (accompanied by Abdallahi Ould Mohamed Fall) in Tūjnin, Mauritania (24 June 2009).

⁹³ Ibid. The Latin term for this plant is *Cynomorium coccineum* (see Glossary).

⁹⁴ This section is taken from Lydon, *On Trans-Saharan Trails*, 101–2.

English and ‘maroquinerie’ by the French. Saharans, who also tanned leather, used it among other things for bookbinding or most accurately for book sleeves and folders often decorated with ornamentation and insignia in bright colors such as yellow, red, green, and indigo. In Tishit women of the blacksmith class (*ma‘alimāt*) commanded the craft of creating strapped leather boxes to protect manuscript folios. Because of the tremendous growth in the book trade worldwide in the nineteenth century, the demand for tanned leather grew considerably. From the 1870s onwards, scholars and traders began importing printed books more regularly after lithographic printing saw the light of day in Morocco.⁹⁵ It was only in the 1800s that Muslim societies, that had resisted for centuries the industrialization of manuscript production, adopted the printing press, centuries after it was in use among most Western and Asian literate societies.

SAHARAN BIBLIOPHILES: THE LEGACY OF THE
TIKNA MERCHANT AḤMAD BŪLA'RĀF

A lively manuscript culture in Muslim western Africa was made possible through the enterprising activities of many Saharan scholars, pilgrims and merchants. Some were active scholars who spent most of their days reading and writing, others were strictly bibliophiles with the resources to sustain their thirst for knowledge. When not acquired directly abroad, Islamic literature could be obtained through various means. Handwritten manuscripts and excerpts of scholarly works were ordered from trans-Saharan traders, purchased from itinerant booksellers, and copied or purchased in local markets with known supplies. By the early twentieth century many book orders were sent to Aḥmad Būla'rāf, the merchant of Timbuktu discussed in this section.

When Moroccan bookmakers, namely in Fez, embraced lithograph technology in the 1870s, printed books started to circulate in the African interior. In Mauritania, the names of the first individuals to possess such works remain in local memory. Caravan merchants of the Awlād Bū al-Sibā' are known to have been the first to import lithograph printed books to Mauritania in the last decade of the twentieth century. According to colonial ethnographer Albert Leriche, the first to import printed books into the region was Aḥmad al-Mā'ī, an Awlād

⁹⁵ Stewart, “New Source,” 245.

Bū al-Sibāʿ of the Awlād al-Baggār lineage.⁹⁶ Among the Idaw al-Ḥājj of the oasis town of Wādān, Aḥmad Shams al-Dīn is remembered as the earliest man to own a lithographed book which he purchased in Fez.⁹⁷

The oral traditions of Tishīt, once a vibrant crossroads of Saharan commerce, hold vivid recollections of one particular trader whom I have described in previous studies.⁹⁸ This is the case of Shaykh b. Ibrāhīm al-Khalīl, a trans-Saharan trader of the Awlād Bū al-Sibāʿ originally from the Wād Nūn region, home to the town of Guelmīm that used to be a western caravan terminus (located in present-day southern Morocco). Shaykh is known to have been very young when he started off on caravans.⁹⁹ Sometime in the first half of the 1800s he settled in Tishīt where he was reputedly the wealthiest man of his day.¹⁰⁰ He was a Sufi, a bibliophile, and an active member of the Wād Nūn trade network who, in all likelihood, dealt in books as well as in general trans-Saharan merchandise.¹⁰¹ One of his clients and correspondents was the Sufi and jihad leader Shaykh ʿUmar Tall, with whom he entertained a friendship. Amidst Shaykh's papers, found in a box in the ruins of his stone house, were legal opinions on how to wage jihad against misbehaving Muslims and on the rules of war-time taxation, as well as several lithographed books.

The most remarkable merchant to specialize in the book trade was also from the the Wād Nūn region. A man of the Aīt Mūsā Wa ʿAly lineage of the large Tikna clan, he was known simply as Aḥmad Būlaʿrāf, but his full name was Aḥmad b. Mbārak b. Barka b. Muḥammad (nicknamed Bū al-Aʿrāf) al-Mūsā-wa-ʿAlī al-Tiknī al-Wād-Nūnī al-Sūsī al-Tinbukti.¹⁰² Born in 1864 in the town of Guelmīm, the largest town

⁹⁶ Mokhtar Ould Hamidoun and Albert Leriche, "Curiosités et Bibliothèques de Chinguetti," *Notes Africaines*, 48 (October 1950), 109–12.

⁹⁷ Personal Communication, Ahmadū Wuld ʿAbd al-Qādir (27 June 2009). The book in question (*Al-Nifḥa al-Aḥmadiya*) discusses the teachings and disciples of the sufi leader Shaykh Mā al-ʿAynayn.

⁹⁸ Lydon, "Inkwells," and *On Trans-Saharan Trails*.

⁹⁹ Personal Communication, Ahmadū Wuld ʿAbd al-Qādir (27 June 2009).

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Dāddah Wuld Idda in Tishīt, Mauritania (June 1997). See *On Trans-Saharan Trails* (especially Chapters 4 and 7). His name is mentioned in contracts with Illigh merchants collected by Paul Pascon (with A. Arrif, D. Schroeter, M. Tozy, H. Van Der Wusten), *La Maison d'Illigh et l'histoire sociale du Tazerwalt* (Rabat: SMER, 1984).

¹⁰¹ See Lydon, *On Trans-Saharan Trails* for information on the Wād Nūn trade network.

¹⁰² Unless otherwise indicated, the biographical material is derived from interviews in Timbuktu with Muḥammad Yaḥya Wuld Aḥmad Būlaʿrāf, in the company of Ṭayyib

in the Wād Nūn, Būla'rāf was orphaned at an early age.¹⁰³ The family sobriquet, from the Arabic (*'araḥa*) "to recognize,"¹⁰⁴ is the name given in the Wād Nūn to a special shaving design on young men's heads. This ritual shaving was performed either when a man reached age twenty, distinguished himself in war or performed a notable act, and it preceded the wearing of his first turban. As he explained to his last surviving son, whom I was fortunate to interview before his passing in the late 1990s, "that is what *al-A'rāf* means, that is the marker to recognize each family."¹⁰⁵ Aḥmad's ancestor apparently was given the name father (*Bū*) of the one with the head-shave marker in recognition of his bravery in the battlefield.

Aḥmad Būla'rāf belonged to the Barka family that was related to Shaykh Bayrūk, the powerful leader of Guelmīm of the first half of the nineteenth century. Both families were of the Aīt Mūsā wa 'Alī lineage of the Tikna clan that was the most prominently involved in organizing trans-Saharan caravan trade. These families operated a trade network system emanating from the Wād Nūn.¹⁰⁶ The Barka family alone had relatives stationed in Walāta and Timbuktu.¹⁰⁷ But the Wād Nūn trade network, which flourished in the nineteenth century, had representatives in all the prominent Saharan and Sahelian markets, including a large Tikna community in Shinqīṭi.

As a young man, Būla'rāf traveled south from Guelmīm to the Sous region in southern Morocco, where he sojourned for a while before going to Shinqīṭi, in northern Mauritania. He would have used family

Wuld 'Aly al-Sa'adī (23 and 27 April 1998). There are inconsistencies in the correct genealogical spelling of his name, even within the family records. Most authors who have written about him base their biographical notes on Aḥmad Būla'rāf's very brief biography at the beginning of his most important written work discussed below. For a history of the Tikna clan that played no small historical part in trans-Saharan caravan trade, see Lydon, *On Trans-Saharan Trails* (Chapter 4). See also Haïdara's chapter in this volume.

¹⁰³ Sidi Mohmed Ould Youbba, "Bibliothèque de Bula'af," in *Chemins du Savoir: Les Manuscrits Arabes et A'jami dans la Région Soudano-Sahélienne* (Rabat: Institut des Etudes Africaines, 2006), 67–72.

¹⁰⁴ The word (*a'rāf*) also means customs, traditional practices, crests, combs (of roosters), and manes (of horses).

¹⁰⁵ Interview in Timbuktu with Muḥammad Yahya Wuld Aḥmad Būla'rāf, in the company of Ṭayyib Wuld 'Aly al-Sa'adī (23 April 1998).

¹⁰⁶ I have described this trade network in *On Trans-Saharan Trails* (especially Chapter 7).

¹⁰⁷ For a history of the Barka family, see Rita Aouad, "Réseaux marocains en Afrique sub-saharienne: Le Tekna de Loued Noun: l'exemple de la famille Benbarka, 1880–1930," *Revue Maroc-Europe*, 4 (1993).

connections to plan his trip, probably traveling on a commercial caravan, and in all likelihood he stayed with one of the Tikna families residing in Shinqīṭī. There he studied for some time with the descendants of Shaykh Muḥammad al-Ḥāfīz, the conveyer of the Tijāniyya Sufi order in western Africa. Būla'raf then headed south to Walāta where four of his relatives were stationed since the year 1880, namely Ibrāhīm Būla'raf, Aḥmad Sālim Būla'raf, Sīdī Būla'raf and 'Umar Būla'raf, and from whence they launched their caravanning businesses. Būla'raf worked with them, and indeed they considered each other as "brothers," as per their correspondence.¹⁰⁸ Eventually he left to settle permanently in Timbuktu, where his relatives Sīdī Būla'raf and 'Umar Būla'raf later joined him. Throughout their lives, the Būla'rafs worked together trading via correspondence. Although his relatives were often off on caravan, Ibrāhīm Būla'raf married locally and remained in Walāta, as did Aḥmad Sālim Būla'raf who built one of the largest houses in town (now in ruins), although he also lived temporarily in the town of Gao, to east of Timbuktu.¹⁰⁹

It is not known precisely when Būla'raf arrived in Timbuktu, but I suspect that it was in the 1890s.¹¹⁰ In the course of time he became the most active bookseller in town specializing in the production and importation of manuscripts and printed books. Būla'raf married only once, and his wife and the mother of his five children was an Algerian woman called Ummulkhayr bint al-Qāḍī. Of his two sons, who worked at times as calligraphers, Muḥammad 'Abdallah followed most closely in Būla'raf's footsteps, as a scholar and teacher (he taught for over a decade in the French *medersa* school in Timbuktu). Apparently, Būla'raf had a policy that only Arabic and Ḥasaniyya were to be spoken in their household, and he chastised anyone caught speaking Sonrai. On the religious plane, Būla'raf was first

¹⁰⁸ According to his son, these were his "brothers," born of the same male ancestor. The genealogy of Aḥmad Sālim Būla'raf, from one of his signed letters discussed below, shows that his father named Muḥammad and Aḥmad Būla'raf would have been brothers. In all likelihood, Aḥmad Būla'raf was the youngest of his family, and so these cousins would have been of the same age or older. It may be the case that Aḥmad grew up in his uncle's family since he was orphaned at a young age.

¹⁰⁹ Aḥmad Wuld 'Alī Fāl Wuld Barka Wuld Būla'raf in Nouakchott, Mauritania (1 July 2009).

¹¹⁰ Hāidara in this volume states that Būla'raf arrived in 1904. Ould Youbba ("Bibliothèque," 67) proposes the date of 1907. Both these authors claim he founded his library the years he arrived in Timbuktu. I suspect he arrived earlier in the 1890s and worked on caravans for a while before starting his library and copying business.

an avid follower of the Tijāniyya Sufi order (*ṭarīqa*), and he obtained the Tijānī *wird* (a Sufi initiation prayer) from Shaykh Muḥammad Yaḥya Sālīma Al-Yūnusī (d. 1354/1935–6), a renowned scholar of Tishīt. But overtime he abandoned the order and switched to the Qādiriyya *ṭarīqa*, which was more popular in Timbuktu.

When he first moved to Timbuktu, Būla'rāf generated the bulk of his income from the caravan business. He purchased salt bars and exchanged these for diverse merchandise. At first, he sent his own camels to Taoudenni to transport salt bars to Timbuktu. But in 1925 or 1926 a group of Reguibāt nomads, known for their pillaging activities, descended on his returning caravan and took all of his camels except for one. From that day onwards, Būla'rāf decided to simply buy the salt from intermediaries because he feared that if he invested in camels these would also be targeted by the Reguibāt. He also was involved in the gum arabic business, sending teams of men to collect it from the acacia trees on the outskirts of Timbuktu. Even after he began focusing on the book trade and the manuscript copying business, Būla'rāf continued to trade in salt bars for general merchandise with local and French trading companies (namely the Compagnie Française d'Afrique Occidentale and Maurel et Prom). He owned no less than three retail stores (*boutiques*) in Timbuktu's central market, which were run by his relatives with whom he continued a close partnership.

Because of his love for books, Būla'rāf collected copies of everything he could find, and in his atelier each individual manuscript was copied at least twice so that he could keep a copy for his private collection. He set up a veritable copying industry in his library that was built in 1907 to accommodate his growing collection and the various stations for the copying business. It held separate rooms for the prepping and cutting of paper, for the copying of manuscripts, for the reading and editing of copied works and for the preparation of the leather bindings and boxes.¹¹¹ The profession of copyist in Morocco also involved performing as a manuscript editor, corrector and book binder, and indeed these tasks were typically performed by the same person elsewhere in the southern Sahara. But Būla'rāf's workshop was organized in such a way that the labor was divided, and trained copyists

¹¹¹ Aḥmad Būla'rāf al-Tiknī, *Al-rayyib wa al-shak wa al-tafrīt fi al-mu'alifin min ahl al-Takrūr wa al-Ṣaḥrā' wa ahl Shinqīt*, Al-Hādī al-Mabrūk al-Dālī, ed. (Tripoli: Sharika al-'āma lil-waraq wal-ṭaba'a, 2001), 11.

and trained editors worked on separate tasks.¹¹² Over a dozen of his calligraphers worked at one time in his atelier, each specializing in a distinct writing style (such as *ṣaḥrāwī*, *maghribī*, *andalūsī*).¹¹³ According to Abdel Kader Haïdara (in this volume), whose father worked as a copyist for Būlaʿrāf, the texts produced in his workshop are recognizable because of the style of the ink and the writing paper that was always of superior quality.¹¹⁴

In order to locate copies of original works, Būlaʿrāf engaged in extensive and long-distance correspondence since he rarely traveled outside of Timbuktu. Not only did he have relationships with all of the major scholars and private library owners in the outlying region of Mali and neighboring Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal, but he also exchanged letters and ordered copies of books from North African and Middle Eastern suppliers. In Algeria, he corresponded with the Kadūr b. Murād al-Targui, in Morocco his main supplier in Fez was Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Qādirī, in Tunisia he worked with four publishers including Nūrī b. Muḥammad Nūrī, in Egypt he imported from Zaydān, and in Lebanon, he ordered books from two publishers.¹¹⁵ So regular were his exchanges with certain suppliers, publishers and intermediaries that several of them had special envelopes printed in both French and Arabic with Būlaʿrāf’s name. One such bilingual stationary, that identifies “Hamed Boularaf” as a Moroccan merchant, includes the epithet “the honorable (*al-janāb*) the celebrated (*al-mājid*) sir Aḥmad Būlaʿrāf the most magnificent (*al-afkham*).” For the regional collection of books, orders and distribution, he relied on his relatives in Walāta, Gao and beyond. For example, in 1345/1926 Aḥmad Sālim Būlaʿrāf, who was probably stationed in Gao at the time, ordered ten copies of the Qurʾān (*maṣāḥif*) from Būlaʿrāf, specifying “five of European make (*afrangiyīn*) and five of them of non European make (meaning locally produced or printed on Muslim presses).”¹¹⁶

¹¹² Binebine, *Bibliothèques*, 36.

¹¹³ For a partial list of the calligraphers, see Aḥmad Būlaʿrāf al-Tiknī, *Al-rayyib wa al-shak*, 11–2.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Abdel Kader Haïdara in Bamako, Mali (8 July 2009). See Haïdara, Table 3 in this volume.

¹¹⁵ Ould Youbba, “Bibliothèque,” 10.

¹¹⁶ Letter by Aḥmad Sālim Būlaʿrāf to his brother Aḥmad Būlaʿrāf in Timbuktu (dated 29 October 1926), IHERI-AB, no. 8855, reproduced in *Timbuktu Script and Scholarship*, Catalogue of Manuscripts (Cape Town: IZIKO), 127. It is interesting to note the distinct letter-writing style used by this family that, in many ways, resembles

Būla'rāf not only devoured books through reading and copying, but he was also a scholar in his own right. It must be noted that it is especially remarkable that a Tikna would become a scholar, since this Saharan clan, considered of the warrior ('*arab*) and not the clerical (*zwāya*) class, was reputed for its economic activities (farming, camel herding and caravan trade), not for its scholarly production. In fact Būla'rāf and his eldest son Muḥammad 'Abdallah b. Būla'rāf, stand in a class of their own as a scholars among the Tikna. As Būla'rāf explains in the preface of his most important work, discussed below,

Fate drove me to reside in Timbuktu. Before that I lived for a period in Shinqītī where I met many eminent families. As for me, I am not a scholar, nor am I from a learned family (*min ahl al-'ilm*). But I love knowledge and those who specialize in it (*uḥīu al-'ilm wa ahlihi*).¹¹⁷

In this humble note, he appears slightly embarrassed about his non-scholarly origins. But in fact, not only did he expend time and energy recovering and compiling the works of known local scholars, that otherwise may have been lost, but Būla'rāf also became a very prolific author.

Būla'rāf composed at least thirty-nine writings, ranging in length from a few folios to large manuscripts. His most cited and copied work is his bio-bibliography entitled "The removal of suspicion, doubt and neglect in the memory of the authors from the people of Takrūr, the Sahara and Shinqīt" (*Izāla al-rayyib wa al-shak wa al-tafrīt fī al-mu'alifīn min ahl al-Takrūr wa al-Ṣaḥrā' wa ahl Shinqīt*).¹¹⁸ The handwritten manuscript, containing exactly 476 authors, was originally 160 folios in length. His first intention in writing this monumental oeuvre may have been to catalogue the works produced by western African scholars contained in his library collection. But in the end, he created a biographical index of all the known authors together

the European letter format with the date placed on the top left corner and the signature at the bottom of the page separate from the text.

¹¹⁷ Aḥmad Būla'rāf al-Tiknī, *Al-rayyib wa al-shak*, al-Dālī, ed., 6. The editor of Būla'rāf's bio-bibliography, discussed below, erroneously claims that Būla'rāf came from a learned family of known scholars in Guelmīm.

¹¹⁸ This work was recently published by a Libyan historian, although it must be noted that his introduction and the brief biographical note on Būla'rāf contain a number of errors (Aḥmad Būla'rāf al-Tiknī, *Al-rayyib wa al-shak*). See also W.A. Brown, "A New Bibliographical Aid: The *Izālat al-Raib* of Aḥmad Abū l-A'rāf al-Tinbkūtī," *Research Bulletin, Centre of Arabic Documentation* (Ibadan) 3, ii (July 1967), 135–6, and Ahmed M. Kani, "A New Source on the Literary Activity of the 'Ulamā' of the Central and Western Sudan: The Niamey Collection," *Bulletin d'information Fontae Historiae Africae* ix/x (1984), 41–8.

with a description of their works. Some entries are more or less descriptive, others contain simply the scholar's name and time of death. A good portion of the entries were copied from the famous bio-bibliography of Al-Bartilī (*Faṭḥ al-shakūr*), but Būla'rāf continued where this previous author left off, documenting biographical and bibliographical entries from the early 1800s onwards.¹¹⁹ His keenness to document the writings of local Muslim African scholars is particularly noteworthy from the Afro-centric tone of the title of this important work.

Būla'rāf's other writings touch on a wide range of topics. Naturally, he composed an essay on the art of calligraphy and manuscript copying. He collected and commented on the works of many local legal scholars, including the Mauritians Muḥamadhan Fāl b. Mutālī al-Tandghī, Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. al-Mukhtār al-'Alūshī, Aḥmad al-Ṣaghīr al-Tishītī, and 'Abdallah b. Aḥmad al-Ḥājj Ḥama'ullah al-Ghallāwī. In fact, Būla'rāf had a keen interest in legal studies, and composed several commentaries of known Mālikī reference manuals and works on Prophetic sayings. He wrote numerous works on Sufism, including several essays discussing the writings of Shaykh Sidī al-Mukhtār al-Kuntī of the Qādiriyya. He also wrote on grammar and the Arabic language. Moreover, he collected genealogies of certain clans, including that of his own group, the Aīt Mūsā wa 'Alī Tikna lineage.

After his passing on September 16th 1955, his son Muḥammad 'Abdallah became the custodian of his father's sizeable library, that once contained 2076 manuscripts and 6039 printed books.¹²⁰ After his passing in the 1980s, the library became progressively depleted by a family no longer financially well-off. By the time his youngest son, Muḥammad Yaḥya, who trained as a watchmaker, but also worked as a calligrapher, passed away in 2000, the library was reduced to several hundred manuscripts (680) and books (900). But, as Haïdara explains in his chapter, the bulk of Aḥmad Būla'rāf's library is now housed at the *Institute de Hautes Études et de Recherches Islamiques- Ahmed Baba* (IHERI-AB) in Timbuktu.

¹¹⁹ Al-Ṭālib Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr al-Ṣaddīq al-Bartilī al-Walātī, *Faṭḥ al-Shakūr fī ma'rifaṭi a'yān 'ulamā' al-Takrūr*, ed. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm al-Kattānī and Muḥammad Ḥājjī (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1981); see also El-Hamel, *Vie intellectuelle islamique*.

¹²⁰ Aḥmad Būla'rāf al-Tiknī, *Al-rayyib wa al-shak*, 10; Ould Youbba, "Bibliothèque," 69.

CONCLUSION

Paper and book manuscripts were the most prized of possessions in southwestern Sahara for they represented the utmost form of cultural capital. Book manuscripts may well have been second to camels, slaves and gold in terms of their market value across the ages. But many Muslim Africans considered book manuscripts to be priceless, because arguably their function as a medium of knowledge was to be shared and their contents distributed within what ideally were highly democratic educational channels. It is perhaps this position that led to the development of a certain cultural ethic with regards to transactions in books. In the former traditions of Mauritania and Mali, for example, it was unconscionable to refuse to lend a book or even to demand its return. It is undoubtedly because of this attitude, but also due to his great generosity that, according to Aḥmad Bābā al-Timbuktī, his teacher Muḥammad Baghayogho lent books never demanding their return, and so, by the end of his days, his library was completely depleted.¹²¹ As Mohamedou Ould Meyine explains, for the case of Mauritania, book manuscripts had an extra-legal status according to local scholars.¹²² It is said that certain actions concerning book transactions could not be punished or pursued through legal channels. The refusal to return, or even the outright theft of, book manuscripts were exempt from legal pursuit, retribution or reprimand.

Against all odds, the southwestern Sahara became home to a highly literate and highly educated Muslim society, which Ould Ahmedou describes with good reason as a “nomadic civilization.”¹²³ While western Africans depended on northerners and later Europeans for their supplies of writing paper, they had a comparative advantage as well. Indeed, the southwestern Sahara was, until the early nineteenth century, the only known source of gum arabic. The French, the British as well as the Dutch were quite dependent on Saharans’ harvesting of the acacia trees for this good which, paradoxically, was also used as an adhesive in printing and bookbinding. It is also somewhat of an irony that, for centuries, Europe had also imported from western Africa and Morocco the best quality tanned leather for bookbinding purposes.

¹²¹ Zouber, *Ahmad Bābā*, 46.

¹²² Ould Meyine, “La sauvegarde.”

¹²³ Ould Ahmedou, *Enseignement*, 24.

Finally, it is tempting to link the Prophet saying “Seek knowledge even if it is as far away as China” (*Aṭlubū al-‘ilmu wa lawu fī al-Šīn*) to, among other factors, China’s pioneering role in papermaking. The invention of this superior medium for the transmission of knowledge would have been something of a marvel to the average scholar forced before the ninth century to write on either parchment or papyrus. As for Saharans, in spite of their dependency on caravans and later caravels for writing-paper supplies, and their reliance for the teaching of Arabic literacy on wooden tablets, the fact that they had access to the largest sand pan that operated as a desert drawing board for practicing the art of writing is an important consideration when reflecting on this once flourishing commercial and scholarly world.

THE PAPER TRADE OF EGYPT AND THE SUDAN
IN THE EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURIES
AND ITS RE-EXPORT TO THE *BILĀD AS-SŪDĀN*¹

Terence Walz

Paper has more varieties than cloth.
—ʿAbd al-Munʿim Sālim, a paper merchant in Cairo, 1972

Paper was an everyday article that was often traded in eighteenth and nineteenth century Egypt and the Sudan, but unlike textiles it is rarely described in the sources most familiar to historians. While dozens of varieties of cloth are mentioned by name in travelogues and mercantile handbooks and dictionaries, only a few types of paper—fine, writing, wrapping, or coarse—are listed. Yet in the eighteenth century, paper ranked only after cloth as the most important article of trade among European exports to the Middle East and North Africa, and the profit derived from selling paper was as high as that earned on the sale of any European-crafted product.²

¹ This chapter is an updated and revised version of an article originally published under the same title in M.W. Daly, ed., *Modernization in the Sudan* (New York: Lilian Barber Press, 1986), 29–48.

² Richard Rolt, *A New Dictionary of Trade and Commerce, Compiled from the Information of the Most Eminent Merchants, and from the Works of the Best Writers on Commercial Subjects, in All Languages* (London: Keith, Crowder, Woodgate & Brooks, 1761); Jacques Savary des Bruslons, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*, trans. Malachy Postlethwayt (4th ed., London: Strahan, Rivington, Hinton, etc., 1774); William Anderson, *The London Commercial Dictionary, and Sea-port Gazetteer, Exhibiting a Clear View of the Commerce and Manufactures of All Nations* (London: E. Wilson, 1819); John Ramsay McCulloch, *A Dictionary, Practical, Theoretical and Historical of Commerce and Commercial Navigation* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1854): entries for “Leghorn” and “Genoa” contain prices for “floredda, media, al Masso, wrapping;” in contrast, many specific names of Indian textiles to the Hijaz can be found in William Milburn, *Oriental Commerce Containing a Geographical Description of the Principal Places in The East Indies, China, and Japan with their Produce, Manufactures, and Trade*, 2 vols. (London: Black, Parry and Co. 1813). The French consul M. Delaporte mentions seventeen specific varieties of textiles but only one of paper (*tre lune*): “Commerce du Darfour avec l’Egypte,” enclosed in Delaporte au Ministre, 5 August 1852 (France, Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Correspondance commerciale, Le Caire, 29: 9), 2.

This study stems from research on the trans-Saharan trade of north-east Africa in the eighteenth century and focuses on the paper trade of Egypt and the re-export of European-made paper to Egypt's Sudanic trading partners. It was sparked by the many, if brief, references to paper among articles purchased by Sudanese merchants in Egypt and by merchants and pilgrims traveling to and from the *Bilād al-Sūdān*, including the western Sudan, then known as *Bilād al-Takrūr*. Paper is not an article of trade normally associated with trans-Saharan commerce, and yet its use among Muslim rulers inhabiting the southern rim of the Sahara was a sign of their governments' growing complexity as well as the extension of Islamic institutions among their peoples. Egypt was only one of several sources of paper for Sudanic rulers and their clerics. The more direct commercial routes via Tripoli and the Libyan oases southward would have been a principal source. Yet so treasured was paper by West Africans that they often purchased it in Cairo on the return leg of their long pilgrimage journeys to Mecca.³

At this time and during much of the nineteenth century most paper bought and sold in Cairo was imported from Europe. Egypt thus acted as a distribution point, to use a phrase employed by Jonathan Bloom, for paper being traded into the Sudan, Arabia and elsewhere.⁴ The extensive Islamic court archive of Cairo from the Ottoman conquest through the end of the nineteenth century, whose scribes employed European-made paper for their documentation, offers a rich datable resource of paper types that were quite possibly re-exported to the Sudan.

In this chapter, I show the use of European paper in Egyptian Islamic court documentation and in manuscripts, the varieties of

³ Terence Walz, *Trade between Egypt and Bilād as-Sūdān 1700–1820* (Cairo: Imprimerie de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1978); Walz, "Trading into the Sudan in the Sixteenth Century," *Annales Islamologiques* 15 (1979), 211–33; Walz, "Gold and Silver Exchange between Egypt and Sudan, 16th–18th Centuries," in J.F. Richard, ed., *Precious Metals in the Later Medieval and Early Modern Worlds* (Durham, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 305–28; on paper as an item of the trans-Saharan trade, Walz 1978: 30–1; John Lavers, "Trans-Saharan Trade circa 1500–1800: A Survey of Sources," paper presented at the Conference on the Economic History of the Central Savanna of West Africa, Kano, 1976; Ghislaine Lydon, "A Paper Economy of Faith without Faith in Paper: A Reflection on Islamic Institutional History," *Journal of Economic Behaviour and Organization* 71 (2009), 647–59.

The original research on this project, carried out in Egypt and Nigeria, was funded by a grant from the American Philosophical Society, to which I am indebted.

⁴ Jonathan M. Bloom, *Paper before Print: The History and Impact of Paper in the Islamic World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 84.

papers used, the dominance of paper manufactured by certain European countries, specifically France and Italy, and how the local Egyptian economy failed to produce paper in sufficient quantities to maintain its age-old paper industry. Finally, I turn to the re-export of paper to the *Bilād al-Sūdān*, where there was an increasing demand for paper. I examine paper used in manuscripts in Nigeria as a way of gauging the trans-Saharan paper trade and showing similarities of the papers used in Egypt. A “paper chronology” established for Egypt may be useful to historians interested in the types of paper circulating in the eastern and western Sudan. With even this roughest of frameworks, a better idea can be gained of the age of paper and the uses to which it was put in trans-Saharan African countries that established commercial relations with the Mediterranean.

PAPER IN EGYPT

Since ancient times Egypt had made writing materials from papyrus, and subsequently adopted the use of parchment rendered from animal skins. Soon after the art of paper making was learned by the Arabs—who borrowed the technology from the Iranians who learned it from the Chinese—Egyptians began making paper locally. From the tenth century onward, paper manufactories were located in Fuwa and Fayyum but especially in Fustat. Various qualities of paper were produced: *al-manṣūrī al-‘āda* (ordinary paper), *‘āli* (excellent or first-rate), *wasaf* (medium), and small-sized paper used in communicating by carrier pigeon. Ṭalhī paper, named after Ṭalḥa b. Ṭāhir, ruler of Nishapur, was another type of paper made in Egypt and figured among Egyptian exports in this period, although it was not considered as fine as paper made in Syria, particularly at Hama and known as *waraq ḥamāwī*. This paper was highly esteemed by the Mamluks who specifically requested that their *waqf* or endowment deeds be written on it. In the fifteenth century, however, Egyptian papermakers faced serious competition from Europe, where techniques were developed that made production cheaper. In the estimation of the encyclopedist Aḥmad ‘Alī ‘Abdallāh al-Qalqashāndī (d. 1418), the flood of European-made papers was “of the worst kind.”⁵ According to Bloom, at this time

⁵ Eliyahu Ashtor, “Levantine Sugar Industry in the Later Middle Ages – An Example of Technological Decline,” *Israel Oriental Studies* 7 (1977), 272: *radī jiddan sarī al-bilā qalīl al-makṭ*.

the Italians exported cheap varieties of papers made in Fabriano and Treviso to Muslim lands. In Egypt, with both the onset of inflation, which made locally made paper expensive, and the availability of the cheaper imported varieties, European paper dealt a deadly blow to the local industry.⁶

After the Ottoman conquest of Egypt in 1517, paper merchants and craftsmen were among those notables and artisans taken to Istanbul where the Turks obviously hoped to use their talents. No industry, however, was developed, and the Ottomans continued to import paper from the east and west. According to one Ottoman author, western paper was already showing its superiority over the paper from the east—the centers in the sixteenth century remaining Damascus and Hama in Syria, Samarqand, and India (especially products from the esteemed Daulatabad [Devlet Abadi])—but traditionalists in the Ottoman empire resisted using western-made paper and continued to import papers from Syria and India.⁷

On the basis of references in Cairo's *Maḥkama* (Islamic court) archives,⁸ it would seem that the Egyptians continued to make paper

⁶ Bloom, 84; Ashtor, 272, also makes the point that the Italians, in effect, dumped their cheap manufactured goods on the Levant markets; on the varieties of paper made in Egypt, Ashtor, 272; S.D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society, Economic Foundations*, vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 84, and S.D., Goitein, *Letters of Medieval Jewish Traders* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 20, 89–94; Johannes Pedersen, *The Arabic Book*, trans. Geoffrey French (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 63–4; “Kāḡad,” *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd edition [hereafter *EI2*]; Rudolf Vesely, *An Arabic Document from Egypt: The Endowment Deed of Mahmud Pasha dated 974/1567*, *Studia Orientalia Pragensia* 4 (Prague: Charles University, 1971), 15–16; Bloom, 82–4.

⁷ Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Ibn Iyās, *Journal d'un bourgeois du Caire*, 2 vols., trans. Gaston Wiet (Paris: Colin, 1955–60), 2: 177, 220. Some returned years later (*ibid.*, 2: 325) but when Pierre Balon du Mans visited Istanbul in the mid-sixteenth century, no paper was being manufactured (Franz Babinger, “Appunti sulle cartiere a sull'importazione di carta nell'impero Ottomano, specialmente da Venezia,” *Oriente moderno* 11 [1931], 408); see also Bloom, 205–6; in Istanbul, the Ottomans showed a theoretical preference for paper of eastern origin, such as Samarqandi and Devlet i-abadi, but an examination of manuscripts in the great public libraries shows that 82% were written on paper made in Damascus: Faruk Bilici, “Les bibliothèques vakif-s à Istanbul au XVIe siècle : prémices de grandes bibliothèques publiques,” *Revue des mondes musulmans et la Méditerranée* 87–8 (September 1999), 53; Asparouh T. Velkov, *Les filigranes dans les documents ottomans: Divers types d'images* (Sofia: Editions “Texte-A. Trayanov,” 2005), p. i discusses Samarqand paper and its superior qualities.

⁸ Dār al-Wathā'iq al-Qawmiya (National Archives of Egypt), hereafter DWQ, documents of the Cairo Sharia courts (*maḥākīm al-shar'īya Miṣr*), abbreviated as follows: Maḥkama al-Bāb al-'Alī (BA); Maḥkama al-Qism al-'Askariya (Q. Ask); Maḥkama al-Qism al-'Arabiya (Q. Arab); Maḥkama Būlāq (BU); Maḥkama al-Zāhid (ZA); Miscellaneous Papers (Dasht); Tarikāt (TA); I'lāmāt (IL).

up to the seventeenth century—the term *waraq baladī* (locally-made or ordinary paper) appears in the inventory of an Egyptian paper merchant dated 1650.⁹ But little is known about the industry, and by the end of the eighteenth century it is often said that no native paper manufactory existed although the term continued in popular use and historians, such as Nelly Hanna, are reluctant to rule out the possibility of local production.¹⁰ Several attempts were made in the nineteenth century to revive the craft: the first, in the 1830s, failed through lack of adequate equipment and maintenance problems; the second, in the 1870s, partially succeeded. The fact remained that Egyptian papermakers never met the demands of the local market and Egyptians continued to rely heavily on the import of European paper until modern times.¹¹

The Italians and the French dominated the imported paper trade in fairly well demarcated periods as evidenced in a survey of Egyptian manuscripts and archives. I have assumed throughout my research that Egyptians never acquired the art of watermarking—at least until the late nineteenth century—and that the presence of a watermark betrayed European manufacture. Roughly, both Italian and French papers were used in the period 1530–1640; Italian papers dominated the market in 1640–80; French papers regained their popularity in the period 1680–1780; and then Italian paper (including the paper exported from Trieste beginning in the nineteenth century) in the period 1780 onward. These periods of “domination” were not exclusive, for French-made papers, for example, are found in periods of Italian “domination,” along with papers from a number of non-European countries, including Syria, Turkey, and possibly India. The information collected here relates primarily to the period 1650–1880.¹²

⁹ (DWQ), Q. Arab, vol. 41, p. 174, No. 217 (17 Sha'bān 1060/1650); see also the inventory list in Table 1.

¹⁰ Nelly Hanna, *In Praise of Books: A Cultural History of Cairo's Middle Class, Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 86.

¹¹ On the lack of an indigenous industry, André Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants au Caire au XVIIIe siècle*, 2 vols. (Damascus: Institut français de Damas, 1973–4), 323; Bloom, 84; Marcel Clerget, *Le Caire. Étude de géographie urbaine et d'histoire économique*, 2 vols. (Cairo: Imprimerie E. & R. Schindler, 1934), 2: 363; “Kāḡad,” *EI2*; 'Abd al-Futūḡ Raḡwān, *Ta'rikh maḡba'at Būlāq* (Cairo, 1953), 311; for an overview of twentieth-century imports, Clerget, 2: 363–4.

¹² In addition to 276 volumes consulted in the religious court archives, I examined 60 manuscripts in the Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriya (Egyptian National Library), hereafter DKM, dated 1650–1936, and 18 manuscripts in the Coptic Museum Library,

First Period: Italian and French, ca. 1530–1640; Italian, 1640–80

The earliest dated document from the archive of Cairo's Islamic courts I examined is dated 1524 and bears the watermark of a hand (or, rather, a glove) with a flower on a stem rising out of the middle digit. This is a widely used watermark, native to Genoa but copied in Venice and other papermaking centers of Europe. On the basis of Charles-Moïse Briquet's classification of watermarks, the Cairo "glove" resembles the series of hands made in Genoa and the Piedmont.¹³ Other documents from the period 1524–46 bear the bull's head watermark, which also appears to be Italian, and a column, which seems to be of French origin.¹⁴ The earliest of the Ottoman chancery documents dated 1404 and 1505, surveyed by Vsevolod Nikolaev, contain the gloved hand along with the bull's head, column, and ladder watermarks (this last watermark seems to be absent from Cairo documents).¹⁵ The anchor, set in a circle and topped by a star, makes its appearance in Cairo in 1568 (Ottoman documents begin in 1532), and for the next seventy years this was the most popular mark on documents in the Cairo court archive. The anchor, also originally Genoese, was copied by Venetian and Piedmontese papermakers; the circle enclosing the anchor is a distinguishing feature of the Italian-made anchor papers, and those in the archive bear the specific

Cairo, dated 1719–1901. The year 1880 was taken as the cut-off date since, with the beginning of the British occupation of Egypt (1882) and the Mahdist revolution in the Sudan (1880–98), substantial changes in the trade of northeast Africa occurred.

¹³ DWQ, BA vol. 1, document dated 2 Rabi' II 930/1524. Most of the documents in this volume date to the year 937/1530; Charles-Moïse Briquet, *Les filigranes, Dictionnaire historique des marques du papier dès leur apparition vers 1282 jusqu'en 1600*, 4 vols. (Amsterdam: Paper Publications Society, 1968), 2, no. 545, and 4, nos. 10706–10723.

¹⁴ DWQ, Dasht 1 (937/1530); BA 1 (937/1530); BA 2 (939/1532); BA 3 (940/1533), BU 1 (943/1536); BU 2 (952/1546). On the column, Briquet, 2, no. 265, and 2, nos. 4380–4382.

¹⁵ Vsevolod Nikolaev, *Watermarks of the Ottoman Empire, I: Watermarks of the Medieval Ottoman Empire in Bulgarian Libraries* (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 1954): hands are pictures in plates 1 (1402) and 4 (1505); plate 14 (1542). On imperial documents in Istanbul archives, an early anchor is on a document dated 1589: Osman Ersoy, *XVIII. ve XIX. Yüzyillarda Türkiye de Kâğıt* (Ankara: University of Ankara, Faculty of History and Geography 145 [1963]), watermark nos. 273, 177; Bloom, 86–7, mentions paper bearing the watermark of a cross as a reason prompting a fatwa given by a fifteenth-century North African juriconsult concerning "the Permissibility of Writing on Paper Made by Christians."

characteristics of Venetian make.¹⁶ We also know from examining the inventories of seventeenth-century paper merchants in Cairo that other French-made papers, especially those employing the “jug,” or *ibrīq*, watermark, were equally sold, even though they do not appear among the papers used in the courts.

French trade with the Levant, especially with Alexandria and Aleppo, remained strong until the 1630s, after which it began a steady decline until the strenuous activity in the 1660s of Jean-Baptiste Colbert, France’s finance minister. Although Egypt imported large quantities of paper from Venice and other Italian cities, French paper apparently “had a better renown” and its reputation remained high. Coming from mills in Provence, French paper “was especially appreciated in Alexandria and Cairo where it was accepted in exchanges as real money.”¹⁷ It is also reported in the same source that “one of the best gifts a consul could give pashas or other notables was to present them with several bales.” Despite French praise for their own paper-making skills, their products failed to make headway into what was becoming an Italian market.

Toward the middle of the seventeenth century, it is clear from the Islamic court records that French paper manufacturers were losing out to Italian papermakers, particularly Venetian and Genoese, and this may indeed reflect the difficulties the French encountered in marketing their goods generally in the Middle East. Two inventories of paper merchants in Cairo, dated 1636 and 1650, show the preponderance of Italian-made paper (see Table 1 below).

Table 1¹⁸ gives an idea of the variety of European- and possibly Egyptian-made papers being sold by paper merchants during the first

¹⁶ DWQ, BA 28 (975/1568); BU 22 (1009/1600); BU 24 (1012/1603); Q. Askar 38 (1035/1625); Q. Arab 28 (1035/1626); Q. Askar 39 (1035/1627); Q. Arab 31 (1040/1631); Q. Arab 33 (1041/1632); Q. Arab 34 (1045/1636); Q. Arab 36 (1049/1639). At this time, the leaf watermark appears in two volumes, and three moons (without initials) in two volumes. On the characteristics of the Venetian mark, Briquet, 1, no. 40: a single looping line is used to connect the two sides of the anchor.

¹⁷ Jean Coppin, *Voyages en Égypte de Jean Coppin: 1638–1639, 1643–1646*, presented with notes by Serge Sauneron (Cairo: Imprimerie de l’Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 1971), 17–18; Paul Masson, *Histoire du commerce français dans le Levant au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Hachette, 1896), 516.

¹⁸ Inventory of Shaykh Aḥmad b. ʿĪd al-Khudayrī (?), paper seller (*al-warrāq*) in Khuṭṭ al-Ashrāfiya: DWQ, Q. Arab 34, 498 (1046/1636); inventory of Shaykh ʿAbd

half of the seventeenth century. It will be immediately seen that Venetian-made paper was more commonly stocked than French (108 vs. 68 reams), that Venetian paper tended to be more expensive than French-made, and that paper merchants stocked both glazed and unglazed papers of varying sizes. What is interesting about these inventories is that at least two “trade-name” watermarked papers are identified: *abū ibriq*, which is almost certainly paper watermarked with a jug, and *kāff*, which is the Venetian-made paper watermarked with a hand. The inventories also contain references to *waraq baladī*, or “locally-made paper” (which was not cheap, compared to the paper imported from France and Italy), and to paper called by the trade-name “locally-made Venetian.” I have no definite interpretation of this phrase, but I believe it may be a reference to the cheap paper manufactured in Italy known as *carta ordinaria* (“common paper”). Prices are given in *pāra*, which was the lowest denomination coin in circulation (also known as *niṣf fiḍḍa*) and in which other coins were calculated.

It is worth noting that at this time—the mid-seventeenth century—three-moon, or *tre lune*, paper, called *waraq hilālī* in later inventories, seems not to have been prevalent. This paper, for which Venetian papermakers were famous, makes its appearance in Cairo court documents only in 1631, and from the latter half of the seventeenth century until the nineteenth century it enjoyed a wide popularity, gradually replacing many other watermarked papers. But since it

Allāh b. ‘Alī, retailer (*mutasabbib*) in Sūq al-Warrāqīn, Q. Arab 41, 164 (1060/1650). This list was also published by Nāṣir ‘Uthmān, “Ta’ifat al-saḥḥāfin fī l-qarn al-sabī ‘aṣḥar,” in Nāṣir Ibrāhīm, ed., *al-Ṭawā’if al-mihaniya w’al-ijtima’iya fi Miṣr fī l-aṣr al-uthmānī* (Cairo: Markaz Buḥūṭ w’al-Dirasāt al-Ijtima’iya [Egyptian Society for Historical Studies], 2003), 64–5, without comments on trade names.

The inventory of ‘Abd al-Mun‘im al-Bisāṭṭī, a wealthy merchant who traded in many imported goods about this time (1640), includes the following paper articles: *waraq janawī* (Genoese paper), 20 reams at 22 riyals (36 ½ *pāras* a ream); *waraq Khawshaq* (wrapping paper), 1 *hashsha* (?) at 14 riyals; *waraq maṣqūl* (glazed paper), 117 reams at 200 riyals and 18 *pāra* (56 *pāras* a ream); *waraq hindī* (Indian paper), 2 quires (*dasta*) at 3 *aṣadī* (90 *pāras*): DWQ, Q. Arab 36 378 (1049 AH). He traded in both Sudan and the Hijaz, where paper would have been equally in demand.

Ersoy, 16, states that Indian paper was “seventh best” and disappeared from the market in Turkey in the eighteenth century; further on it, Vesely, 16. Milburn’s *Oriental Commerce* (123) shows that nineteenth-century Basra was still importing Indian paper from Madras and Bombay.

Table 1. Paper merchants' inventories, Cairo, ca. 1636–50

Type	Quantity (in reams)	Price per ream (in pāra)
Venetian, glazed	48	60
Genoese	9	30
Wrapping, small ^a	8	12.4
Venetian, unglazed ^b	10	60
Venetian, “baladī” ^c	9	N/A
Venetian, “Hand” ^d	1	N/A
Venetian “Hand” “baladī” ^e	4	55
French, ^f “Jug” ^g	23	Approx. 60
Venetian, unglazed	33	45
“Hand,” unglazed	4	40
“Jug,” unglazed ^g	34	60
Venetian	3	70
Unglazed	1	55
Heavy ^h	1	172
French “itna” ⁱ , unglazed	11	54
Baladī ^j	1	55

^a Wrapping: *waraq khawshaq*.

^b *Khām*. The phrase *waraq khām wa maṣqūl* (unglazed and glazed paper) is used to suggest opposites in one *Maḥkama* document (Q. Arab, 127, p. 236, no. 291 (1201/1786)).

^c *Baladī* usually means “local,” but when in conjunction with Venetian, the meaning is unclear. If it means “local” paper made in the Venetian manner; it suggests the existence of a local manufactory; it may also suggest what the Venetians termed *carta ordinaria* (literally, “common, or ordinary, paper”), or paper that was not watermarked.

^d *Kāff*.

^e The inventory reads *waraq bunduqī kāff baladī*. *Kāff* also means “quire” (as in French, *main*), but the notation notes the presence of “5 reams” which rules out “quire” in this context.

^f *Rūmī*. Since *bunduqī* and *janawī* (Venetian, Genoese) are carefully spelled out, *rūmī* means generic European (“Christian”) of unknown origin (but probably French).

^g *Abū ibriq*.

^h *Waraq thaqīl*: no further notation. Note its high cost.

ⁱ Probably *itnashari* (sic), unidentified. Does the term refer to the size of the paper?

^j Egyptian? More probably, Venetian *carta ordinaria*.

Source: Inventory of Shaykh Aḥmad b. ʿĪd al-Khudayrī (?), paper merchant (*al-warrāq*) in *Khuṭṭ al-Ashrafīya*: DWQ, Q. Arab 34, 498 (1046/1636); inventory of Shaykh ʿAbd Allah b. ʿAlī, retailer (*mutasabbib*) in *Sūq al-Warrāqīn*, Q. Arab 41, 174 (1060/1650).

began its popular run in Egypt only in the late seventeenth century, and in Ottoman documents only in 1604, Georg Eineder is partially incorrect in suggesting that three-moon paper, which occurs as early as 1520, was made primarily for the Levant export trade.¹⁹ In the latter part of the seventeenth century, other marks were equally appreciated, including three rows of bells or jars one placed on top of each other, topped by a cross (from 1661 onward), and another being a combination of crown, star and crescent, possibly known under the trade names *corona* and *tāj al-dīn* (from 1662 onward). This latter paper, which seems to be of Italian manufacture, is the only type used in *Mahkama* (Cairo's law court) documents during 1662–96, and it continued in nonexclusive use until 1751.²⁰ The frequency with which paper with Italian watermarks appeared merely corroborates the steady decline of French trade with the Levant, so that by 1660 it was only a tenth of what it had been fifty years earlier.²¹

Second Period: French, ca. 1680–1780

Efforts by Colbert to reinvigorate the French economy paid off for French trade in the Levant toward the end of the seventeenth century,

¹⁹ Georg Eineder and E.J. Labarre, *The Ancient Paper-Mills of the Former Austro-Hungarian Empire and their Watermark*. (Hilversum: Paper Publications Society, 1960), 179; Briquet dates the earliest three moon paper to 1559, 2, nos. 314–5; Nikolaev, plate 151 (dated 1604); crescents became an Islamic symbol only in Ottoman times. The term *waraq hilālī* appears in a merchant inventory in 1631: DWQ, Q. Arab 32 (1040).

However, Anne Basanoff found a reference to two paper mills in the neighborhood of Istanbul in the fifteenth century (established 1453, before its capture by the Turks, and 1486), and they both produced paper with a watermark of three half-moons, which closely resembled the watermark in paper of Italian provenance at a later date: Anne Basanoff, *Itinerario della carta dall'oriente all'occidente e sua diffusione in Europa* (Milano: Il Polifilo, 1965), 64–5. I am indebted to Prof. Russell Jones of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, for this reference.

²⁰ The *corona* watermark is associated with Venice by watermark authority Edward Heawood (*Watermarks: Mainly of the 17th and 18th Centuries* [Hilversum: Paper Publications Society, 1950], 86); it was made by several Venetian papermakers, including Fratelli Galvani and Liberale Vendrame: Antonio Fedrigoni, *L'industria veneta della carta dalla seconda dominazione austriaca all'unità d'Italia* (Torino: ILTE, 1966), 140–1; *tāj al-dīn* comes from a list of papers made in Heidenschift in 1771 expressly for the Levant trade (Eineder and Labarre: 89); the last appearance of the crown, star and crescent in Cairo materials is in DWQ, Q. Arab 109 (1164/1751); for their popularity in Ottoman chancery documents in the seventeenth century, Ersoy, 20, and Nikolaev.

²¹ Masson (1896), 134.

particularly after Egyptian customs on French-made textiles and paper were reduced in 1686. Referring to the paper trade, Consul Benoît de Maillet wrote the Marseille Chamber of Commerce in 1698 from Cairo, “*Les français n’ont pas de concurrents pour ce produit*” (the French have no competitors in this product).²² Exported from Marseilles, the chief port for the Levant trade, these papers were made in Provence and were now of cheaper quality than Venetian and other Italian paper: three to four thousand bales in place of around two thousand. By 1728, more than fifty-four mills could be found in the valley of the Huveaune, near Marseilles, producing paper primarily for the Levant. When the Ottomans let it be known they wished to establish a paper mill near Istanbul, the French remained unworried: they knew there were not enough linen rags in Turkey to supply the mill and that therefore the Turkish output could not compete.²³ In order to cut further into the Italian market, French mills began producing a *trois lune* paper similar to the *tre lune* that was now consumed in large quantities in the Middle East and North Africa.²⁴

In Cairo, the archives show that crown, star and crescent paper and *tre lune* paper were most often used in the early part of the eighteenth century, and only in the period 1740–60 do specifically identified French papers turn up there and in manuscripts in the Egyptian National Library (Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriya): Jarvel, Gemenos, Fabre, Castres, La Seymandy, Vanan, Faugère, watermarks of paper mills largely in Languedoc, are among the names that appear in conjunction with the “raisin” motif, one of the best known French

²² As quoted in Raoul Clement, *Les français d’Égypte au XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Cairo: Imprimerie de l’Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 1960), 125.

²³ Paul Masson, *Histoire du commerce français dans le Levant au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Hachette, 1911), 496–8; on the paper factory set up at Yalova in association with Ibrahim Mütefferrika’s press, Ersoy, 26, 30–6; “Ibrahim Mütefferrika,” *EI2*, 3: 996–8; it seems to have collapsed in the 1760s, and Ersoy blames a lack of water rather than of rags. Later efforts collapsed for economic or political reasons.

²⁴ Masson (1911), 497. On the decline of Venetian trade at Istanbul and the distress this caused, Mary Lucille Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734, as Revealed in Dispatches of the Venetian Bailli* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1944; reprinted Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978), 63–6; on French imitation of *tre lune* paper, Babinger, 412: Aleppo imports include “papier aux trois croissants façon de Venice” (dated 1775): William Algernon Churchill, *Watermarks in Paper in Holland, England, France, etc. in the XVII and XVIIIth Centuries* (Amsterdam: M. Hertzberger, 1935), 58.

watermarks.²⁵ But most *Mahkama* paper bears an undistinguishable three-moon mark, unadorned by the maker's initials, which makes it impossible to determine whether it is of French or Italian origin. According to a 1774 Venetian law, all paper was to bear the initials of the papermaker and the date, and this generally occurred, although, as Antonio Fedrigoni has pointed out, it was left to discretion of each manufacturer or the "*fantasia dei fabbricanti*."²⁶

French trade, which began so dynamically in the early part of the eighteenth century, slackened as the century progressed and went into decline in the last two decades.²⁷ As far as paper was concerned, the Venetian industry reasserted itself.

Third Period: Italian, ca. 1780–1880

Regulations affecting the size and weight of paper exported to the Levant were established in Venice in 1725. They affected papers known commercially as *real grande* or *imperiale* (which were manufactured specifically for Ottoman firmans), *real più leggera* (also called *sott'imperiale*), *real mezzana* (also known as *real lunga*), *tre lune*, *corona*, *scrivere*, and *tre cappelli*.²⁸ Toward the end of the eighteenth century, these sizes, along with papermakers' countermarks, appear with great regularity in Ottoman chancery documents and in the Egyptian court records. According to the countermarks, they were made in Lombardy and Venice by Fratelli Gava (Venice; mark GF, GFA, GAF, FAG); Giovanni Bertì (Venice; mark: BG); Andreas

²⁵ *Jarvel*: DWQ, Q. Arab 103 (1155/1742), with moons; see Nikolaev, plate 450 (dated 1740) with crown and "raisin"; *Gemenos*: DWQ, Q. Arab 103 (1155/1742) with legend GEMENOS EN PROVENCE; the firm is listed among papermakers whose names accompanied the "raisin" watermark in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Briquet, 2: 646); *Fabre*: DKM, MS 3444G, copied 1161/1748 with legend FABRE LANGUEDOC 1743 (1748?); see also Briquet, 2, no. 646; *Castres*: DKM, MS 3444G; La Seymandy, Vanan, A. Fugere (with crown): DKM, MS 1993B, copied 1163/1750.

²⁶ Fedrigoni, *L'industria veneta della carta*, 37.

²⁷ Clement, 236; Raymond 1973–74, 165 ff; the decline is evident in the scarce statistics shown in Table 1.

²⁸ Fedrigoni, *L'industria veneta della carta*, 122. New regulations were apparently established in 1774, although, as is clear from Fedrigoni's "Prospetto D," sizes varied from papermaker to papermaker. According to the law, *tre lune* paper, for example, was to measure 46.36 cm × 33.32 cm whereas the average size made by Venetian papermakers was 48 cm × 35.1 cm. The weight of a ream of *tre lune* paper similarly varied.

Maffizzoli (Lombardy; mark: AM, MA); Fedrigone (Lombardy; mark FV); Valentino Crescini (Venice; mark: VC); Fratelli Andreoli (Lombardy; mark: CFA, FAC); Fratelli Remondini (Venice; mark: FR); and from the 1770s, Valentino Galvani (Venice; mark: VG).

The prevalence of Venetian and Lombardian watermarks during the latter half of the eighteenth century demonstrates the stability of the Levant market for Italian papermakers, despite difficulties at home and a general decline in paper production. Their fortunes in Cairo were no doubt helped by Carlo Rossetti, a Venetian consul (ca. 1780–1820) and businessman who achieved an influential position among the ruling beys.²⁹

An inventory of a Cairene paper merchant named ‘Alī b. Ismā’īl al-Ashnīhī (the spelling of the place-name *nisba* is unclear), a merchant in the “Market of the Paper-sellers,” who died in 1786—a time of considerable political turbulence in Egypt—poses problems for researchers on the paper trade of the period. It contained only small quantities of Italian paper (Venetian, Genoese), and large quantities of treated paper of unspecified origin. They included glazed paper, rose, red, “colored,” “marbled,” and gilded papers. Gilded and marbled papers were usually imported, and it is possible that the officials and scribes involved in enumerating the estate simply omitted details about provenance. The merchant evidently also traded in *ḥamāwī* paper, though no information exists on the paper manufactory of the period, and an article called “Islāmbūlī paper” which may or may not have been produced by the struggling mills outside Istanbul. Unfortunately, there is no Egyptian documentation on imports for this date.³⁰

To this we must add historian Hanna’s contention that a local manufactory of paper existed, as evidenced by the mention in a document

²⁹ Bruno Caizzi, *Industria e commercio della Repubblica Veneta nel XVIII secolo* (Milano: Banca commerciale italiana, 1965), 175–9; on Rossetti, L.A. Balboni, *GI Italiani nella civiltà egiziana del secolo XIX*, 3 vols. (Alexandria, Egypt: Tipo-Lit. V. Penasson, 1906).

³⁰ DWQ, Dasht 313, 209 (1199/1786): ‘Alī b. Ismā’īl al-Ashnīhī (?), shop located in the Sūq al-Warrāqīn. On Istanbul mills, Bloom, 222–4 and Ersoy, 36, of which none seems to have been operating in the early 1780s. I could find no information on the paper products of Hama at this time. Regarding the paper trade of Syria, already by the end of the seventeenth century it too relied heavily on French and Italian imports (Alexander Russell, *The Natural History of Aleppo*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. [London: G.G. and J. Robinson, 1794; reprint Farnborough: Gregg International, 1969], 2: 95–6).

Table 2. Egyptian paper imports in the 18th century (in reams)

Year	France	Venice	Livorno	Other	Total
1719 ^a	42,000–56,000				
1734 ^b	(53,042 piasters)				
1762 ^c	14,000	10,000 500 “wrapping”		300	15,800
1775 ^d	14,000				
1776 ^e				7,574	7,574
1779 ^f	11,500				
1800 ^g	Approx. 9,800	20,000 “writing” 15,000 “wrapping”	4,050		48,850

Bale: The number of reams per bale varied from country to country. In Genoa, the bundling was 12–15 reams per bale (Girard); in France, 14–24 reams/bale (Girard); Labarre (*Dictionary and Encyclopædia of Paper and Paper-making*, 14) uses the figure 10 reams/bale. I have used 14 reams/bale when otherwise not indicated.

^a Masson, *Histoire du commerce français* (1896), 598.

^b Clement, *Les français d'Égypte*, 204.

^c Niebuhr, *Travels through Arabia*, 2: 98.

^d De Chabrol, “Essai sur les moeurs des habitans modernes de l'Égypte,” 1: 288–9

^e Girard, “Memoire sur l'agriculture, l'industrie et le commerce de l'Égypte,” 392.

^f Froment, *Du commerce des Européens*, 332.

^g Girard, “Memoire sur l'agriculture, l'industrie et le commerce de l'Égypte,” 344–63.

dated 1731 of a paper factory in the area of al-Azhar Mosque, on a street called Suwayat al-Shaykh Ḥamūda (and to the many references, as mentioned above, to *waraq baladī* (locally-made paper)).³¹ Yet Pierre Simon Girard's close examination of Egyptian commerce at the beginning of the nineteenth century fails to mention a local industry and confirms the dominance of Italian imports; his figures are found in Table 2. “Writing paper,” described as *tre lune*, and “wrapping paper” is how he divides the Venetian imports; Livorno exported “first, second, and third quality” paper, and French papers were of a cheaper quality (packed fourteen reams per bale, manufactured in Provence). Smaller quantities of better quality paper (packed twenty-four reams per bale) were mostly re-exported to the Hijaz. As the century progressed, imports of better quality writing paper from Italy were

³¹ Hanna, *In Praise of Books*, 86.

stepped up, and the French paper trade was restricted to wrapping and specialized papers (gilded, marbled, and other).³²

It was now common for imported paper to be described as *tre lune*, and almost all travelers to Egypt who mentioned paper fell into this usage. By the 1820s, in fact, the rather simplistic crescents took the form of “moon faces,” a development that also occurred in Ottoman chancery documents at the beginning of the century (although they had appeared sporadically in the eighteenth).³³ Moreover, the moon faces in the Cairo religious court records are usually accompanied by a shield, countermarked by the initials of the maker, and increasingly the moon faces are set inside the shield. By the early 1840s, moon faces had entirely replaced moons in Egyptian documents which may be considered a demarcation point for bibliographers interested in the age of undated manuscripts—and the practice was followed by the Galvanis, who may have pioneered the mark, and by numerous Venetian papermakers, including Valentino Wasserman (mark: W, VWC), Isidoro Mori (mark: IMC), Luigi Trentin (mark: LT, TL), Bernardino Nodari (mark: BNeC); Giobatta Ranzolin (mark: GR), and Marco Ranzolin (mark: MR).³⁴ The Bulgarian scholar Nikolaev considered the faces in the moons superb caricatures of capitalist entrepreneurs thumbing their noses, so to speak, at Muslim consumers or at themselves, and certainly as the watermark was accepted, the artistry of the craftsmen improved; noses took more form, the mouth became more deliberate, and a scowl or a grimace appeared.³⁵

³² Pierre S. Girard, “Mémoire sur l’agriculture, l’industrie et le commerce de l’Égypte,” in *Description de l’Égypte*, 2nd ed., vol. 17 (Paris: Panckoucke, 1826), 334–63; on early nineteenth century European exports, France was exporting only “papier brouillard” (“blotting paper”) in the 1820s: Felix Mengin, *Histoire de l’Égypte sous le gouvernement de Mohammed-Aly, ou, Récit des événemens politiques et militaires qui ont eu lieu depuis le départ des Français jusqu’en 1823*, 2 vols. (Paris: A. Bertrand, 1823), 2: 406; Bowring’s report on Syrian imports ca 1840 confirms that “fine” paper was still being imported from Italy while “wrapping” paper was being imported from France (John Bowring, *Report on the Commercial Statistics of Syria* [1840; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1973], 36).

³³ The earliest in Nikolaev is plate 353 (dated 1719); others, during the eighteenth century, are plates 398 (1727) and 522 (1769).

³⁴ An early Galvani moon face appears in Nikolaev, plate 613 (1779). For the identification and illustrations of watermarks of the papermakers, Fedrigoni, Tavola A-C, between 40–1. Wasserman and Marco Ranzolin moon faces appear in DWQ, Q. Arab 144 (1247/1831) and BA 419 (1258/1842).

³⁵ Nikolaev, *Watermarks of the Ottoman Empire*, 469.

Not to be left behind, Genoese and Tuscan papermakers also produced three-moon paper, with the Tuscan product now often exported from Livorno. Genoese *tre lune* was considered “inferior” to the Venetian paper. *Tre lune* exported from Livorno fell under the “third quality” paper mentioned by Bowring in his 1838 *Report on Egypt and Candia*. Other Tuscan manufacturers included the Magnani Brothers (paper mill at Pescia), whose paper was countermarked ALMASSO, and C. Cini (paper mill at Pistoia, whose watermark included a shield, flower and star of David. Initials of other papermakers, such as LAF (shield, moon faces), DAC (moon faces), EAN, and Fratelli Corti, appear on the documents of the Cairo religious courts and in manuscripts at Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīya and the Coptic Museum at this time. The locations of the paper mills are as yet unidentified, though from the watermarks or names they would appear to be Italian.³⁶

At mid-century, a French account of Egypt’s paper trade reported that the market was principally supplied by Venetian paper called three moons.³⁷ At this time the Venetian paper industry was dominated by manufacturers in the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region the most famous of whom was the Galvani firm. It had been established by Valentino Galvani (d. 1810), who had purchased a mill dating to 1664, and his craft was carried on by his sons Carlo and Antonio (d. 1824), and then by his grandson Andrea (d. 1854). The Galvanis had five mills, according to an 1818 census conducted in Pordenone and nearby towns, and enhanced their papermaking abilities and production capacities by inventing new methods of cleaning papermaking utensils and bleaching rags with chlorine.³⁸ Valentino Galvani’s watermark is identifiable as early as the 1770s in Ottoman chancery documents, when the initials VG are seen under a small crown and in tandem with three moons.³⁹ He and his descendants, who produced as

³⁶ Mengin, *Histoire de l’Égypte*, 2: 413–4; John Bowring, *Report on Egypt and Candia* (Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Reports of the Commissioners, 21, 1840), 78; on Magnani paper, see John Bowring, *Report on the Statistics of Tuscany, Lucca, the Pontifical and the Lombardo-Venetian States with Special Reference to their Commercial Relations* (Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Reports of the Commissioners 16, 1839), 32; DWQ, BA 359 1232/1817; DKM, MS 10659Z (copied 1256/1840); on Cini paper, Bowring 1839, *loc. cit.*; DKM, MS 10659Z (copied 1256/1840).

³⁷ France, Ministère de l’agriculture et du commerce, *Annales de commerce extérieur, Faits commerciaux*, no. 3 (1844), 12.

³⁸ Eineder and Labarre, 166–7, 168–9; Fedrigoni, Appendix 2, document 7, 21.

³⁹ Nikolaev, plate 577 (dated 1773); Ersoy, fig. 206, p. 146 (dated 1774).

many as fifteen varieties of paper, were able to triple their output between 1800 and 1870. Their papers were countermarked with the initials VG or AFG (Antonio et Fratelli Galvani) and AG (Andrea Galvani). According to an 1878 report, they employed 410 operators, used 1.5 million kilograms of rags, and produced 550,000 kilos of “fine” paper and 550,000 kilos of “ordinary” paper. Fedrigoni states that they and other Friulan *imprenditori* produced eighty percent of the paper exported to the Levant in the 1860s. Most was exported via Trieste, which extended favorable customs terms and which emerged, thanks to the Galvanis, as the largest exporter of paper to Egypt from the 1840s onward.⁴⁰

Galvani paper is found in the Egyptian Islamic court documents from 1806: a shield enclosing stars, with three moons on alternate sheets and the initials VG; or a shield enclosing a six-point star topped by a crown (1837); or a shield enclosing a moon face (1842 onward); or a shield enclosing a moon face and the initials AG (1847 onward). This latter paper is virtually the only paper used in the period 1855–1867. In 1868 the first run of a shield with moon face and script Andrea Galvani Pordenone is observed—in Ottoman documents the earliest appears in 1871—and this paper is used into the 1880s, the terminal point of this study. Prominent merchants in Upper Egypt also used Galvani paper for their account books, and it is found in many manuscripts in Nigeria, as discussed below. The nineteenth-century British traveler, Major Dixon Denham (d. 1828), purchased Galvani paper in Nigeria in 1824 on which he wrote to the African Association in London.⁴¹ Clearly, such paper achieved a wide-ranging geographical spread in trans-Saharan Africa.

Paper imports for the nineteenth century are listed in Table 3. They bear out the reliance on “Austrian” (Trieste, i.e. Italian) imports (via Trieste, which was the principal commercial port of the Austrian Empire from the Napoleonic Wars to the First World War), and on

⁴⁰ Fedrigoni, 65; 94, footnote 2; 139–40; Eineder and Labarre, 168.

⁴¹ On the Galvani moon face and initials AG: DWQ, Q. Askar 242 (1221/1806); TA 1 (1253/1837); Q. Arab 150 (1263/1847); with legend ANDREA GALVANI PORDENONE, DWQ, Q. Arab 156 (1292/1868); Nikolaev, plate 1159 (1871); in Upper Egypt, Terence Walz, “Family Archives in Egypt,” in *L’Égypte au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1982), 21, dated 1843–44, 1848, 1860–61; in Africa, Heawood, *Watermarks*, plate 139 (no. 880); on Denham’s use of Galvani-made three moon paper, Heawood, plate 139 (no. 879); however, it is possible that he brought the paper with him.

paper from Tuscany and France. Belgian- and British-made paper, the latter significantly after the 1882 occupation of Egypt, register major increases in the latter half of the century. But by this time, Egypt was also importing paper for cartons, cigarettes, wallpaper, and newsprint (with the proliferation of newspapers), as well as ordinary paper for bureaucratic and educational purposes. Altogether total paper imports to Egypt jumped four fold between 1880 and 1888, as the statistics in Table 3 bear out.

Revival in the Nineteenth Century

It will surprise no one acquainted with the character and ambitions of Muḥammad ‘Alī, ruler of Egypt in 1805–1848, that he wished to establish a paper factory in yet another effort to lessen Egypt’s reliance on foreign exports. The Italian traveler Giovanni Brocchi is said to have brought the matter to his attention, and a student was sent to Europe to learn papermaking. This should be seen as a logical extension of his effort to establish a printing press in Egypt, which was founded a decade earlier in 1821–22. At that time, both the presses and the paper needed to print books on them were imported from Livorno.

Under the supervision of Yusuf Hekekyan (1807–1875), who had been trained in Europe in engineering and architecture, a paper factory was built in 1833. In 1834, Muḥammad ‘Alī ordered soldiers to send their old clothing to the factory for rags (and in 1836 the shaykhs of town quarters were similarly instructed). Beginning in 1834, the factory started to produce paper for “government purposes, account books and trade needs.”⁴² That it was not of very good quality may be an explanation for its failure to appear in the Cairo *Mahkama* documents and in manuscripts I consulted. However, it may have been used by the government for day-to-day business in its expanding bureaucracies. It is worth noting that imports of paper, as shown in Table 3, hardly diminished until the last five years of Muḥammad ‘Alī’s rule. In any event, the factory ceased production from time to time. ‘Abd al-Futūḥ Raḍwān notes it stopped altogether during the period

⁴² Aḥmad Aḥmad al-Ḥitta, *Ta’rikh Miṣr al-Iqtiṣādī fī al-qarn al-tāsi’ ‘ashar* (Cairo: Maṭba’at al-Miṣri, 1967), 184.

1841–47 and its output proved sporadic until 1870, when a new factory began operation.⁴³

This factory, under the direction of Ḥusayn bey Ḥusnī (director of the Būlāq Press, 1865–1880, 1882–86) and supervised by one Mr. Henderson from London, produced a variety of papers, both wrapping and better quality, including writing paper and colored paper for printing purposes. In the early years it produced 18 tons of coarse wrapping paper for use in the sugar factories and 70,000 reams of printing and writing paper of various qualities. According to Raḍwān, the new Egyptian-made paper was exported to India, Hijaz, Yemen, North Africa and even to Europe. Some of it may be the variety bearing the watermark *Gouvernement égyptien* with a star and a crescent seen in manuscripts dated as late as 1901.⁴⁴ Certainly in the early years, it did not replace Italian-made papers the reputation of which remained high in the traditional Egyptian market. However, as Table 3 makes clear, the 1880s marked a gigantic increase in the amount and types of British paper imports to Egypt, which found their way into the many bureaucracies and private European and Egyptian businesses that developed in the wake of the British take-over of Egypt in 1882.⁴⁵

⁴³ ‘Abd al-Futūḥ Raḍwān, *Ta’rikh maṭba’at Būlāq* (Cairo, 1953), 311–5, 320–33; Giovanni Battista Brocchi, *Giornale delle osservazioni fatte ne’ viaggi in Egitto, nella Siria e nella Nubia*, 5 vols. (Bassano, 1841–43), 1: 172–3; al-Ḥitta, 167; James Heyworth-Dunne, *An Introduction to the History of Education in Modern Egypt* (London: Luzac, 1938), 161; no specimens were exhibited at the 1867 Paris world fair (Charles Edmond, *L’Égypte: L’Exposition universelle de 1867* [Paris: Dentu, 1867], 250), but they were displayed at the 1873 Vienna world fair (Raḍwān, *Ta’rikh maṭba’at*, 333).

⁴⁴ Raḍwān, 331–7; al-Ḥitta, 183; J.C. McCoan, *Egypt As It Is* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1877), 294–5; for the 1901 manuscript, Coptic Museum Library, MS 86.

⁴⁵ By the early twentieth century, this factory seems also to have collapsed; a new one had been founded in Alexandria in 1897; on it and on the continuing reliance on European imports, al-Ḥitta, 213; Albert Geiss, “Histoire de l’imprimerie en Égypte,” *Bulletin de l’Institut Égyptien*, 5ème série, ii (1908), 206; “The Paper Trade in Egypt,” *Monthly Journal of the British Chamber of Commerce in Egypt* 118 (July 1913), 3–6; Joseph A. Cattau pacha, “Note sur la fabrication du papier en Égypte,” *Egypte contemporaine*, VIII, 4 (1917), 261–9; *Paper and Paper Products in the Union of South Africa and Egypt* (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, Trade Information Bulletin, no. 363, Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1925), 13–22; some of these manufacturers and their watermarks are discussed by ‘Azza Maḥmūd ‘Alī Ḥasan, “Al-Tā’šil al-ta’rikhi li-ba’ḍ al-‘alāmāt al-mā’iyya al-warida bi-wāthā’iq al-qarn al-tasi’ ‘ashar,” *Cybrarians Journal* 5 (2005), available from <http://www.cybrarians.info/journal/no5/watermarks.htm> (accessed 31 January 2009).

Table 3. Egyptian paper imports in the 19th century (1831–1888) (in Egyptian piasters)

Year	Tuscany	Austria	France	Turkey	Belgium	England	Total
1831 ^a	282,385	251,197	4,347				517,929
1836 ^b							4,664,000
1841 ^c	2,100,000	1,700,000	184,000				4,060,000
1842 ^d	940,000	2,336,000	732,000				4,144,000
1843 ^e	524,000	1,176,000	712,000				2,612,000
1849 ^f	208,000	704,000	380,000	40,000		6,000	1,360,000
1850 ^g		864,000					864,000
1851 ^h	450,000	5,897,000	350,000	16,000	12,000		6,780,000
1855 ⁱ	233,715	218,975	241,075	34,775	18,916	8,650	771,444
1856 ^j	233,000	223,000	236,000		91,000		856,000
	(Italy)						
1874 ^k	548,983	1,360,522	1,087,390	6,901		112,595	3,142,582
1875 ^k	498,967	1,524,398	1,305,047	2,675		112,320	3,556,265
1876 ^k	622,354	1,754,691	1,287,911			41,235	3,722,021
1877 ^k	770,470	2,570,059	1,138,214	5,899		107,004	4,622,492
1878 ^k	808,902	3,295,132	1,068,288	9,048		60,028	5,266,208
1879 ^m	1,001,780	4,500,584					6,660,240
1880 ⁿ	1,118,232	3,813,660					6,942,124
1888 ^o	4,248,245	10,768,697	3,309,030	26,500	3,276,670	3,717,324	25,936,017

In my sources, imports are expressed in piasters, not reams, and in light of the great variety of paper and their prices, a conversion for the sake of comparison to earlier figures is not possible. Imports include all types of paper: writing, wrapping, and, in the late 1840s, wallpaper (Letters to Robert Hay from E.W. Lane and R.J. Lane, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Letters d. 165, folio 151, Cairo, 30 October 1846). By the 1860s, carton and cigarette paper were added to the list. On the latter, see Antonio Figuri, *Studi scientifici sull'Egitto e sue adiacenze, compresa la penisola dell'Arabia Petrea*. 2 vols. (Lucca: Giuseppe Giusti, 1865), 2: 467.

^a John Bowring, *Report on Egypt and Candia* (1840), 68.

^b Auguste Colin "Lettres sur l'Égypte," *Revue des Deux Mondes* 14 (1838), 529. In francs: 1,666,000; for conversion to piasters, I used the rate of four to one.

^c France, Ministère de l'agriculture et du commerce, *Annales du commerce extérieur, Faits commerciaux*, no. 1 (1843), in francs.

^d *Ibid.*

^e *Faits commerciaux*, no. 3 (1844), 5, in francs.

^f *Faits commerciaux*, no. 5 (1848–49), 5, in francs.

^g *Faits commerciaux*, no. 7 (1850), in francs.

^h *Faits commerciaux*, no. 8 (1851), 10–11, in piasters.

ⁱ *Faits commerciaux*, no. 9 (1855), 8–9, in piasters.

^j *Faits commerciaux*, no. 10 (1856), 17, in piasters.

^k Egypt, Ministère de l'intérieur, Direction générale de la statistique, *Le commerce extérieur de l'Égypte pendant les années 1874, 1875, 1876, 1877 et 1878* (Cairo, 1879), 24, in piasters.

^m France, Direction des affaires commerciales et industrielles, *Bulletin consulaire français*, 4 (1880), 922–8.

ⁿ *Bulletin consulaire français*, 5 (1881), 861–87.

^o Egypt, Direction générale des douanes égyptiennes, *Le commerce extérieur de l'Égypte pendant l'année 1888* (Alexandria, 1889), 36.

THE CAIRENE MARKET STRUCTURE AND SELLING PRACTICES

In pre-nineteenth century Cairo, paper merchants were clustered in a stretch of the Ashrāfiya Street market known as Sūq al-Warrāqīn, appropriately near the great center of learning, al-Azhar Mosque. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as Hanna shows in her work *In Praise of Books*, there was a dramatic increase in the production of books as the “middle class” began reading and collecting books with the result that there was a spike in the trade in paper. In a more recent work, she focuses on other factors that encouraged greater literacy among the population and the consequent use of paper.⁴⁶ Paper merchants (*warrāqīn*) were organized in a guild, headed by a shaykh (or guildmaster) who was deputized by a *naqīb*. Booksellers (*saḥḥāfīn*) also had their own guild and there was another guild for paper glazers (*ṣaqqālīn*), using a process that allowed paper to sustain Egyptian-made inks that also prolonged the life of paper. Glazers could have been found in every quarter, and I have also found references to them outside Cairo, for example, in Jirja and Asyut. Glazed paper preserved in the Cairo court documentation dating from the sixteenth century was of such fine and sturdy quality that today it looks as if it had been written on only recently. On the other hand, unglazed paper has turned brown and brittle.⁴⁷

Despite the existence of guilds, many independent merchants served as middlemen between the European importers and individual Egyptian buyers. Debts listed in one merchant’s inventory confirm André Raymond’s contention on this matter that paper merchants bought most of their paper directly from European traders in Cairo.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Hanna, *In Praise of Books*, chap. 4; “Literacy and the ‘Great Divide’ in the Islamic World, 1300–1800,” *Journal of Global History* 2, no. 2 (2007), 185–9.

⁴⁷ Bloom, 84, citing Evliya Çelebi and Raymond (1973–74: 343), concludes there was a decline in bookselling in Ottoman Egypt; for an example of an inventory of a merchant in Sūq al-Warrāqīn: DWQ, Q. Arab 41, no. 117 (1060/1650); on the location of the market and the guild, Raymond, 1973–74, 343, 525; Edmée François Jomard, “Description de la ville du Kaire,” in *Description de l’Égypte*, 2nd ed., vol. 18, part 2 (Paris: Panckoucke, 1829), 419; Gabriel Baer, *Egyptian Guilds in Modern Times* (Jerusalem: The Israel Oriental Society, 1964), 38, 39, 41; André Raymond, “Une liste des corporations de métiers au Caire en 1801,” *Arabica* 4, no. 2 (1957), 154; for glazing outside Cairo, “Due on hire for glazing of paper in Upper Egypt,” notation in DWQ, Q. Arab 378, no. 608 (1049/1636). Research I carried out in 2007–08 on the 1848 Cairo census (DWQ, *Ta’dād al-nufūs Muḥāfazāt Miṣr 1264*) reveals that glazers were numerous throughout the districts of Jamāliya and Azbakīya.

⁴⁸ Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants*, 343.

Syrian Christians and Egyptian Jews also played a role as paper importers. Of particular interest for the aims of this volume is the fact that paper is found in inventories of merchants who specialized in trading in Sudanese goods. It was customary for them to stock any article of trade that was of potential interest to visiting long-distance traders, and paper was clearly an item in high demand.⁴⁹

It was the practice of paper merchants to sell paper by the ream,⁵⁰ the size of which varied according to the manufacturer; by “tens” the Arabic term being “*asharāt*” (in the nineteenth century *kurrās* was commonly used), which may have been due to the custom of folding five sheets into half to make a folio; or by the quire (Arabic, *dasta*, *kāff waraq*). This latter term used to be one-twentieth of a ream or 24 sheets (assuming a ream equaled 480 sheets), and was related, according to E.J. Labarre, to the custom of counting by dozens (the Arabic *dasta* means a dozen, but in Turkey it counted for 24 sheets). Gilded paper was probably sold by the sheet, since it was more expensive. As previously noted about the Italian industry, sheet sizes varied according to the manufacturer, and only in modern times was any international standard brought to this question.⁵¹

EGYPT’S PAPER RE-EXPORT TRADE TO AFRICAN MARKETS

In speaking of the import of 20,000 reams of Venetian paper, Girard noted (1801) “[it] is consumed partly in Egypt, partly in Arabia and in the interior of Africa.” In the middle of the nineteenth century, French sources again note the re-export of paper to Hijaz and the Sudan (here meaning the rest of Africa). In fact, the re-export of paper to the Hijaz

⁴⁹ DWQ, Dasht 313, 209 (1189/1785); Q. Askar 108, 157, No. 1128/1716); Raymond 1973–74, 525.

⁵⁰ Ream derives from the French *rames*, which in turn comes from the Spanish *rasma* and ultimately from the Arabic *rizma*. The Italian equivalent, *risma*, is documented to the fourteenth century and the Castilian *rezma* to a little later. The word seems to have followed the route of papermaking technology.

⁵¹ Reams of 480, 461, 500 sheets, Eineder and Labarre, 170. In general, E.J. Labarre, *Dictionary and Encyclopædia of Paper and Paper-making, with Equivalents of the Technical Terms in French, German, Dutch, Italian, Spanish & Swedish* (Amsterdam: Swets & Zeitlinger, 1952), 218–22; on tens (*kurrāsa*): Edward W. Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, 2 vols. (London: Charles Knight and Co., 1842), 1: 317. For the use of *deste* in Turkey, Ersoy, 17 and Velkov, i; on sizes of paper with the trade-names “royal,” “imperial,” and “fioretta,” Labarre 1952, 130, 230–1, 248–9.

was a significant trade item and had been since the early eighteenth century.⁵² With regard to trans-Saharan exports, they would have followed the three well-known trade routes into the Sudan. To the countries south of Egypt, from the Nile Valley towns of Asyut and Isna, along the *darb al-arba'in* before bifurcating to the kingdom of Sinnar on the east and to the kingdom of Dar Fur on the west. From there paper would have been exported further west to Wadai (present-day Chad). To the countries of the western Sudan, paper exports would have followed the well-known pilgrimage route departing the Nile Valley near the Pyramids, to the Libyan oases of Siwa and Awjila, then south to Fezzan and the kingdoms of Borno and further west. The trade would have been in the hands of long-distance merchants—the richest were often representatives of the African kings—or of individual pilgrims and traders.⁵³

Eastern Sudan

The import of paper from Egypt must date to the early days of the consolidation of power of the Funj sultanate, beginning in the sixteenth century, on the one hand, and, on the other, to the development of the Keira sultanate of Dar Fur, beginning in the seventeenth. Theodore Krump, who passed through Sinnar in 1700, refers to written laissez-passers given the royal merchants who traveled to Egypt each year, but the earliest report of the existence of a paper trade dates only from 1698, when it is mentioned by the French traveler Charles Jacques Poncet as an item of trade brought into Sinnar.⁵⁴ No quantities are mentioned, and indeed for Sinnar's history as a whole we are unable to document statistically the import of paper, even in the nineteenth century. For the early part of the nineteenth century, John Lewis Burckhardt provides some explicit details:

Paper (papier de trois limes, from Genoa and Leghorn) is rather a heavy article here; it is more in demand in the western countries, to which it is

⁵² Girard, 344–5; on the Hijaz trade, Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants*, 130–83; several partnerships relating to the trade in paper between Cairo and Hijaz are discussed by Ḥussām Muḥammad 'Abd al-Mu'tī, *Al-'Alāqāt al-Miṣriya al-Hijāziya fi'l-qarn al-Thāmin 'Ashar* (Cairo: Hayat al-Miṣriya al-'amma lil-kitāb, 1999), 142.

⁵³ Girard, "Memoire sur l'agriculture, etc.," for later in the nineteenth century, *Faits commerciaux*, No. 3 (1844), 14; see also Delaporte's report, "Commerce du Darfour avec l'Égypte," mentioned in footnote 1.

⁵⁴ Charles J. Poncet, *A Narrative of His Journal from Cairo to Abyssinia, 1698–1701* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1949), 106–7.

carried by the Darfour caravans; it is, however, always found in the warehouses of the Egyptians.⁵⁵

Other nineteenth-century travelers report on a trade in “Turkish paper” or “paper dressed in the Turkish fashion,” apparently referring to Italian paper glazed in Egypt, bearing crescent watermarks. With the installation of the Turco-Egyptian regime in 1821, large quantities of paper must have been shipped to the Sudan to be used by the burgeoning bureaucracy; supplies also may have reached Khartoum from Jidda. Again, no statistics are available. At the end of the century, Na‘ūm Shuqayr mentions that a “thick brown” (cream colored?) paper called “*abū shibāk*” featured among European imports. The term may have been given to paper whose “woven” patterns was usually visible and resembles a grid.⁵⁶

William G. Browne visited Darfur in 1796–98 and found that “writing paper” was a “considerable article”—echoing Burckhardt’s earlier comment—and in a survey of late eighteenth and mid-nineteenth century court documents from Darfur, R. Sean O’Fahey and Muhammad I. Abū Salīm found them to be written on paper “mainly of Italian origin,” although the watermarks were not specifically examined. In the middle of the nineteenth century, French consul Delaporte estimated the annual trade amounted to 750–2,400 reams (of 500 sheets) of “Frioul” (i.e. Galvani) paper. The fluctuation in the numbers probably reflected the sporadic nature of caravan arrivals. As a ream then cost about twenty-five piasters, the annual trade amounted to between 18,750 and 60,000 piasters. At the time total Egyptian imports were averaging about 800,000 piasters, so the Darfur trade amounted to no more than five percent of Egyptian imports. By the 1870s, significant

⁵⁵ Lewis Burckhardt, *Travels in Nubia* (London: John Murray, 1822), 302.

⁵⁶ R. Sean O’Fahey and Jay Spaulding, *Kingdoms of the Sudan* (London: Methuen, 1974), 56; Serge Sauneron, “Une description des Djellabs datant du milieu du XVIIIe siècle,” *Bulletin de l’Institut français d’archéologie orientale* 67 (1969), 144; Richard Hill, trans. and ed., *On the Frontiers of Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), Appendix, 217; Naum Shuqayr, *al-Jughrāfiya wa Ta’rīkh al-Sūdān* (Beirut: Dar al-Thaqafa, 1967), 177; Ignatius Pallme, *Travels in Kordofan; Embracing a Description of That Province of Egypt, and of Some of the Bordering Countries* (London: J. Madden and Co., 1844), 299.

According to the anonymous author of the “Journal fait durant un voyage au Sennar et à l’Hédjaz en 1837, 1838, 1839 et 1840,” mentioned in Hill, *On the Frontiers of Islam*, 217, “Turkish” (i.e. imported from Egypt) paper was sold in reams of 115 sheets, a quarter of the normal size. Reams of 120 sheets are mentioned in a report on paper re-exports to Hijaz in 1844 (*Faits commerciaux*, No. 3, 14). Were they specially repacked, or does this suggest the Sudan was receiving paper imports via Hijaz?

paper imports into Darfur removed paper from among the goods and commodities that circulated as currency in the kingdom, an indication that paper was no longer rare.⁵⁷

Western Sudan

The spread of Islam and the emergence of powerful states in the western Sudan predates similar developments in the eastern Sudan, and so the need for paper arose earlier. By being on the route to the Holy Cities, Egypt established early trade relations with this part of Africa. A 1635 report by the Venetian merchant Santo Sequezzi dwells at length on the gold brought from the “pays d’Acrouri” (*Bilād al-Takrūr*, as western Sudan was known in the Muslim world) that was exchanged for “silk stuffs from Italy, coral, paper, lead, copper, tin and quicksilver.” About this time, paper was found among goods temporarily stored with a Cairene merchant by a party of West African pilgrims while they journeyed to Hijaz and back. Given the types of paper available in the market at this time, it is safe to assume that they were of Venetian or Genoese manufacture and been watermarked with crowns, stars and crescent—but not necessarily three moons. Early sixteenth century exports might also have included French and Italian paper, watermarked with hands, jugs, or bulls’ heads.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ William George Browne, *Travels in Africa, Egypt and Syria from the Years 1792 to 1798* (London: Cadell & Davies, 1799), 203; Rex Sean O’Fahey and M.I. Abū Salim, eds., *Land in Dar Fur: Charters and Related Documents from the Dar Fur Sultanate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 26; Other references to the re-export of paper to Dar Fur: Edward William Lane, *Description of Egypt: Notes and Views of Egypt*, Jason Thompson, ed. (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2000), 268; Charles Cuny, *Journal de voyage de Docteur Charles Cuny de Siout à El-Obeid* (Paris: Arthus Bertrand, 1863), 31; on the prevalence of paper in Dar Fur in the 1870s, Gustav Nachtigal, *Sahara and Sudan, IV, Wadai and Darfur*, trans. Allan G.B. Fisher and Humphrey J. Fisher (London: C. Hurst and Co., 1971), 254; this contrasts with the situation in parts of Wadai and Baghirmi where paper was scarce and circulated as money: *ibid.*, 28, 31–2, 100, 104, 111, 201, 242.

⁵⁸ Santo Sequezzi, “Estat des revenus d’Égypte, par le sieur Santo Sequezzi 1635,” in *Voyages en Égypte des années 1634, 1635 & 1636*, presented, translated and annotated by Oleg V. Volkoff (Cairo: Imprimerie de l’Institut français d’Archéologie Orientale, 1974), 127–8; DWQ, Q. Arab 41, 404, no. 534 (1061/1651); on watermarks in sixteenth-century manuscripts of the western Sudan, John O. Hunwick, “West African Manuscript Colophons, I: Askia Muhammad Bani’s Copy of the *Risala* of Abi Zayd,” *Bulletin d’Information (Fontes Historiae Africanae)* 7–8 (1982–83), 53. Prof. Hunwick also noted, in a personal communication to me, a watermark of a gloved hand and a star on a manuscript copied in Timbuktu in 981/1574.

The major trade routes linking western Sudan with the Mediterranean world shifted in the seventeenth century with the development of Tripoli as a market for Euro-African exchange, and paper was certainly an item of that exchange. Hoping to improve commercial ties with Borno, Muḥammad Saqīzli, the Ottoman governor of Tripoli, wrote in 1636 to the “prince” of Fezzan and to Mai ‘Umar b. Idrīs, ruler of Borno, offering to supply large quantities of certain goods, including paper, copper in sheets, Venetian beads and cloth.⁵⁹ In Tripoli, however, the French never succeeded in gaining a commercial foothold, and almost all reports of the paper trade from the seventeenth century onward refer to Italian imports. The French consul Le Maire typically reported at the end of the seventeenth century that the trade between Fezzan and Borno (glass, beads, bracelets, cloth, paper, copper wire and copper sheets) was “mostly from Venice.”⁶⁰ Eighteenth-century accounts confirm the Venetian dominance in the paper trade, much of which was re-exported “to the Blacks.” A British report on the trade of Tripoli in 1767 lists among imports from Venice “paper stamped with three moons” (800 reams), “writing paper” (200 reams), “outside quires” (300 reams) (wrapping paper?), and “another kind of ditto” (150 reams).⁶¹ It is not surprising that the famous “Yunfa’s Qur’ān,” which is dated to the late eighteenth century and which was taken from the house of the ruler of the Hausa state of Gobir, Sarkin Gobir Yunfa, during the sack of Alkalawa in 1808, is written on three moon paper.⁶² The French, whose Provence paper mills produced paper that sold well in Morocco, continued to be excluded from the Tripoli market, perhaps due to the strength of Jewish merchants who were heavily involved in the caravan trade of the Sudan and who had extensive contacts in Livorno.⁶³ So entrenched were the Venetians that the British played with the idea of exporting “three half-moon” and other papers made in Mahon (in the Balearics)

⁵⁹ Lavers, “Trans-Saharan Trade.”

⁶⁰ Claude Le Maire, “Memoire des observations...,” in *Missions archéologiques françaises en Orient aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*, ed. Henri Auguste Omont (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1902), 1048; Masson (1903), 177–8.

⁶¹ “A General State of the commerce of Tripoli,” enclosed in Consul Frazer to the Earl of Shelburn, London, Public Record Office, FO 76/2, quoted in Lavers, “Trans-Saharan Trade.”

⁶² MSS. 62 in Arewa House, Kaduna. No roman letters accompany the watermarks. My thanks to Abdallahi Smith for having allowed me to view the Qur’ān.

⁶³ Paul Masson, *Histoire des établissements et du commerce français dans l’Afrique barbaresque (1530–1793)* (Paris: Hachette, 1903), 610–1.

Table 4. Tripoli paper imports 1767–1865 (in reams)

Year	Venice/Trieste	Livorno	Genoa
1767 ^a	1,450		
1820 ^b	40		
1821 ^b	320		
1822 ^b	240		
1828 ^c		2,000	
1856 ^d	120		
1861 ^e	1,920		
1863 ^e	3,700		
1864 ^e	4,600		
1865 ^e	2,400		

For the number of reams per bale, I used the figure of twenty. See Bowring 1973, 39.

^a London, Public Record Office, FO 76/2: "A General State of the Commerce of Tripoli" enclosed in Consul Frazer (Tripoli) to the Earl of Shelburn, quoted in Lavers, "Trans-Saharan Trade."

^b Fedrigoni, *L'Industria veneta della carta*, 155, in bales.

^c Hemsö, "Prospetto del commercio di Tripoli," 25.

^d Fedrigoni, *L'Industria veneta della carta*, 157, in bales.

^e *Ibid.*, 161, in bales.

in an effort to cut into their share.⁶⁴ The trends, which continued into the nineteenth century, can be seen in the statistics in Table 4.

The situation changed little in the nineteenth century, although Livorno succeeded in establishing itself in the paper market and Tuscan paper began being exported across the Sahara. The "Almasso" paper manufactured by the Magnani Brothers, for example, appears in

⁶⁴ "A General State of the commerce of Tripoli," quoted in Lavers, "Trans-Saharan Trade." See also Murray Last, "The West African Book Trade before 1900: A Plea for Research," paper presented at the Conference on the Changing Role of the 'Ulama' in Africa, Program of African Studies, Northwestern University, 1984. Exports of unspecified types of paper are found in: Jean-Michel Venture de Paradis, "Notions sur le royaume de Fezzan," *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie de Paris*, 2 sér., 4 (1835), 188; Friedrich Hornemann, *Proceedings of the Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa*, 2 vols. (London: C. MacRae, 1810), 2: 136; Nehemia Levtzion, "Early Nineteenth Century Arabic Manuscripts from Kumasi," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 8 (1965), 118–9.

French paper made in Provence sold well in Morocco in the seventeenth century (Masson, *Histoire des établissements*, 230), and some was undoubtedly shipped south. Hunwick noted the "raisin" watermark on a Timbuktu manuscript dated 1715 with a heart and the initials FS (personal communication).

some Nigerian manuscripts.⁶⁵ Most of the paper reaching Kano and Kukuwa at mid-century and later was made in the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region, foremost being the products of the Galvanis, Giovanni Berti (mark BG: three hats, three moon faces), and a papermaker whose mark, SSB, is as yet unidentified.

In a survey of manuscripts in Nigerian libraries and archives, I found paper from other Venetian makers: Bernardino Nodari, Isidoro Mori, Niccolò Berlindis (mark NB: three moons, three moon faces), Niccolò Raccanelli (mark: FT: three hats), and Luigi Trentin (three moon faces.) The products of Franz Thurn (mark FT: three moons), an Austrian papermaker, also turn up.⁶⁶ The “three hats” (*tre cappelli*) watermark was more commonly used in the western Sudan

⁶⁵ Jacopo Gräberg di Hemsö, “Prospetto del commercio di Tripoli d’Affrica e della sue relazioni con quello dell’Italia,” *Antologia* (Florence) 81 (1827), 89: “carta da scrivere, colla marci di tre luna, fabricato a Genova ed a Livorno.”

I examined 484 manuscripts in Nigeria dating to the nineteenth century and earlier: 32 at the National Archive, Kaduna (abbrev. Kaduna); 94 at the University Library, Ibadan (abbrev. Ibadan); and 358 at the Jos Museum (abbrev. Jos). Magnani paper was found in (Jos) MSS 105, 103, 127, 85, 131, 156, 196A, 196B, and 77; (Kaduna) B/AR: 2/2 (dated 1264/1847); AR: 1/8 (dated 1279/1862); (Ibadan) 87/7.

⁶⁶ On paper in the Kano market in 1851, Heinrich Barth wrote in his *Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa* (London: Frank Cass, 1965), 2: 38, that “Common paper, called on the coast ‘tre lune’, is imported in great quantity, being used for wrapping up the country cloth; but it is a bulky heavy article, and in large quantities is sold at a very cheap rate.” On the paper trade in Kukuwa in 1873–74, Nachtigal, *Sahara and Sudan*, 2, 230: “Paper is also a not unimportant article of commerce in Kuka. It is very coarse... [and] shows its Italian origin by its watermark of three crescents with the legend, tre lune.”

The major papermakers and their marks:

Galvani: Mark: AG: (Jos) MSS 40, 45 (written during Palmer’s tour of duty in Nigeria), 314, 326, 345 (dated 1289/1872), 639, 706; (Kaduna) MS C/AR:5/2 (but possibly AC, unknown); Mark: Andrea Galvani Pordenone: (Jos) MSS 22, 30, 40, 49 (dated 1913), 50, 51, 53, 72.J.6 (dated 1928), 95, 124, 140, 149, 158, 191, 212, 225, 244, 326, 337, 347, 594, 587, 603, 609, 618, 626, 642, 702, 747, 837, 857, 1439 (dated ca. 1904), 1440, 1442 (dated ca. 1892), 1442; (Kaduna) MSS A/AR:16/3, A/AR:4/12; (Ibadan) MSS 82/1, 82/3, 82/8, 82/25, 82/55, 82/93, 82/205.

Giovanni Berti: Mark GB: (Jos) MSS 83, 102, 257, 352, 358, 635, 706, 790, 809; (Kaduna) MS A/AR:3/1.

SSB (?): (Jos) MSS 45 (written during Sir Richmond Palmer’s tour of duty, ca 1920s), 52, 61, 120, 121, 132, 201, 212, 1440; (Ibadan) MSS 82/63, 82/205.

Bernardino Nodari: Mark BNC and BNeC: (Jos) MSS 215, 628, 1441 (dated ca. 1890); (Kaduna) MS A/AR:5/3 (copied ca 1239/1824).

Isidoro Mori: Mark IMC: (Jos) MSS 55, 72, 289 (dated 1287/1870), 623.

Niccolo Berlindis: Mark NB: (Jos) MSS 46, 300, 344, 398.

Luigi Trentin: Mark LT: (Jos) MSS 54, 307, 309.

Franz Thurn: Mark FT: (Kaduna), MS A/AR:2/2 (dated 1246/1830).

than in Cairo.⁶⁷ In fact, two-thirds of the manuscripts seen in Kaduna, almost 70 percent of the manuscripts bearing a watermark preserved in the Ibadan University Library, and 75 percent of the watermarked paper in the Jos Museum Library was *tre lune* paper. A copy of the *Ḍiyā' al-siyasa* by 'Abdallāh b. Fūdī, dated 1819,⁶⁸ was written on *tre lune* paper of unknown origin.

The emirates of what is now northern Nigerian were not unique in this preference. Italian paper was also reaching such sub-Saharan kingdoms as Asante, at least by the end of the eighteenth century. An examination by Nehemia Levtzion of the early nineteenth-century Arabic manuscripts from Kumasi, the chief city of the Asante in present-day Ghana, held in Copenhagen's Royal Library, revealed mostly Italian-made paper, dating to the period 1795–1820, some with dated watermarks.⁶⁹

Most Nigerian manuscripts are not dated by the copyist, but from an examination of the watermarks they would appear to be largely from the last quarter of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries. The popular Galvani paper with the legend Andrea Galvani Pordenone appears in Cairo only in 1868 and probably was not used in the western Sudan before 1870. A paper enclosing the watermark Cartiere Prealpine Intra (Italia), also popular in Nigeria, could not have been made before 1880 since the firm is not listed in a directory

Many manuscripts contain several different makes of watermarked papers. The Jos MSS 1440, for example, contains as many as eight; a combination of at least two different types of paper is common. The catalog of the Jos Museum Arabic collection, prepared by Aida S. Arif and Ahmad M. Abu Hakima and titled *Descriptive Catalogue of Arabic Manuscripts in Nigeria [in the] Jos Museum and Lugard Hall Library, Kaduna* (London: Luzac, 1965), contains numerous annotations on manuscript watermarks, almost all of them incomplete or erroneous. Indeed, many manuscripts in the collection are not even listed, and those that are, are sometimes mis-numbered or mis-titled.

⁶⁷ None was found in the manuscripts examined in Cairo; for Nigeria, A.D.H. Bivar, "Arabic Documents of Northern Nigeria," *Bulletin of SOAS* 22, nos. 1/3 (1959), 327.

⁶⁸ National Archives, Kaduna, D/AR:2/7. It also appears on the copy of Muḥammad ibn 'Abdallāh, *Tazyin al-Waraqāt*, ed. and trans. M. Hiskett (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1963), 2.

⁶⁹ Levtzion, 118–9. He also pointed out that Dutch and English paper circulated in Kumasi as well, and concluded (118) that some of the paper was of non-European origin and came to Kumasi from the northeast. "It is probably of Near Eastern origin, and made its way from Egypt or North Africa." But Egypt, as I have shown, relied primarily on import of paper from Europe.

of papermakers published in 1883.⁷⁰ Paper made by Waterlow & Sons Limited, John Dent & Co., T.H. Saunders, and C.M.S. Bookshop (Lagos), all British firms, probably dates from the time of the formal British occupation of Nigeria (1900) and after.⁷¹ Paper made by Kampa,⁷² the Czechoslovakian firm, obviously dates from 1920 or thereabouts, sometime after the founding of that state.

Two other papers widely used in Nigeria were not found in Egypt, at least not in the documents that I consulted, and yet one of them suggests an intriguing trade link between the two ends of a trade route. I refer to the cream-colored paper bearing a floral design set in an oval that some have said resembles a horseman waving a sword; across the top is the name Beniamino Arbib and curving around the bottom is the legend *yā naṣīb* in Arabic. The scholar Nabia Abbott discussed this paper in an article published in 1938 (which also contains a plate of the watermark) in which she expressed astonishment on finding a watermark bearing an Arabic inscription. She dated the manuscript to the seventeenth or eighteenth century, believing the design resembled similar watermarks on paper made in Spain during that time. The manuscript bearing the watermark had been purchased in Lagos in 1928 and had been brought to the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago in 1935. She concluded it had been hand copied in the Maghrib and taken to Nigeria.⁷³

⁷⁰ For Cartiere Prealpine Intra (Italia), see *The Paper Mill Directory of the World* (Holyoke, Mass: C.W. Bryan & Company, n.d.). Its paper occurs in Nigerian manuscripts almost as commonly as Andrea Galvani paper: (Jos) MSS 3, 115, 137, 164, 205, 206, 238, 240, 267, 314, 315, 325, 333 (dated 1935), 334, 347, 380, 616, 715, 841, 904, 1442 (dated ca 1892); (Kaduna) A/AR:4/4/6; (Ibadan) 82/5, 82/9, 82/20, 82/29, 82/32, 82/56, 82/62, 82/96, 82/100, 82/134.

⁷¹ *C.M.S. Bookshop*: (Jos) MSS 588, 601, 632, 867 (all lined paper); (Kaduna) MS A/AR:4/10; (Ibadan) MS 82/94 (dated 1358/1939).

Waterlow & Sons Limited: (Jos) MSS 308 (lined paper), 608 (dated 1347/1928); 704; (Ibadan) MS 82/54.

T.H. Saunders: (Jos) MSS 94, 885; (Ibadan) MS 82/204 (watermarked 1914), dated 1334/1916).

John Dent & Co.: (Jos) MSS 68, 588; (Ibadan) MS 82/94 (dated 1358/1939).

⁷² *Kampa (Made in Czechoslovakia)*: (Jos) MS 1439 (dated ca. 1919–26); (Ibadan) MS 82/53, 82/60. This paper was also watermarked with three moons.

⁷³ *Beniamino Arbib/Ya Nasib* paper in Nigeria: (Jos) MSS 28, 89, 97, 187, 292, 299, 318, 329 (dated 1889), 331, 341, 594, 591, 603, 640 (dated 1339/1922), 1439 (dated ca 1904); (Kaduna) MS C/AR:8/4 (mistakenly dated 1804); (Ibadan) MSS 82/14, 82/17, 82/48, 82/64.

Nabia Abbott, "Maghribi Koran Manuscripts of the Seventeenth to the Eighteenth Centuries," *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 55, no. 1 (1938), 61–5. Abbott also mentions that the manuscript contains another paper watermarked

The Arabic inscription *yā naṣīb* (O Fate!) is an expression associated with lotteries, and it may well be that this paper was made originally for lottery coupons that later found a market among Muslims in northern and western Africa. When I interviewed Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī in Cairo in 1976 about paper used by the famous firm of al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, whose books were exported to many parts of the Muslim world, including West Africa, he mentioned “*naṣīb*” paper as having been specially made to prevent counterfeiting, and that among its qualities was its strength since it was made from rags. It also had yellowish tint that was preferred, according to him, by Nigerians who believed that white paper was considered “magical” since it prevented the reader from remembering what was written on it.⁷⁴

More relevantly, the papermaker, Beniamino Arbib, was a member of the Arbib family prominent in the Sudan trade of Tripoli in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The paper was used in manuscripts bearing dates of 1889 and 1922. Though the family was scattered across North Africa from Tunis to Egypt, this Beniamino Arbib may have been the one who moved his family from Tripoli to Cairo where he continued to trade with Africa after the collapse of the Mahdist government in Omdurman. Were they indeed manufacturing paper, and if so, for what purpose?⁷⁵

with the name of Andreo Gabriel and three horizontal crescents, which she believed was also current in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

⁷⁴ Muṣṭafā ʿĪsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, interviewed by the author on 20 August 1976 at his office on Sharia al-Azhar, Cairo. On the firm’s renown in West Africa, John O. Hunwick “The Arabic Literary Tradition of Nigeria,” *Research in African Literatures* 28, no. 3 (1997), 217, and Terence Walz, “Trans-Saharan Migration and the Colonial Gaze: The Nigerians in Egypt,” *Alif* 26 (2006), 114–5.

⁷⁵ On the Arbibs in North Africa, Nahum Slouschz, *Travels in North Africa* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1927), 276; on the family in general, “Arbib,” in *Jewish Encyclopedia*, localizes them in Tripoli and Livorno; on the Arbibs in Tripoli, Slouschz, 10; on their connections with the trans-Saharan trade of Tripoli: Parmenio Bettoli, “Tripoli commerciale,” *L’Esploratore* 6 (1882), 266. Muhammad ʿUṭmān al-Ḥaṣāʾiṣī (el-Hachaichi), *Voyage au pays des Senoussia à travers la Tripolitaine et les pays touareg* (Paris: A. Challamel, 1912), 159–60, states that Arbib was responsible for opening up the trade routes to Wadai; see also J-L Miegé, “La Libye et le commerce transsaharien au XIXe siècle,” *Revue de l’Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée* 19 (1975), 138. On their leaving Tripoli and settling in Cairo, Balboni, *G’Italiani nella civiltà egiziana*, 2: 106. According to Stefano G. Poffandi, *Indicateur égyptien de 1890* (Alexandria, 1889) and *Indicateur égyptien de 1911* (Alexandria, 1911), several Arbibs were in business in Alexandria and Cairo between the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century. A notation in the 1911 guide indicates that headquarters of “Benjamin Arbib, de la maison A. Arbib e figli,” was located on Sharia al-Maghribi in Cairo. Balboni (2: 106) wrote: “Today [ca 1900] the

A second paper, carrying in the watermark the legend “Hakuri Maganin Dunya” set in what resembles a traditional Nigerian wooden tablet used for teaching the Qur’ān, was obviously made for the Nigerian market. The Hausa expression, written in Arabic script, means “Patience is the way to cope with the world’s ills.” The maker has not been identified; the paper probably dates from the time of the British occupation in the first years of the twentieth century.⁷⁶

CONCLUSION

The Italian paper industry dominated the paper trade of Egypt in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as evidenced in the documentation of the Islamic courts and in manuscripts housed in Cairo’s National Library. Although efforts were made to restart the local papermaking industry in the nineteenth century, locally-made paper never fully came to supplant imported varieties. Italian-made paper also played a major role in Egypt’s re-export trade. In trans-Saharan Africa, the paper manufacturers of the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region enjoyed a wide renown. In the eastern Sudan, paper was imported directly from Egypt, via caravan routes across the deserts as well as via the Red Sea ports (which also depended on the Egyptian market). In the western Sudan, Nigerian archives show that until the latter part of the nineteenth century, Italian-made paper was commonly used in chancelleries and by local clerics. Egypt appears not to have been primary source of paper for this region—the routes from Tripoli and Benghazi would have been more direct and functioned efficiently through an established trans-Saharan commercial network. Countries further west of Nigeria, the kingdoms of the ancient “Takrūr,” Tunis and other ports along the North African coast would have been the

‘Casa Arbib’ is headed by Beniamino Arbib, about whom we will speak in another part of this book” Unfortunately, he does not. On Jews and the lottery, see Slouschz, *Travels in North Africa*, 77 (excepting the Jews in Tripoli from engaging in games of chance, “contrary to the general custom in Africa”) and Jacob Landau, “The Jews in Nineteenth-Century Egypt,” in *Political and Social Change in Modern Egypt: Historical Studies from the Ottoman Conquest to the United Arab Republic*, ed. P.M. Holt (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 203. It was the late Abdallahi Smith’s opinion that Beniamino Arbib was a Tunisian papermaker (personal conversation, Kaduna, 13 January 1976).

⁷⁶ *Hakuri maganin dunya* with the legend REGISTERED TRADE MARK flanking either side of the “tablet”: (Jos) MSS 57, 214, 220, 304, 815, 853. The author is grateful to Murray Last for a reading of the expression.

logical providers. Nonetheless, Egypt enjoyed a special geographical advantage in that it was on one of the pilgrimage routes to the Holy Cities, and it was not uncommon for pilgrims to stop off in Cairo to study for short periods at al-Azhar mosque and purchase paper, manuscripts and books and other essentials of the developing literacy in the eastern and western Sudan.

Cheap European paper fed the growing uses in Muslim Africa where civil and commercial transactions were being increasingly committed to writing. The documenting of substantial and sometimes less important trade transactions—loans, partnerships, the purchase of precious commodities such as slaves or boats as well as real estate transactions—and of important civic events, such as the payment of dowries and emancipation of slaves or the registration of endowment deeds and changes in the endowments—all contributed to creating a demand for paper. In Egypt, Hanna has argued that literacy greatly increased in the early modern period, and especially through the “legal culture” encouraged by the Ottomans. Accompanying this new interest in recording deeds and acts was a greater interest in reading and writing, activities that also required the import of paper.⁷⁷

In trans-Saharan Africa, the introduction and spread of Islam inevitably was likewise accompanied by the import of paper. As Ghislaine Lydon writes, “Muslim societies consumed, produced and imported writing paper since Arabic literacy was a quintessential trait of Islamic practice.”⁷⁸ The export of paper to the western Sudan is documented at least to the middle of the seventeenth century, and to the eastern Sudan, at least to the beginning of the eighteenth century. The import of paper was often associated with returning pilgrims, who purchased it in Cairo en route to their home countries. In the nineteenth century, Lydon shows that one scholar returned home with four camel loads of books.⁷⁹ In fact, she comments, “without literacy and access to a stable paper supply it is hard to imagine the operation of far-flung trade networks.”⁸⁰

The paper chronology established for Egypt reveals a periodization of paper imports. Both French and Italians dominated the trade at the beginning of the sixteenth century, followed by a resurgence of Italians

⁷⁷ Hanna, “Literacy and the ‘Great Divide,’” 186–91.

⁷⁸ Lydon, “A ‘Paper Economy of Faith,’” 6.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

at the end. The French paper industry enjoyed dominance in the period 1680–1780, which was then followed by an Italian resurgence that lasted through most of the nineteenth century. Within those rough periods, I detected several years' runs of watermarked paper for certain firms. The three-moon paper manufactured by the Galvanis had a special renown, for example, and the watermark of a shield enclosing a moon face and the initials AG appears to have been used exclusively in the period 1855–67. This study suggests that such a "periodization" may be useful in the dating of manuscripts in West Africa—on the other side of trans-Saharan trade routes. Such a periodization would be very different for manuscripts in other North African countries, such as Libya or Morocco, where the trade in paper produced different histories. Minimally it documents the operation and extent of a trade network.

Edward Heawood believed that books offered a stronger correlation between dates and watermarks than manuscripts because there was "less likelihood of remnants of old stock being used."⁸¹ On both sides of the Sahara, printing was a nineteenth century phenomenon, since it was introduced into sub-Saharan Africa only in the latter part of the century. Therefore, the question does not come into play. However, Heawood remained convinced that a "clearly legible" watermark offered a useful guide to the question of dating, since it could help "decipher a similar mark in a dated paper."⁸² He argued that for nineteenth-century manuscripts, there was an average interval of three years between the manufacturing of the paper and its use.⁸³ On such a basis, there have been attempts in the Ottoman archives to use watermarks to date documents.⁸⁴ Given the vagaries of caravanning across the Sahara, however, a three-year interval may be inapplicable. Heawood recognized this when he pointed out that the traveler Denham wrote from Borno on paper that was six or seven years old.⁸⁵

Murray Last believes that paper in West Africa was imported "in bulk," and therefore the use of watermarks as a method of dating

⁸¹ Heawood, *Watermarks*, 29.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 30.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁸⁴ Gülru Necipoğlu-Kafadar, "Plans and Models in 15th- and 16th-Century Ottoman Architectural Practice," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 45, no. 3 (1986), 224–43.

⁸⁵ Heawood, *Watermarks*, 31.

documents may be problematic.⁸⁶ Whether they can be or not, there are other problems. Much of the paper I saw in the Kaduna National Museum in Nigeria, for example, was of such poor quality—moreover, little of it was glazed—that it seems likely it was never watermarked, a fact that renders dating especially difficult.

Nonetheless, new techniques available for capturing watermarks and transferring them to internet databases, such as has been started by ‘Azza Maḥmūd Ḥasan in an issue of the *Cybrarians Journal*,⁸⁷ it may be possible to share the rich evidence in Cairo and other major North African archives with scholars in sub-Saharan Muslim Africa who seek to date the many new manuscripts and documents that are coming to light.

⁸⁶ Nachtigal, *Sahara and Sudan*, 28, note 1.

⁸⁷ Azza Mahmud Hasan (2005).

THE HISTORIC “CORE CURRICULUM” AND THE BOOK MARKET IN ISLAMIC WEST AFRICA

Bruce S. Hall and Charles C. Stewart

I. INTRODUCTION

Much work has been done to map out the contours of Islamic intellectual production in West Africa before the twentieth century.¹ However, we still do not understand very well the process by which ideas and texts circulated in the region. Lists of specific books imported by West Africans during the nineteenth century are rare (although one such compilation helps frame this paper),² and the particular books memorized and/or copied by individual students on particular subjects usually fail to tell us much about their mentors' libraries. As a result, the reconstruction of a trans-Saharan, much less the east-west Sahelian book trade, if these existed in any formal sense, must be subject to some speculation. Clearly, there was a steady demand in West Africa for Arabic texts; libraries and literary capital have long been understood as an important component of religious authority. But our knowledge of what might have been the actual texts sought in a book trade, is limited. We can deduce something about the distribution of books in West Africa from the authors and subjects studied in particular venues,³ and from analyses of the citations used in particular

¹ For example, John Hunwick et al., have filled two volumes with the annotated titles of works written by West African scholars: *Arabic Literature of Africa*, Vol. II: *The Writings of Central Sudanic Africa* (Leiden: Brill, 1995) [hereafter ALA II] and Hunwick et al., *Arabic Literature of Africa*, Vol. IV: *The Writings of Western Sudanic Africa* (Leiden: Brill, 2003) [hereafter ALA IV].

² One of the few definitive lists of book purchases made by a West African scholar is analyzed in C.C. Stewart, “A New Source on the Book Market in Morocco in 1830 and Islamic Scholarship in West Africa,” *Hesperis Tamuda* 11 (1970): 209–50.

³ Examples of such studies include Ivor Wilks, “The Transmission of Islamic Learning in the Western Sudan,” in *Literacy in Traditional Societies*, ed. J. Goody (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 161–97; Louis Brenner, *West African Sufi: The Religious Heritage and Spiritual Search of Cerno Bokar Saalif Taal* (London, 2005), 74–6; Stephan Reichmuth, “Islamic Education in Sub-Saharan Africa,” in *The History of Islam in Africa*, ed. N. Levtzion and R.L. Pouwels (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2000), 427–8; Lamin Sanneh, *The Jakhanké Muslim Clerics: A Religious and Historical Study of Islam in Senegambia* (Lanham, MD: University Press

scholarly works written by West Africans.⁴ But both the works studied and the analysis of citations tell us about books that were known to individual scholars rather than works that were actually in demand.⁵ This paper seeks to describe the books—by author and title—that were in heaviest demand by doing an inventory of the contents of a cross-section of West African libraries. Our working assumption is that the extant copies of manuscripts that appear in the largest numbers across representative libraries from the Atlantic to northern Nigeria are a good indication of the most widely studied subjects and texts across the Sahel. We are calling these works the “core curriculum” and we suggest that they were likely at the center of any regional book market.⁶

In a provocative and somewhat speculative recent article on “The Book in the Sokoto Caliphate,” Murray Last has posed wide-ranging questions about the periodization, merchandizing, and production of books in the Central Sudan.⁷ He proposes four phases for our understanding of the Central Sudanic book market that may bear relation to the wider Sahelian region: an early period in which books were imported at high prices, a second period spanning the sixteenth and

of America, 1989), 149, 158; Ousmane Kane, “Intellectuels non Europhones,” CODESRIA (2003).

⁴ Examples include Mervyn Hiskett, “Material Relating to the State of Learning among the Fulani before Their Jihad,” *Bulletin of SOAS* 19 (1957): 550–78; F.H. El Masri, “The Life of Shehu Usman dan Fodio before the Jihad,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 2, no. 4 (1963): 435–48; Sidi Mohamed Mahibou and Jean-Louis Triaud, *Voilà ce qui est arrivé, Bayân mâ waqa’a dâl-Hâgg’ Umar al-Fûti. Plaidoyer pour une guerre sainte en Afrique de l’Ouest au XIX^e siècle* (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1983); Jean Schmitz, “Introduction,” Shaykh Muusa Kamara, *Florilège au jardin de l’histoire des Noirs. Zuhûr al-basâtîn. L’Aristocratie peule et le révolution des clerics musulmans (Vallée du Sénégal)*, vol.1, (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1998), 11–22; Chouki el Hamel, *La vie intellectuelle islamique dans le Sahel Ouest-Africain (XVI^e–XIX^e siècles)* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2002); John Hunwick, *Shari’a in Songhay: The Replies of al-Maghîlî to the Questions of Askia al-Hâjj Muḥammad* (London: British Academy, 1985).

⁵ The handful of (generally incomplete) published compilations of individual libraries deserve mention as among the few samplings of books that individuals or lineages had managed to acquire and that give us a glimpse of what resources actually were available at some centers of scholarly activity. For an example see L. Massignon, “Une Bibliothèque Saharienne; la bibliothèque du Cheikh Sidia au Sahara,” *Revue du Monde Musulman* 8 (1909): 409–18.

⁶ In the discussion here and below we will combine notions of a book market, book copying and book trading to and across West Africa. The copying industry was driven by the preservation of previously acquired and valued books and/or by the duplication of popular works for study and possibly trade. Work still needs to be done to distinguish between local copying activity and book “imports” to West Africa.

⁷ Murray Last, “The Book in the Sokoto Caliphate,” *Studia Africana* 17 (2006): 39–52.

seventeenth centuries when a local copying industry dependent upon paper imported from North Africa was chiefly responsible for the dissemination of texts, a third phase in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when copyists attempted partial monopolies over others' access to manuscripts and when “the trade in rare and recent books was ‘privatized,’” which triggered a fourth, eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries phase marked by local scholars composing original works themselves. The elegance and logic of this periodization founders on sketchy empirical evidence. But what Last's work does provide is a call for us to look carefully at what we know about the extant manuscripts in the Sahel, to see what can be deduced from them about the importation of texts, education, original scholarship and the copying industry.

This has been our point of departure in the analysis that follows. We have had the advantage of drawing on empirical data from the contents of over 80 private manuscript libraries that stretch from Mauritania to Nigeria⁸ that have been entered in the Arabic Manuscript Management System (AMMS) database, which is now open-access and available on the internet.⁹ This sampling encompasses at least half (and possibly a good deal more) of the West African book market, intellectually as well as geographically.¹⁰ For this exercise we have grouped together six clusters of the Islamic sciences that reappear with regularity in accounts of subjects studied across the breadth of

⁸ It includes bibliographic material from the Institut Mauritanien de Recherche Scientifique in Nouakchott which contains material from 72 libraries largely from southwestern Mauritania, the Institut des Hautes Etudes et de la Recherche Islamique – Ahmed Baba (IHERI-AB), in Timbuktu, Mali that has material from a number of libraries in Northern Mali, the personal libraries of al-Ḥājj ‘Umar Tall at Ségou, the Ahl Sidiyya in Boutilimit, the Northwestern University collection that contains the Umar Falke Library from Kano, and a dozen collections in Shinqīṭi and Wādān. Where relevant copies of a few works appear in collections from Niamey, Ibadan and Ghana, these are noted.

⁹ The Arabic Manuscript Management System (AMMS) is a new bilingual bibliographic tool containing over 23,000 West African Arabic manuscript citations drawn from eight major collections across the Sahel. Under a current contract with al-Furqan Foundation for the addition of their hardcopy West African catalogues we expect that number to nearly double again during the next year. Although the citations vary in accuracy, for the first time the literary heritage of Islamic West Africa can be surveyed across multiple individual collections and on a scale that may well be statistically representative of that heritage. The AMMS database, now available as an open-access Internet resource, permits us to move beyond piecemeal snapshots of literary activity, text transmittal, and knowledge transfer in the Islamic sciences. It can be accessed at: <http://www.westafricanmanuscripts.org/>

¹⁰ This assertion is based on the fact that the subject categories that make up the clusters of Islamic sciences used here also constitute about half of the total

the Sahel and over several hundred years: Qur'ānic studies (recitation, abrogation, exegesis), Arabic language (lexicons, lexicology, morphology, syntax, rhetoric and prosody), the Prophet Muḥammad (biography, devotional poetry, ḥadīth and history), theology (tawḥīd), mysticism (taṣawwuf) and law (sources, schools, didactic texts, legal precepts and legal cases/opinions). In all, we will be surveying about 21,000 extant manuscript records from libraries distributed across the Sahel. We will be comparing the multiple copies of works in these 80-odd libraries that have also been described by representative West African authors as part of their own education or cited in their writings.¹¹ We believe the results are an accurate indicator of the actual books in greatest demand (as well as authors most widely "collected"). We will argue that the frequency of citations of particular texts has implications for the movement of manuscripts across the Sahara as well as across the Sahel, and for the Sahelian copying industry. While this data does confirm (and provide detailed documentation on) many of the descriptions that have previously been made of Islamic learning in West Africa, it also offers a useful corrective to some of the more elaborate claims made about Islamic scholarship in the region. AMMS data also reveals the specific subjects in which the popularity of local writers appears to have eclipsed external scholars (who otherwise dominate most fields), and we are able to show the sub-fields of Islamic knowledge that held greater and lesser levels of interest for West African scholars. This data strongly suggests that levels of training and scholarship varied from one region to another, which was presumably a reflection of the books that were available. In consequence, it also points to the likely evolution of distinctive intellectual traditions across centers of learning in West Africa during a (somewhat arbitrarily defined) three hundred year period, ca.

manuscripts in the AMMS database. The database also includes a wide range of correspondence, licenses, literary work, devotional material, etc. which, if discounted, would make the subject categories used here a much larger percentage of the total. Interestingly, 80% of the book purchases brought to West Africa from Morocco in the one account we have of the book trade in the 1830s, noted in footnote 2, fall in these same categories.

¹¹ It is important to stress that the prevalence of certain texts, and the absence of others, does not in itself demonstrate the existence of a trade in some books and not others. What we are arguing in this paper is that a "core curriculum" in the Islamic sciences based on multiple copies of extant manuscripts in a large and representative selection of West African libraries gives us empirical evidence of the common texts that formed the basis of Islamic education. It is not clear from our evidence that there was a commercial "market" for these texts, although there may have been. We will return to the issue of the nature of the market in the conclusion.

1625–1925.¹² At the same time it permits us to compare education in West Africa with what was taking place in contemporary North Africa and the wider Islamic world. Finally, taking issue with Last’s projections of book production and consumption in the Central Sudan, the data suggests that there may have been a rather more modest book market supporting advanced studies in the Islamic sciences than he has suggested. But we do concur with his skepticism about the existence of an actual book trade on any scale.

II. THE SAHELIAN “CORE CURRICULUM” IN THE ISLAMIC SCIENCES

The presence of certain texts in multiple West African libraries, and conversely, the absence of others, suggests to us an important empirical basis for determining the actual texts that were studied by students and scholars. This “core curriculum” includes a wide range of material: at one end are the texts available to advanced scholars and described in their own writings, and at the other, the core didactic texts studied by all aspiring students. This latter group of titles is easily traced by their widespread distribution across the Sahel. Our criteria for including a text in our “core curriculum” therefore includes manuscripts for which there are multiple (at least four) extant copies in a minimum of three of these regions: (1) south-western Mauritania (Nouakchott [IMRS] and Boutilimit (Ahl Sīdiyya library)); (2) northern Mauritania (Shinqīṭi and Wādān); (3) the Niger Bend (Timbuktu [IHERI-AB]); (4) the middle Niger (Ségou [al-Ḥājj ‘Umar library]); and (5) northern Nigeria (Kano). In almost all cases these are also texts that are confirmed by West African authorities writing about their own studies. Not included are a number of clearly influential locally-authored works that have not appeared in libraries outside their region of origin.¹³

¹² This 300-year frame corresponds, roughly, to two generations of the paper upon which most manuscripts were copied. The modern baseline is the 1920s, the moment at which we can date the erosion of the copying-industry due to widespread importation of Arabic print material. The earliest lithograph book in southern Mauritania, a dictionary bearing the imprint of 1262/1846, arrived there in 1861. However, widespread importation of printed texts did not take place until after the First World War. The very oldest surviving copies of manuscripts in the 1920s rarely dated back more than about 150 years (to ca. 1775) due to the high bleach content in imported papers in the 18th century. This same paper chemistry-based chronology would tell us that the oldest manuscript copies extant at the end of the 18th century would be unlikely to predate the early 1600s—thus our time frame of 1625–1925.

¹³ Admittedly, this methodology devalues the very substantial emphasis upon memorization of texts as part of learning in this region and, as a result, the

Western-based scholarship describing Islamic learning in West Africa generally identifies the classical texts, but we are rarely given any details on the actual form or profundity of study. For example, Ivor Wilks tells us that in order to achieve the status of scholar, students in the Dyula tradition were required to study Mālik b. Anas' *Muwatta'*, the fundamental reference work of Mālikī law.¹⁴ Such a statement is undoubtedly true but it begs the question of the form of the work that was studied; the *Muwatta'* cannot be understood as a single discrete text. There is of course a book entitled *al-Muwatta'* of which there are numerous extant copies in the West African libraries that we have surveyed, but the number of copies is not the only criterion that indicates the circulation of a particular text. In addition to the original text, there are many, many more copies of abridgements and commentaries, exegeses and versifications of the work that were clearly in wider circulation. The *Muwatta'* is best regarded as a foundational text (even if parts of it are copied, committed to memory by students and explained by teachers) that was transformed across time by its abridgements and versifications, and further by the exegeses of these abridgements and versifications. To fully appreciate the level of sophistication of study of the *Muwatta'* by students in the Dyula tradition, for instance, we need to know the derivative forms of the *Muwatta'* that were studied.¹⁵ This kind of imprecision in our knowledge of what was studied reappears in most generic descriptions of traditional Islamic education in West Africa and it little advances our

multiplication factor attached to each book as a result of students committing it to memory. Our methodology also sets aside single copies of particular books that may be of great significance. But we have reasoned that the existence of a single copy of a particular text somewhere in West Africa, however instructive to the movement of books and ideas, does not necessarily mean that this text was widely read, or that it can be considered part of a widely-shared "curriculum" of Islamic learning. As additional copies of particular works, now thought to be unique or only available at one or two sites, are uncovered, we anticipate that this curriculum will expand beyond the 150-odd works cited below. The one exception to this methodology that includes only works numbering four or more that are found in three or more sites is for a small number of texts numbering six or more in two sites with other works by the same author well distributed across other collections.

¹⁴ Wilks, "The Transmission of Islamic Learning in the Western Sudan," 168.

¹⁵ The simplest analogue in Western scholarship is the distinction made between studying a primary source, a monograph based on such a source, a text that is a synthesis of such a monograph, and a schoolbook that is derivative of such texts. It was this last, most general level of study of the great authorities that, judging from the frequency of derivative works across West African collections, was most commonly studied.

understanding of the actual curriculum studied, much less what might have been a market for particular books. Our purpose in this paper is to provide an empirically-based overview of the texts that are most widely distributed (and we assume used) in the region, and thereby provide a solid basis for mapping the Islamic intellectual field and the demand for books.

What follows is a survey of manuscripts in six clusters of the Islamic sciences, manuscripts that constituted the greatest part of the West African book acquisitions. The criteria for including a text in our “core curriculum” are two: the distribution and number of copies held in the libraries documented in AMMS, and/or its citation in foundational works written by four West African literati that have been chosen to represent a chronological and geographical cross-section of Sahelian scholarship. This information is detailed in the appendix. The four bibliographic annotations by prominent West African scholars that have been correlated with the libraries’ actual contents are:

- ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sa’dī’s (died after 1655/56) *Ta’riḫ al-sūdān*,¹⁶ which discusses many of the texts studied in Timbuktu. He borrows heavily from the work of Aḥmad Bābā, thus providing us with a snapshot of what we might call the classical, 17th century Sudanese tradition of Islamic learning.
- al-Ṭālib Muḥammad al-Bartilī’s (d. 1805) *Faṭḥ al-shakūr fī ma’rifat a’yān ‘ulamā’ al-Takrūr*,¹⁷ which is a biographical dictionary of the scholars of the region of Walata up to the beginning of the 19th century. It contains summaries of their qualifications (the works that they studied) and offers us a survey of Sahelian scholarly credentials during the 17th and 18th centuries.
- Abdallahi dan Fodio’s (d. 1829) *Idā’ al-nusūkh man akhadhtu ‘an-hu min al-shuyūkh*,¹⁸ in which the author describes his own training. This is the scholarly autobiography of one of the most illustrious

¹⁶ al-Sa’dī draws much of his bibliographic information from Aḥmad Bābā’s *Nayl al-ibṭihāj*. The *Ta’riḫ al-sūdān* is translated and analyzed by John Hunwick, *Timbuktu and the Songhay Empire: Al-Sa’dī’s Ta’riḫ al-sūdān down to 1613 and other Contemporary Documents* (Leiden: Brill, 1999). Hereafter we will refer to the text as “TS.”

¹⁷ Translated and analyzed by el Hamel, *La vie intellectuelle islamique dans le Sahel Ouest-Africain*. Hereafter we will refer to the text as “Fath.”

¹⁸ Written in 1227/1812–3 and translated and analyzed by Hiskett, “Material Relating to the State of Learning among the Fulani before Their Jihad.” Hereafter we will refer to the text as “Idā’.”

intellectuals of the Central Sudan at the dawn of the 19th century and, as indicated in this survey, one of the most frequently-cited West African contributors to our “core curriculum.”

- al-Ḥājj ‘Umar Tall’s (d. 1864) *Bayān mā waqa‘a baynanā wa-bayn amīr Māsina Aḥmad b. Aḥmad b. al-Shaykh Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Lobbo*,¹⁹ a work that reflects the scholarly apparatus available to a Western Sudanese intellectual in 1862. His own library ranked among the most comprehensive in West Africa (by comparison to others in this database).

These texts are not an exhaustive survey of Islamic scholarship and training across 300 years, but together they do provide a good chronological and geographical slice of West African bibliographic accounts. They were used in the first stage of our methodology to generate lists of authors and titles that were then compared to the extant manuscripts in regional libraries that make up the AMMS data base. As will be apparent in what follows, not all titles mentioned in these West African sources are widely distributed in libraries today, and conversely, there are many works that are widely attested in the AMMS data that are not mentioned by these West African authors. We have indicated these correlations in the appendix.

The texts included in the “core curriculum” are identified by AMMS geographic categories that roughly indicate their region of origin: Nouakchott, Boutilimit, Shinqīṭi (Chinguetti), Wādān (Ouadane), Ségou, Timbuktu and Kano. AMMS also includes collections from Niamey, Ibadan and Ghana that have not been incorporated in this survey due to the less than complete documentation on individual manuscripts in those collections or, in the case of Ibadan citations, their high overlap with the “Kano” listings.

- Nouakchott and Boutilimit: The Nouakchott citation refers to the national collection at the Institut Mauritanien de Recherche Scientifique (IMRS) which, at the time it was entered into the AMMS database in 1992 included manuscripts from 72 small libraries (totaling about 4600 items) mainly from the south-east quadrant of Mauritania. Boutilimit refers to the private library of the Ould

¹⁹ Translated and analyzed by Mahibou and Triaud, *Voilà ce qui est arrivé*. Hereafter we will refer to the text as “Bayān.”

Sīdiyya family in Boutilimit, Mauritania, acquired largely during the 19th century (about 2100 items), and catalogued in 1990.

- Shinqīṭī and Wādān: These two sites refer to twelve private libraries—six at each site—containing about 1100 manuscripts and catalogued and published by al-Furqan Foundation in 1997.
- Ségou: This is the library originally belonging to al-Ḥājj ‘Umar Tall and his sons at Ségou, now held at the Bibliothèque nationale in France, with about 4100 items, catalogued by C.N.R.S. in 1985.
- Timbuktu: The first 5640 items from the collection at the Institut des Hautes Etudes et de la Recherche Islamique-Ahmed Baba (IHERI-AB) in Timbuktu, Mali drawn from Northern Malian libraries, especially from the Būla‘rāf library in Timbuktu, entered from their handlist in 1992. These roughly correspond to the first four volumes printed by the al-Furqan Foundation in 1995 of the Institut’s collection (known under the name CEDRAB).
- Kano: This is a composite of the ‘Umar Falke library from Kano (3030 items) and the Paden collection (330 records) from Northern Nigeria with about 500 items from the Hunwick acquisitions of market editions and published works housed at Northwestern University. “Kano” has been used here as a convenience to incorporate approximately 4200 records largely from Northern Nigeria.

Roughly, based on numbers of manuscripts surveyed for this analysis, about 35% come from Mauritania, 45% from the Niger Bend/Middle Niger region, and 20% from Northern Nigeria. Unless otherwise noted, we have only cited manuscripts in this “core curriculum” that appear in at least four copies distributed across at least three of these regions.²⁰ But we have also noted a few works that were mentioned by one of our four authorities as being of particular importance when it or its commentaries, exegeses, abridgements, or versifications do not appear at all or are recorded in only one of the collections.

Each of the subject classifications in the AMMS database, of course, contains far more citations than those noted here. For example, the data base notes 303 records on exegesis/*tafsīr* of the Holy Qur’ān, but

²⁰ There are a few exceptions. The distribution and provenance of the texts is noted in the “core curriculum” list in the appendix.

only 76 of the most-frequently cited are annotated in the following summary. The remaining 227 records contain 98 unidentified authors or titles, and 129 unique references and/or multiple references to regional and local authors whose work is not found in more than one or two of these regions, leading us to conclude they did not figure in a West Africa-wide book market. A sampling of other sub-sets of the Islamic disciplines treated here suggest a similar ratio (25:75) of records analysed here to incomplete citations or authors and works of essentially local impact, lacking in copies outside their region of origin. For more detail on the contents of the database, readers are referred to the AMMS website.

III. THE “CORE CURRICULUM”

a) *Qur’ānic Sciences*

Although the Qur’ān was the starting point of Islamic education, the texts that we discuss here are works that would have been studied by relatively advanced students, after they acquired the necessary linguistic skills in Arabic. We have divided the sub-fields of Qur’ānic sciences into three parts: Qur’ānic recitation (*tajwīd*); the closely related fields of revelation (*tanzīl*) and abrogation (*naskh*); and exegesis (*tafsīr*).

1. *Qur’ān Recitation* (*tajwīd*)

The field of *tajwīd* refers to the art of reciting the Qur’ān. Among the most widespread texts in this domain are Ibn al-Barrī’s (d. 1330) popular poem entitled *al-Durar al-lawāmi’*, which is mentioned in the *Faḥ al-shakūr* and in Abdallahi dan Fodio’s *Idā’ al-nusūkh*. There are more than two dozen commentaries on this poem by authors from both outside and within West Africa.²¹ Oddly, neither the poem nor its commentaries appear in current AMMS records from Nigeria. Another poem on *tajwīd* found in Kano and Shinqīṭi is al-Shāṭibī’s (d. 1194) *Ḥirz al-amānī wa-wajh al-tahānī* which is also mentioned in the *Faḥ al-shakūr* and in Abdallahi dan Fodio’s *Idā’ al-nusūkh*. The other widely attested text is Ibn al-Jazarī’s (d. 1429) *al-Muqaddima*.

²¹ See Appendix C for the geographical distribution of copies.

2. *Qur’ānic Revelation (tanzīl) and Abrogation (naskh)*

The most widely known work on abrogation is Ibn Juzay’s (d. 1340) *al-Tashīl li-‘ulūm al-tanzīl*. Copies of al-Suyūṭī’s (d. 1505) *al-Itqān fī ‘ulūm al-Qur’ān* are also found in most of the collections used in our sample.

3. *Exegesis (tafsīr)*

By far the most widely distributed and most numerous *tafsīr* in these collections is Abdallahi dan Fodio’s (d. 1829) *Ḍiyā’ al-ta’wīl fī ma‘ānī l-tanzīl*, which is found even in the Mauritanian collections. The next most popular text is the so-called *Jalālayn*, the “Two Jalāls,” so named because of the shared first name of its two Egyptian authors, al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505) and al-Maḥallī (d. 1459). This text is as widespread as another well-known exegetical title, the *tafsīr* of ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. Khāzin al-Baghdādī (d. 1340), which is based on an earlier work that is less well distributed in West Africa by Ḥusayn b. Mas‘ūd b. Muḥammad al-Baghawī (d. 1117). The Mauritanian Muḥammad al-Yadālī’s (d. 1753) *tafsīr*, written in the western Sahel in 1738, is mentioned by Abdallahi dan Fodio as part of his studies seventy-four years later at the eastern extreme of the same region.²² This is the second most popular West African *tafsīr* title judging from its distribution in the region’s libraries. The other major source for Qur’ānic exegesis is that of al-Jazā’irī (d. 1468), which is found across all collections except for those in Nigeria. Not accurately reflected in our methodology are the numerous West African authors of *tafsīr* who achieved considerable regional popularity, judging from the numbers of copies of their works within individual collections in the data base. This one subject seems to have attracted more West African scholars than any other surveyed.

b) *Arabic Language*

Under the rubric of Arabic Language we have grouped the linguistic sciences of lexicons and lexicology, morphology, syntax, rhetoric and

²² al-Ḥājj ‘Umar says that he read al-Baydāwī’s (d. c. 1300), *Anwār al-tanzīl*. There are no manuscript copies of this work recorded in the AMMS data base. He also says that he studied the muftī of Istanbul, Aḥmad b. Ismā‘īl al-Kurānī’s (d. 1488) *Ghāyat al-amānī*. There are no manuscript copies of this in the database. He also mentions al-Nasafī’s (d. 1310) *Madārik al-tanzīl wa-ḥaqā’iq al-ta’wīl*, as does the *Fath al-shakūr*, although the only copy of this text in the database is in Nouakchott (Bayān 200, 203, 205).

prosody. For any serious student aspiring to advance in the Islamic sciences, mastering the various branches of Arabic linguistics was essential. The texts in this field were central building blocks to the “core curriculum” many of those in widest circulation in West Africa were didactic texts, in verse, meant for memorization. Copies of the large, major treatises in these fields are rare. The texts that were in wide use in West Africa indicate that Arabic language was considered a practical field, not a domain likely to support detailed investigations. That said, we also know that regional figures like Abdallahi dan Fodio and al-Mukhtār Būnah (d. 1805/6) were extremely sophisticated masters of the Arabic language; other West African scholars also appear among the “core curriculum” authors of works on grammar, morphology and rhetoric.

1. *Lexicons and Lexicology*

Dictionaries are large and valuable texts. They are also rarely found in their entirety. Al-Firūzābādī's (d. 1415) *al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṭ* is by far the best-known dictionary in West Africa. It is mentioned in the *Ta'riḫ al-fattāsh*,²³ and there are dozens of copies (or fragments) of it across the database (although there are none in Nigeria). Two commentaries on the dictionary, both by Aḥmad b. 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Hilālī al-Sijilmāsī (d. 1659), are widely available although they are not mentioned by the West African writers consulted for this paper (and again, there are no copies in Nigeria). The Andalusian Ibn Sida's (d. 1066) dictionary entitled *al-Muḥkam* is mentioned by scholars in Timbuktu, and there is a record of it having been copied there,²⁴ but it does not appear in the database in manuscript form (the first print edition, from Egypt, is in Boutilimit). There is, however, a copy of al-Jawhari's (d. c.1007–8) important dictionary, *al-Ṣiḥāḥ fī 'l-lughā*, in all the collections in the database except Nigeria, although it is not mentioned by the West African authorities consulted for this paper.

2. *Lexicology*

Among the better-known works of lexicology is the *Muthallath Quṭrub*, a short text written in the eighth century in Basra by Abū 'Alī

²³ Hunwick, *Timbuktu and the Songhay Empire*, lxi.

²⁴ Ibid., lxi, 353–5. Ibn Sīda [‘Alī b. Ismā‘īl b. Sīda al-Andalusī] (d. 1066), *Kitāb al-muḥkam wa-'l-muḥīṭ al-a'ẓam* (GAL I 309, SI 542).

Muḥammad b. al-Mustanīr Quṭrub (d. 821). This is a book about words with the same consonant-skeleton that have different meanings according to the vowels that they take.²⁵ There are many copies of this text in the database, as well as numerous copies of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. ‘Abd al-Wāḥid al-Fāsī al-Miknāsī’s (d. 1557) versified commentary on it. Another very well known work is al-Ḥarīrī’s (d. 1122) *al-Maqāmāt*, a series of dialogues, meant to be memorized, that introduce difficult and rare vocabulary. This text is mentioned by Abdallahi dan Fodio and in the *Faṭḥ al-shakūr*.

3. Morphology

Ibn Mālīk’s (d. 1274) *Lāmiyyat al-af‘āl* was a very popular didactic poem on morphology, written as a complement to his more famous *Alfiyya* on syntax (see below). It is mentioned in the *Faṭḥ al-shakūr*, and there are many copies of it in the database. Ibn Mālīk is also the author of a poem listing all the words that end in *alif maqṣūra* and *alif mamdūda*.²⁶ Ibn Durayd’s (d. 933) poem, also on this topic, appears to have been important outside of Mauritania. The two other main works on morphology that were evidently studied in West Africa outside of Nigeria are Ibn Ḥājjib’s (d. 1249), *al-Shāfiyya* and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Alī b. Ṣāliḥ al-Makkūdī al-Fāsī’s (d. 1405), *al-Baṣṭ wa-l-ta‘rīf fī ‘ilm al-taṣrīf*, which is mentioned in the *Faṭḥ al-shakūr*.

4. Syntax

The two most widely used works of syntax in West Africa were Ibn Mālīk’s poem known as the *Alfiyya*, and Ibn Ājurrūm’s (d. 1223) concise treatise known as *al-Muqaddima al-Ājurrumiyya*. These texts are mentioned frequently in West African sources and they are widespread in the database. Among the commentaries on the *Alfiyya* that are most widespread (except in Nigeria) are those of al-Ushmūnī (d. 1467), al-Suyūṭī, and that of the Mauritanian scholar al-Mukhtār Būnah (d. 1805/6). Numerous copies of Ibn Hishām’s (d. 1360) commentary on Ibn Mālīk appear in Nouakchott, Shinqīṭī and Ségou, and there are also copies of a commentary on Ibn Hishām by Khālīd b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Jirjāwī al-Azharī (d. 1499) that are found in Mauritania

²⁵ G. Troupeau, “Quṭrub, the Cognomen of Abū ‘Alī Muḥammad b. al-Mustanīr,” *Encyclopedia of Islam*. 2nd edition [hereafter *EI2*].

²⁶ H. Fleisch, “Ibn Mālīk,” *EI2*.

and Mali. Ibn Mālik's very concise manual on grammar, *Tashīl al-fawā'id wa-takmil al-maqāsid*, appears to have been much less popular than its commentaries. There are a number of West African commentaries and versifications of Ibn Ājurrūm's *Muqaddima*, but the only widespread commentaries are by Khālid b. 'Abd Allāh al-Jirjāwī al-Azharī, and the Boutilimit scholar Sidiyya b. al-Mukhtār al-Ntishāi'ī (d. 1868).

Abdallahi dan Fodio mentions that he studied two manuals on grammar by Ibn Hishām (d. 1360). These are *Qaṭr al-nadā wa-ball al-ṣadā*, of which there are five copies in the database,²⁷ and the *Shudhūr al-dhahab fī ma'rifat kalām al-'arab*, of which there are seven copies and five commentaries. Abdallahi does not mention Ibn Hishām's great treatise on grammar, the *Mughnī 'l-labīb 'an kutub al-a'arīb*. This is not a didactic text like the aforementioned titles, but there are copies of it in Nouakchott, Timbuktu and Ségou, which suggests that it must have been known in areas further west.

Al-Ḥarīrī's didactic *urjūza* poem on grammar entitled *Mulḥat al-i'rāb* is another text mentioned by Abdallahi dan Fodio. There are more than a dozen copies of this across the database, as well as eight copies of Suyūṭī's commentary on it. Abdallahi dan Fodio also mentions Ibn Wardī's (d. 1349) *al-Tuḥfa al-wardiyya fī mushkilāt al-i'rāb*, an *urjūza* poem on grammar of which there are about a dozen copies in the database, although none in the Mauritanian collections.²⁸ In addition, Abdallahi dan Fodio mentions al-Suyūṭī's didactic text on grammar called *al-Farīda*, of which there are six copies in the database.

An important Moroccan text on grammar that was studied in West Africa is the grammatical poem by Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Salāwī al-Mijrādī's (d. 1376–7) called the *Lāmiyya*, also known as the *Naẓm al-jumal*.²⁹ In the database, this text only appears in the form of its commentary by al-Rasmūkī (d. 1639) and Muḥammad Mayyāra's

²⁷ Abdallahi mentions a commentary by Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Sibṭ al-Māridīnī (d. 1506), but the only three copies are in the Ségou collection in the database (Idā' 570); the *Faṭḥ al-shakūr* mentions a different commentary by Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Qādir al-Fāsī (d. 1704) entitled *Takmil al-marām fī sharḥ shawāhid Ibn Hishām*, of which there are single copies in Boutilimit, Shinqīṭī and Ségou (*Faṭḥ*, 336).

²⁸ Abdallahi also mentions that he studied a West African commentary on Ibn Wardī by Muḥammad al-Wālī b. Sulaymān b. Abī Muḥammad al-Wālī al-Fulānī (fl. 1688–9) entitled *Mu'in al-ṭālib wa-mufīd al-rāghib* (ALA II, 36). There are copies of this text in northern Nigeria, Timbuktu and Ségou.

²⁹ El Hamel, *La vie intellectuelle*, 116.

(d. 1662) commentary on al-Rasmūki.³⁰ Finally, Ibn Ḥājib’s (d. 1249) famous work on syntax called *al-Kāfiyya* is not mentioned by our West African authorities, but it is extant in the database, mainly through commentaries and versifications, albeit not among the Nigerian records.

Two additional West African authors, Muḥammad Bābā al-Tinbuktu (d. 1606) and Sidi al-Mukhtār al-Kuntī (d. 1812) achieved the distinction of their works on grammar spreading well beyond the Timbuktu region; the former from Wādān to Nigeria and the latter from Timbuktu to southwestern Mauritania.

5. *Rhetoric*

The main books in the field of rhetoric derive from Yūsuf b. Abū Bakr al-Sakkākī’s (d. 1229) *Miftāḥ a-‘ulūm*, which does not appear to have been read in West Africa. However, the Syrian al-Qazwīnī’s (d. 1338) *Talkhīṣ al-miftāḥ* is mentioned by Abdallahi dan Fodio, al-Sa’dī, and in the *Faṭḥ al-shakūr*.³¹ There are two copies of this work according to the database, in Ségou, and we know a third was among the books purchased by Shaykh Sīdiyya in Morocco in the 1830s and brought back to Boutilimit.³² Commentaries on it are found in the Timbuktu, Nouakchott, Shinqītī and Kano collections.

6. *Literature/Prosody*

The following texts are explicitly about prosody, or more general works of poetry that can best be understood as models for poetic composition. Serious studies in this field generally began with collections of pre-Islamic poetry, which are widespread in the database. One poem in particular, al-Shanfarā’s *Lāmiyyat al-‘arab*, is mentioned in the *Faṭḥ al-shakūr*, and appears itself or with commentaries frequently in the database. This is a famous poem of the so-called “brigand-poets” genre, in which the hero-outcast describes his trials and tribulations.³³ Another famous poem mentioned in the *Faṭḥ al-shakūr* is al-Ṭughrā’ī’s (d. 1121) *Lāmiyyat al-‘ajam*, of which there are many copies and commentaries in the database. In this poem, the speaker complains

³⁰ There is only a single copy of Muḥammad Mayyāra’s commentary in the database, in Timbuktu.

³¹ Idā’ 566; TS 65–6; Faṭḥ 161, 169, 322, 355, 366.

³² Stewart, “A New Source,” 230.

³³ R.A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 79–81.

about the corruption of Baghdad and how his younger contemporaries in that city ill-treat him.³⁴ Another popular poem was Ibn Durayd's eulogy, *al-Maqṣūra*. Abdallahi dan Fodio and al-Sa'dī both mention al-Khazrajī's (fl. 13th century) poem on prosody, of which there are five copies in the database.³⁵

c) *Prophet Muḥammad*

The fields of knowledge associated with the life and actions of the Prophet Muḥammad are obviously important for devotional reasons, but they also played an important role as sources of positive law and as a model for personal behavior and social and political organization. We have divided our treatment of this field into five sections: biography of the Prophet Muḥammad (*sīra*), devotional poetry, ḥadīth collections and sciences of ḥadīth, and history.

1. *Biography of the Prophet Muḥammad (sīra)*

In the West African Islamic tradition, as in other areas of the Muslim world after the classical period, the genre of biography of the Prophet Muḥammad was suffused with devotional literature. As such, there appears to have been less interest in the earliest, longer, and more sober historical accounts of the life of the Prophet such as that of Ibn Hishām (d. 835). There is only a single copy of his *sīra* in the database (in Boutilimit).³⁶ The biography of the Prophet that was most popular in West Africa was the later, more devotional recension of the Andalusian Mālikī scholar al-Qaḍī 'Iyāḍ (d. 1149) in his *Kitāb al-shifā' bi-ta'rif ḥuqūq al-muṣṭafā*.³⁷ This work is mentioned in many West African writings as the central work of *sīra*, and there are dozens of copies of the work across the database.

Another text that can be broadly classified under the category of biography of the Prophet is the work on the Prophet's attributes by

³⁴ F.C. de Blois, "al-Ṭughrā'i," *EI2*; Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs*, 326.

³⁵ Abdallahi dan Fodio (Idā' 569) and the *Faṭḥ al-shakūr* (169, 366) mention a commentary on this poem by Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Sahrif al-Ḥasanī al-Gharnāṭī al-Sabtī (d. 1359), *Sharḥ al-khazrajiyya*. There may be a copy in Timbuktu in the database.

³⁶ The *Faṭḥ al-shakūr* mentions the Moroccan Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Sūsī al-Būsa'īdī al-Hashtūkī al-Ṣanhāji's (d. 1637), *Ishrāq al-badr 'alā 'adad ahl badr*, on the fighters at the Battle of Badr (El Hamel, *La vie intellectuelle*, 200). The only manuscript copy of this work is in the Ségou collection.

³⁷ Wilks points to this as one of the three central works studied to be a scholar in Dyula tradition. "The Transmission of Islamic Learning in the Western Sudan."

the great *ḥadīth* collector al-Tirmidhī (d. 892). There are six copies of this work in the database (none recorded in Ségou or Nigeria), but also a number of West African compositions based on the information in this work.

Al-Qaṣṭallānī (d. 1517), the Egyptian commentator on al-Bukhārī, is best known in West Africa not for his long *ḥadīth* commentaries,³⁸ but for his biography of the Prophet entitled *al-Mawāhib al-laduniyya fī 'l-minaḥ al-muḥammadiyya*. This is a work that attained popularity across the Muslim world,³⁹ although we find only a handful of copies in the database (in Ségou, Timbuktu and Boutilimit).

One of the most popular West African compositions about the Prophet's life, and about devotion to the Prophet, is Sīdī al-Mukhtār al-Kuntī's (d. 1811) *Nafḥ al-ṭīb fī 'l-ṣalāt 'alā 'l-Nābī 'l-ḥabīb*, of which there are more than a dozen copies in the database (in Ségou, Timbuktu and Boutilimit). By contrast nineteen copies of the Maghribi scholar 'Abd al-'Azīz b. 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Lamṭī al-Miknāsī's (d. 1475) *Qurrat al-abṣār fī sīrat al-Nābī al-mukhtār* are found throughout the collections.

2. Devotional Poetry

The field of Islamic devotional poetry is vast and begins with the 7th century Ka'b b. Zuhayr's *Bānat su'ād*, a poem written after Ka'b b. Zuhayr's conversion to Islam at the Prophet's Madina. This poem is well known around the Muslim world and in West Africa. There are several West African commentaries on this poem but none are widespread across the whole region.

A number of popular poems devoted to aspects of the Prophet Muḥammad's character, or events in his life, achieved wide popularity. One of the most popular was al-Fāzāzī's (d. 1230) *al-'Ishrīniyāt*, a collection of poems in praise of the Prophet, each with twenty verses. These poems are mentioned in many of the West African sources we have consulted, and there are many copies in the database from every region.⁴⁰ From the thirteenth century, it became popular amongst those interested in poetry, to add additional material to existing poems, especially religious devotional verse. One popular format for

³⁸ There are two copies of his *Irshād al-sārī fī sharḥ Bukhārī* in Timbuktu and Niamey.

³⁹ C. Brockelmann, "al-Qaṣṭallānī," *EI2*.

⁴⁰ There are large numbers in the northern Nigerian material suggesting that this was a especially popular work in this region.

adding to poems was called “*takhmīs*,” which involved adding three hemistichs to each “*bayt*” (or “line,” which consists of two hemistichs each) of a poem, thus creating a block of five hemistichs from the original two.⁴¹ Such additions to poems could act as commentaries, adding information to explain the original poem. One popular example of this form in West Africa was the *Takhmīs* on al-Fāzāzī’s *‘Ishrīniyāt* by Ibn Mahīb (Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Mahīb). It is mentioned in al-Sa’dī’s *Ta’rikh al-sūdān* and in the *Fath al-shakūr*. There are dozens of copies in the database. Among the most popular West African commentaries on the *‘Ishrīniyāt* was al-Kashnāwī’s (d. 1667), *al-Nafḥa al-‘anbariyya*, although there are only a few copies in the database.

Perhaps the most popular devotional poem in the Muslim world is al-Būṣīrī’s (d. 1295/6) poem named after the Prophet’s mantle, known as *al-Burda*.⁴² This poem also carries a longer title, *al-Kawākib al-durriyya fī madḥ khayr al-bariyya*, and it owes much of its popularity to the medicinal value that its verses are believed to hold. The database contains dozens of copies of the poem, as well as commentaries and other writings about it, but the only one that seems to have been moderately widespread was that written by the Egyptian Khālid b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Jirjāwī al-Azharī. Al-Būṣīrī is also the author of another poem in praise of the Prophet Muḥammad known as *al-Qaṣīda al-hamziyya*, which is also widely available. Extant commentaries on this work include one by al-Naẓīfī,⁴³ and another by Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytāmī (d. 1567).

Another popular devotional work is al-Jazūlī’s (d. 1465) book of prayers in honor of the Prophet entitled *Dalā’il al-khayrāt*. This is frequently mentioned by the West African authors consulted here, and there are dozens of copies in the database from all across the region. The most popular commentary is that of Ibn Sulaym al-Awjili (d. 1801/2).⁴⁴

Other popular poems in praise of the Prophet include al-Shaqrāṭīsī’s (d. 1073), *al-Qaṣīda al-lāmiyya*, which is also mentioned in the *Fath*

⁴¹ P.F. Kennedy, “Takhmīs,” *EI2*.

⁴² A bilingual Arabic-English version of this poem is published in Stefan Sperl “Al-Būṣīrī (d. c. 1296): The *Burda* in praise of the Prophet Muḥammad,” in Sperl and Christopher Shackle ed., *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa, vol. II* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 388–411.

⁴³ GAL SI 471.

⁴⁴ On the *Dalā’il al-khayrāt*, see Vincent Cornell, *Realm of the Saint: Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), 170–7. On Ibn Sulaym al-Awjili, see ALA II, 51.

al-shakūr. The Moroccan Ibn Marzūq’s (d. 1439) *al-Qaṣīda al-mīmīyya* which praises the Prophets and saints is also widespread. The *Faṭḥ al-shakūr* also mentions al-Tawzarī’s (d. 1113) *al-Qaṣīda al-munfarīja* which is also known as *al-Faraj ba’d al-shidda*; there are seven copies in the database.

Some of the imprecision in the AMMS cataloguing (which was dependent upon the original cataloguing of individual collections) is evident in the case of a poem in praise of the Prophet and its commentary entitled *Ḥullat al-siyārī fī madḥ khayr al-warā*. This is the title of a commentary on a poem by Ibn Jābir (d. 1378) called *Badī’iyyat al-‘imyān*. The commentary was written by the poet’s friend and colleague Aḥmad al-Gharnāṭī al-Ru’aynī (d. 1377). Both were from Andalusia, both went to Egypt to pursue their studies, and both finally settled in Syria.⁴⁵ According to the database records, the text and commentary are both attributed to Ibn Jābir. There are about a dozen copies in the database, but none in Mauritania. Three authors there, Muḥammad al-Yadālī (d.1753), ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Ṭālib Aḥmad b. al-Ḥājj Ḥamā Allāh al-Ghallāwī al-Tīshītī (d. 1794) and Sīdī ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Ḥājj Ibrāhīm al-‘Alawī (d. 1818) wrote works that spread as far as Timbuktu and Ségou.

3. *Ḥadīth collections*

We include *ḥadīth* in this section out of convenience rather than logical division of the Islamic sciences. Not surprisingly, the most important *ḥadīth* collections of al-Bukhārī and Muslim are mentioned by almost all of the West African authorities on Islamic education consulted for this chapter. There are also many copies of these works in all the collections of the database. There are also several widespread derivative texts such as ‘Abd Allāh b. Sa’īd b. Abī Jamra al-Azdī al-Andalusī’s (d. 1296), *Bahjat al-nufūs* and Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-Ṣaghānī (d. 1252), *Mashāriq al-anwār al-nabawīya fī ’l-ṣiḥāḥ al-akhbār al-muṣṭafawīya*.

Aside from the canonical collections, one finds a number of texts in the tradition of the “forty *ḥadīths*,” in which a selection of the Prophet’s *ḥadīths* on a particular subject, or the most “representative” *ḥadīths*, are brought together in a smaller collection. There are two examples in the database, the collection of Ibn Wad’ān (d. 1101) which are found

⁴⁵ S.A. Bonebakker, “al-Ru’aynī, Abū Ja’far Aḥmad al-Gharnāṭī (or al-Ilbīrī) al-Mālikī, d. 779/1377,” *EI2*.

only in Mauritanian libraries, and the more famous collection by the Syrian al-Nawawī (d. 1277), which is more widely distributed. There are commentaries on al-Nawawī mentioned in our written sources, notably that of Ibn Ḥajar, mentioned by al-Ḥājj ‘Umar Tall,⁴⁶ but they do not appear to have been widespread. Another popular collection of *ḥadīth* was Ibn al-Jazarī’s (d. 1429), *Ḥiṣn al-ḥaṣīn*, which is a collection used for prayers.⁴⁷

4. *Sciences of ḥadīth* (‘Ulūm al-ḥadīth)

In the field of the sciences of *ḥadīth*, some of the most important medieval authorities such Ibn Ṣalāḥ (d. 1245) and Ibn Ḥajar al-Asqalānī (d. 1449) are mentioned by our West African authorities, but they do not appear widely in the database.⁴⁸ However, al-‘Irāqī’s versification of Ibn Ṣalāḥ’s work on the sciences of *ḥadīth*, called the *Alfiyyat al-‘Irāqī*, is mentioned among the works studied in West Africa, and it appears across all the collections in the database. There are also copies of the Egyptian Zakariyyā’ al-Anṣārī’s (d. 1520) commentary on it. The only other works of any distribution in this field are by the Mauritanian scholar Sīdi ‘Abd Allāh b. Sīdi Ibrāhīm al-‘Alawī (d. 1818), whose works are found in the Mauritanian and Malian collections.

5. *History*

We have inserted history here as a matter of convenience and acknowledgement of likely interest, although the subject was not one of widespread study judging from the contents of West African libraries. By this we do not mean that West African library owners had no interest in history; rather, that the histories we find tend to be local or regional works, and even these are not widespread. There is evidence in a

⁴⁶ Bayān 179; Ibn Ḥajar al-Ḥaytamī [Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ḥajar al-Ḥaytamī] (d. 1567), *al-Fath al-mubīn fī sharḥ al-arba‘īn al-nawawīyya* (GAL II 387–88, SII 527). The only manuscript copy of this in the database is in Timbuktu.

⁴⁷ This was part of the curriculum in Fez according to G. Delphin, *Fas, son université et l’enseignement supérieur musulman* (Paris: Ohallamel, 1889), 31.

⁴⁸ Ibn Ḥajar al-Asqalānī [Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. Ḥajar al-Asqalānī] (d. 1449), *Nukhbat al-fikr*, which is a commentary on Taqī al-Dīn Abū ‘Amr ‘Uthmān b. al-Ṣalāḥ al-Shahrazūrī’s (d. 1243) *‘Ulūm al-ḥadīth*, mentioned by al-Ḥājj ‘Umar Tall (Bayān 210) and in the *Fath al-shakūr* (253). The only manuscript copy is in Boutilimit. There is a versification of Ibn Ḥajar’s *Nukhbat al-fikr* by the Mauritanian author al-Ḥasan b. Aghbuddi al-Zaydī al-Tīshīti (d. 1711), *Rawḍat al-azhār*. It is mentioned in the *Fath al-shakūr* (253), but the only manuscript copy of this title in the database is one copy in Timbuktu.

number of texts written by West African authors that they were aware of some of the classical historical works in the Islamic tradition. However, these texts were not mentioned by our authorities on Islamic education nor do they appear in the database. Except for the history of the first four caliphs, the study of history as we think of it today appears to have been only of secondary interest. Despite the fact that writers such as Aḥmad Bābā quote Ibn Khaldūn in his *Mi'rāj al-ṣu'ūd*,⁴⁹ there are no copies of Ibn Khaldūn's great history in the database. What we see instead are shorter works that are more focused on early Islamic history, presumably because such works concerned important sources of Islamic knowledge, as well as the early transmitters of *ḥadīth*. The principal source of wider Islamic historical information about the early Islamic period for West Africa seems to have been al-Suyūṭī's *Ta'riḫ al-khulafā'*, which appears under this title and in various abridgements and versifications by local authors. The other main historical text found in the database, and also mentioned in the *Fath al-shakūr*, is al-Himyarī's (d. 1237) account of the campaigns of the Prophet and the first four caliphs. The one local historian who was collected well beyond his home region was Abdullahi dan Fodio whose history of the *jihād* is found in Ségou and Timbuktu as well as in Nigeria.⁵⁰ There are only five copies in our sample of Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī's (d. 1449) biographical dictionary of the companions of the Prophet, *al-Iṣāba fi'l-tamyīz al-ṣaḥāba*.

d) *Jurisprudence* (fiqh)

By following the Mālikī school (*madhhab*) of jurisprudence, West Africa is part of the dominant legal tradition in the western Muslim world, including the vast majority of North Africa and formerly Islamic Spain (Andalusia). The core Mālikī texts were central to the “core curriculum” across West Africa.

Islamic law is a vast and complicated field divided into many sub-disciplines. We have presented the texts used in West Africa according to five broad sub-divisions that are roughly consistent with the major categories of legal materials: sources (*uṣūl*), schools (*madhhab*)

⁴⁹ Aḥmad Bābā, *Mi'rāj al-ṣu'ūd: Aḥmad Bābā's Replies on Slavery*, ed. John Hunwick and Fatima Harrak, (Rabat: Institute of African Studies, 2000), 24–6.

⁵⁰ Murray Last suggests this absence of ‘secular’ writing may be an artifact of the high cost of paper (“The Book in the Sokoto Caliphate,” 44), although this evidently did not inhibit the spread of Abdullahi's account of events in the Sokoto region.

including foundational texts and manuals, didactic texts, legal precepts/maxims (*qawā'id*), and legal cases/opinions.

1. *Uṣūl al-fiqh*

Uṣūl al-fiqh ("sources of jurisprudence") is devoted to the theoretical issues about the sources of substantive law, and the rules of interpretation by which legal principles were extrapolated from different sources. It is, broadly speaking, a sub-field devoted to understanding the reasoning behind existing legal norms, and at least in theory, to the methodology required to arrive at new interpretations. Because West African Muslims participated in a wider Mālikī tradition in common with the majority of North African Muslim scholars, we would expect to find significant parallels in the curriculum of these two regions. Indeed, as with the foundational texts of the Mālikī school, the extant works of *uṣūl al-fiqh* in West Africa closely mirror those studied in Fez.⁵¹ The foundational text studied in Fez was al-Subkī's (d. 1370) *Jam' al-jawāmi'*.⁵² There are copies of this text in Timbuktu and in the Mauritanian collections, but al-Maḥallī's commentary on it and al-Suyūṭī's versification of it are even more widespread. This confirms what we would expect: the text would normally be studied with one of these aids. We will return to the possible implications of the apparent paucity of supporting glosses of this critical work.

According to A. Samb, al-Juwaynī's (d. 1085) *Waraqāt* was a fundamental work of *uṣūl al-fiqh* in Islamic education in West Africa.⁵³ Oddly, there are only two copies of the *Waraqāt* itself in the database, but like al-Subkī's text, there are numerous copies of commentaries and five different versifications in circulation by various authors, many of whom are West African. Because the *Waraqāt* is a short but

⁵¹ On the curriculum at Fez, see Delphin, *Fas*, 169–70.

⁵² The *Jam' al-jawāmi'* is itself a work based on commentaries on Ibn Ḥājjib's *Mukhtaṣar al-far'i* and 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar al-Bayḍāwī's (d. 1316) *Minhāj al-wuṣūl ilā 'ilm al-uṣūl* (GAL SI 741). In his *Bayān mā waqa'a*, al-Ḥājj 'Umar Tall mentions a commentary on Ibn Ḥājjib's *Mukhtaṣar* by Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Salām b. Yūsūf al-Hawwārī al-Tūnisī (d. 1348–9) (Bayān 210), but there is no manuscript copy of this text in the database. Copies of Ibn Ḥājjib's *Mukhtaṣar* are in Boutilimit, Nouakchott and possibly Ségou and Niamey but there are no copies of al-Bayḍāwī's *Minhāj*. So, it appears that as in Fes, West African students began with the *Jam' al-jawāmi'*.

⁵³ Amar Samb, *Essai sur la contribution du Sénégal à la littérature d'expression arabe* (Dakar: IFAN, 1972), 27.

difficult text that incorporates certain Ash‘arī notions into juridical methodology,⁵⁴ it should not surprise us that its study was accompanied by commentaries and versifications. The most widespread commentary in the database is Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ḥaṭṭāb al-Mālikī al-Ru‘aynī al-Ṭarābluṣī’s (d. 1540/1), *Qurrat al-‘ayn*. The most widespread versification of this work was written by the Egyptian Yaḥyā b. Nūr al-Dīn al-‘Imriṭī (d. 1581).

Another important Mālikī legal writer was al-Qarāfī (d. 1285). There are seven copies in the database of his commentary on al-Rāzī’s (d. 1209) *al-Maḥṣūl fī uṣūl al-fiqh* entitled *Tanqīḥ al-fuṣūl fī ‘ilm al-uṣūl*.⁵⁵ The only copy of al-Rāzī’s original appears to be in Timbuktu. Al-Qarāfī was also the author of a large work on *furū‘ al-fiqh* entitled *al-Dhakhīra*, of which only one copy appears in the database (in Boutilimit), and another work of *qawā’id* noted below.

Mohamed El Mokhtar Ould Bah argues in his work on the history of Mālikī writing in Mauritania that the field of *uṣūl al-fiqh* was an area in which West African scholars produced little original work, but followed closely the lead of outside authorities. It was a sub-discipline, according to Ould Bah, of secondary importance in the West African legal field.⁵⁶ Local authors did, however, produce a number of commentaries and versifications of *uṣūl al-fiqh* texts, presumably for didactic purposes. For example, the Mauritanian Sīdī ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Ḥājj Ibrāhīm al-‘Alawī wrote a poem entitled *Marāqī al-su‘ūd* in which he condensed all the essential elements of *uṣūl al-fiqh* into 20–30 manuscript pages.⁵⁷ Al-‘Alawī also wrote a commentary on this poem which runs to over two hundred manuscript pages. Both the poem and the commentary are well represented in the database.

2. *Furū‘ al-fiqh*

The parallel sub-field to *uṣūl al-fiqh* is known as *furū‘ al-fiqh* (“the branches of jurisprudence”) which refers to the corpus of positive law. For reasons of clarity, we divide this field into sub-sections of foundational texts and manuals.

⁵⁴ Brockelmann, “Al-Djuwaynī,” *EI*2.

⁵⁵ GAL SI 921.

⁵⁶ Mohamed El Mokhtar Ould Bah, *La littérature juridique et l’évolution du Malikisme en Mauritanie* (Tunis: Université de Tunis, 1981), 177.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 187–8.

2a. Foundational Texts

In the Mālikī *madhhab*, the foundational texts are ascribed to the jurist after whom the school is named, Mālik b. Anas (d. 796). It is clear from our West African sources that Mālik's *Muwattaʿa* was studied. There are ten copies of the book in the database, and eight copies of al-Zarqānī's (d. 1710) commentary on it. Although not found in Kano, in its place are four copies of the Andalusian Sulaymān b. Khalaf al-Bājī's (d. 1081) commentary, also found in Ségou (and Ghana). Saḥnūn's (d. 854) *Mudawwana* is complementary to the *Muwattaʿa* as a presentation of Mālik's views, with additional materials not found in the *Muwattaʿa*. The *Mudawwana* was an important text in the original spread of the Mālikī *madhhab* in the Muslim West and it is mentioned in many West African sources, yet there is only a single copy of this text in our database, possible due to its extreme length. There are however numerous copies of al-Barādhī's abridgement and it seems likely that this was the means by which many students encountered the work.⁵⁸ Both the *Muwattaʿa* and the *Mudawwana*, and their commentaries and/or abridgements, can be understood as standing in close relation to the later works of *uṣūl al-fiqh* in that they report the earliest principles of what would become the Mālikī school, but they are not strictly speaking theorized in the same way as the later *uṣūl* genre.⁵⁹ These texts were especially important as sources of positive law as it developed in the Mālikī school. Al-ʿUtbi's (d. 869) *al-Mustakhraja* was a foundational work of Mālikī jurisprudence in Andalusia, and it is mentioned by al-Ḥājj ʿUmar Tall in his *Bayān*,⁶⁰ but it lost its importance over time and there are no manuscript copies of it in the database.

2b. Fiqh Manuals

It is evident that the later manuals of Mālikī law were much more widely studied than the foundational works discussed above. Two texts, in particular, dominated the field: the *Risāla* of Ibn Abī Zayd (d. 996) and the *Mukhtaṣar* of Khalīl b. Iṣḥāq (d. 1374). Ibn Abī Zayd's

⁵⁸ Abū ʿI-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Zarwīlī (d. 1319), *Sharḥ al-mudawwana* is mentioned in the Fath (170), and TS (67), but there is no copy of it in the database. For reference to this work, see F. Krenkow, "Saḥnūn," *EI2*.

⁵⁹ On the difference and relationship between *furūʿ al-fiqh* and *uṣūl al-fiqh* as genres of legal literature, see Wael Hallaq, "Uṣūl al-fiqh: beyond tradition," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 3, no. 2 (1992): 181–4.

⁶⁰ GAL SI 300; Bayān 213.

Risāla is a synopsis of Mālikī law, whereas the *Mukhtaṣar* of Khalīl is an abridgement of Ibn Ḥājjib's (d. 1249) *Mukhtaṣar al-far'ī*, and is almost incomprehensible without the aid of commentaries. There are a large number of copies of the *Risāla* and Khalīl's *Mukhtaṣar* in the database, and these represent among the most widely copied texts in West Africa. The number of copies of some of its commentaries and glosses gives some indication of their popularity. Ibn Ḥājjib's *Mukhtaṣar al-far'ī* is mentioned by al-Ḥājj 'Umar Tall in the *Bayān*, and by 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Sa'dī in the *Ta'rikh al-sūdān*,⁶¹ but there is only a single copy of it in the database (in Nouakchott). Al-Ḥājj 'Umar Tall also mentions a commentary on this work by al-Hawwarī,⁶² but there is no manuscript copy of this in the database.

We have little to add to the list of commentaries on the *Risāla*. For Khalīl's *Mukhtaṣar*, al-Zurqānī's (d. 1688) commentary was among the most popular, as was al-Bannānī's (d. 1780) gloss on it. There are also numerous copies of al-Kharashī's (d. 1690) commentary and of Dardīr's (1786) two commentaries. Both of al-Tatā'ī's (d. 1535) commentaries appear to have been in wide circulation, as was al-'Abdārī's (d. 1492) *al-Tāj wa-'l-iklīl li-mukhtaṣar Khalīl*. Among West African authors, there are two dozen copies of the Mauritanian Maḥanḍ Bābā b. Ubayd al-Daymānī's (d. 1860) commentary entitled *al-Muyassar al-jalīl 'alā mukhtaṣar Khalīl*. However, all the copies are in Mauritanian libraries suggesting that the influence of this commentary was regionally limited; more widespread was the commentary by the Timbuktu savant Aḥmad Bābā. It is striking that none of these works have yet appeared in AMMS entries from Nigeria.

Ibn 'Āṣim's (d. 1427) *Tuḥfat al-ḥukkām* is another fundamental manual of Mālikī jurisprudence often mentioned by West African writers; there are dozens of copies mentioned in the database. What is less well known, because this title goes unmentioned by the West African authorities consulted here, is that Muḥammad Mayyāra's commentary was widespread. Ibn 'Askar's (d. 1332) *Irshād al-sālik* was an important *fiqh* manual in northern Nigeria and in the Dyula areas, but it does not appear to have held the same popularity elsewhere. There is only one reported copy outside of northern Nigeria (in Timbuktu). Another

⁶¹ Ibn Ḥājjib [‘Uthmān b. ‘Umar b. Abī Bakr al-Mālikī] (d.1249) (Bayān 207–8, TS 67).

⁶² Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Salām b. Yūsūf al-Hawwarī al-Tūnisī (d. 1348–9), *Sharḥ Ibn al-Ḥājjib* (Bayān 210).

work that appears to have been especially popular in northern Nigeria is al-Manūfī al-Shadhilī's (d. 1532) *al-Muqaddima al-'izziyya*. This is a *fiqh* manual that is not mentioned in our West African sources despite the fact that there are more than a dozen copies, mostly in northern Nigeria but also in Ségou, Timbuktu and Shinqīī.

Finally, al-Zaqqāq's (1506) two poems on jurisprudence are both mentioned in the *Faḥ al-shakūr* and are widely distributed in the database. The *Manhaj* is an *urjūza* poem in which al-Zaqqāq explains the principles of the Mālikī *madhhab*; the *Lāmiyya* is a poem in which al-Zaqqāq provides solutions to legal problems using the judicial practice of Fez, where he lived. Delphin mentions that the *Lāmiyya* was taught in Fez, but makes no mention of the *Manhaj*.⁶³ Works such as these document the direct influence of Moroccan legal training on the West African legal curriculum; a second influence, from Egypt is also evident, although less obvious in the database.⁶⁴

3. Didactic texts

Didactic texts include works that were composed to be teaching tools and were often used in relatively elementary levels of education. Some of these are poems that focus on particular legal issues relevant to ritual practice; others, like the treatise by Ibn al-Ḥājj (d. 1336), are sophisticated, theoretical, but admonitory works, aimed at correcting what are perceived to be shortcomings in applications of the law. In this sense, some of these texts might be categorized as polemical.

Perhaps the most important didactic text is al-Akhḍārī's (d. 1585) *Mukhtaṣar fi 'l-'ibādāt*, an elementary textbook on ritual duties according to the Mālikī *madhhab*.⁶⁵ It is not clear that all the copies of al-Akhḍārī's legal texts in the database are the same, because they are often referred to by the author's name in the place of a title. However, it is obvious that this was an important didactic text for beginners in West Africa; the popular derivative texts, according to the database, were versifications of this work that helped students in committing it

⁶³ Delphin, *Fas*, 32.

⁶⁴ As we have suggested above, the direct Egyptian influence may have been stronger in areas further east such as northern Nigeria. Al-Ḥājj 'Umar Tall mentions the influential Egyptian jurist Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Sunbāwī al-Amīr al-Kabīr al-Malikī's (d. 1817), *Majmū' al-Amīr [al-Majmū' fi 'l-fiqh]* (GAL II 486; SII 738), but there is no evidence of this text in the database. The Bayān also mentions the Tunisian Qāsim b. 'Isā al-Nājī's (d. 1433), *Sharḥ risālat Ibn Abī Zayd*, but there are no copies in the database.

⁶⁵ J. Schacht, "al-Akhḍārī," *EI2*.

to memory. Another popular text is ‘Abd al-Bārī al-Rifā’ī al-‘Ashmāwī’s (fl. 16th century) *al-Muqaddima*, which is mentioned by Abdallahi dan Fodio and in the *Faṭḥ al-shakūr*. There are copies of this title across the database (although not in northern Nigeria). A number of West African commentaries on this work are found in the database, but none appears to have achieved widespread popularity.

There are certainly shorter works devoted to particular ritual practices that are not as obvious in the database, nor mentioned by our West African authorities. Some shorter works by West African authors appear to have achieved some popularity, including two short texts by Usman dan Fodio that were known in Ségou, Timbuktu, and in Nigeria.

Finally, we have included in this section the *Durrat al-ghawwāṣ* by Ibn Farḥūn (d. 1397), a Mālikī scholar from Madina. This is a compilation of a thousand conundrums or riddles (*alghāz*) in jurisprudence.⁶⁶

4. *al-Qawā’id al-fiqhiyya*

The *qawā’id* are the legal precepts or maxims of jurisprudence derived from the different areas or branches of substantive law. As such, they consist of theoretical guidelines in the different areas of *fiqh* such as evidence, transactions, civil law, etc. They are derived from the body of substantive law, rather than from the sources or methodology used in deriving the *fiqh* in the first place, as was the case with *uṣūl al-fiqh*. Although similar in form, the *qawā’id* are understood to be a completely separate branch of juridical literature from the *uṣūl al-fiqh*.⁶⁷ The *qawā’id* manuals appeared after the full development of the *madhhabs* and are internal to each school. This type of literature blossomed only beginning in the thirteenth century.⁶⁸

We have listed four works here, three of which appear to be widespread. The one that is not is Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfī’s (d. 1295) long and important work on *qawā’id* entitled *Kitāb anwār al-burūq*. It is mentioned by Abdallahi dan Fodio and al-Ḥājj ‘Umar Tall as a work that they had studied, but there are only three copies in the database (in Boutilimit, Ségou and Shinqīṭī) and another copy of a commentary

⁶⁶ Aḥmad Bābā, *Nayl al-ibtihāj bi-taṭrīz al-dībāj*, in the margins of Ibn Farḥūn, *al-Dībāj al-mudhahhab fī a’yān ‘ulamā’ al-madhhab* (Cairo, 1932/3), 32.

⁶⁷ Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 7.

⁶⁸ W.P. Heinrichs, “Qawā’id Fikhiyya,” *EI2*. See also Heinrichs “Qawā’id as a genre of legal literature,” in *Studies in Islamic Legal Theory*, ed. Bernard Weiss (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 365–84.

on this work (in Timbuktu). The other three works are al-Wansharisī's (d. 1508) work on *qawā'id* which is not mentioned by the West African authorities consulted for this paper; the *Kulliyāt* of Ibn Ghāzī (d. 1513), which is a short work on legal questions and judgments in the Mālikī *madhhab*;⁶⁹ and Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Juzay al-Kalbī al-Gharnāṭī's (d. 1340), *Qawānīn al-aḥkām al-shar'iyya*.

5. Legal Cases/Opinions

Finally, we include a section on compilations of legal rulings. There are a number of *fatwa/nāzila* collections, and some works which should be classified separately on advice to judges (*adab al-qādī*). None of these works have yet been identified as being in circulation in northern Nigeria.

Al-Wansharisī's *al-Mi'yār al-mu'rib* is a massive collection of *fatwas* from North Africa and Andalusia issued between the ninth and the fifteenth centuries C.E. As we should expect, a work of this size was rare; there are only two copies (both in Mauritania) and in one case it consists of lithographed volumes. Even these appear to be but a fraction of the complete work. We find a similar pattern with the other important Mālikī *fatwa* collections. The Egyptian al-Ujhūrī's (d. 1656) *fatwa* collection is mentioned by Abdallahi dan Fodio, and there are single copies in Ségou and Timbuktu. There are several West African versifications of al-Warzāzī's (d. 1752/3) collection of *nawāzil* mentioned in the *Fatḥ al-shakūr*, but none appear to have been especially widespread across the whole region.

There are also some smaller works devoted to particular issues. For example, Aḥmad Bābā's *Mir'āj al-ṣu'ūd*, which is a discussion of the illegitimacy of enslaving West African Muslims, is relatively widespread.

Ibn Salmūn's (d. 1365) *al-'Iqd al-munazzam* is a substantive manual in the *adab al-qādī* genre of legal literature, meant to be a practical guide to judges. Included in this work is a chapter on the formularies for particular types of legal documents such as contracts and sales (the *shurūt*).⁷⁰ Perhaps because of its practical nature, the text is not

⁶⁹ E. Lévi-Provençal, *Les historiens des Chorfas. Essai sur la littérature historique et biographique au Maroc du XVIe au XXe siècle* (Paris: Larose, 1922), 231 ff.

⁷⁰ Wael Hallaq, "Model Shurūt Works and the Dialectic of Doctrine and Practice," *Islamic Law and Society* 2, no. 2 (1995): 114, 116.

mentioned by the West African authorities we have consulted. There are copies in the libraries in Mauritania and in Timbuktu.

Finally, we have included here Ibn Rushd's (d. 1198) *Bidāyat al-mujtahid*, which appears to be the most important work in what became an important legal sub-field, known as *khilāf*, on the differences in legal opinions of various legal authorities.⁷¹ There are copies of this lengthy work in Boutilimit, Ségou, Timbuktu and Shinqīī. Al-Dimashqī's (fl. 14th century) *Raḥmat al-umma* is another important work in this sub-field, but there are only a few copies of this work in the database, and four copies of a work derived from it by al-Shaʿranī (d. 1565), perhaps because of the length of these texts which run more than three hundred manuscript pages.

e) *Belief* (tawhid)

The most important works of *tawḥīd* in West Africa, as in the Muslim West more generally, are the creeds written by Muḥammad b. Yusuf al-Sanūsī (d. 1486). Al-Sanūsī wrote a number of creeds meant for different levels of readers. These works give an exposition of the essentials of faith and the nature of God. By far the most common text in our collection in the most elementary of these creeds, called the *ʿAqīdat ahl al-tawḥīd al-ṣuḡhrā*.⁷² There are dozens of copies of this work across our sample. Several West African commentaries and versifications of this text exist, including one that discusses Fulfulde commentaries on the *Ṣuḡhrā* by Muḥammad al-Wālī b. Sulaymān b. Abī Muḥammad al-Fulānī (d. 1688/9),⁷³ and another that is a versification by Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Maḥmūd b. Abī Bakr b. Baghayogho al-Wangarī (d. 1655), who was the nephew of the Timbuktu scholar Muḥammad Baghayogho (d. 1594).⁷⁴ There are also copies of al-Sanūsī's own more advanced creeds, including *al-ʿAqīda al-wuṣṭā* and *al-ʿAqīda al-kubrā*. These texts are not nearly as widely distributed as the *Ṣuḡhrā*, and we have omitted the *Wuṣṭā* from our list

⁷¹ Hallaq, *Authority, Continuity, and Change in Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 125. J. Schacht, “Ikhtilāf,” *EI2*.

⁷² For a discussion of how this text was used as the basis of other didactic texts in West Africa, see Louis Brenner, *West African Sufi*, 79–86.

⁷³ ALA II, 35.

⁷⁴ ALA IV, 33.

because, despite suggestions to the contrary, the text does not appear to be widespread,⁷⁵ at least in a format that would result in it being catalogued as a distinct title.⁷⁶

Another popular didactic text, especially in Nigeria, is the Andalusian al-Qurṭubī's (d. 1171) *Urjūzat al-wildān*, also known as *Manzūmat al-Qurṭubī*, which summarizes the five "pillars" of Islam in rhyming verse designed to be easy for children to memorize, although not simplified in content.⁷⁷ Aḥmad b. 'Abd Allāh al-Jazā'irī's (d. 1479/80), *Manzūmat al-jazā'iriyya* is another widely attested and well-known versification of the Islamic creed. Ibrāhīm b. Ibrāhīm b. Ḥasan al-Laqānī's (d. 1631) commentary, *Faṭḥ al-majīd bi-kifāyat al-murīd*, is well represented, as is his didactic commentary on his own *Jawharat al-tawḥīd*. The Moroccan al-Maqqārī's (d. 1632) versification of Najm al-Dīn al-Nasafī's (d. 1142) *Aqīda* is a popular text.⁷⁸ There is only one copy of al-Nasafī's creed in our sample (in Timbuktu), but more than forty copies of al-Maqqārī's versification. Ibn 'Ashir's (d. 1630) theological poem *al-Murshid al-mu'in 'alā 'l-ḍarūri min 'ulūm al-dīn* is widely distributed, as is the commentary on this poem by Muḥammad Mayyāra (d. 1662) entitled *al-Durr al-thamīn wa-'l-mawrid al-mu'in fī sharḥ al-Murshid al-mu'in*.⁷⁹

A popular text from Sudan is *al-Jawāhir al-ḥisān fī taḥqīq ma'rifat arkān al-imām*, which was written by someone known in West Africa as Arbābā al-Khartūmī. This is the Sudanese scholar Arbāb b. 'Alī b. 'Awn b. 'Amir b. Aṣḥab (d. 1690/1), from Wad Madanī. His *nisba* identifying him with Khartoum must be a later West African appellation, since the city of Khartoum was not founded until the nineteenth century, long after Arbāb's lifetime. We also include al-Ghazālī's (d. 1111), *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* in this section on *tawḥīd* (it is the one text we cite twice, also including it in the section on Sufism), as well as the work on *tawḥīd* by al-Ghazālī's brother, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 1123) entitled *Tajrīd fī kalimat al-tawḥīd*.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ The *Wustā* is also known as *al-Jumal* and as *al-Murshida*. It is widely attested in Nigerian libraries, but except for a copy in Boutilimit, not elsewhere in our sample. See ALA IV, xix.

⁷⁶ H. Bencheneb, "Sanūsī," *EI2*.

⁷⁷ R. Y. Ebied, "Qurṭubī," *EI2*.

⁷⁸ Majīd Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*. 3rd edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 333.

⁷⁹ Ch. Pellat, "Mayyāra," *EI2*.

⁸⁰ H. Ritter, "Ghazālī," *EI2*.

Among the West African works on *tawhīd* that are well represented in our sample, Ibn Sulaym’s (d. 1801/2) poem on the attributes of God entitled *Dalīl al-qā’id li-kashf asrār šifāt al-wāhid*, along with the author’s own commentary called *al-Mazīd al-‘aqā’id* are very popular texts, especially in Nigeria. Little is known about this author; his *nisba* indicates that he is from the Libyan oasis of Awjila, but his writings appear to have been known primarily in sub-Saharan Africa. The Mauritanian al-Mukhtār Būnah’s (d. 1805/6), *Wasīlat al-sa’āda* is another well-known West African poem on *tawhīd*. An additional Mauritanian work of some significance is Muḥammad al-Yadālī’s (d. 1753) long commentary entitled *Farā’id al-fawā’id fī sharḥ qawā’id al-‘aqā’id* on his own short work called *al-Qawā’id al-‘aqā’id*. According to F. Leconte, this work includes more than just a treatment of *tawhīd*, but also the problem of the validation of saints, Aristotlian notions of astrology, and the esoteric sciences.⁸¹

f) *Sufism* (taṣawwuf)

Even more than other fields of knowledge, the works of Sufism extant in the West African libraries are surprisingly limited considering just how important Sufism is thought to be in West African Islamic practice. This suggests that it is not very useful to think of Sufism as a discreet field of knowledge in West African Islam, at least not until more recent times, and that it may be useful to distinguish between *taṣawwuf*, the study of Sufism, and literature relating to the *ṭurūq*, the sufi brotherhoods, themselves.

There are very few copies of the classical works of Sufism. The exception is al-Ghazālī’s (d. 1111) *Iḥyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn*, which is found in every region in our sample. This work, which is a manual on religious practice that goes beyond issues related to Sufism, is also one of the foundational works of Sufism around the world. While there are a few copies of classical Sufi texts written before al-Ghazālī, they are not widespread. For example, there is only one copy of al-Makkī’s (d. 998) Sufi manual entitled *Qūt al-qulūb*, upon which parts of al-Ghazālī’s *Iḥyā’* is based, and there are no copies of al-Qushayrī’s (d. 1015) *al-Risāla*. There are also no copies of the great Persian Sufi poets such as Fārid al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār, Rūmī, or Suhrawardī, and only a couple of copies

⁸¹ F. Leconte, “al-Yadālī (1096–1166/1685–1753),” *EI2*.

of the poetry of Egyptian Sufis such as Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 1235). There are a limited number of copies of al-Ghazālī's brief work entitled *Bidāyat al-hidāya* which outlines the rules of daily life for the devout and advice for avoiding sin.⁸² Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Umar b. Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh b. Salama al-Ḥabashī's (d. 1380), *Kitāb al-Nūrayn fi iṣlāḥ al-dārayn* is widely attested. This is an admonitory work on *taqwa* and related issues. It contains a large number of supplications.

The influence of important later Sufis such as Ibn al-'Arabī (d. 1240) or the Egyptian 'Abd al-Wahhāb b. Aḥmad al-Sha'rānī (d. 1565) is difficult to measure using our bibliographic data. There are copies of their works in the collections, but there is not a single title that is widely attested. These authors are mentioned by West African writers as authors that they read,⁸³ but the impression that our data leaves is that insofar as the ideas of Ibn al-'Arabī were influential in West Africa, they were not transmitted by his major writings but through the filter of Shādhilī authors such as the Egyptian Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh al-Iskandarī (d. 1309) or the Moroccan Aḥmad Zarrūq (d. 1493). These two writers are the most popular Sufi writers in our sample of libraries. Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh's *al-Hikam al-'aṭā'iyya*, which is a very well-known collection of Sufi maxims derived from the teachings of Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (d. 1258), is mentioned many times in the *Faṭḥ al-shakūr* and there are copies of it almost everywhere. Aḥmad Zurrūq's commentary on this work is also widely attested. There are also a number of copies of Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh's *Miṭṭah al-filāḥ wa-miṣbāḥ al-arwāḥ*, which is a manual of Sufi devotional practice that includes an extensive discussion of *dhikr*.⁸⁴ Aḥmad Zarrūq's Shādhilī *wazīfa*, which he claimed was dictated to him by the Prophet Muḥammad while sitting on his tomb at Madina,⁸⁵ is widely distributed, as are a number of other works by the same author. Among the best known are his *Qawā'id al-taṣawwuf* which is also known as *Qawā'id al-Zarrūq*, a poem presenting the

⁸² On this last work, see W. Montgomery Watt, "Ghazālī," *EI2*.

⁸³ On Ibn al-'Arabī, see Hiskett, *The Sword of Truth: The Life and Times of the Shehu Usuman dan Fodio* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 60. On al-Sha'rānī, see B.G. Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods in Nineteenth-Century Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 32, 95, 147.

⁸⁴ Richard J.A. McGregor, *Sanctity and Mysticism in Medieval Egypt: The Wafā' Sufi Order and the Legacy of Ibn 'Arabī* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 30.

⁸⁵ C.E. Bosworth and F. de Jong, "Wazīfa," *EI2*.

main tenets of Sufism and two hundred brief rules intended for novices.⁸⁶ Muḥammad al-Yadālī’s (d. 1753), *Khatimat al-taṣawwuf* is patterned after Aḥmad Zarrūq’s poem, and is often found together with it. The *Khatima* is a 19-line poem.⁸⁷

Aḥmad Zarrūq’s *al-Naṣiḥa al-kāfiyya* is a more substantive work in which he connects the different branches of the religious sciences to Sufism. This work also appears to have been popular, although it is less well distributed and there are only six copies in our sample.⁸⁸ We should not be surprised at the popularity of Aḥmad Zarrūq who is in some ways a figure not unlike al-Ghazālī, in that he is understood as a proponent of a very sober form of Sufism. Aḥmad Zarrūq famously said, “Be a legist first and a Sufi second, not a Sufi first and a legist second.”⁸⁹ Another popular Shādhilī text is the Moroccan al-Yūsī’s (d. 1691), *Dāliyyat al-Yūsī*, which is a poem rhyming in the Arabic letter *dāl*, about al-Yūsī’s Sufi master Ibn Nāṣir (d. 1674) and his teachings. The poem was composed in 1666 and it is usually accompanied by the author’s own commentary entitled *Nayl al-amānī*.⁹⁰ There are more than thirty copies of this text in our sample.

The Tijānī-Qādirī debates that students of West African Islam will expect to see reflected in an exercise of reconstructing a “core curriculum” are not as extensive as might be expected. The only texts that are widely distributed in the Qādirīyya camp are a number of works by Sīdī al-Mukhtār al-Kuntī (d. 1811), who established a prominent *ṭariqa* in the Azawād region north of the Niger Bend at the end of the eighteenth century. His son Sīdī Muḥammad also wrote a number of works that are relatively widespread. But other well-known Kunta writers such as Aḥmad al-Bakkāy al-Kuntī (d. 1865) do not figure prominently across the libraries of our database. On the Tijāniyya side, the order’s foundational text about the life of Aḥmad al-Tijānī by the Moroccan ‘Alī Ḥarāzīm (d. 1856) entitled *Jawāhir al-ma‘ānī* is the only non-West African text widely attested. There are a dozen copies of al-Ḥājj ‘Umar Tall’s (d. 1863), *Rimāḥ ḥizb al-raḥīm*, but only three

⁸⁶ On this poem, see Ali Fahmi Khushaim, *Zarrūq the Sufi: A Guide in the Way and a Leader to the Truth* (Tripoli: General Company for Publication, 1976), 64.

⁸⁷ F. Leconte, “al-Yadālī (1096–1166/1685–1753),” *EI2*.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁸⁹ Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 197.

⁹⁰ Jacques Berque, *Al-Yousi: Problèmes de la culture marocaine au XVIIème siècle* (Paris-La Haye: Mputon, 1958), 25.

copies of his well-known *Bayān mā waqaʿa* which we have not included in our list.⁹¹ The only other widely attested Tijānī title is by al-Ḥājj ʿUmar Tall’s companion Yarkī Ṭalfī (d. 1863), and his anti-Qādirī polemic entitled *Tabkiyat al-Bakkāʿī*.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

An exercise such as this is fraught with methodological challenges: the AMMS data base is only as accurate as the original input of records in a wide variety of catalogues employing, themselves, separate criteria for annotation. Some of these collections have been published and expanded since the data in AMMS was entered; others are currently being revised. AMMS editing has corrected some of the more obvious errors but we are aware that misidentified and “under-identified” items remain in the database; the data used in this account are drawn only from citations that we are reasonably confident are correctly identified manuscripts. We are also held hostage to the manuscript acquisition and cataloguing practice in the collections included in AMMS. Although whole libraries were acquired in national collections such as the one in Nouakchott, cataloguing there seems to have favored classical texts and their derivatives over “ephemera” including locally-written poetry, correspondence and the like. By contrast, material identified here as “Kano” in origin seems to emphasize local authorship over classical works. Although the libraries or library clusters included in this analysis have each included the principle collections in their regions, there remain unexpected lacunae in each when compared with the contents of other libraries across West Africa.⁹² Finally, in this list of caveats, is our own somewhat arbitrary decision to focus on works that number at least four copies appearing in at least

⁹¹ On al-Ḥājj ʿUmar’s œuvre, see Mahibou and Triaud, *Voilà ce qui est arrivé*.

⁹² These lacunae permit us to construct a checklist of manuscripts—authors and titles—we are likely to uncover in particular regions (and hopefully integrate into the AMMS database). Similarly, the search for additional copies of items that are in the database now but not in sufficient number or distribution to be mentioned on these lists provides an agenda for on-going research. Clearly, the region least well-served by this analysis is Nigeria where we need to elaborate our knowledge about books available there. In his chapter in this volume, Murray Last summarizes his own assessment of the manuscript collection at the Kaduna National Archives which confirms the importance there of a dozen authors and titles that also appear in the “Kano” listings and in our “core curriculum.”

three regions. At a minimum this formula signifies books that potentially had some currency in two of the three geographic regions of these 80-odd libraries—the Central Sudan, the Niger Bend and the western Sahara. But the bar for inclusion of a book has been purposely set very low in acknowledgement of the amount of memorization that was part of the culture of learning, as well as the multiplier effect of particularly influential works that were then extracted and abridged and commented upon in local scholarship but that might not have been caught in our distribution formula for inclusion in this "core curriculum."

These qualifications aside, the pattern of text distribution cited above does allow us to suggest some tentative conclusions about (i) external geographical milieus and chronological periods that apparently had the greatest influence on West African scholarship (and possibly the movement of books); (ii) the differential access across the Sahel to certain authors or types of literature and therefore the authority of scholarship on particular topics likely to emanate from different centers; and (iii) the implications that the numbers and distribution of texts might hold for a book market. We will conclude by returning to some of Last's hypotheses, as a mechanism for stimulating discussion about the trans-Saharan book trade.

First, a few summary numbers from the texts cited here and what they represent. Because the grouping of subject matter for this exercise does not map directly on to the subject classifications in AMMS we cannot report with precision the slice of fully-identified AMMS records that have been summarized here. But we can do this for particular subjects which may convey a sense of the significance of this sampling in relation to the total records in AMMS. For instance, 42% of the AMMS records on Qur'anic recitation have been cited on our lists; 31% of the records on Qur'anic exegesis; 26% of AMMS records identified as lexicons; 36% of what we have combined as morphology and syntax; 40% of the records on the science of *ḥadīth*. The converse of these percentages, of course, is to specify those works that are too few in number, according to the methodology we have employed, to claim an impact outside of the particular library/region in which they have been recorded. These also may include some unidentified or misidentified works, but their lack of multiple copies has led us to assume that they were not part of a widely-shared Sahelian "core curriculum" and therefore not a focus of the book trade or copying industry. As additional records are added to the AMMS database it will be

instructive to see how many more multiple-copy clusters emerge and/or how representative our current 21,000 records may be. Based on the percentages of particular subject matter captured in this analysis, it is our working assumption that the books summarized here do represent the vast majority of the multicopied books and therefore the “core curriculum” across the Sahel.

A second observation on these 150 separate author citations has to do with what their chronological spread tells us about influences on Islamic learning in West Africa. Over one-third of the authors cited (37%) died in the 250 year period between 1300 and 1550, and the number of authors who predate the eleventh century (and therefore produced works that were in demand at the beginning of the period covered by this volume) is small (10%). Clearly, it is scholarship written between 1300 and 1700 that formed the core of the “core curriculum” (nearly 50%). This might be explained in a variety of ways, from an artifact of the quality and quantity of paper on which manuscripts were copied (and therefore which ones survive the longest and/or were most frequently recopied), to the impact of the Songhay “Arma” Pashalik in launching “modern” Islamic teaching and scholarship in West Africa, or to the geographic proximity of Egyptian and/or Moroccan authorities to centers of learning in the Sahel. According to Last’s speculation, the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries was a period when a local copying industry flourished, even attempted to assert monopolies over book production, and was chiefly responsible for disseminating texts, at least in the Central Sudan. But the empirical evidence from the death dates of the most widely extant authors suggests that their works would have only just been arriving in West Africa at this time. Muslim education and Islamic scholarship in West Africa clearly reflected Moroccan influence but it drew on both Egyptian and Moroccan authorities who lived at the height of the Sa’adian hegemony over the western Sahara and Sudan. Whatever the book market may have been before the 15th century, there is very limited contemporary evidence that its impact was lasting.

The most widely circulating texts across the whole of West Africa remained overwhelmingly texts from outside the region, and those texts were largely written by authors based in North Africa and Egypt. The interrelationships between intellectual activities in West Africa and Morocco have long been known. Biographical materials from centers such as Timbuktu or Walāta underscore the similar nature of educational systems in North and West Africa, well documented in

Aḥmad Bābā's *Nayl al-ibtihāj*, 'Abd al-Raḥmān Sa'dī's *Ta'rikh al-sūdān*, and al-Ṭālib Muḥammad al-Bartilī's *Fath al-shakūr*. Chouki el Hamel's excellent translation and annotation of the *Fath al-shakūr* demonstrates quite conclusively the virtually identical Islamic intellectual cultures in Morocco and the southwestern Sahara and high Sahel.⁹³

Therefore, the prominence of Egyptian authors in this West African “core curriculum” is somewhat surprising. Among post-classical works (for our purposes, books written during or after the fourteenth century), there are actually slightly more Egyptian-authored texts in our curriculum than the combined output of Maghribi and Andalusian writers (see appendix A).⁹⁴ Part of the reason for this is the historical prominence of Egypt generally as an intellectual center in the medieval Muslim world, and as a center for Mālikī scholarship. Certainly, many Egyptian authors were considered to be prominent authorities by scholars in the Maghrib, and thus, it is not surprising that they would also be held in high esteem in West Africa. However, the extent of the Egyptian presence in our curriculum suggests that when the West African region is considered as a whole, the direct influence of Morocco is less dominant than one is led to believe in an area like Mauritania alone. In areas further to the east, the relationship with Egypt is well attested historically. In particular, the importance of the great Egyptian polymath 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505) is clear in a number of ways: there was a record of direct correspondence in letters between al-Suyūṭī and West African scholars in Tagedda;⁹⁵ in a number of West African sources al-Suyūṭī is an especially important Islamic authority for local figures;⁹⁶ and his writings are widespread in

⁹³ El Hamel, *La vie intellectuelle*, 112.

⁹⁴ See Appendix A for a summary of author provenance, arranged by subject matter, for the period 1250–1700.

⁹⁵ E.M. Sartain, “Jalal ad-Din As-Suyuti's relations with the people of Takrur” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 16, no. 2 (1971): 193–8; id., *Jalāl al-dīn al-Suyūṭī: Biography and background* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 50–1; H.T. Norris, *The Tuaregs: Their Islamic Legacy and Its Diffusion in the Sahel* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1975), 45–7; Abdel Wedoud Ould Cheikh, *Éléments d'histoire de la Mauritanie* (Nouakchott: IMRS, 1988), 23–39.

⁹⁶ For example, the Kunta claim an authority bestowed upon one of their ancestors by al-Suyūṭī. See Norris, *The Arab Conquest of the Western Sahara: Studies of the Historical Events, Religious Beliefs and Social Customs which Made the Remotest Sahara a Part of the Arab World* (London: Longman, 1986), 227–41; Bruce S. Hall, “The Question of ‘Race’ in the Pre-colonial Southern Sahara,” *Journal of North African Studies* 10, 3–4 (2005): 359.

the region (there are 219 copies of different works attributed to al-Suyūṭī in the AMMS data base). The importance of a number of al-Suyūṭī's works, and those of other Egyptian writers, may also be connected to pilgrims returning to West Africa from the *ḥajj*, although the exact historical mechanisms responsible for the introduction and circulation of certain Egyptian works remains an area requiring further research.

This brings us to what appears as differential access across the Sahel to certain authorities or types of literature that logically would have impacted the kinds of scholarship likely to emanate from different centers. If the main resources for Islamic scholarship and training were, as this analysis suggests, somewhat recent (post-16th century), and the main conduit for texts came via Morocco, this might also explain why those West African centers most remote from the Far Maghrib, e.g., northern Nigeria, seem to not register the same range of authorities typical of the Niger Bend, the Middle Niger and the Mauritanian libraries. This needs to be confirmed by additional comparisons of library resources in Nigeria with some of these other centers, but it is difficult to escape the observation from this sampling that Nigerian scholarship labored under resource handicaps not found further west. This evidence points to the distinct possibility that Islamic learning in the Central Sudan, as a consequence, followed a slightly different (more original?) trajectory, perhaps compensatory for its more modest resource base. This might explain the relatively prolific *ʿajamī* literary production as well as a spur to the production there of didactic texts in Arabic and vernacular languages. Perhaps Last's suggestion that the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were moments of originality in the scholarship of the Central Sudan can also be read as a reaction there to a certain isolation from the main flow of books that is evident in the Middle Niger libraries. If so, the "market" for this original writing and/or demographic demand in the area of contemporary Northern Nigeria would have been a factor. This train of thought also invites a reprise of the critics of the Sokoto jihad who argued that the quality of Islamic learning there was not commensurate with the scholarly apparatus needed to justify holy war. Clearly, more information about the library resources in Northern Nigeria is needed. The great intellectual of that movement, the Shehu's brother Abdullahi dan Fodio, was clearly conversant with our "core curriculum," and his *tafsīr* is the one work of West African authorship that

found the most widespread distribution across the Sahel, in addition to its audience in North Africa. But the absence of a number of our “core curriculum” texts from the “Kano” sample does make additional surveys of Nigerian libraries an imperative.⁹⁷

The distribution of Abdullahi dan Fodio’s *tafsīr* brings up another feature of the “core curriculum”: its robust but relatively late (nineteenth-century) representation of West African scholars. In addition to Abdullahi dan Fodio, three others—al-Ḥājj ‘Umar Tall, Sīdi al-Mukhtār al-Kuntī and Shaykh Sidiyya—all authored works that found distribution and, presumably, study across at least four of these centers of learning. Not even the fabled Aḥmad Bābā (d. 1627) is so distinguished. Obviously, the chronological proximity of these authors to our survey end point has some bearing, but this is also suggestive of an emergence of a nineteenth-century West African scholarly tradition that can be regionally defined and that was reproducing itself at the beginning of the colonial occupation. Our methodology masks yet another nineteenth-century development within West African scholarship, obvious in these library collections: the clear emergence of regional authorities in particular subject matter whose work – found in numerous copies – did not stretch beyond their home region.

Any sample such as this one will invite critical appraisal of the data base itself. But if we accept these libraries as an approximate cross section of individual collections in the pre-print years,⁹⁸ some deductions can be hazarded about book acquisition and/or the book market. Our arbitrary cut-off point in deciding whether a book should be included in this survey was the presence of at least four copies across three or more regions. If less, the reason for the book’s inclusion has been explained (usually in the case of a work upon which there are multiple commentaries which normally include the original text). That is four copies stretched across 80-odd libraries, themselves distributed across 2000 miles. Admittedly, many of these libraries were small ones in

⁹⁷ The al-Furqan Foundation catalogues of the Arabic manuscript collection at Ibadan University, and the Kaduna National Archives collection, both recently edited for inclusion in the AMMS database, do exhibit a bias similar to the Northwestern “Kano” collection insofar as there is a distribution of fewer classical authorities than typical in collections from the Niger Bend and further west.

⁹⁸ To reiterate, we believe this sampling does have statistical validity in its base of 21,000 citations, and in its geographic range of 80-odd libraries from southern and northern Mauritania, the Niger Bend and Northern Nigeria.

southwestern Mauritania (averaging 60-odd books each),⁹⁹ and they were in a region with nomadic patterns that put scholars in regular and easy contact with southern Morocco. But to achieve “core curriculum” mention in this study, the particular work had to be also found in two other regional collections – in the case of southwestern Mauritania, the library in Boutilimit, one of the two Middle Niger/ Niger Bend collections or the composite “Kano” collections. Still, four copies of a book is not a very large number for works in a “core curriculum” in an area as vast as the West African Sahel. These numbers have to raise questions about the volume of book commerce and/or the book market itself. Perhaps in another 80 libraries we would uncover dramatically larger numbers of these central texts, but we think this unlikely. In brief, this data suggests the commerce in books was modest for the authors and titles that were central to training students and for documenting scholarship. In this, we concur with Last’s skepticism over whether there was much of a book trade at all. The accounts of book-buying expeditions to North Africa imply that serious bibliophiles went abroad to seek books, an unlikely custom if there was a regular West African commerce in manuscripts.¹⁰⁰

Finally, we have estimated that the extant works recorded here were, if not original themselves, copies of books composed or copied in the period between roughly 1625 and 1775. This is based on experience working with manuscripts in West Africa where, as noted above, the use of bleach to utilize non-white rag in its European paper

⁹⁹ The size of private libraries may be placed in perspective by reference to North Africa. Roger Le Tourneau, in *Fès avant le protectorate. Étude économique et sociale d'une ville de l'Occident musulman* (Casablanca: Publications de l'Institut des Hautes Études Marocaines, 1949), 376–7, 473, notes that the personal libraries of individuals in Fes, one of the great centers of book commerce from the sixteenth century—although down to only ten book sellers by 1900—was several dozen books, rarely more than 100 items. It would seem unlikely that a large number of West African personal collections would exceed this range, as is indicated by the 72 southwestern Mauritanian libraries consolidated in the national collection in Nouakchott.

¹⁰⁰ Shaykh Sīdiyya’s Moroccan trip in the 1830s to purchase books has been noted above; Last likewise notes book-buying travels from the central Sudan (“The Book in the Sokoto Caliphate,” 44). The most famous book-buying episode is that reported by the Mauritanian traveler Aḥmad b. Tʿwayr al-Janna who, by one account, imported 400 volumes acquired in Mecca. When he passed through Marrakech about 1834, he purchased still more books, despite resistance there from book sellers, on his way back to Wādān. See H.T. Norris, *The Pilgrimage of Ahmad, Son of the Little Bird of Paradise* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1977), 102, 105–6.

manufacture resulted in the survival of very little paper that predates the last quarter of the 18th century. Books written prior to that time were subject to the same paper chemistry-chronology (unless the paper was made with white rags) and thus required re-copying at the very least at 150–200 year intervals if they were to remain extant. A glance at the authors’ death dates across the centuries of book production cited here (see appendix B) provides a rough sense of how many times, at a minimum, individual works from particular periods would have had to be copied to survive into the late 20th century. Exactly half of all the authors cited above wrote their treatises after 1450, which means a minimum of two cycles of recopying were likely necessary for the work to survive into the mid-19th century, probably three re-copyings to be among the extant works we have identified above. These approximate dates for paper survival may be problematical, but the obligatory act of recopying older works that appear in this “core curriculum” does reaffirm the centrality of particular texts to the scholarship and teaching of West Africa. It also explains how some texts literally fell out of use through inattention to their recopying. Further analysis of the copies of these manuscripts (unfortunately not commonly dated nor frequently with copiest named) can be done within the AMMS data base where this information is generally noted when it is available.

In sum, the AMMS database of extant manuscripts allows us to identify a “core curriculum” common to the southern Sahara and West Africa that likely overlapped in large part with the books in greatest demand. The modest numbers of extant manuscripts from this “core” based on a sampling of 21,000 records leads us to question whether, in fact, there was a book trade in any real sense. But this survey does allow us to compare scholarly training in West Africa, as evidenced by extant libraries, which compares favorably with what was being taught in contemporary centers of learning in Egypt and Morocco. It also allows us to identify the main authorities studied in West Africa which included a greater Egyptian influence that we expected, the dominance of a relatively recent (post-sixteenth-century) cohort of scholars, and a vibrant emerging, local West African scholarly output in the nineteenth century. As the AMMS database is enlarged we anticipate that increasingly authoritative surveys of this nature will be possible, and we encourage colleagues to join other data sets to this database.

APPENDIX A

Texts by author provenance written between 1250 and 1700 c.e. (58% of all books): Summary of subject matter in the “core curriculum” and author death dates (the notes explain discrepancies between numbers and authors, and numbers of titles summarized)

Period	Region	Qur'an	Arabic	Prophet	Law	Belief	Sufism	Total
1250–1400 (18% total texts)	Maghrib	2	2	2	4		1	11
	Egypt		5	3	2		2	12
1400–1550 (26% total texts)	Maghrib	3	3	1	10	4	4	25
	Egypt	2	11	9	7			29
1550–1700 (14% total texts)	Maghrib		5	1	6	3	2	17
	Egypt		1		6	2		9

APPENDIX B

Summary of author death dates for subject matter in “core curriculum”
(the notes explain discrepancies caused by authors of multiple titles)

Period	# titles	Qurʾān	Arabic	Prophet	Law	Belief	Sufism	# authors
Pre-Islamic	6		6					5 ¹⁰¹
700–800	5		2	2	1			3
800–900	5		2	2	1			5
900–1000	4		2		1	1		3 ¹⁰²
1000–1050	2		1		1			2
1050–1100	4		1	1	2			4
1100–1150	9		3	3		1	2	7 ¹⁰³
1150–1200	3	1			1	1		3
1200–1250	4		2	2				4
1250–1300	13		5	6	2			7 ¹⁰⁴
1300–1350	12	4	2	1	3		2	11 ¹⁰⁵
1350–1400	15		8	2	3		2	12 ¹⁰⁶
1400–1450	11	1	4	3	3			9 ¹⁰⁷
1450–1500	20	2	3	3	3	5	4	12 ¹⁰⁸
1500–1550	28	3	6	4	14	1		12 ¹⁰⁹
1550–1600	6		3		3			5 ¹¹⁰
1600–1650	8		2		2	4		7 ¹¹¹
1650–1700	18		2	2	8	4	2	14 ¹¹²
1700–1750	3				2	1		3
1750–1800	10	2		1	5	1	1	7 ¹¹³

¹⁰¹ Imruʾ al-Qays appears as an author in two works of pre-Islamic poetry.

¹⁰² Ibn Durayd (authored one work in Arabic and one in poetry).

¹⁰³ al-Ghazālī (authored works in belief, Sufism) and al-Harīrī (two works in Arabic).

¹⁰⁴ Ibn Mālik (Arabic); Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfī (law) and Buṣīrī (Prophet).

¹⁰⁵ Ibn ʿAṭāʾillāh (Sufism) & Ibn Juzay (Qurʾān, law).

¹⁰⁶ Ibn Hishām (Arabic).

¹⁰⁷ al-Makkūdi (Arabic) & Ibn al-Jazarī (Qurʾān, hadith).

¹⁰⁸ al-Sanūsī (belief) & Aḥmad Zarrūq (Sufism) & Khālid al-Azharī (Arabic, Prophet).

¹⁰⁹ al-Suyūṭī (Qurʾān, Arabic, Prophet, law); al-Zaqqāq (law); Ibn Ghāzī (law); Zakariyyāʾ al-Anṣārī (Qurʾān, law); al-Manūfī al-Shādhilī (law), and al-Tatāʾī (law).

¹¹⁰ al-Akhḍārī (law, Arabic).

¹¹¹ al-Laḡānī (belief).

¹¹² al-Sijilmāsī (Arabic) and Muḥammad Mayyāra (law, belief).

¹¹³ Muḥammad al-Yadālī (Qurʾān, Prophet, belief, Sufism) and ʿAbd Allāh al-Tishīṭī (Qurʾān, law).

APPENDIX B (*cont.*)

Period	# titles	Qur'ān	Arabic	Prophet	Law	Belief	Sufism	# authors
1800–1850	28	2	3	8	5	3	7	9 ¹¹⁴
1850–1900	7		2		1		4	4 ¹¹⁵
Unidentified	2		1	1				2 ¹¹⁶
Totals	223*	15	60	41	61	22	24	150

* one work cited twice

¹¹⁴ Ibn Sulaym, al-Mukhtār Būnah, Sidi al-Mukhtār al-Kuntī, Sidi Muḥammad al-Kuntī, Usman dan Fodio, Sidi 'Abd Allāh al-'Alawī, Abdallahi dan Fodio.

¹¹⁵ al-Hājj 'Umar Tall (Sufism) & Shaykh Sidiyya (Arabic).

¹¹⁶ al-Tuwāti and Ibn Mahib.

APPENDIX C

*Works cited in “Core Curriculum”**Summary of Abbreviations*

- ALA I *Arabic Literature of Africa*, Vol I: *The Writings of Eastern Sudanic Africa to c. 1900*, compiled by R.S. O’Fahey et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1994).
- ALA II *Arabic Literature of Africa*, Vol. II: *The Writings of Central Africa*, compiled by J.O. Hunwick et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1995).
- ALA IV *Arabic Literature of Africa*, Vol. IV: *The Writings of Western Sudanic Africa*, compiled by J.O. Hunwick et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2000).
- Bayān al-Ḥājj ‘Umar Tall (d. 1864), *Bayān mā waqa’a baynanā wa-bayn amīr Māsina Aḥmad b. Aḥmad b. al-Shaykh Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Lobbo*, trans. Sidi Mohamed Mahibou and Jean-Louis Triaud, *Voilà ce qui est arrivé, Bayān mā waqa’a d’al-Ḥāḡḡ ‘Umar al-Fūtī* (Paris: Centre regional de publication de Paris, Editions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1983).
- Fatḥ al-Ṭālib Muḥammad al-Bartilī, *Fatḥ al-shakūr fī ma’rifat a’yān’ulamā’ al-Takrūr*, trans. Chouki el Hamel, *La vie intellectuelle islamique dans le Sahel Ouest-Africain (XVIè-XIXè siècles). Une étude sociale de l’enseignement islamique en Mauritanie et au Nord du Mali (XVIè-XIXè siècles) et traduction annotée de Fath ash-shakūr d’al-Bartilī al-Walāti (mort en 1805)* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2002).
- GAL Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1943–9).
- GAL S Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur*, Supplementbande, I–III. (Leiden: Brill, 1937–42).
- Idā’ Abdallahi dan Fodio, *Idā’ al-nusūkh man akhadhtu ‘anhu min al-shuyūkh*, trans. Hiskett in “Material relating to the state of learning among the Fulani before their Jihad,” *Bulletin of SOAS* 19, no. 3 (1957): 550–78.
- Kaḥḥāla ‘Umar Ridā Kaḥḥāla, *Mu’jam al-mu’allifīn; Tarājim muṣannifī al-kutub al-‘arabiya*. 4 volumes (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-risāla, 1993).
- Last Murray Last, *The Sokoto Caliphate* (London: Longman, 1967).
- Makhtout *Makhtout Mauritania* electronic data base created by the IMRS and Union nationale des associations des détenteurs de manuscrits under World Bank financing to inventory approximately 34,000 manuscripts in 675 libraries across Mauritania.

- MLG Ulrich Rebstock, *Maurische Literaturgeschichte*. 3 vols (Würzburg: Ergon, 2001).
- OMAR Oriental Manuscript Resource, University of Frieburg (<http://omar.ub.uni-freiburg.de>)
- TS al-Sa'dī, *Ta'riḫ al-sūdān*, trans. John Hunwick, *Timbuktu and the Songhay Empire: Al-Sa'dī's Ta'riḫ al-sūdān down to 1613 and other Contemporary Documents* (Leiden: Brill, 1999).
- Willis "The Writings of al-Ḥājj 'Umar al-Fūti and Shaykh Mukhtār b. Wadī'at Allāh: Literary Themes, Sources, and Influences" in *Studies in West African Islamic History*, Vol.1: *The Cultivators of Islam*, ed. John Ralph Willis (London: Frank Cass, 1979).
- Zirkilī Khayr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī, *al-A'lām: qāmūs tarājīm li-ash'har al-rijāl wa-'l-nisā' min al-'Arab wa-'l-musta'ribīn wa-'l-mustashriqīn*. 8 vols., 7th ed. (Beirut: Dār al-'ilm li-'l-Malāyīn, 1986).

Qur'ānic Sciences

1. Qur'ānic Recitation (*tajwīd*)

- Ibn al-Barrī [‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Ribāṭī] (d. 1330), *al-Durar al-lawāmi' fī aṣl maqra' al-imām Nāfi'*¹¹⁷
Derivative texts:
 - Yaḥyā b. Sa'īd al-Karāmī al-Simlālī (d. 1495), *Taḥṣīl al-manāfi' min kitāb al-durar al-lawāmi'*¹¹⁸
 - ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Ṭālib Aḥmad b. al-Ḥājj Ḥamā Allāh al-Ghallāwī al-Tishīṭī (d. 1794), *Sharḥ al-durar al-lawāmi'*¹¹⁹
 - Aḥmad b. al-Ṭālib Maḥmūd b. A'mar al-Īdaw'ayshī (d. 1841), *Irshād al-qāri' wa-'l-sāmi' li-kitāb al-durar al-lawāmi'*¹²⁰
- Abū 'l-Qāsim b. Firruh b. Khalaf al-Ru'aynī al-Shāṭibī (d. 1194), *Ḥirz al-amānī wa-wajh al-tahānī [Qaṣīdat al-shāṭibiyya]*¹²¹
Derivative text:
 - Ibrāhīm b. 'Umar b. Ibrāhīm al-Ja'barī (d. 1332), *Kunz al-ma'ānī fī sharḥ ḥirz al-amānī*¹²²

¹¹⁷ Maghribi; GAL II 248, SII 350; Idā' 571; Faḥḥ 241; OMAR 930, 2509; mss found in Nouakchott, Boutilimit, Timbuktu; commentary in Ségou.

¹¹⁸ Maghribi; GAL II 248, SII 350; OMAR 1791, 2202; mss found in Nouakchott, Timbuktu and Ségou.

¹¹⁹ West African; Faḥḥ 362–6; MLG 707; mss found in Nouakchott, Niamey and Timbuktu.

¹²⁰ West African; MLG 741; OMAR 2578; mss found in Nouakchott and Timbuktu.

¹²¹ Andalusian; lived adult life in Egypt, GAL I 407, SI 725; Idā' 571; Faḥḥ 241; the mss or its derivative texts are found in Ségou, Kano and Shinqīṭi.

¹²² GAL II 1 64, SI 725, SII 134; OMAR 2560; mss found in Nouakchott, Timbuktu and Shinqīṭi.

- Ibn al-Jazarī [Shams al-Dīn Abū l-Khayr al-Dimashqī al-Jazarī] (d. 1429), *al-Muqaddima al-jazariyya fi ‘ilm al-tajwid*¹²³
Derivative text:
 - Zakariyyā’ b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Anṣārī (d. 1520), *al-Daqā’iq al-muḥakkima fi sharḥ al-muqaddima*¹²⁴
- 2. Qur’ānic revelation (*tanzīl*) and abrogation (*naskh*)
 - ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505), *al-Itqān fi ‘ulūm al-Qur’ān*¹²⁵
 - Ibn Juzay [Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Juzay al-Kalbī al-Gharnāṭī] (d. 1340), *al-Tashīl li-‘ulūm al-tanzīl*¹²⁶
- 3. Exegesis (*tafsīr*)
 - ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505) and Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Maḥallī (d. 1459), *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*¹²⁷
 - Muḥammad al-Yadālī b. al-Mukhtār b. Maḥam Sa’īd al-Daymānī [Muḥammad b. Sa’īd] (d. 1753), *al-Dhahab al-ibriz fi tafsīr al-kitāb al-‘azīz*¹²⁸
 - ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. Khāzin al-Baghdādī (d. 1340), *Lubāb al-ta’wīl fi ma’ānī l-tanzīl*¹²⁹
 - Abdallāhī dan Fodio [‘Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad Fūdī] (d. 1829), *Ḍiyā’ al-ta’wīl fi ma’ānī l-tanzīl*¹³⁰
 - ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad al-Tha‘ālibī al-Jazā’irī (d. 1468), *Jawāhir al-ḥisān fi tafsīr al-Qur’ān*¹³¹

¹²³ Syrian; GAL II 202, SII 275; mss found in Ségou, Kano and Nouakchott; Ibn al-Jazarī’s commentary on his own work entitled *al-Muqaddima al-jazariyya fi ‘ilm al-tajwid* appears only in Boutilimit.

¹²⁴ Egyptian; GAL SII 276; OMAR 1957; mss found in Ségou, Shinqīṭī and Timbuktu.

¹²⁵ Egyptian; GAL SII 179; mss found in Kano, Timbuktu, Nouakchott, Boutilimit and Shinqīṭī.

¹²⁶ Andalusian; GAL II 265, SII 377; mss found in Ségou, Timbuktu and Nouakchott.

¹²⁷ Egyptians; GAL II 114, 145, SII 589; Bayān 212; mss found everywhere except Kano.

¹²⁸ West African; MLG 334; Faḥ 297–9; Bayān 201; OMAR 198, 199; mss found in Nouakchott and Ségou; commentary in Timbuktu.

¹²⁹ Iraqi; GAL II 109, SII 135; Bayān 205; mss found in Nouakchott, Timbuktu and Kano. This is a work based on an earlier text written by Ḥusayn b. Mas’ūd b. Muḥammad al-Baghawī (d. 1117) entitled *Ma’ālim al-tanzīl*, GAL SI 622. The two texts are sometimes confused but it is Baghdādī’s text which is found most frequently in the database.

¹³⁰ West African; ALA II 93; Last 241; mis-attributed to Usman dan Fodio in MLG 623; OMAR 1012, 1013; mss found in all collections. This is the most widely found *tafsīr*.

¹³¹ Maghribi; GAL II 249, SII 351; OMAR 2559; mss found in Nouakchott, Boutilimit and Ségou; commentary in Timbuktu.

Arabic Language

1. Lexicons and Lexicology

- Muḥammad b. Ya‘qūb al-Firūzābādī (d. 1415), *al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṭ*¹³²

Derivative texts:

- Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Hilālī al-Sijilmāsī (d. 1659), *Idā‘at al-udmūs wa-riyādat al-shamūs fī iṣṭilāḥ al-qāmūs*¹³³
- Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Hilālī al-Sijilmāsī (d. 1659), *Faṭḥ al-quddūs fī sharḥ khuṭbat al-qāmūs*¹³⁴
- Ismā‘īl b. Ḥammād al-Jawharī (d. c. 1007–8), *al-Ṣiḥāḥ fī ‘l-lughā*¹³⁵

2. Lexicology:

- Abū ‘Alī Muḥammad b. al-Mustanīr [Quṭrub] (d. 821), *Muthallath Quṭrub*¹³⁶

Derivative texts:

- ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. ‘Abd al-Wāḥid al-Fāsī al-Miknāsī (d. 1557), *al-Mūrith li-shakl al-muthallath*¹³⁷
- Ibn Mālik [Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Mālik al-Jayyānī] (d. 1274), *Muthallath Ibn Mālik* [a.k.a. *al-I‘lām bi-thalāth kalām* or *Urjūza fī ‘l-muthallathāt*]¹³⁸
- al-Qāsim b. ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Ḥarīrī al-Baṣrī (d. 1122), *al-Maqāmāt li-‘l-Ḥarīrī*¹³⁹

3. Morphology

- Ibn Mālik [Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Mālik al-Jayyānī] (d. 1274), *Lāmiyyat al-af‘āl* [*al-Miftāḥ fī abniyat al-af‘āl*]¹⁴⁰

¹³² Persian; active in the Arab East; GAL II 183, SII 234; mss found in Ségou, Timbuktu, Nouakchott and Boutilimit.

¹³³ Maghribi; GAL II 183, SII 234; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott and Ségou; versification in Timbuktu.

¹³⁴ Maghribi; GAL SII 235; mss found in Timbuktu, Nouakchott and Ségou.

¹³⁵ Turkish; active in Iraq and Arabia; GAL I 128, SI 196; mss found in Nouakchott, Boutilimit, Ségou and Timbuktu.

¹³⁶ Iraqi; GAL I 103, SI 161; OMAR 1640; mss (or mss of its commentaries) found in all collections.

¹³⁷ Maghribi; GAL SI 161, title variation *al-Mūrith li-mushkil al-muthallath*; mss found in Kano, Timbuktu and Ségou.

¹³⁸ Andalusian; lived in Syria; GAL I 300, SI 526; mss found in Nouakchott, Boutilimit, Timbuktu, and Ségou.

¹³⁹ Iraqi; GAL I 276, SI 487; *Idā‘* 571; *Faṭḥ* 168 and *passim*; mss found in Kano, Nouakchott, Boutilimit, Ségou and Timbuktu.

¹⁴⁰ Andalusian; lived in Syria; GAL I 300, SI 526; *Faṭḥ* 239; mss found in all collections.

Derivative texts:

- Muḥammad b. ‘Umar b. Baḥraq al-Ḥaḍramī (d. 1524), *Sharḥ lāmiyyat al-af‘āl* [*Faṭḥ al-aqfāl wa-ḍarb al-amthāl bi-sharḥ lāmiyyat al-af‘āl*]¹⁴¹
 - Sidiyya b. al-Mukhtār b. al-Hayba al-Ntishāi’ī (d. 1868), *al-Tuḥfa al-atfāl fī ḥal ‘uqūd lāmiyyat al-af‘āl*¹⁴²
- Ibn Mālik [Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Mālik al-Jayyānī] (d. 1274), *Tuḥfat al-mawdūd fī ‘l-maqṣūr wa-‘l-mamdūd*¹⁴³

Derivative text:

- Sidi al-Mukhtār b. Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr al-Kuntī (d. 1811), *Faṭḥ al-wadūd ‘alā al-maqṣūra wa-‘l-mamdūd*¹⁴⁴
- Ibn Durayd [Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Durayd al-Azdī] (d. 933), *al-Maqṣūr wa-‘l-mamdūd*¹⁴⁵
- Ibn Ḥājjib [‘Uthmān b. ‘Umar al-Mālikī] (d. 1249), *al-Shāfiyya*¹⁴⁶
- ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Alī b. Ṣāliḥ al-Makkūdi al-Fāsī (d. 1405), *al-Baṣṭ wa-‘l-ta‘rif fī ‘ilm al-taṣrīf*¹⁴⁷

4. Syntax

- Ibn Mālik [Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Mālik al-Jayyānī] (d. 1274), *al-Alfiyya* [*al-Khulāṣa al-alfiyya*]¹⁴⁸

Derivative texts:

- al-Ḥasan b. al-Qāsim al-Murādī (d. 1348), *al-Tawḍīḥ*¹⁴⁹
- ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Alī b. Ṣāliḥ al-Makkūdi al-Fāsī (d. 1405), *Sharḥ ‘alā alfiyya Ibn Mālik*¹⁵⁰
- Ibn Hishām [‘Abd Allāh b. Yūsuf b. Hishām al-Anṣārī] (d. 1360), *Awḍaḥ al-masālik ilā alfiyyat Ibn Mālik*¹⁵¹

¹⁴¹ Yemeni; GAL I 300, SI 526, SII 555; OMAR 55, 1031; mss found in Nouakchott, Ségou, Timbuktu and Shinqīti.

¹⁴² West African; MLG 935; OMAR 223, 746; mss found in Nouakchott, Boutilimit and Timbuktu.

¹⁴³ Andalusian; lived in Syria; GAL I 300, SI 526; OMAR 707; mss found in Kano, Ségou, Timbuktu and Nouakchott.

¹⁴⁴ West African; ALA IV 68; Faṭḥ 339; MLG 552; OMAR 1133; mss found in Boutilimit, Ségou, Timbuktu and Nouakchott.

¹⁴⁵ Iraqi; GAL I 111, II 14, SI 173; mss found in Kano, Ségou and Timbuktu.

¹⁴⁶ Egyptian; GAL I 305, SI 535; mss found in Nouakchott, 12 commentaries in Nouakchott, Ségou, Shinqīti and Timbuktu.

¹⁴⁷ Maghribi; GAL SII 336; Faṭḥ 318; mss found in Nouakchott and Shinqīti; commentary in Timbuktu.

¹⁴⁸ Andalusian; lived in Syria; GAL I 298, SI 522; TS 54, 67; Idā‘ 570; Faṭḥ 146, *passim*; mss found in all collections.

¹⁴⁹ Lived in Egypt; GAL SI 522; mss found in Ségou, Nouakchott and Boutilimit.

¹⁵⁰ Maghribi; GAL I 299, SI 524, SII 336; el Hamel (Faṭḥ) 116; mss found in Ségou, Nouakchott, Timbuktu, Shinqīti and Wādān.

¹⁵¹ Egyptian; GAL I 298, II 25, SI 523; mss found in Nouakchott, Ségou and Shinqīti.

Derivative text:

- Khālid b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Jirjāwī al-Azharī (d. 1499), *al-Taṣrīḥ bi-maḍmūn al-tawḍīḥ*¹⁵²
 - ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505), *al-Bahja* [*al-Nahja*] *al-marḍiya fī sharḥ al-alfiyya*¹⁵³
 - ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Ushmūnī (d. 1467), *Manhaj al-sālik ʿalā alfiyya Ibn Mālik*¹⁵⁴
 - al-Mukhtār b. Saʿīd b. Būnah al-Jakānī (d. 1805/6), *Ṭurra ʿalā alfiyya Ibn Mālik*¹⁵⁵
- Ibn Mālik [Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Mālik al-Jayyānī] (d. 1274), *Tashīl al-fawāʿid wa-takmil al-maqāṣid*¹⁵⁶

Derivative texts:

- Ibn ʿAqīl [ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Qurashī al-Hāshimī] (d. 1367), *al-Masāʿid ʿalā al-tashīl al-fawāʿid*¹⁵⁷
 - Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr b. ʿUmar al-Damāminī al-Iskandarī (d. 1424), *Sharḥ tahsīl Ibn Mālik*¹⁵⁸
- Ibn ʿAjurrūm [Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Dāwūd al-Ṣanhājī] (d. 1223), *al-Muqaddima al-ʿajurrūmiyya*¹⁵⁹

Derivative texts:

- Khālid b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Jirjāwī al-Azharī (d. 1499), *Sharḥ al-Azharī ʿalā al-muqaddima al-ʿajurrūmiyya*¹⁶⁰
 - Sidiyya b. al-Mukhtār b. al-Hayba al-Ntishāʾī, (d. 1868), *al-Nafḥa al-qayyumiyya bi-taqrīr al-ʿajurrūmiyya*¹⁶¹
- Ibn Hishām [ʿAbd Allāh b. Yūsuf b. Hishām al-Anṣārī] (d. 1360), *Qaṭr al-nadā wa-ball al-ṣadā*¹⁶²
- Ibn Hishām [ʿAbd Allāh b. Yūsuf b. Hishām al-Anṣārī] (d. 1360), *Shudhūr al-dhahab fī maʿrifat kalām al-ʿarab*¹⁶³

¹⁵² Egyptian; GAL II 27, SI 523, SII 23; mss found in Ségou, Nouakchott, Timbuktu and Shinqīṭī.

¹⁵³ Egyptian; GAL II 199, SI 524; Idāʿ 570; mss found in Ségou, Kano, Timbuktu and Shinqīṭī.

¹⁵⁴ Egyptian; GAL SI 524; Idāʿ 570; MLG 956; OMAR 2470; mss found in Ségou, Timbuktu, Nouakchott and Shinqīṭī.

¹⁵⁵ West African; GAL SI 525; Faḥ 321–23; MLG 587; OMAR 2122; mss found in Nouakchott, Boutilimit, Timbuktu, Shinqīṭī and Wādān.

¹⁵⁶ Andalusian; lived in Syria; GAL I 298, SI 522; OMAR 1767; mss found in Ségou, Boutilimit, Shinqīṭī; commentary in Nouakchott. This title appears in 10 additional works on grammar.

¹⁵⁷ Syrian; lived in Egypt; GAL SI 522, SII 104; mss found in Nouakchott and Boutilimit; author is cited in mss held in Kano and Timbuktu.

¹⁵⁸ Egyptian; GAL II 32–33, SII 21; mss found in Boutilimit, Shinqīṭī and Ségou.

¹⁵⁹ Maghribi; GAL II 237, SII 332; Idāʿ 570; Faḥ 154 and *passim*; mss found in Boutilimit, Kano, Ségou, Timbuktu, Nouakchott and Shinqīṭī.

¹⁶⁰ Egyptian; GAL II 27, 238, SII 23, 333; mss found in all collections.

¹⁶¹ West African; MLG 935; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott and Timbuktu.

¹⁶² Egyptian; GAL II 23, SII 16; Idāʿ 570; mss found in Kano, Ségou, Nouakchott, Timbuktu and Shinqīṭī.

¹⁶³ Egyptian; GAL II 24, SII 19; Idāʿ 570; mss found in Ségou and Nouakchott; commentary in Timbuktu.

- Ibn Hishām [ʿAbd Allāh b. Yūsuf b. Hishām al-Anṣārī] (d. 1360), *Mughnī ʿl-labīb ʿan kutub al-ʿarīb*¹⁶⁴
- al-Qāsim b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Ḥarīrī al-Baṣrī (d. 1122), *Mulḥat al-i-rāb*¹⁶⁵

Derivative text:

- ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505), *Sharḥ mulḥat al-i-rāb*¹⁶⁶
- Ibn al-Wardī [ʿUmar b. al-Muzaḥḥār b. ʿUmar al-Qurashī] (d. 1349), *al-Tuḥfa al-wardīya fī mushkilāt al-i-rāb*¹⁶⁷
- ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505), *al-Farīda fī ʿl-naḥw*¹⁶⁸

Derivative text:

- Muḥammad Bāba b. Muḥammad al-Amīn b. Ḥabīb al-Mukhtār al-Tinbukṭī (d. 1606), *al-Mināḥ al-ḥamīda fī sharḥ al-farīda*¹⁶⁹
- Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Salāwī al-Mijrādī (d. 1376–7), *Lāmiyya [Naẓm al-jumal]*¹⁷⁰

Derivative text:

- ʿAlī b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Rasmūkī (d. 1639), *Mibrāz al-qawāʿid al-naḥwiyya*¹⁷¹

5. Rhetoric

- Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Qazwīnī (d. 1338), *Talkhīṣ al-miftāḥ*¹⁷²

Derivative texts:

- Saʿd al-Dīn Masʿūd b. ʿUmar al-Taftāzānī (d. 1390), *Sharḥ talkhīṣ al-miftāḥ*¹⁷³
- ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad al-Ṣaghīr al-Akhḍārī al-Bunṭyūsī al-Mālikī (d. 1585), *al-Jawhar al-maknūn*¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁴ Egyptian; GAL II 23, SII 17; mss found in Ségou, Shinqīṭī, and Nouakchott; commentary in Timbuktu.

¹⁶⁵ Iraqi; GAL I 277, SI 488; Idāʿ 570; mss found in Kano, Ségou, Nouakchott, and Timbuktu.

¹⁶⁶ Egyptian; GAL SI 488, SII 195; mss found in Ségou, Niamey and Timbuktu.

¹⁶⁷ Syrian; GAL II 140, SII 175; Idāʿ 570; mss found in Kano, Ségou and Timbuktu.

¹⁶⁸ Egyptian; GAL II 155, SII 193; Idāʿ 570; mss found in Ségou; commentaries in Kano, Nouakchott and Timbuktu.

¹⁶⁹ West African; ALA IV 34; Faḥḥ 282; MLG 85; OMAR 56, 1024; mss found in Timbuktu, Ségou, Kano and Wādān.

¹⁷⁰ Maghribi; GAL I 497, SII 336; Faḥḥ 116; mss found only in form of commentaries by al-Rasmūkī (see following note) in Nouakchott and Ségou, and by Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Mayyāra (d. 1662) in Timbuktu (MLG 124; OMAR 1438).

¹⁷¹ Maghribi; GAL SII 336, 676; mss found in Ségou, Shinqīṭī and Nouakchott.

¹⁷² Syrian; GAL I 295, SI 516; Idāʿ 570; TS 65–66; Faḥḥ 161; mss found in Ségou and Boutilimit; commentaries in Nouakchott, Timbuktu and Shinqīṭī.

¹⁷³ Iranian; GAL I 295, II 216, SI 516, II 304; TS 66; OMAR 1606; mss found in Nouakchott, Shinqīṭī and Timbuktu.

¹⁷⁴ Maghribi; GAL SI 519, SII 706; Idāʿ 570; mss found in Nouakchott, Timbuktu and Kano.

- ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505), *‘Uqūd al-jumān fī ‘ilm al-ma‘ānī wa-’l-bayān*¹⁷⁵
- ‘Abd al-Raḥīm b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Qāhirī al-‘Abbāsī (d. 1556), *Ma‘āhid al-tanṣīṣ fī sharḥ shawāhid al-talkhīṣ*¹⁷⁶
- ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505), *al-Nuqāya*¹⁷⁷
- Sīdī ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Ḥājj Ibrāhīm al-‘Alawī (d. 1818), *al-Fattāḥ ‘alā nūr al-Aqāḥ*¹⁷⁸

6. Literature/Prosody: pre-Islamic and Muslim poetry

- Dīwān al-shu‘arā’ al-sitta¹⁷⁹
 - ‘Antara b. Shaddād al-‘Absī, *Diwan ‘Antara b. Shaddād*¹⁸⁰
 - Imru’ al-Qays b. Ḥujr b. al-Ḥārith al-Kindī (d. c. 550), *Diwān Imru’ al-Qays*¹⁸¹
 - Imru’ al-Qays b. Ḥujr b. al-Ḥārith al-Kindī (d. c. 550), *Bānat su‘ād*¹⁸²
 - Zuhayr b. Abī Sulmā al-Muzānī, *Diwān Zuhayr b. Abī Sulma*¹⁸³
 - Nābigha [Ziyād b. Mu‘āwiya] al-Dhubyānī, *Diwan Nābigha Dhubyānī*¹⁸⁴
- Derivative text:
- Yūsuf b. Sulaymān b. ‘Īsā al-Shantamarī (d. 1083), *Sharḥ ash‘ār al-shu‘arā’ al-sitta al-jāhliyyīn*¹⁸⁵
 - al-Shanfarā ‘Amr b. Mālik al-Azdī, *Lāmiyyat al-‘arab*¹⁸⁶
 - al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī al-Isfahānī al-Ṭughrā’ī (d. 1121), *Lāmiyyat al-‘ajam*¹⁸⁷
- Derivative text:
- Muḥammad b. Abb b. Aḥmad b. ‘Uthmān al-Mizmāri al-Tuwāti, *Nafth al-qalam bi-sharḥ lāmiyyat al-‘ajam*¹⁸⁸

¹⁷⁵ Egyptian; GAL I 296, II 156, SI 519; Idā’ 570; mss found in Ségou, Boutilimit, Timbuktu, Nouakchott and Wādān.

¹⁷⁶ Egyptian; GAL I 296, SI 519; mss found in Ségou, Timbuktu, Shinqīṭi and Nouakchott.

¹⁷⁷ Egyptian; GAL I 377, II 156, SII 195; Idā’ 566; mss found in Kano, Ségou and Nouakchott; al-Suyūṭī’s own commentary entitled *Itmām al-dirāya bi-sharḥ al-nuqāya* is found in Ségou and Nouakchott.

¹⁷⁸ West African; Faṭḥ 367–69; MLG 624; OMAR 175; mss found in Timbuktu, Shinqīṭi and Nouakchott.

¹⁷⁹ Arabian; collection of pre-Islamic poetry; mss found in Boutilimit, Kano, Nouakchott, Ségou and Timbuktu.

¹⁸⁰ Arabian; GAL I 22, SI 45; mss found in Kano, Ségou and Timbuktu.

¹⁸¹ Arabian; GAL I 24, SI 48; mss found in Kano, Ségou, Timbuktu and Nouakchott.

¹⁸² Arabian; GAL I 24, SI 48; Faṭḥ 241, 365; mss found in Kano, Ségou and Timbuktu.

¹⁸³ Arabian; GAL I 38, SI 68; mss found in Kano, Ségou and Timbuktu.

¹⁸⁴ Arabian; GAL I 22, SI 45; mss found in Timbuktu, Kano, Ségou and Nouakchott.

¹⁸⁵ Andalusian; GAL SI 542; mss found Nouakchott, Shinqīṭi, Wādān and Ibadan.

¹⁸⁶ Arabian; GAL I 25, 248, SI 53; Faṭḥ 243; mss found in Kano, Ségou and Boutilimit; commentary in Nouakchott and Niamey.

¹⁸⁷ Iraqi; GAL I 247, II 17, 191, SI 439; Faṭḥ 243; mss found in all collections.

¹⁸⁸ Maghribi/Saharan; MLG 1301 (#200) cites a didactic poem on Ibn Ājurrūm by al-Mizmāri; mss found in Nouakchott, Ségou and Timbuktu.

- Ibn Durayd [Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Durayd] (d. 933), *al-Maqṣūra*¹⁸⁹
- ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Uthmān al-Khazrajī (fl. 13th century), *al-Rāmiza al-shāfiya fī ‘ilm al-‘arūd wa-‘l-kāfiya [al-Qaṣīda al-khazrajīyya]*¹⁹⁰
- Abū Tammām [Ḥabīb b. Aws al-Ṭā‘ī] (d. 845), *Diwan al-Ḥamāsa*¹⁹¹
- Dhū ‘l-Rumma [Ghaylān b. ‘Uqba al-‘Adawī] (d. 735), *Diwan Ghaylān*¹⁹²

Prophet Muhammad

1. Biography of the Prophet Muhammad (*sīra*)

- al-Qādī ‘Iyāḍ b. Mūsā al-Yaḥṣubī al-Sabtī al-Andalusī (d. 1149), *Kitāb al-shifā’ bi-ta’rīf ḥuqūq al-muṣṭafā*¹⁹³
- Muḥammad b. ‘Isā b. Sawra al-Tirmidhī (d. 892), *Kitāb shamā’il al-rasūl*¹⁹⁴
- Muḡhaltāy b. Qilij b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Bakjari al-Ḥikri al-Ḥanafi (d. 1361), *Khaṣā’iṣ al-muṣṭafā* [a.k.a. *al-Khaṣā’iṣ*]¹⁹⁵
- Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr al-Shāfi‘ī al-Qaṣṭallānī (d. 1517), *al-Mawāhib al-laduniyya fī ‘l-minaḥ al-muḥammadiyya*¹⁹⁶
- ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505), *Unmūdḥaj al-labīb fī khaṣā’iṣ al-ḥabīb*¹⁹⁷
- Sīdī al-Mukhtār b. Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr al-Kuntī (d. 1811), *Nafḥ al-ṭīb fī ‘l-ṣalāt ‘alā ‘l-Nābī ‘l-ḥabīb*¹⁹⁸
- ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Lamṭī al-Miknāsī (d. 1475), *Qurrat al-abṣār fī sīrat al-Nābī al-mukhtār*¹⁹⁹

2. Devotional poetry

- Ka’b b. Zuhayr (fl. 7th century), *Bānat su‘ād*²⁰⁰

¹⁸⁹ Iraqi; GAL I 111, II SI 173; mss found in Kano, Ségou, Nouakchott and Timbuktu.

¹⁹⁰ Maghribi; GAL I 312, SI 545; Idā‘ 565; TS 66; mss found in Kano, Ségou and Timbuktu; commentaries in Boutilimit, Nouakchott and Ségou.

¹⁹¹ Syrian; GAL I 83, SI 134; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott and Shinqīṭī.

¹⁹² Arabian; lived in Iraq; GAL I 58, SI 87; mss found in Timbuktu, Boutilimit and Nouakchott.

¹⁹³ Andalusian; GAL I 455–6, S I 630–2; TS *passim*; Faḥḥ *passim*; mss found in Kano, Ségou, Timbuktu and Nouakchott.

¹⁹⁴ Khurasanian; GAL I 162, SI 268; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott, Timbuktu and Shinqīṭī; commentaries in Ségou.

¹⁹⁵ Egyptian; also known as al-Turkī; GAL SII 48; mss found in Nouakchott, Ségou and Kano.

¹⁹⁶ Egyptian; GAL II 73, SII 78; mss found in Ségou and Boutilimit and Timbuktu.

¹⁹⁷ Egyptian; GAL II 146, SII 181; mss found in Timbuktu, Boutilimit and Shinqīṭī.

¹⁹⁸ West African; ALA IV 78; MLG 552; OMAR 114; mss found in Ségou, Timbuktu, Boutilimit, Nouakchott and Shinqīṭī.

¹⁹⁹ Maghribi; Ziriklī IV 21; OMAR 2524; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott, Kano, Ségou, Timbuktu and Shinqīṭī.

²⁰⁰ Arabian; GAL I 39, TS 68; Faḥḥ 241, 365; mss found in Kano, Ségou, Timbuktu, Nouakchott and Boutilimit.

- ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Yakhlaftān b. Aḥmad al-Fāzāzī (d. 1230), *al-‘Ishrīniyāt*²⁰¹
Derivative texts:
- Ibn Mahīb [Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Mahīb], *Takhmīs al-‘ishrīniyāt*²⁰²
 - Muḥammad b. Masanih b. ‘Umar al-Kashnāwī (d. 1667), *al-Nafḥa al-‘anbariyya fī ḥall alfāz al-‘ishrīniyya*²⁰³
- Muḥammad b. Sa‘īd al-Būṣīrī, (d. 1295/6), *al-Burda [al-Kawākib al-durriyya fī madḥ khayr al-bariyya]*²⁰⁴
Derivative text:
- Khālid b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Jirjāwī al-Azharī (d. 1499), *Sharḥ al-burda*²⁰⁵
- Muḥammad b. Sa‘īd al-Būṣīrī, (d. 1295/6), *al-Qaṣīda al-hamziyya fī ‘l-madā’ih al-nabawiyya [Umm al-qurā fī madḥ khayr al-warā]*²⁰⁶
- Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Sulaymān b. Abū Bakr al-Jazūlī al-Simlālī (d. 1465), *Dalā’il al-khayrāt*²⁰⁷
Derivative texts:
- ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad al-Mahdī b. Yūsuf al-Fāsī (d. 1653), *Maṭāli’ al-musirrāt fī sharḥ dalā’il al-khayrāt*²⁰⁸
 - Ibn Sulaym [Muḥammad al-Ṣāliḥ b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Awjilī] (d. 1801/2), *Dalīl al-qā’id li-kashf asrār ṣifāt al-Wāḥid*²⁰⁹
Derivative text:
 - Ibn Sulaym [Muḥammad al-Ṣāliḥ b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Awjilī] (d. 1801/2), *Mazīd al-‘aqā’id ‘alā dalīl al-qā’id*²¹⁰
- ‘Abd Allāh b. Abī Bakr al-Shaqrāṭīsī (d. 1073), *al-Qaṣīda al-lāmiyya al-shaqrāṭisiyya*²¹¹
Derivative text:
- Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. Shabbāṭ al-Tawzarī (d. 1282), *Simṭ al-hadī fī ‘l-fakhr al-muḥammadi*²¹²

²⁰¹ Maghribi; GAL SI 482; Idā’ 570; TS 61, 81; Bayān 204; Faṭḥ 164; mss found in Kano, Ségou, Timbuktu and Nouakchott.

²⁰² GAL SI 483; Faṭḥ 172; TS 61; author found in all collections.

²⁰³ West African; ALA II 30; mss found in Kano, Ségou and Timbuktu.

²⁰⁴ Egyptian; GAL I 264, SI 467; mss found in all collections.

²⁰⁵ Egyptian; GAL SI 468, SII 23; mss found in Ségou, Shinqīṭī and Nouakchott.

²⁰⁶ Egyptian; GAL I 266, SI 470; Faṭḥ 242, 248; mss found in all collections.

²⁰⁷ Maghribi; GAL II 252, S II 359; Faṭḥ 192, *passim*; TS 79; mss found in all collections.

²⁰⁸ Maghribi; GAL II 253, SII 360; Faṭḥ 116; mss found in Ségou, Timbuktu and Nouakchott.

²⁰⁹ Libyan; ALA II 51; mss found in Kano, Ségou and Timbuktu.

²¹⁰ Libyan; ALA II 51; OMAR 1442, 1755; mss found in Kano, Ibadan, Timbuktu, Ségou and Nouakchott.

²¹¹ Maghribi; GAL I 268, SI 473; Faṭḥ 242–3; OMAR 279, 280; mss found in Kano, Ségou, Timbuktu and Boutilimit.

²¹² Egyptian; also known by the nisba of Tūzūrī and Tūzī (GAL SI 473); this is a takhmīs of *al-Shaqrāṭisiyya*; mss found in Kano and Ségou. It appears to be one

- Abū ’l-Faḍl Yūsuf b. Muḥammad b. Yūsuf b. al-Naḥwī al-Tawzarī (d. 1113), *al-Qaṣīda al-munfarīja [al-Faraj ba’d al-shidda]*²¹³
- Ibn Jābir [Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ’Alī b. Jābir al-Hawwārī al-Andalusī] (d. 1378), *Hullat al-siyārī fī madḥ khayr al-warā [Badī’iyyat al-’imyān]*²¹⁴
- Muḥammad al-Yadālī b. al-Mukhtār b. Maḥam Sa’īd al-Daymānī (d. 1753), *Qaṣīda fī madḥ al-nabī*²¹⁵
- Muḥammad al-Nābigha b. A’mar al-Ghallāwī (d. 1825), *Faṭḥ al-murabbī ’alā ḥal alfāz ṣalāt rabi*²¹⁶
- Sīdī ’Abd Allāh b. al-Ḥājī Ibrāhīm al-’Alawī (d. 1818), *Rawḍ al-nisrīn*²¹⁷

3. Hadith collections

- Muḥammad b. Ismā’īl b. Ibrāhīm al-Bukhārī (d. 870), *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*²¹⁸
Derivative texts:
 - ’Abd Allāh b. Sa’īd b. Abī Jamra al-Azdī al-Andalusī (d. 1296), *Bahjat al-nufūs*²¹⁹
 - Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-Ṣaghānī (d. 1252), *Mashāriq al-anwār al-nabawīya fī ’l-ṣiḥāḥ al-akhbār al-muṣṭafawīya*²²⁰
- Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj (d. 875), *al-Jāmi’ al-ṣaḥīḥ*²²¹
- Ibn Waḍ’ān [Muḥammad b. ’Alī b. ’Abd Allāh al-Mawṣilī] (d. 1101), *Arba’ūn ḥadīthan*²²²
- Yaḥyā b. Sharaf al-Nawawī al-Shāfi’ī (d. 1277), *Arba’ūn ḥadīthan*²²³
- Ibn al-Jazarī [Shams al-Dīn Abū ’l-Khayr al-Dimashqī al-Jazarī] (d. 1429), *Ḥiṣn al-ḥaṣīn min kalām sayyid al-mursalīn*²²⁴

of only two works cited in this appendix that do not appear in the Makhtout Mauritania data base of 34,000 mss in Mauritanian private libraries.

²¹³ Maghribi; GAL I 268, SI 473; Faṭḥ 243; mss found in Kano, Ségou, Timbuktu, Boutilimit, Nouakchott and Shinqīṭī.

²¹⁴ Andalusian; GAL I 341, SI 581; mss found in Kano, Ségou and Timbuktu.

²¹⁵ West African; MLG 587; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott and Timbuktu.

²¹⁶ West African; MLG 713; OMAR 559; mss found in Ségou, Nouakchott and Timbuktu.

²¹⁷ West African; Faṭḥ 367–9; MLG 624; OMAR 1615, 2231; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott and Timbuktu.

²¹⁸ Central Asian; GAL I 157, SI 260; mentioned many times in Faṭḥ, Idā’, Bayān, TS; mss found in Kano, Ibadan, Boutilimit, Nouakchott, Ségou, Timbuktu, Shinqīṭī and Wādān.

²¹⁹ Egyptian; GAL I 372; OMAR 2585; mss found in Ségou, Nouakchott, Boutilimit and Shinqīṭī.

²²⁰ Indian; GAL SI 613; OMAR 831. This is based on the hadith collections of both al-Bukhārī and Muslim; mss found in Ségou, Nouakchott and Shinqīṭī.

²²¹ Iranian; GAL I 160, SI 265; mentioned many times in Faṭḥ, Idā’, Bayān, TS; (multivolume) mss found in Kano, Timbuktu and Shinqīṭī.

²²² Iraqi; GAL I 355, SI 602; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott, and Shinqīṭī.

²²³ Syrian; GAL I 396, SI 682; mss found in all collections.

²²⁴ Syrian; lived in Egypt; GAL II 203, SII 277; mss found in Kano, Ségou, Timbuktu, Nouakchott and Shinqīṭī.

4. Sciences of ḥadīth (‘Ulūm al-ḥadīth):

- ‘Abd al-Raḥīm b. al-Ḥusayn al-‘Irāqī (d. 1404), *Alfiyyat al-‘Irāqī*²²⁵
Derivative text:
 - Zakariyyā’ b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Anṣārī (d. 1520), *Faṭḥ al-bāqī bi-sharḥ alfiyyat al-‘Irāqī*²²⁶
- Sidi ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Ḥājj Ibrāhīm al-‘Alawī (d. 1818), *Ghurraṭ al-ṣabāḥ fi iṣṭilāḥ al-Bukhārī*²²⁷
- Sidi ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Ḥājj Ibrāhīm al-‘Alawī (d. 1818), *Ṭal’at al-anwār*²²⁸

5. History:

- ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505), *Ta’riḫ al-khulafā’*²²⁹
- Ibn Ḥajar [Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī] (d. 1449), *al-Iṣāba fi ‘l-tamyīz al-ṣaḥāba*²³⁰
- Sulaymān b. Mūsā b. Sālim al-Kilā‘ī al-Ḥimyarī (d. 1237), *al-Iktifā’ bimā taḍammanahu min maghāzī al-Muṣṭafā wa-‘l-thalātha al-khulafā’*²³¹
- Ibn Sayyid al-Nās [Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ya’marī al-Andalusī] (d. 1334), *‘Uyūn al-Aṭhar fi funūn al-Maghāzī wa-‘l-shamā’il wa-‘l-siyar*²³²
- Abdallahi dan Fodio [‘Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad Fūdī] (d. 1829), *Ḍiyā’ ūlī ‘l-amr wa-‘l-mujāhidīn fi sīrat al-nabī wa-‘l-khulafā’ al-rashidīn*²³³

Jurisprudence (fiqh)

1. Uṣūl al-fiqh

- ‘Abd al-Waḥḥāb b. ‘Alī b. ‘Abd al-Kāfī Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 1370), *Jam’ al-jawāmi’ fi ‘l-uṣūl*²³⁴
Derivative texts:
 - Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Maḥallī al-Shāfī‘ī (d. 1459), *al-Badr al-ṭālī‘ fi ḥall jam’ al-jawāmi’*²³⁶

²²⁵ Egyptian; GAL I 359, SI 612; Idā’ 570; TS 66; Faṭḥ 169; mss found in all collections.

²²⁶ Egyptian; GAL SI 612; mss found in Ségou, Timbuktu and Shinqīṭī.

²²⁷ West African; Faṭḥ 37–69; MLG 624; OMAR 334, 836, 951, 1776; mss found in Boutilimit, Timbuktu and Ségou.

²²⁸ West African; Faṭḥ 37–69; MLG 624; OMAR 1062; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott and Timbuktu.

²²⁹ Egyptian; GAL II 157, SII 196; mss found in Ségou, Nouakchott and Timbuktu; possibly Kano.

²³⁰ Egyptian; GAL II 68, SII 73; mss found in Boutilimit, Shinqīṭī and Ségou.

²³¹ Andalusian; GAL I 371, SII 634; Faṭḥ 176; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott, Ségou and Timbuktu.

²³² Egyptian; GAL II 71, SII 77; mss found in Nouakchott, Ségou, Boutilimit, Shinqīṭī and Wādān.

²³³ West African; ALA II 93; Last 241; mss found in Ségou, Timbuktu and Kano.

²³⁴ Egyptian; GAL II 89, SII 105; Idā’ 570; TS 65; Bayān 203; Faṭḥ 173, *passim*; mss found in Nouakchott, Ségou, Timbuktu and Shinqīṭī.

²³⁵ Egyptian; GAL SII 105; Idā’; TS 66; Bayān; mss found in Nouakchott, Ségou, Timbuktu and Shinqīṭī.

- ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abi Bakr al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505), *al-Kawkab al-sāṭi*²³⁶
- ‘Abd al-Mālik al-Juwaynī (Imām al-Ḥaramayn) (d. 1085), *Waraqāt Imam al-Ḥaramayn [Kitāb al-waraqāt fī uṣūl al-fiqh]*²³⁷
Derivative texts:
 - Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ḥaṭṭāb al-Mālikī al-Ru‘aynī al-Ṭarābluṣī (d. 1540/1), *Qurrat al-‘ayn [al-‘aynayn] li-sharḥ al-waraqāt*²³⁸
 - Yahyā b. Nūr al-Dīn al-‘Imrīṭī (d. 1581), *Naẓm waraqāt Imam al-Ḥaramayn [Tashīl al-ṭuruqāt fī naẓm al-waraqāt]*²³⁹
- Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Idrīs al-Qarāfī al-Ṣanḥājī al-Mālikī (d. 1285), *Tanqīḥ al-fuṣūl fī ‘ilm al-uṣūl*²⁴⁰
- Sīdī ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Ḥājī Ibrāhīm al-‘Alawī (d. 1818), *Marāqī al-su‘ūd li-mubtaghī ‘l-raqī wa-‘l-ṣu‘ūd*²⁴¹
Derivative text:
 - Sīdī ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Ḥājī Ibrāhīm al-‘Alawī (d. 1818), *Nashr al-bunūd ‘alā marāqī ‘l-su‘ūd*²⁴²

2a. Furū‘ al-fiqh: Foundational texts

- Mālik b. Anas al-Aṣbaḥī (d. 796), *al-Muwatta‘a*²⁴³
Derivative texts:
 - Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Bāqī al-Zarqānī (d. 1710), *Nahj al-masālik bi-mazj muwatta‘a’ al-imam Mālik [Abhaj al-masālik bi-sharḥ muwatta‘a’ al-imam Mālik]*²⁴⁴
 - Sulaymān b. Khalaf al-Bājī (d. 1081), *al-Muntaqā sharḥ al-muwatta‘a*²⁴⁵
- Saḥnūn (d. 854), *al-Mudawwana al-kubrā*²⁴⁶

²³⁶ Egyptian; GAL I 89, SII 106; Idā‘; OMAR 2465; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott and Kano.

²³⁷ Kurasanian; GAL I 389, II 218, SI 671; Idā‘; mss found in Boutilimit and Ségou.

²³⁸ Maghribi; GAL I 389; OMAR 1283; mss found in Nouakchott, Ségou, Timbuktu and Wādān.

²³⁹ Egyptian; GAL SII 441; mss found in Timbuktu, Nouakchott, Kano and Boutilimit.

²⁴⁰ Maghribi; GAL I 506, SI 921; OMAR 244; this is a commentary on al-Rāzī’s (d. 1209) *al-Maḥṣūl fī uṣūl al-fiqh*; mss found in Ségou, Nouakchott and Boutilimit.

²⁴¹ West African; GAL SII 873; MLG 624; OMAR 1075; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott, Ségou and Timbuktu.

²⁴² West African; GAL S II 375, 873–84; MLG 624; OMAR 1075; mss found in Ségou, Nouakchott and Timbuktu.

²⁴³ Arabian; GAL I 66, 175, SI 297; OMAR 2327; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott, Ségou, Timbuktu and Kano.

²⁴⁴ Egyptian; on author see GAL II 318, SII 439 although this title is not mentioned in GAL; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott, Timbuktu and Shinqīṭī.

²⁴⁵ Andalusian; GAL SI 298; TS 67; mss found in Kano and possibly Ségou and Ghana.

²⁴⁶ Maghribi; GAL I 177, II 239, SI 299; Idā‘ 570; Bayān 206; TS 53, *passim*; Fath 157, *passim*; mss found in Timbuktu.

Derivative text:

- Khalaf b. Abī 'l-Qāsim Muḥammad al-Barādhī'ī (d. 1039), *al-Taḥdhīb fī ikhtisār al-mudawwana al-kubrā* [a.k.a. *Taḥdhīb masā'īl al-mudawwana*]²⁴⁷

2b. Furū' al-fiqh: Fiqh manuals

- Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī (d. 996), *al-Risāla*²⁴⁸

Derivative texts:

- Aḥmad b. Ghunaym al-Nafrāwī (d. 1792), *al-Fawākih al-dawānī 'alā risālat Ibn Abī Zayd*²⁴⁹
- 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Manūfī al-Shādhilī (d. 1532), *Kifāyat al-ṭālib al-rabbānī li-'l-risāla*²⁵⁰
- Aḥmad b. Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh al-Qalashānī (d. 1459), *Taḥrīr al-maqāla fī sharḥ al-risāla*²⁵¹
- 'Abd Allāh b. al-Ṭālib Aḥmad b. al-Ḥājj Ḥamā Allāh al-Ghallāwī al-Tīshīṭī (d. 1794), *Sharḥ 'alā al-risāla Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī*²⁵²
- Khalīl b. Ishāq (d. 1374), *Mukhtaṣar al-shaykh Khalīl*²⁵³

Derivative texts:

- Bahrām b. 'Alī al-Damīrī (d. 1412 or 1452), *Sharḥ mukhtaṣar Khalīl*²⁵⁴
- Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Marzūq al-Tilimsānī (d. 1438/9), *Sharḥ mukhtaṣar Khalīl*²⁵⁵
- Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-'Abdarī al-Gharnāfī (d. 1492), *al-Tāj wa-'l-iklīl li-mukhtaṣar Khalīl*²⁵⁶
- Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. Khalīl al-Tatā'ī (d. 1535), *Fath al-jalīl fī sharḥ mukhtaṣar Khalīl*²⁵⁷

²⁴⁷ Maghribi; GAL I 178, SI 302; TS 41; this is an abridgement of the *Mudawwana*; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott and Timbuktu.

²⁴⁸ Maghribi; GAL I 177–8; Idā' 570; Bayān 208; Fath 146, *passim*; TS 54, *passim*; mss found in all collections.

²⁴⁹ Egyptian; GAL I 18, SI 302; Bayān 202; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott and Ségou.

²⁵⁰ Egyptian; GAL I 178, SI 302, SII 435; mss found in Ségou and Timbuktu and Shinqīṭī.

²⁵¹ Maghribi; GAL I 178; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott and Shinqīṭī.

²⁵² West African; Fath 362–66; MLG 707; ALA IV 118; OMAR 1390; mss found in Timbuktu, Nouakchott and Ségou.

²⁵³ Egyptian; GAL II 83–84, SII 96–9; Idā' 570; Fath *passim*; TS *passim*; Bayān 207; mss found in all collections.

²⁵⁴ Egyptian; GAL II 84, SII 97, 100; Bayān 170; OMAR 1457; there are three versions: “Kabīr,” “Awsaṭ,” “Ṣaghīr;” not indicated in the database; mss found in Ségou, Timbuktu and Shinqīṭī.

²⁵⁵ Maghribi; GAL II 84, SII 97, 345; Bayān 210; OMAR 1958; mss found in Ségou, Nouakchott and Boutilimit.

²⁵⁶ Andalusian/Maghribi; GAL II 84, SII 97, 376; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott, Timbuktu and Shinqīṭī.

²⁵⁷ Egyptian; GAL II 84, SII 97; TS 68; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott, Ségou and Shinqīṭī. The Bayān (203–4) mentions a *hāshiya* by the North African Muṣṭafā

- Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. Khalīl al-Tatā’ī (d. 1535), *Jawāhir al-durar*²⁵⁸
- ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Ujhūrī al-Miṣrī (d. 1655/6), *Mawahib al-jalīl fī sharḥ mukhtaṣar Khalīl*²⁵⁹
- ‘Abd al-Bāqī b. Yūsuf al-Zurqānī (d. 1688), *Sharḥ ‘Abd al-Bāqī li-mukhtaṣar Khalīl [Tawḍīḥ]*²⁶⁰
Derivative text:
 - Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Bannānī al-Fāsī (d. 1780), *Fath al-rabbānī fī mā dhahala ‘an-hu al-Zurqānī*²⁶¹
- Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Ghāzī al-Miknāsī (d. 1513), *Shifā’ al-ghalīl fī ḥall muqafal Khalīl*²⁶²
- Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Kharashī al-Mālikī al-Miṣrī (d. 1690), *Sharḥ ‘alā’-l-mukhtaṣar li-Khalīl*²⁶³
- Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Dardīr al-‘Adawī (d. 1786), *Sharḥ al-dardīr li-mukhtaṣar Khalīl*²⁶⁴
- Maḥaṇḍ Bāba b. Ubayd al-Daymānī (d. 1860), *al-Muyassar al-jalīl ‘alā mukhtaṣar Khalīl*²⁶⁵
- Ibrāhīm b. Mar’ī al-Shabrakhītī (d. 1694), *Sharḥ al-shabrakhītī li-mukhtaṣar Khalīl*²⁶⁶
- Ibn ‘Aṣīm [Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. ‘Aṣīm al-Gharnāṭī] (d. 1427), *Tuḥfat al-ḥukkām fī nakt wa-l-aḥkām [al-‘āṣimīyya]*²⁶⁷
Derivative text:
 - Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Mayyāra (d. 1662), *al-Itqān wa-l-iḥkām fī sharḥ tuḥfat al-ḥukkām*²⁶⁸

al-Rammāṣī (d. 1723–24) entitled the *Hāshiya al-muṣṭafā*, but the only collection in the database with an extant copy is Boutilimit.

²⁵⁸ Egyptian; GAL II 84, SII 97; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott and Timbuktu.

²⁵⁹ Egyptian; GAL II 84, SII 98; mss found in Boutilimit, Shinqīṭī and Timbuktu. The Bayān (203) mentions a derivative text by the Egyptian scholar Ibn Shās [‘Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad Shās] (d. 1219) entitled *al-Jawāhir al-thamīna fī madhhab ‘ālim al-Madīna* (Kaḥḥāla II 303). According to Willis 202, this text is based on al-Ujhūrī’s commentary on the *Mukhtaṣar* of Khalīl. The only extant manuscript in the database by this author is a work called *Aḥkām Ibn Shās* held in Nouakchott.

²⁶⁰ Egyptian; GAL II 84, SII 97–8, 438; TS 67; Bayān 212; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott, Ségou, Timbuktu, Shinqīṭī and Wādān.

²⁶¹ Maghribī; GAL II 84, SII 98; Bayān 203; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott, Timbuktu, Shinqīṭī and Wādān.

²⁶² Maghribī; GAL SII 97; mss found in Boutilimit, Shinqīṭī and Ségou.

²⁶³ Egyptian; GAL II 84, SII 98; Idā’ 570; a variation of the name is “al-Karāshī” in the Idā’; mss found in Nouakchott, Ségou, Timbuktu, Shinqīṭī, Wādān and Boutilimit.

²⁶⁴ Egyptian; GAL II 353, SII 98, 480; mss found in Nouakchott, Ségou and Timbuktu.

²⁶⁵ West African; MLG 900; mss found in Boutilimit and Nouakchott.

²⁶⁶ Egyptian; GAL II 84, SII 98; Kaḥḥāla I 72–3; mss found in Boutilimit, Shinqīṭī and Nouakchott.

²⁶⁷ Andalusian; GAL 264, SII 375; TS 66; Fath 169, *passim*; mss found in Nouakchott, Timbuktu, Ségou and Kano.

²⁶⁸ Maghribī; GAL II 264, SII 375; mss found in Nouakchott, Ségou, Boutilimit, Wādān and Timbuktu.

- Ibn ‘Askar [‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Askar al-Baghdādī] (d. 1332)], *Irshād al-sālik ilā ashraf al-masālik ‘alā madhhab al-Imam Mālik*²⁶⁹
- ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Manūfī al-Shādhilī (d. 1532), *al-Muqaddima al-‘izziya li-l-jamā‘a al-azhariyya*²⁷⁰
- ‘Alī b. Qāsim b. Muḥammad al-Tujībī al-Zaqqāq (d. 1506), *Lāmiyyat al-Zaqqāq*²⁷¹

Derivative text:

- Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Mayyāra (d. 1662), *Sharḥ lāmiyyat al-Zaqqāq*²⁷²
- ‘Alī b. Qāsim b. Muḥammad al-Tujībī al-Zaqqāq (d. 1506), *al-Manhaj al-muntakhab fī qawā’id al-madhhab*²⁷³

Derivative texts:

- Aḥmad b. ‘Alā b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Manjūrī (d. 1587), *Sharḥ al-manhaj al-muntakhab*²⁷⁴
- Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Mayyāra (d. 1662), *Takmil al-manhaj ilā uṣūl al-madhhab*²⁷⁵

3. Didactic texts

- ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Miknāsī al-‘Uthmānī (d. 1618), *Silāh ahl al-imān fī muḥāribat al-shaytān*²⁷⁶
 - ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad al-Ṣaghīr al-Akhḍārī al-Buntyūsī al-Mālikī (d. 1585), *Mukhtaṣar fī ‘l-‘ibādāt ‘alā madhhab al-imām Mālik*²⁷⁷
- Derivative text:
- Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ḥasanī al-Sijilmāsī (d. 1712/3), *al-Rawḍ al-yānī‘ al-azharī ‘alā diyānāt al-Akhḍārī*²⁷⁸
 - ‘Abd al-Bārī al-Rifā’ī al-‘Ashmāwī (fl. 16th century), *al-Muqaddima al-‘ashmāwīya fī ‘l-‘ibādāt*²⁷⁹

²⁶⁹ Iraqi; GAL II 163, S II 205; mss found in Kano, Timbuktu and Ibadan; commentary in Ghana.

²⁷⁰ Egyptian; GAL I 449, S I 805, S II 434–5, 437; mss found in Kano, Ségou, Shinqīṭī and Timbuktu.

²⁷¹ Maghribi; GAL SII 376; Faḥḥ 232, 241; OMAR 2528; mss found in Kano, Timbuktu and Boutilimit.

²⁷² Maghribi; GAL SII 376; OMAR 1438; mss found in Timbuktu, Ségou and Nouakchott.

²⁷³ Maghribi; GAL II 264, SII 376; Faḥḥ 241–42; OMAR 2528; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott, Ségou, Timbuktu and Shinqīṭī.

²⁷⁴ Maghribi; GAL SII 376; OMAR 1165; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott, Shinqīṭī and Ségou.

²⁷⁵ Maghribi; GAL SII 376; mss found in Timbuktu, Boutilimit and Nouakchott.

²⁷⁶ Maghribi; Ziriklī IV 97–8; OMAR 356, 1962; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott, Timbuktu and Shinqīṭī.

²⁷⁷ Maghribi; GAL SII 705; Idā’ 570; Faḥḥ 293; mss found in all collections.

²⁷⁸ Maghribi; MLG 162; mss found in Nouakchott, Ségou and Timbuktu.

²⁷⁹ GAL SII 435; Idā’ 570; Faḥḥ 308, 372; mss found in Kano, Ségou and Timbuktu.

- Usman dan Fodio [‘Uthmān b. Muḥammad Fūdī] (d. 1817), *‘Umdat al-‘ubbād*²⁸⁰
- Usman dan Fodio [‘Uthmān b. Muḥammad Fūdī] (d. 1817), *Hidāyat al-ṭullāb*²⁸¹
- Ibn Farḥūn [Ibrāhīm b. ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. Farḥūn al-Ya‘marī al-Andalusī] (d. 1397), *Durrat al-ghawwāṣṣ fi muḥāḍirat al-khawāṣṣ*²⁸²

4. al-Qawā’id al-fiqhiyya

- Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Idrīs al-Qarāfī al-Ṣanhāji al-Māliki (d. 1285), *Kitāb anwār al-burūq*²⁸³
- Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Wansharīsī (d. 1508), *Īdāḥ al-masālik ilā qawā’id al-imām Mālik*²⁸⁴
- Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Ghāzī al-Miknāsī (d. 1513), *Kulliyāt*²⁸⁵
- Ibn Juzay [Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Juzay al-Kalbī al-Gharnāṭī] (d. 1340), *Qawānīn al-aḥkām al-shar‘iyya wa-masā’il al-furū‘ al-fiqhiyya*²⁸⁶

5. Legal Cases/Opinions

- ‘Alī b. Muḥammad Zayn al-Ābidīn b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ujhūrī (d. 1656), *al-Zaharāt al-wardiyya min fatāwā al-Ujhūrī*²⁸⁷
- Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Warzāzī al-Darī (d. 1752–53), *Nawāzil*²⁸⁸
- Sīdī ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Ḥājj Ibrāhīm al-‘Alawī (d. 1818), *Nawāzil fiqhiyya*²⁸⁹
- Aḥmad Bābā b. Aḥmad al-Tinbukti (d. 1627), *Mir‘āj al-ṣu‘ūd ilā nayl ḥukm majlūb al-sūd*²⁹⁰

²⁸⁰ West African; ALA II 77; MLG 623; Last 240; mss found in Kano, Ségou and Timbuktu.

²⁸¹ West African; ALA II 61; MLG 623; Last 237; mss found in Kano, Ségou and Timbuktu.

²⁸² Arabian; GAL I 277, SI 488, SII 226; mss found in Nouakchott, Ségou, Timbuktu; possibly in Boutilimit.

²⁸³ Maghribi; GAL I 385, SI 665; Idā’ 570; Bayān 205; mss found in Boutilimit and Shinqīṭi; commentary in Timbuktu.

²⁸⁴ Maghribi; GAL II 248, SII 348; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott and Timbuktu.

²⁸⁵ Maghribi; GAL II 240, SII 338; OMAR 618, 682; mss found in Ségou, Boutilimit, Nouakchott and Timbuktu.

²⁸⁶ Andalusian/Maghribi; GAL SII 377; mss found in Timbuktu, Nouakchott and Ségou.

²⁸⁷ Egyptian; GAL SII 437; Bayān 213; mss found in Ségou and Timbuktu.

²⁸⁸ Maghribi; el Hamel (Fath) 364–5 ff; mss found in Timbuktu; versifications in Nouakchott and Timbuktu. One Mauritanian versification of al-Warzāzī’s collection of *nawāzil* is by ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Ṭālib Aḥmad b. al-Ḥājj Ḥamā Allāh al-Ghallāwī al-Tishīṭī (d.1785). MLG 470; OMAR 1025. It is mentioned in the Fath 364.

²⁸⁹ West African; Fath 367–69; OMAR 787; mss found in Nouakchott, Shinqīṭi and Timbuktu.

²⁹⁰ West African; ALA IV 26; mss found in Nouakchott, Timbuktu and Ségou.

- Ibn Salmūn [‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Alī b. Salmūn al-Kinānī al-Gharnāṭī] (d. 1365), *al-‘Iqd al-munazzam li-’l-ḥukkām fi-mā yajrī bayn-hum min al-aḥkām*²⁹¹
- Ibn Rushd [Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Rushd al-Qurṭubī al-Andalusī] (d. 1198), *Bidāyat al-mujtahid wa-nihāyat al-muqtaṣid*²⁹²
- Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Dimashqī al-Ṣafadī (fl. 14th century), *Raḥmat al-umma fi ’khtilāf al-a’imma*²⁹³

Belief (tawhid)

- Muḥammad b. Yusuf al-Sanūsī (d. 1486), *‘Aqīdat ahl al-tawḥīd al-ṣuḡhrā*²⁹⁴
Derivative texts:
 - Muḥammad al-Walī b. Sulaymān b. Abī Muḥammad al-Fulānī (d. 1688/9), *al-Manḥāj al-farīd fi ma’rifat ‘ilm al-tawḥīd*²⁹⁵
 - Muḥammad b. Yusuf al-Sanūsī (d. 1486), *al-‘Aqīda al-kubrā*²⁹⁶
 - Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Alī al-Ḥawḍī (d. 1505), *Wāsiṭat al-sulūk*²⁹⁷
 - Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Maḥmūd b. Abī Bakr b. Baghayogho al-Wangarī (d. 1655), *Naẓim al-‘aqīda al-ṣuḡhrā*²⁹⁸
- Yaḥyā b. ‘Umar al-Qurṭubī al-Azdī (d. 1171), *Manẓūmat al-Qurṭubī [Urjūzat al-wildān]*²⁹⁹
- Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), *Iḥyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn*³⁰⁰
- Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Ghazālī (d. 1123), *Tajrīd fi kalimat al-tawḥīd*³⁰¹
- Naṣr b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Samarqandī (d. 982/3), *Tanbīh al-ghāfilīn*³⁰²

²⁹¹ Andalusian; GAL II 264, SII 374; OMAR 2525; mss found in Nouakchott, possibly Boutilimit and Timbuktu.

²⁹² Andalusian; GAL SI 836; mss found in Boutilimit, Ségou and Timbuktu.

²⁹³ Syrian; GAL II 91, 97, SII 107; mss found in Ségou, Shinqīṭī and Timbuktu.

²⁹⁴ Maghribi; GAL II 250, SII 353; OMAR 109, 2590; this text is mentioned in virtually every West African text about Islamic education; mss found in all the libraries in the sample.

²⁹⁵ West African; ALA II 35; MLG 269; mss found in Kano, Ségou and Timbuktu.

²⁹⁶ Maghribi; GAL II 250, SII 353; mss found in Boutilimit, Kano and Shinqīṭī.

²⁹⁷ Maghribi; GAL SII 355; MLG 33; mss found in Boutilimit, Ségou and Timbuktu.

²⁹⁸ West African; ALA IV 33; MLG 78; mss found in Ségou, Timbuktu and possibly in Nouakchott.

²⁹⁹ Andalusian; GAL I 429, SI 763; TS 61; mss found in Kano, Timbuktu and Ségou.

³⁰⁰ Iraqi; GAL I 422, SI 748; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott, Ségou, Timbuktu, Kano, and Shinqīṭī.

³⁰¹ Iraqi; GAL SI 756; 5 copies in Boutilimit, Ségou and Timbuktu.

³⁰² Central Asian; GAL I 196, SI 348; mss found in Ségou, Nouakchott, Kano and Shinqīṭī.

- Aḥmad b. Abd Allāh al-Jazā’irī (d. 1479/80), *Manzūmat al-Jazā’iriyya fi ’l-tawḥīd*³⁰³
Derivative texts:
 - Muḥammad b. Yusuf al-Sanūsī (d. 1486), *Sharḥ al-manzūmat al-jazā’iriyya fi ’l-tawḥīd*³⁰⁴
 - Ibrāhīm b. Ibrāhīm b. Ḥasan al-Laḡānī (d. 1631), *Faṭḥ al-majīd bi-kifāyat al-murīd*³⁰⁵
- Ibrāhīm b. Ibrāhīm b. Ḥasan al-Laḡānī (d. 1631), *Iṭḥaf al-murīd ‘alā jawharat al-tawḥīd*³⁰⁶
- Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Maqqārī al-Tilimsānī (d. 1631), *Iḍā’at al-dujunna fi ‘aqā’id ahl al-sunna*³⁰⁷
Derivative text:
 - Ibn al-A’māsh [Muḥammad b. al-Mukhtār b. al-A’māsh al-‘Alawī] (d. 1695–96), *Futūḥāt dhī al-raḥma fi sharḥ iḍā’at al-dujunna li-l-Maqqārī*³⁰⁸
- Arbāba al-Kharṭūmī [Arbāb b. ‘Alī b. ‘Awn b. ‘Āmir b. Aṣḡbah] (d. 1690/1), *al-Jawāhir al-ḥisān fi taḥqīq ma’rifat arkān al-imām*³⁰⁹
- Ibn ‘Āshir [‘Abd al-Wāḥid b. Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. ‘Āshir al-Anṣārī al-Fāsī] (d. 1630), *al-Murshid al-mu’īn ‘alā ’l-ḡarūrī min ‘ulūm al-dīn*³¹⁰
Derivative text:
 - Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Mayyāra (d. 1662), *al-Durr al-thamīn wa-’l-mawrid al-mu’īn fi sharḥ al-murshid al-mu’īn*³¹¹

³⁰³ Maghribi; GAL II 252, SII 357; TS 66; mss found in all the collections in the sample.

³⁰⁴ Maghribi; GAL II 252, SII 357; mss found in Boutilimit, Ségou, Timbuktu and Shinḡīṭī.

³⁰⁵ Egyptian; GAL SII 437; mss found in Nouakchott, Boutilimit, Ségou and Timbuktu.

³⁰⁶ Egyptian; GAL II 316, SII 436; this commentary and the work commented on (the *Jawharat al-tawḥīd*) are often found together; mss found in Ségou, Nouakchott and Timbuktu. Al-Ḥājj ‘Umar mentions another title of a commentary on the same text by al-Laḡānī called *‘Umdat al-murīd* (Bayān 213).

³⁰⁷ Maghribi; GAL II 298, SII 408; OMAR 2516, 2591; mentioned many times in the *Faṭḥ*; mss found in Kano, Nouakchott, Ségou and Timbuktu.

³⁰⁸ West African; GAL SII 408; MLG 174; OMAR 1029, 1250, 1777; mss found in Ségou, Timbuktu and Nouakchott. Also known as *Bila’mish* (Ghislaine Lydon, *On Trans-Saharan Trails: Islamic Law, Trade Networks, and Cross-Cultural Exchange in Nineteenth-Century Western Africa* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009], 303). For a brief biography, see MLG 1: 53–56; *Faṭḥ* 257; Rainer Oßwald, “Inequality in Islamic law,” in *Law and the Islamic World Past and Present*, ed. Christopher Toll and Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen (Copenhagen: Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters, 1995), 97–104.

³⁰⁹ Sudanese; ALA I 13–14; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott and Ségou.

³¹⁰ Maghribi; GAL II 461, SII 699. Mentioned in the *Faṭḥ*; mss found in Nouakchott, Boutilimit, Timbuktu, Ségou, Kano and Shinḡīṭī.

³¹¹ Maghribi; GAL II 264, SII 375; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott, Ségou and Timbuktu.

- Ibn Sulaym [Muḥammad al-Ṣāliḥ b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Awjālī] (d. 1801/2), *Dalīl al-qā’id li-kashf asrār ṣifāt al-wāhid*³¹²
Derivative text:
 - Ibn Sulaym [Muḥammad al-Ṣāliḥ b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Awjālī] (d. 1801/2), *al-Mazīd al-‘aqā’id ‘alā dalīl al-qā’id*³¹³
- al-Mukhtār b. Būnah al-Jakanī (d. 1805/6), *Wasīlat al-sa’āda fī nashr mā taḍammun al-shahāda fī ’l-tawḥīd*³¹⁴
- Muḥammad al-Yadāli b. al-Mukhtār b. Maḥam Sa’īd al-Daymānī (d. 1753), *Farā’id al-fawā’id fī sharḥ qawā’id al-‘aqā’id*³¹⁵

Sufism (taṣawwuf)

- Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), *Iḥyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn*³¹⁶
- Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), *Bidāyat al-hidāya*³¹⁷
- Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Umar b. Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Salama al-Ḥabashī (d. 1380), *Kitāb al-nūrayn fī iṣlāḥ al-dārayn*³¹⁸
- Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Karīm b. ‘Aṭā’illāh al-Iskandarī (d. 1309), *Miftaḥ al-filāḥ wa-miṣbāḥ al-arwāḥ*³¹⁹
- Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Karīm b. ‘Aṭā’illāh al-Iskandarī (d. 1309), *al-Ḥikam al-‘aṭā’iyya*³²⁰
Derivative texts:
 - Aḥmad Zarrūq [Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ‘Īsa al-Burnusī al-Fāsī] (d. 1493), *Tanbīh dhawī ’l-himam* [a.k.a. *Sharḥ al-ḥikam*]³²¹
- Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Anṣārī al-Sāḥilī al-Mālaqī (d. 1353), *Bughyat al-sālik fī ashraf al-masālik*³²²

³¹² Libyan; ALA II 51; mentioned many times in the Faṭḥ; mss found in Kano, Nouakchott, Ségou and Timbuktu.

³¹³ Libyan; ALA II 51; OMAR 1442, 1755; mss found in Nouakchott, Ségou and Timbuktu.

³¹⁴ West African; Faṭḥ 321–3; OMAR 510, 2593; mss found in Nouakchott, Boutilimit, Timbuktu and Ségou.

³¹⁵ West African; MLG 334; OMAR 702; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott and Ségou.

³¹⁶ Iraqi; GAL I 422, SI 748; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott, Timbuktu, Ségou, Kano and Shinqīṭī.

³¹⁷ Iraqi; GAL I 422, SI 749; mss found in Boutilimit, Timbuktu, Ségou and Shinqīṭī.

³¹⁸ GAL II 189, S II 251; mss found in Nouakchott, Timbuktu, Ségou and Kano.

³¹⁹ Egyptian; GAL II 118, SII 145; mss found in Nouakchott, Timbuktu and Ségou and Shinqīṭī.

³²⁰ Egyptian; GAL II 118, SII 146; multiple mentions in the Faṭḥ; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott, Timbuktu, Ségou and Kano.

³²¹ Maghribi; GAL II 118, SII 146; multiple mentions in the Faṭḥ; mss found in Boutilimit, Timbuktu and Ségou.

³²² Andalusian; GAL II 265, SII 378; OMAR 327, 2485; mss found in Nouakchott, Ségou and Wādān.

- Aḥmad Zarrūq [Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ‘Īsa al-Burnusī al-Fāsī] (d. 1493), *al-Naṣiḥa al-kāfiyya li-man khaṣṣa-hu ‘llāhu* [bi-’l-‘āfiyya]³²³
- Aḥmad Zarrūq [Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ‘Īsa al-Burnusī al-Fāsī] (d. 1493), *Qawā‘id al-taṣawwuf* [*Qawā‘id al-Zarrūq*]³²⁴
Derivative text:
 - Muḥammad al-Yadālī b. al-Mukhtār b. Maḥam Sa‘īd al-Daymānī (d. 1753), *Khatimat al-taṣawwuf*³²⁵
- Aḥmad Zarrūq [Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ‘Īsa al-Burnusī al-Fāsī] (d. 1493), *al-Waḥīfa al-zarrūqiyya*³²⁶
Derivative text:
 - ‘Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad al-‘Ayyāshī (d. 1679), *al-Anwār al-saniyya ‘alā al-waḥīfa al-zarrūqiyya*³²⁷
- Ḥasan b. Mas‘ūd b. Muḥammad al-Yūsī (d. 1691), *Dāliyyat al-Yusī*³²⁸

Qādiriyya Texts:

- Sīdi al-Mukhtār b. Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr al-Kuntī (d. 1811), *Zawāl al-albās fī tard al-shayṭān al-khannās*³²⁹
- Sīdi al-Mukhtār b. Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr al-Kuntī (d. 1811), *al-Kawkab al-waqqād fī faḍl dhikr al-mashā’ikh wa-ḥaqā’iq al-awrād*³³⁰
- Sīdi al-Mukhtār b. Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr al-Kuntī (d. 1811), *Jadhwat al-anwār fī ‘l-dhabb ‘an awliyā’ Allāh al-akhyār*³³¹
- Sīdi al-Mukhtār b. Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr al-Kuntī (d. 1811), *Ḥizb al-isrā’*³³²
- Sīdi Muḥammad b. Sīdi al-Mukhtār al-Kuntī (d. 1826), *al-Ṭarā’if wa-’l-talā’id min karāmāt al-shaykhayn al-wālida wa-’l-wālida*³³³

³²³ Maghribi; GAL II 253, SII 361; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott, Timbuktu, Ségou and Shinqīti.

³²⁴ Maghribi; GAL SII 361; OMAR 188, 1105; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott, Timbuktu and Ghana.

³²⁵ West African; MLG 334; OMAR 531; this is a 19-line letter on Sufism, which was often accompanied by his own commentary. It is similar to Zarrūq’s *Qawā‘id al-taṣawwuf*; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott, Timbuktu and Ségou.

³²⁶ Maghribi; GAL II 254, SII 361; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott, Timbuktu and Kano.

³²⁷ Maghribi; GAL SII 361; OMAR 1022; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott, Wādān and Shinqīti.

³²⁸ Maghribi; Zirikli II 223; GAL II 455, S II 675; mss founding Kano, Ségou and Timbuktu.

³²⁹ West African; ALA IV 92; MLG 552; OMAR 388; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott, Timbuktu, Ségou and Shinqīti.

³³⁰ West African; ALA IV 77; MLG 552; OMAR 94, 711; mss found in Nouakchott, Timbuktu and Kano.

³³¹ West African; ALA IV 76; MLG 552; mss found in Ségou, Timbuktu and Shinqīti.

³³² West African; ALA IV 97; MLG 552; OMAR 192; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott and Timbuktu; there is a long commentary on this text written by Sīdi Muḥammad b. Sīdi al-Mukhtār al-Kuntī (d. 1826) called: *Irsā’ al-asrār ilā asrār ḥizb al-isrā’*; mss found in Nouakchott and Timbuktu.

³³³ West African; ALA IV 113; MLG 775; OMAR 64, 162, 372; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott, Ségou and Timbuktu.

- Sīdi Muḥammad b. Sīdi al-Mukhtār al-Kuntī (d. 1826), *Junnat al-murīd dūna 'l-marīd*³³⁴
- Sīdi Muḥammad b. Sīdi al-Mukhtār al-Kuntī (d. 1826), *Shudhūr al-adhkār al-maḥiya li-'l-awzār*³³⁵

Tijāniyya Texts:

- 'Alī Ḥarāzīm b. al-'Arabī Barāda al-Fāsī (d. 1856), *Jawāhir al-ma'ānī wa-bulūgh al-amānī fī fayḍ Sīdī Abī 'l-'Abbās al-Tijānī*³³⁶
- 'Umar b. Sa'īd al-Fūtī (d. 1863), *Rimāḥ ḥizb al-raḥīm 'alā nuḥūr ḥizb al-rajīm*³³⁷
- 'Umar b. Sa'īd al-Fūtī (d. 1863), *Suyūf al-sa'īd al-mu'taqid fī ahl Allāh ka-'l-Tijānī 'alā raqabat al-ṭarīd al-jānī*³³⁸
- Yarkī Ṭalfī [al-Mukhtār b. Wadī'at Allāh al-Māsīnī al-Fulānī] (d. 1863), *Tabkiyat al-Bakkā'i*³³⁹

³³⁴ West African; ALA IV 98; MLG 775; OMAR 208, 1046; mss found in Boutilimit, Nouakchott, Ségou and Timbuktu.

³³⁵ West African; ALA IV 112; MLG 775; OMAR 1284; mss found in Boutilimit, Ségou and Timbuktu. This is a short work concerned with dhikr.

³³⁶ Maghribi; GAL SII 876; mss found in Shinqīṭī, Ségou, Timbuktu and Kano.

³³⁷ West African; GAL SII 896; ALA IV 218; MLG 918; OMAR 28/2 mss found in Kano, Ségou, Timbuktu, Shinqīṭī and Ibadan.

³³⁸ West African; ALA IV 220; MLG 918; OMAR 28/1; mss found in Ségou, Ibadan and Shinqīṭī.

³³⁹ West African; ALA IV 235–6; MLG 1114; this is a Tijānī poem written in 1859 attacking the Qādirī shaykh Aḥmad al-Bakkā'i al-Kuntī; mss found in Kano, Nouakchott, Ségou and Timbuktu.

THE BOOK AND THE NATURE OF KNOWLEDGE
IN MUSLIM NORTHERN NIGERIA, 1457–2007

Murray Last

Book famines, it seems, are still a feature of northern Nigerian intellectual life. For the last 50 years, “Book Aid International” in Britain has tried to make up the shortfall, yet in 2008 it has removed Nigeria from its list of recipients as if Nigerian university libraries (there are 94 major ones now) were no longer in need of books from abroad. Over twenty years ago, in 1986, the late Michael Crowder could publish a passionate essay on the African book famine, but the underlying conditions have still not improved. Late in 2007 *The Economist* ran a story on how copies of Adiche’s best-selling novel on the Biafran war could not find a distributor in Nigeria; even Doris Lessing for her Nobel Prize speech in December 2007, chose book hunger in Africa as her theme.¹ Any visitor to a university campus in Nigeria today will hunt in vain for a bookshop with the latest works: some universities now have no bookshop whatsoever—the University of Abuja site in Gwagwalada and Usman Danfodiyo University in Sokoto come to mind, but even the huge store in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, is remarkably bare (its branch in Arewa House, Kaduna, is much fuller, but very small; the core problem, the manager told me, is the demand abroad for pre-payment); the History shelf of Bayero University’s bookshop in Kano has only four textbooks and nothing else.²

¹ Michael Crowder: “The Book Crisis: Africa’s Other Famine,” in Hector Blackhurst, *Africa Bibliography* 1985 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), xvi–xxi; cf. Carol Priestley, “The Book Famine: A Selective Directory for Book and Journal Assistance in Africa,” *Africa* 60, no. 1 (1990), 135–48. *The Economist* (24th November, 2007), 74. Doris Lessing, “A Hunger for Books,” her speech for the Nobel Foundation (2007), reprinted in *The Guardian* (London) 8th December 2007. Book Aid International started in 1954 as the Ranfurly Library Service; the name was changed in 1994.

² On the University of Abuja’s new site there is now (2010) a bookshop. One of the rare distributors in northern Nigeria told me how bookshops do not pay up and how a Sokoto university librarian (now dead) had once demanded from him a bribe of 20,000 naira before he placed any order; by contrast, state Ministries were, he said, his best customers. Basic textbooks and religious books (for Muslims or Christians), however, are often found in smaller shops, where printers’ agents or authors have taken

There are private shops in town with schoolbooks; there is a line of Islamic book stalls in Kano's Kurmi Market and a few specialist shops with leather-bound volumes of major religious texts in classical Arabic. Outside key mosques on a Friday there is a marketplace for these and other texts, and at important conferences certain booksellers will set up their tables. Mission bookshops that used to stock a range of books have either closed down or become focused on a very limited set of Christian works. Finally, for visitors desperate for something to read, a major hotel in a key city will usually have a small shop. On the other hand, should some visiting scholar show his Nigerian colleagues a new book, it can be photocopied and spiral-bound overnight; the private libraries of some academics are full of such texts, along with articles copied on rare trips abroad. Book famine persists.

Price is not the only factor in the famine. Libraries open to the general public are rare. Two foreign governments—the Americans and the British—maintain them in a very few important cities, but they are not general libraries, and in recent years an educational institution like the British Council has even reduced its holdings. University libraries are specialist collections, often well supplied with textbooks, and the older ones have an excellent backstock which had been built up in the 1960s: but to find the latest monograph on, say, African history or even a recent work of popular science is usually out of the question. Personal libraries, of course, exist, and some that have been shown to me are formidable collections reflecting the intellectual passions of their owners. But these collections have been made by travelling to Saudi Arabia and to London; rarely has any item been bought within Nigeria. Today, it might be argued that the internet more than makes up for the lack of books—but in Nigeria broadband connections are relatively rare, dial-up is exceedingly slow, and access to the net in the privacy of one's home is not common: "epileptic" electricity (as Nigerians call their national grid) renders much of such modern gadgetry unreliable, or dependent on a personal generator and, importantly, a supply of fuel. I have yet to meet an academic who prefers the net to the books on his own shelves when it comes to preparing

them. In Kano city the latest chapter of currently popular novels, printed not in *a'jamī* but Hausa roman script, can be hired for 10 naira a day from a stall in the mainly women's market, just as elsewhere one can rent a newspaper for a brief read. Practically speaking, along with authors, printers are the main publishers at this level of the book-trade.

lectures or writing articles for a scholarly journal—even if such books are largely out of date and reflect his period as a student long ago.

It was not always like this. Indeed, if anything, the book famine has got worse since independence. In the early 1960s, bookshops had good stock, and they would order new texts on request—in Nigeria mainly paperbacks, but “in Ghana”, said the Ibadan bookshop manager recently arrived from Legon, “the students would refuse to buy any book that wasn’t in hard covers.”³ As a young student staying in friends’ flats, we revelled in their collections of books, often with the latest Penguin specials; one of my hosts (the late Mustafa Zubeiru) always scrutinised a book to see how well made it was. Young medical doctors could be avid collectors, with early editions of the travellers’ journals and big books on African art; the latest books of African history were not just on their shelves but usually had been read.

My point is that there are periods when books, and book-based knowledge, dominate the intellectual landscape; and there are periods of serious book-famine, when ‘knowledge’ lies elsewhere than in books, or else is confined to a very limited (and often controlled) number of texts. Counterknowledge, then, does not lie in “alternative” readings that break free from that control, but may take a different form, for example, in oral, often vernacular transmission, if necessary out on the deep-rural margins of the settled world.

In this brief essay, I want to suggest how this pattern of book-wealth and book-famine, with its varying knowledge systems and counter-knowledges, might be traced over the last five to six hundred years. During that period, there have been some very interesting periods of plenty but overall, my argument goes, the experience of Muslim scholars living in northern Nigeria has been shaped by a scarcity of books: generally their expertise is to go deep, not wide. One can argue that depth of learning is superior to a superficial knowledge of not only a broad range of subjects but of divergent yet fashionable opinions about them. So some of the questions to be raised here are:

1. Was this book famine simply the product of the long distance from, say, Cairo or Fez, and the failure of the West African book trade to meet the demand from local scholars and students for the latest books?

³ The bookshop manager was Mrs. Marguerite Harris, ca. 1963. At that period everything Ghanaian was apt to be thought superior—music, politicians (e.g., Nkrumah), even Ghanaians’ larger sleeping cloths.

2. Or was the ‘famine’ not so much a famine as simply a lack of demand on the part of the scholarly milieu in West Africa, because the focus was only on books and subjects that really mattered, namely core religious texts?
3. Could it be that those who were the ‘book-mad’ in this milieu, the would-be passionate book-collectors, by and large all travelled to North Africa and the Middle East and, once there, decided to stay where the books and the libraries were—in short, was there a “brain-drain” of the bookish?
4. Were the Muslim rulers in west Africa so rarely interested enough in this particular book-based knowledge that they failed to build up and maintain huge royal libraries which could be passed on to their heirs? Did West African savanna politics usually deter the king-makers from selecting a learned prince as too bookish to be a “real” ruler?
5. Finally, do most books actually *not* contain the sort of knowledge that really matters in a scholarly west African context—should an ambitious young scholar learn to cultivate other skills than a wide-ranging book learning, if he is to be respected by peers and public alike, listened to by the powerful, even well enough off to afford to buy the latest books brought back from abroad by a pilgrim? In short, was a reputation, for example, as an unusually enlightened Sufi worth more than bookishness—was a period in *khalwa* better than time with a text?

My broader hypothesis is that long periods of book famine shape the nature of knowledge—both for the scholar elite and for the Muslim community generally. And when periods of book-plenty have been possible, this has accentuated not only the elite’s claim to even greater knowledge but to reinforce among the followers of great shaykhs the same elitist values associated with book-learning. Book-plenty has not given rise to book-based dissent and debate brought about by dissident scholars getting hold of the ‘latest’ controversial texts from abroad and adopting their viewpoints. There has of course been controversy among scholars: the *mutakallimūn* antagonised the circle around Shaykh ‘Uthmān, for example, and Sokoto deemed some books as “bad,” as not to be read.⁴ But these debates did not arise out of an

⁴ The Shaykh referred to his opponents on *kalām* always as “*ṭalaba*”—may it have been their own name for themselves and their “school”? Apart from in his *Mawāḍi‘*

abundant book supply, but over issues of interpretation and what was of prime importance for being counted as a Muslim. Even at the end of the 19th century when conditions for traders and pilgrims were good, such new, radical works as those of Muḥammad ‘Abduh and al-Afghānī caused apparently no stir in intellectual circles in northern Nigeria.

Conversely, the suggestion here is that once a particular style of knowing has been established in a region, the book-trade shapes itself to conform to that style. So once book-famine is seen as normal, it will not be traders who end it but extraneous circumstances, like the military success of the Sokoto scholars ca. 1810 or intense mercantile prosperity in 16th century Timbuktu and Borno.

Instead, in a book-famine what can develop is a tradition of “counterknowledge”—alternative bases for “deep” knowing that bypasses the claims of book-learning.⁵ These counterknowledges have taken many different forms over the centuries without ever displacing entirely the core knowledge system which surely was, and is, based (in Muslim northern Nigeria at least) on a deep understanding of key texts in classical Arabic. Today, however, there is a question whether this core knowledge system is under attack, implicitly if not explicitly, as northern-Nigerian society changes under the impact of oil wealth and other pressures.

Priority is given here to book-learning at the core of this Muslim knowledge, in part because the “book” is the focus of this volume, in part because book-knowledge is cosmopolitan and in northern Nigeria

auhām al-talaba, his *Ifhām al-munkirīn* and his *Ḥiṣn al-afhām*, the Shaykh’s arguments with his critics are outlined in the early sections of Muḥammad Bello’s *Infāq al-maisūr*, and most famously in the exchange of letters there with Shaykh Muḥammad al-Amin al-Kānimī. The Shaykh expressed his disagreement with even his teacher, Jibril b. ‘Umar, in his *Shifā’ al-ghalīl*. Muḥammad Bello argued also, for example, with Shaykh ‘Abd al-Salām in his *Sard al-kalām*, and with Shaykh Aḥmad Lobbo in his *Jawāb li’l-sayyid Aḥmad b. Ḥamma Lobbo*. See note 48 below for a “ban.”

⁵ “Counterknowledge” is used here in the sense it has, for example, in Damian Thompson, *Counterknowledge* (London: Atlantic Books, 2008). James Simpson, *Burning to Read: English Fundamentalism and Its Reformation Opponents* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), gives insight into another world whose passion for a single book could lead to violence. But book-based “counterknowledge” has occurred at least once—in forgeries of *jihādī*-style texts made in the 1950s in the strongly Tijani, Kano-oriented and pro-NEPU town of Gusau: *Kanz al-awlād* and two fulfulde poems are by M. Balarabe but he attributes them to Muḥammad Bello and Nana Asmā’; for the latter, see Jean Boyd and Beverly Mack, *The Collected Works of Nana Asmā’u, daughter of Usman dan Fodio (1793–1864)*, 2nd edition (Ibadan: Sam Bookman Publishers, 1999), 218–23.

has been valid as such since the 15th century. Other knowledges (such as *tsafi* and *maita*, or indeed non-*ṭariqa* forms of Sufism) have been parochial and temporary by comparison—powerful awhile but ultimately discredited on the wider stage. Today in a Nigeria with over 90 universities deep knowledge of classical Arabic texts is still respected but not in the way it once was: key jobs in policy-making, in the legislature, in the economy and the learned professions require different expertises. The well-being of the state lies no longer with the great ‘*ulamā*’. But interestingly, “book famine” remains. The new dominant knowledges have, it seems, largely shaped themselves to the condition of being book-short. Is a local “style” of knowing, then, more deep-seated than might be implied by the contents of what’s to be known?

BOOKS IN THEIR CONTEXT

1. *Merchants*

I have argued at length in an earlier essay (already published) for the recognition of periods of book-plenty and book-shortage over the last five centuries in West Africa.⁶ This is not the place to repeat in detail my hypotheses here, but only suggest again that there was a book-boom in Timbuktu in the 15th and 16th centuries, a period that saw similarly an influx of books into Kano, and a boom in Borno.⁷ After about 1650, the particular mercantile cultures that had supported the book-boom in both Timbuktu and Kano went into decline due to political changes. The next boom occurred in Sokoto and in the emirates under its intellectual leadership from ca. 1810 onwards. In the 20th century, one can be more detailed: the 1920s and 1930s were periods when books in Arabic as well as English were available as never before, as were the 1950s and 1960s, only for supply (and demand?) to fall sharply thereafter. Why?

⁶ “The Book in the Sokoto Caliphate,” in *The Meanings of Timbuktu*, ed. Shamil Jeppie and Souleymane B. Diagne (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2008), 135–63, is a slightly revised and corrected version of an article by the same title published in *Studia Africana: revista interuniversitària d’estudis Africans* 17 (October 2006), 39–52.

⁷ Elias N. Saad, *Social History of Timbuktu: The Role of Moslem Scholars and Notables, 1400–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). Cf. Shamil Jeppie and Souleymane B. Diagne, op. cit., and Brent D. Singleton, “African Bibliophiles: Books and Libraries in Timbuktu,” *Libraries & Culture*, 39, no. 1 (2004), 1–12. On Borno, see John Lavers, “Islam in the Borno Caliphate: A Survey,” *Odu: A Journal of West African History*, New Series, 5 (1971), 27–53.

First, we must not think of the West African savanna as especially isolated, even in the distant past. Contacts across the Sahara were frequent and profitable—and, most of the time, no more dangerous or time-consuming than a sea voyage. There were, too, routes that did not cross the Sahara, routes that historians tend to neglect but ones that pilgrims, at least by the 17th century, regularly travelled to and from the Middle East—the route east of Lake Chad through Darfur to the Nile valley. The advantage of this route is that a traveller could work and earn money for his food and lodging at intervals on his journey. Given that returning pilgrims brought books with them, this route may have been a significant component of the book trade. Many items came across to west Africa though we do not know their routes: coins, a royal water jug, the game of chess; and news from west Africa reached Europe, including *dramatis personae* as Shakespeare's Othello and references in Marlowe suggest—even 13th century England was aware of what was happening in those parts of north Africa most closely engaged with west Africa: Chaucer's knight fought as a mercenary there, while King John was accused of planning to recognise the Sultan of Morocco as his suzerain.⁸ Even earlier is the reference in a Roman text, ca. 70 c.e., to a people by Lake Chad, a people who use the very same name today; Roman coins have turned up in Nigerian excavations. In short, books could piggy-back on a trade system that was already well established and diverse in what it carried. West Africa was no more remote than was, say, northern Britain or Ireland (where there was a similar book famine) vis à vis the northern, Christian shore of the Mediterranean.

We need, however, to analyse West Africa not as an undifferentiated whole, but rather as comprising two distinct (though inter-related) mercantile zones. The first zone comprises, in the north, Egypt, Tripoli, the Fezzan and, in the south, Sudan, Darfur, Borno. The second zone includes Morocco, Algeria in the north, and Timbuktu, Jenné in the south. Hausaland, the main focus of my discussion here, lies on the borderlands between the two zones, attracting merchants from the east (Borno) and from the west (the Wangarawa from

⁸ Supplies of ivory and fine, tawed leather reached 13th and 14th century Europe from West Africa via the Maghreb—news passed back and forth with trade (gold and slaves from the Hausa region tended to go to Tripoli, Cairo and the Middle East). By the 16th century, Morocco was a useful friend for England in their mutual opposition to catholic Spain.

Songhai and Mali), as well as, of course, northern Arab, Ibadi and Tuareg merchants (the Agalawa for example). The two zones had early linguistic differences too: Coptic terms and place-names from Egypt in the eastern zone, while the western zone had Latin terms. These zonal differences probably reflect the quite distinct merchant networks, networks in which trust, credit, co-operation were crucial to trading success. And these differences show up in the book-stock the different networks would bring in from such northern centres of scholarship and book-copying as Fez and Cairo where certain local titles might be available for sale more cheaply or more immediately. This would affect merchants more than pilgrims, in that pilgrims primarily were heading back from Mecca; Fez might well not be on their route, at least not back to Borno or Hausaland. It might be a hypothesis worth working on that manuscripts of Moroccan or Algerian provenance that have survived in Borno and Hausaland were sourced originally through merchants, and not pilgrims.⁹

Merchants were also scholars. It is well known that in the first three centuries of Islam the men who were expert in the crucial texts—the *ḥadīth*, *tafsīr*—earned their livings as traders, especially in foodstuffs or cloth, or even as craftsmen; religious learning was not a profession in itself.¹⁰ As far as we know, this was true also of many of the northern African merchants trading across the Sahara. The trading stations they established in towns like Zaye (later known as Birnin Katsina), Dalla (later known as Birnin Kano), Kurmin Dan Ranko (in southern Katsina), Yandoto are also recalled as centres of Islamic scholarship. Much later, semi-professional ‘*ulamā*’ tended to live away from towns (which were dominated by military-minded “kings”), and draw around them students to form rural scholarly communities; the Holy

⁹ It has long been noted that many of the later, non-“classical” authorities cited by west African scholars were Maghrebi, though some were Egyptian: see, for example, the lists in Fathi H. El-Masri’s edition of the Shaykh’s *Bayān wujūb al-hijra ‘alā ‘l-‘ibād* (Khartoum University Press, 1978), 168–77, and F.R. Siddiqi’s edition of the Shaykh’s *Ḥiṣn al-afḥām* (Kano: Bayero University, 1989), vi–ix, 16–7. The bias reflects perhaps the role of Timbuktu as a source of books for West African scholars generally.

¹⁰ Hayyim J. Cohen, “The Economic Background and the Secular Occupation of Muslim Jurisprudents and Traditionalists in the Classical Period of Islam, until the Middle of the Eleventh Century,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 13, no. 1, (1970), 16–61. I am very grateful to Prof. Patricia Crone for this reference. In the Sokoto Caliphate there was a tradition that the Caliph should also earn his living, usually by making rope either from baobab bark (for livestock) or from hemp (for fastening fences). Today in Kano a very notable merchant, Shaykh Isyaku Rabi’u, is widely respected as a distinguished scholar and given the title *Khadimul Qur’ān*.

Qur'ān, it is said, was too "hot" to have in an ordinary town or village, too "subversive" of the questionable spirit-power that sustained kings. These early scholar-merchants were the ones who converted their local rulers to Islam—not just because a local ruler, once Muslim, made Zaye or Dalla *dār al-Islām*, and so made the traders' Sudan-derived goods legitimate for eventual sale in North Africa; these merchants were also sincere scholars for whom the niceties of *sharī'a* law mattered. It is they who renamed their local allies "Habasha" (a term that eventually became, I surmise, more generally pronounced "Hausa").¹¹ Habasha were the legal category "Abyssinian" that was now extended to this part of *Bilād al-Sūdān*. It is these scholar-merchants who probably added similar categorical labels to various local groups such as *majūs* ("Maguzawa"/Persians), *jalūt* ("Jalutawa"/Palestinians), *rūm* ("Rumawa"/Byzantines) and others. Through these new labels other local groups too became legally categorised as non-Muslim allies from whom the strictly Muslim merchants could buy grain and livestock, and could hire the guards and caravan-men that made trade possible. In short, these traders knew their al-Ṭabarī, and were interested in old middle-eastern topography: theirs was a scholarly milieu as well as a mercantile one. Hence were books a normal part of their personal baggage, if not of their stock-in-trade? And did the different merchant networks have different cultural styles and tastes, in books as in other items?

2. *The Book as a Material Object*

First, West Africa was a manuscript culture, not a print-culture. We need to think, not of "print-capitalism" but of "script-mercantilism," as Sheldon Pollock suggests for India where hand-copying of manuscripts persisted well into the modern period, leaving some 30 million manuscripts still extant.¹² In some senses then a further question is why did not the West African scholarly milieu develop in the same

¹¹ For a wider discussion of these points and the evidence for them, see my "Historical Metaphors in the Kano Chronicle," *History in Africa* 7 (1980), 161–78; and for the broader context, see my "The Early Kingdoms of the Nigerian Savanna," in *History of West Africa*, ed. J.F.A. Ajayi and M. Crowder, 3rd edition, vol. 1 (London: Longman, 1985), 167–224. Linguists however are sceptical that *ba-Habasha* could become *ba-Habshe* (along with *Habshawa*, both are current usages sometimes heard in southern Katsina) and then *ba-Haushe*.

¹² Sheldon Pollock, "Literary Culture and Manuscript Culture in Precolonial India," in *Literary Cultures and the Material Book*, ed. Simon Eliot, Andrew Nash and Ian Willison (London: The British Library, 2007), 77–94.

way; it may have done so awhile in Timbuktu, but what stopped it elsewhere? One answer lies in the lesser use, in west Africa, of the vernacular in *text* form; oral use of the vernacular in west Africa was always more common than *a'jamī* texts. Furthermore, the Indian manuscript tradition developed out of the Persian model, with pictures in texts in the Persian style, and so there grew a more popular market for them. By contrast, West African manuscripts are resolutely bare of any such illustrations. However, West African manuscripts can be very finely made: there was a formal reluctance to have the Holy Qur'ān set in movable type (the same was true of the Torah); there is a significant blessing to be had in writing out the Qur'ān by hand. Only in recent years in northern Nigeria have printed copies of the Holy Qur'ān been acceptable, and even then, a manuscript copy, though mechanically lithographed, is worth more than one set in movable type. By contrast, the first movable-type products of Gutenberg's innovative press were made specifically for the Catholic Church—first, indulgences, then the Bible itself.¹³ Neither were problematic theologically, it seems; the lower cost (compared with a hand-written version) made such a Bible a desirable item when it came onto the market, especially once it was translated into the various vernaculars of, first, Europe, then abroad. The West African milieu did not set up printing presses in the pre-colonial period though such presses were active in both Morocco and Egypt in the 19th century.¹⁴ Indeed printed Arabic books are rarely found in collections in Hausaland before the 20th century; it was during the early colonial period that private individuals started collecting them, presumably initially when they went on pilgrimage, or when merchants could use the efficient parcel post set up by the new colonial authorities.

The alternative to importing books is, of course, either to copy books already imported or to compose books oneself. Either way, the key factor in book-production is the availability of paper. Ink and pens

¹³ That the Church welcomed printing is widely recognised. But the specific reference to indulgences is Kai-Michael Sprenger, “‘volumus tamen, quod expressio fiat ante finem mensis Mai presentis’. Sollte Gutenberg 1452 im Auftrag Nicolaus von Kues' Ablassbriefe drucken,” *Gutenberg-Jahrbuch* 74 (1999), 42–57.

¹⁴ F.A. Abdulrazak, *The Kingdom of the Book: The History of Printing as an Agency of Change in Morocco between 1865 and 1912*. (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1990) Dissertations Abstracts International, DAI, 51, No.01A: 263. For “western” presses able to print in Arabic, see José Balagna, *L'imprimerie arabe en Occident: XVIe, XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1984).

can be made locally, but as far as we know, no paper was locally produced in either Borno or Hausaland; nor did copyists use vellum—whether made from the skins of calves, lambs or kids. Sentences can be written on cotton cloth (as on war flags), but it's unsatisfactory for a book, or even for a letter. Bookmen therefore relied on imported paper, primarily made in Italy and marketed by North African merchants. But some paper seems to have come from manufacturers in the Ottoman Empire who nonetheless used the same watermarks as some Italian producers. The "three moons" (*tre lune*) as a watermark seems to have indicated more a quality of paper than a manufacturer; it became a well-recognised trademark.

Composing a book, say in classical Arabic, requires skills that are very different and much harder to acquire than reading. Relatively few scholars in West Africa could write good Arabic prose; many could write passable prose, but their limitations were recognisable to competent scholars.¹⁵ Hence, more scholars preached, or wrote poetry in the vernacular—neither required much paper. I do not know if would-be authors composed drafts before making a final copy—I have never seen an old "draft," with its crossings out; and throwing-away or destroying paper with writing on it was unacceptable. Notes (transcripts?) were taken down during the Shaykh's teaching and reproduced in other books (such as *Infāq al-maisūr* and 'Abdullāh b. Muḥammad al-Kanawī's work on the 35 *dā'ira* he attended). But I have never seen preliminary notes to be used in composing a book. Such work was probably done in one's head. Teachers would carry interpretations and arguments in their head ready for the morning's oral instruction; similarly, a scholar due to deliver a judgment on a case or a legal problem would rehearse his response in his mind. One can assume that many locally composed books were in effect those same oral pronouncements written out on paper. This must have been the most common form of composition, yet we know that 'Abdullāh b. Fūdī kept his hand in practice by doing a bit of writing every evening by the light of a small oil lamp.¹⁶ The implication is that scholars whose

¹⁵ But *not* to me! I have always relied for such comments on excellent Arabists such as my professors Fathi El-Masri, the late Muhammad Ahmad al-Hajj, John Hunwick and others, to whom I owe a great debt of gratitude for their help and their patience.

¹⁶ My source here, ca. 1984, is A.D.H. Bivar; I do not know who told him. According to Umar Bello, Asma'u in one of her poems says her brother Muḥammad Bello, when *Amīr al-mu'minīn*, used lamps fuelled by official oil when working on official duties, and switched to oil he had personally paid for when composing his own books.

'library' was mainly in their head could compose books more readily than those whose books were, at best, in their bags. A good example of this is 'Abdullāh b. Fūdī who ca. 1806 abandoned the *jihād* and headed east on pilgrimage; when in Kano he was asked to write a book on political offices (*Ḍiyā' al-ḥukkām*). It is unlikely that as a pilgrim he traveled with *all* his books, yet he was able to compose a long text (ca. 70 folios) with some 60–70 references. He may have borrowed books from Kano colleagues, assuming they had the ones he needed, but he probably knew most of his quotations 'off head'. In any case it did not take him long—persuaded by the Kanawa, he gave up the idea of the pilgrimage and returned to Gwandu, having also done for them the *tafsīr* in Ramadan. An indication of his speed of composition is shown by how long he took to finish the second volume of his great *tafsīr*; he completed the first volume of *Ḍiyā' al-ta'wīl* at the end of Ramaḍān, and the second volume 10 months later, spending the dry season of 1815–6 writing some 370 folios.

'Uthmān b. Fūdī, in contrast, composed the 21 folios of his *Naṣīḥat ahl al-zamān* in 17 days during March–April 1811/1226, but he repeats there much of what he wrote in *Miṣbāḥ li-ahl hadhā 'l-zamān* (56 ff. long, written three years before—1808/1223) which in turn might be seen as a précis of his *Bayān wujūb al-hijra* (150 ff., written in 1806/1221). It is very unusual to find an author spelling out how long it took him to compose a book; at the time, the Shaykh 'Uthmān was settled peacefully in Sifawa and teaching a large circle of students, now that the *jihād* had been successfully completed, and all his administrative responsibilities had been delegated to others.

Written formats differ, of course, from an oral one. All the written prose texts we have start with an appropriate opening formula, say who is the author, and usually give a title to the work. It is possible that copyists added these details later—that the author simply handed his copyist sheets of his writing starting from chapter one—but it seems unlikely. In contrast to poetry, authors identified a prose work as theirs. Authorship in this field mattered. Clearly it was widely known who wrote which poem, but poets are not as often cited as "authorities"—it is a different medium, of joy and praise as well as general instruction that requires no authorial "weight." Yet some works do have no author, some no title specified.¹⁷ Usually the owner or the

¹⁷ One book, the Shaykh's *Bayān wujūb al-hijra*, had also a working title: Muḥammad Bello in his *Infāq al-maisūr* referred to it, it seems, simply as *Kitāb*

cataloguer attributed the work to a known author (on the basis of style or an internal reference), but some texts quite possibly were composed deliberately as pastiches (or forgeries? See note 4 above). But who would otherwise compose a book of prose anonymously, and why?

The main demand for paper, then, was from copyists, and almost certainly the book most copied was the Holy Qurʾān, since students had to complete a copy, in a fair hand, to graduate. The main centre for copying Qurʾāns was Borno; in the early 19th century Borno exported fine Qurʾāns to North Africa – students went to Borno to learn calligraphy and to study the Qurʾān, and still do. The quality—especially the accuracy—of Borno-made Qurʾāns was apparently high, in a way they were not elsewhere: Borno Qurʾāns were worth \$40–\$50 on the Tripoli market.¹⁸ Paper was therefore available in Borno markets, with Kano traders going to Borno to buy supplies—not to the capital but to peripheral markets where politics interfered less with trade (and prices were lower?). Besides, it was often thought better for students copying the Qurʾān *not* to reside in the capital; so, was the greatest demand for paper essentially suburban?

The hypothesis here is that where paper was readily available and reasonably priced, there was more use of paper for locally composed books, or for uses of paper other than Qurʾānic copying. This was the case, it seems, in 16th/17th century Timbuktu and in 16th century Borno; in both regions historical texts about local rulers were composed.¹⁹ At such times, too, imported books were copied; and texts newly arrived from abroad fetched very high prices presumably in part because they gave high status to the scholar-owner, but also because

al-jihād (see El-Masri, 36). Sometimes a note was written just to correct, diplomatically, some details in a work by another scholar – an example is the 10-page *Hāshiya* attributed to Muḥammad Bello where he modifies some historical/ethnographic points made by his uncle ʿAbdullāh b. Fūdī in his *ʿIdāʾ al-nusūkh*. It lacks both a title and formal authorship. The wider problems of anonymity elsewhere are discussed in John Mullan, *Anonymity: a secret history of English Literature* (London: Faber, 2007), where it was the copyist (alias the printer) who could be then at risk, not the author.

¹⁸ Dixon Denham, Hugh Clapperton and Walter Oudney, *Narrative of Travels and Discoveries in Northern and Central Africa in the Years 1822, 1823 and 1824*, 3rd edition (London: John Murray, 1828), II, 162. For the “common”, *tre lune* paper in Uje, the market south of Kukawa, see Heinrich Barth, *Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, 1857), 2: 370. Markets in political centres were always at risk of being infiltrated by enemy soldiers in disguise, hence wary rulers seldom wanted major markets within their walled settlement.

¹⁹ Examples are, in 17th century Timbuktu, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Saʿdī’s *Taʾrikh al-Sūdān* and Maḥmūd Kaʿtī’s *Taʾrikh al-fattāsh* and in 16th century Borno, Aḥmad b. Furtūwa’s *Kitāb ghazawat Barnū* and his *Kitāb ghazawat Kānim*.

they offered a fresh market for copies. Sokoto ca. 1810–1820 clearly had good supplies of paper, as the leading scholars there composed some three hundred books, many of which were written for wide dissemination. Certain texts became “favourites” and have survived in very many copies; other texts are rare.

3. *Books as Items of Trade*

This raises the question: which books were in demand? One way, perhaps, of answering this question is simply to see how many copies are in the main national collections—on the assumption that scholars were willing to sell to these collections the books that were easily replaceable, books that were in some sense “standard.” Real family treasures are rarely handed over. Remember, these collections were made by museum or archive employees, not by librarians (who might have selected only one best copy of each book they needed to complete their holdings.) Thus in 1965 after the initial phase of manuscript collecting was over, the National Archives at Kaduna had²⁰

73 copies of the six main pre-Islamic poets;
51 copies of al-Badamāṣī’s *Takhmīs* in praise of the Prophet;
38 copies of al-Buṣīrī’s *al-Burda*;
27 copies of al-Yūsī’s *Dāliyya*.

Then, on Mālikī law, 34 copies of al-Akhḍarī’s *Shurūt al-ṣalat*;
31 of al-‘Asmāwī’s *al-Muqaddima*;
29 of al-Qairawānī’s *Risāla*;

²⁰ In November and December 1965 I made a card-index of every Arabic manuscript in the National Archives, Kaduna, where I was kindly given a room of my own and could work until midnight. The card catalogue is currently in the store-room of the Northern History Research Scheme library, in Ahmadu Bello University’s History Dept. at Zaria. A summary was published in two articles, “Arabic Manuscript Books in the National Archives Kaduna,” *Research Bulletin, Centre of Arabic Documentation* 2, no. 2. (1966), 1–10; and 3, no. 1 (1967), 1–15. The Archives’ own catalogue, where books are listed by provenance, systematically province by province, gives an excellent idea of who was selling what, where and at what price. The Archives has changed its cataloguing codes, but conversion from old to new is relatively easy. In 1995, the Al-Furqān Islamic Heritage Foundation published a handlist in Arabic of the Archives’ collection, *Fihris makhtūṭat Dar al-Watha’iq al-Qawmiyah al-Nijiriyah bi-Kaduna/Handlist of Manuscripts in the Nigerian National Archives of Kaduna*, compiled by Muhammad Baba Yunus, edited by John Hunwick, which was used for John Hunwick et al., *Arabic Literature of Africa*, Vol. 2: *The Writings of Central Sudanic Africa* (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

28 of Khalīl b. Iṣḥāq's *Mukhtaṣar*;
 20 of Ibn 'Askar's *Irshād al-sālik*.

And on *tawḥīd*, 31 copies of Yaḥya al-Qurṭubī's *Urjūzat al-wildān*.

Of the more local books, the most common is 37 copies of *Qawā'id al-ṣalat* attributed to Shaykh 'Uthmān b. Fūdī, with 25 copies of *Kitāb al-zuhd* attributed to Zayn al-'Ābidīn, and 21 copies of the *Qaṣīda* by Muḥammad al-Ṣāliḥ b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Sālim al-Aujilī. Note, mentioned here are only those with over twenty copies, simply to suggest the commonest texts. In all, over half the manuscripts (i.e. ca. 2000) in the Archives are by non-West African authors but copied by West African copyists; and a further 1000 are anonymous, a category in which I put fragments of books I could not identify as well as anthologies and excerpts from prized religious books.

Finally some 900 books are of west African authorship, 55 percent of which are by Sokoto writers, especially Shaykh 'Uthmān b. Fūdī (246 copies comprising 60 different works of his), his brother 'Abdullāh b. Fūdī (168 copies, of 58 different texts) and the Shaykh's son, Muḥammad Bello (73 copies, of 46 texts). Of the Shaykh's books certain ones stand out as 'popular': *Nūr al-albāb* (27 copies), *Dāliyya fī madḥ al-nabī* (23 copies); *Bayān al-bid'a al-shaitāniyya* (19 copies); *'Umdat al-'ubbād* (19 copies); *Kitāb al-masā'il min shaykhinā Ibn Fūdī* (14 copies). 'Abdullāh b. Fūdī has fewer 'best-sellers': *Ḍiyā' al-ḥukkām* (13 copies), *Ḍau' al-muṣallī* (12 copies), *Tazyīn al-waraqāt* (12 copies). Interestingly, Muḥammad Bello's "best-selling" text was *Sard al-kalām* in which he dealt with the revolt of 'Abd-Salām (8 copies). From this list we might conclude that shorter texts were the most useful to people; *Nūr al-albāb*, for example, is only 13 folios long at most (older copies are 7 folios long), and his *Dāliyya* is only 62 verses long.²¹ Big, "famous" books like Shaykh 'Uthmān's *Ihyā' al-sunna* (226 printed pages) or Muḥammad Bello's *Infāq al-maisūr* (212 printed pages) are not on the list—perhaps too valued to sell to the Archives, or simply more rare?

Calculating accurately the average lengths of Sokoto books by the number of folios per manuscript is thwarted by the large variation in copyists' hands. Older 19th-century hands tend to be neater and

²¹ Interestingly, in his *Infāq al-maisūr* where he lists some of his father's books, Muḥammad Bello puts *Nūr al-albāb* as the first. I can detect no rationale, other than significance for the student, for the order in which he lists only 27 out of more than a hundred books the Shaykh wrote.

smaller than later hands, so that an early copy can be two-thirds the size of a later one; lines per page vary from 10 to 34. Nonetheless where institutional collectors (such as librarians) sought older copies, it is possible from their collections to compare authors' propensity for writing short or long books. For example, in a set of 61 books by Shaykh 'Uthmān, 44 consisted of 10 or less folios; only 6 had more than 40 folios.²² Muḥammad Bello, in a smaller set, had 13 out of 22 books under 10 folios (and none over 40), whereas 'Abdullāh, in a collection of 27 books, had 6 books of 10 or less folios, and 10 over 40. It does not seem that earlier books by these scholars were necessarily shorter; for example, *Ihyā' al-sunna* was composed in 1793. But 'Abdullāh's really big books came after the *jihād* though at that time he was formally in charge of the whole western and southern regions of the Caliphate. He famously preferred writing to governing.

Obviously there are problems with this notion of a "best-seller" or "most popular." But if we take a single provincial collection like that of the Emir of Bauchi, whose forebear, Ya'qūb, was a student of the Shaykh's (books were written specifically to guide him), we find that in the 1950s it contained 32 books by the Shaykh, 11 by Muḥammad Bello and apparently only 2 by 'Abdullāh, one of which was 4 folios long, the other 2 folios. But admittedly we do not have a complete list of all that was in that library. Another way of calculating which local texts are "most loved" would be to list those that have been recently re-printed using photo-lithography and sold in the marketplace or outside mosques. I have never done a systematic inquiry of printers about their print-runs or of traders about which texts sell best, but it would be possible to do. In the 1960s, the Saradauna and his colleagues promoted the publication of many texts and translations (into Hausa roman script) as did the Tijānī shaykhs in Kano (at "P.O. Box 40"). In recent years, more Sokoto-authored texts, especially by 'Abdullāh b. Fūdī, have been printed abroad with movable type and finely bound. A market is clearly there, but I do not know on what scale.

²² What I have used here is W.E.N. Kensdale's printed catalogue, at Ibadan University Library, of the books he borrowed for microfilming in 1955–8. I was told earlier this year (2008) that all Ibadan's microfilms are now damaged beyond repair; I understand they have been discarded. I have also consulted the Arif and Abu Hakima catalogue for the Jos Museum collection (London: Luzac, 1965) though it is often unsatisfactory. Both it and Kensdale's give the number of folios, number of lines per page and page size, whereas the Hunwick volume (see note 19) does not, of course.

One reason for the popularity of one book and the relative “unpopularity” of another lies in the fact that books by, for example, the Shaykh ‘Uthmān can have a considerable degree of overlap. Of his hundred or so books, some 50 are on *bid‘a* and unacceptable local practices. His brother, ‘Abdullāh focused especially on grammar, on which he wrote several essays, and on *tafsīr*; on this latter subject he produced a two-volume study of 747 folios (appropriately called *Ḍiyā’ al-ta’wīl*; in the printed Cairo version it’s in four volumes) followed, 7 years later, by an abridgement *Kifāyat ḍu‘afā’ al-Sūdān*, in some 532 folios divided into two volumes. A further work of some 535 folios (*Baḥr al-muḥīṭ*) turned al-Suyūṭī’s *Jam‘ al-jawāmi‘* into 4232 lines of verse, presumably to make it memorable. Though his many versifications of core texts might be memorable, some proved still too long: his 70-folio, 1212-verse *Miftāḥ li’l-tafsīr* of 1209 AH was followed the next year by an abridgement, *Sulālat al-miftāḥ*, down to less than half size of the original at 477 verses in 40 folios. Some books, then, may have been simply too long to be widely copied in the 19th century, though today they are more readily available in bound, printed editions.

‘Abdullāh’s are the only really extensive books in the Sokoto corpus. The standard Sokoto text was rarely very big (50+ folios would be a substantial work), and this raises the question why they wrote so many shorter works if it was not in response to specific questions that came up in teaching or in requests for guidance; or in some instances to refute another scholar. Many of the texts quote repeatedly from a relatively limited set of key texts—perhaps ten or twelve, the majority being 15th or 16th century works, plus the earlier “classics”—but often refer as well to a vastly larger number directly or indirectly: 80–100 such references are not uncommon. The Shaykh classified himself as a *muqallid*, as one who gathers the views of the best scholars, and so his books consist more of quotations from others than his own opinions; and his quotations, El-Masri²³ found, were usually accurate. Hence several books are like mini-“readers,” offering the relevant quotations that a student might need on a given topical subject. In this context, then, perhaps some books were *not* even written for very wide dissemination, and did not really enter the copying trade—if indeed it was a trade.

²³ Op. cit., 34, 30.

Given the number of citations, can we know how many books a scholar like the Shaykh ʿUthmān might have read? The only data we have is Muḥammad Bello’s remark that he had spent a morning counting the books he had read, and reached a total of 20,300.²⁴ To me it is obvious that it is not meant to be an exact figure—a “thousand” can be used figuratively—but, were someone to take it as accurate, then if Bello’s morning had lasted three hours, he would have been counting at over a hundred books a minute; had his morning been four hours, it’d have been 85 a minute, without a pause for thought. But perhaps he simply got tired of counting once he had reached 300. Whatever the case, there is no doubt he was very widely read—and widely interested—and he had had access to both his father’s and his uncle’s libraries as a youth. His kinship network (which he himself compiled in a huge genealogy of 80 folios and some 10,000 names) listed over 36 living kin who were scholars; there may have been more that we could not identify.²⁵ Their collective book-stock must have been enormous; there is no indication, however, that a scholar like the Shaykh ʿUthmān did not access books from other friendly scholars, so that if we assume each of those 36 contemporary kinsmen of his themselves also had friends and connections in the book-owning milieu of the savanna, the potential resource was vast.

It is rarely clear if any of the copies we have today were the original, personal copies of the Shaykhs we have records of. Almost all the texts that survive have no personal annotations in the margins that can be identified as made by a particular reader. Occasionally there are copies with a word or two of Fulfulde in the margin (cf. the *Ihyāʾ al-sunna* in Jos, or the Emir of Kano’s old copy of *Bayān wujūb al-hijra*); sometimes a “note” in Arabic occurs, but in prose works these are unusual. Was there a convention that texts be kept “clean” (especially if they were borrowed from colleagues or one’s teachers); or did copyists ignore marginal addenda and re-copy only the main body of the text?

²⁴ *Shifāʾ al-asqām*. For this reference I am indebted to Professor Sambo Junaidu’s paper, “Research Methodology among Scholars of the Sokoto Caliphate before the British Colonial Invasion of 1903,” delivered at the International Colloquium on the Arabic and ʿajamī manuscripts of Africa, Niamey, February 2007. El-Masri (36) makes the point that the number of military and war-related books they had was rather limited; the Prophet’s example was paramount.

²⁵ The book, *Ishāra waʾl-iʿlām*, I converted (it took two weeks’ work) into a genealogical tree and published in the hardback edition of my *The Sokoto Caliphate* (London: Longman, 1967); it is not in the paperback edition (1977) but I can supply a copy on request.

In poetry, such addenda may have been more common (e.g. in *Baḥr al-muḥīṭ*), but in prose I do not remember fellow *almajirai* ever putting a gloss in ink or pencil against an obscure Arabic word or phrase (in the way I might have to, if my copy was my own personal, working one.)²⁶ Were books in northern Nigeria usually too scarce—or too precious, too authoritative—to “personalise” with marginalia? Were readers reluctant ever to “quarrel” with the book’s author? Whatever the case, it does seem that in Sokoto books were not “used” by readers as they were, say, in Timbuktu where marginal addenda in works of local history were more common.²⁷

Furthermore we cannot assume that every scholar had bags full of his own compositions. We do not know if, say, Shaykh ‘Uthmān kept a copy of everything he wrote. We do know that there was an “*Amīr al-kuttāb*” (his name was al-Muṣṭafā and was married to a sister of the Shaykh; he was also the Shaykh’s personal barber), but what his exact book-ish role was (chief scribe?) and when, we do not know. It is possible that a visitor could commission via him a copy of a particular work, in which case he’d also serve as a kind of book-shop manager: but whether he had all of what Shaykh ‘Uthmān, ‘Abdullāh and Muḥammad Bello ever wrote, we do not know. It could be that his prime interest was in copies of classic works, not local compositions. If the National Archives Kaduna collection is anything to go by, only some 12 percent (or an eighth) of the books they acquired from scholars were by the key Sokoto authors. If the bulk of books owned, over 85 percent of them, were by other authors, should we not assume, then, that these were the items most in demand from copyists?

Was copying, and the book-trade generally, profitable? Initially, yes, at least in Timbuktu (according to Leo Africanus when he was there

²⁶ Since writing this, I have seen a 19th century copy of the Qur’ān in the Arabic collection in the Liverpool Museum where the Hausa translation of a relatively obscure word was put very neatly in the margin. The annotator did not specify it was Hausa, but just wrote *a’jam* after the word; such a note was unusual in this copy. I am grateful to the curator, Zachary Kingdon, and my colleague Prof. Aliyu Bunza, for showing me it.

²⁷ John Hunwick, “The Islamic Manuscript Heritage of Timbuktu,” available from <http://www.sum.uio.no/research/mali/timbuktu/research/articles/manuscript%20heritage%20timbuk.pdf> (accessed 31 January 2009). Elsewhere, the rise of librarians has been linked to the disapproval of marginalia: see Heather J. Jackson, *Marginalia: Readers Writing in Books* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), and William H. Sherman, *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008). Sokoto, however, had no librarians until recently.

in ca 1500).²⁸ But in Hausaland, the book trade as a whole was constrained: people did not buy (*saya*) and sell (*sayar da*) books; books, especially the Qur'ān, were redeemed or ransomed (*fansa*), as slaves were. You were not meant to make massive profits on such texts which is why so much offence was taken when a Kano merchant ca. 1960 “swindled” a famous calligrapher out of the reward due to him while making huge gains for himself (he lithographed the fine copy he had commissioned, and it sold very well). In general, the ordinary copyist was usually paid less than the proof-reader (who had already to know the exact wording of the text being copied if he was to catch errors); copyists with better hand-writing might be paid more, but the payments were a pittance (a few shillings in the early 1960s). There was no copyright; you borrowed for free the book you needed copying, but the risk to the lender was that he'd not get his original back. The great Library in Alexandria had been notorious for sending back copies, rather the originals of the books it borrowed;²⁹ in Nigeria such habits also worried would-be lenders to collectors from university libraries going round northern Nigeria in the 1950s and 1960s—a photograph or xerox copy is no substitute (it has no watermark, for example, no rubrication).

Constraints on the handling of books extended to paper. Paper was not thrown away; it was never rubbish—there was always a fear that the name of Allah would be on the scrap of paper. Charms were written on scraps (*kundi*) of paper, and many charms used sacred names in their formulations. But odd pages of books (which were always unbound) might blow away in a storm, or get loose in the course of a fire. When this happened it was remembered as a sacrilege: notorious occasions were the sack of Yandoto ca. 1805 and the destruction of Gimbana ca. 1819, when Muslim armies destroyed Muslim towns. At Gobir's sacking of Dār al-Salām (which was a *casus belli* for the *jihād* later that dry season 1803–4), it was recalled how pages from books

²⁸ Leo Africanus, *Description de l'Afrique*, ed. A. Épaulard et al. (Paris: Adrien Maisonneuve, 1956) ii, 468–9. A wider discussion is in Saad, *Social History of Timbuktu*, 79–80.

²⁹ The third-century B.C.E. ruler, Ptolemy III, started the policy of keeping the originals. Cf. Lucien X. Polastron, *Books on Fire: The Tumultuous Story of the World's Great Libraries* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007), 13–4. My practice for the NHRS collection at ABU Zaria was never to borrow a book but to take a camera and stand round to personal libraries and once in the scholar's own house photograph his manuscripts there.

lay on the ground.³⁰ Even today a violent District head is remembered for having set fire to a scholar's room, and his *allo* boards and manuscript books caught fire. Rumours about the misuse of a page of Arabic writing can cause a riot, as it has done in Kano, and again last year (2007) when such rumours were enough to bring the University of Maiduguri to a complete halt.

Finally, what constitutes a “book”? In the National Archives Kaduna, some 20 percent of their collections are fragments or incomplete books. Some classics are notably prone to missing pages: of the 11 copies there of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Bukhārī, not one is complete; similarly there are more incomplete copies of the *ʿIshrīniyya* of al-Fāzāzī and the *Mukhtaṣar* of Khalīl b. Iṣḥāq than complete ones. But in every major collection, “fragments” are rife: possibly only a final page is missing, but clearly any page (or pages) can go astray if the reader is interrupted in the midst of reading a text. Whether we should consider it as a sign of much use or rather of carelessness, one cannot tell. For example, though one is not allowed to copy only part of the Holy Qurʾān, as a student one normally goes to study with only the section relevant to the day's work, since ablutions are necessary if one is going to carry a complete Qurʾān. Furthermore, a colleague told me of a major court that kept two copies of the Holy Qurʾān on which litigants swear their oaths; one copy is complete, the other lacks a final page—and thus any oath taken on it is invalid (litigants pay to swear on the incomplete Qurʾān). In general, it is reasonable to think scholars keep their books even when they are incomplete, simply because it would be sacrilege to throw away any Arabic text. Nonetheless people do occasionally make excerpts or copy passages they most want to use or to memorise later. The fact that manuscript books were not stitched and bound, but kept between boards with a strap around them, made it easier for pages to go astray. Very rarely have I found a manuscript without boards; I do not remember ever finding several small books within a single pair of boards but it may have happened when boards were in short supply (today boards are cardboard, but in the past they could be stiffened leather, sometimes with a flap). A big book would

³⁰ The significance of these reports is shown by Muḥammad al-Amin al-Kānīmī's mentioning them in one of his letters to Sokoto in which he protests against the *jihād* as practiced; the fact that Muḥammad Bello's *Infāq al-maisūr* scrupulously records the incidents suggests their significance to the wider public. As the *jihād* was against “bad” Muslims (and not against non-Muslims), it was inevitable that sacked sites had books in them.

be stored by itself in a bag (*gafaka*) made of leather with the smooth side inside (unlike today's *gafakoki* made for sale as handbags).

In short, books and paper were not ordinary items of "material culture," nor ordinary items of trade. Profit-taking was inhibited, but so too books did not lose their value entirely. Some Qur'āns became in effect fetishes, kept as a sacred object for the security of the state; they were wrapped in many a hide, and stored often secretly.³¹ Old copies from a palace might be seized as a trophy after a conquest. It represented "power." One might argue that the mere presence of a Holy Qur'ān in such a respected context implied that the palace or the town was Muslim and therefore exempt from being attacked and sacked as part of a *jihād*. But in fact the *jihād* in Sokoto was against "bad" Muslims; it was a reform movement that saw this fetishization of the Holy Qur'ān, no matter how aged or beautiful, as a sign of a corrupted Islam. Nonetheless such items are, or can be, passed down as an inheritance (*gado; kayan gida*), along with other items such as a named sword, a bow plus quiver of arrows, a jug for ablutions before prayer (*buta*), that identify who heads the lineage. But there is no other book that is, or could be, held in such esteem.

4. *Who Held Books?*

As far as the late Wazirin Sokoto, alhaji Junaidu, knew, there were no specific bookshops in 19th century Kano or Sokoto in the way there had been in, say, 9th century Baghdad (where you could rent a bookshop over night and read).³² Nor were there public libraries; and there were no *madrasas* (whether with books or not) then attached to the mosque as they were in North Africa. There was no *waqf* system to support them, nor any institutions that were "public property" such as a *maristān* or public hospital. It seems that it was felt that, with the

³¹ The Qur'ān in Kano, known as *dirki*: Kano Chronicle, in Sir Herbert R. Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs* vol. III (Lagos: Government Printer, 1928; London: Cass, 1967). The 18th century Qur'ān of Sarkin Gobir Yunfa was a "trophy;" it is now in the Jos Museum. In Borno, such a talismanic covered Qur'ān was known as *mune* or *munya* ("much desired;" see Kyari Tijani, "The Mune in pre-colonial Borno," *Berichte des Sonderforschungsbereichs* 268, no. 2 [1993], 227–54). The Jewish Torah has always been similarly kept in an "ark," just as Irish bibles were kept in jewelled *polaires*.

³² Shawkat M. Toorawa, *Ibn Abi Tahir Tayfur and Arabic Writerly Culture: A Ninth-century Bookman in Baghdad* (London: Routledge, 2005), 25. As in early modern Paris, young women in Kano today can hire, in the *kasuwar Rimi*, a short book for the day (for 10 naira) but no deposit is required (unlike Paris where university textbooks were a new, costly commodity).

world's end imminent, such public welfare was the responsibility of the leading families and office-holders. Recently, re-built mosques have been designed with a library and potential school-rooms attached, but pre-colonial mosques seemingly had no such rooms.³³ When a Nizāmiyya school was established in Sokoto in the 1950s, its excellent library was provided by its founder, the Marafan Sokoto. Many mosques were always kept open; even livestock might take shelter inside, so that the place was swept before people gathered for prayers. My understanding is that all collections of books were private, and were inherited: the value of each volume was assessed on its owner's death and the executors of the dead man's estate might well decide to split a collection up, even split a book up, between inheritors. Last year (2007), the Kano State Government has tried to forbid such practices, encouraging collections to remain as wholes, but it remains to be seen how far this ruling is put into effect. Palaces often had collections, initially from the founder of the *jihādi* emirate with additions from later emirs. Access to such collections was not public but limited (if allowed at all) to selected '*ulamā*' connected with the palace. In short, books were inevitably scarce, unless, that is, you had personal access to the owner, and he trusted you. One notable *Mai Borno*, 'Alī (known as "the Bird"), solved this problem personally in the 17th century by being able to stretch out a hand and retrieve any book he needed straight from a Cairo library.³⁴ It's not recorded if he returned the book later; nor is it known if the *Mai* benefited much by his talent for "liberating" library books (as we students called book theft in early 1960s Ibadan). The story does, however, suggest what was the scholar's "dream" at that period—"if only..."

The alternative to collecting books was to memorise them—not just the Holy Qur'ān but key texts such as collections of the *ḥadīth*. Some scholars had an eidetic memory: they could visualise each page, and leaf through a book in the mind's eye to find the passage they wanted.³⁵

³³ In late 18th century Birni Ngazargamu (Borno's capital) the main mosque apparently had a library attached, but we know nothing else about it (Lavers, "Islam in the Borno Caliphate," 35). The Islamic culture of Borno before ca. 1800 was comparatively well developed under the *Mai*, who used the title of *khalīfa* and built burnt-brick mosques; for centuries it drew visiting scholars and pilgrims from far afield.

³⁴ The late Professor John Lavers in Kano was my source for this. It is not, however, in his remarkable study cited in the previous note.

³⁵ Professor Sambo Junaidu ("Research Methodology," 2) cites Gidado's *Raud al-jinān* for the Shaykh's memorising al-Kharrashi's 4 volumes of commentary on the

But more common was an aural memory: you recited a text regularly (for example, the Qurʾān each month). Some scholars were better at feats of memory than others: a few had “off-head” any text that particularly interested them, so they ended up with many texts memorised. By contrast, some scholars recognised they could re-call a passage wrongly. A famous example is Aḥmad Bābā, the noted Timbuktu scholar, who apologises to his readers that some of his quotations (in a book written on a journey ca. 1607) might not be exactly accurate; I have not been able to check how many errors he did in fact make as we do not have the very text he was composing *en route*.³⁶

Errors occur of course in copyists’ work, so it is the proof-reader who has to know the original by heart. Interestingly in Wahhābi-controlled Mecca, copies of the Holy Qurʾān produced for sale there in 1814 were unusually full of mistakes.³⁷ Presumably the best copyists and proof-readers had recently emigrated to quieter places to do their scholarship. If so, might it be a feature of West African bibliography that certain periods in certain cities were apt to produce ‘bad’ copies of classical texts? No one has yet attempted a careful study of ‘corruption’ in the manuscripts we have, and the circumstances that gave rise to flawed work—let alone of the effect on prices. The critical apparatus of some published editions we do have of a manuscript work indicate the variations in copying that can occur but not on a huge scale.

But the major problem with memorised texts is not that one can forget them, but that if the scholar dies (or is killed in a fight), his mental

Mukhtaṣar of Khalil: for him “they were as simple as reciting the *Fātiḥa*”. He also tells the story of how an 18th century student, Zayd b. al-Ḥājj, in his mind’s eye once ran through the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī from “revelation” to “hunting and slaughter” looking for a specific ḥadīth, and thus refuted his famous teacher, Jibril b. ʿUmar – which the other students there thought was very discourteous. Shaykh Jibril had to go back into his library to look up the relevant text and found the student was correct.

³⁶ The book was Aḥmad Bābā’s *al-Lamʿa fī l-ishāra li-ḥukm tibgh* in which he suggests that using tobacco is not prohibited. Two centuries later, a Moroccan jurist would only say of this: “even the finest horse stumbles sometimes.” His books were packed away, he says, on his camels as he went south through the Wadi Draʿa.

³⁷ Johann Ludwig Burckhardt was in Mecca in 1814, just after its liberation from the Wahhabis; his account of the state of Mecca’s libraries and book-sellers is cited in Nehemia Levtzion and Gideon Weigert, “The Muslim Holy Cities as Foci of Islamic Revivalism in the Eighteenth Century,” in *Islam in Africa and the Middle East: Studies on Conversion and Renewal*, ed. M. Abitbol and A. Nadan (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2007), 259–77.

“library” dies with him. This was, most notably, a problem for the Prophet after the disastrous battle of Uḥud, but it was also a serious concern of the *jihād* leaders in Sokoto—any battle in which many of your Qur’ān-reciters were killed meant that the community’s library stock was seriously depleted. It was not just battle that killed: the *jihād* commander, Muḥammad Bello, said that more people died of famine and disease than of wounds—though it was, admittedly, war that caused both famine and epidemics.³⁸

The major advantage of memorised books is that they move around with the scholar—he is not burdened by loads of books; he does not need a camel or a donkey to carry them. A young scholar could thus move long distances from teacher to teacher, gradually acquiring books in his memory, and thus create the networks that transcend locality. Given that the books they carried in their heads were in Arabic, such students were not limited by local ties or ethnicity.

It is true, however, that poetry was more readily memorised than prose. Furthermore, much of this poetry was not just in Arabic but also in *a’jamī*, in local languages such as Fulfulde and Hausa.³⁹ Poems—or songs, as they really are—had a much wider audience, and I have heard them sung by people as they cycle or are driven in a car; or they are sung as people walk, in a group or singly. Texts of songs were committed to paper—they are found in private collections; and the ability to read *a’jamī* is still widespread. For many it is still easier than reading Hausa in roman script (*boko*); its recent removal from Nigeria’s *naira* notes provoked an outcry, and not just from academics.

The key point here is not just that there was book scarcity, but such books as there were, were in private hands. An aspiring scholar, if he was to access texts, needed to belong to a lineage or to a Shaykh’s circle. Great learning, unlike great piety, was not in the public domain.

³⁸ Muḥammad Bello, *al-Dhikra*. The battle of Tsuntsua was Sokoto’s Uḥud, as Tabkin Kwotto was their Badr, a point made explicitly in Bello’s *Infāq al-maisūr*. Much of the raiding in the *jihād* was for food; they were so desperate for supplies of grain that they risked alienating peasants who initially were ready to support them.

³⁹ On the extensive use of fulfulde religious verse, see Louis Brenner’s introduction to Christiane Seydou’s *La poésie mystique peule du Mali : Edition bilingue français-peul* (Paris: Karthala, 2008), 11–35. Though the focus is more on Mali, what he says is applicable more widely, especially in the pre-*jihād* period. Seydou found that oral transmission is more accurate than written: copyists make errors, whereas reciters are subject to the metre (op. cit., 34 n).

BOOKS AND THE NATURE OF ISLAMIC KNOWLEDGE
IN WEST AFRICA

I find it useful (from my very brief experience as an *almajiri* in Zaria city) to divide expert knowledge into three: first-order knowledge, where the scholar has memorised the texts he uses off by heart—texts may be whole books, or large excerpts (especially among the young), and then not always the original but a versified précis. Second-order knowledge is where the scholar owns the books he uses, and can readily re-read or refer to them at any time. This knowledge is at risk from fire, flood, white ants, and especially from borrowers, which is why personal libraries are usually kept closed to strangers or even visitors. For example, I once found an exceedingly rare, old text tucked inside a copy of a classical text—a hiding-place known presumably only to the would-be thief; the text “disappeared” again as soon as I talked about it publicly.⁴⁰ Books put out for “borrowing” are quickly taken and never returned, as one friend’s kin found to their sorrow. Occasionally, such books can be retrieved when the “borrower” dies. If not, even important royal libraries can disappear in this way.

Third-order knowledge is when a scholar knows where he can access a book, by borrowing or by reading the text on a visit—perhaps with the ultimate purpose of memorizing it or making a copy for himself. Shaykh ‘Uthmān did this extensively as a young man—he went into the Sahara to copy *al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṭ*; he used to walk to Alkalawa, the capital of Sarkin Gobir (whose city he was later to sack in the *jihād*), in order to borrow books from colleagues.⁴¹ If a kinsman had returned from pilgrimage, a visit to him was called for, and no doubt the books he brought back were examined too. But third-order knowledge is useless in debate or discussion (as I found out personally), unless it can be converted into second-order or, better still,

⁴⁰ The text was Aḥmad Bābā’s (see note 36), written in an early hand that might have been Shaykh ‘Uthmān’s. The text was eventually returned after the Marafa, Ahmad Danbaba, set off “enquiries.” It was then the first copy of that book ever to have been found. Water damage is not entirely irreparable as one book-laden pilgrim found as he tried to dry off his books, which he had meant to sell, after they had got wet in the bottom of his canoe as he crossed the Benue (Barth, *Travels and Discoveries*, 366–7). Ink made of carbon and gum stains paper effectively.

⁴¹ Shaykh ‘Uthmān went to Tafadek for his copy of al-Fairūzābādī’s four-volume *al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṭ* (which later his brother ‘Abdullāh apparently learnt by heart). His going to Alkalawa is mentioned in Gidado dan Laima’s *al-Kashf wa’l-bayān*.

first-order knowledge. Today third-order knowledge tends to predominate, though the best students usually know almost all their textbooks by heart (if only for a limited time-span).

Yet books are only one dimension of learning. For all these orders-of-knowledge presume a certain fluency in classical Arabic. First, initial access to this knowledge has always been difficult, always an elite option, encoded as it was in a very foreign tongue, classical Arabic, with its forms so different from those of Fulfulde or Hausa. There were no educational aids to learning, no “first steps in classical Arabic:” children went straight to learning the Holy Qur’ān, the Arabic of which is not easy. There were no dictionaries from Arabic into, say, Hausa or Fulfulde (or vice versa). An Arabic encyclopaedia like *al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṭ* might cost more than a slave.⁴² Grammar was an important dimension of knowledge—one in which ‘Abdullāh b. Fūdī specialised but ordinary scholars were less proficient. An adequate semi-mastery was possible of course, but it was shown up when spoken or written alongside true experts.

The argument is, then, that there were two kinds of scholars:

a) Those that were good preachers but relatively poor Arabists; they provided local ritual services as well as medicines and amulets. It seems it was they who attracted the most converts to Islam in the 18th century, and who ran the Islamic communities for runaway slaves. They had the title “Shaykh,” and they were Sufis too. They explored other kinds of religious insight than those of books, and expressed in song an emotional longing for the Prophet. Many a remote Muslim village or hamlet still today has such a scholar nearby who does the burials, the marriages, the naming ceremonies for everyone; he leads the prayer on Friday, but his command of Arabic is limited and his stock of books is minimal. There was, however, a non-elite expertise which might bring him great respect—the use of *a’jamī* poetry and songs which were widely memorised by learned and unlearned alike. The *tafsīr* in Ramadan was done in *a’jamī* as was the preaching that very learned scholars like Shaykh ‘Uthmān also did at large gatherings; though he was more at home speaking in Fulfulde than in Hausa, in these big meetings it was Hausa he had to use.⁴³

⁴² Saad, *Social History of Timbuktu*, 80. This was the price in 16th century Timbuktu.

⁴³ Accounts of the Shaykh’s preaching are in Muḥammad Bello’s *al-Turjumān ‘an kaifiyyat wa’z al-shaykh ‘Uthmān* as well as in his *Infāq al-maisūr*. Despite some

b) Good Arabists, by contrast, were bookmen-teachers who owned or memorised books, and taught them to students. Drawn to specialist scholars known for their mastery of a particular text, students came from a wide range of places and backgrounds, thus creating not only a common identity (as young scholars) but also a network with links over a wide territory. They had a common tongue to communicate in—classical Arabic—and could use it to travel far afield and sit at the feet of, say, Kanuri, Berber or North African scholars. Mastery of language was so important that some scholarly networks were famous for specialising in it. Kano, for example, was notable for two distinct specialities—the law (almost solely *al-Mukhtaṣar*) and the Arabic language;⁴⁴ Sokoto and Katsina were similarly divided, albeit with different textual foci. Bookmen (especially once *ṭuruq* were formalised) might later be organised around Sufi links, too, like the preachers, but it seems this was an additional, not a core attribute: good arabists/bookmen were international whereas good preachers were parochial.

Clearly there were men who overlapped both categories. It seems probable that even a scholar like Shaykh ʿUthmān started out his career as primarily an itinerant preacher *and* a student before becoming settled in a community of his own (at Degel), whereas his brother ʿAbdullāh was always primarily a “bookman.” Others like the ba-Are Shaykh ʿAbd al-Salām (his original name was Mikaʿila, unusually) remained preachers primarily with a mixed community of his own, a community that remained loyal to him even when he confronted his former leaders in the *jihād*. Even Sufism could be of two kinds: one that antedates the *jihād* and the rise locally of major international *ṭuruq* (like the Qādiriyya and the Tijāniyya), and which seems to have

suggestions otherwise, the Shaykh did not write in Hausa prose or verse; the mistake arises because some of his fulfulde poems were translated by others into Hausa in the 1840s and 1850s, when the majority of Sokoto’s very large population was ceasing to use fulfulde and there was real concern that the old *jihādī* ideals were slipping.

⁴⁴ John W. Chamberlin, “The development of Islamic education in Kano City, Nigeria with emphasis on legal education in the 19th and 20th centuries” (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1975), 104–9. Scholarship sometimes had a slight ethnic dimension to it: in a number of cities Hausa and Fulbe scholars (and their students) long kept up separate teaching networks based in distinct residential quarters, though Shaykh ʿUthmān had tried to prevent that dimension developing.

been less book-centred;⁴⁵ and the other that was institutionalised around a *ṭariqa* and its hierarchy of Shaykhs, and had core texts, a *wird* and *salāsīl*.

The “bookmen” not only advised rulers and tutored princes, but they were also mediators in disputes and could act as judges—they knew the *sharīʿa* law and could offer judgements with more widely based authority. For young new Muslims the quest for justice—for Islamic justice—was of major significance; by converting to Islam or by becoming “good” Muslims, they were putting themselves under *sharīʿa* law, a legal system that took precedence over the arbitrary rules and practice of kings and their subordinate princes and lords, however ostensibly Muslim these were.

The confidence among “bookmen” that they truly know not only the Holy Qurʾān but also its meanings, its implications in law and rules of behaviour ensured they meant to implement what they knew is right. It can create a radicalism of interpretation that leads to violence against recalcitrant “bad Muslims” and “venal *mallams*,” and ultimately against “bad governments.” These “bookmen” were the reformers, the renewers who should enforce what is right. It led to the *jihād* in Sokoto—it led, too, to the deaths of many students fighting in the struggle to enforce the law, to such an extent that the fighting was taken over by men who were primarily not students but free-lance militants who also sought the wealth that came from booty—finery of all sorts and women.

This led to the *jihād* forces splitting into two: those, gathered mainly in Gwandu, disillusioned by war, who preferred to write, to experience visions and be Sufis, and did not wish to go out and govern other lands

⁴⁵ The late alhaji Garba Saʿīd first drew my attention to the pre-*jihād* sufi groups among fulfulde-speaking scholars, especially in Zamfara (e.g. at Birnin Gada); they were not Qādirī, he said. It seems, as Louis Brenner has suggested in his “Concepts of Tariqa in West Africa,” in *Charisma and Brotherhood in African Islam*, ed. Donald B. Cruise O’Brien and Christian Coulon (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 33–52, that the Qādirīyya in the 18th century, developed into a quasi-political organisation of a kind it later became in Sokoto under the leadership of Shaykh ʿUthmān. But non-Qādirī sufi practices had probably been common since the 17th century at least, with *khalwa* done in pits dug into the ground. On some pre-Qādirī sufis in Borno, see Lavers (“Islam in the Borno Caliphate,” 33–34). On such pits found in *bori* temples in ca. 1813 Tunis, see Ismael Musah Montana, “Aḥmad ibn al-Qāḍī al-Timbuktāwī on the *bori* ceremonies of Tunis,” in *Slavery on the Frontiers of Islam*, ed. Paul E. Lovejoy (Princeton: Markus Weiner Publishers, 2004), 181.

and peoples; and those, based in Sokoto, who took up commands and felt the duty to govern—to write books on how to govern properly, to modernise Muslim society, to import texts and ideas. Had the scholars at Gwandu had the same inclination for government as those at Sokoto had, the western half of the Caliphate (which then extended as far as today's Burkina) might still have been part of a greater Nigeria; indeed the Caliphate might in time have extended even further west. Texts, however, took priority over territory.

The seeming dogmatism of the actively dominant bookmen gave rise to counterknowledge, such as knowledges based on interior spiritual experience. 'Abd al-Salām at Kware may have been an early example (as perhaps was Dan Buya at Kalambaina), but later among the learned it took the form most notably of the Tijāniyya, especially in Gwandu, and the millenarian groups who focused on Sufi, non-bookish ways of knowing, often through the medium of withdrawal (*khalwa*).⁴⁶ There was also a vernacular form of counterknowledge—dissident communities like those around M. Hamza at Tsakwa (he eventually emigrated with his community to Ningi) and the Isawa who similarly moved away to the Zaria/Kano border. Other groups survive to this day, notably the Digawa and the Salihawa who are extra-strict in their observance of Islamic rules and who insist on keeping their distance from government. A 19th-century prose text of the Digawa is in *a'jamī* (Hausa), not Arabic.

This tradition of alternative knowledges, not based on Arabic books but which nonetheless can lead to power and wealth, has long attracted some of the young in the 20th century. Theirs, however, was a *new* learning, not a variant on the old. First, *boko* knowledge—"book" or "Western" school learning—in the colonial 1920s and 1930s gave access to Native Authority posts as well as to the new sciences and geography. Nonetheless, experts in *boko* could (and did) still retain their Arabic skills and buy printed Arabic texts from Cairo and elsewhere. In the 1950s the exciting new knowledge lay in political skills

⁴⁶ Shaykh 'Uthmān was aware of the expected end of time—see the essays of alhaji Garba Sa'id collected in Asma'u Saeed, *Literary Works of Alhaji Garba Abubakar Sa'idu* (Kano: A. Joji, 2007), 168–220. A major millenarian exodus occurred ca. 1855/1271 from eastern Kano, but other anti-establishment groups, such as the Isawa, continued to take millenarian ideas very seriously. The very unwelcome arrival ca. 1900–1903 of a Christian-led (British) army prompted a major exodus towards Mecca which continued into the 1920s; to many it seemed a sign of the world's imminent end (and thus their coming was Allah's will).

and focused on anti-colonial ideas and political organisation; the new radicals were not just against colonialism but also against the ‘indirect’ rulers who collaborated with the colonial officials. The 1990s have seen yet another new knowledge—financial skills and the ability to negotiate contracts (and the illicit skill, too, of scams!). But the dominance of this new knowledge is derived, directly or indirectly, from universities and their degrees; to get a good degree the student needs to learn text books “off head” in the tradition of learning based on a good memory. Usable knowledge is acquired and displayed. Dissent is no longer at a premium.

There is currently another dimension of this new knowledge—the vernacularisation of religious texts, making them accessible to those whose Arabic (if any) is inadequate; English is used, but today especially Hausa printed in roman script. The current climate of thought is populist, evangelical—religious learning is no longer to be exclusive to the elite, so that there is a do-it-yourself religiosity that is also radical, self-assured and with easy access to external ideas, whether Wahhabi or Shi’ite. The economy of the old mallam class is under threat—inevitably some ambitious ‘*ulama*’ have themselves left the old mainstream, and offer at a price special services to politicians fearful of losing power.⁴⁷

IN CONCLUSION

A major shift in west African Muslim society over the centuries has been the way merchant-scholars in key big cities have been superseded as book-users by full-time professional scholars, initially out in the countryside but also now in the cities. These professional scholars were centred primarily on book-learning and on teaching, with small, rural school-communities of their own (*mallamari* in Kanuri; *tsangaya* is the term one would use in Hausa). In the process, books moved from being the valued personal possessions of men with other work to do—these books were widely distributed among men brought up speaking Arabic and whose social status might not depend on their book-knowledge—to being the crucial “stock-in-trade” of specialist teachers who had mastered classical Arabic as a foreign tongue and

⁴⁷ On this trend, see my essay, “Charisma and Medicine in Northern Nigeria,” in Cruise O’Brien and Coulon, 176–224.

whose status depended specifically on the quality of their book-knowledge.

Such teachers had to have in their intimate possession the key texts, either entirely memorised or as carefully safe-guarded manuscripts. In either form such books were scarce and at great risk from death or damage. Given the scarcity, eventually scholars such as Shaykh ‘Uthmān and his son Muḥammad Bello, if they were to lead an enlarged Muslim society effectively, needed to produce, among their other books and poems, short collections of “readings” for their colleagues, students and the wider circle of followers; ‘Abdullāh, their brother/uncle, in addition versified and abridged a few key texts to enable people to memorise them. In short, these Sokoto books constituted a competent, working library of approved texts for use by those put in authority by the success of the *jihād* movement; they encapsulated the vision of the proper Muslim community for the 13th Islamic century. The vision of Shaykh ‘Uthmān as *mujaddid*, “renewer,” included making available useful, reliable book-knowledge in a context where books were scarce and unreliable knowledge a problem among ordinary Muslims.⁴⁸ One aspect of this problem lay in the necessity of reading classical Arabic. For those that could not read, there were the *a‘jamī* religious songs both to instruct and to uplift. But there were also other solutions: for example, one Sufi scholar I knew in Sokoto spent most of his day moving round from workshop to workshop, reading to the craftsmen as they got on with their work—not preaching but reading, thus enabling books to reach men as they earned their living.

Hence the suggestion here is that book scarcity has encouraged an emphasis on an extra-good memory, on the control of access to key books and thereby on a scholarly elite. This has led to formidable networks of highly trained scholars, tying young to old, yet via their greater book-learning empowering the young vis à vis their less-lettered rivals; between them, they generated in time a radicalism that ultimately led to a successful *jihād* over a very wide area.

⁴⁸ This included “banning” some books. In *Infāq al-maisūr* (pp. 75–7 of al-Shadhili’s edition, Rabat, 1996), Muḥammad Bello cites ‘Umar b. Muḥammad al-Torodi, a scholar originally from Kebbi and a would-be pilgrim who stopped in Baraya Zaki (near Wurno; Bello used to visit him); he lists some 57 books that people should not read, so poor was their scholarship and accuracy (“liars”, he calls them). My colleague, Prof. Sambo Wali Junaidu, tells me, however, that in his youth he read some of the “banned” books – so they were still available!

A further but unexpected consequence was the development of counterknowledge, based on more populist, competing radicalisms. Though in the politics of knowledge access to books gave an advantage, when books did eventually become more readily available, the lines of debate were not drawn over books: dissident scholars did not seek out dissident, 'modern' books but dissident sources of inner, sacred knowledge instead. But over time even dissidence was professionalized: among Sufi practitioners, a shift occurred from ad hoc groups around a charismatic "saint" to structured, almost professional brotherhoods where the written word, paradoxically, became central to deep knowledge.

In 20th century northern Nigeria, the brand-new knowledges were initially based upon new books, but, once a new knowledge was established, the early enthusiasm for ever more such new books soon slackened off because yet more alternative bases for power were constructed. Books, and the specialist claims based on having read the latest ones available on the world market, carried—and, in my experience, still carry—relatively little weight among fellow northern Nigerians in general. Ultimately real knowledge is reckoned to lie elsewhere, not in books—or at least not in those available from bookshops or even libraries. Only one book remains at the core of northern Muslim culture: it's the one every person should carry constantly within them—the Holy Qur'ān. As for all the other, ephemeral books, it scarcely matters that there is still a "book famine."

APPENDIX: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF YEAR-DATES IN SOKOTO

We know that the Sokoto scholars were working by the Islamic calendar but their interest was primarily in the days of the week and the months of the year, if only so that they could properly fulfil the regular rituals. But their interest in calculating the year-dates since the *hijra* seems much less marked. In the histories of the *jihād* authors rarely state the calendar year in which an event took place: it is more likely they will say, for example, "second year" calculating from their own *hijra* that marked the start of the *jihād*.⁴⁹ Sometimes, a historian will just give the day and month an event occurred, leaving the reader to work out (if he must) which year is being referred to. The sequence

⁴⁹ In the *jihādi* chronicles, I think "year" refers to the solar year, not the Islamic lunar year. References in texts to events tend to use the seasons, not months, to indicate times of the year; similarly today, in ordinary Hausa usage, "last year" refers

of events is carefully noted, even if left uncalibrated against “universal” time. Sometimes the day rather than the month-date is given, but rarely both—yet certain days of the week are more significant than others, and it is important we put both into our narratives. In short, it seems year dates do not matter, or did not matter in early 19th century Sokoto historiography.

The only exception to this reluctance to specify which is the current year occurs at the end of books and poems where the author might say when he (or she) finished writing the work (occasionally a copyist or a poem’s translator will add his date). But in Sokoto the practice of dating books varied widely: it was especially common at some periods and rare at others, suggesting that sometimes the author might actually not know “off head” which year it was, and that it was not important enough to find out from another scholar what was the right year. If this is true, could some of the year dates that *were* put in be wrong: a simple mistake made?

Of the three major Sokoto scholars, it was ‘Abdullāh b. Fūdī who was most likely to date his work.⁵⁰ Out of some 79 works, 44 are dated (55%), whereas his elder brother Shaykh ‘Uthmān only dated 20 of his 92 books (22%), while his nephew Muḥammad Bello dated 22 out of his 98 books (22%). It is clear that during the period 1221–30 AH (that is, from mid-*jihād* to just before Shaykh ‘Uthmān’s death), it was more usual to add the date when your book was written: 75% of the Shaykh’s dated books are from this period, as are nearly 30% of ‘Abdullāh’s (but ‘Abdullāh dated 25% of his books in both 1231–40 and 1241–50, whereas nearly 60% of Muḥammad Bello’s dated books were written in 1231–40). ‘Abdullāh was, it seems, the first of his family to date a book (in 1201), and had dated two more before the Shaykh’s first dated book (1209). Later on that century, the Viziers, often writing historical works, dated more of their books—about half overall—but it was not until the recent Vizier, the late Alhaji Junaidu (himself a prolific historian) that adding the date to a book became conventional.

The Viziers and Waziri Gidado’s wife, Nana Asmā’, took on the role of custodians of the history of the *jihād* and the *mujāhidūn*, and were especially date-conscious. Out of some 50 poems by Nana Asmā’, 37 have year-dates (all of which are written as letters [*ramzi*] in the Maghrebi code); 13 have no date. She does not, however, specify the day or the month. Why did she give year-dates to three-quarters of all her poetry—to whom did it matter in

to the solar year—as I found when doing an illness survey one March, when the change of clouds indicated that the new year had come, that winter (*rānī*) had given way to *bazara*, the late dry season when the fields are made ready for planting once the rains come. In the *jihād*, seasons determined when and how campaigns were fought, with the “autumn (*kharīf*) raid” an annual “mass” fixture against the enemy’s harvest. *Rabī* (“spring” ca. April-May) campaigns, when it was very hot and water was in short supply, were smaller projects.

⁵⁰ For the dates of books I have used the lists in my *The Sokoto Caliphate* (1967), and for the dates in the poems by Nana Asmā’ I have used the revised, 1999 Ibadan edition of Jean Boyd and Beverly Mack’s *The Collected Works of Nana Asma’u, Daughter of Usman dan Fodio (1793–1864)*.

which year she was writing? Was she “educating” the women who sang her songs? Did they ever, in practice, convert the letters of the date into numbers; were indeed numbers much used, in this or any other ways? Did any year-dates have meanings, for readers, which are not recorded—for example, who would know (or care) that the *jihād* began in 1218 or that the Shaykh ‘Uthmān died in 1232? What are those year-dates to synchronise with—in the history of the Maghreb or the Ottoman Caliphate? It was easy in the colonial 20th century always to date documents, but surely we need to re-think what significance year-dates had in the 19th century.

It is not always clear to me which books were considered worth dating and which were not. Longer, “classic” studies of the sort that ‘Abdullāh b. Fūdi specialised in were more dateable than, say, the Shaykh ‘Uthmān’s shorter pamphlets, and it is tempting to see the spate of books written in the period 1225–8 as a response to changing ideas and debates: in those four years (when dating seems to have mattered as never before) Shaykh ‘Uthmān wrote nine dated books, ‘Abdullāh another nine and Bello two. Unusually, in 1235 Bello wrote no less than seven dated books; it was, admittedly, a time of stress (and controversy) in the Sokoto caliphate, but is that why dating mattered? Given how few of their books were dated, so uneven a distribution surely demands an explanation. But was it no more than if you are conscious of what year it is, you repeatedly use that date in your books—and at other times, when you cannot recall the year, you ignore it? Nana Asmā’ was writing songs once or twice a year from ca. 1245 (1829/30) on, by which time Sokoto’s co-ordinates in time and place were well established; scholarly visitors and pilgrims were passing through as well as merchants. But the lack of year-dates in earlier books and histories makes it nearly impossible to construct a sequence of, say, the Shaykh ‘Uthmān’s writings and the development of his thinking; even a precise, incontrovertible chronology for the *jihād* has yet to be made.

Precise birth- and death-dates are occasionally given in Sokoto texts for especially important shaykhs, but as there is no tradition of celebrating the anniversary of a birth (let alone the day of a death, or any other calamity), there is no need for the public to remember these dates. Similarly, the lengths in office (in this case sometimes spelt out in years, months and even days) are given for 19th century emirs in some emirates, and for Kano they go as far back as the 17th century (when a version of the Kano Chronicle was seemingly first compiled). No specific year-dates, however, are ever given; they have to be reconstructed retrospectively by 20th century historians.

Finally, the administrative correspondence from and to the Viziers in Sokoto was never dated, or so the surviving files suggest (by contrast, chancery letters in 14th century al-Andalus, for example, were dated and checked). Not even the month was relevant. Muḥammad Bello’s caliphal seal had no date on it (unlike the al-Kānimī seal in Borno). No one kept a journal or diary until after the end of the century, nor were there calendars, but one can assume merchants making long-term loans or participating in long-distance caravans kept notes that might perhaps include a year-date (the one trader’s notebook that has survived from the 1830s does have the occasional date).

Numbers in the form of figures (*arqām hindiyya*), written from left to right in the standard Indian manner, are common in magic squares and numerology, but it is numbers in the form of letters that predominate in literary works, to such an extent that one wonders if numerals in Sokoto had connotations that were not seen as quite proper (scholars who were especially good at numbers were sometimes suspected of improper numerology). Unlike in North Africa, numerals were never used to number pages of a Sokoto book—so the use of written numerals in daily life was probably very limited even for the ordinary reader. Yet it is almost inconceivable in a work of history to use letter-numbers as a way of denoting dates for an event. So were dates in a *ramzi* format both legitimate and literary but not an essential component of a work—were they more symbolic, stylish even, than meaningful? Remember *ramz* means a “code”—perhaps in this case a code that was seldom deciphered, or indeed needed deciphering?⁵¹

Whatever the answer, it does raise the question of how closely were the scholars of Sokoto, in the early days of the *jamā'a*, tied into the “universal” dating system of Islam. In the millenarian context, did many people know, in 1201 AH, they were entering the 13th Islamic century; or more significantly, in 1301 AH, that the world’s end might be nigh? The alien Christians (the British) arrive in 1320 AH (1903 AD): was the actual year significant, or just the general awareness that we had entered the 14th Islamic century, and this was when great calamities might be expected? Millenarian expectations apart, one can suggest that the absence of year-dates generally reflects the relatively low status of history as a scholarly subject in Sokoto. Accurate chronologies which synchronise with events elsewhere in the world are an obsession with historians today, but we need to remember it is *our* obsession, not the obsession of those we write about. It’s not that the Sokoto scholars were not aware of contemporary events (in the 1820s they knew the British had power in India), and both Muḥammad Bello and ‘Abd al-Qādir b. al-Muṣṭafa were well versed in the past histories of the Muslim world, just as they had a relatively good sense of world geography. The Prophet’s life was dated, and Sokoto’s *jihād* (and a few aspects of Shaykh ‘Uthmān’s life) seemed to mirror his: was it therefore necessary to date chronometrically “our” affairs in the same way—or might that be too presumptuous? Year-dates in Sokoto, in this view, therefore primarily show how many years it is since the Prophet’s *hijra*—they are not designed to show what events elsewhere in the Muslim world can be synchronised with “our” local events (no matter how momentous they are). Only in books and poems might it sometimes matter to show a possible sequence of writings through the use of dates; and perhaps, more importantly, to show

⁵¹ Interestingly, the early 18th century scholar Muḥammad al-Katsinawī wrote a book in which, in one chapter, he discusses numerals and their alphabetical equivalents in “eastern” and “western” systems. Al-Katsinawī grew up in Kurmin Dan Ranko, a Wangarawa merchant town in southern Katsina that Muḥammad Bello destroyed in the *jihād*, but he stayed long in Cairo. The book is therefore not widely available in Nigeria, but the “western” system was the one used in Sokoto books.

how one is part of a wider, Islamic literary tradition that did use dates. If so, is it fair, then, to suggest too that the Sokoto world was initially solipsistic in its sense of the *longue durée*? So, when did Shaykh ‘Uthmān come to think he was the *mujaddid* for the 13th Islamic century—was it some time in the 1220s when dating started really to matter to him and to the other *mujāhidūn*, and when he sent Muḥammad Bello out to tell them about the imminent coming of the *Mahdī*?

LITERARY CULTURE AND ARABIC MANUSCRIPTS IN 19TH-CENTURY ILORIN

Stefan Reichmuth

I. ARABIC LITERARY CULTURE IN ILORIN

1. *Introduction: The Historical role of Islamic Learning in the Ilorin Emirate*

Arabic and Islamic learning and education are among the key elements of the foundation narrative of the Ilorin emirate, as was the case in other parts of the former Sokoto Caliphate in Nigeria.¹ The introduction of Islamic preaching in several languages was realised by Qur'ānic scholars of different origins. This is clear from the oral traditions related to the career of Ṣāliḥ Janta, called *Āfáà Ālīmī* (d. 1823).² This Fulani scholar and itinerant preacher who had been based in Bunza (Kebbi), in what is today northern Nigeria, is said to have toured Borgu and the northern parts of Yorubaland until he finally settled in Ilorin around 1817, at the invitation of Afonja, the general who had risen in rebellion against the king of Oyo and who looked for the military support of the Muslims. Ṣāliḥ succeeded with his preaching to win over the diverse Muslim groups who had settled there, further attracting Muslim slaves, craftsmen, warriors and scholars from different parts of the Oyo Empire and from the troubled regions of the north. In addition to cooperating with Afonja, the Muslims of Ilorin succeeded in forging a religious community which recognized Ṣāliḥ as their leader. This mixed religious and communal authority was expressed in his title as *‘ālim* (learned man or scholar), and he became

¹ For an overview of the early history of Ilorin and the highly contradictory traditions and views connected with it, see S. Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung und soziale Integration in Ilorin (Nigeria) seit ca. 1800* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 1998), 18–43; for the traditions related to Ṣāliḥ's teaching and preaching, 32 f.

² See Reichmuth and R.D. Abubakre, "Ilorin and Nupe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," in *Arabic Literature of Africa II* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), *Arabic Literature of Africa*, Vol. II: *The Writings of Central Sudanic Africa*, ed. J. Hunwick and R. Sean O'Fahey (Leiden: Brill, 1995) [hereafter ALA II], 442 f., with bibliography; also Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 29–36.

predominantly referred to as *Álimi*. Local tradition stresses his teaching of the work of Qur'anic exegesis by the fifteenth-century scholars Jalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥallī (d. 864/1459) and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), the *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* (Interpretation of the two Jalāls) as a novel way of Islamic instruction, and also his previous connections with the Islamic movement of 'Uthmān b. Fūdī in the north, the nature of which remains to be clarified. His alleged focus on teaching and preaching was certainly similar to that of the Sokoto scholars. Alimi's own Friday mosque in Ilorin, the Makana Mosque in the Balogun Fulani Ward, would seem to have symbolized his creation of a new Islamic community as a place of *hijra*, as its name probably derived from a Qur'anic notion, the "Elevated Place" (*makānan 'aliyyan*) mentioned in the Qur'ān, and as it is said to have been built after the model of the Prophet's mosque in Medina.³ The growing tension between the increasingly power of Ilorin's Muslim community, which became an important military factor in the region, and Afonja, the Yoruba general and head of the town, came to a bloody conclusion within a year of Alimi's death (1823), when his son 'Abd al-Salām assumed leadership. Afonja was overthrown and killed, and 'Abd al-Salām succeeded to bring Ilorin into the realm of the Sokoto Caliphate as an emirate under the authority of Gwandu. In the following years he also managed to put down his rivals among the leaders of the other local Muslim groups, thus becoming the founder of a dynasty of emirs which continues to this day.

The internal structure of nineteenth-century Ilorin reflected its dual character as a town of warriors and religious scholars (called *àlufáà/àfáà* in Yoruba; in the following the etymological form *Alfa* will be used for both), with the emir at the head of a dual hierarchy of warlords and imams.⁴ Whereas Alimi's sons 'Abd al-Salām (1823–36) and Shitta (1836–61) became the first emirs, Alimi's predominant position in the town was transformed into that of a foundation saint, possessing a sacred "rank" (*jāh*), which is still frequently invoked in prayers today. A delicate balance had to be maintained among

³ Qur'ān (19:57). On this tradition, see Reichmuth, "A Regional Centre of Islamic Learning in Nigeria: Ilorin and its influence on Yoruba Islam," in *Madrassa: La transmission du savoir dans le monde musulman*, ed. Nicole Grandin and Marc Gaborieau (Paris: Éditions Arguments, 1997), 232 f.; *Islamische Bildung*, 33 f.

⁴ Reichmuth, "Regional Centre," 234 f.; *Islamische Bildung*, 43–53.

scholars and warriors who represented distinct ethnic constituencies in the locality.⁵

The early scholarly community in Ilorin (c. 1817–1861) was strikingly cosmopolitan, as evidenced especially by a survey of local Islamic schools and their history conducted between 1986 and 1989. Along with the Yoruba, scholars of Fulbe, Hausa and Nupe origin were identified, and also early migrants from the Western Sudan and further east from Borno, Agadez and the Eastern Sudan.⁶ The role of Islamic learning, which became crucial to the town, enhanced the religious as well as communal role of the teachers, scholars and imams. This also provided the base for an Islamic literary culture and the consequent increase in Arabic manuscript production in Ilorin.

2. *Educational practice, literary culture and Arabic manuscripts in 19th-century Ilorin*

Literacy and literary culture in Ilorin were based first and foremost on the teaching of the Qurʾān, which was provided by a large number of Qurʾānic schools as in other parts of the Caliphate.⁷ The entrance age was 7–10 years, which normally coincided with the first apprenticeship in crafts and trades. Adults also took part in it, a good number even from outside Ilorin. Despite its frequent wars with southern Yoruba states, the town attracted students from many parts of Yorubaland. Compared with other emirates in the north, the share of female students in Ilorin was often remarkable (between half and one third), which could perhaps be related to the prominent role of the market women in the town and the absence of early marriage practices among the Yoruba. For both young men and women, Qurʾānic education was concluded with a large *walīma* feast, which was celebrated with a public reading of the first verses of Sūrat al-Baqara (the second Sūra of the Qurʾān) by the student in front of the teacher and other scholars, normally on the day before his or her

⁵ On this ethno-political system, see Reichmuth, “Regional Centre,” 234 f.; *Islamische Bildung*, 48–53, 148–70; “A Sacred Community: Scholars, Saints, and Emirs in a Prayer Text from Ilorin,” *Sudanic Africa* 6 (1995), 35–46.

⁶ Reichmuth, “Regional Centre,” 234 f.; *Islamische Bildung*, 148–70.

⁷ For the Qurʾānic schools, their history and ways of instruction in Ilorin, see Reichmuth, “Regional Centre,” 235 ff., *Islamische Bildung*, 101–13,

marriage ceremonies. For men and women Qur'ānic education had thus become a crucial part of the initiation into adult life in Ilorin.

As in many other Muslim regions of Nigeria, Qur'ānic students first had to memorize the Fātiḥa (the Opening Sūra of the Qur'ān) and the Sūras of the last teaching section (*ḥizb*), i.e. backwards from the last Sūra (114: al-Nās) to Sūra 87 (al-A'lā), for the purpose of recitation during prayer, whose rituals were part of the instruction. Students also memorized the names of the letters of the Arabic alphabet. Spelling exercises then started with Arabic words and Qur'ānic verses, which were written for each student on his wooden tablet. Each ethnic community, namely the Fulani, Hausa, Nupe, Kanuri and Yoruba, had their own names for the Arabic letters expressed in their native language, and their distinct systems of spelling. After the successful completion of the last *ḥizb* using this letter-by-letter spelling, the student continued with the reading of the Sūras of the Qur'ān, which were written out by the teacher on each pupil's tablet. This was the format of the training which was complete once the student was able to read and recite the entire Qur'ān without mistakes. In this last stage many students also learned to write and to copy the Qur'ānic text on their tablets or on paper.

For the writing of Arabic, a flat and pointed reed, with its tip cut and split for keeping the ink, was normally used. Ink was formerly produced by boiling the leaves of *òrì* (*Vitex doniana*, whose fruits are normally eaten raw). Wooden writing slates were prepared by cleaning them with sand and water and by soaking them with warm maize pap, which after drying was rubbed and smoothed with the hard and coarse leaves of the *ipín* tree (*Ficus asperifolia*). Local food and plants thus played a key role in this elementary process. In traditional Qur'ānic schools in Nigeria, Arabic is normally written from top to bottom, with the tablet lying widthwise on the thighs of the student. This is still maintained by some Alfasi when writing on paper, and it may explain to some extent the rectangular shape of the Arabic letters in West African scripts. The writing of certain verses for therapeutic and protective uses was also part of Qur'ānic instruction, and providing such texts for drinking or as amulets has remained to this day a basic occupation of the teacher.

Apart from this common pattern of Qur'ānic instruction there was another type which was introduced from Borno and which was based on the memorizing of the whole Qur'ān and imparted the ability to recite and finally even write Qur'ānic texts from memory, with all its

orthographic peculiarities. Some scholar families in Ilorin were famous for this, and the Borno tradition was apparently also important for the development of Arabic calligraphy in the town, as seen below.

After the completion of the Qur'ānic school a good number of students continued with the study of other books and disciplines, known as *'ilm* (from the Arabic word for "knowledge") in Ilorin and in other parts of Nigeria.⁸ Female participation was less common, however, in this new stage of instruction. *'Ilm* studies began with short introductory texts of a few pages, providing basic instruction in ritual and creed as well as exhortation, poems in praise of the Prophet, and some preliminary grammar. Some of these basic texts and didactic poems go back or are ascribed to 'Uthmān b. Fūdī, thus illustrating the persisting presence of the Sokoto authors in religious mass education. Instruction at this stage could be individual or in groups. The lesson normally consisted in the recitation of a portion of an Arabic text by the student, and its ensuing translation and explanation by the teacher. Questions from the students would then be discussed. In the initial stages this was practiced without any knowledge of the Arabic grammar, which was later studied in depth.

The course of studies normally included the translation of the Qur'ān, Mālikī law, Ash'arite theology, and grammar. It further led to Arab literature and Qur'ānic interpretation (*tafsīr*), and also to studies in basic arithmetic and in numerology. Studies proceeded in different stages from elementary to advanced books in the different disciplines. All the established *'ilm* disciplines were well represented in Ilorin. The copying of texts for instruction was either undertaken by the teacher himself, or by the student who was given a number of leaves from a book for copying until the next lesson where he had to recite what he had written, which was then controlled and corrected by the teacher. Some scholars specialized in the copying of manuscripts, especially of the Qur'ān, the *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* (already mentioned above), and the popular prayer book of al-Jazūlī (d. 870/1465), *Dalā'il al-khayrāt*, which gave them some additional income. The copying and passing on of magico-therapeutical recipes (called *kúndī* in Yoruba) was another part of the professional occupation of an Alfa in Ilorin.

⁸ For the different stages as well as for the content of *'ilm* studies in Ilorin Reichmuth, "Regional Centre," 236 f.; *Islamische Bildung*, 114–44.

3. Paper and Watermarks

In northern Nigeria as in other parts of West Africa, during the nineteenth century paper was largely imported from Europe through the trans-Saharan trade. This is evidenced by watermarks, which often provide a key to the dating and provenance of the paper.⁹ The most common type was the one with the *tre lune* (“three moons”) watermark, called in Ilorin *alánkúri*, i.e. “(the paper) with the circular *hā’*”, and which dominated paper imports from the second half of the eighteenth century onwards. Ilorin manuscripts had their fair share of this paper, which for the most part was produced by the Galvani papermills in Pordenone (northeast of Venice). The later watermarks of the Galvanis, the three moon faces, the moon face in a shield, or the empty shield, were also found rather frequently in Ilorin, as also the name *Andrea Galvani Pordenone*. Other less common watermarks included the *tre cappelli* (“three hats”) in large and in smaller size, which belonged to other Venetian paper-mills active in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. A “small hats” watermark appears on a manuscript with a poem written in 1887,¹⁰ which shows that this type of paper continued to be used well into the last decades of the nineteenth century. Among the rare watermarks was a crowned coat of arms with grapes, attested for Spain 1782 by Heawood.¹¹ An Austrian double eagle carrying a sword and a sceptre and showing a coat of arms with horizontal stripes, together with *tre lune*, moon in shield, and the initials ZZUDL, can be found in a manuscript of

⁹ For watermarks and paper identification, see Terence Walz’s and Murray Last’s chapters in this volume. Also E. Heawood, *Watermarks: Mainly of the 17th and 18th Centuries* (Hilversum: Paper Publications Society, 1950); G. Eineder and E.J. Labarre, *The Ancient Paper-Mills of the Former Austro-Hungarian Empire and their Watermarks* (Hilversum: Paper Publications Society, 1960); A. Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts: A Vademecum for Readers* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 290 ff. For Egypt, the Sudan and West Africa, see T. Walz, “A Note on the Trans-Sahara Paper Trade in the 18th and 19th Centuries,” *Research Bulletin. Centre of Arabic Documentation. Institute of African Studies* (Ibadan) 13, no. 1–2 (1980–82); “The Paper Trade of Egypt and Sudan in the 18th and 19th Centuries,” in *Modernization in the Sudan: Essays in Honor of Richard Hill*, ed. Martin W. Daly (New York: L. Barber Press, 1985), 29–48; A. Brockett, “Aspects of the Physical Transmission of the Qur’ān in 19th-century Sudan: Script, Decoration, Binding and Paper,” *Manuscripts of the Middle East 2* (1987), 45–67, 48 ff., pictures.

¹⁰ Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Thānī b. Abū Bakr Būbē, *Qaṣīda fī wa’at Ofa*, 1887, ALĀ II, 449 f.; ms. Imam Erubu, 20 Sept. 1987.

¹¹ Heawood, *Watermarks*, 118, no. 2407; only the coat of arms, but not the name Viñals attached to it below in Heawood’s sample, could be found.

al-Būṣīrī's *Hamziyya*.¹² Another elliptic coat of arms with a broad diagonal stripe, framed on both sides by ear-like curved forms and showing below the initials GM, was found in a prayer-book which was claimed to have belonged to emir 'Alī b. Shitta (1869–91) and kept by some of his descendants.¹³ Other initials occurring in watermarks include: BG (i.e. Giovanni Berti), GB (ditto), FP, CP (italics), G.L.S., VG (i.e. Valentino Galvani, d. 1810), DD, L.MAGN, LL, M (Mafizzoli?).¹⁴

4. *Arabic Manuscripts and the "Literary Profile" of Nineteenth-Century Ilorin*

The author had an opportunity to analyze and document several private collections of Arabic manuscripts in Ilorin as part of a field study of Islamic learning and education in the area.¹⁵ The "invisible library" of nineteenth-century Ilorin, that is, the literary profile of the town which emerges from this survey, is yet to be thoroughly compared with that of other centers of Islamic learning in Nigeria and West Africa. Only some general traits and some peculiarities can be mentioned here.

Ilorin obviously shares the Arabic literary tradition of northern Nigeria to a large extent. This is brought out by the overwhelming presence of many works which are widespread also further north, like the established texts of Mālikī law and the Ash'arite creed, Arabic grammar, and also the *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* as the most common *tafsīr*, and the *Maqāmāt* of al-Ḥarīrī (d. 516/1122) as central piece of Arabic literary prose. As in other parts of the north, interest in Arabic poetry, although fed by the tradition of the major pre-Islamic poems, is largely dominated by the praise of the Prophet, with Ka'b b. Zuhayr's *Bānat su'ād*, the *Qaṣīdat al-burda* and the *Hamziyya* of al-Būṣīrī (d. 694/1294), the *ʿIshrīniyyāt* of al-Fāzāzī (d. 627/1230),¹⁶ and al-Badamāṣī's *Qaṣīda ṭā'iyya* with its *takhmīs* by the author, which was

¹² Imam Alanamu, 25 October 1989.

¹³ Ile Ojodu, 10 September 1986, later also found in another collection.

¹⁴ Watermarks of the colonial period, that is to say from paper dating from the early twentieth century onward, were not taken into account here.

¹⁵ For the documentation of this survey, see Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 356–79.

¹⁶ For the overall importance of this collection in Nigerian Muslim culture, see Rasheed Ajani Raji, "The Influence of the ʿIshrīniyyāt on Arabic and Islamic Culture in Nigeria" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1982).

already commented upon by Muḥammad Bello.¹⁷ Strikingly popular, too, is the *Dāliyya* of al-Yūsī (d. 1102/1691) in praise of his Sufi master and teacher Muḥammad b. Nāṣir, which served ‘Abdallāh b. Fūdī as a model for his poem on his own master.¹⁸

Anonymous *wa‘z* poems of general use, like *al-Karīmu yaqbalu* and *Allāhu li ‘uddatun*¹⁹ are equally cherished in Ilḥrin. The first praises the sensible and patient believer, promising him a beautiful woman who awaits him in paradise as his reward. This poem had come to carry a distinct social message in Ilḥrin as it was often recited by the bride during her *walīma* ceremony, which as mentioned took place on the day before her marriage. The second poem evokes the trust in God and His providence as a remedy for all sufferings.

The long and famous *wa‘z* poems of northern Nigerian provenience, *Mazjarat al-fityān* (Cautioning of the Boys) by Muḥammad b. al-Ṣabbāgh (Dan Marina, fl. 1050/1640 in Katsina), *‘Aṭiyyat al-mu‘īṭī* (Gift of the Giver) by ‘Abdullāhi Suka (fl. mid. 11th/17th century in Kano), and Muḥammad Mūdī al-Dūtawī al-Qūmatī (fl. 1186/1772, probably from Yan Doto), *Ṣarf al-‘inān* (The Drawing of the Rein),²⁰ can even be regarded as expressing the epistemological and ethical framework of Islamic learning in Ilḥrin.²¹ The Borno tradition of Qur’ānic learning and calligraphy and the traces which it left in Ilḥrin will be discussed below.

As noted above, the writings of the founding scholars of the Sokoto Caliphate, ‘Uthmān b. Fūdī (d. 1232/1817), ‘Abdallāh b. Fūdī (d. 1245/1829) and Muḥammad Bello b. ‘Uthmān (d. 1253/1837) also figure prominently in the manuscript collections in and from Ilḥrin. Perhaps the most popular religious poem is ‘Uthmān’s early *Dāliyya* in praise of the Prophet, which expresses his longing for the visit of the Prophet and his tomb in Medina. Its popular name in Ilḥrin is *Alīmasīra*, which was taken from the first Arabic words of the poem (*Hal li masīrun* “Is there a way for me [to Medina]?”).²² ‘Uthmān b. Fūdī’s short treatise on prayer, *Qawā‘id al-ṣalāt*, is still basic reading in the town, and an equally common grammatical *Rā‘iyya* beginning

¹⁷ ALA II, 50, 138.

¹⁸ Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 374 f.; for ‘Abdallāh’s poem and its dependence upon al-Yūsī, see ‘Abdallāh b. Muḥammad, *Tazyīn al-Waraqāt* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1963), 10, 32 f.

¹⁹ For both, see ALA II, 49 f.; Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 121 f.

²⁰ ALA II, 30 f., 32 f., 45 f.

²¹ Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 135 ff., 143 f.

²² Written 1188/1774, ALA II, 68 f.

with *A-yā ṭālība l-i'rābi*, is also attributed to him.²³ The ethical, legal and political writings of the three leading scholars of the Sokoto jihād are well represented in a collection from the school of Ile Gbagba²⁴ and were occasionally also found in other library collections. 'Abdallāh b. Fūdī was also present with his ethical treatise *Lubāb al-madkhal* in a very carefully written old copy.²⁵

The comparison with the Arabic literary heritage, which Ilṛin largely shares with other centres of learning in northern Nigeria, shows a very strong ethical and moral focus, which seems to be connected with the development of preaching, something for which the Alfas of Ilṛin became widely famous. This can be seen in the importance attached to al-Quḍā'ī's (d. 454/1062) *Kitāb al-shihāb*, a *ḥadīth* work which presents the Prophetical Traditions without their chains of transmission, as a collection of wise sayings, proverbial utterances and admonitions. Another work of particular importance in Ilṛin is al-Zarnūjī's (fl. around 600/1202) *Ta'lim al-muta'allim ṭarīq al-ta'allum* (Instruction of the Student How to Learn).²⁶ The introduction and spread of this important treatise on *adab al-'ilm*, which stems from Ḥanafī legal tradition as practiced in Central Asia (that is, a legal tradition distinct from the one practice in West and North Africa), still requires investigation, as it does not seem to have been common in Nigeria before the nineteenth century. The earliest copy documented for West Africa (dated 1245/1829), which is now in the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris, was located in the library of al-Ḥājḡ 'Umar al-Fūtī (d. 1864), in Ségou (Mali) and thus might have belonged to this famous Tijānī leader.²⁷ In Ilṛin al-Zarnūjī's *Ta'lim* forms a very important part of the *'ilm* studies, which again underlines the ethical and paraenetic dimension of learning in that town.

²³ Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 119, 123.

²⁴ Microfilm copy in the University of Ibadan Library, UIL 82/258; for a list of titles of their writings which were identified in Ilṛin, see Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 366.

²⁵ ALA II, 98; Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 358, from Ile Iwo, *tre lune* watermarks, written by the same hand as the ms of the *Mukhtaṣar Khalīl* discussed below under no. 4.

²⁶ Burhān al-Dīn al-Zarnūjī, *Ta'lim al-muta'allim ṭarīq al-ta'allum*, ed. Muṣṭafa 'Ashūr (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qur'ān, 1986). Translated by G.E. von Grunebaum and Theodora M. Abel, *Instruction of the Student: The Method of Learning* (New York, 1947). For Ilṛin, see Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 125, 277, 358 f.

²⁷ BN 5319, 17–31; mentioned by Nouredine Ghali, Sidi Mohamed Madhibou and Louis Brenner, *Inventaire de la Bibliothèque Umarienne de Ségou, conservée à la Bibliothèque nationale* (Paris: CNRS Editions 1985); see also Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 358.

Another peculiarity of Arabic literature in Ilorin is a predilection for rhetorical and linguistic virtuosity. This is expressed in poems like the *Qaṣīdat al-bulbul* (Poem of the Nightingale), attributed to al-Aṣma'ī (d. 216/831), in *al-Qaṣīda al-tarjī'iyya* (i.e. a poem with stanzas divided by independently rhymed verse pairs), written in praise of the wesir Nizām al-mulk by al-Ṭanṭarānī (d. c. 480/1087), and finally by a collection of palindromes, called *al-Qahqarī* (Going Backwards), which was authored by an otherwise unknown poet of West African origin, 'Ubaydallāh al-Wangharawī, called *Ṣāhib al-balāgha* (Master of Eloquence). He apparently owed his inspiration to al-Ḥarīrī (d. 516/1122) and his 16th and 17th *Maqāma*, *al-M. al-Maghribiyya* and *al-Qahqariyya*.²⁸ This rhetorical interest can also be seen in connection with the development of public preaching, which became even more significant during the colonial period.

The spread of public preaching, which had been of such importance for the early development of the Ilorin emirate, also led to the emergence of above-mentioned *wa'z* poetry in Yoruba, which started to be committed to writing in the late nineteenth century. A preacher from the western part of town, Badamāṣi b. Mūsā (d. c. 1309/1891), was apparently the first to compose such religious poems (*wākā*) using Arabic rhyming schemes. Some of his Yoruba poetry, which was written down in Arabic script, survives in manuscripts both in and outside of Ilorin.²⁹

II. NOTES ON SOME ARABIC MANUSCRIPTS FROM ILORIN

The Arabic manuscripts described in this section were photographed in the years 1987 and 1989, in the course of my field research on the history of Islamic learning and education in Ilorin. The following samples serve to illustrate some important aspects of the literary culture of the town, namely (a) its early connection with the calligraphic tradition of Borno (nos. 1, 2), (b) its occasional contacts with the Middle East (no. 3), (c) its higher level of legal and philological literature (nos. 4, 5), and (d) a peculiar expression of Prophetic piety (no. 6).

²⁸ Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 134, 374 f.

²⁹ ALA II, 456 f.

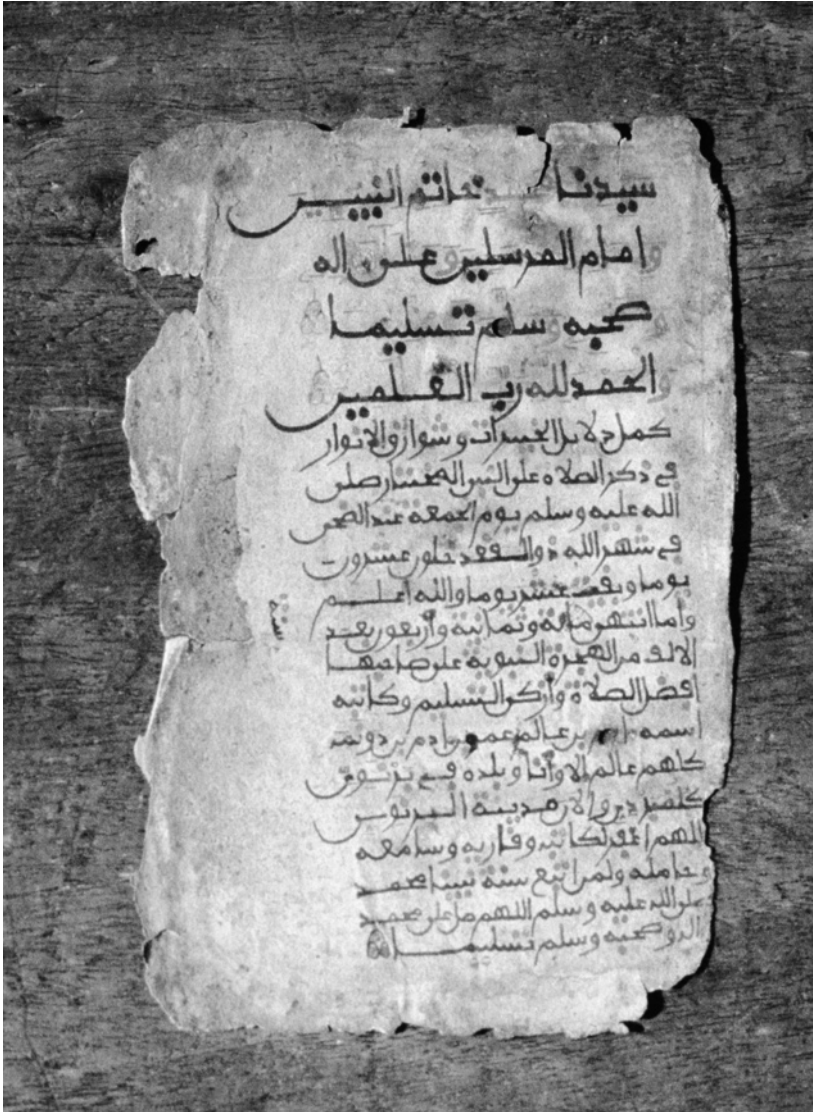
1. *Muḥammad b. Sulaymān al-Jazūlī (d. 870/1465), Dalā'il al-khayrāt wa-shawāriq al-anwār fī dhikr al-ṣalāt 'alā al-nabī al-mukhtār*³⁰ (*Directions to the Benefits and Shining Lights: On the Benediction over the Chosen Prophet*) (Photographs 1a, 1b)

This text is the concluding prayer after the recitation of the names of the Prophet, followed by the description and picture of the tombs of the Prophet and the first two caliphs in the mosque of Medina. The copy consulted is from Ile Mekabara (Ita Kudimoḡ, Balogun Alanamu Ward, Ilḡrin, 2 October 1987). The final page with colophon (Photograph 1a) indicates the date of the copy and name and origin of the copyist. The writing was completed on Friday, 20 Dhū l-qa'da 1148/2 April 1736, by Ādam (?) b. 'Ālim 'Umar b. Ādam b. Dūnama from Birnin Kulumbardo (*baladuhu fī barnawiyyi Kulumbardiyyi*), now in the city of al-Birnawī (*wa-l-'ān fī madīnat al-Birnawiyyi*), most probably Birni Gazargamo (in present-day Nigeria). The thick paper used for the copying of this manuscript was of octavo size, sometimes with clearly visible laid lines; chain lines could also be identified on some of the pages. No watermarks were noticed on the paper, and the text was written with the use of dark brown ink.

The *Dalā'il al-khayrāt* of Ile Mekabara is the oldest dated Arabic text which could be identified until now in Ilḡrin. According to family tradition (Interview with Yusuf Baba Ahmad, Ahmad Hanbali, Ile Mekabara, 2 October 1987), it was brought to Ilḡrin by their ancestor, called Ilyās b. Hāmid Maikabara, who came from Borno in the early nineteenth century. He is said to have belonged to an influential family in Birni Gazargamo, the Borno capital which he left for Bauchi with his father after disturbances in connection with the downfall of one of the kings. From there he went to Biu and Gongola after the death of his father, then travelled along the river Benue to the west until he finally reached Oke Suna in the vicinity of Ilḡrin, where many people originally from of Borno lived.³¹ After the destruction of Oke Suna (i.e. around 1826/7) he, like many others, settled in the

³⁰ GAL II 252f., S II 359; for a general study on the manuscript tradition of the *Dalā'il al-khayrāt*, see Jan Just Witkam, *Vroomheid en activisme in een islamitisch gebedenboek: De geschiedenis van de Dalā'il al-Khayrāt van al-Ġazūlī* (Leiden: Legatum Warnerianum, Universiteitsbibliotheek Leiden, 2002).

³¹ For the Muslim trading settlement of Oke Suna, its inhabitants and its destruction in the early days of the Ilḡrin emirate, see Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 26f., 39ff., *et passim*, see index, 424.



Photograph 1a: al-Jazūlī (d. 870/1465), *Dalā'il al-khayrāt*, prayer after the recitation of the names of the Prophet; tombs of the Prophet and the first two caliphs in the mosque of Medina, Ile Mekabara (Ita Kudimō, Balogun Alanamu Ward).

western part of Ilorin, at the present site of the family compound, where he remained a much respected scholar. The manuscript provides a strong testimony to the presence of people of Borno origin in



Photograph 1b: al-Jazūlī (d. 870/1465), *Dal'ā'il al-khayrāt*, colophon, Ile Mekabara (Ita Kudimo, Balogun Alanamu Ward).

Oke Suna, which is otherwise borne out by other family genealogies in western Ilorin.³²

The writer of the colophon states that all of his ancestors whom he mentions were learned scholars (*'ālim*), except himself (*kulluhum 'ālim illā wa-anā* [sic] “they are all learned except myself”). In the Borno context, the *'ālim* title had a communal dimension, as it was used for the head of an autonomous scholar settlement (Kanuri *mallemti*) endowed with a royal privilege of tax exemption (a so-called *maḥram*), that exercised at the same time educational, administrative and judicial functions.³³ Kulumbardo, in Niger's Borno, was one of the better-known settlements of this kind, which flourished during the seventeenth century. After it was destroyed by the Tuaregs in 1088/1677, when its most famous Sufi leader was killed, Kulumbardo was apparently maintained for a while but the inhabitants gradually

³² Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 26 f., 160 f.; for Şoġagberu, the leader of Oke Suna, Ādam 'Abdallāh al-Ilūrī, *Lamaḥāt al-ballūr fī mashāhīr 'ulamā' Illūrīn* (Cairo: Mk. al-Ādāb-Agege, 1982), 21.

³³ H. Bobboyi, “Relations of the Borno 'Ulamā' with the Sayfawa Rulers: The Role of the *Maḥrams*,” *Sudanic Africa* 4 (1993), 199 ff.

dispersed into different parts of Borno and adjacent areas of present-day Niger and Nigeria.³⁴ The *‘ālim* title of his forefathers might thus indicate that the copyist was a member of a leading family from Kulumbardo who would have moved to Birni Gazargamo.

The beautiful and very regular calligraphy of the manuscript bears close resemblance to the old type of the “Borno Court Hand” described by Bivar and Bondarev³⁵ for the so-called Shetima Kawo Qur’ān.³⁶ It shares letter forms like the elongated *kāf* and the long ascender of the *lām*, and also the tall and angular shape of the letters with the calligraphy of that manuscript which is assumed by Bivar to date from the 16th-17th centuries.³⁷ The Mekabara manuscript thus provides a non-Qur’ānic example of the ancient calligraphic tradition of Borno which as it seems was already well established by the 16th century.

As common in other *Dalā’il* manuscript copies, a picture of the tombs of the Prophet in Medina and of the two caliphs Abū Bakr and ‘Umar at his side is found in this text, shaped as a geometrical decorative pattern carefully drawn in red and yellow, which is reminiscent of the decorative headpieces otherwise used for the Qur’ān (Photograph 1b).³⁸ The names of the two caliphs are introduced by *abī* “my father,” thus *qabr abī al-Ṣiddīq* and *qabr abī ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb*. The tiny roundish script of the names renders the letter *ṭā’* with a diagonal stem, which is close to the normal Maghribī pattern. Vocalization in the main text has been added in red ink, which is also used for the name *Muḥammad*, for the common *allāhumma*, and for some initial words of new paragraphs, like *hākadhā* (Photograph 1b)

The colophon differs from the main text both in size and style, showing red diacritical points and v- and ^-shaped *shadda* (doubling)

³⁴ For Kulumbardo, see J.E. Lavers, “Divisions on a Journey, or the Travels of Shaykh Ahmed al-Yamani (1630–1712) from Halfaya to Fez,” in *The Central Bilād al-Sudān: Tradition and Adaptation*, ed. Y.F. Hasan and P. Doornbos (Khartoum: Khartoum University Press, 1979); H.T. Norris, *Ṣūfī Mystics of the Niger Desert. Sīdī Maḥmūd and The Hermits of Air* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 1–4, 132 ff., 146 f. n. 10; Bobboyi, “Relations,” 252–69.

³⁵ A.D.H. Bivar, “The Arabic Calligraphy of West Africa,” *African Language Review* 7 (1968), 7; D. Bondarev, “The Language of the Glosses in the Bornu Quranic Manuscripts,” *Bulletin of SOAS* 69, no. 1 (2006), 122.

³⁶ Cf. especially the *ḥamdala* in 1b, line 4, with that of the Shetima Kawo Qur’ān in Bondarev, “Bornu Quranic Manuscripts,” 118.

³⁷ Cf. Early Nigerian Qur’ānic Manuscripts (ENiQMa), available from <http://www.soas.ac.uk/africa/research/kanuri/about/> (22 September 2009).

³⁸ See, for example, the pictures of a 19th-century Qur’ān in Brockett, “Physical transmission,” 57 ff.

signs, otherwise common in Maghribī script.³⁹ Yellow trefoils appear as separators at the end of the last two lines of the text before the colophon, showing a trait otherwise common in the calligraphy of the Qurʾān.⁴⁰ The occasional admixture of Maghribī letter forms, already noted above for the letter *tāʾ*, also occurs in other manuscripts (e.g. no. 4 below). It certainly deserves to be further studied for its possible implications for dating and for the distinction of calligraphic styles.

2. *Copy of the Qurʾān by Muḥammad al-Būṣīrī (Busari)*
b. Badr al-Dīn (d. 1915) (Photograph 2)

These are the last two pages (containing the final Sūras 112, 113, and 114), of a Qurʾān manuscript written by a prominent Ilorin scholar, who was the official Qurʾān reciter of the Emir (*ajánási ɔba*) from Ile Oloyin, Balogun Alanamu Ward.⁴¹ This is another family of Borno origin, whose ancestor Badr al-Dīn was according to family tradition gifted with the knowledge of many languages, something which brought him from the beginning in close connection with Alimi and with the first emir ʿAbd al-Salām (1823–36). He became one of the early authorities of Arabic grammar in Ilorin⁴² and is related to have belonged to the group which ʿAbd al-Salām gathered around himself when he wanted to establish his own circle of Qurʾānic scholars independently of the Hausa leader, the Sarkin Gambari, in the town. His son, al-Būṣīrī, went back to Borno where he studied for a long time. After his return he was made the first Qurʾān reciter of the emir. The office was created after a rebellion of the western quarters of the town against Emir Zubayr (Suberu, 1861–69). It gave an additional representation to scholars of these quarters in the ceremonial *tafsīr* sessions during Ramaḍān in the emir’s palace, which were established as an official religious event attended by the elite of the town.

The fact that Muḥammad al-Būṣīrī was firmly grounded in the Borno tradition of Qurʾānic studies certainly was decisive for his

³⁹ N. Van den Boogert, “Some notes on Maghribi script,” *Manuscripts of the Middle East* 4 (1989), 32; here in line 2 with *al-nabī* and in line 11 with the two place names *Kulumbardiyyi* and *al-Birnawiyyi*.

⁴⁰ For the trefoil motif and its history in Qurʾānic calligraphy, see Brockett, “Physical transmission,” 46, 53 n. 23.

⁴¹ Interview with Alfa Haruna b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, grandson of Muḥammad al-Būṣīrī (2 October 1987).

⁴² Ādam al-Ilūrī, Agege, 13 July 1985.



Photograph 2: Copy of the Qurʾān by the official Qurʾān reciter of the emir, Muḥammad al-Būṣīrī (Busari) b. Badr al-Dīn (d. 1915); final pages with Sūras 112, 113, and 114, Ile Oloyin (Balogun Alanamu Ward).

appointment as the leading Qur'ānic reciter of the town, an office which he kept for about fifty years until his death. He also had many prominent students.⁴³ Qur'ānic studies in Borno not only required the memorization and recitation of the entire Qur'ān, but aimed at the ability to recopy the Qur'ānic text from memory with all of its orthographical peculiarities.⁴⁴ Several scholar families in Ilṛin, such as the Ile Ojibara and Ile Bature in Oke Apomu (Balogun Ajikobi Ward) and Ile Gbagba (Balogun Gambari Ward), were known for their Qur'ānic training. In former times, the teachers at the Ojibara school used to gather fifty of their young scholars and students during the month of Ramaḍān, who would divide among them the writing of the portions of the the holy book to be recopied from memory, so that each day a whole Qur'ān was completed by the group.

Muḥammad al-Būṣīrī's Qur'ān was, according to his grandson, also written from memory, bearing testimony to that kind of literary activity which owes a good deal to the Borno tradition. In contrast to the angular script of the manuscript of the *Dalā'il al-khayrāt* which was presented above it shows a rather rounded and flowing style, which can be observed also with other old Qur'ān manuscripts in the town. The three Sūras (112–114) are followed by a concluding Fātiḥa. The copyist mentions that the manuscript was finished on Sunday, 3 *Dhū l-ḥijja*, without indicating the year, giving his name as "Muḥammad Būṣīrī, father of 'Abd al-Wahhāb" (the name of one of his sons), and proudly stating in the last line: "I wrote it all" (*katabtuhu kullahu*).

3. *First Pages of a Copy of the Qur'ān, Imported from Cairo in the Early Nineteenth Century, Originally in Possession of 'Abd al-Salām, the First Emir of Ilṛin* (Photograph 3)

This is a splendidly illuminated manuscript, which is now in possession of the Daudu Aleḡe, Sa'īd b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Aleḡe, head of the descendants of Prince Muḥammad

⁴³ On him, see Ādam al-Ilūrī, *Lamaḥāt al-ballūr*, 34 ff., with a long elegy on his death by his student Aḥmad Yanmā; also Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 109, 129 f., 162, 204 f.

⁴⁴ For a description of this intensive and long-drawn training, see A. Mustapha, "The Contribution of the Sayfawa 'Ulamā' to the Study of Islam, c. 1086–1846" (Ph.D. diss., Bayero University, Kano, 1987), 121–69; also Reichmuth, "Islamic Education and Scholarship in Sub-Saharan Africa," 423.

Aleḡe b. Zubayr b. ‘Abd al-Salām (Emir’s Palace, Ilorin, 21, 23 September 1987).⁴⁵ According to its present owner, this Qur’ān was brought together with a similar copy by pilgrims returning from Cairo to emir ‘Abd al-Salām. One of them remained in his family, whereas the other one went to the children of his brother Shitta (1836–61), the second emir.

This Qur’ān is remarkable for its combination of an Ottoman illumination typical of the late 18th-early 19th century, already influenced by European Rococo style, with a very delicate Maghribī script. The two illuminated headpieces of *al-Fātiḡa* and *Sūrat al-Baqara* are gilded and richly colored with flower patterns in yellow, red, orange, brown and blue (in other pages green also occurs). Eastern scripts are used for the headlines of the Sūras and for the indication of Meccan or Medinan origin and of the number of verses. Apart from these initial



Photograph 3: First pages of a copy of the Qur’ān, imported from Cairo, early 19th century, originally in possession of emir ‘Abd al-Salām (1823-36), Emir’s Palace (Magajin Gari Ward).

⁴⁵ On Muḡammad Aleḡe and his failed attempt to become emir in 1895, see K.V. Elphinstone, *Gazetteer of Ilorin Province* (London: Waterlow & Sons, 1921), 18f.

headpieces, all Sūras have small but colorfully decorated frames for their headlines. The finispiece (not reproduced here) is decorated with pink roses, small blue flowers and brownish leaves, in a style even closer to European patterns than that of the headpiece. Until today this manuscript remains a unique example of the merger of different styles of calligraphy and illumination which can perhaps be regarded as typical for Cairo (with its large Maghribī community) in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. It also illustrates the cosmopolitan outlook of the early scholarly community of Ilḡrin,⁴⁶ showing that the scholars and copyists of this town had at least some limited access to Middle Eastern and Maghribī textual samples and resources.

4. *Khalīl b. Ishāq al-Jundī* (d. 776/1374): *al-Mukhtaṣar fī l-furū*⁴⁷ (Photograph 4)

This is the initial page of an incomplete legal manuscript that includes copious notes from different commentaries. It belongs to the scholar family of Ile Iwo,⁴⁸ whose ancestor was also of Borno origin. He had lived in Iwo in Yorubaland before he went to Ilḡrin, where he preached and held *tafsīr* and also participated as a religious warrior in the early wars of the emirate. According to family tradition, he had been an early companion of the above-mentioned Alimi and later became one of the prominent scholars of the western wards of the town where he had many students. The head of the family, the Alfa Iwo, is to this day one of the leading imams in that part of Ilḡrin. The family still keeps a good collection of manuscripts and runs a large school.

The manuscript of Khalīl's *Mukhtaṣar*, the most authoritative text of Mālikī scholarship in Ilḡrin as elsewhere in Nigeria (often referred to as *Mukhtaṣar Khalīl*), is in quarto format (16 × 22,5 cm) and shows a block with five large lines for the main text, with copious space left for marginal notes in small size which often cover large parts of the pages. The paper shows *tre lune* watermarks, as well as moon faces and letters. As the moon faces, according to Terence Walz (in his chapter in this volume), superseded the simple *tre lune* in Egypt and probably

⁴⁶ Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 148–70.

⁴⁷ GAL II 84, S II 96.

⁴⁸ Interviews in Ode Alfa Nda, Balogun Alanamu Ward with Alfa Zakariyyā Iwo (3 Oct. 1987; 12, 13 Sept. 1989). For this scholar family and their school in Ilḡrin, see Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 119, 127, 161 f., 356, 359).



Photograph 4: Khalil b. Ishāq (d. 776/1374): *al-Mukhtaṣar fī l-furūʿ*, initial page, text with copious notes from different commentaries, Ile Iwo (Ode Alfa Nda, Balogun Alanamu Ward).

elsewhere in the course of the 1840s,⁴⁹ the manuscript which has sheets of both kinds might perhaps be regarded as dating from about the middle of the nineteenth century.

⁴⁹ Cf. Brockett, "Physical Transmission," 49, 54 n. 66.

The letter forms of the large script resemble the Borno hands discussed above. They also show some traits which draw them closer to Maghribī models, like the curved variant of *rā'*, *ṭā'* with a diagonal stem, and *hā'* in isolation with a diagonal upstroke to the right.⁵⁰ All these can also be found in the small-size format, which shows that the comments were written by the same hand as the main text.

The notes in the text often refer to their sources, some of which can be identified as important commentaries to the *Mukhtaṣar*, like the two commentaries of al-Tatā'ī (d. 942/1535), *Faṭḥ al-jalīl* (abbreviated with *j*) and *Jawāhir al-durar*, and al-Kharāshī (d. 1101/1689), *al-Mawāhib al-jalīla*, and also the commentaries of 'Abd al-Bāqī al-Zurqānī, (d. 1099/1688) and al-Mawwāq (d. 897/1492).⁵¹ Reference to Firūzābādī's *Qāmūs* can also be found. It includes some poetry, for example on the lower right margin of the front page, where the beginning student of the *Mukhtaṣar* is admonished to cut short his sleep for the study of this important book. Later pages also show lecture marks indicated by the sign *dars*.

The significance of this manuscript lies both in its calligraphic quality and in the wealth of its commentaries. The calligraphy appears close to the Borno type but nevertheless shows some use of Maghribī patterns which do not seem to have survived in Arabic handwriting in Nigeria. The writing thus illustrates the different scripts and sizes which a good calligrapher had at his disposal. The commentaries show a well-versed teacher of *fiqh* who was familiar with a good number of large and important commentaries of Khalīl's *Mukhtaṣar*. From these he selected entries apparently for further use in his own lessons. Whether such amply augmented legal manuscripts were also copied by students or rather remained as reference works with the teacher himself, is a matter of further inquiry.

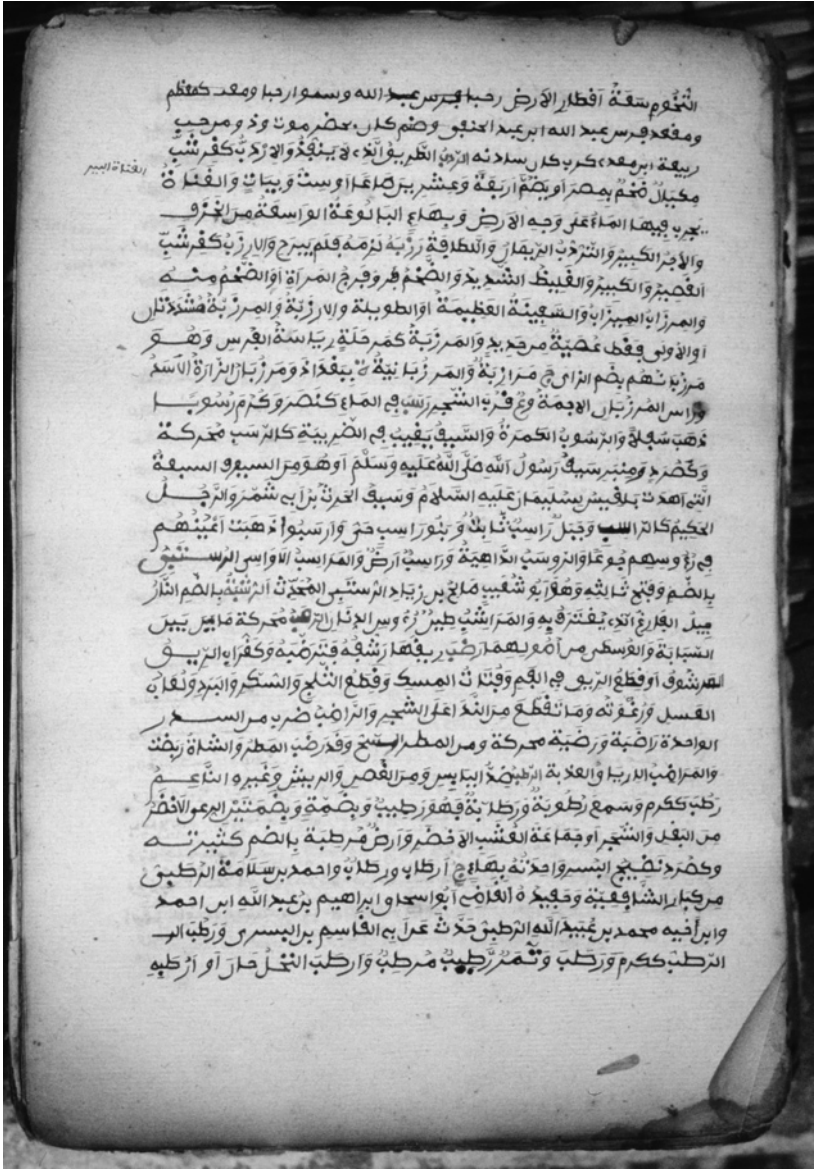
5. *Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb al-Firūzābādī (d. 817/1415),
al-Qāmūs al-muḥiṭ*⁵² (Photograph 5)

From Ile Masingba, Oke Kere, Balogun Ajikobi Ward, Ilorin (Interview with Shehu Ahmad, Imam Masingba, 18 Sept. 1987).

⁵⁰ Cf. van den Boogert, "Notes," 36 ff., 40.

⁵¹ For the manuscript, see also Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 364 f.

⁵² GAL II 181 ff., S II 234 ff.



Photograph 5: al-Firūzābādī (d. 817/1415), *al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṭ*, Ile Masingba (Oke Kere, Balogun Ajikobi Ward).

Ile Masingba is the Ajikobi branch of the family of the Imam Imale, an office which comes second in rank within the hierarchy of imams in the town. Its ancestor, Yūsof Malle, father of the first imam, is said

to have been of Malian origin and to have first settled in the old settlement of Kogbaya (a place now in ruins near Igboho in northern Yorubaland).⁵³ He seems to have been the religious leader of a larger community of Muslim settlers from that older city of the Oyo Empire, which can probably be identified as a Wangara trading community.⁵⁴ The location of the original residence in an area near the palace called Koro Gurma, or “Gurma lane,” also suggests a western connection of the founder who is said to have been a close associate of Alimi. The imam office, first established with Yūsuf’s son, rotates between the two branches of Fagba (near the Emir’s Palace) and Ile Masingba. The Imam Imale became the head of the imams of the western wards, and the office played an important and sometimes contested role in the history of Ilorin.⁵⁵

The manuscript, a partly damaged but apparently complete copy in two volumes, is kept in the Ile Masingba branch of the Imam Imale family. It is the only text in folio size (30 × 24 cm) which could be identified in Ilorin until now. Its paper shows *tre lune* watermarks. The text consists of 31 lines, written in a rounded and very regular fashion, with the headlines of the different *fusūl*, the common abbreviations and the initial words of the entries set apart in red ink. Whether the manuscript was imported or produced in Ilorin itself cannot be decided with any certainty. It does not appear too different from the calligraphic style presented above in Muḥammad al-Buṣṣirī’s Qur’ān, and could thus well have been produced by a copyist trained in that tradition, in Ilorin or elsewhere. In any case it shows the demand for this famous lexicon which appears every now and then as reference in the marginal notes of legal as well as literary texts. One of the nineteenth-century scholars of Ilorin, Mūsā Ateṛe (d. 1325/1907), is credited by Ādam al-Ilūrī with the introduction of the *Qāmūs* in Ilorin.⁵⁶ He is related to have known it by heart.

6. *Picture Folios*

This sample contains two colored pictures in folio format, namely a) the image of the Ḥaram of Medina; b) the image of the Sandals of the Prophet. These picture folios are from Ile Kasandubu, Isale Okaka,

⁵³ For Kogbaya, see Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 22, 31, 49, 55, 158, 160, 167.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 22 f.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 49–52, 156–61, index 418.

⁵⁶ Ādam al-Ilūrī, *Lamaḥāt al-ballūr*, 34.

Balogun Fulani Ward, Ilḡrin.⁵⁷ The original sheet containing the two pictures belongs to a Fulani family whose head, Alfa Shu'ayb Jodi (then c. 70 years old), was still active at the same time as imam, teacher and cattle trader. He traced the family origin to the Toronkawa of the Sokoto region, i.e. to the same group as 'Uthmān b. Fodiye.

According to Alfa Jodi the sheet, which he called *khātām al-nabī* (Seal of the Prophet), was brought from the Sokoto region to Ilḡrin by his ancestors. It is a full sheet of 45 × 33 cm which showed traces of frequent folding to octavo size, apparently being used as amulet. Its brittle parts had been stitched together with red and blue threads and it had been pasted on another paper. The original showed laid lines, but no watermarks could be found. The colors used for the drawings are red, brownish yellow and black. The whole sheet is divided in two parts which are connected by a litany of the names of the Prophet, ending with the promise to be allowed to enter Paradise without judgment or reckoning (*ḥisāb*). The parts otherwise consist of two fully separate images:

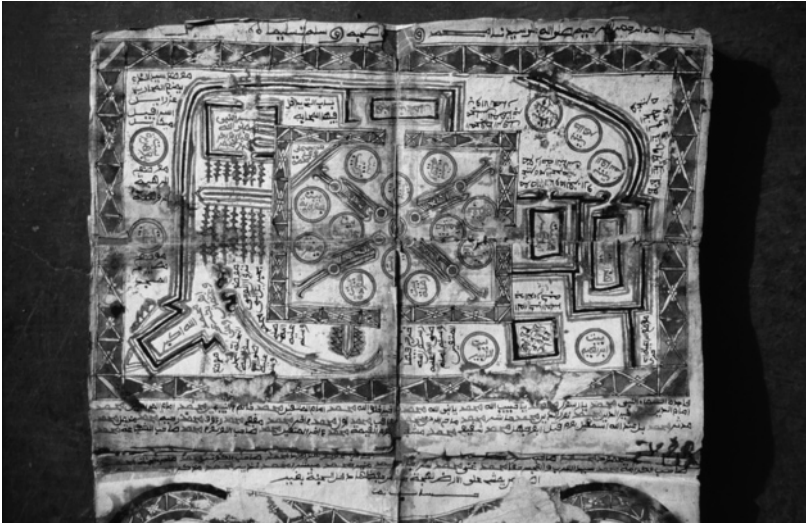
6a. *Image of the Ḥaram of Medina* (Photograph 6a)

This depicts the tombs of the Prophet and of the two caliphs Abū Bakr and 'Umar, the central compound with the houses of his wives (including Khadija who never came to Medina!) and daughters, and of some of his sons and companions around it, indicating also some important gates, the places of revelation and of the recitation of the Qur'ān, the majlis of the Muhājirūn and Anṣār, the prayer niche of the mosque, the trees of the Rawḍa and the palm tree of the Prophet. It also includes the name of three angels ('Azrā'īl, Isrāfil, Mikā'īl) as guardians and as mediators of the divine power. The drawing shows highly geometrical forms, with houses indicated as rectangles or circles, walls as colored line bundles or stripes with geometrical decoration. A rectangular stripe pattern also surrounds the whole image.

A similar charm from Jenné, collected and published by Paul Marty before 1920, was more recently described and discussed at length by René Bravmann.⁵⁸ The Jenné charm shows some additional pictorial elements, such as the horses and swords of the Prophet and the

⁵⁷ Interviews with Alfa Shu'ayb Jodi (29.8.1986, 6.9.1987, 13.9.1987).

⁵⁸ R. Bravmann, "A Fragment of Paradise," *The Muslim World* 78, no. 1 (January 1988), 29–37.



Photograph 6a: Image of the Ḥaram of Medina, Ile Kasandubu (Isale Okaka, Balogun Fulani Ward).



Photograph 6b: Image of the Sandals of the Prophet, Ile Kasandubu (Isale Okaka, Balogun Fulani Ward).

caliphs. The comparison suggests that the large curved form which is placed in the Ilorin sample between prayer niche, Rawḍa and compound of the Prophet's wives, might also be regarded as a large sword

with handle. The purpose of the whole image is explained in the Jenné amulet by a text on its cover:⁵⁹

This is an image (*ṣifa*) of the city of the Prophet of God, may He bless him and grant him peace. He who looks at it every day will have his sins forgiven by God, even if they be as vast as the space between East and West... He upon whom it is attached (*man 'aliqa 'alayhi* [sic]) will find power (*mulk*), might (*'izza*), rank (*qadr*), love (*maḥabba*), dignity (*karāma*) and wealth (*rizq*) if God wishes, by the sanctity (*ḥurma*) of the image of the town of the Prophet.”

The image is thus designed to be used both for meditation and as a charm, in order to secure God's forgiveness and to attain power and success in life. A similar purpose seems to apply to the Ilḡrin sample. It is a rather striking testimony to the Prophetic piety which greatly expanded in the Western Sudan since the late eighteenth century and which also fuelled the *turuq* and the Islamic movements of that period.⁶⁰ Since a good number of Fulani families in Ilḡrin claim to originate from western regions up to Masina and Futa Jalon, it seems likely to that this style of amulet design, too, came from the Western Sudan.

6b. *Image of the Prophet's sandals* (na'l) (Photograph 6b)

A more common type of amulet, showing the two sandals in highly abstract fashion, similarly decorated with geometrical patterns and stripes (see Photograph 1b). Their middle parts bear the names of the four major angels (Mikā'il, Isrāfīl, Jibrīl, 'Azrā'il), the four caliphs and the two letters *Yā Sin*, whereas the inscriptions of the four circles which form tips and heels of the sandals reveal the promise of the whole image:

Fā'ida (Note):

Sandals of the Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace.

He who looks at them every day will see the Prophet at Resurrection Day.

He who looks at them every day will find good fortune in this world and in the Hereafter.

He who looks at them every day will find good fortune with God and the people and will not be exposed to the disasters of this world.

⁵⁹ Bravmann, "Fragment of Paradise," Plate 2.

⁶⁰ For the settlements in the Western Sudan that were given Islamic names like Mecca or Medina during that period, see e.g. D. Robinson, *The Holy War of Umar Tal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 85 f.; Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 33.

He who looks at them every day will find dignity with the people.
 He who looks at them every day will not see misfortune (*muṣība*)
 (inflicted upon him by) a ruler (*sultān*) or by (several) rulers (*salāṭīn*).
 He who looks at them every day will not see any misfortune of *jihād*
 (inflicted by) iron (*lā yarā muṣibat al-jihād 'inda l-ḥadīd*).
 He who looks at them every day will find love with the people.

The image of the Sandals of the Prophet was commonly featured in North African amulets where they similarly were regarded among other things as an effective protection from fire and destruction and from the perils of travel, especially from suffering shipwreck. The texts of al-Maqqarī (d. 1041/1631),⁶¹ *Nafaḥāt al-'anbar fī waṣf na'l dhī l-'ulā wa-l-minbar* (Fragrances of Ambergris: Description of the Sandals of the Man of the Lofty Heights and *Fathḥ al-muta'āl fī madḥ al-ni'āl* (Illumination of the Supreme [God]: Praise of the Sandals), are perhaps the most well-known works on this topic. The first of them was also found in print in Ilḡrin.⁶² The two images which form part of this sheet provide an important set of protective devices against one's own sins and against the perils of nature and of social life. Making use of the representation of his sandals and his town, these devices create connections with the Prophet and with the traces which he left on earth, and thus give some insight into the kind of Prophetic piety prevailing in—and also far beyond—nineteenth-century Ilḡrin.

⁶¹ GAL II, 296 f., S II 408.

⁶² Maktabat al-Qāhira, Cairo, n.d., printed together with Maqqarī, *Iḏā'at al-dujunna*, and with Ḥusām al-Dīn al-Wa'izī, *Bashā'ir al-is'ād*.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE MAJOR MANUSCRIPT LIBRARIES IN TIMBUKTU

Abdel Kader Haïdara

(translated from the French by Graziano Krätli and Ghislaine Lydon)

Timbuktu has long been known as a major commercial and intellectual crossroad in West Africa. An important center of Islamic learning and erudition for generations of students and scholars, today it is renowned for its architecture, its rich literary tradition and its many libraries full of ancient and precious manuscripts.

As director of one of these libraries, I had the opportunity to inventory 408 private manuscript collections in Timbuktu and surrounding areas, where many more collections remain to be appraised. These manuscripts played a crucial role in the spread of the Arabic language and Islamic culture across the western Sudanic region. Today they preserve the written heritage of Mali, a tangible expression of our ancestors' collective memory, bearing witness to their cultural and religious identity, their scholarly traditions and life experiences. At the same time, the rich intellectual and scientific content of these manuscripts represents a tremendous contribution to the cultural heritage of humankind as a whole. These libraries form a vast repository of information on a wide range of subjects and topics, which demonstrates the intellectual engagement of Muslim scholars of the glorious past.

The generations that inherited these scholarly treasures have the responsibility not only of ensuring their preservation, but also of building upon this unique intellectual heritage. Today, however, many collections are at risk of disappearing for a variety of reasons, including environmental causes (humidity, rain, fire, termites and other insects, droughts), economic conditions, wars, displacements, negligence, ignorance and other human factors. If these and other problems had not contributed already to significant losses, the estimated number of manuscripts in Timbuktu and surrounding areas would probably amount to several million. But even so, the most recent surveys suggest the existence of about one million manuscripts preserved in several private and public libraries. The most important of

Table 1. Major manuscript libraries in Timbuktu and surrounding areas

1. 'Abd ar-Raḥmān Haman Sīdī	14. Mamma Haïdara*
2. Aḥmad Būla'raf al-Tikni*	15. Muḥammad Maḥmūd (Ber)*
3. Aḥmad Fondo Goumou	16. Muḥammad Tashīr Shirfī
4. al-Ḥassānī*	17. Muḥammad Yaḥyā w. Bou
5. Al-Imām al-Aqīb	18. Shaykh al-Arawānī*
6. Al-Imām Alfa Sālem	19. Shaykhna Bul Kheyr
7. Al-Imām Al-Suyūṭī*	20. Shaykhna Sīdī 'Alī
8. Al-Muṣṭafā Konaté	21. Sheibani Maiga
9. Al-Anṣārī and Sons	22. Sīdī Lamine Sīdī Goumou
10. Alfa Bābā of Sankoré	23. Sīdī 'Umar Idjé
11. Al-Qāḍī 'Īsā	24. Zawiyatou al-Kunti
12. Al-Wangarī	25. Zeinia (Boù Djébéha)*
13. Fondo Ka'ti *	

* Described in this chapter.

Source: Abdel Kader Haïdara

them in Timbuktu (see Table 1) hold a total of no less than 101,820 manuscripts, but sizeable collections can be found in other Malian cities such as Ségou, Gao, Kayes, Mopti and Kidal. This chapter describes a number of important manuscript collections in and around Timbuktu, focusing on the largest and those that played a major role in the past.

MAMMA HAÏDARA LIBRARY

The Mamma Haïdara library was founded in the tenth century A.H. (sixteenth century C.E.) in the village of Bamba, about two hundred kilometers east of Timbuktu, by one Muḥammad al-Mawlūd, who was a direct ancestor of the current owners. The original nucleus of manuscripts followed the itinerant lifestyle of al-Mawlūd between the wells of Tinditasse, near Bamba, and the surrounding town of Bourem, near Gao. In the mid-nineteenth century C.E., the collection passed under the responsibility of a descendent of Muḥammad al-Mawlūd, named Muḥammad al-Ṣāliḥ. Around this time, a fire caused irreparable damage to some of the manuscripts in the collection, the consequences of which can still be seen today.

At the beginning of the twentieth century Muḥammad al-Ṣāliḥ left the collection to his son, Muḥammad al-Ḥijāzī, who added new manuscripts and important documents to it. Unfortunately, further damage and destruction were caused by the collapse of the building in which the collection was stored. Muḥammad al-Ḥijāzī's son, Mamma Haïdara (ca. 1895–1981), reorganized the library and, on learning about prominent 'ulamā' in Egypt and Sudan, started travelling in search of knowledge. In the following years, he studied Islamic sciences, especially Arabic language and *ḥadīth*, with nomadic 'ulama' who taught him much of what he would be renowned for as a scholar and learned man. When he finally returned to Bamba (the exact date is unknown), he brought with him a large number of manuscripts and printed books. These works, together with others that he collected on subsequent trips in the Sudan and desert areas, significantly enlarged the family library. After continuing his studies in the villages of Arawān and Boû Djébéha, he finally settled in Timbuktu, where his bibliophilia thrived. He personally copied dozens of manuscripts and exchanged them with other libraries in Mali and elsewhere, which allowed him to form one of the largest and most important collections of Arabic manuscripts in the Timbuktu area.

After the great drought of 1973, at a time when Mamma Haïdara was in Timbuktu, part of the collection that remained in Bamba was targeted by unknown looters from a neighbouring country, who are said to have stolen about five hundred volumes of manuscripts. Rain, insects, dust and relocations caused further losses and damages. Nevertheless, Mamma Haïdara, thanks to his good relations with local 'ulamā' and leaders, was able to overcome these and other adversities, to collaborate with library owners in the region (see Table 2), and to help the Centre Ahmed Baba acquire several manuscripts.¹

A savant and a bibliophile, Shaykh Mamma Haïdara spent most of his time and energies exploring other libraries and collections all over Mali and in neighbouring countries, collecting and tending to the preservation of books and manuscripts. For over six years he

¹ The Centre de Documentation et de Recherches Aḥmad Bābā (CEDRAB) was created in 1970, the result of a conference of experts organized by UNESCO in Timbuktu in 1967. The center became operative in 1977 with financial support from Kuwait, and in 2000 the Malian Government changed its status and name to Institut des Hautes Etudes et de la Recherche Islamique Ahmed Baba (IHERI-AB). On the Centre and its manuscript collection, see John O. Hunwick, "CEDRAB: The Centre de Documentation et de Recherches Ahmed Baba," *Sudanic Africa* 3 (1992), 173–81.

Table 2. Library owners in contact with Shaykh Mamma Haïdara

Location	Library
Bamba	Sharif al-Mukhtār b. al-Marzūq Sharif ‘Abdullāh b. al-Mukhtār Shaykh Sīdī al-Galādī Muḥammad at-Taher as-Sharif
Ber	Shaykh al-Munzer Kal Inno Kandar
Boû Djébéha	Zeinia Library
Gao	Kala-Souk and Sharif Library
Rharous	Gaira Go Family Muḥammad al-Mukhtār b. Hawad al-Anṣārī
Timbuktu	Aḥmad Būla‘rāf Muḥammad Maḥmūd b. Shaykh al-Arawanī Sīdī ‘Alī Family Al-Qādī ‘Issa al-Arawanī Muḥammad b. Touta Arawān Family Abdurahman Sīdijé Imām Alfa Sālem Mūlāy Aḥmad Baber al-Arawanī Shaykhna Sīdī ‘Alī al-Djakanī Shaykhna Boul Khayr al-Arawanī Muḥammad at-Taher Shirfī
Mauritania	Muḥammad Yahyā b. Sālim al-Walātī Muḥammad al-Amīn b. Barik Muḥammad Yahyā al-Walātī

Source: Abdel Kader Haïdara

assisted the Centre Ahmed Baba with their acquisitions, while at the same time pursuing his own library and archival work. Eventually he moved whatever books or manuscripts were left in Bamba to Timbuktu, in order to have his entire collection under one roof, and this marks the official birth of the Mamma Haïdara Library. After the Shaykh's death in 1981, I, being one of the Shaykh's sons, took over the management of his library.

Why is this family library named after Mamma Haïdara? The name makes perfect sense, since Shaykh Mamma was one of those who contributed most to the growth of the collection in a number of ways, as

both copyist and author. As a *qāḍī* in Bamba and a *muftī* in Timbuktu, he wrote a great number of acts and *fatwas*, in addition to various genealogical and astrological works, poems, letters and treatises on Sufism, and collected a large number of printed books, which continue to be consulted by researchers and scholars, both local and foreign. He was also the first to open a Qur'ānic school in the Bella Farandi neighbourhood, where he taught the Holy Book and related disciplines, Sufism, logic, literature and grammar (his area of expertise), and where he trained many students who subsequently became renowned scholars in their own right.

Until relatively recently, these manuscripts and documents were preserved in steel or wooden trunks, stacked in a small and dark room, and exposed to all sorts of hazards. Despite these poor conditions, the collection continued to attract students and scholars, as well as other visitors who came to see these curiosities and take pictures of them. But whatever their purpose, they had to deal with a poor space and difficult conditions. Faced with the great number of visitors coming from within Africa and beyond, I became increasingly aware of the need to improve the conditions of access to the collection, especially after consulting with the director of the Centre Ahmed Baba, Mahmoud Zouber. Both he and Harber Chabani, who at the time was mayor of Timbuktu, supported the idea of building an adequate structure for the preservation of the library holdings. Building plans were sent to a number of potential partners, and in 1996 the Malian Ministry of Culture authorized the construction of a private library.

At the same time, I made several trips to secure funding for the project and increase awareness of these manuscripts and their current condition. In 1997 the London-based Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation responded to my appeal with the offer to catalog three thousand manuscripts. An agreement was signed, but the actual work started only two years later due to the lack of resources and trained staff. Bibliographical records were generated in Timbuktu and sent to London, where Aymān Fu'ād Sayyid compiled and edited the first three volumes of the catalog, which were published in 2000.²

² *Catalogue of Manuscripts in Mamma Haidara Library*. Compiled by Abdelkader Mamma Haidara and edited by Ayman Fuad Sayyid. 4 vols. London: Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, 2000–03. Five years earlier, the Al-Furqan Foundation had sponsored the *Handlist of Manuscripts in the Centre de Documentation et de Recherches Historiques Ahmad Bābā, Timbuktu, Mali*. 4 vols. Compiled by Sidi Amar Ould Ely and edited by Julian Johansen. London: Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, 1995–98.

The year 1997 was also when Professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Director of the W. E. B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research at Harvard University, visited Mali with a film crew to make a documentary on the towns of Jenné, Bandiagara and Timbuktu. The script included a visit to a manuscript library, and he chose the Mamma Haïdara. Gates was greatly impressed by the amount of manuscripts, but he was also concerned about the poor conditions in which they were preserved. Consequently, after filming was done, he consulted with me on the possibility of building a more adequate structure, promising to find funding for the project. He suggested that I submit a proposal to the Malian Ministry of Culture, with a copy to his attention in Harvard. Through his university, contacts were established with the Mellon Foundation in New York City, which agreed to finance the project. Harvard then entered into direct contact with the Ministry of Culture in Bamako, to secure its endorsement and guarantee of support before the Mellon Foundation released the funds.

To better manage the new facility, I appointed a committee made of representatives of the library's major stakeholders, namely donors, the Association pour la Sauvegarde et la Valorisation des Manuscrits à Tombouctou, the Ministry of Culture, users and custodians. As its honorary secretary, the committee chose the governor of Timbuktu, Mahmoud Maiga, who enthusiastically endorsed this initiative. Construction started in September 1999 and the new building was officially inaugurated on 13 January 2000 by the Malian First Lady, Her Excellency Mrs. Adama Bah Konaré, together with the Ministers of Culture of Mali and Morocco. The ceremony was held in conjunction with the first festival of culture hosted by Timbuktu.

The library started to operate in May 2000 with a staff of three, comprising a director, an assistant director and a secretary. All of the rooms were properly furnished and equipped, the manuscripts stored in drawers, and the library was finally ready to accept researchers and students. In 2003 the Al-Furqan Foundation issued the fourth volume of the library catalog, which contains the listings of one thousand manuscripts. The Foundation also provided the library with a workstation, a number of other Arabic manuscript catalogs and additional reference manuals. A second workstation was purchased with funds donated by the former Algerian president Ahmed Ben Bella.

In 2005 the Ford Foundation, in cooperation with the local non-profit organization SAVAMA-DCI (Sauvegarde et Valorisation des

Manuscripts pour la Défense de la Culture Islamique), provided funds for the renovation of the library, added more workstations, trained staff in computer literacy, calligraphy, manuscript cataloging and basic preservation, and supported research and publication projects focused on the library manuscripts, including English and French translations of major works. More funding and support materialized at the beginning of 2007, when the Juma al-Majid Heritage and Culture Center in Dubai built a library extension and provided materials and resources for the conservation, restoration and digitization of its manuscripts, as well as for the training of staff for a period of six months starting in December 2007.

Over the years, the Mamma Haïdara Library has received visits from important dignitaries, including diplomats, ministers of culture and heads of state, in addition to scores of scholars, researchers and students from Africa, North America, Asia, Europe and beyond. The library is located on the east side of town, in the Hamabangou neighborhood next to the Bahadou school complex and on the road to the IHERI-AB (former CEDRAB). The building comprises over twelve rooms, several administrative offices, two guest rooms and one custodial room. Manuscripts and printed books (ca. 9000 and 1200, respectively) are kept in separate rooms. The former contains the bulk of the collection, with individual items numbered and protected by leather covers. The other rooms include technical services (conservation, restoration and binding; cataloging and digitization), a computer lab, a reading room, an exhibition room (which displays some of the oldest and rarest manuscripts and a selection of writing tools) and an Internet café. The library is open to researchers and scholars.

Most manuscripts are in good condition and bound, others have been successfully restored, while many remain in fragile state as a consequence of old age and intense use. With the exception of a few items on parchment, the vast majority of manuscripts are written on paper. Some covers, in tanned leather, are artistically decorated. The documents are written in various scripts, namely Sūqī, Sudanic, Saharan, Maghribi and Oriental. Manuscripts include original works by local African authors, or their summaries and commentaries of the works of North African, Andalusian and Middle Eastern scholars, as well as copies of these commented works. Several manuscripts contain marginal notes referring to their owners or buyers, their purchase date and the price paid for them. Moreover, it is worth noting that a number of them involve women in various roles. Some contain poems

by or about women, correspondence between women or concerning them, and deeds involving female merchants; while others were owned, inherited or copied by women or for them.

A list of the main subjects represented in the collection will give an idea of the wide range of scholarly and scientific interests pursued in Timbuktu and surrounding areas. These include copies of the Qur'an, Qur'anic sciences, Islamic exegesis, *ḥadīth* and related works; theology, the life of the Prophet, religious doctrines, including Sufism (*taṣawwuf*); jurisprudence and Islamic law; Arabic language, grammar and morphology; literature, prosody, poetry, rhetoric, music; correspondence related to political, juridical and commercial issues and activities authorities; history, geography, biography, tales and travel accounts; medicine, pharmacopeia, optics, physics, chemistry, biology; philosophy, philology, pedagogy, logic, political sciences; mathematics, astronomy, astrology. Additional topics include scholarly debates about good governance, fighting corruption, conflict resolution, religious tolerance, education, the rights of women, children, orphans, workers, slaves and animals, and commercial and property law. The oldest manuscript in the collection is a copy dated 467/1056 of Mālik b. Anas' *al-Muwatta'*, a work on the traditions of the Prophet that forms the basis of the Mālikī law.

Among the factors that contributed most to the growth and preservation of the collection is that its custodians and curators never allowed manuscripts to be sold, given away or even taken by inheriting members of the family; and, secondly, that the library continues to be managed by a direct descendant of Shaykh Mamma Haïdara who is particularly concerned with its value as intellectual resource and cultural heritage. The family archives show that past members always included in their wills an article stipulating that manuscripts be preserved and regarded as both a family heirloom and a contribution to world heritage. Expressions of this commitment can be found in the covers of individual manuscripts, either in detailed form or summarized in the word *waqf*, indicating a pious endowment that cannot be sold or divided among the members of the family.

These manuscripts, it goes without saying, represent a unique resource for the intellectual and political history of Mali and West Africa. At the same time, they form an invaluable part of our cultural heritage and the embodiment of the spirit of our ancestors. They are much more than a goldmine of historical information and an emblem of cultural identity. If adequate preservation resources are secured and

properly managed, this written patrimony can help reduce poverty and provide employment opportunities for researchers, including young men and women, by generating a variety of activities focused on manuscript location, classification, cataloging and description, conservation and restoration, digitization, scholarly investigation, translation and publication in various languages of the most important works (such as those dealing with conflict resolution, tolerance, good governance, etc.).

The Mamma Haïdara Library is primarily concerned with the preservation (conservation, restoration, binding and digitization), cataloging and description of its manuscript holdings, which together with the formation and training of personnel (particularly young men and women) represent the core component of its institutional mission and objectives. The library is also actively promoting its collections by regularly participating in exhibits and other cultural activities at the national and international level.

The library's broad mission is focused on a number of priorities. First, it seeks to continue the task of cataloging and digitizing manuscript holdings in order to make them accessible via the Internet. Secondly, it will establish an advisory committee to identify and select a number of manuscripts of particular intellectual value, to make sure these are properly studied in their original Arabic as well as through English and French translations. Thirdly, the library will sponsor the publication of scholarly research based on its collections, the organization of cultural exchanges, workshops, symposia, exhibits and other professional activities and the production and dissemination of scholarship. Fourthly, the library will network with other private libraries and manuscript organizations in Mali, particularly the IHERI-AB. Lastly, it is considering the launch of a local radio station devoted to cultural programming, as a way to further promote the activities of the library and its peer institutions in the area and throughout the country.

SHAYKH AL-ARAWANĪ LIBRARY

The library of al-Qādī Muḥammad Maḥmūd b. Shaykh al-Arawanī originated in the eleventh/seventeenth century in the village of Arawān (Araouane), approximately 230 km north of Timbuktu and on the trail between the latter and the salt mines of Taoudenni (Tawdanni)

in northern Mali. Its founder, Muḥammad Maḥmūd, belonged to a family of scholars and jurists from whom he inherited a large amount of manuscripts. To these he added several works written or copied by himself in his capacity as a poet, scholar and *qāḍī*, particularly on jurisprudence, doctrine, history and logic, in addition to collections of poems, religious questions and correspondences.

The library was relocated on several occasions, first from Arawān to Timbuktu and then to Bamako, where it was moved a number of times since 1960 due to the political turmoil in which Shaykh Muḥammad Maḥmūd was involved. Finally, in 1972, the entire collection was shipped back to Timbuktu, where the owner was able to organize and expand his collection of manuscripts. After Shaykh Muḥammad Maḥmūd's death in 1973, the library passed to his son Adel Maḥmūd, who followed in his father's steps, cooperating with the Centre Ahmed Baba to locate and acquire additional manuscripts. In 1994 a large part of the original collection followed its owner to Mauritania, where he currently resides with his family, while the remainder of the collection stayed behind. Adel Maḥmūd, however, is planning to build a new library and bring all of his family's manuscripts under one roof in Timbuktu.

AḤMAD BŪLA'RĀF AL-TIKNI LIBRARY

The Būla'rāf library is an important repository comprising a large amount of manuscripts, printed books and historical documents. It dates from 1904, the year its founder arrived in Timbuktu.

Aḥmad Būla'rāf was born in 1884 in Guelmīm (Goulimine), in southern Morocco, and as he mentioned in one of his works:

Destiny brought me to Timbuktu. Before coming here I lived for some time in Shinqīti, where I had the opportunity to meet many of its scholars and '*ulamā*'. The truth is that I am no scholar, religious or otherwise, although I love culture and learned people. My sojourn in Timbuktu has been the longest and best known period of my life.

This statement is illustrative of the typical modesty of the '*ulamā*'. Despite his claim to the contrary, Būla'rāf was indeed a scholar who belonged to a family of scholars and savants. Blessed with intellectual faculties and financial means, he invested both in the effort to preserve and protect the written heritage of West Africa, to encourage and

support researchers and scholars, and to promote and disseminate their work. In addition to the large number of books he owned (on history and biography, Qur'anic sciences and *ḥadīth*), he collected works written by the 'ulamā' of Takrūr (including poetry), and wrote a few himself on subjects such as mortal sins (*al-kabā'ir*), genealogy, necromancy and Sufism.

He owned collections of poems and had a number of books printed at his own expenses in Tunisia and Egypt. These include *al-Wahāj*, *Naḥū al-Shaharaynī*, and *Nazmūl 'Ashmawī*, by Muḥammad Yaḥyā b. Salīm al-Walāti; *al-Hadāya wa al-Silāt fī Mubtilāt al-Ṣalāt*; *al-Mubāshir Sharḥ 'alā ibn 'Āshir*; *Mashrab zulāl*; *Manfa'atu al-Ikhwānī fī Shuwābil al-Iman*, by Aḥmad b. Būla'rāf; *Subūlu Sa'āda*; and *al-Abqarī fī Nazmi Saḥwī al-Akhdārī*, by Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ubba al-Mazmarī. Among the other works authored by Būla'rāf, it is worth mentioning *Sulam al-Bayān fī Ḥuriyat al-Sudān*, *Bahjāt at-ṭālib bi Nayl al-Mā'ārib* and *Izālat al-Rayb wa al-Shak wā al-Tarīt fī Zikr al-Mu'alifīn min 'ulamā' al-Takrūr wa al-Ṣaḥrā' wa Shinqīt*.

The only way to acquire manuscripts is by actively searching for them, and that is exactly what Būla'rāf did and how he managed to built his collection. He would send letters of inquiry concerning specific and rare manuscripts that he had read about, with the intention of buying or borrowing them to have them copied.³ For this purpose he employed a number of copyists, sending some of them on manuscript-searching and copying missions to villages and towns near and far. Table 3 lists some of the 'ulamā' who have worked copying or correcting manuscripts for Būla'rāf, and the scripts for which they were particularly known.

Thanks to this entrepreneurial approach, Būla'rāf established good working relations with other manuscript owners, libraries and publishers both in Mali and abroad, exchanging information about newly-discovered manuscripts, collections and potential caches (see Table 4).

³ On Aḥmad Būla'rāf and his bibliophilic correspondence, including his exchanges with his two bookseller brothers based in Gao and Bourem, see Abdelouahed Akmir, "Les activités commerciales et culturelles des marocains de Tombouctou durant la première moitié du vingtième siècle selon les manuscrits," in *Les bibliothèques du désert. Recherches et études sur un millénaire d'écrits*, ed. Attilio Gaudio (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2002), 171–85.

Table 3. Copyists employed by Būla' rāf

Copyist	Script
Yaḥyā b. Khatar al-Arawanī	Maghribi
Muḥammad Ataher b. Shirfi b. Bābā Shirfi	Saharawi (Saharan)
'Abd ar-Raḥmān Sadi Idjé	Sudani
Al-Marwan b. Aḥmad	Saharawi
Muḥammad al-Amīn b. Barīk	Saharawi
Jaduna b. al-Murābiṭ	Saharawi
Muḥammad b. al-Ḥabīb al-Nu'mān	Sudani
'Isā b. Muḥammad al-Mawlūd al-Qādī (Arawān family)	Suqī
Muḥammad 'Abdullāh (son of the founder)	Maghribi
Sīdī as-Shaykh al-Fulāni	Sudani
'Abdullāh b. 'Umar	Sudani

Source: Abdel Kader Haïdara

Table 4. Libraries in contact with Aḥmad Būla' rāf

Country	Town/Region	Library
Mali	Bamako	Aḥmad al-Qāri Muḥammad al-'Irāqī
	Boû Djébéha	Zeinia
	Gao	Kala Souk
	Mourdja (Nara district)	Muḥammad b. 'Umar al-Murji'
	Timbuktu	Aḥmad Bābā b. Abi'l 'Abbās al-Ḥassānī Sankoré Family Muḥammad Maḥmūd b. Shaykh Arawanī Mamma Haïdara Binta Gongo Family Goundame Family Touka Bango Family Imbounan Family Kunta Family Sīdī 'Alī Family Kal Owza Centre Ahmad Baba

Table 4. (*cont.*)

Country	Town/Region	Library
Mauritania	Walāta (Oualata)	Muḥammad Yahyā b. Salīm al-Walātī Al-Marwān b. Aḥmad al-Walātī Muḥammad al-Amīn b. Barīk
Niger	Boutilimit Ḥawd (Hodh) region Niamey	Muḥammad al-Amīn b. Barīk Shaykh at-Turād Université Abdou Moumouni, Institut de Recherche en Sciences Humaines (IRSH), Département des manuscrits arabes et ajamis
Nigeria	Sokoto	ʿAbdu Ṣamad Muḥammad b. Maḥjūb al-Marakuchi
Algeria		Imprimerie Thaʿālibi Rodoussi Qādūr b. Murād Turki Library
Morocco	Fez	Aḥmad b. Abdul Karīm al-Qādirī Library
Tunisia		al-Manār Library Atiq al-ʿAssalī Library Nūri b. Muḥammad Nūri Islamic Library
Lebanon	Beirut	Shazeli al-Zawq Library Tawfiq Kabouch Library Sader Sulaymān b. Ibrāhīm Sader Library
Egypt	Cairo	Zaydān Public Library

Source: Abdel Kader Haïdara

Today the library is located in the Badjindé neighborhood of Timbuktu, east of the great market and very close to it. The building has a number of rooms used for specific purposes such as conservation, binding, cataloging and reading. Two separate rooms are used for copying manuscripts and for correcting scribal errors, while the preparation of writing paper, through lining and smoothing of sheets, took place in a third one. The exact number of holdings is unknown,

but an inventory made in 1945 by Būla'raf himself lists 2076 manuscripts and 6039 printed books.

After Būla'raf's death in 1955, his eldest son Muḥammad 'Abdullāh (1907–93) took over the library and its numerous activities. A scholar, author and copyist himself, he continued in his father's steps until the great drought of 1973, which devastated many West African communities and the Timbuktu region in particular, jeopardizing and diverting resources. This coincided with the establishment of a manuscript center in Niamey, funded by UNESCO and supported by Boubou Hama, who at the time was President of the National Assembly of Niger. The new center started prospecting in Mali for the acquisition of valuable manuscripts, and soon they contacted Muḥammad 'Abdullāh who eventually agreed to sell a large part of his collection to them. The rest remained in Timbuktu, where it was eventually deposited at the newly-created CEDRAB. Unfortunately, at this time the library's scribal atelier, which had been responsible for the production and reproduction of manuscripts, ceased its activities entirely.

The situation further deteriorated after Muḥammad 'Abdullāh's death in 1993, resulting in the loss or dispersion of more material. This notwithstanding, the library still retains a remarkable number of manuscripts and printed books, and the founder's grandchildren, led by Al-Ṭayyib Būla'raf (b. 1942), are determined to bring it back to its former and prestigious standing. Unfortunately, they do not have the means to undertake any renovation or conservation projects, especially after recent damage caused by rain, dust, insects and other environmental hazards. However, the Būla'raf family is currently trying to locate and gather dispersed manuscripts, restore those that have been damaged, and implement basic preservation measures with a view to a more substantial and comprehensive approach in the future.

AL-ḤASSĀNĪ LIBRARY

The library was founded at the end of the thirteenth/nineteenth century by Aḥmad Bābā b. Abi'l 'Abbās, the first *qāḍī* appointed by the French colonial authorities after they took control of Timbuktu in 1893. Belonging to a family of scholars, savants and substance, he played an important role in the acquisition of manuscripts from various parts of the country, thus adding to the collection he inherited

from his forefathers. Being an author, poet and *muftī* himself, he left a number of works including a collection of responses to religious questions, historical documents, poems and correspondence.

After his death in 1930, his son al-Qāḍī Muḥammad al-Amin took over the responsibility of the library. A great scholar himself, he continued his father's work, adding manuscripts to the collection until his disappearance in 1982. He was succeeded first by al-Qāḍī 'Umar Shirfī, who contributed legal and historical works and collaborated with many local manuscript libraries, including the Centre Ahmed Baba, and then by his brother, al-Qāḍī Zubayr. Under this last custodian, the library entered a period of inactivity and decline that lasted until Zubayr's death in 1994, and resulted in significant losses and the general deterioration of the collection.

In 2000 the founder's grandchildren, concerned about the conditions of the remaining manuscripts and historical documents, took a few initial steps to protect and preserve them. They started compiling an inventory of the approximately 2000 manuscripts still in their hands, and volunteered to store them in one of their houses. These first efforts were boosted by funding provided by SAVAMA-DCI in 2007, which made it possible to renovate the building in which the manuscripts were stored and to undertake their cataloging. The library is currently managed by Bābā Sīdī Haïdara, has a manuscript room, a reading room and an administrative office, and is open to researchers, students and the general public.

FONDO KATI

One of the oldest manuscript libraries in the area, it dates from the eighth/fourteenth century and survived various relocations and dispersions. After the death of its founder, Maḥmūd Ka'ti, his oldest son Ismā'īl Ka'ti continued collecting manuscripts from Djenné, Tindirma, Kurshamba, Goundame and Timbuktu. Today the library is administered by one of his descendents, the scholar Ismael Diadié Haïdara. Some of the manuscripts in the Fondo Kati have marginal notes stating that the library was entrusted as an endowment (*waqf*) to the grandchildren of the founder. Among them, 'Alī Gao's son played a particularly critical role as custodian, but after his death it was dispersed and some of the manuscripts turned up in various places. Things remained like this until Ismael Diadié Haïdara, realizing the

importance of this patrimony, initiated efforts to locate dispersed manuscripts and rebuild the collection. Relying upon documentary sources and the oral tradition, he spent several years visiting towns and villages in the Niger Bend, looking for lost and scattered manuscripts, until he managed to locate and recover more than seven thousand items, particularly from the Timbuktu, Goundame and Kurshamba areas, all of which have since been inventoried. The reconstituted library includes many works by *'ulamā'* from Spain, the Maghreb and Sudan, in addition to important historical documents. The oldest manuscript is a Qur'ān copied on parchment in Ceuta in 599/1202–3.

Since the founder's family is originally from Toledo, the Spanish government agreed to finance the building of a research and conservation facility, which was inaugurated in 2003 by the Malian Ministers of Culture and Education. The new building is open to researchers and students, and has rooms for the storage and preservation of both manuscripts and printed books, as well as a reading room and an exhibition space. The mission of the Fondo Kati is first and foremost to recover all the manuscripts collected by the Ka'ti family first in Spain and then in Timbuktu, to ensure their conservation and cataloging, and to sponsor the translation of important works in various languages.

AL-IMĀM AL-ŞUYŪTĪ LIBRARY

In the late twelfth/eighteenth century, the founder of this library, al-Ḥājj Muḥammad al-Irāqī, left his own country to spread the word of the Prophet Muḥammad and make converts in the Bilād al-Sūdān, where he engaged in the dissemination of the Arabic language and Islamic learning. Thanks to the accounts of Muslim travellers such as Ibn Battuta, Timbuktu's renown as a center of learning and intellectual production had reached the Arabian Peninsula and the Near East. By this time the commerce of manuscripts had become profitable and al-Irāqī, aware of this, carried a good supply along to finance his trip.

After Egypt, the Sudan and Morocco, he reached Timbuktu, then part of the Fulani Empire. Although past its golden age, the town maintained a dynamic intellectual tradition in the field of Islamic sciences. This activity captivated the traveller, who in turn impressed his hosts with his knowledge of Qur'ānic sciences and his perfect mastery of Islamic traditions. As a result, the Fulani rulers offered him assistance and protection, and al-Irāqī formed an alliance with them

by marrying a granddaughter of the great religious leader Muḥammad Gurḏo. Soon he became a member of Timbuktu's scholarly circles, and the Qur'ānic school he started eventually attracted hundreds of students who helped him copy the manuscripts he received from the Maghrib and the Middle East. Thus al-Irāqī became an undisputed religious authority, who was called upon to authenticate *ḥadīths* as well as other doctrinal texts. In time he built a collection of several thousand volumes, which he would lend willingly to students and scholars alike.

After al-Irāqī's death, his children followed in his scholarly steps and became renowned jurists themselves. Thanks to their father's contacts, they continued importing and copying manuscripts, activities they pursued in total respect of their father's sacrosanct dictate to "never sell a manuscript, but always make it available to those who want to learn." It was also decided that the responsibility of the library would always go to the eldest male descendant.

The reputation of the family grew, with al-Irāqī's descendants serving as imams of the Djinguereber mosque (Timbuktu's great mosque) and prominent jurists. Some went to study abroad and one of them, after a sojourn in Egypt, became known as Asyuti (i.e., from Asyut). This in time, and as a result of linguistic manipulation, became Al-Suyūṭī (or Essayouti), a name that also reflects the owner's Mālikī connections.

'Abd ar-Raḥmān b. al-Suyūṭī, grandfather of the current curator and a famous scholar, was killed in 1864 during the conquest of Timbuktu by the troops of 'Umar Tall, who were also responsible for the looting of the family library. His son, Sīdī Muḥammad, was able to recover and preserve what was left behind by the attackers, and later on, while studying at the al-Azhar university in Cairo, even managed to rebuild the collection by acquiring items that had been stolen or destroyed. His many disciples further helped him copy a great number of manuscripts, and his financial means allowed him to acquire more material during trips to Arabia, Egypt and Morocco.

At the beginning of the colonial period, Sīdī Muḥammad's travels abroad, combined with his erudition and open-mindedness, raised the suspicions of the French authorities.⁴ Moreover, he opened the first

⁴ Paul Marty, *Études sur l'Islam et les tribus du Soudan* (Paris: Leroux, 1920), 2:15–7.

Franco-Arabic school in the area and was one of its teachers. The Governor of French Sudan, François Clozel, realizing the importance of Sīdī Muḥammad's role and library, managed to secure the original manuscript of Maḥmūd Ka'tī's *Ta'rikh al-fattāsh*, an important source for the study of the history of Western Sudan.

Unfortunately, the manuscript collection was depleted rather than expanded. Over the years several volumes were stolen or damaged beyond repair, and others were directly or indirectly acquired by the Centre Ahmed Baba. Facing this dismal situation, the family elders resorted to drastic measures and locked the manuscripts away, keeping them concealed from most people (including some family members), but the collection was held in such poor conditions that eventually this measure resulted in further damage and loss.

Only at the beginning of the twenty-first century, thanks to the work of organizations such as SAVAMA-DCI, library owners started to realize the importance of their manuscript holdings, as well as the risks of protecting them without taking proper preservation measures. In 2001, relocating from one building to another, the Al-Suyūti family saw the damages they had caused to their manuscripts by keeping them locked away. They applied for help from the U.S. Embassy in Bamako and the ambassador, following a visit to Timbuktu, provided funds to build a library and supply it with water and electricity. The new curator, 'Abd ar-Raḥmān b. al-Suyūti (Abderrahman Essayouti), grandson of Sīdī Muḥammad, joined the SAVAMA-DCI and, through the association's contacts, obtained funds to renovate the library, make an inventory of its manuscripts and catalog 1500 out of a total of almost eight thousand.

The collection includes copies and commentaries of the Qur'ān, treatises on Islamic law, traditions of the Prophet, astrology and astronomy, as well as works of history, sociology, poetry and grammar. One of the oldest and most precious items is a gilded Qur'ān donated by a Moroccan sultan to the Imām Al-Suyūti at the end of the twelfth/ eighteenth century. It is worth mentioning that the manuscripts in this and other local collections present serious problems of interpretation to researchers with a limited knowledge of classical Arabic, especially in a country such as Mali, where French is the official language. Starting in 2007, and through the SAVAMA-DCI, the library was the recipient of aid from the Ford Foundation and the American Embassy in Mali, as well as from the Programme de soutien aux initiatives culturelles (PSIC) of the Malian Ministry of Culture.

The library is located in front of the great mosque of Timbuktu, and on the main sight-seeing circuit. It is open to the public and visited regularly by tourists, researchers and students. It has a manuscript room, a reading room, an exhibition room (with permanent displays), a conservation room, a meeting room, a director's office and an Internet café.

ZEINIA LIBRARY

Located in the village of Boû Djébéha, about 250 kilometers north of Timbuktu and 100 southeast of Arawān, the Zeinia library was established in 1175/1761–2 by the founder of the village, Ṭālib Sīdī Aḥmad b. al-Bashīr Sūqī al-Adawī, a great scholar and holy man who authored several works, compiled religious opinions, left a large correspondence and was also a renowned copyist.

After his death, the library passed to his son Ibrāhīm, an accomplished scholar himself, who copied a large number of manuscripts and did not hesitate to spend large sums of money to expand the collection. Shaykh Baye b. Shaykh Zeini, a renowned scholar and *qāḍī* who is currently in charge of the library, tells how Ibrāhīm, on his way back from Taoudenni with a load of salt bars and other merchandise, met a caravan from Morocco loaded with precious manuscripts. When he offered to buy some of the manuscripts, the caravan leaders asked for all his merchandise plus the camels. He accepted and was left in the middle of the desert without even the means to get back to his village. Fortunately, as soon as the news of this unusual transaction reached his pupils they went looking for him and brought him back with his precious literary goods. Thus one of the largest libraries in the area was founded.

During Ibrāhīm's life, Boû Djébéha was attacked by an infamous brigand named Achakarna, who plundered the library and burned manuscripts in the local mosque. After the drought of 1323/1905, the village was abandoned by its inhabitants, and when they returned a number of years later, they found the library in critical condition. The roof had collapsed, the walls were barely standing and the manuscripts, needless to say, were seriously damaged and fast deteriorating.

It was not until the founder's grandson, Shaykh Zeini b. 'Abdul Azīz, was old enough to take over the responsibility of the library that the situation started to improve. A notable scholar and 'ālim belonging to

the Qādiriyya Sufi order, he wrote many works, including *fatwas*, and left a voluminous body of correspondence, in addition to acquiring more manuscripts for the library. After his death in 1936, Shaykh Zeini was succeeded by his son, Shaykh Bay Zeini, a scholar and author who fortunately is aware of the need to protect and preserve his family library. This consists of about eleven hundred manuscripts and a large number of printed books, most of them in poor condition and in need of urgent care. However, because of the owner's lack of resources, he was unable to ensure the proper storage, let alone restoration and cataloging of his important collection.

In 2005–06 the World Islamic Call Society (WISC), through the SAVAMA-DCI, provided funds to build a library. Once completed, the new facility will contain storage and reading rooms, and it will be open to researchers and the general public. In 2003, long before this building was planned, I signed a contract with the Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation for the cataloging of the manuscripts in the collection. Nevertheless, the library is in need of additional support for the conservation, restoration and protection of its manuscripts since, being in a Saharan environment, they are exposed to harsher environmental conditions than those preserved in Timbuktu.

LIBRARY OF MUḤAMMAD MAḤMŪD, IMĀM OF THE BER MOSQUE

This library originated in the area surrounding Ber, a village some 50 kilometers east of Timbuktu, between the wells of Agozmi, Inno Kandar and Inistlane, and it was moved to Ber in 1950. The founder, Muḥammad Maḥmūd, was a copyist and a bibliophile who managed to build a large collection of manuscripts through purchases, gifts, inheritance, or scribal work. In 1988 his son, Fida Muḥammad Maḥmūd, gathered all the manuscripts together, put them in boxes and compiled an inventory. In 1992 he transferred them to wooden and steel trunks, in order to better protect them from the rain, and six years later applied for a permission to establish a manuscript center. His request was approved by the Direction régionale de la culture of Timbuktu (the local Department of Cultural Affairs) in 1999, and the new “Centre des sciences islamiques et des manuscrits historiques Fida Muḥammad Maḥmūd” appointed an administrative body, but was not able to build an adequate structure for lack of funding. In 2007 the SAVAMA-DCI provided financial assistance to Fida

Muḥammad Maḥmūd to build the library, which today consists of a manuscript room, a reading room and the director's office. The center also benefited from a plot of land offered by the mayor of Ber. The collection contains about 2600 manuscripts and a large number of printed books, although the lack of an inventory or catalog makes its access and use problematic.

THE DISAPPEARANCE AND REAPPEARANCE OF MALIAN MANUSCRIPTS

This overview of major private libraries in Timbuktu and surrounding areas is meant to give an idea of the large amount of manuscripts that have been collected and preserved in the region over the past five centuries at least, in spite of the many adversities faced by their owners. The following section focuses on the dangers these collections have been exposed to, not because of climate or environment-related events, but as a consequence of human intervention, especially since colonial times.

There is no doubt that, in the past, manuscripts were hidden away for certain periods of time. This explains why most European travelers who visited the Niger River Bend, during the colonial period and soon after, did not report the existence of manuscript libraries in the area. It is not that they failed to notice or pay attention to them, but simply that their owners carefully kept them out of European sight. This precaution was partly responsible for the long-held belief that Africa lacked a written history and literary culture – a misperception that was perpetrated for decades in Western schools and universities. Yet the accounts of travellers who visited the region before colonial times mention both manuscripts and their importance as intellectual resources and articles of trade. The best known examples include Ibn Battuta, Al-Ḥasan Al-Wazzānī (commonly known as Leo Africanus) and the German explorer Heinrich Barth, who were in Timbuktu in the 1340s, 1510s and 1853–55, respectively.

It is worth mentioning the factors that caused the disappearance of manuscripts at a certain time and their reappearance later. First and foremost were the tensions and conflicts between Muslim scholars and colonial authorities, who soon after their arrival started to seize manuscripts and take them to France. For example, the library of the illustrious scholar Shaykh ʿUmar Tall (d. 1865) was taken by the French after the capture of Ségou and transferred to Paris, where it

now forms the Fonds Archinard at the Bibliothèque nationale.⁵ Something similar happened to the libraries of Shaykh Ḥamaullāh (1883–1943), Shaykh Aḥmadu Bamba (c. 1850–1927) and several other Muslim scholars and leaders from the same area.

To prevent further expropriations and thefts, West African scholars started to hide their manuscripts or conceal their repositories. Some buried them underground in leather bags, while others took them to far away locations in the desert, stored them away in abandoned caves, or simply walled off the doors of their libraries. In this way, manuscripts remained hidden for a century or longer, until after the independence (1960), when people started to revisit and reopen their manuscript caches, although cautiously at first, and with some apprehension for what might happen to them. The situation changed towards the end of the decade, after UNESCO organized an international conference in Timbuktu, to discuss ways to protect and preserve African cultural heritage, and manuscripts became officially part of this patrimony and its related discourse. One of the outcomes of this groundbreaking event was the decision to create a number of cultural heritage centers in the region, each one devoted to the preservation of a specific aspect and related materials and documents. Thus, the Institut fondamental de l'Afrique Noire (IFAN) in Dakar was charged to collect historical objects and documents; a second center, in Niamey, focused on research and the oral tradition; and a third one, in Timbuktu, served as a repository of ancient manuscripts. The latter opened officially in 1973 and was named after the great tenth/sixteenth-century scholar Aḥmad Bābā al-Timbuktī.

From then on, the Centre de documentation et de recherches Ahmed Baba (CEDRAB, now IHERI-AB) has been actively seeking and collecting manuscripts in the Niger River Bend region and beyond, while promoting its role in the protection and preservation of this cultural heritage. Moreover, the CEDRAB has campaigned among manuscript owners, encouraging them to open up their caches and let the Centre hold and preserve their manuscripts, explaining that the only purpose of collecting them was to prevent further deterioration, damage or theft, and assuring that they would retain ownership of their manuscripts and continue to be able to access them for research

⁵ See Nouredine Ghali, Sidi Mohamed Mahibou, and Louis Brenner, *Inventaire de la Bibliothèque 'Umarienne de Ségou* (Paris: CNRS, 1985).

or study. As a result of these efforts, which included consecutive visits to owners and their families, the latter started to dig up their manuscripts and to open the walls they had built to conceal their libraries.

Malian authorities played an important role in this process, both in the country and abroad, in the former case to convince manuscript owners to give up their holdings, and in the latter to encourage private and public collections in Europe to return manuscripts that had been taken away from Mali. As part of this initiative, in the early 1980s former Malian president Alpha Oumar Konaré (who was Minister of Culture at the time) succeeded in bringing back a number of manuscripts from France. He also secured a microfilm of the Fonds Archinard, which was sent to the National Museum in Bamako because back then Timbuktu did not have a place to preserve or view material in microfilm format. (Unfortunately, today this copy appears to be in poor condition.) Former-president Konaré further negotiated the purchase of manuscripts with a member of the Archinard family, paying over seven million francs for about forty of them, which he brought back to Timbuktu and the CEDRAB. Appeals of this kind followed afterwards, and more negotiations were conducted although without tangible results. Still, the effort continues both at the local and the national level.

The majority of Malian manuscripts, however, were collected after 1991, when a democratically-elected government restored a number of rights that citizens had been denied for a long time, such as the right to form associations, private foundations and other types of organizations. Manuscript owners took this opportunity to create their own organization, named *Sauvegarde et Valorisation des Manuscrits pour la Défense de la Culture Islamique*, or SAVAMA-DCI. Soon a new campaign was launched to highlight the cultural and intellectual value of their manuscripts, and to convince skeptical owners of the urgent need to preserve them for future generations.

With funds obtained from the Mellon Foundation in 1999, the Mamma Haïdara library was the first private manuscript library to open in Timbuktu (or, for that matter, in Africa). Several others followed in subsequent years, both in the same town and elsewhere. Similarly, the Mellon Foundation was the first non-profit organization in the world to sponsor a project of this kind, and we can only hope that other foundations, cultural heritage organizations and academic institutions will follow this enlightened example. On their part, library owners and other custodians of the intellectual traditions of Timbuktu

are greatly indebted to the organizations and the individuals who assisted in the preservation, cataloging and dissemination of their manuscripts, thus ensuring the long-term conservation of this rich cultural heritage, as well as the cultural survival of the communities and the people of this part of Africa and the Islamic world as a whole.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES
FOR THE PRESERVATION AND VALORIZATION OF
MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS IN MOROCCO

Said Ennahid

The use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) constitutes the backbone of *e-Maroc 2010*, a national strategy championed by the Moroccan Ministère des Affaires Economiques et Générales (Département de la Poste, des Télécommunications et des Technologies de l'Information, SEPTI) to build a knowledge economy, reduce the digital divide and carve out a place for Morocco in the information society.¹ In recent years, several sectors in Morocco have integrated the use of ICT as a key component in their strategic agendas (e.g., e-gov., e-learning, e-commerce, etc.). However, the use of ICT for the preservation of manuscript collections was not on the *e-Maroc 2010* agenda. And today, except for a few on-line portals of key content holders such as the Bibliothèque nationale du royaume du Maroc (BNRM) and the Qarawiyyin Library in Fez (hosted by the Web site of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs), and scattered personal Web pages and blogs, Moroccan manuscript collections are still far from crossing the digital divide.²

This chapter will start with a review of major Moroccan manuscript collections and their contents, followed by a historical outline of the book trade in Morocco and the origin and evolution of the Maghribi script. It will continue with a critical assessment of recent ICT initiatives, both institutional and individual, for the preservation and valorization of manuscript collections in Morocco, with a special emphasis on The Manuscript Treasures in the Kingdom of Morocco Project

¹ For more details on *e-Maroc 2010 National Strategy*, visit <<http://www.septi.gov.ma>> (accessed 31 January 2009).

² Although not specifically designed for dealing with documentary heritage, the Strabon Project (Multilingual and Multimedia Information System for The Euro-Mediterranean Cultural Heritage and Tourism) is one of the highlights of international partnerships between the Ministry of Cultural Affairs and the Ministry of Tourism in Morocco and the EUMEDIS Initiative (a European program to contribute to building an Information Society).

(*Dhakhā'ir al-makhṭūṭāt bi al-mamlaka al-maghribiyya*), to date the most important ICT-related initiative of this kind in Morocco. Championed by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs and sponsored by UNESCO-Rabat Office, it targeted the selective digitization and complete cataloging of ancient manuscript collections hosted at three heritage libraries (*bibliothèques patrimoniales*): the Qarawiyyin Library in Fez, the Ibn Yūsuf Library in Marrakech, and the Library of the Great Mosque of Meknès. The chapter will conclude with a brief discussion of most recent research in automatic text transcription, indexing, searching and retrieval of Arabic historical manuscripts, followed by some concluding remarks and recommendations.

MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS IN MOROCCO IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The corpus of Moroccan manuscripts is estimated at more than 80,000 titles and 200,000 volumes³ held at a number of public and private libraries—mostly religious institutions and *zawāyā*.⁴ These collections are invaluable both as repositories of human knowledge and memory and for their aesthetic value in terms of calligraphy, illumination, iconography and craftsmanship. Several medieval authors position Morocco as an important center in the Muslim West (*al-Gharb al-Islāmī*) for manuscript production, illumination, binding and exchange. However, except for a few scattered publications, a history of North African Arabic calligraphy (*al-khaṭṭ al-maghribī*) remains to be written. By providing the tools for making these collections readily accessible to the scholarly community in the Maghrib and beyond, ICT will make possible the study of North African scripts within the broader context of Arabic calligraphy and the Islamic arts of the book in general.

The two main manuscript collections in Morocco are hosted at the National Library of Morocco (Bibliothèque nationale du royaume du Maroc, or BNRM, formerly General Library and Archive) in Rabat (12,140 titles), and the Qarawiyyin Library in Fez (5,600 titles, 3,157

³ Based on official figures provided by the BNRM.

⁴ For example, the libraries of the *Zāwiyya* of Tamgrūt and the *Zāwiyya* of Sidi Ḥamza in south-eastern Morocco, both administered by the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs. For further details, see Latifa Benjelloun-Laroui, *Les Bibliothèques au Maroc* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1990), 280–5; 288–95.

of which in several volumes).⁵ These collections originated mostly from *waqf* (pious endowments)⁶ and state appropriation of private collections (e.g., 1,311 and 3,371 titles from the al-Glāwī and al-Kattānī collections respectively).⁷ They are written almost entirely in Arabic and in various scripts; Amazigh (Berber) manuscripts in Arabic script and Hebrew manuscripts constitute less than one percent of the total collections.⁸ In terms of content, these manuscripts cover a wide range of disciplines including sacred (i.e., Qur'anic) texts, Islamic religious sciences (exegesis of the Qur'an, Traditions of the Prophet Muḥammad, and jurisprudence), Arabic grammar and lexicography, Arabic poetry, hagiography and genealogy, Islamic theology and mysticism, philosophy and logic, historiography, medicine, astronomy and astrology, mathematics, agriculture and natural sciences. Most of these manuscripts are several centuries old and their content is now in the public domain. One of the earliest inventories of manuscript collections in Morocco is the *Catalogue des manuscrits arabes de deux bibliothèques de Fès* (al-Qarawīyyin and al-Raṣīf), compiled in 1883 by René Basset. Many other catalogs, inventories and indexes, in Arabic as well as in French, were published since then.⁹

Most manuscripts in Morocco are written on paper produced locally and, to a lesser extent, imported from Europe.¹⁰ Only two to three percent of those at the BNRM are on parchment (*raqq* or *riqq*), and most of them are Qur'anic texts. Until the end of the 10th century, however,

⁵ Benjelloun-Laroui, *Bibliothèques au Maroc*, 150, 232 (note 166).

⁶ Ahmed-Chouqui Binebine, *Histoire des bibliothèques au Maroc* (Rabat: Faculté des lettres et des sciences humaines, 1992), 155–77.

⁷ *Mukhtārāt min makhtūṭāt al-maktaba al-waṭaniyya lil al-Mamlaka al-Maghribiyya* (Selection of Manuscripts at BNRM), 1 Pilot CD-ROM, BNRM, Rabat, 2006.

⁸ For Amazigh manuscripts in Arabic script, see Ali Amahan, “Notes bibliographiques sur les manuscrits en langue tamazight écrits en caractères arabes,” in *Le manuscrit arabe et la codicologie*, ed. A.-Ch. Binebine (Rabat: Faculté des lettres et des sciences humaines: Colloques et séminaires, vol. 33, 1994).

⁹ For example, *Fihris al-makhtūṭāt al-‘arabiyya al-mahfūza fī al-khizāna al-‘amma bi al-ribāṭ* (Catalog of Arabic Manuscripts Preserved at the General Library in Rabat), 6 vols. (Rabat: BNRM, 1997–2001); see also ‘Abd al-Salām al-Barrāq, *Fihris al-makhtūṭāt al-mahfūza fī khizānat al-jāmi‘ al-kabīr bi mahnās* (Rabat: Wizārat al-Thaqāfa, 2004), and Muḥammad al-Manūnī, *Dalīl makhtūṭāt dar al-kutub al-nāṣiriyya bi tamgrūt* (Rabat: Wizārat al-Awqāf wa al-Shuūn al-Islāmiyya, 1985). For earlier catalogs and indexes, see Benjelloun-Laroui, *Bibliothèques au Maroc*, 411–3, and Binebine, *Histoire des bibliothèques au Maroc*, 250–2.

¹⁰ Chiefly from Xātiva (formerly Jativa, from the Arabic *Shāṭiba*), in the province of Valencia, eastern Spain, which was a major paper manufacturing center since the twelfth century C.E.

parchment remained the support of writing *par excellence*, especially for *muṣḥafs*. The first evidence of a paper (*kāghad* or *kāghid*) industry in Morocco dates to the Almoravid period (1073–1147 C.E.), when Fez had no less than 104 paper-mills. By the Almohad period (1130–1276 C.E.), their number had increased four times. Furthermore, Fez had a special quarter for papermakers (*kaghghādīn*), located near the river (*Wādī al-Zaytūn*) so that water energy could be used to operate paper mills, and special quarters for bookbinders/booksellers (*warrāqīn*) and parchmenters (*raqqāqīn*) near the Qarawiyyin mosque.¹¹ In Marrakech, the booksellers' quarter gave its name to the congregational mosque of the city (*Jāmi' al-Kutubiyya*), as attested by Leo Africanus (al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-Wazzān al-Fāsī): "Sous le portique de ce temple [*Jāmi' al-Kutubiyya*], il y avait autrefois une centaine de boutiques de libraires, mais maintenant il n'y en a plus une seule."¹²

This booksellers' quarter dates to the Almohad period and has been identified archaeologically.¹³ In another passage, Leo Africanus states that Maghribi manuscripts were prized merchandise in Timbuktu markets: "On vend aussi beaucoup de livres mansucrits qui viennent de Berbérie. On tire plus de bénéfice de cette vente que de tout le reste des marchandises."¹⁴ In addition to paper production, bookbinding (*al-Tasfīr*) was a well established and highly specialized profession, as attested by two treatises, Bakr al-Ishbilī's *Kitāb al-taysīr fī ṣinā'at al-tasfīr*, compiled during the Almohad Period and consisting of twenty chapters on bookbinding and manuscript restoration,¹⁵ and the *Ṣinā'at tasfīr al-kutub wa ḥall al-dhahab*,¹⁶ written by Abū al-Abbās Aḥmed b. Muḥammad al-Sufyānī in 1619 C.E.,

¹¹ 'Alī Ibn Abī Zar' al-Fāsī, *Rawḍ El-Qirtās* (Rabat: Imprimerie Royale, 1999), 59; cited also in al-Manūnī, *Tārīkh al-wirāqa al-maghribiyya: Ṣinā'at al-makhtūṭ al-maghribī min al-'aṣr al-wasīṭ ila al-fatra al-mu'āsira* (Rabat: Kulliyat al-Ādāb wal Ulūm al-Insāniyya, Silsilat Buhūt wa Dirāsāt, 1991), 2:33. Elsewhere, Ibn Abī Zar' al-Fāsī mentioned 472 mills without any specifications to their link to paper factories (*Rawḍ El-Qirtās*, 57). Cf. Bloom (quoting the same source): "by the end of the twelfth century ... the city of Fez, in Morocco, had 472 papermills." Jonathan Bloom, *Paper before Print: The History and Impact of Paper in the Islamic World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 86.

¹² Leo Africanus, *Description de l'Afrique* (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1981), 1: 101–2.

¹³ Gaston Deverdun, *Marrakech, des origines à 1912*, vol. 1 (Rabat: Editions Techniques Nord-Africaines, 1959), 178.

¹⁴ Leo Africanus, *Description de l'Afrique*, 1: 468–9.

¹⁵ Bakr al-Ishbilī, *Kitāb al-taysīr fī ṣinā'at al-tasfīr*, annotated by A. Gannun, in *Ṣaḥīfat Ma'had al-Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyya fī Madrid*, vols. 7–8 (Madrid 1959–60).

¹⁶ al-Sufyānī, Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad, *Ṣinā'at tasfīr al-kutub wa ḥall al-dhahab* (Art de la reliure et de la dorure), ed. P. Ricard. 2nd ed. (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1925).

under the Sa'adians. From the mid-19th century on, when paper production in Fez, and most likely elsewhere in Morocco, ceased almost completely, manuscripts were made using European paper.¹⁷

Most manuscript collections in Morocco were penned in Maghribi script (*al-khaṭṭ al-maghribī*).¹⁸ This is a script that Moroccan scribes, copyists and calligraphers must have developed from an eastern style called Kufic (*al-khaṭṭ al-kūfī*, or angular scrip), which was introduced to the Maghrib by the Arabs. What remains unclear is when and how the transition from *tifinagh*, the local script of the indigenous populations of North Africa (Berbers or Amazigh), to Arabic occurred.¹⁹ Numismatic research provides evidence of Kufic epigraphy on dirhams (silver coinage) minted during the Idrisid period (789–974 C.E.). The Kufic script used in minting these coins only rarely uses diacritical marks. The oldest were struck in the cities of Tudgha and Walilā (Volubilis) under the founder of the dynasty Idrīs I (789–91 C.E.).²⁰ In the course of time, the Maghribi script became very distinct from eastern Kufic and more so from *naskhī* (cursive script) by its

swooping tails, flat diacritical marks, unusual pointing for *fā'* [a single dot below the letter] and *qāf* [a single dot above the letter], and typical letter shapes such as *alif* with a club foot, flat *sad*, *kāf* with a diagonal bar, and *dāl* like pursed lips. Letters are set on a flat baseline, and the tails regularly descend to the line below. The strokes are exaggerated and attenuated.²¹

¹⁷ See al-Manūnī, *Ta'rikh al-wirāqa*, 21, 33–4, 232; Binebine, *Histoire des bibliothèques au Maroc*, 188–91.

¹⁸ For an early study of maghribi script, see Octave Houdas, "Essai sur l'écriture maghrébine," in *Nouveaux mélanges orientaux* (Publications de l'École des langues vivantes orientales, IIe série, vol. XIX) (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1886). For more recent discussions, see Binebine, *Histoire des bibliothèques au Maroc*, 184–8, Blair *Islamic Calligraphy*, 221–8, 392–9, 566–71, and François Déroche, "O. Houdas et les écritures maghrébines," in *Le manuscrit arabe et la codicologie*, ed. A.-Ch. Binebine (Rabat: Faculté des lettres et des sciences humaines: Colloques et séminaires, vol. 33, 1994), 75–81.

¹⁹ See Ahmed Skounti, Abdelkhalek Lemjidi, and El Mustapha Nami, *Tirra: aux origines de l'écriture au Maroc* (Rabat: Institut royal de la culture amazighe, 2003), 27–8.

²⁰ For a detailed list of the kufic characters used in Idrisid coinage, see Daniel Eustache, *Corpus des dirhams Idrissites et contemporains: Etudes sur la numismatique et l'histoire monétaire du Maroc I* (Rabat: Banque du Maroc, 1970–71), 87–8; for an archaeological discussion of the spatial distribution of Idrisid mints, see Said Ennahid, *Political Economy and Settlement Systems of Medieval Northern Morocco: An Archaeological-Historical Approach*, British Archaeological Reports, International Series No. S1059 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2002), 44–6.

²¹ Sheila Blair, *Islamic Calligraphy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 567.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ وَالصَّالَاتِ حَقًّا ①
 فَالزَّجْرَاتِ زَجْرًا ② وَالتَّلَاتِ عِدْرًا ③ اِر
 إِلْفِكُمْ لَوْحًا ④ رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا
 وَرَبُّ الْمَشْرِقِ ⑤ إِنَّا زَيْنَا السَّمَاءِ الدُّنْيَا بِزِينَةِ
 الْكَوَاكِبِ ⑥ وَجِجْضًا مَرَكًا شَيْخَرًا مَارِدًا
 ⑦ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ إِلَى الْمَلَأِ إِلَّا عَلَيْهِ وَيُفَعُّ بُورًا مَرَكًا
 جَانِبًا ⑧ دُحُورًا وَلِقَمٌ عَدَابٌ وَاصِبًا ⑨
 الْأَمْرُ خَصَفَ الْخُضْبَةَ وَاتَّبَعَهُ شُعَابٌ ثَاقِبًا ⑩
 فَاسْتَقْبَتِ لِقَمٌ أَلْفَمٌ وَأَشَدُّ خَلْفًا أَمٌّ مَخْلَفْنَا إِنَّا
 خَلَقْنَا لِقَمٌ مَرَكِيْرًا زَيْبًا ⑪ بَلْ عَجِبْتَ وَيَسْخَرُونَ
 ⑫ وَإِنَّا عَدُّكَرُوا لَا يَذْكُرُونَ ⑬ وَإِنَّا أَرَأَا آيَةً
 يَسْتَسْخَرُونَ ⑭ وَقَالُوا إِنْ لَهَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُبِينٌ
 ⑮ أَعَدَّ امْتِنَا وَكَتَابًا رَابًا وَعِضْمًا إِنَّا الْمُبْعُوثُونَ

Figure 1. al-Mušhaf al-Ḥasanī al-Musabba (1417 A.H.) in Maghribi script (*al-khatt al-mabsūt*). Source: S. Ennahid.

Questions related to the geographic origin of the Maghribi script, whether it came from Ifrīqiya (modern-day Tunisia and western Algeria) or al-Andalus (Muslim Spain), its historical evolution and its typology are still subjects of debate among experts. Several Moroccan

scholars quoted the following passage from the *Muqaddimah* of Ibn Khaldūn (written in 1377 C.E.) to argue for an Andalusian origin:

In the later Merinid dynasty [Marinid: 1258–1420 C.E.] in Morocco [*al-Maghrib al-Aqsa*], a kind of Spanish script²² [*al-khaṭṭ al-andalusī*] established itself, because (the Spaniards) were close neighbors and the (Spaniards) who left (Spain) soon settled in Fez, and the Merinids employed them during all the days of their rule. (But) in regions far from the seat and capital of the realm, writing was not cared for, and it was forgotten as if it had never been known. The (various) types of script used in Ifriqiyah and the two Maghribs inclined to be ugly and far from excellent.²³

For example, both Ahmed-Chouqui Binebine and Muḥammad al-Manūnī²⁴ trace the origin of the Maghribi, as a “national script” of Morocco, to the 14th century under the Marinids. And since Fez was the intellectual and spiritual capital of the country, this “national script” was also named *al-khaṭṭ al-fāsī*, or *al-qalam al-fāsī*, to distinguish it from a number of local styles such as the *al-khaṭṭ al-sūsī* (in southern Morocco), the *al-khaṭṭ al-badawī* (in rural areas) and the *al-khaṭṭ aṣ-ṣaḥrāwī* (in the Sahara). Al-Manūnī proposes a typology of the Maghribi script as an urban national script (i.e., *al-khaṭṭ al-fāsī*) made of five writing styles: *al-mabsūt*, used mostly for Qurʾānic texts, including the oldest lithographs of the Holy Book (Figure 1);²⁵ *al-mujawhar*, the most widely used script, including for royal decrees and correspondence, and early printed materials; *al-musnad* or *al-zimāmī*, used for notarized texts and personal memoranda; *maghribized mashriqī* (eastern cursive script rendered in a Maghribi style), used for chapter headings and *waqfiyyas* (marble plaques placed on important monuments to show endowment

²² This, according to al-Manūnī (*Taʾriḫ al-wirāqa*, 45), is no other than *maghribi script*.

²³ Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans. Franz Rosenthal (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967, 1980), 2: 387. In another passage, Ibn Khaldūn states that the *Andalusī* script has supplanted the *Ifriqī* script of modern-day Tunisia and western Algeria. For a critique, see Blair *Islamic Calligraphy*, 573, and Binebine, *Histoire des bibliothèques au Maroc*, 185–6.

²⁴ Binebine, *Histoire des bibliothèques au Maroc*, 185; al-Manūnī, *Taʾriḫ al-wirāqa*, 45.

²⁵ Beautiful examples of *al-mabsūt* script are provided in *al-Muṣḥaf al-Ḥasani al-Musabbaʿ*, commissioned by late King Hassan II (Moroccan Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, 1997).

provisions); and *maghribized kūfī* (eastern angular script rendered in a Maghribi style), used for ancient Qurʾānic texts, written on parchment, and on monumental epigraphy.²⁶

Sheila Blair²⁷ has adopted a different approach by setting up a typology of the Maghribi script based on size as opposed to geographic origins (the four commonly cited origins are *qayrawānī* from Qayrawān in Tunisia, *qurṭubī* from Cordova, *fāsī* from Fez, and *timbuktī* or *sūdānī* from Timbuktu in Mali).²⁸ In particular, she distinguishes between two broad Maghribi styles, one (known as *andalusī*) small and compact and the other (*fāsī*) larger and looser, which eventually merged, in the sixteenth century, to form one style of medium size. The earliest paleographic evidence of the Maghribi script is a copy of a manuscript by Ishāq b. Sulaymān al-Isrāʾīlī entitled *Kitāb maʿrifat al-bawl wa-aqsāmīhi* and penned in 346 A.H./957 C.E., probably in al-Andalus.²⁹ Numismatic evidence provides useful insight as well.³⁰ *Maghribized mashriqī* or *maghribī thuluth* was the script *par excellence* on Moroccan coinage (minted in Paris, Berlin and London) and inscriptions of the 19th and 20th centuries, especially during the Protectorate period.³¹

DIGITIZATION OF MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS IN MOROCCO

The most important initiative in the last ten years to use ICT for the preservation and valorization of manuscript collections in Morocco is The Manuscript Treasures in the Kingdom of Morocco (*Dhakhāʾir*

²⁶ Al-Manūnī, *Taʾrīkh al-wirāqa*, 13–14, 47.

²⁷ Blair, *Islamic Calligraphy*, 221–2, 392.

²⁸ These are all major intellectual centers and book markets in the Muslim West.

²⁹ Vatican, ms. Arab 310, see Blair, *Islamic Calligraphy*, 223 (notes 71 and 72), citing François Déroche, “Tradition et innovation dans la pratique de l’écriture au Maghreb pendant les IVe-Xe et Ve-XIe siècles,” in *Afrique du Nord antique et médiévale: Numismatique, langues, écritures et arts du livre, spécificité des arts figurés* (proceedings of the VIIe colloque international sur l’Histoire et l’archéologie de l’Afrique du Nord, Nice, October 21–31, 1996), ed. Serge Lancel (Paris: Editions du comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques, 1999), 239–41.

³⁰ ‘Umar Afā, “Malāmiḥ min taṭawwur al-khaṭṭ al-Maghribī min khilāl al-kitāba ‘alā al-nuqūd,” in *Majallat Kulliyat al-Ādāb wa al-‘Ulūm al-Insāniyya*, vol. 18 (Rabat, 1993), 71–91.

³¹ A large database of Maghribi coinage is available on the Web site of the American Numismatic Society, available from <http://numismatics.org> (accessed 1 February 2010).

al-Makḥṭūṭāt bi al-Mamlaka al-Maghribiyya), a collaboration between the Moroccan Ministry of Cultural Affairs, UNESCO and the Centre National du Patrimoine Manuscrit (CNPM) at the BNRM in Rabat.³² The project consists of complete computer cataloging and selected digitization of the manuscript collections at the Qarawiyyin Library in Fez, the Library of the Great Mosque of Meknès and the Ibn Yūsuf Library in Marrakech.³³ Based on existing print catalogs³⁴ and in-house inventories, the new digital database (available in Arabic only) features a bibliographic index for each of the three libraries; 3,823 searchable entries for the Qarawiyyin Library; 473 for the Library of the Great Mosque of Meknès, and 1,057 for the Ibn Yūsuf Library.³⁵ Each entry features twenty-three searchable fields including inventory number (*al-sijjil*), library catalog number,³⁶ subject matter, title, number of volumes, volume catalog number, author's name, alias (a.k.a.), author's date of death, opening line, colophon, dimensions (*miqyās*), number of folios, quality of book-making (*al-wirāqa*), ruling (*al-miṣṭarah*), type of support (paper or parchment),³⁷ type of script, place and date of composition, name of copyist, place of copy, date of copy, marks of ownership, author's authorization(s) of transmission (*ijāza*), ornaments (*al-ḥilyat*), illuminations or paintings (*al-rusūm*), tables (*al-jadāwil*), binding (*al-tajlīd*), preservation conditions, microfilm number, microfilm type, author's biographical references, manuscript bibliography, name of library holding manuscript, and other additional information such as *waqf* details. One important field unavailable for searching through the CD-ROM interface is the microfilm number. Most researchers will need this information since

³² *The Manuscript Treasures in the Kingdom of Morocco (Dhakhā'ir al-Makḥṭūṭāt bi al-Mamlaka al-Maghribiyya)*, 3 CD-ROM (Rabat: Ministry of Cultural Affairs of Morocco, 2000). Produced by Artlight Multimédia; the scientific content supervision of the project was conducted by Ahmed Toufiq, Mohamed Ibn Abdelaziz al-Dabbagh, Mohammed Hijji and Abd al-Salam al-Barrak.

³³ This excluding *khurūm* or loose sheets.

³⁴ See, for example, al-Barrāq, *Fihris al-Makḥṭūṭāt*.

³⁵ Compare to 1,450 volumes (Benjelloun-Laroui, *Les Bibliothèques au Maroc*, 195) and 1,840 volumes (Ministry of Cultural Affairs Web site, <http://www.minculture.gov.ma> [accessed 1 February 2010]).

³⁶ Of a total of 34 fields showing for each entry, only 23 (indicated with an asterisk) are actually searchable.

³⁷ In the case of paper (especially if imported from Europe), the inclusion of watermark information would have been very useful to trace the production place, since watermarks are visible only when the original document (i.e., as opposed to a digital copy) is held against a light source.

the manuscript collections are accessible only in microform, and users are not allowed to handle originals. Other information that cannot be searched through the CD-ROM interface regards manuscript ornamentation, illumination and marks of ownership. To access this type of information, users will have to circumvent the main interface and search a Microsoft Access database stored on the CD-ROM.

In addition to the digital catalog of the entire manuscript collections in Fez, Meknès and Marrakech, the project produced the first complete digital version (in image mode and scanned two pages per frame) of nine manuscripts chosen for their unique historical, cultural and aesthetic value; these are: *Kitāb tuḥfat al-nāzir wa ghunyat al-dhākir fi ḥifẓ al-sha‘ā’ir wa-taghyyir al-manākir* by Aḥmad b. Qāsim al-‘Uqbānī (d. 1466–67);³⁸ *Kitāb al-uns al-Jalīl bi ta’rīkh al-Quds wa-al-Khalīl* by Mujīr al-Dīn al-Ḥanbalī al-‘Ulaymī (d. 1522);³⁹ *al-Futūḥāt al-ilāhiyya fi aḥādīth khayr al-barīyya tushfa minha al-qulūb al-ṣadiyya*, by Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh (Alawite Sultan of Morocco, d. 1789),⁴⁰ *Sharḥ al-urjūrza fi ṭibb Ibn Sīnā*, by Abū al-Walīd Muḥammad Ibn Rushd (Averroes, d. 1198);⁴¹ *Lubb al-azhār fi sharḥ al-anwār*, by ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Qalsādī al-Gharnāṭī (d. 1482);⁴² *al-Wāḍiḥa fi al-sunan wa al-fiqh*, by Abū Marwān ‘Abd al-Mālik b. Ḥābīb al-Sullamī al-Andalusī (d. 852);⁴³ *Iḥyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn*, by Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111);⁴⁴ *Kitāb fi ṭibb al-ajinna*, by an anonymous author from Cordova (10th century C.E.);⁴⁵ and *Muṣḥaf shāṭiba*.⁴⁶

³⁸ Qarawiyyin Library, catalog number: 1584; number of folios: 134; date of copy 1877.

³⁹ Qarawiyyin Library, catalog number: 556; number of folios: 179; most likely an autograph composed in 1497.

⁴⁰ Qarawiyyin Library, catalog number: 745; number of folios: 163; date of composition 1784.

⁴¹ Qarawiyyin Library, catalog number: 1979bis? (1970 in the library MS Access database); number of folios: 95; date of copy?

⁴² Library of the Great Mosque of Meknès, catalog number: 470; number of folios: 29; date of copy: 1472.

⁴³ Library of the Great Mosque of Meknès, catalog number: 218? (110 in the library MS Access database); number of folios: 38; date of copy?

⁴⁴ Ibn Yūsuf Library of Marrakech, catalog number: 262/1 see also 262/2; number of folios? Date of copy?

⁴⁵ Ibn Yūsuf Library of Marrakech, catalog number: 604; number of folios? Date of copy?

⁴⁶ Ibn Yūsuf Library of Marrakech, catalog number: 431/5, see also 430, 431/5–8, 432/1–2; probably the handwriting of the Almohad Caliph ‘Umar al-Murtaḍa (d. 1266 C.E.); number of folios? Date of copy: 1223 C.E.?

Since it was not possible to digitize entirely a larger collection, a sample of 206 manuscripts (144 from Fez, 22 from Meknès and 40 from Marrakech) were partially digitized making it possible for users to view more than 1500 pages (in image mode and scanned one page per frame). These partially-digitized manuscripts present distinctive features in relation to their authorship (e.g., they are autographed), their origin, their content, their rarity or uniqueness, their aesthetic value, their endower (*wāqif*), the support on which they were written and their age. The digitized pages are accessible from a list that shows the subject matter, the author's name, the manuscript title, the date of composition and the library catalog number. A graphic user interface allows the viewer to zoom in and out of individual pages and provides a concise description of each manuscript, listing author, title, date of composition, subject matter, catalog number, number of folios, ruling (*al-miṣṭarah*) and dimensions.

The sample covers a wide range of disciplines including Qur'ānic texts and exegesis, Prophetic Traditions, jurisprudence, biblical texts, Arabic grammar and lexicography, hagiography, Islamic theology and mysticism, philosophy and logic, historiography, medicine, astronomy, logic, mathematics and biographical dictionaries.

The digitization of the manuscript collections in Fez, Meknès and Marrakech was conducted using a conventional "off-the-shelf" scanner,⁴⁷ which explains the low quality of some of the images especially in the case of tightly bound or damaged manuscripts. In similar situations, proper digitization would require more sophisticated equipment to allow "face-up scanning" or, in the case of extremely rare or fragile manuscripts, "contact-free scanning." Some of the scanned pages from the Qarawiyyin Library collection show traces of lamination (*plastification*), or the application of a layer of plastic or tracing paper. This was done during the colonial period, the intention being to halt the course of degradation of some 54 rare manuscripts.⁴⁸ Ironically today, because of the chemicals used in lamination, these manuscripts are in a more advanced state of disintegration than many of those that were not laminated.

Simultaneously with digitization, some of the most treasured manuscripts in Morocco are being reproduced using high-quality facsimile

⁴⁷ Hassan Harnan, current curator of the Qarawiyyin Library in Fez (personal communication, 2007).

⁴⁸ Of these manuscripts, 32 were laminated with plastic and 22 with tracing paper.

technology. In 2003, the Moroccan Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs produced a limited series of very high-quality facsimiles of two treasured Moroccan manuscripts, the *Dalā'il al-khayrāt wa shawāriq al-anwār fī dhikr aṣ-ṣalāt 'alā an-nabī al-mukhtār* ("Tokens of blessings and advents of illumination in the invocation of prayers on behalf of the chosen prophet") and other texts of panegyrics and praise, by Muḥammad al-Jazūlī (d. 1465 C.E.)⁴⁹ (Figure 2), and the *Kitāb al-shifā' bi-ta'rif ḥuqūq al-muṣṭafā*, by al-Qāḍī Iyāḍ (d. 1149 C.E.).⁵⁰ The *Dalā'il al-khayrāt* also includes an introductory chapter by Ahmed Toufiq that places the text and its author in their cultural-historical and religious context, and a commentary on the material and aesthetic aspects of the manuscript (e.g., paper format, calligraphy, illumination and binding) by Marie-Geneviève Guesdon. In 2006, the same ministry produced another facsimile of a two-volume *muṣḥaf* transcribed by the hand of the Marinid sultan Abū al-Ḥasan (d. 752/1351). Reproducing manuscripts by means of high-quality facsimiles is undoubtedly a commendable way of preserving and promoting cultural heritage, but the exorbitant cost of such initiatives tends to make these materials largely inaccessible to scholars and the general public.⁵¹

To our knowledge, no other ICT initiative in Morocco has reached the scale of The Manuscript Treasures in the Kingdom of Morocco Project. In 2006, the BNRM produced a CD-ROM (*Mukhtārāt min Makḥṭūṭāt al-Maktaba al-Waṭaniyya lil al-Mamlaka al-Maghribiyya*) showcasing a selection from a hundred of its most treasured manuscripts (about 5–10 pages per manuscript).⁵² This is essentially a "large panorama photographique" of digital images with a simple interface and no zooming or searching capabilities. The digital reproductions were accompanied by a short note with the manuscript's title, author's

⁴⁹ Manuscript penned in Fez in mid-15th century C.E.; facsimile of manuscript No. G. 356 of the BNRM, printed by ADEVA, Graz-Austria, see Muḥammad al-Jazūlī, *Dalā'il al-khayrāt wa shawāriq al-anwār fī dhikr aṣ-ṣalāt 'alā an-nabī al-mukhtār* (Rabat: Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, Kingdom of Morocco, 2003).

⁵⁰ Manuscript penned in Fez in 1868–69; facsimile of manuscript No. G. 636 of the BNRM.

⁵¹ The listed price of the complete color facsimile edition of *Dalā'il al-khayrāt* (318 folios in the original size 114 × 114 mm; Maghribi script) is 1.500 euros. For further details, visit the Web site of the Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt (ADEVA) Graz, available from <http://www.adeva.com> (accessed 1 February 2010).

⁵² *Selection of Manuscripts at the BNRM (Mukhtārāt min Makḥṭūṭāt al-Maktaba al-Waṭaniyya lil al-Mamlaka al-Maghribiyya*, 1 Pilot CD-ROM (Rabat: BNRM, 2006). Available in French only and sponsored by the UNESCO-Rabat Office.



Figure 2. *Dalā'il al-khayrāt* by Abū-'Abd-Allāh Muḥammad b. Sulayman al-Jazūlī (d. 1465). Source: S. Ennahid.

name, date of copy, subject matter, script, dimensions and catalog number. The BNRM and UNESCO are planning to build on this pilot project to launch a large-scale project for the preservation and valorization of manuscripts in the Maghrib region using ICT, eventually

integrating other regional initiatives.⁵³ Researchers at the Center for Documentation of Cultural & Natural Heritage (CULTNAT) in Cairo have achieved excellent results in digitizing manuscripts hosted at the National Library of Egypt. Their work could serve as a model for similar initiatives in the Maghrib and sub-Saharan Africa.

In 2001 CULTNAT, in partnership with the National Library of Egypt and UNESCO, produced a CD-ROM in three languages (Arabic, English and French) entitled *The Contributions of the Arab and Islamic Civilizations to Medical Sciences, Selections from the Manuscripts Collection of the National Library and Archives of Egypt*⁵⁴ and featuring a catalog of the Arabic, Turkish and Persian medical manuscripts that are preserved at the National Library and Archives of Egypt. The manuscripts are listed alphabetically by author's name, and each of the 1,087 entries lists manuscript title, author's name, catalog number, copyist's name and copy date. Another important component of this project is the complete digitization (in image mode and with zooming capabilities) of seven medical manuscripts: the *Bodily Rectification through Man's Measures (Taqwīm al-abdān fī tadbīr al-insān)*, by Yaḥyā b. 'Īsā b. Jazāla al-Baghdādī (d. 493/1100); *The Prescription of Ibn al-Bayṭār (Tadhkirat Ibn al-Bayṭār fī al-Ṭibb)*, by 'Abd Allāh b. Aḥmad al-Malaqī b. al-Bayṭār (d. 646/1248); *The Herbalist's Reserves from Ibn al-Bayṭār's Terminology (Dhakhīrat al-'Aṭṭār)*, by Abū Sa'īd b. Ibrāhīm al-Maghribī (d. 658 A.H.); *Treatise on the Structure of the Eye (Jawāmi' Jālīnūs fī al-amrāḍ al-ḥadītha fī al-'ayn)* (included in Galen's Collective Book on Eye Diseases), by Ḥunayn b. Ishāq al-'Abbādī, Abū Zayd (d. 260/867); *Curing Diseases (Shifā' al-asqām)*, by 'Umar Ibn Ḥasan Ibn 'Umar al-Saynūbī (d. 1159/1734); *The Collective Abridgement via Questions and Answers (Mukhtaṣar al-Iqtidāb al-majmū' fī al-ṭibb)*, by Abū Naṣr Sa'īd b. Abī al-Khayr b. al-Masīhī (d. 658/1260); and Galen's *Book of Antidotes (Kitāb al-Tarāyīq)* translated by Yaḥya al-Iskandarānī.

In addition to institutional initiatives, there are several manuscript digitization projects in Morocco that are being conducted by individual researchers. For example, the ongoing computer cataloging and digitization of manuscript collections in private libraries at Tétouan,

⁵³ Mohamed Ould Khattar, Program Specialist at UNESCO Office for Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania and Tunisia, in Rabat (personal communication, 2006).

⁵⁴ No date is indicated for the CD-ROM edition. For the book edition, see *The Contributions of the Arab and Islamic Civilizations to Medical Sciences* (Dar El Kotob: UNESCO and CultNat Publication, 2002).

conducted by researchers from the *Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences humaines* at 'Abd al-Mālik as-Sa'adi University,⁵⁵ and the author's own work at the Center for Retrospective Digitization in Göttingen (*Göttinger Digitalisierungszentrums, GDZ*), Germany.⁵⁶ Renowned for The Göttingen Gutenberg Bible, a digital facsimile of one of the rarest fully preserved vellum copies of the Gutenberg Bible (printed ca. 1454),⁵⁷ the GDZ is funded by the German Research Foundation (*Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*) to champion a nation-wide initiative to build a German digital library. Its main mission is to evaluate "tools and techniques for image capture and text conversion, bibliographic description, document management and the provision of remote access."⁵⁸

The BNRM and the Qarawiyyin Library have been working in close partnership with the GDZ and the *Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen* (Göttingen State and University Library) since 1987. Areas of partnerships between these two Moroccan institutions and the GDZ include the equipment of their manuscript restoration, photography and microfilming laboratories, the restoration and microfilming of their manuscript collections, and the training of their staff. The *Centre National du Patrimoine Manuscrit (CNPM)* at the BNRM is the result of this partnership. Established in 1995 to inventory, preserve, restore and promote Moroccan manuscript heritage, it provides restoration and microfilming services and technical support to individuals and institutions involved in the preservation of manuscript collections. At the time of this writing (2008), the entire manuscript collection of the Qarawiyyin Library has been microfilmed, while microfilming is still on-going at the other libraries; the total numbers of manuscripts microfilmed at the BNRM and the Library of the Great Mosque of Meknès are 4,780 and 750, respectively. Thanks to the CNPM guidelines and standards,

⁵⁵ Muhammad Benaboud, paper presented at the workshop "Implementing a Maghreb Digital Library for Education, Science & Culture" (Rabat, January 25–27, 2007), jointly organized by the Moroccan Ministry of Higher Education and The Fulbright Academy of Science & Technology (FAST).

⁵⁶ The author visited the Center for Retrospective Digitization in Göttingen on a Research Stays and Study for University Academics grant provided by the German Academic Exchange Service (*Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst, DAAD*), Summer 2006.

⁵⁷ For further details, visit the "Gutenberg Digital" Web site, available from <http://www.gutenbergdigital.de/gudi/start.htm> (accessed 31 January 2009).

⁵⁸ Göttinger Digitalisierungszentrum (GDZ) Web site, available from <http://gdz.sub.uni-goettingen.de/en/index.html> (accessed 31 January 2009).

the manuscript collections at the BNRM and the Qarawiyyin Library are now properly preserved in acid-free boxes, stored on metal shelves and cleaned monthly by trained staff who are also responsible for ensuring that ambient temperature and humidity are carefully monitored. Unfortunately, the CNPM guidelines are not enforced nationwide, and consequently preservation practices at several libraries (e.g., the Library of the Zāwiyya of Tamgrūt in southeastern Morocco) leave a lot to be desired. The CNPM has organized a number of workshops and published a booklet in Arabic on manuscript preservation (*Kayfa naṣṣūnū makḥṭūṭātīnā/Comment préserver nos manuscrits*). However, More proactive action needs to be taken in the future to reach out to these libraries and to provide them with the necessary training and technical support.

While at GDZ, the author conducted a pilot project for the digitization of an important Maghribi manuscript on Sufism, *Kitāb miṣṭāḥ al-faḍā'il wa al-ni'am fi al-kalām 'ala ba'di ma yatta'allaqu bi al-ḥikam* by Aḥmad Zarrūq al-Burnusī al-Fāsī (d. 899/1493), penned on the 11th of Shabān 887/25 September 1482.⁵⁹ The process consisted mainly in the extraction of structural metadata, image capture and PDF conversion. Ibn Zarrūq's manuscript was scanned in-house at 600 dpi using a high quality DigiBook 6002RGB scanner⁶⁰ (Figure 3) and delivered as a PDF document copied on a CD-ROM. Most manuscripts and old books digitized at GDZ are available online via the Göttingen State and University Library Web site. Digital master files are stored offline on CR-ROMs at a secure storage area. To allow easy and efficient navigation through the manuscript digital version (pages scanned in image mode), the author extracted detailed structural metadata in Arabic (based on marginal notes penned in red in the original) including opening page, chapter headings, sub-headings and colophon. Structural metadata are easily accessible through the PDF file Bookmarks view (Figure 4). The number to the right of each bookmark refers to the folio number in the original.

⁵⁹ Göttingen State and University Library Call Number: 8 COD MS ARAB 379. Number of folios/dimensions: 171 folios; 16×21 cm. Werner Schwartz of the Göttingen State and University Library found evidence that this manuscript is not the author's autograph, but was collated with several others including the author's own (Schwartz, personal communication 2006).

⁶⁰ For technical specifications, visit the i2S Web site, available from <http://www.i2s-bookscanner.com/> (accessed 31 January 2009).

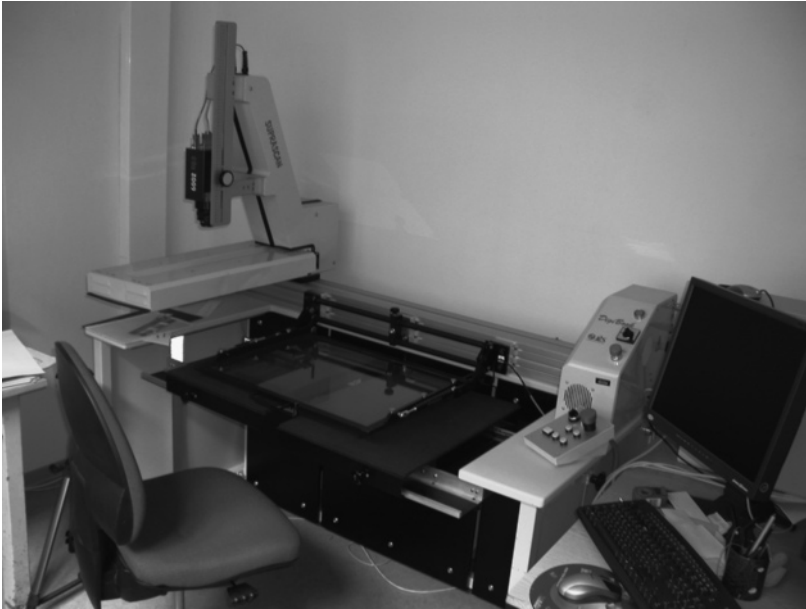


Figure 3. DigiBook 6002RGB Scanner. Source: S. Ennahid.

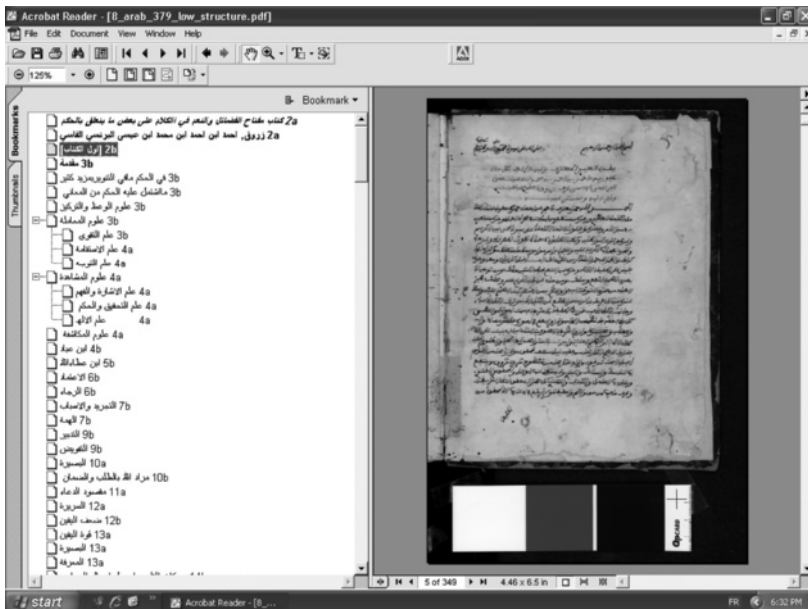


Figure 4. Bookmarks view of PDF file of Ibn Zarrūq's *Kitāb miiftāḥ al-faḍā'il wa al-ni'ām fi al-kalām 'ala ba'di ma yatta'allaqu bi al-ḥikam* (1442–93). Source: S. Ennahid.

The extraction of detailed structural metadata can be a tedious and time-consuming process, especially for large-scale digitization projects, and it should be recommended only for a selected number of titles in a manuscript collection. For exceptionally important manuscripts, the best solution is manual transcription of the entire textual content to accompany the digital version. A model project in this regard is the Bodleian Library's *Book of Curiosities*. In 2002, the Bodleian library acquired an important Arabic cosmographical treatise compiled in Egypt in the 11th century C.E. by an anonymous author and entitled *Kitāb gharā'ib al-funūn* ("Book of Curiosities").⁶¹ Subsequently the manuscript was entirely digitized, transcribed, edited, translated and annotated.⁶² The project allows unique full-text searching capabilities of the Arabic text, its English translation, glossary, list of references and footnotes (Figure 5). Its cost in terms of time and resources, however, makes it financially unviable for large-scale digitization initiatives.

To allow full-text searching capabilities for Arabic historical manuscripts, researchers are now moving towards automatic text transcription, indexing, searching and retrieval. To our knowledge, there is no reliable and commercially available product for Optical Character Recognition (OCR) of handwritten texts in Arabic. Most commercial OCR programs were developed for digitized versions of printed texts and cannot be used for manuscripts. However, even for print, and regardless of the alphabet (Latin or Arabic), OCR programs have shown serious limitations when applied to digitized versions of poorly printed texts. Similar limitations are encountered when OCR is applied to text printed in ancient fonts or historical languages; for example, when the long "s" in old English font turns into an "f" in OCR-generated transcription, or when the Latin word *tum* ("then") is incorrectly recognized as *turn* because the OCR is programmed to process English texts. In Germany, OCR programs are still unable to process texts in *Fraktur* (i.e., Gothic) script. Even more serious problems arise when OCR programs are applied to texts with multiple languages, mathematical formulas, musical scores, etc. The good news is that, in the last few years, several alternatives to OCR have been proposed with encouraging degrees of success.

⁶¹ Bodleian Library Catalog Number: MS. Arab. c. 90; 48 folios (96 pages); dimensions: 324 × 245 mm.

⁶² For a project description and on-line access to the *Book of Curiosities*, visit <http://cosmos.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/hms/home.php> (accessed 1 February 2010).

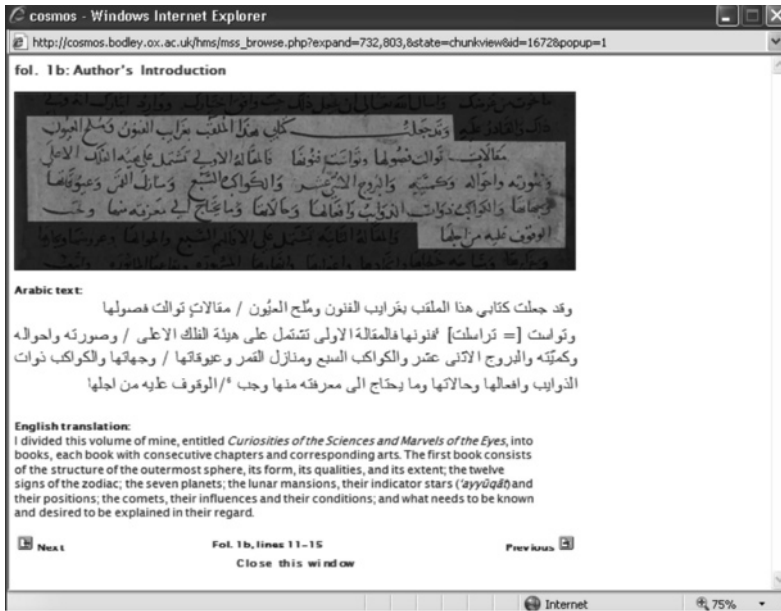


Figure 5. The Bodleian Library's *Book of Curiosities Project*: MS. Arab. c. 90, Fol. 1b, lines 11–15. Source: Bodleian Library, Oxford University.

Computer Assisted Transcription (CAT) is a method based on character segmentation and character pattern redundancy; it is used for historical documents printed in ancient fonts but not for manuscripts.⁶³ The word-matching technique showed good results for retrieval and indexing of printed Ottoman documents. The document is first segmented in horizontal lines; then the text is segmented in word images by applying a threshold value on the length of space between two words; and lastly the data set is searched to retrieve instances of interest using hierarchical matching algorithms.⁶⁴ This method has been recently improved to use for retrieval and indexing of an Ottoman manuscript in *riq'a* script.⁶⁵ Since Ottoman alphabet

⁶³ Yann Leydier, Frank LeBourgeois, and Hubert Emptoz, "Textual Indexation of Ancient Documents," in *Proceedings of the 2005 ACM Symposium on Document Engineering*, Bristol, UK, November 2–4, 2005, ed. Anthony Wiley and Peter R. King (New York: ACM, 2005), 112–3.

⁶⁴ Esra Ataer and Pinar Duygulu, "Retrieval of Ottoman Documents," in *Proceedings of the 8th ACM international Workshop on Multimedia information Retrieval*. Santa Barbara, California, October 26–27, 2006 (New York: ACM, 2006), 155–62.

⁶⁵ Esra Ataer and Pinar Duygulu, "Matching Ottoman Words: An Image Retrieval Approach to Historical Document Indexing," in *Proceedings of the 6th ACM*

uses mainly Arabic characters (28 Arabic characters out of 33 found in the Ottoman alphabet), this method could be adapted to handle Arabic printed documents or even manuscripts.

The application of OCR to the Arabic script is a real challenge due to its cursive style, the fact that most letters are directly connected, the use of diacritical marks and the use of different forms for the same character depending on its initial, medial, final or isolated position (e.g., the letter “ayn” or “ع”). In recent years, and despite all these difficulties, significant progress has been made in Arabic OCR research, development, and application. A good example in this regard is The Bibliotheca Alexandrina’s (BA) efforts to implement the Million Book Project initiated by Carnegie Mellon University. The Million Book Project provided an excellent platform for research on digitization, OCR, automatic indexing, translation and retrieval. In 2005, the BA completed the digitization and OCR-processing of 13,466 books (4 million pages), including 9,588 Arabic books (2.9 million pages). The ultimate goal is to convert all the Bibliotheca Alexandrina’s books into digital format. For all its OCR applications, the BA is using Sakhr Automatic Reader, a commercial package whose most recent version claims “up to 99 percent accuracy in recognizing Arabic books, newspapers, etc.”⁶⁶ To increase recognition rates, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina’s ICT department built libraries for 16 different fonts based on font shape, size and quality of print.⁶⁷ To allow automatic transcription, indexing, searching and retrieval of digitized text in manuscript format, research is moving from OCR to image pattern recognition. In other words, instead of using OCR to try to optically recognize the handwriting of individual authors and copyists, researchers are now developing new solutions based on the segmentation of the handwritten text into a set of images, and the analysis of these images in search for patterns (e.g., analysis of luminance of each pixel in the image). The segmentation operates at the word level and not on individual characters as in OCR. In Word Spotting for

International Conference on Image and Video Retrieval (CIVR). Amsterdam, The Netherlands, July 9–11, 2007 (New York: ACM, 2007), 341–7.

⁶⁶ Visit the Sakhr Software Web site, available from <http://www.sakhr.com> (accessed 31 January 2009).

⁶⁷ Noha Adly, “Digitizing Materials at Bibliotheca Alexandrina,” paper presented at the Digitizing Arab Heritage Workshop, Centre for Development of Cultural and Natural Heritage, Cairo, November 27–28, 2005 (unpublished).

example, the process is “based on [mathematical calculations of] a similarity or a distance between two images, the reference image defined by the user and the target images representing the rest of the page or all the pages from a multi-page document.”⁶⁸ Although the application of Word Spotting on Arabic manuscript material achieved very promising results, this technique has yet to overcome a number of difficulties inherent to this script (and language). A typical problem is the fact that Word Spotting confuses words of the same root but of very different meaning (e.g., *al-Ḥamd*, meaning “praise,” and the proper name *Muḥammad*). Another is wrapping (i.e., the risk of skipping some letters if the spacing between words is incorrectly determined), and the use of diacritical marks that are often too small to detect. For example, in *scriptio defectiva* (vowel-less writing) before the introduction of diacritical marks, the same grapheme “ﺝ” was used for two very different phonemes, “r” and “z.” Missing a diacritical mark usually leads the technique to incorrectly match two words of similar general form but of totally different pronunciation and meaning.⁶⁹ In another system of automatic retrieval and indexing of Arabic texts, described by S.A. Shahab, W.G. Al-Khatib and S.A. Mahmoud, “a user can select query words by utilizing an easy to use graphical user interface (GUI). The proposed system will retrieve all the occurrences of the query word and present them to the user one at a time. Based upon user’s feedback, the system will index the relevant words under the user specified ‘Query Concept,’ in its Arabic textual form.”⁷⁰ The authors used this technique for an Arabic manuscript (in Maghribi script) that was scanned, pre-processed for noise reduction (through binarization and noise filtering) and then segmented into “sub-words.” The sub-words were then analyzed for feature extraction. For example, in the case of “Angular Lines Features,” the process consists of computing the number of pixels that fall in any one region formed by the drawing of four lines originating from the centroid of the sub-word in question. Retrieval and indexing was achieved by applying a set of distance/similarity measures to the values of the extracted features.

⁶⁸ Leydier et al., “Textual Indexation of Ancient Documents,” 113–4.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 116–7.

⁷⁰ S.A. Shahab, W.G. Al-Khatib, and S.A. Mahmoud, “Computer Aided Indexing of Historical Manuscripts,” in *Proceedings of the International Conference on Computer Graphics, Imaging and Visualisation* (Sydney, Australia, 2006), 287–95.

In addition to automatic retrieval and indexing, image enhancement of digitized manuscripts is another area where significant progress is being made. The processing of digitized modern books for image enhancement is relatively straightforward and consists mainly of binarization and noise filtering prior to OCR. This is not the case for manuscripts. Many, if not most, ancient manuscripts present imperfections due to the type and/or quality of paper, the ink used, the conditions of preservation and their age, or a combination of all these factors. Recently, a new technique has been developed for the removal of show-through and uneven background and low contrast on a digitized sample of a Maghribi manuscript.⁷¹ At the moment, this method consists mainly of foreground-background segmentation of historical Arabic manuscripts in color, but future applications aim to improve the texture segmentation method to allow classification of documents into text, background and graphics; a useful functionality to incorporate in retrieval and indexing systems for Arabic manuscripts.⁷²

It is clear from the above discussion that in the last few years, significant progress has been made in automatic retrieval and indexing of Arabic texts. However, research in this field is still not taking full advantage of the wealth of paleographic and historical data available. For example, the chapter on calligraphy in the *Muqaddima* of Ibn Khaldūn includes information that should provide important insight to computer scientists working with Maghribi scripts.⁷³ Ibn Khaldūn speaks of a distinctive method Maghribi master-calligraphers used to train pupils:

[In Spain and the Maghrib] the letters are not learned individually according to norms the teacher gives to the pupil. Writing is learned by imitating complete words. The pupil repeats (these words), and the teacher examines him, until he knows well (how to write) and until the habit (of writing) is at his finger tips. Then, he is called a good (calligrapher).⁷⁴

⁷¹ Wafa Boussellaa, Abderrazak Zahour, and Adel Alimi, "A Methodology for the Separation of Foreground/Background in Arabic Historical Manuscripts Using Hybrid Methods," in *Proceedings of the 2007 ACM Symposium on Applied Computing* (New York: ACM, 2007), 605–9.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 609.

⁷³ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, 2: 377–91.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 378.

In this regard, Houdas⁷⁵ mentioned cases where a copyist would render a character in three to four different ways on the same page. This may have been one of the reasons why art historians found it difficult to set up a clear classification of the variety of forms in Maghribi script. In other passages of the *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldūn speaks of a more formalized and scientific training of calligraphers:

[In Cairo, master-calligraphers] teach the pupil by norms and laws how to write each letter. In addition, they let him teach (others) how to write each letter. This strengthens his (respect for) the rank of knowledge and (for) perception [*al-ḥiss*] as far as teaching is concerned. His habit becomes one of the most perfect kind.⁷⁶

This method resulted in a more standardized script, as attested in yet another passage:

The art of writing continues to be cultivated there [Cairo] at this time. There are teachers of writing there who are employed (just) to teach the letters. For that, they have norms of how the letters are to be drawn and shaped. These norms are generally recognized among them. The student soon learns to draw and form the letters well, as he learns them by sensual perception [*al-ḥiss*], becomes skilled in them through practice in writing them, and learns them in the form of scientific norms. Therefore, his letters turn out to be as well formed as possible.⁷⁷

Other factors that may have contributed to produce a “well formed” or standardized script are the technique used to prepare the reed pen (*qalam*) and the quality and method of preparation of the inks.

CONCLUSIONS

While some progress has been made in using ICT for the preservation and valorization of manuscript collection in Morocco, there is still a long road ahead. Manuscript collections at several heritage libraries are literally disintegrating because of poor conditions of preservation and direct handling of originals; many rare manuscripts are

⁷⁵ Octave Houdas, “Essai sur l’écriture maghrébine,” in *Nouveaux mélanges orientaux* (Publications de l’Ecole des langues vivantes orientales, IIe série, vol. XIX.) (Paris : Imprimerie nationale, 1886), 107–8.

⁷⁶ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, 2: 378.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 386.

smuggled outside the country for a clientele of Western antiquarians and collectors. There is an urgent need for a national e-heritage initiative with specific strategic goals and operational objectives.⁷⁸ Digitization represents the best solution today to preserve manuscript collections and to make them available to researchers and institutions (both on CD-ROM and through on-line access). An important added value for a national e-heritage initiative is to assist under-funded public libraries and private repositories of manuscript collections to become self-sustained by generating financial resources through fees from institutional subscriptions, services to individuals and proceeds from CD-ROM sales. Another strategic goal of this initiative is to build a National Digital Library for Manuscript Collections in Morocco in charge of all ICT aspects related to manuscript preservation, valorization and dissemination to avoid duplication of services among content holders. All e-services (on-line access, downloads, etc.) provided by content holders will eventually merge in one portal. This initiative should ultimately integrate future national e-strategies and ongoing regional initiatives such as the Memory of the Arab World Project launched in 2005 by CULTNAT and UNESCO. At a global level, it will contribute to carve out a place for Morocco in the information society by integrating the UNESCO Memory of the World initiative launched in 1992 and defined as “the documented, collective memory of the peoples of the world—their documentary heritage—which in turn represents a large proportion of the world’s cultural heritage.”⁷⁹ The UNESCO Memory of the World has also established an open-access register of manuscript collections of world significance linked to existing programs such as the UNESCO World Heritage List. Most important of all, this international program recognizes the importance of ICT (e.g., CD-ROMs, DVDs and on-line resources) as effective means of preservation, valorization and access to manuscript collections of national, regional, and global significance.

⁷⁸ Ameur proposed a digitization program for the BNRM; see Abderrahim Ameur, “Elements d’une strategie pour la numerisation du patrimoine culturel marocain: cas des fonds manuscrits de la bibliotheque nationale du royaume du Maroc.” Unpublished B.A. thesis (Rabat: Ecole des Sciences de l’Information, 2004).

⁷⁹ Ray Edmondson, *Memory of the World: General Guidelines*. Revised edition (Paris: UNESCO, 2002), 2.

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COMING TO TERMS WITH TRADITION: MANUSCRIPT CONSERVATION IN CONTEMPORARY ALGERIA

Judith Scheele

Many historic trade routes along which scholars, students and manuscripts circulated, crossed what is now Algerian territory, integrating it firmly into the intellectual world of Western Islam. As well as being a centre of scholarship in its own right, Algeria thereby acted as a relay between Morocco and the Eastern Maghrib, and the Mediterranean and the countries of the Sahel.¹ This accounts for the importance and variety of manuscripts to be found throughout Algeria. Yet these funds are but little known, and only rarely attract the attention of researchers,² to the point where Algeria has gained the reputation of lacking its own independent written tradition and historical and religious sources, especially when compared to neighbouring countries

¹ For an overview of existing institutions at the colonial conquest, see Yvonne Turin, *Affrontements culturels dans l'Algérie coloniale. Ecoles, médecines, religion, 1830–1880* (Paris: Maspero, 1971). For more detailed studies see in particular Robert Brunschvig, *La Berbérie orientale sous les Hafsides des origines à la fin du XV^e siècle* (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1940–7), Jacques Berque, *L'intérieur du Maghreb: XV^e – XIX^e siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978) and Kamel Filali, *L'Algérie mystique: des marabouts fondateurs aux khwân insurgés, XV^e au XIX^e siècle* (Paris: Publisud, 2002). For religious networks, see Ernest Carette, *Recherches sur la géographie et le commerce de l'Algérie méridionale* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1848); see also the notable extension of Sufi networks, mapped by Octave Depont and Xavier Coppolani, *Les confréries religieuses musulmanes* (Algiers: Jourdan, 1897).

² With the notable exception of Brunschvig, *La Berbérie orientale*, Berque's *L'intérieur du Maghreb* and "En lisant les *Nawâzil Mazouna*," *Studia Islamica* 32 (1970), 31–9, Houari Touati, "En relisant les *nawâzil Mazouna*, marabout et chorfa au Maghreb central au XV^e siècle," *Studia Islamica* 69 (1989), 70–94, and Gilbert Grandguillaume, "Le droit de l'eau dans les Foggara du Touat au XVIII^e siècle," *Revue des études islamiques* 43, no. 2 (1975), 287–332, all based on local legal documents. More recently, Muhammad Dabâgh et al., "Ghuniya al-muqtasid al-sâ'il fîmâ waqa'a fî Tuwât min al-qadaya wa al-masâ'il" (Adrar, n.d.) provide a resume of a major collection of southern *nawâzil*; Elise Voguet, "Entre réalités sociales et construction juridique: le monde rural du Maghreb central d'après les 'Nawazil Mazouna' (IX^e – XV^e siècle)" (Doctoral thesis, Université de Paris I-Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2005) reinvestigates the famous *Nawâzil Mazûna*. Saïd Bouterfa, *Les manuscrits du Touat* (Algiers: Barzakh, 2005) and Arab Abdelhamid, *Manuscrits et bibliothèques musulmanes en Algérie* (Méolans-Revel: Atelier Perrousseaux, 2006) are directed at a general rather than an academic audience.

such as Morocco, Tunisia and Mauritania.³ Similarly, government interest in the conservation of manuscripts is of recent date, and has so far been crowned with relatively little success.⁴ Alongside deeply-rooted (and mistaken) notions that Algeria was historically lacking in urban culture and therefore in independent scholarship,⁵ there seems to be a general unspoken consensus that French colonial rule destroyed most local manuscript collections, and irredeemably severed any intellectual tradition that Algeria might have possessed.

This destruction was indeed considerable; however, it cannot account solely for the relative neglect of the religious heritage in Algeria, nor for the particular difficulties encountered by present day attempts to redress this knowledge gap. This chapter aims to describe and explain these difficulties, linking them to the problematic relationship that many contemporary Algerians maintain with their history and with local traditions of knowledge and scholarship. It argues that what is at stake in current debates about manuscript conservation are not merely technical matters, but fundamental questions of intellectual and social legitimacy. This will be illustrated through the analysis of two initiatives for the conservation of manuscripts in Algeria. The first of these recounts the “discovery” of a manuscript library in a small village in Kabylia, a Berber-speaking area in north-eastern Algeria, and the difficult insertion of this collection of Arabic manuscripts into local narratives of Berber particularity. The second example deals with various attempts that have been made to catalogue and preserve the numerous manuscripts held in the Touat (Twât), a group of oases in south-western Algeria. Both examples are based on more

³ To cite but one example, the collection of essays about Saharan libraries edited by Attilio Gaudio, *Les bibliothèques du désert. Recherches et études sur un millénaire d'écrits* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2002) only mentions one library in the whole of the Algerian South, as compared to six in Morocco and Mauritania and nine in Mali. Not one of the forty articles makes specific mention of Algeria.

⁴ The foundation of the Centre national des manuscrits, located in the southern city of Adrar, dates from January 2007 (see below).

⁵ Such notions point both to the long-standing assimilation of scholarship with cities and “mysticism” with the countryside, shown to be erroneous by, among others, Vincent Cornell, *Realm of the Saint: Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), and to the belief that Algeria was somehow deficient in urbanisation, an idea that runs through French colonial pamphlets, finds its most ample expression in Emile Gautier, *L'islamisation de l'Afrique du Nord: les siècles obscurs du Maghreb* (Paris: Payot, 1927) and in a more subtle way in Augustin Berque, *Écrits sur l'Algérie* (Aix-en-Provence: Edisud, 1986), and has often unthinkingly been adopted into more recent scholarship.

than twenty months of anthropological fieldwork in the relevant areas, conducted between 2003 and 2008, and on extensive interviews with those most involved.⁶

MANUSCRIPTS IN ALGERIA

It is difficult to make any general statements about the quantity, quality and distribution of manuscripts in contemporary Algeria. No overall catalogue exists, the most comprehensive document being the manuscript catalogue of the Bibliothèque nationale d'Algérie (BNA), volume eighteen of the *Catalogue général des manuscrits des bibliothèques publiques de France*, which was established in the late nineteenth century. In addition to this, there are a few catalogues of individual libraries, such as those of the *madrasas* (Islamic teaching institutes) of Tlemcen and Algiers, dating from the beginning of the twentieth century. Other catalogues of individual collections produced during the colonial period are often difficult to get hold of and make no claims to be exhaustive.⁷

Although efforts are underway at the University of Algiers to establish an updated catalogue of the National Library holdings, and to catalogue manuscripts held in private collections, these have not led to any published results yet (i.e., as of June 2007).⁸ Other cataloguing initiatives will be undertaken by the Centre national des manuscrits in

⁶ Research in Kabylia was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) of Great Britain and the Centre for African Studies at Oxford; fieldwork in the Sahara was made possible by Magdalen College, Oxford and the British Academy (grant number SG-47632). I am grateful to both editors for their comments; my greatest debt, of course, is to my Algerian hosts, their indefatigable hospitality and great patience.

⁷ These are, respectively: Edmond Fagnan, *Catalogue général des manuscrits des bibliothèques publiques de France. Départements. Tome XVIII: Alger* (Paris: Plon, 1893); Auguste Cour, *Catalogue des manuscrits arabes conservés dans les principales bibliothèques algériennes. Médersa de Tlemcen* (Algiers: Jourdan, 1907); Mohammed Ben Cheneb, *Catalogue des manuscrits arabes conservés dans les principales bibliothèques algériennes. Grande mosquée d'Algier* (Algiers: Jourdan, 1909). Examples of the latter category are Alphonse de Calassanti-Motyliniski, *Bibliographie du Mzab* (Algiers: Fontana, 1885), and René Basset, "Les manuscrits arabes de la zaouyah d'el Hamel," *Giornale della società asiatica italiana* 10, no. 43 (1897), 43–97.

⁸ Interview with Abdelaziz Laredj, director of the research group for southern manuscripts at the University of Algiers, conducted in Bouzaréah on April 9, 2007. Several such publications are planned for the end of 2007, however, as part of the year-long initiative "Alger, capitale de la culture arabe."

Adrar, but since it opened only in January 2007 it is still too early for any concrete results. This means that all estimates of overall numbers of manuscripts and distribution maps in the country are tentative. Further, the definition of “manuscripts” and the way they should be counted remains singularly unclear, and the ongoing “discovery” of libraries—and the political attention they attract—makes overall figures unreliable.

Newspapers quote an overall number of 35,000 manuscripts for the whole country, of which the National Library holds just under 4,000, all others being kept in private collections.⁹ In some rare cases, these are used by their present-day owners for study and teaching; in others, they are kept as sacred objects, and displayed on special occasions to the curious visitor or to members of the extended family. In probably the majority of cases, however, they are kept hidden in private houses, and their existence is known to only a few. Although there clearly exists a shared sentiment that these manuscripts constitute a religious, historic, cultural and social asset of considerable material value, and that something should be done with them, most people do not seem to be sure what this something should be, how to go about it, and whose responsibility this is.

Government policy ultimately aims at centralising all manuscripts in the National Library, in order to protect them and to make them accessible to the public.¹⁰ This is mainly achieved by buying up manuscripts. Public funds have been made available for this, and word of mouth has contributed to several owners coming up to Algiers to offer their manuscripts.¹¹ Those who sell, however, rarely own large collections, but only dispose of small numbers of manuscripts through split inheritance. Owners of larger collections categorically refuse to hand

⁹ The former figure is taken from the article “Un anthropologue algérien accuse,” signed R.N. and published in *Infosoir* (8 May 2007), without citing further sources; the latter was mentioned in an interview with Mme Sebbah, head of manuscript conservation at the BNA, interviewed in Algiers on April 10th, 2007.

¹⁰ The BNA was founded by the French in 1835 and taken over by the Algerian national government at independence in 1962. It moved to a much larger building equipped for the restoration and conservation of manuscripts in 1996. The following paragraphs are based on information given by Mme Sebbah, head of manuscript conservation at the BNA, interviewed in Algiers on April 10th, 2007.

¹¹ The price offered by the Library is determined by a committee of experts according to their age, rarity, condition, and subject matter: “scientific” subjects are more highly valued than “yet another exegesis of the Qur’ān”. The library refuses to haggle over prices; average prices are around 10,000 dinars (roughly 100 euros on the black market at the time of writing).

these over to representatives of the “*pouvoir*,” whom they accuse of embezzlement—the only thing the *pouvoir* excels in, according to Algerian folk wisdom. More generally, repeated “public outcries” about the “irretrievable loss” of the “*patrimoine*” these manuscripts represent are only rarely followed by conclusive research or sustained interest.¹²

This now seems to be changing, not least with the opening, in January 2007, of a Centre national des manuscrits in the southern town of Adrar. Yet although everybody agrees on the need for conservation and restoration of manuscripts, including those manuscript owners who are adamant to hold on to their own, the question of what actually to do with them once they have been “saved”—short of handing them over to the National Library—remains unanswered, or rather, absent from the debate. This has led to the primacy of conservation over research projects, and to a profusion of largely uncommemated exhibitions of manuscripts presented as beautiful objects and proofs of a glorious past, with a clear emphasis on their aesthetic values rather than their content. Although partly the result of practical needs, this emphasis also helps to avoid unpleasant questions about the truth value of the content of the manuscripts—do they contain eternal religious truth or merely historical information?—, about their contemporary legitimacy and the ways in which they should be apprehended. Such questions go beyond the purpose of manuscript conservation, but are nonetheless central to it; a brief look at the recent history of Islam in Algeria will help us to situate the terms in which they are debated.

THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE ZAWĀYĀ

As indicated above, most manuscript collections used to be owned by families descended from saints or scholars, many of whom were attached to Islamic and Sufi teaching institutes (*madrāsas* or *zawāyā*).¹³

¹² See for example Bouterfa, *Les manuscrits*, 15–6, and “La sauvegarde des manuscrits du Sud algériens en débat,” *El Moudjahid* (October 29, 2005); “D’Alger à Tamanrasset, un mois pour le patrimoine et les attentes,” *La Tribune* (April 19, 2007); and “Algérie: pillage des manuscrits. De hauts responsables impliqués,” *Infosoir* (May 8, 2007).

¹³ The former term refers exclusively to urban Islamic teaching institutes, whereas the latter can also mean a Sufi lodge, a saint’s tomb, and the activities that are carried out in it. Most present-day *zawāyā* seem to have been established in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries.

As can be guessed from the overlapping terminology, distinctions between both were of tendency rather than essence,¹⁴ and with the beginning of the most recent wave of Algerian Reformism in the 1930s, the term *zāwiya* came to stand for all representatives of “traditional”—i.e., non-Reformist—forms of Islam. The *zawāyā* mainly derived their revenues from the considerable land-holdings attached to them as religious endowments (*aḥbās*, sing. *ḥubūs*). These lands were worked either by the *ṭalaba* (students) of the *zāwiya*, by sharecroppers or, further south, by slaves belonging to the *zāwiya*.¹⁵ Thus, in addition to representing a certain “kind” of Islam, the *zawāyā* also came to exemplify a certain type of social, political and economic order.

This order was fundamentally at odds not only with most publicly declared French notions of justice and modernity, but also with those that crystallised within the nascent nationalist movement from the 1930s onwards. Under French colonial rule, unless the representatives of the *zawāyā* chose to collaborate with the French, their land-holdings were confiscated, thereby dealing a mortal blow to the material base of Islamic education throughout Algeria.¹⁶ Whenever they did cooperate with the French administration, they lost much of their social and spiritual legitimacy.¹⁷ Due to this partial collaboration and Reformist accusations of their “furthering of superstition” to the detriment of “orthodox Islam,” the *zawāyā* came under fire from various strands of nationalism in the decades leading up to the war of independence (1954–62).¹⁸ The rare *zawāyā* that had survived the war

¹⁴ See for example Houari Touati, *Entre Dieu et les hommes: saints, lettrés et sorciers au Maghreb (17^e siècle)* (Paris: EHESS, 1997), and Filali, *L'Algérie mystique*.

¹⁵ The best-known example of *hubus* land worked by slaves is probably that of the Tijaniyya *zawāyā* at Temacine and Aïn Madhi, said to possess several hundreds slaves, and clearly implicated in slave-trade even after it had officially been abolished (see the documents preserved in the French overseas archives, the *Centre d'archives d'outre-mer* (CAOM) in Aix-en-Provence, boxes 12H50, 16H44, 16H46 and 16H51–3). More generally, the southern *zawāyā* played an important role in the organisation and finance of Saharan and trans-Saharan trade, as witness for example the commercial correspondence kept at the *zāwiya* of Akabli near Aoulef.

¹⁶ Turin, *Affrontements culturels*. France occupied Algiers in 1830 and then gradually expanded her dominion over the rest of what is now Algeria, subduing Kabylia by 1857 and reaching the last independent outpost, the Touat in the Algerian South, in 1902. Algeria gained independence from France in 1962, after eight years of intense conflict.

¹⁷ For one such example, see Julia Clancy-Smith, *Rebel and Saint: Muslim Notables, Populist Protest, Colonial Encounters (Algeria and Tunisia, 1800–1904)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

¹⁸ Ali Merad, *Le réformisme musulman en Algérie de 1925 à 1940* (Paris: Mouton, 1967).

were shut down at independence by the newly established Ministry of Religious Affairs, unless they were reconstructed in order to serve as government-run training centres for a new generation of imams, now paid and selected by the state.

Even if the opposition between “Reformist” and “traditional” Islam had never been as clear-cut as political rhetoric would like us to believe, even if the families who had originally run them often succeeded in reinvesting their traditional prestige either in the national administration or in the new state-run Islam, and even if in reality local traditions of religious practice often continued privately, these families had, *qua* religious families at least, lost their intellectual legitimacy in the public realm.¹⁹ This loss of legitimacy on the part of individual families and institutions was in turn projected onto the intellectual tradition to which they belonged. “Local Islam” as represented by the *zawāyā* came to be seen as somewhat morally tainted, and clearly as a far cry from “orthodox Islam” thought to be based not only on direct access to the Qurʾān and the *sunna*, but also on Middle Eastern models. The practical impact of such public discourse was region-specific, however: in much of the West and the South, “traditional” religious families and institutions continued to yield considerable influence, whereas in Berber-speaking areas, their loss of legitimacy was exacerbated from the 1970s onwards by a heightened consciousness of a separate “Berber identity” to which all Arab influence – including Islam and local written traditions in Arabic—could appear not just as foreign, but also as potentially threatening and destructive.²⁰

This loss of legitimacy of the tradition represented by the *zawāyā* had social, but also material consequences. With the devaluation of the tradition of which their manuscript holdings were an integral part,

¹⁹ For the very flexible practical boundaries between “Reformist” and “traditional” Islam, see Judith Scheele, “Recycling *Baraka*: Knowledge, Politics and Religion in Contemporary Algeria,” *Contemporary Studies in Society and History* 49, no. 2 (2007), 304–28. For the contemporary importance of “traditional” practices, see Sossie Andezian, *Expériences du divin dans l’Algérie contemporaine: adeptes des saints de la région de Tlemcen* (Paris: CNRS, 2002), and Mohand Akli Hadibi, *Wedris: une totale plénitude. Approche socio-anthropologique d’un lieu saint en Kabylie* (Algiers: Zyriab, 2002).

²⁰ See, for example, messages sent to the various Kabyle web-sites, such as <http://www.kabyle.com/> (accessed 31 January 2009); see also Judith Scheele, *Village Matters. Knowledge, politics and community in Kabylia (Algeria)* (Oxford: James Currey, 2009).

the skills needed to access them—familiarity with the Maghribi script, knowledge of authors and sources cited—has become rare among the new generation. Furthermore, the “classical Arabic” now taught in Algerian schools and broadcast on television reproduces Middle Eastern models rather than local precedents.²¹ After a first inspection, younger people in southern Algeria often told me that manuscripts found locally were written in *dārija*, spoken Algerian Arabic, where in fact the terms they picked out were classical (dictionary) Arabic used in everyday speech in Algeria, but uncommon in the Hijaz.²² Even more important is the distinction between French and Arabic speakers, commonly construed as a social and cultural divide.²³ Although the ability to speak “proper” classical Arabic is publicly valued, in reality French remains the true language of social advancement: it is still used on all higher levels of administration, and most branches of natural sciences—apart from teacher training—are taught in French at university.²⁴

Concretely, this means that members of religious families who have been successful in integrating the new system, and have thereby been able to maintain their past prestige, feel they cannot directly relate to the tradition represented by the manuscripts. On the other hand, those who retain knowledge of classical Arabic as used locally have only limited access to state resources, and feel incapable of promoting their own, if they indeed feel a desire to do so. The general rhetoric of the necessity to conserve the “national patrimony” that those manuscripts represent thus hides tensions internal to Algerian society, leading to frequent misunderstandings and mutual mistrust, while forcibly

²¹ Despite a strongly felt lack of qualified Algerian teachers, Algerian primary education was Arabised straight after independence in 1962. Secondary education followed suit in the early 1970s, as did, more gradually, higher education in the social sciences and humanities. See Gilbert Grandguillaume, *Arabisation et politique linguistique au Maghreb* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1983), 96–105.

²² The distinction between colloquial and classical or “real” Arabic (*fuṣḥā*) is as omnipresent throughout Arabic-speaking countries as it is impossible to establish objectively. What matters seems to be the shared notion of a universal and self-evident standard against which local realities are compared and usually found wanting, rather than its actual existence or practical use. In contemporary Algeria, *fuṣḥā* is inevitably associated with the Standard Modern Arabic as taught in school and spoken on satellite television.

²³ Aïssa Kadri, “Intellectuels algériens: aux fondements de la division,” in *Parcours d'intellectuels maghrébins. Scolarité, formation, socialisation et positionnements*, ed. Aïssa Kadri (Paris: Karthala, 1999).

²⁴ Grandguillaume, *Arabisation*.

asking questions that show ignorance on both sides, to the embarrassment of all.

In recent years, however, the heritage represented by the *zawāyā* and their manuscript collections has attracted considerable interest, expressed in conferences on related matters, visits paid by government officials to various *zawāyā*, and the increased public voice accorded to their representatives.²⁵ Many of these local *zawāyā* and their networks of support had in fact remained central to local politics since independence, and used as such by the central government; however, this sudden degree of publicity was new. It was partly caused by the equally very public success of political Islam, most clearly expressed by the electoral victory of the Front Islamique du Salut (FIS) in 1991. To the administration at the time, “traditional” Islam appeared perhaps as a convenient and none too threatening antidote to the more challenging claims to religious legitimacy put forward by the FIS and related movements.²⁶ Despite a decade of civil war, during which most “Islamists” were outlawed, killed or quietly incorporated into government, this interest has been sustained until today, and the most recent government-run conference on Sufism took place in autumn 2006.

Yet government interest was also mirrored locally by attempts to reconstruct *zawāyā* through private means.²⁷ Local religious families clearly perceived their chance to reclaim some of their lost authority, even more so as the economic reorientation of the 1980s sometimes allowed them to reclaim land they had lost at independence. This process became more intense in the 1990s, when the partial loss of

²⁵ For a critical account of one of these conferences, see S. Hadj Ali, “Algérie: le premier séminaire national des zaouias,” *Maghreb, Machreq, Monde Arabe* 135 (1992), 53–62.

²⁶ As many commentators (e.g. Hugh Roberts, “The FLN: French Conceptions, Algerian Realities,” in *North Africa: Nation, State and Region*, ed. E.G.H. Joffé [London: Routledge, 1993], 111–41), as well as popular jokes point out, the relationships between the FIS and the FLN government were rather more complex than the public rhetoric of opposition would make us believe. Nonetheless, it is public rhetoric that provides the framework for contemporary debates, and thus cannot be simply ignored. After the FIS had won the first round of presidential elections, the elections were cancelled by the military. The literature on the violent and ongoing struggles that followed is vast and cannot be done justice here. For various (more or less “objective”) attempts at explanation, see Luis Martinez, *La guerre civile en Algérie* (Paris: Karthala, 1998), Hugh Roberts, *The Battlefield Algeria 1988–2002* (London: Verso, 2003), and Lounis Aggoun and Jean-Baptiste Rivoire, *La Françalgérie. Crimes et mensonges d’Etats* (Paris: La Découverte, 2004).

²⁷ For a more detailed discussion of these developments, see Scheele, *Recycling baraka*.

sovereignty of the national government and the generally high level of violence allowed claims to be voiced and often also to be defended with other than legal means. At the same time, the assertions of religious families were challenged as local associations with little or no connection to these families or government started to redefine the *zāwiya* tradition as part of their own particular local—rather than national—history. They thereby put forward yet another claim to “ownership” of the *zawāyā* and all they represent, which fed into larger debates over historical and intellectual legitimacy in contemporary Algeria.

The sudden revival of interest in manuscript collections that occurred from the mid-1990s onwards was thus not an isolated occurrence, but part of a larger “rediscovery” of Algeria’s long-neglected intellectual and religious heritage, and of ongoing conflicts over social and political legitimacy between central government and local actors. Yet despite common concerns and suspicions, local reactions differed from area to area, or even from one manuscript collection to another, showing how deeply such matters are engrained in local history and society. In the following paragraphs, I shall point out some of these differences and commonalities using two case studies, the first of which takes us to Kabylia, a Berber speaking area in north-eastern Algeria.

ARABS AND BERBERS

Kabylia is probably the area that has caused most problems to the Algerian government since the country gained independence in 1962, from an early uprising against the freshly established government in 1963 to the beginnings of Berber political demands (the “Berber movement”) in 1980 and more recent political trouble in the early 2000s.²⁸ Since the late 1970s, claims for the recognition of the Berber identity of the area have become central to the expression of discontent in the region. This “Berber identity” is most frequently described as a cluster of values glossed as “democratic,” and is publicly symbolised by the Berber language.²⁹ In the area, linguistic, cultural

²⁸ For further details, see Ali Guenoun, *Chronologie du mouvement berbère. Un combat et des hommes* (Algiers: Casbah Editions, 1999), Alain Mahé, *Histoire de la Grande Kabylie, XIX^e-XX^e siècles* (Paris: Bouchène, 2001), and Farid Alilat and Shéhérazade Hadid, *Vous ne pouvez pas nous tuer, nous sommes déjà morts. L’Algérie embrasée* (Paris: Editions n° 1, 2002).

²⁹ See, for example, Salem Chaker, *Berbères aujourd’hui, Berbères dans le Maghreb contemporain* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1999).

and political demands are thus bound up, and might on occasion amount to the rejection of everything associated with the Arabic language and, by extension, Islam.

Yet this strict dichotomy is of recent date. Before the French colonial occupation, Kabylia used to be famous for the large number of renowned *zawāyā* present on its territory.³⁰ These *zawāyā* maintained close contact among each other, with other rural *zawāyā* throughout the Maghrib and with the intellectual centres of Béjaïa, Constantine and Tunis. As a result of this, the Kabyle mountains host a considerable number of manuscript collections of great value, most of which are written in Arabic.

However, these collections have attracted little attention, as they do not easily match either the government's largely Reformist agenda or local "Berberist" notions of identity. They have thus largely dropped out of public conscience, reaffirming the widespread notion that Kabylia has long been deprived of its own historical sources, and indeed lacks altogether a written tradition. This difficult relationship to local intellectual heritage is further exacerbated by the ambiguous status of local families of saintly descent, who tend to be defined as past "feudal lords" of Arab origin, and thus not as Kabyles, but as "foreigners." Yet their descendants also represent a large percentage of contemporary Kabyle university teachers, high-ranking government officials, doctors and lawyers. They thus continue to be at the origin of much written discourse about the area, while maintaining an intellectual and socio-economic influence that is sometimes resented. All these factors put together render an objective appreciation of "Kabyle Islam," as partly represented by local manuscript collections, politically highly sensitive.³¹ In turn, this means that large parts of locally

³⁰ Merad, *Le réformisme musulman*. For a historic description of these *zawāyā*, see Henri Aucapitaine, *Zaouïa de Chellata: excursion chez les zouaoua de la Haute Kabylie* (Geneva: Imprimerie Fick, 1860) and the relevant sections in Adoplhe Hanoteau and Aristide H. Letourneux, *La Kabylie et les coutumes kabyles* (Paris: Challamel, 1872–3); for more recent appraisals, see Djamil Aïssani, "Timeemert n'Ichellaten. Un institut supérieur au fin fond de la Kabylie," in *Les Manuscrits Berbères au Maghreb et dans les Collections Européennes: Localisation, Identification, Conservation et Diffusion* (Méolans-Revel: Atelier Perrousseaux, 2007) and Djamel Eddine Mechehed, "Zaouïa d'Ibn Abu Daoud à Akbou. Un institut pas comme les autres" (2007). Allan Christelow, *Muslim law courts and the French colonial state in Algeria* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985) notes the high number of trained jurists from Lesser Kabylia who were employed throughout the Constantine region in the second half of the nineteenth century.

³¹ As becomes obvious throughout Kamel Chachoua, *L'Islam kabyle: religion, état et société en Algérie* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2001).

existing historical sources and intellectual tradition remain ignored, thus accruing the intellectual dependency of the area on outside sources of knowledge and traditions of scholarship.

The “discovery” of a large manuscript library at Tala Ouzrar, in Beni Wartilan, Lower Kabylia, in 1994, thus came not only as something of a surprise, but also as a slight embarrassment—embarrassment dealt with rather reluctantly by an association based in the city of Béjaïa, the Groupe d’études sur l’histoire des mathématiques à Béjaïa (GEHIMAB), founded in 1991 by local academics and civil servants.³² The association’s stated aim is the “*épanouissement de la personnalité algérienne*,” through the knowledge of local history on all levels, but also, it seems, through its (re)-definition as part of the intellectual history of the Mediterranean. This is achieved with the broad support of regional institutions, schools, universities and village associations, and through collaboration with trans-Mediterranean networks linked to Italian, Spanish, Egyptian and French universities.

The president of the association, Djamil Aïssani, is an internationally renowned mathematician, trained in Ukraine and currently teaching at the University of Béjaïa. His father had been one of the first French primary school teachers in the vicinity, but he is also a descendant of a prestigious local religious family and comes from an area renowned for the high number of *zawāyā*. Djamil’s scholarly and academic credentials are beyond doubt, and the same can be said of his social and political status. He is on easy terms with everybody who matters locally, government officials as well as members of the opposition. He clearly feels uncomfortable speaking Arabic, but used to be the vice-spokesman for the association of Arab students in the USSR. Entirely francophone, hardly a practicing Muslim and consciously Kabyle, he invests much energy and time into the rediscovery of the intellectual history of the area, for educational purposes, but also because it frequently overlaps with his own family history.

³² The decentralisation of higher education in Algeria launched in the 1980s, which led to the opening of a centre of higher education in Béjaïa in 1983, was crucial for this initiative. For more information on GEHIMAB, see the association’s web-site, available from <http://www.gehimab.org> (accessed 31 January 2009); for a more critical appraisal, especially concerning the treatment of the manuscript collection discussed below, see Mohand Akli Hadibi, “Le Groupe d’Etudes sur l’Histoire des Mathématiques à Béjaïa. Une association indépendante à la recherche du patrimoine d’une ville et de sa province dans l’Algérie d’aujourd’hui” (Doctoral thesis, EHESS, Paris, 2006).

Other members of GEHIMAB have similar backgrounds, having become part of the local state apparatus while maintaining a critical distance to it. They are for the most part francophone and well-educated, and part of Aïssani's far-reaching network of friends and colleagues. Although the activities of the association, aiming to revalorise local culture and history, clearly need to be understood against the backdrop of the Berber Movement and could not have taken place without it, the members of the association have always stayed away from the latter's more radical fringes, although they of course know its main activists and might on occasion be counted among them; hence, although relations between both might be tense at times, they are mostly marked by mutual respect and acknowledged interdependence.

The association's "discovery" of the manuscript collection in question was almost accidental, or at least it is now portrayed as such: Djamel Eddin Mechehed, its current owner, visited an exhibition organised by the association and thought they might help him "do something" with his manuscripts.³³ The collection itself, containing about 300 manuscripts, had mainly been assembled by Mechehed's great-uncle, al-Mühüb b. Lahbīb, who lived in the second half of the nineteenth century in the small and remote village of Tala Ouzrar where he acted as local imam, teacher, notary and copyist—many of the manuscripts are in his own hand. He also seems to have been a rather shrewd businessman, who succeeded in concentrating not only the religious prestige of the family, but also most of the material property in his own hands.³⁴ His relative prosperity was one of the preconditions for the constitution of such a collection; others were his frequent visits to all the major markets in the area looking for manuscripts, and his belonging to a wide-reaching scholarly network. His collection was passed on to Mechehed's father, who was himself an imam, but who, due to the considerable religious and political changes in the area from the 1930s onwards, had led a life of wandering from one position to another in various small villages on the right

³³ The following paragraphs are based on interviews with Djamel Aïssani and Djamel Eddin Mechehed, conducted in Béjaïa on February 11th and April 2nd, 2007, on a large number of informal conversations held over the past five years, and on a trip to Tala Ouzrar where I was accompanied by both of them, another member of the association, and the local mayor and president of the *daira* (department), on April 4th, 2007.

³⁴ Hadibi, "Le Groupe d'Etudes".

bank of the Soummam River, before settling down with his manuscripts in Béjaïa.

Sole heir to the library, Mechehed keenly felt the obligation of having to “do something” with these materials, in order to make their existence known and to preserve them from further damage. Yet his initial attempts to interest the authorities or competent university departments throughout the 1980s failed. He still bitterly regrets sending a sample of manuscripts to the university of Tlemcen and to the National Library in Algiers, without receiving an answer or ever seeing the manuscripts again. On encountering GEHIMAB, his original intention was to offer them the entire collection, pleased at finally having found somebody locally to help him carry his burden. GEHIMAB, however, aware of the potential political implications of such a gift, was not prepared to accept it. After several unsuccessful demands to the Ministry of Culture for financial support—the time of more general interest in manuscripts had not yet come—GEHIMAB and Mechehed contacted the Canadian Embassy and succeeded in convincing them to finance the restoration of the house in Tala Ouzrar where the collection had originally been stored.³⁵ The local town hall was shamed into participation by foreign interest, and agreed to help finance and to oversee the works. At the time of writing (summer 2007), a library and research centre are under construction in Tala Ouzrar, while the manuscripts remain in Mechehed’s house in Béjaïa waiting to be transferred to the new facility.

Djamil Aïssani is certainly proud of the results of this project. Yet he seems even more pleased with having finally got rid of the “can of worms” it might have easily turned into. He is especially relieved that, despite personal threats and more popular slander condemning him as “Islamist” or “retrograde marabout,” the Berber Movement officially recognised the construction of the library as a way of “furthering Berber culture.” His initial worries were well justified in the rather animated climate of the late 1990s and early 2000s that saw many a building burn down for lesser crimes.³⁶ They also influenced the ways the

³⁵ In the Algerian context, where foreign aid and NGOs are virtually non-existent, and easily frowned upon as “foreign meddling,” this is a highly unusual procedure.

³⁶ In 2001, Kabylia was shaken by sustained demonstrations and riots against central government, attacking and sometimes demolishing buildings associated in one way or another with state institutions (for further details, see Alilat and Hadid, *op. cit.*, and Mohammed Brahim Salhi, “Le local en contestation: citoyenneté en construction. Le cas de la Kabylie,” *Insaniyât* 16 (2002), 55–97. Ruins of these buildings

collection was first presented: in its catalogue and secondary publications, the association chose to stress the “local” (read “Berber”) and “scientific” (read “universal” and thus politically neutral), aspects of the collection.³⁷ Descriptions of the collection were widely publicised throughout Kabylia, but also and especially in relevant universities and institutions in France, thus making it part of a larger, unquestionably valuable, whole. Besides, the library that is being built (according to “traditional Kabyle models”) avoids any reference to its potential religious significance—in clear opposition to all other Kabyle libraries that I have visited, which remain unambiguously imbued with *baraka* (blessing, the main defining quality of a saint and a saintly lineage).

For the same reason, perhaps, it was decided to “keep” the manuscripts in Tala Ouzrar, rather than to build a library in Béjaïa itself. A two-and-a-half-hour’s drive from Béjaïa, on a road often less than safe, with no public transport, near a village that is virtually deserted, with no running water or electricity, and hard to reach by foot even from the local administrative centre, the library at Tala Ouzrar can hardly be considered public. This, more than any other political arrangement, might have been crucial for the success of the project; it also helped to anchor both the Arabic manuscripts and the urbanised promoters of the project in the proverbial “*fin fond de la Kabylie*,”³⁸ and to avoid unpleasant questions over the ownership of the collection, defining it as belonging to the locality rather than to “the nation” or to a specific family.

Yet even so close to home, problems had to be held at bay. Any outside investment in an economically marginalised and practically

can still be found in most Kabyle towns, constantly reminding local actors of the fragility of their own position.

³⁷ Djamil Aïssani and Djamel Eddine Mechehed, *Manuscrits de Kabylie: catalogue de la collection Ulahbib* (Algiers: CNRPAH, 2007). In the catalogue, this was partly achieved by placing much emphasis on categories such as “mathematics” and “astronomy” (as opposed to “astrology”) that might have made little sense to nineteenth-century scholars. Six out of 25 categories are clearly intended to be identified as “scientific,” compared to seven with obviously religious content, although “religious” manuscripts outnumber “scientific” ones two to one. For descriptions of the library, see the GEHIMAB web-site (<http://www.gehimab.org/>).

³⁸ Expression generally used by GEHIMAB to describe Tala Ouzrar. It has to be noted here that the region of Tala Ouzrar, Beni Wartilan, occupies a special place in Kabylia: less densely populated, home to the region’s perhaps best-known Islamic intellectuals, largely bilingual, and part of the Arabic-speaking *wilāya* (department) of Sétif, it is in many ways marginal to Kabylia as it is most often imagined, both in Algeria and in France.

deserted area runs the risk of attracting too much interest by people who think they might benefit from it, and vehement hostility by those who think that they did not benefit as much as they should have done. The sudden interest in the Mechehed manuscript collection also rekindled tensions internal to the family who owned them. Other descendants of the nineteenth-century owners of the collection suddenly made their appearance, questioning Mechehed's legitimacy and intentions, and claiming parts of the collection as their rightful property. The fact that family papers, contracts and records of contestable inheritance divisions were part of the collection exacerbated potential conflicts, as did the presence of researchers and other willing ears open to conflicting claims. The accusation of the manipulation of genealogies and of past or present heritage hunting became the stuff of everyday life. Yet it became clear very soon that pure saintly genealogy without the necessary political support to validate it in any practical way has but little effect. In this sense, past *baraka* inevitably needs to be backed up by contemporary *baraka* that in turn can only be brought about by "closeness" to government institutions and, to a lesser degree, foreign embassies.

GEHIMAB's involvement in the re-establishment of the manuscript collection of Tala Ouzrar thus amounted to much more than mere "discovery," and should rather be qualified as a reinvention of the collection in terms that were acceptable to various groups in contemporary Kabylia, Algeria and the wider world. This was made possible by placing the collection and its guardian into contemporary networks of powerful relations and political efficiency, and by a successful balancing act between regional, national and international sources of funding, between government involvement and private initiative, and between various notions of local, regional and national culture and identity. GEHIMAB's regionally established position and the polysemy of its membership and purpose were the necessary preconditions for this. It allowed them to work with regional government institutions while remaining independent of them, and to be identified with local intellectual traditions of which they nevertheless stayed aloof. Indeed, such a position of relative ambiguity seems to be fundamental to the success of similar projects throughout Algeria. This is at least the case of the very different, but similarly marginal area that we shall now turn to: the Touat, a group of oases in the Algerian South.

NORTH AND SOUTH

In the past, the Touat oases were a crucial relay for trans-Saharan caravans, and most mediaeval Arabic descriptions of the area note their importance. This did not only influence the local economy, but it also turned the Touat into an important centre of intellectual exchange and scholarship. A large number of its oases boasted Islamic teaching institutes; students came from far away, as did teachers and teaching materials.³⁹ Inversely, religious figures from the Touat could be found throughout southern Algeria, working as teachers and jurists both in pre-Saharan settlements and among nomadic tribes in the far south.⁴⁰ Furthermore, the Touat served as an instruction centre for sub-Saharan slaves who were converted in its oases before being sent on to the North.⁴¹ The influence of Touati centres of learning declined with the arrival of the French army further north, and *a fortiori* with French occupation of the Touat itself in 1902. However, French occupation caused less physical destruction here than elsewhere, and, the climate helping, the Touat now counts the proportionally largest numbers of manuscripts in the country.⁴²

The social upheavals mentioned above, although far from negligible, were less intense here than in the north. French observers estimated that before their occupation of the Touat, up to seventy percent of land and water rights were owned by *sharîfs* (descendants of Muhammad) or *mrâbits* (descendants of saints).⁴³ This land was either

³⁹ See, for example, Alfred-Georges-Paul Martin, *A la frontière du Maroc: les oasis sahariennes (Gourara, Touat, Tidikelt)* (Algiers: Imprimerie algérienne, 1908), Faraj Mahmûd Faraj, "Iqlîm Tuwât khilâl al-qarnayn al-thâmin 'ashr wa-l-tâsi 'ashr al-milâdiyin" (Doctoral thesis, University of Algiers, 1977), and al-Bakrî, *Al-nubdha fi ta'rikh Tuwât wa a'lâmihâ min al-qarn 9 ilâ al-qarn 14 hijrî* (Aïn M'lila: Dar El Houda, 2005).

⁴⁰ CAOM 22H26, see also Marceau Gast, "Modernisation et intégration: les influences arabo-islamiques dans la société des Kel Ahaggar (Sahara algérien)," *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord* 14 (1975), 203–19, and Jeremy Keenan, *The Tuareg, people of the Ahaggar* (London: Allen Lane, 1977).

⁴¹ Carette, *Recherches sur la géographie*, and Daniel Shroeter, "Slave Markets and Slavery in Moroccan Urban Society," in *The Human Commodity. Perspectives on the Trans-Saharan Slave Trade*, ed. E. Savage (London: Frank Cass, 1992), 185–213.

⁴² Qawaydar Bashâr and Mukhtâr Hassâni, *Makhtûtât wilâyat Adrâr* (Algiers, 1999), and Bouterfa, *Les manuscrits du Touat*.

⁴³ See Robert Capot-Rey and W. Damade, "Irrigation et structure agraire à Tamentit," *Travaux de l'institut de recherches sahariennes* 21 (1962), 99–119, Yves

worked by slaves or, more frequently, by *hartānīs* (landless labourers). Although with national independence such unequal property relationships were theoretically abolished, and more importantly, many *hartānīs* were more ready to benefit from state education and look for work elsewhere, the political and spiritual prestige of the religious families persists, as do many at least notional relations of dependence and differences of status.⁴⁴ Where they are salient, socio-economic dividing lines tend to be drawn between *hartānīs* and *hārrs* (“free”), or rather, as it is generally put, between “black” and “white,” without explicit reference to religious prestige. There is thus no comparable public discourse to that found in Kabylia stigmatising religious families as “feudal lords,” although this might be more appropriate here than elsewhere.

Similarly, there is no wholesale rejection of the tradition they represent. On the contrary, where Kabyles are proud of their secularism, Touata tend to stress the uninterrupted tradition of Islamic learning, and especially of piety and spirituality, as something that makes them superior to people from the North. And indeed, any casual observer is struck by the large number of children in Qur’anic schools, the everyday piety of most people, and the predominant role that large religious families continue to play. Most formerly important sharifian families have succeeded in maintaining their privileged position, by becoming part of the national administration and benefiting from grants to study in the cities of the North, by maintaining their positions as religious leaders now backed up by the government (working for local representations of the Ministry for Religious Affairs, for example), or by carrying on to influence social life and politics through informal networks of religious prestige.

Guillermou, “Survie et ordre social au Sahara. Les oasis du Touat-Gourara-Tidikelt en Algérie,” *Cahier des Sciences Humaines* 29, no. 1 (1993), 121–38, and Jean-Claude Granier, “Rente foncière et régulation économique dans le Gourara algérien,” *Revue Tiers-Monde* 21, no. 83 (1980), 649–64, for examples from the Gouarara, a group of oases 200 kilometres further north with a similar socio-economic organisation. Some more figures can be gleaned from French military surveys, e.g. CAOM 22H36. Local legal documents stating water rights and regulating inheritance generally support French estimates.

⁴⁴ For various reasons and in opposition to the north, Boumedienne’s land reform of the 1970s was only applied to about a tenth of land owned in the south (Guillermou, “Survie et ordre social au Sahara,” 131). Similarly, political influence often remained in the same hands, as only the relatively rich had been able to support the struggle for independence.

Despite these continuities and parallels, local religious references have changed. Religious knowledge has, as elsewhere in Algeria, become more unified and follows Middle Eastern fashions, as does the Arabic locally learned as “classical.” Religious standards are now in large part derived from satellite TV, mostly broadcast from Saudi Arabia, the Gulf and Lebanon. The same is true for books on general religious knowledge: even those books that are published in Algiers tend to be based on Middle Eastern scholarship. This means that although most people, and especially members of sharifian families, are aware of the importance and the sacred nature of the manuscripts they own, these are seldom referred to as more than abstract sources of religious truth, not least because they are difficult to read and understand for people brought up in a different kind of religious and linguistic tradition.

Furthermore, there tends to be a slight unease with the more “unorthodox” parts of the local tradition, resulting in implicit fears that the content of local manuscripts, once open to public scrutiny, might cause some embarrassment. This fear is mixed with a more general uneasiness among owners of manuscripts as to their real value. Open access to, and public comparison of, manuscripts would result in direct competition between neighbouring families as to the authenticity of their collections; it is thus generally agreed that it is better to refrain from such activity. All these elements lead to a certain paradox: although everybody agrees that these manuscripts are important, indeed so important that it is often difficult for anybody from outside the family to have access to them or even to know about their existence, what exactly should be done with them and who should do it remains as much a mystery here as in Kabylia.

The first local association that undertook the protection, cataloguing and conservation of manuscripts in the Touat, the Association des recherches et des études historiques de la région d’Adrar, was founded in Adrar, the regional capital, in 1985, five years after the Berber movement got off the ground in Kabylia.⁴⁵ As the name indicates, the initial aims of the association were broad and touched on the promotion of local history writ large, including prehistory and colonial history.

⁴⁵ The following paragraphs are based on interviews with Abdelkader Kabouya, president of the association, and Mehdi Titafi, one of its founding members and formerly director of the Centre national des manuscrits. These interviews were conducted in Adrar on March 7th and 21st, 2007, respectively.

In reality, though, it mainly concentrated its energies on promoting issues related to manuscripts, and particularly their cataloguing and conservation.

The association was founded at the instigation of the local Direction de la Culture to organise celebrations to mark the anniversary of the birth of the fifteenth century Tlemceni scholar al-Maghîlî, who had spent a large part of his career in the Touat.⁴⁶ Most members were part of the first generation of local civil servants, who had been educated during the war or in the years immediately following independence in the *lycées* and universities of the North, where teaching was then still exclusively in French. Many, but by no means all, were themselves descendants of influential families in the area, a fact that clearly helped them gain access both to the national administration and to local manuscript libraries. However, they were administrative rather than theological “experts.” This, and the fact that most of them claim that they find it difficult to read the manuscripts, were probably equally indispensable for the initial success in convincing local sheikhs both of the legitimacy and the relative harmlessness of the project. The association collaborated closely with the Direction de la Culture in Adrar; indeed, boundaries between local government and the association remain fluid, as most members are active in both areas.

This close connection became especially salient when, in the early 1990s, Mehdi Titafi, one of the members of the association, was appointed head of the Direction de la Culture in Adrar. He is the descendant of a local religious family, but spent most of his early life further north, in Laghouat, Béchar and Oran. Although he went to Qur’anic school as a child, he finds it difficult to read local manuscripts. He nevertheless prides himself in his considerable knowledge of local history, which is almost exclusively drawn from French

⁴⁶ Today, al-Maghîlî (1440–1504) is mainly known for the role he played in West Africa (see, for example, John Hunwick, *Shari’a in Songhay: the replies of al-Maghîlî to the questions of Askia al-Hajj Muhammad* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985]) and for having instigated the destruction of the synagogue in Tamantit, a *qsar* just outside Adrar (cf. Jacob Oliel, *Les Juifs du Sahara. Le Touat au Moyen Age* [Paris: CNRS, 1994] and Hunwick, *Jews of a Saharan Oasis. Elimination of the Tamantit Community* [Princeton, N.J.: Markus Wiener, 2006]). His career brought him from Tlemcen to Adrar and then Gao and Kano, where he acted as an adviser to various West African rulers. His life thus bears witness not only to inter-communal tensions and violence, but also to the importance of trans-Saharan connections to local intellectual life at the time.

colonial sources, and boasts of his mother's Berber origins—at least to foreign researchers.

As soon as he was appointed, he used his influence to construct a new facility to house a manuscript library in Cousan, a small *qsar* (fortified settlement) only a few kilometres away from Adrar, but with no public transport. Although Cousan had been the seat of the regional *qâdî*, this choice was clearly a compromise. The library in Cousan is relatively small, and the collection is looked after by Shaykh al-Ṭayyib, a representative of a junior branch of the *qâdî*'s descendants, who works as an imam, that is to say as a low-ranking government official without real opportunities of a better position or social status. Shaykh al-Ṭayyib spends his time teaching in the local Qur'ānic school, copying his manuscripts, or gardening. The library is frequently visited by government officials who like to show it off to outside visitors, and by government parties, with no specific interest in manuscripts aside from a general pride in their existence. All these people need to be entertained, an obligation Shaykh al-Ṭayyib seems to accept as incumbent on government investment in the library. His cousins, direct descendants of the *qâdî* settled in the neighbouring *qsar* and employed in Adrar, seem indeed relieved that Shaykh al-Ṭayyib thus bore the brunt of government attention.

Similar projects had been envisaged in Tamantit, the ancient capital of the Touat situated twelve kilometres south of Adrar, and in Métarfa in the Gourara. Tamantit is home to several prestigious religious families, who own between them many hundred manuscripts, which they keep in their homes. In this case, however, the project failed because of the deep disagreement about the exact location and architectural style of the library: should it be situated in an old mud building in one of the old *qsar*, as the Direction de la Culture suggested? Or should it be in a concrete building with all the amenities of modern life at some distance from the *qsar* on open land, as demanded by the shaykhs? Different notions of status, "tradition" and the "proper place" of the former religious elites in contemporary Algeria clearly played a part here, as did tensions among the different families. Since each *qsar* is associated with a particular family, the choice of one site over another is inevitably seen as a form of preferential treatment. Furthermore, the religious families in Tamantit have "made it" in other ways, and would gain but little from being more closely associated with the Direction de la Culture, especially in terms that smacked of dependency and of the admission of their own inability to look after

their own. The project in Métarfa seems to have failed for similar reasons: negotiations as to the construction of a government-funded national library ground to a hold due to debates over the exact location and the architectural style of the building-to-be.

In recent years, government interest in the manuscripts of the Touat has soared. In 2000, the Institut de Bibliothéconomie in Algiers, in collaboration with the Centre du Livre in Arles and the project Manumed financed by the European Union, sent a team of researchers and manuscript conservators to the Touat, followed by further trips in 2001 and 2003.⁴⁷ In 2003, the foundation of a national manuscript centre in Adrar was decided; in 2006, Titafi was appointed its director. His appointment was due to support he could mobilise from friends and researchers throughout the world, as well as to fears that a candidate from the North would jeopardise the centre's chances for success. Indeed, much as Mechehed, most southern manuscript owners are extremely wary of the *pouvoir*, which is here not associated with "Arabo-Islamists" as in Kabylia, but with "irreligious, immoral and frenchified meddling Northerners," whose "excessive" political influence in the area is widely resented, and often read as part of a "long history of expropriation" of southern wealth to the benefit of "the North"—of which the "theft of manuscripts" is but one aspect. Here as in Kabylia, notions of the primacy of "national patrimony," the moral ground for the BNA's centralising policies, have thus little persuasive power, although, of course, national funding is always welcome and indeed expected.

Debates over the administrative status that the centre should adopt brought these tensions to the forefront. Initial proposals intended the construction of an annex of the National Library in Adrar, a project that encountered the fierce resistance of the local shaykhs. After a broadly publicised visit in Adrar, the Minister of Culture decided in their favour; by then, in any case, the then Directeur de la Culture had already made up his mind and started building the centre with regional funds, using as a model a facility he had seen and liked during a trip to one of the Gulf States.

The centre was officially opened in January 2007, and within the next two months some French emissaries, eager to collaborate, arrived.

⁴⁷ For a more detailed description of this project, see Bouterfa, *Les manuscrits du Touat*.

What failed to arrive, however, was most of the equipment, allegedly held back by the National Library in Algiers. And more significantly, the centre did not have any manuscripts.⁴⁸ The actual intentions of the centre with regards to the physical collection of manuscripts were the cause of great suspicion locally. Officially, the first efforts were declared to concentrate on the cataloguing and on the restoration of the “most important” manuscripts, but how should these distinctions be made? And could the centre be trusted to return manuscripts to their owners after they had been restored? And why exactly did they have so much shelf-space?

The first meeting, intended to convince local shaykhs to collaborate with the centre, was held in March 2007. The thirty or so shaykhs that turned up to the meeting were suspicious and reluctant to believe the promises put forward. At the same time, none of them wanted to “miss the boat,” now that government funding and attention seemed so readily available. The atmosphere was thus one of intense negotiation, the shaykhs aiming to hold on to their manuscripts while at the same time converting them into permanent links to the government and real material advantages, whereas the centre tried to get as much as they could without being forced to make concrete promises, while being mindful of tensions between local families.

As much as the meeting was a first step towards legitimising the centre, it also operated a public distinction between those who could officially claim to be “manuscript owners” and those who could not. Indeed, in the Touat, rare are *sharīfs* or even *mrâbits* who cannot muster at least one manuscript to bolster their claim, and the question of what constitutes a true collection rather than random samples of individual manuscripts loomed large in the background. Quantity in this case (a much easier attribute to define and apply than quality) seemed to carry the day. The more learned sheikhs are obviously aware of quality issues, but these do not seem to qualify for public debate.

These tensions and internal hierarchies determined the social interaction among sheikhs themselves, who clearly all knew each other, but tended to stay aloof and to underline their internal differences of status. Some chose to be slightly late or very late, and there was a great commotion of polished four-by-four at the entrance of the centre,

⁴⁸ Apparently, in April 2007, a first shipment of manuscripts did arrive—ironically, from the North.

most of which looked like they had been borrowed for the occasion. Yet one of the most influential religious families in the area had sent but one representative, by car, dressed in a western-style suit, as indeed he would be for his job as head of the Direction des Affaires Religieuses in Adrar. He sat quietly in the back and did not care to talk much to anybody; or, if he did, used local dialect, impeccable *fushā* or French, according to whom he was speaking to. Other sheikhs, who, in terms of religious prestige, were equally well-known and had attracted international interest, but had been less successful in becoming part of the state administration, were conspicuously dressed in *jallāba* (long shirt) and *shāsh* (headdress), and, in flowery *fushā* with local turns, vociferously claimed government support and blamed them for their neglect, pictures of manuscripts branded as a proof. Less established shaykhs, Kunta from northern Mali resident in the “slums” of Adrar, who had so far been kept outside the “manuscript circuit,” and were considered by most people locally as rather dubious, had turned up in a large group.⁴⁹ They saw my presence at the meeting as a chance to improve their own position, and busily waved manuscript letters and business cards at me, until another sheikh thought it fit to warn me, beckoning me outside to tell me to not waste my time on their “scraps of paper.” All in all, the meeting carried on as do many official meetings in Algeria: official speeches, fierce complaints and few results. The most passionate comments I heard in retrospect were complaints about the menu: instead of the customary couscous, the Centre had served only fried chicken and chips...

CONCLUSION

In Algeria as elsewhere, questions of manuscripts conservation are more than merely technical. They lead to debates about how to interpret the heterogeneous cultural and intellectual heritage they represent, what place Islam should play in Algerian history and in contemporary Algeria, and, more generally, what kind of Islam Algerian Islam should be. This question about “what kind” of Islam is more

⁴⁹ Contacts between southern Algeria and northern Mali and Niger have always been intense. Many Arabic- and Tamasheq-speaking people from the Sahel have settled in Adrar, where they first arrived as refugees from the various droughts and civil wars that have hit both countries since the 1970. Although many can boast family connections with Touata families, their status remains ambiguous.

often than not expressed in terms of “whose Islam,” thus associating the traditional religious families with a certain form of religion, and associating this kind of religion with social structures that many now think should be overcome, if needs must by state intervention or even popular violence. This means that debates over how to preserve Algeria’s rich manuscript heritage mostly turn into contests over intellectual and thereby often also social and political legitimacy. This legitimacy is partly dependent on, and partly antithetical to, access to the state apparatus and the redistribution of government funding.

In the Touat, government projects are often seen as ways of ascertaining local influence or gaining access to state funds that are somehow perceived as one’s due. At the same time, they are also condemned as northern “meddling” in local affairs and yet another step towards the “expropriation” of local religious heritage, mirrored by the “theft” of the region’s mineral resources. However, a closer analysis of the situation in the Touat shows just how difficult it is to disentangle government initiatives and representatives from local actions, despite prevailing discourses of sharp dichotomies. Successful projects tend to be based on the collaboration between French-educated administrators and “traditional” shaykhs without direct access to state institutions, and thus inevitably of a relative low status in contemporary Algeria. Where both roles are played within the same family, publicly-funded initiatives seem to fall flat.

The Kabyle case study, on the other hand, provides an example of a local association appealing to outside funding in order to build a local library partly in explicit protest against state conservation policy. All attempts at manuscript conservation in this area need to be read against the background of Berber cultural revival, which, however, is much less monolithic on the ground than it might appear in public statements. Outright rejection of state initiatives, as much as of the hold of formerly influential religious families is even more pronounced here than in the South. Yet even here, social restructuring has never been total, and the involvement of state officials and descendants of local religious families in conservation projects remains crucial. Hence, at a closer look, the fundamental issues at stake remain the same in both examples: the thorny question of “ownership” and “expropriation,” the relationship between public and private, knowledge and science, and the ways in which the deceptively simple notion of “national patrimony” can be adapted to local debates over religious, intellectual and political legitimacy.

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CAMEL TO KILOBYTES:
PRESERVING THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE
TRANS-SAHARAN BOOK TRADE

Graziano Krätli

They try only to describe the soul, but they fail to go into any kind of
detail about the body which is to receive the soul.
– Aristotle

For the words ... are nobler than the accompanying harmonic system,
just as the soul is nobler than the body.
– Friedrich Nietzsche

VICISSITUDES OF A SAHARAN LIBRARY

Sometime between 1830 and 1835, a prominent scholar and Sufi leader from southwestern Mauritania, Shaykh Sidiyya al-Kabīr (1775–1868), made a book-buying trip to Morocco. While in Marrakech, he visited a number of book dealers and bought or received as gifts some two hundred books;¹ of these he kept a list, recording also occasional information about their prices and provenance. The books traveled back with their new owner to Shinqīṭī (Chinguetti), the caravan town and learning center in the Mauritanian Adrar where Shaykh Sidiyya lived at the time, there probably increasing the size and prestige of his library.² The length and circumstances of Shaykh Sidiyya's visit are unknown, and the timeframe itself is based on the oral tradition, but most of the books he bought in Marrakech have come down to us, together with his purchase list.³

¹ Throughout this chapter, “book” is used to indicate a manuscript book, whether bound or unbound, unless otherwise indicated.

² Charles C. Stewart, “A New Source on the Book Market in Morocco in 1830 and Islamic Scholarship in West Africa,” *Hespéris-Tamuda* XI (1970), 212.

³ The manuscript consists of 23 folios. “The first half of it (folios 1–14),” which Stewart reproduces in English translation, “consists of a listing of purchases made from individual book sellers, zawiyas, mosques and donations from the *ikhwān* (...) The second section of the manuscript (folios 15–23),” not reproduced in the article, “is a re-listing of the volumes, but according to branches of Islamic studies, *as defined by the Shaykh*” (ibid., 213, Stewart's emphasis).

At the time of this trip, Shaykh Sīdiyya was almost sixty years old and already a renowned leader in his tribe (*qabila*) and beyond. But it was mostly during the next three decades, when he was consulted regularly on a wide range of legal and political issues, that the Shaykh's authority and influence grew to make him a pivotal figure in Mauritania's affairs during the early period of French colonization. In a culture appreciative of learning and the written word, such as the one in which he grew up, it is legitimate to assume that the Shaykh's library played a significant role—as a source of learning (and, by extension, spiritual and political authority) as well as a tangible collection—in granting him the power and prestige on which his influence was based.

At the time of his death, Shaykh Sīdiyya's considerable possessions, which included one of the largest private libraries in the region, went first to his only son, the renowned poet Shaykh Sīdī Muḥammad (called Sīdnā), and then, after his own passing a few months later, were inherited by the eldest of Sīdnā's four children, Shaykh Sīdiyya Bābā (then five years old), together with the spiritual and political leadership of the *qabila*.⁴

One of the foremost Mauritanian leaders of his time, Shaykh Sīdiyya Bābā (1862–1924) settled in Boutilimit (Bū Tilimīt) to become the French colonial administration's strongest and most persuasive ally in Mauritania, working initially as co-architect of Coppolani's "peaceful penetration" and "pacification" plans, and then, after Coppolani's assassination in 1905, establishing an equally effective collaboration with the man who completed the military conquest of southern and central Mauritania, Col. Henri Gouraud.⁵ This exclusive relationship had direct consequences for the family settlement and their library:

Boutilimit, with its administrative center, military garrison, and French doctor, was a visible sign of the alliance. The French took over the library and house built by Sīdiyya al-Kabir and maintained by his grandson.

⁴ Abdel Wedoud Ould Cheikh, "Hārūn Wuld al-Shaykh Sīdiyya (1919–1977)," in *Les temps de marabouts*, ed. D. Robinson and J.-L. Triaud (Paris: Karthala, 1997), 203. On Shaykh Sīdiyya Bābā, see D. Robinson, "Shaykh Sīdiyya Baba: Co-Architect of Colonial Mauritania," *Islam et Société au Sud du Sahara* 13 (December 1999), 119–37, reprinted in *Paths of Accommodation: Muslim Societies and French Colonial Authorities in Senegal and Mauritania, 1880–1920* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), 178–93; and Paul Dubié, "La vie matérielle des Maures," in *Mélanges ethnologiques. Mémoires de l'institut Français d'Afrique Noire* no. 23 (Dakar: IFAN, 1953), 111–252.

⁵ Robinson, "Shaykh Sīdiyya Baba," 135.

Baba lived close by, and in close association with the colonial administration.⁶

Starting in 1902, Boutilimit became the staging area for the “pacification” campaigns in the regions of Brakna (1903–04), Tagant (1904–05) and Adrar (1908–09). At the time of the latter and most strenuous venture, the French resident commissioner in Boutilimit was Henri Gaden, whose local contacts and diplomatic work proved instrumental in securing Sīdiyya Bābā’s cooperation and support. In acknowledging Gaden’s crucial contribution to the final success of the campaign, Colonel Gouraud noted the “influence discrète et bienfaisante que Gaden avait su prendre sur le marabout de Boutilimit.”⁷ In reality Gaden (who in his letters strongly criticized France’s military involvement in the region) played a much larger and more significant role in Mauritania than the outcome of Gouraud’s campaign implies. During his two-year’s residence in Boutilimit, he developed a local network of scholarly contacts, effectively cultivating Sīdiyya Bābā and other notable marabouts, and acting as a liaison between them and French orientalist such as Maurice Delafosse and Octave Houdas, both teaching at the time at the École des langues orientales in Paris.⁸ Thanks to

⁶ Ibid. Cf. Ould Cheikh: “A Boutilimit, qui n’était jadis qu’un puits foré par son grand-père, Baba cédera la maison bâtie par Shaykh Sīdiyya al-Kabir pour entreposer ses livres et d’autres *impedimenta* aux représentants de l’autorité française qui en renouvelleront la construction” (“Harun Ould al-Shaykh Sīdiyya,” 204).

⁷ Anna Pondopoulo, “À la recherche d’Henri Gaden (1867–1939),” *Islam et Société au Sud du Sahara* 16 (December 2002), 19. On the relationship between Gaden and Gouraud, see Gouraud, *La pacification de la Mauritanie* (Paris, 1910), and Gouraud’s letters to Gaden, now in the Centre des archives d’outre-mer (CAOM), Fonds Gaden, in Aix-en-Provence (CAOM AP 15). In two of these letters (March 11 and April 7, 1917), Gouraud “indicates that he is sending seven volumes in Arabic requested by Sīdiyya Baba” (Robinson, “Shaykh Sīdiyya Baba,” 131, note 56).

⁸ “Il semblerait que l’effort principal de Gaden à Boutilimit résidât dans la construction du réseau de ses partenaires et alliés, qui se concrétisait, notamment, dans l’établissement des contacts avec les grands marabouts mauritaniens. Sa correspondance garde les traces de ces relations, consolidées par les dons de livres, sollicités par le marabout. L’achat des livres à l’intention des marabouts n’était pas un geste fortuit, mais faisait partie d’une démarche systématique que Gaden préparait de conserve avec son ami de longue date, Maurice Delafosse (1870–1926), à cette époque chargé du « course de dialectes soudanais » à l’École des langues orientales de Paris, et le beau-père de ce dernier, Octave Houdas, spécialiste de la langue et des pays arabes et professeur à la même école. L’offre stimulait la demande et *vice versa*, à tel point que l’on peut imaginer une véritable politique de contacts avec les marabouts, appuyée sur l’envoi de livres. Ainsi, le Cheikh Sīdya a-t-il envoyé à Delafosse, par l’intermédiaire de Gaden, la liste d’ouvrages qu’il voulait se procurer. Pour répondre à sa demande, Delafosse avait renvoyé cette liste à une des libraires d’Alger, don’t le nom lui était

them and their contacts in the North African book market, Gaden was able to fulfill the marabouts' requests for books, while at the same time pursuing his own scholarly interests and also providing his Parisian contacts with valuable, first-hand information from the field.

Based as it was on intellectual exchange and reciprocal respect, the relationship with Sīdiyya Bābā and other Mauritanian scholars bore obvious political and diplomatic fruits (as acknowledged by Gouraud himself), but it also proved uniquely advantageous to Gaden the scholar, by giving him access to hitherto unknown manuscript materials that would further his linguistic and literary studies. Twice, in the course of 1909, his "utile et féconde activité scientifique" and his "contributions importantes" were praised by another French orientalist, Louis Massignon, in two articles he published in the Parisian journal *Revue du monde musulman*. Both these articles were based on original material that Gaden had sent from Mauritania.⁹ The second of them, a review of the Shaykh Sīdiyya family library based on an inventory compiled by Gaden (upon Massignon's request), was the very first analysis of the contents of a traditional Saharan library to appear in a scholarly journal.

Massignon's inventory comprises 1195 titles (683 printed and 512 manuscript works), which he quantifies in terms of subject and format, recording at the top of the list traditions of the Prophet Muḥammad (*ḥadīth*), with 98 printed and 83 manuscript titles, followed by Mālikī law (72 and 95), and mysticism (*taṣawwuf*, 58 and 64). Based on these raw statistical and bibliographic data, Massignon then provides a few observations and comments, namely on the fact that, even in the middle of the Sahara, the library of a shaykh already contained more printed than manuscript works (which he sees as a sign of the fast spread of printing across Islamic lands);¹⁰ the title list is a perfect

indiqué par Octave Houdas. Les livres chez un certain Mourad Turki, « quoique un peu plus chers qu'au Caire et à Tunis, où on les imprime, sont d'un bon marché stupéfiant. Vous vous en rendez compte d'ailleurs au vu de son catalogue (en arabe), dont je lui dis de vous envoyer quelques exemplaires; cela pourra vous servir pour le cas où Cheikh Sidia ou d'autres vous demanderaient de renseignements de même nature. Mourad Turki possède en libraire ou peut procurer tous les ouvrages dont les marabouts mauritaniens peuvent avoir envie" (Pondopoulo, 19–20).

⁹ "Un poète saharien. La Qasīdah d'Al Yedāli," *Revue du monde musulman* 8, no. 6 (Juin 1909), 199–205, and "Une Bibliothèque saharienne," *Revue du Monde Musulman* 8, no. 7–8 (Juillet-Août 1909), 409–18.

¹⁰ "La révolution commencée à la fin du dix-huitième siècle par les imprimeurs de Stamboul, reprise et menée à bien par les typographies à bon marché du Caire il y a

indication of which aspects of the Arabic culture (i.e., orthodox theology and law) Islam allowed to spread across the Saharan region; and how this trend is further confirmed by the distinctly Maghribi character of the library, whose juridical works clearly outnumber mystical titles (226 vs. 122).¹¹

After Sidiyya Bābā's death in 1924, the family affairs were initially managed by his eldest son, Muḥammad, and when he passed away a couple of years later, the *qabila's* spiritual and political leadership went to his younger brothers Ahmed and Abdallahi, respectively. It was the latter who, in January 1934, showed the family library to Odette du Puigauveau and Marion Sénones, two Frenchwomen who stopped briefly in Boutilimit on their way to the Adrar (and more library visits). The experience is recorded in Du Puigauveau's account of their trip:

One of Abdallahi's suite took a heavy key which was hanging round his neck, went up the three crumbling steps and unlocked the door. Shutters were thrown open, and the evening sun lit up two bare and rather dilapidated rooms. In them were the wooden chests covered with leather, studded with heavy nails and bound with iron bands, which contained all the wisdom of Islam.

Hundred of rare books were there in sumptuous bindings: Moorish Korans and also Moroccan, Tunisian and Egyptian, and many books of philosophy, poetry, and law. Four generations of the family had laboriously collected them. There was a most precious Koran of the thirteenth century of which Abdallahi was particularly proud. It had been brought from Egypt by some of the disciples which his great-grandfather was constantly sending over all the Musulman world.

Abdallahi's disciples took the books out of the chests and pointed out to us the ornamental capitals and mystic illuminations. Their faces glowed with pride: all these books belonged to their beloved master, and it was for them as well as for him that they had left their families and their countries.¹²

This was the first of several trips that Du Puigauveau and Sénones would make to western Sahara between the 1930s and the 1960s, often spending months at a time with their Moorish hosts, sharing their

moins de quarante ans, a gagné déjà la cause du livre imprimé jusqu'aux plus lointains confins de l'Islam" ("Une Bibliothèque saharienne," 411).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Odette Du Puigauveau, *Barefoot through Mauritania*, trans. Geoffrey Sainsbury (London: George Routledge & Son, 1937), 95–6.

nomadic lifestyle while researching their material and cultural life. Their ethnographic accounts, written by Du Puigaudeau and illustrated by Sénones, contain valuable information on virtually all aspects of Moorish life, including unique examples of leatherwork applied to book production.¹³ The couple paid at least two more visits to Boutilimit, in 1951 and 1960, both times as houseguests of Hārūn wuld Shaykh Sidiyya Bābā (1919–77), Abdallahi’s half brother and now custodian of the family and library.¹⁴ Hārūn had studied with a prominent intellectual figure of his *qabila* and then, after a grand tour of western Sahara on the scholarly steps of his great grandfather, had settled in Boutilimit to pursue a career as local archivist and historian. In the 1950s he gave up his Arabic teaching at the local elementary school and, taking a position at the Institut Supérieur d’Études Islamiques (recently founded by Abdallahi), embarked on a vast and ambitious project that would absorb him for the rest of his life and consolidate his scholarly reputation. Originally conceived as a biography of Shaykh Sidiyya al-Kabīr and his descendants, during its long compilation (1952–77) the *Kitāb al-akhbār* grew, in size as well as in scope, to include an impressive array of written and oral sources. At the time of Hārūn’s death, the manuscript consisted of over six thousand notebook pages and a potpourri of anecdotal, archival, genealogical, doxographical and literary material documenting the Shaykh’s relationship with his contemporaries in the region.

One of the most “amazing” things that Hārūn experienced during his research—and recorded in his work in progress—was the visit of a young American scholar, Charles C. Stewart, who arrived in Boutilimit on the 4th of April 1968 with an official letter from the Direction des Affaires Culturelles in Nouakchott, authorizing him to conduct research on the life of Shaykh Sidiyya al-Kabīr, the topic of his doctoral thesis at the University of Oxford. Soon Stewart realized how Hārūn’s project “effectively re-established the core of his father’s library,” which at the death of Bābā had been dispersed among several of his sons,¹⁵ and in the following two decades was instrumental in

¹³ The articles they published between 1967 and 1981 in the Moroccan journal *Hespéris Tamuda* have been collected in Odette du Puigaudeau, *Arts et coutumes de maures* (Paris: Ibis Press, 2002).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 234.

¹⁵ Charles C. Stewart, “The Harun Ould Sidia Collection of Arabic Manuscripts,” *History in Africa* 18 (1991), 349.

drawing scholarly attention to this major repository, while also laying the foundations for its future preservation.

One of Stewart's earliest and most significant contributions in this regard was the publication of the manuscript recording Shaykh Sidiyya al-Kabīr's book-buying trip to Marrakech. In stressing the value of this document, Stewart pointed out that it "does offer insights into the nature of book selling business in Marrakech as well as the texts which were made available, as a result of Shaykh Sidiyya's visit to Marrakech, to *fuqahā'* in one region of the southern Sahara and West Africa, as well as the books which one scholar from the area thought to be advantageous to have at hand."¹⁶ At the same time, while resisting the temptation "to analyze the subject matter, authors, their countries of origin, the chronological periods in which they wrote, etc. in hopes of better defining the nature of influence which these purchases represented," he hoped that the "document will encourage other students ... to take up analyses of classical Islamic education in West Africa and the influence of particular texts or schools of thought common to Maghribi and Sudani studies in the interpretation and practice of Islam in West Africa."¹⁷

Three years after this manuscript, Stewart published his book-length study of Shaykh Sidiyya's life and work, based on his doctoral thesis at Oxford University. Here he acknowledged his "great debt of gratitude" towards Hārūn w. Shaykh Sidiyya Bābā, whose catalog of his great grandfather's literary works and correspondence had provided most of the book documentation in Arabic, and who had allowed the young scholar to preserve much of this collection on microfilm.¹⁸ The opportunity to pay off this debt presented itself in 1985, eight years after Hārūn's death, when his son Bābā contacted Stewart with the request to microfilm the entire family library as a way of preserving it for future students and scholars. This led to the Hārūn w. Shaykh Sidiyya Library Microfilm Project, a major initiative funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and co-sponsored by the University of Illinois (Stewart's home institution).

After a preliminary survey in June 1986, over 100,000 pages were filmed between October 1987 and December 1989, resulting in more

¹⁶ Stewart, "A New Source," 246.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Charles C. Stewart, *Islam and Social Order in Mauritania: A Case Study from the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 168.

than 100 reels of film. These covered the manuscript and lithographed books in the family library reconstituted by Hārūn, a collection of nineteenth-century correspondence gathered by the same, and the contents of a couple of small personal collections related to the main library. Even before microfilming started in Boutilimit, Stewart and his team were grappling with the “problems posed by the development of a finding aid for the collection that might be compatible with other catalogs of Arabic manuscript material in west Africa.”¹⁹ The issue of compatibility was affected by the inconsistency and inadequacy of most cataloging initiatives to date, since

Despite the attention given to Arabic manuscript collection and preservation in Africa during the past twenty-five years, the several accounts of these collections are widely dispersed, and the systems of annotation employed in them do not always agree on the types of information most essential for cataloging and indexing. Our first task, therefore, was to arrive at a corpus of data for annotation of each manuscript that was full enough to make for easy and rapid identification, yet brief enough to avoid the usual delays in making the material available to researchers.²⁰

Consequently, Stewart’s challenge was to determine the level of information that needed to be recorded for each manuscript in order to meet the needs of researchers and scholars. A “valuable model” was offered by the recently published inventory of the Ahmadu Sheku’s library, plundered by the French army during the 1890 siege of Ségou and now at the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris.²¹ But the real breakthrough came with the latest advances in software development, which allowed Stewart’s team to build a finding-aid program using a software application (ARABDOS) that enabled simultaneous use of Latin and Arabic characters. With the addition of a programming language specifically designed for database management (Turbo Pascal 3.0), three separate programs were developed to create and manipulate data files, to produce hard copies of such files, and to create and print index files. Individual records consisted of thirty-one data fields (although less than one third were generally used) taking up approximately two

¹⁹ Charles C. Stewart and Kazumi Hatasa, “Computer-Based Arabic Manuscript Management,” *History in Africa* 16 (1989), 404.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Noureddine Ghali, Sidi Mohamed Mahibou, and Louis Brenner, *Inventaire de la Bibliothèque ‘Umarienne de Ségou* (Paris: CNRS, 1985). Stewart reviewed the catalog in *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 20, no. 2 (1987), 357–8.

kilobytes of memory.²² The program, called AMMS (for Arabic Manuscript Management System), was used to catalog the Shaykh Sidiyya materials selected for microfilming as well as the manuscript collection of the Institut Mauritanien de Recherche Scientifique (IMRS) in Nouakchott (about 6000 items from a large number of repositories, mainly in the Trârza region of southwestern Mauritania). The two catalogs were published in 1994 and 1992, respectively.²³

The development of a second version of AMMS, in the early 1990s, made it possible to add over 19,000 records from the published catalogs or hand-lists of six manuscript collections in Niamey (Institut de Recherche en Sciences Humaines), Timbuktu (Centre de Documentation et de Recherches Historiques Ahmed Baba, CEDRAB), Paris (Bibliothèque nationale de France/Fonds Archinard) and Evanston, Illinois (Northwestern University, Africana Library). The entire database of 19,778 records was migrated to a Microsoft Windows platform in 2002, and within a couple of years it became available on the Web with enhanced search functionality and a graphic interface. More recently, Stewart's team entered into an agreement with the London-based Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation to add fifteen thousand records from their catalogs of West African manuscripts.²⁴

Today, the AMMS database, part of the West African Arabic Manuscript Project portal, is the only union catalog of manuscripts from this region available in any format or media, and one of only two online databases describing Arabic manuscripts from the Saharan-Sahelian zone. Providing searchable access to the bibliographic records of over eighty private manuscript libraries from four countries (Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal), it allows researchers and scholars to investigate and assess what Bruce Hall and Charles Stewart, in a chapter of this book, call the historic "core curriculum" of West African scholarship, meaning the authors and works that were most in

²² For a description of the project and the catalog structure, see Charles C. Stewart, "Towards a Uniform Finding Aid Format for Manuscripts," *ISSS* 1(1987), 115–9, and Stewart and Hatasa, 403–11.

²³ C.C. Stewart, S.A.A. Salim, and A.M. Yahya, *Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscript Collection at the Institut Mauritanienne de Recherche Scientifique/ TMs* (photocopy), 5 vols. (Urbana: University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign, 1992); C.C. Stewart, *Catalogue of Arabic Manuscripts among the Ahl Al-Shaykh Sidiyya*, 4 vols. (Urbana: University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign, 1994).

²⁴ C.C. Stewart, "A West African Arabic Manuscript Database," in *The Meaning of Timbuktu*, ed. Shamil Jeppie and Souleymane B. Diagne (Cape Town: HRSC, 2008), 321–9.

demand during the late pre-colonial and colonial periods. Yet, being essentially a consolidation of existing catalogs, rather than a cataloging initiative in its own right, the database carries over the flaws and the limitations of those previous works, whose cursory character and basic content are generally the result of the pioneering circumstances in which they were achieved. Because of this, the obvious advantages of a searchable database are somehow offset by the shortcomings of the cataloging component, especially the unevenness of the amount and type of information across the collections (with the Niamey records being the poorest overall, and the Falke occasionally more eloquent), and the limited attention paid to the physical description, including its material and technological aspects. This is confined to the “script,” the “dimension” (i.e., number of folios) and the “condition,” the latter category being used only sporadically and rather ambiguously to note such different realities as the support material, the type of medium, vocalization, completeness or incompleteness, and—more significantly, although very rarely and a bit simplistically—the state of the manuscript at the time it was examined.²⁵

The other online database mentioned above is OMAR (Oriental Manuscript Resource), which was developed in the late 1990s by the University of Freiburg in collaboration with the Center of Informatics of the University of Tübingen. Unlike the West African Arabic Manuscript Database (WAAMD), OMAR is focused on the collections of one institution (the Orientalisches Seminar in Freiburg) and one country, containing basic cataloging description and digitized images of over 2500 manuscripts microfilmed by Ulrich Rebstock, Tobias Mayer and Rainer Oßwald “during several research trips in Mauritania between 1979 and 1997.”²⁶ Each record contains a number of standard fields (author, date, title, keywords, date of copy, place,

²⁵ A few examples: “Excercise [sic] book paper, with occassional [sic] vocalisation” (Paden/155/MS); “Lithographed copy” (Paden/361/ME); “Incomplete. The end is missing” (Timbuktu 4763); “Paper slightly damp-stained, frayed and worn at edges. Text vocalised” (Falke/0502/MS); “Paper frayed and torn at edges. MS incomplete. No end.” (Falke/2092/MS); “One margin slightly eaten by insects; some stains on margins” (Hunwick/552/ME).

²⁶ For a description of the project, see <http://omar.ub.uni-freiburg.de/> (accessed 25 January 2010), and Matthias Brückner and Paul-Thomas Kandzia, “OMAR : An Online Database for Oriental Manuscripts.” In *International Cultural Heritage Informatics Meeting: Cultural Heritage and Technologies in the Third Millennium*, Proceedings of the International Cultural Heritage Informatics Meeting Held in Milan, Italy (3–7 September 2001), 2:401–5.

pages, status, readability), of which four (name, title, place and keyword) can be searched either individually or simultaneously. In addition to the number of pages, “status” is the only field that provides some sort of information about the physical object, although this is limited to the manuscript being complete or incomplete.

While the WAAMD and OMAR are important resources for the study of the intellectual history of West Africa, the amount of codicological information recorded, and the level of access that is provided to such information (i.e., database interface, searchability and overall usability) do not do full justice to the remarkable scholarship that prompted and sustained both initiatives. To some extent, however, this should not come as a surprise, since both databases were conceived and implemented primarily to serve literary interests and purposes. Therefore, they meet the expectations and the needs of literary scholars, but inevitably disappoint codicologists and other students of the book as a material and technological object. To answer the questions of these other users (i.e., to answer them exhaustively, partially or even negatively), resources such as the two under discussion, and any other similar efforts that aim at exhaustiveness and authority, should address all the major components of a manuscript’s description (even if many fields will not be populated for lack of relevant data), namely: (1) preliminary data (location and name of the repository; shelfmark; language); (2) title of the work and author’s name; (3) summary description of the work (incipit, explicit, content, colophon, lacunae); (4) writing surfaces/support (including provenance and watermarks, if any); (5) textblock (dimensions of the page and the written area, layout, prickings and rulings, foliation and/or pagination, quires, signatures, catchwords); (6) scripts/hands (number of hands, type of script/s, letter-pointing, vocalization); (7) ink(s); (8) painted decoration and illustration; (9) bookbinding; (10) transmission of the text; (11) history of the manuscript; (12) state of preservation/conservation; (13) remarks; (14) references.²⁷

The imbalance between the “intellectual” and the “physical” dimension of the West African Manuscript Database (and consequently between its search features and catalog component) is not peculiar to this resource, but has more or less affected all initiatives that have dealt

²⁷ Adam Gacek, “Describing the Manuscript,” in *Arabic Manuscripts: A Vademecum for Readers* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 333–8.

with these materials in the past, and is likely to affect those currently in progress or in their planning stages. Consequently, it may help to identify and understand the causes of a problem which, if not properly addressed or recognized, may have serious consequences for the long-term preservation of, and access to, this rich and unique form of cultural heritage.

TRANS-SAHARAN BOOK LEGACIES

As one of the finest and most-documented traditional libraries in West Africa, the Shaykh Sīdiyya exemplifies the evolution of interest and attention this type of cultural heritage has generated in the last one hundred years or so, since it first appeared on the Western scholarly radar. At the same time, this is only one of a number of West African libraries that have come under Western scrutiny, which in turn represent a fraction of the entire manuscript heritage of the region.²⁸

At least two other “manuscript-rich” areas—Timbuktu and the Niger River Bend in Mali, and the ancient *ksour* of Wādān (Ouadane), Shinqīṭī, Tīshīt (Tichit) and Walāta (Oualata) in Mauritania—have been known since colonial times for their scholarly traditions and libraries, which provided a solid motivation for their inclusion in UNESCO’s World Heritage List (in 1988 and 1996, respectively). Unlike Boutilimit, which was “settled” by Shaykh Sīdiyya al-Kabīr in the 1830s and grew around his family (and library), Timbuktu and the Mauritanian *ksour* represent, in the words of the World Heritage Committee, “exceptional examples of settlements built to serve the important trade routes of the Sahara Desert, and which were witness to cultural, social and economic contacts for many centuries.”²⁹ As a

²⁸ Since only a small part of this fraction has been competently and accurately cataloged, it is still impossible to quantify this patrimony with any degree of accuracy. Consequently, very few estimates have been attempted, one of the earliest and most reliable being the one made in the early 1960s by Mukhtār wuld Ḥamidūn and Adam Heymowksi, described below.

²⁹ For the two citations, see United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), *Report of the World Heritage Committee*, 12th Session (Brasilia, Brazil, 5–9 December 1988), 23 December 1988; and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), *Report of the World Heritage Committee*, 20th Session (Merida, Mexico, 2–7 December 1996), 10 March 1997.

result of this listing—and the official recognition that came with it—the two designated sites have drawn growing international attention, support and media coverage, quickly becoming a symbol of West African Islamic manuscript and intellectual heritage.

Timbuktu “la Mystérieuse,” whose magic minarets had long stirred the European imagination, acquired a new postcolonial glitz after its mosques and manuscripts were featured by Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr. in an episode of his television series *Wonders of the African World*.³⁰ This, and the “the entrepreneurial activities of an enterprising few African custodians of local literary capital,”³¹ resulted in large-scale, well publicized initiatives such as the Timbuktu Manuscripts Project/AREMALT (Archivage Electronique des Manuscrits de Tombouctou), a five-year pilot phase launched in 2000 with funding from the Ford Foundation and NORAD, the Norwegian development agency, and the objective “to develop a comprehensive electronic document management system for the IHERI-AB [formerly CEDRAB] collection in Timbuktu which would qualify IHERI-AB as a service provider for private collectors.”³² More recently—and far more ambitiously—an “inter-governmental agreement between South Africa and Mali was signed in 2002 ... to undertake a government-to-government project aimed at conserving the manuscripts at the Ahmed Baba Centre [i.e., IHERI-AB] and at rebuilding the library and archival infrastructure of the Institute.”³³ The Tombouctou Manuscript

³⁰ The six one-hour episodes were first broadcast on PBS on October 25–27, 1999, and subsequently distributed in a variety of formats, including VHS, DVD, CD, and a printed book illustrated by renowned photographer Lynn Davis. Timbuktu features prominently in the fifth episode, entitled “Road to Timbuktu,” which shows Gates visiting the Sankoré mosque and the Haïdara family library accompanied by the Islamic scholar Ali w. Sidi.

³¹ Charles C. Stewart, “Reading Books by Their Covers: Cultural Boundaries in Saharan Africa,” *Saharan Studies Association Newsletter* 11, no. 2 (December 2003), 2.

³² Archivage Electronique des Manuscrits de Tombouctou – AREMALT, available at <http://www.sum.uio.no/research/mali/timbuktu/arefalt/arefalt.html> (accessed 31 March 2009), which includes a full project description in French.

³³ Thabo M. Mbeki, “The South Africa-Mali Timbuktu Project: Utilizing Skills and Talents to Advance the African Renaissance,” *Journal of Pan African Studies* 1, no. 3 (2006), 66. See also: Mary Minicka, “Safeguarding Africa’s Literary Heritage; Timbuktu Rare Manuscripts Project,” paper delivered at the LIASA (Library and Information Association of South Africa) Western Cape Higher Education Libraries Interest Group, Winter Colloquium, 15 June 2006; Shamil Jeppie, “Re/discovering Timbuktu,” in *The Meanings of Timbuktu*, ed. Shamil Jeppie and Souleymane B. Diagne (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2008), 1–18; Aslam Farouk-Alli and Mohamed Shaid Mathee, “The Tombouctou Manuscript Project: Social History Approaches,” *Ibid.*, 181–9.

Project—as it was called to emphasize the leading role played by the University of Cape Town (UCT)—was officially launched on Africa Day, 25 May 2003, as a Presidential Special Project and the first cultural initiative of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). The first phase involved a “training program for Malian conservationists and heritage professionals,” conducted in collaboration with the National Archives of South Africa in Pretoria, the National Library and the Library of Parliament in Cape Town, and a couple of exhibitions of manuscripts from Timbuktu.³⁴

For over three decades, although with far less publicity and glitter than Timbuktu, Mauritania has persistently pursued and taken advantage of international cooperation and development opportunities to assess, protect and preserve its rich manuscript heritage. The first countrywide survey of West African manuscripts was conducted here soon after the independence, with funding from UNESCO, by Mukhtār wuld Ḥamidūn, a leading Mauritanian scholar, and Adam Heymowski of the Royal Library in Stockholm. They estimated the existence of about 40,000 manuscripts and inventoried almost 2000 of them in their ground-breaking *Catalogue provisoire*.³⁵

The next decade saw the creation of the Institut Mauritanienne de Recherche Scientifique (IMRS) and the Institut Supérieur des Etudes et Recherches Islamiques (ISERI), in 1975 and 1978 respectively, which in just a few years managed to collect several thousand manuscripts from around the country, virtually taking over the role and responsibilities of a centralized national repository for this type of cultural heritage. As such, the IMRS soon became a natural government partner for foreign-led initiatives like the manuscript cataloging and microfilming projects funded by the Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Foundation) in the early 1980s³⁶ and by the U.S. National Endowment for the Humanities later on.

³⁴ Mbeki (ibid.) mentions a current “exhibition of sixteen Malian manuscripts on show at the Standard Bank gallery in Johannesburg.” A second, travelling exhibition of forty manuscripts from the IHERI-AB, “Timbuktu: Script and Scholarship,” was shown in a number of South Africa venues between August and December 2008.

³⁵ Adam Heymowski and Mokhtar Ould Hamidoun, *Catalogue provisoire des manuscrits mauritaniens en langue arabe préservés en Mauritanie* (Nouakchott: Bibliothèque nationale de Mauritanie; Stockholm: Bibliothèque royale de Suède, 1965–6).

³⁶ A collaboration between the IMRS and the Orientalisches Seminar at the University of Tübingen, the DFG/GRF project resulted in the microfilming and summary cataloging of over two thousand manuscripts from 260 public, private and *waqf*

Moreover, in June 1989 Jean-Marie Arnoult, General Inspector of French Libraries and UNESCO consultant, visited a dozen libraries in Shinqīṭī, Wādān and Akjoujt and prepared a report with specific recommendations for the preservation and conservation of their manuscripts.³⁷

In 1993, the Mauritanian government established the Fondation Nationale pour la Sauvegarde des Villes Anciennes (FNSVA), with the aim to plan and implement a strategy for the protection and preservation of the ancient caravan towns of Shinqīṭī, Tishīt, Wādān and Walāta. This paved the way for their inclusion, three years later, in UNESCO's World Heritage List, which in turn allowed Mauritania to obtain a five-million dollar credit from the World Bank for a cultural heritage project to be implemented over five years (2000–05). This ambitious, multi-purpose initiative undertaken by the new Project Sauvegarde et Valorisation du Patrimoine Culturel Mauritanien (PSVPCM) consisted of three main components aimed at the conservation, promotion and management of cultural heritage through a series of pilot activities focused on specific sites, resources and initiatives.³⁸ Some of these activities had to be canceled

libraries around the country, thus creating the conditions for a number of increasingly important scholarly initiatives to be accomplished in the next two decades. These include Ulrich Rebstock's *Rohkatalog der arabischen Handschriften in Mauritien* (Tübingen, 1985), Rainer Oßwald's 1983 Ph.D. dissertation on the trading centers of western Sahara, *Die Handelsstädte der Westsahara: Die Entwicklung der arabisch-maurischen Kultur von Singit, Wadan, Tisit un Walata* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1986), U. Rebstock, R. Oßwald and Aḥmad w. 'Abd al-Qādir, *Katalog der arabischen Handschriften in Mauretien* (Stuttgart: In Kommission bei Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1988), and Rebstock's *Sammlung arabischer Handschriften aus Mauritien: Kurzbeschreibungen von 2239 Handschrifteneinheiten mit Indices* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1989).

The sum and culmination of the work of the "Tübingen group" is represented by two major and related achievements. One is Rebstock's monumental history and bio-bibliography of Mauritanian Arabic literature, *Maurische Literaturgeschichte*, 3 vols. (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2001); the other is the OMAR (Oriental Manuscript Resource) database described above.

³⁷ Jean-Marie Arnoult, *Propositions des mesures de préservation et de conservation des villes anciennes (Chinguetti, Ouadane et Akjoujt)* (Paris: UNESCO, 1989). A decade later, in November 1996, Arnoult would return to Shinqīṭī and Wādān on a second mission sponsored by UNESCO and funded by the Fondation Rhône-Poulenc. See Jean-Marie Arnoult, Marie-Geneviève Guesdon and Sid'Ahmed Ould Ahmed Salem, *Étude préparatoire au traitement scientifique des manuscrits. Bilan bibliographique* (Paris: UNESCO, 1999).

³⁸ World Bank. Implementation Completion Report (Ida-34010 Ppfi-Q1430 Ppfi-Q1431) on a Credit in the Amount of SDR 3.8 Million (US\$ 5.0 Million Equivalent)

or postponed,³⁹ but for the most part significant results were achieved in a number of important areas. These included the organization of an international colloquium in Nouakchott (28–30 April 2002),⁴⁰ the creation of a National Union of Associations of Manuscript Owners (also in 2002), the construction or renovation of three manuscript repositories in Shinqīṭi, Sélibaby and Tishīt, the development of a database of 33,000 manuscripts held in over 800 public and private libraries, the creation of a Geographic Information System, and the training of about thirty archivists, “documentalists” and manuscript owners.⁴¹

The latest initiative to date is a two-year project launched in 2008 with funding from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Autonomous Region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia. Aimed at developing on-site manuscript conservation and restoration skills, techniques and facilities, it involves a training program to be followed by the creation of five conservation laboratories in Noaukchott (IMRS), Shinqīṭi, Wādān, Tishīt and Walāta. In the course of 2008, twelve Mauritians attended a crash course on conservation techniques in Nouakchott, followed by an intensive course at the Regional Institute for the Restoration of Documentary Materials in Passariano (northeast of Venice), and a theoretical-practical seminar taught by Italian conservators back in the Mauritanian capital.

Obviously, for desert towns like Timbuktu, Shinqīṭi and others survivors of the trans-Saharan trade, all more or less chronically depressed

to the Islamic Republic of Mauritania for a Cultural Heritage Project. Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2005.

³⁹ In particular, the planned publication of ten ancient manuscripts did not go beyond the selection of material and a service provider, “due to the very high costs of the bids tendered to perform this task,” and “the specific actions in favor of archeological sites were canceled [because] the project unit was unable to mobilize the community of Mauritanian and foreign archeologists working in Mauritania and the relevant institutions (the University and IMRS) to cooperate on protection issues.” (Ibid.)

⁴⁰ *Acts du colloque international sur les manuscrits mauritaniens*, Nouakchott, 28–30 April 2002. Previous initiatives of this kind, focused on Mauritanian cultural heritage, were held in Shinqīṭi (October 1995), Milan (May 1998) and Nouakchott (November 1999). See *Actes du 1er colloque international sur le patrimoine cuoturel mauritanien*. Nouakchott, 29–30 November and 1 December 1999. Some of the proceedings were also collected by Attilio Gaudio in *Les bibliothèques du désert* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2002).

⁴¹ According to the “Implementation Completion Report,” the manuscript database is now operated by the IMRS and is available to researchers and institutions. The report, however, does not provide further information about the format, the platform or the conditions of access to this resource, and since the IMRS does not have a Web presence, the catalog is currently available to on-site visitors only.

and increasingly threatened by desertification and depopulation, their manuscript libraries represent a most valuable resource—both intellectually, as repositories of traditional knowledge and Islamic scholarship, and economically, as increasingly popular tourist attractions. In fact, together with a few architectural structures such as Timbuktu's three great mosques of Djinguereber, Sankoré and Sīdī Yaḥyā, Shinqīṭī's Friday Mosque, and Walāta's house paintings, these libraries constitute a unique—and uniquely threatened—form of cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, upon which the case for aid, intervention and cooperation has been built, repeatedly if not always convincingly, over the past two decades by a variety of players and stakeholders, locally as well as nationally and internationally. Popular catch-phrases such as “desert libraries” and “universities of the sands,” first introduced by journalists and travel writers,⁴² have been increasingly used by scholars, conservators and other “concerned parties” to draw attention and funds to a region that has always been easier to stereotype than to “sell” (on the contrary, one can always count on manuscripts to help sell something else, such as a development project or a tour package, especially if they are ancient, remote, and at risk of disintegrating). And indeed the rate at which projects and initiatives to save these “desert libraries” have been planned, publicized and (more or less successfully) implemented, especially in the last ten years, shows the extent to which brittle manuscripts and crumbling minarets can play a key role in the survival and revival of many a once-thriving caravan town, as they draw international attention, promote tourism and attract investments that, in turn, benefit other economic sectors and the community as a whole. The rationale and the potential advantages of a comprehensive, integrated and holistic approach that links together cultural, social and economic life—in the way envisioned by some nongovernmental organizations working in the Saharan region⁴³—are easy to see and hard to deny, at least on

⁴² See for example: Attilio Gaudio, ed., *Les bibliothèques du désert: Recherches et études sur un millénaire d'écrits* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2002), and *Mauritania. Alla scoperta delle antiche biblioteche del deserto* (Firenze: Polaris, 2002); Danielle Rouard, “La ‘Sorbonne du désert,’” *Le Monde* (5 September 1999); Laura Alunno, “Università della sabbia,” *Popoli* 4 (April 1997). Technically speaking, both “desert libraries” and “universities of the sands” (the latter referring to the traditional nomadic educational system of the *maḥaḍra*), should refer specifically to Mauritania, the only West African country whose territory is sixty percent desert.

⁴³ One example of this approach is the feasibility report (*Étude de faisabilité d'un projet de développement communal a Chinguetti*) submitted by the Italian nongovernmental organization Africa '70 to the European Commission office in Nouakchott in

paper. However, the downside of a scenario shaped by development cooperation, with conservation strategies and policies playing only a subaltern role, is that cultural heritage is often short-changed, as manuscripts and minarets (being generally more appealing and photogenic than cattle or water wells) are first used to attract funding and media attention, then rarely receive the amount of financial, professional and technical support that is required to ensure their proper care, long-term preservation and access. Consequently, quick-and-dirty cataloging and preservation jobs tend to be rather common in manuscript areas targeted by international cooperation, since they serve to showcase and substantiate development projects, justify expenses and attract more funding—no matter how accomplished, effective or sustainable their results are.

Yet the cultural heritage of the trans-Saharan book trade extends far beyond the “golden triangle” represented by Boutilimit, Shinqīṭī and Timbuktu, or the development goals of international cooperation; likewise, its full understanding and appreciation involve much more than the inventorying and preservation of a few emblematic libraries and the scholarly dissemination of their contents. Geographically and historically, it concerns a vast area traversed by a complex and ancient network of caravan routes that crossed the desert in a north-south and east-west direction, intersecting at various points, typically in coincidence with oasis groups or other resourceful sites (e.g., salt mines). Since none of the accepted geo-cultural designations—North Africa, West Africa, Sudanic or Sub-Saharan Africa—proves inclusive or relevant enough to represent this perpetually in-between, fluid and transitional region, we will refer to it as Trans-Saharan Africa, meaning the area historically, economically and culturally defined by the movement of people, goods and ideas *across* and *beyond* the desert;⁴⁴

June 1998. Based on two missions undertaken the previous month by a team consisting of a sociologist, a social economist, an architect, a book conservator, a tourist promoter and a tour operator, the report assessed the social, economic, institutional and environmental situation of the town, and outlined a municipal development plan focused on five interconnected and interdependent priority issues: water resources, sand removal, road maintenance, culture (i.e., architecture and manuscript libraries) and tourism.

⁴⁴ Whereas *beyond* refers primarily to the Sahara's northern and southern “shores,” where most caravan termini were located, while also stressing the fact that these end-stations marked the beginning of other commercial routes, reaching farther south into the heart of Africa, or extending in other directions beyond its continental

or simply the area coextensive with the historical plexus of desert-crossing caravan trails and their termini in various directions.

From the close of the first millennium C.E. onward, the trans-Saharan route network was exploited and significantly expanded by Muslim traders in their attempts to tap the rich markets south of the desert. The “Arab conquest of the Sahara,” and the simultaneous spread of Islam to West Africa, had a momentous impact on the region, variously and progressively affecting all spheres of life. Of great moment was the introduction of the Arabic language and writing system, which eventually caused a growing number of commercial, religious and juridical activities to rely upon writing for recording and communication purposes. While only partially replacing verbal communication and the oral tradition, the new medium introduced new, text-based and text-mediated, practices, patterns and protocols of communication and exchange, which in turn led to new forms of intellectual, religious and political leadership founded on the authority of written texts and their authors, interpreters and owners.

As a result of this paradigm shift, books and what they consist of (i.e., concepts and ideas, written language, writing materials, tools and technologies) became part and parcel of the trans-Saharan trade. More specifically, the new “technology of the intellect” developed its own economy by generating and fulfilling a growing demand for new materials (paper, ink, pigments, rawhide and tanned leather), skills (scribal and calligraphic), services and practices (manuscript copying, collecting and storage, etc.),⁴⁵ some of which became available locally, at major caravan towns, while others had to be imported from the Maghrib, Spain, Egypt, the Middle East or southern Europe.⁴⁶ A few more strategically located caravan towns became prominent centers of religious instruction and started drawing teachers and pupils from the entire region and beyond, in some cases gaining a

boundaries. This expansive approach is represented by the inclusion in this volume of chapters focused on Morocco, Algeria and Nigeria.

⁴⁵ “[W]hen I speak of writing as a technology of the intellect, I refer not just to pen and paper, stylus and tablet, as complex as these instruments are, but to the training required, the acquisition of new motor skills, and the different uses of eyesight, as well as to the products themselves, the books that are stacked on the library shelves, objects that one consults and from which one learns, and which one may also, in time, compose.” Jack Goody, *The Power of the Written Tradition* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000), 133.

⁴⁶ Starting in the 13th century, for example, France and Italy replaced Egypt as exporters of paper to Africa (see Terence Walz’s chapter in this volume).

widespread reputation for their spiritual leaders, their schools and the rich libraries that supported them.

Although most surviving libraries are concentrated in the western part of the Sahelian-Sudanic zone, between 10° and 18° N, an area that comprises the southern fringes of Mauritania, Mali and Niger, Senegal and Burkina Faso, and the northern provinces of Guinea, Ghana and Nigeria, manuscripts were copied, collected and preserved in the Mauritanian Sahara as well, especially in trading and intellectual centers along the western route connecting Sijilmāsa (in today's southeastern Morocco) to the salt mines of Taghāza (in northern Mali) and Awdaghust (modern Tegdaoust, in south-central Mauritania), or alternately Sijilmāsa, Taghāza, Walāta (in southeastern Mauritania) and Timbuktu. The northern section of this route passed through the *ksour* of Wādān, Shinqīṭī, Tidjikja and Tīshīt, all in the Mauritanian Sahara and home to prominent merchant-scholars and 'ulamā', renowned for their learning, their spiritual leadership and their libraries.

Until the nineteenth century, when books printed in Islamic lands started to circulate and be collected by African scholars, these libraries consisted entirely of manuscripts, typically unbound and penned on paper (but also on calf, sheep, goat or gazelle parchment), and protected by wrap-and-tie leather covers, leather pouches (for transportability) or simply wooden boards. Sizes varied depending on various factors (provenance, subject, intended use, availability of paper), but typically ranged between the formats of a modern hardcover (145 × 220 mm) and mass market paperback (110 × 175 mm).

For the most part, books entered private collections in any of three ways. They were authored or copied locally, in the latter case for scholars and "booksellers" who, if needed, would send emissaries around the region to buy, commission or copy specific manuscripts (copy-on-demand being a common practice in a manuscript culture, just like print-on-demand is increasingly doing in today's electronic and desktop publishing).⁴⁷ Alternatively, books were bought locally, from

⁴⁷ The best known and, possibly, most enterprising manuscript collector and dealer in the region was Aḥmad Būla'rāf (1884–1955), the Moroccan-born scholar-bookseller of Timbuktu who employed a significant number of roving and in-house copyists. See Abdelkader Haïdara's and Ghislaine Lydon's chapters in this volume, as well as Abdelouahed Akmir, "Les activités commerciales et culturelles des marocains de Tombouctou durant la première moitié du vingtième siècle selon les manuscrits," in *Les bibliothèques du désert*, cit. 171–85.

merchants and scholars (or merchant-scholars) who brought them to the region, together with other goods commonly traded across the Sahara (including paper, leather and other book-related materials); or they were obtained (i.e., bought, copied or received as gifts) in Fez, Tripoli, Cairo, Mecca or other major centers in the Islamic world, and in the course of trips that often combined religious, scholarly and business purposes.

Typically (and not surprisingly), manuscripts penned locally were far less accomplished and refined than those coming from the outside, especially from scribal ateliers in Fez, Tunis, Cairo, Damascus, Istanbul or other major urban centers. Their distinctive features are simpler layout and penmanship, basic rubrication, lack of illumination or illustrations, and plain or no leatherwork. While this is due primarily to the limited resources and skills available locally, two other factors played a significant role as well. One is that trans-Saharan manuscript production consisted largely of texts written or copied by and for local scholars and their pupils, often for immediate use and practical purposes such as teaching, study and reference. The other factor is the austere and minimalist aesthetic typical of Moorish culture, which shaped their arts and crafts, and also inspired the ascetic form of Islam practiced by West African marabouts and Sufi orders.

Covering the full range of traditional Islamic disciplines, with an obvious emphasis on religious, legal and related subjects,⁴⁸ these libraries document the evolution of a unique intellectual and literary tradition spanning at least eight hundred years, from the eleventh-century Almoravid expansion across western Sahara to the consolidation of European colonial rule in the years before World War One.

The size and composition of individual libraries varied significantly, changing over time as a result of historical events and circumstances, economic conditions and family affairs.⁴⁹ Typical holdings range

⁴⁸ In addition to the Qurʾān (usually the most elegantly produced manuscripts), major subject areas are jurisprudence (*fiqh*), Qurʾānic exegesis (*tafsīr*), Sufism (*taṣawwuf*), history (*taʾrikh*), monotheism (*tawhīd*), biographies of the Prophet Muhammad (*sīra*), traditions related to the life and deeds of the Prophet (*ḥadīth*), grammar, language, logic, medical theory and practice, and various other scientific, traditional and practical forms of knowledge. For a comprehensive and detailed overview of subject areas and topics covered by trans-Saharan manuscript libraries, see Bruce Hall's and Charles Stewart's chapter in this volume.

⁴⁹ This, it should be noted, is an ongoing process affecting all kinds of repositories through mergers, dismemberments, acquisitions and de-acquisitions, reorganizations and other institutional changes, natural causes, and—last but not least—human

between a few hundred and a few thousand items, with older and larger libraries occasionally showing a remarkable combination of manuscripts produced in the region and brought in from the outside, printed books (sometimes in surprising amounts, as pointed out by Massignon in regard to the Shaykh Sidiyya library), and archival materials such as correspondence, genealogies, legal, diplomatic and commercial papers, often revealing important information about the collections of which they are part, their nature and provenance, and their owners. Since few traditional libraries and collections have been analyzed systematically, extensively and in depth, it is still premature to make assumptions about the ratio of books produced (i.e., written or copied) locally to those purchased abroad, or also the ratio of manuscripts to printed books; however, existing data about the main collections in Mauritania and Mali suggest a sizable local production, as well as an intriguing percentage of printed books.⁵⁰

Therefore, any full understanding and appreciation of this unique cultural heritage, let alone any serious attempts at studying or preserving it, should rightly consider all the material, technological, economic, cultural and intellectual aspects of book production, circulation, consumption and preservation in the area we refer to as Trans-Saharan Africa. However, this goal can be achieved only if the focus of

negligence and incompetence. Today's manuscript libraries in Trans-Saharan Africa are largely the result of two different preservation approaches implemented successfully—if not always successfully—since the independence. One is the form of agglomeration and centralization that in the 1960s and 1970s produced national institutional repositories such as the IMRS and the ISERI in Nouakchott, and the Institut de Recherches en Sciences Humaines in Niamey, Niger. This was followed by a decentralized and cooperative approach, often encouraged and supported by international development and funding agencies, which resulted in the creation of local organizations, “manuscript centers” and owners' associations in heritage sites such as Shinqīti and Timbuktu.

⁵⁰ Of course, any attempt to estimate the size and, consequently, the composition of a manuscript library or collection is determined by the criteria adopted to define an individual item, i.e., what is meant by “a manuscript.” “Another factor which influences the counting of manuscripts,” writes Jan Just Witkam, “is that there is no definition of what should be considered as a manuscript.” J.J. Witkam, “Aims and Methods of Cataloguing Manuscripts of the Middle East,” in *Les Manuscrits du Moyn-Orient: Essais de Codicologie et de Paléographie*. Actes du Colloque d'Istanbul (Istanbul, 26–29 May 1986), ed. F. Déroche (Paris: CNRS, 1986), 2. This is no minor issue, whether we deal with bound or unbound materials, since statistics, assessments and initiatives depending on them (e.g., cataloging, preservation and digitization projects) are ultimately affected by the way manuscripts are counted and accounted for.

attention is shifted from the book as primarily—or exclusively—intellectual content (a view which is naturally promoted and maintained by scholarly traditions, their interests and agendas) to the book as physical object, artifact, commodity and collectible. In other words, the cultural heritage of the trans-Saharan book trade, which is made of tangible as well as intangible realities, material and intellectual aspects, will be preserved and accessible in the long term only if the planning and implementation of specific initiatives are firmly put in the hands of codicologists, conservators, librarians and other professionals who are trained to deal with issues related to the perishable nature of the book and the protean character of information.⁵¹

BODY AND SOUL: MESSAGES, MEDIA, MIGRATIONS

The transmission of knowledge by means of the written word (or, for that matter, any other sign system) is a syncretic process characterized by the transfer of intellectual content from one physical container to another, as with the audio or video recording of an oral performance, the transcription of such a recording, the penning, copying or scanning and digitization of a manuscript. This process, which we may call “physical transmission,”⁵² is defined by such opposite concepts as physical and intellectual, material and incorporeal, tangible and intangible, concrete and abstract, hard and soft, or body and soul. While intellectual content is by nature abstract (and of necessity expressed by words, images, sounds, bytes and other languages and sign systems), the physical container can be variously—although not synonymously—identified as “medium,” “format” or “information package,” and the definition can be further extended to include the human mind (in the case of verbal communication and the oral

⁵¹ One of the few exceptions, by a scholar who is not a historian of the book, is Salah M. Hassan's *Art and Islamic Literacy among the Hausa of Northern Nigeria* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellon Press, 1992), which devotes an entire chapter to the evolution of the Malamic calligraphic style, and no less than three to the “Tools and products of the Hausa Traditional Malam.” The fact that Professor Hassan is an art historian, rather than a literary historian or a historian of Islam, may explain his keener interest in, and consequent focus on, what he aptly calls the “material culture of literacy.”

⁵² In the sense used, for example, by Adrian Brockett, “Aspects of the Physical Transmission of the Qur’an in 19th-Century Sudan: Script, Decoration, Binding and Paper,” *Manuscripts of the Middle East 2* (1987), 45–67.

tradition) or the human body (as with tattooing, piercing, scarification and other forms of body adornment). The continuous transfer of content between containers, which is at the core of information processing and communication, involves some degree of translation (either within or between sign systems) and transformation (largely as a consequence of the adaptation of content to different types of containers).

Ever since the development of writing systems, this metempsychosis has occurred in various ways and with a constant increase of technological dependence and mediation, from the oldest techniques of memorization and oral transmission, transcription and translation, to the most recent forms of digital storage and delivery. Clay tablets, bone and bronze inscriptions, bamboo strips, scrolls, books (manuscript, printed and electronic) and other technological solutions developed and adopted at different times in history to capture, store, deliver and preserve data and information, are all expressions of this dual nature, according to which any sort of information package exists as container and content, medium and message, at one and the same time. While some solutions and technologies proved more successful than others, and therefore spread farther and lasted longer, all share a common fate determined by technological innovation and economic laws: sooner or later they become obsolete and disappear, or they are replaced by something else, newer and better, although still ruled and defined by the same old, ineluctable dualism. In other words, the body will always confine and define the soul it holds, just as the soul will always need a body to inhabit and use as a receptacle and a vehicle. (In a digital context, of course, the “body” consists of an infrastructure of software and hardware components, but the relationship remains.) What changed over time is the growing role of technology in facilitating and accelerating the transfer of content from container to container (and the consequent generation of new content), thus making its proliferation increasingly unpredictable and difficult to prevent and control (especially today, in the age of networked information, mobile communication devices and the Internet, when words, images and sounds can reach millions of destinations around the globe in real time).

Whatever the format or technology used to capture, store and deliver content, a further and subtler characteristic applies to all “information packages” (or any other artifact or manufactured product). This is represented by the difference between *embodied* and

embedded knowledge, the former pertaining specifically to the content—the object of embodiment—, while the latter involves more intimately the container as a material, technological economic and cultural object. In the case of a manuscript book, the physical object embodies (i.e., holds, shapes and to a certain degree represents and defines) the written and visual record of intellectual content (authorial, editorial, institutional, etc.), which being in itself abstract can migrate to another medium or container by act of transcription, translation, photocopying, microfilming, scanning or other transfer technique or technology. For example, the particular copy of the *Risāla* completed in Timbuktu “with praise to God and through His goodly aid, on Monday the 13th of the month of Sha‘bān in the year nine hundred and ninety-five [19 July 1597] at the hand of its scribe Ahmad b. Abi Bakr b. ‘Ali b. D-n-b-s-l,”⁵³ is a distinct and particular embodiment of a literary work existing in other manuscript copies, produced by other scribes using different materials, and today also preserved in other forms, media and formats. What makes this particular copy unique has less to do with its intellectual content (unless it was significantly altered or enhanced for the specific purposes of this version) than with its embodiment, which involved the use of specific materials (paper, inks and pigments etc.),⁵⁴ techniques (ruling, sewing) and skills (calligraphy), as well as the know-how necessary to each production aspect and stage. (For more elaborate books, this list would of course include leather, tooling, binding, decoration and ornamentation.) In other words, *embodied* knowledge is knowledge expressed by and in a particular medium and format, while *embedded* knowledge refers to the material, technological, economic and cultural conditions involved in the making of a particular object and its component parts. This implicit knowledge is obviously more than the eyes can see or the fingers can feel, and while it can be partly inferred by a physical examination of the object under study, a full understanding and appreciation of its nature and implications requires a much wider

⁵³ Described by John Hunwick, “West African Arabic Manuscript Colophons I” *FHA/BI* 7–8 (1982–3), 51–8.

⁵⁴ Regarding this particular manuscript, Hunwick identifies two watermarks related to paper manufactured in Messina and in Normandy, adding that “These two examples illustrate the potential contribution which Arabic manuscripts can make to the history of paper making and the trade in paper, a potential which so far seems to have been untapped.” (Ibid.)

range of contextual and comparative information. That is, it requires specialized competence, expertise and scholarship.

In regard to manuscript description and preservation, embodied and embedded knowledge represent respectively the tip and the submerged mass of the iceberg. Unfortunately, many projects and initiatives sail on the surface of the sea and, failing to address the hidden dimension underneath, tend to produce descriptive catalogs that do not (properly or sufficiently) describe or, even worse, provide preservation solutions more problematic than the issues they purport to address. Poor performances of this kind can easily be attributed to a lack of adequate resources, equipment and expertise; but a deeper and more detrimental cause is to be found in the long-standing scholarly and cultural approach to the “book” as primarily intellectual content, and the consequent and persistent lack of concern for its physical dimension and material culture. While natural enough and hardly surprising (after all, books are made to be read, studied, taught, commented upon and written about), this approach reduces the concept of preservation to “content preservation,” and affects inevitably the scope and purpose of related cataloging and restoration initiatives. Since this form of preservation can be easily achieved by a transfer of (textual) content from one container to another, as with photocopy or microfilm, “conservation” initiatives are often implemented to the extent that is necessary to preserve intellectual content by way of migration (transcription, translation, etc.), reformatting or publication.

As far as the “book” is concerned, however, no real dichotomy exists between intellectual content and physical container, and the two realities are neither mutually exclusive nor contradictory; on the contrary, they are intrinsically and intimately bound, and the obvious differences between their physical and intellectual nature are offset by overlapping features that are difficult, if not impossible, to place on either side of the physical/intellectual divide. A perfect example of this ambivalence is the colophon, which typically combines information about the material *and* the intellectual production of a manuscript or printed book, thus exemplifying the interrelation and interdependence between container and content, medium and message.

This is a condition that affects all possible uses of, and approaches to, a book or other information package, although content users (such as students, teachers, scholars and readers in general) and content providers (a large and diversified category which includes publishers and booksellers, librarians, curators, conservators and, more recently,

online aggregators and distributors) are affected differently depending on their specific needs, purposes and conditions of access. Both categories have been intertwined and interdependent since the “book” and the “library” (two different and complementary ways of preserving data and information) became part and parcel of the human experience. Both have been increasingly dependent on scientific and technological innovation, particularly since the two major periods of transition, from manuscript to print between the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries, and from print to digital between the twentieth and the twenty-first. However, this dependence did not affect content users and creators so much as it did content providers, librarians, conservators and other “book practitioners,” whose professional fields, competences and tools have known an unprecedented expansion and specialization in the past fifty to one hundred years, mainly as a result of scientific and technological innovation.

The parallel evolution of such “book disciplines” as analytical and descriptive bibliography in Great Britain, codicology and book archeology in continental Europe, and more recently the new interdisciplinary (and international) field of “history of the book,”⁵⁵ has resulted in a growing scholarly and academic interest for the material, technological, economic and cultural aspects of book production, circulation, consumption and preservation. This is clearly evidenced by the increase in the number of monographs, journals, conferences,

⁵⁵ On bibliography, see in particular Ray Stokes, *The Function of Bibliography* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1969) and Philip Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972; reprint, 1974). On codicology: Léon Gilissen, *Prolegomenes a la codicologie: recherches sur la construction des cahiers et la mise en page des manuscrits medievales* (Gand: Story-Scientia, 1977); Jacques Lemaire, J., *Introduction à la codicologie* (Louvain la Neuve: Université Catholique de Louvain, Publications de l'Institut d'Etudes Medievales, 1989); Manuel Sánchez Mariana, *Introducción al libro manuscrito* (Madrid: Editorial ARCO LIBROS, 1995); Armando Petrucci, *La descrizione del manoscritto. Soria, problemi e metodi*, 2nd ed. (Roma: Carocci, 2001); Marilena Maniaci, *Archeologia del manoscritto. Metodi, problemi, bibliografia recente* (Roma: Viella, 2002); Maria Luisa Agati, *Il libro manuscritto. Introduzione alla codicologia* (Roma: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2003). On history of the book: G. Thomas Tanselle, *The History of Books as a Field of Study* (Chapel Hill, NC: Rare Book Collection, Academic Affairs Library, The University of North Carolina, 1981); Robert Darnton, “What Is the History of Books?,” *Daedalus* (Summer 1982), 65–83; reprinted in *Books and Society in History*, ed. Kenneth E. Carpenter (New York: Bowker, 1983), 3–26; John Feather, “The Book in History and the History of the Book,” *The Journal of Library History* 21, no. 1 (Winter 1986), 12–26. Thomas R. Adams and Nicolas Barker, “A New Model for the Study of the Book,” in *A Potencie of Life: Books in Society*, ed. Nicolas Barker (London: The British Library, 1993), 5–44.

symposia, exhibitions, academic departments, research centers and qualified Internet resources devoted to the book as product, commodity, collectible and cultural object.⁵⁶

Furthermore, the geographical scope of this interest is rapidly expanding to include non-Western societies—a significant progress if we consider the length to which bibliography, codicology, epigraphy, paleography and other ancillary disciplines have remained strongholds of Eurocentric scholarship, their lenses strictly (and often snobbishly) focused on materials and issues from the Graeco-Roman and the Judaeo-Christian worlds.⁵⁷ In the past two or three decades, in fact, the large tree of knowledge cultivated by such disciplines on said materials, and the wide range of specialized technical skills associated with them, started to branch off in postcolonial societies with rich manuscript and documentary traditions of their own, resulting in a new wave of scholarly investigations, cataloging and preservation projects.⁵⁸ While many of these initiatives are still prompted, carried out and funded by Western scholars and institutions, there are also forms of localization and cultural appropriation, as with manuscriptology in South Asia,⁵⁹ which applies approaches, methodologies and techniques derived from European codicology to local conditions and materials (e.g., palm leaves or bamboo strips instead of papyrus

⁵⁶ In a wider sense, the growing popularity of the book as physical object is also a direct consequence—as well as a reaction to—the digital revolution. The cult of rare books, with its emphasis on the esthetic and monetary value of the physical object, has been growing in direct proportion to the availability of information in digital format. In other words, by celebrating the book as object we are somehow easing its canonization as a relic of the past.

⁵⁷ As pointed out by Robert Darnton, “[t]he history of books as a field of study has spread across many disciplines, from bibliography to comparative literature, history, graphic arts, and sociology; but it has not expanded far beyond the Western world.” R. Darnton, “Book Production in British India, 1850–1900,” *Book History* (2002), 239.

⁵⁸ See, for example, Henri Chambert-Loir, “Malay Colophons,” *Indonesia and the Malay World* 34, no. 100 (November 2006), 363–81. *Literary Cultures and the Material World*, ed. S. Eliot, A. Nash and I. Willison (London: The British Library, 2007), provides new and interesting perspectives, particularly in the editors’ “Introduction” (1–29), David McKitterick’s “Perspectives for an International History of the Book” (413–29), and the section on “Non-Western Traditions of the Book” (although “Towards a History of the Book and Literary Culture in Africa” is a rather misleading title for a chapter dealing with South African editions of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*).

⁵⁹ On manuscriptology (a more appropriate term than codicology), see A.E. Sivaganesamurti, *Introduction to Manuscriptology* (Delhi: Sharada, 1996); P. Visalakshy, *The Fundamentals of Manuscriptology* (Thiruvananthapuram: Dravidian Linguistics Association, 2004); *Aspects of Manuscriptology*, ed. Ratna Basa and Karunasundhu Das (Kolkata: The Asiatic Society, 2005).

and parchment), often integrating them with older indigenous traditions of the book.

The Arabic manuscript tradition has been in the sight of Western scholars ever since they were called Orientalists (a term whose geo-cultural implications seems to exclude Africa outright), although for a long time their aims were set exclusively on the most precious and noticeable aspects of this tradition, namely calligraphy, decorations and bindings. Only in the past thirty years or so, the scope and specialization of these studies widened to include less prominent features, such as paper or ink, and—more significantly perhaps—to consider the book and its making as an object of scholarly investigation *independently of its intellectual content*.⁶⁰ This created the conditions, as well as the need, for more specific reference works,⁶¹ whose merits consist primarily, although not exclusively, in the application to Arabic manuscripts of the descriptive and prescriptive approaches, the methodologies and the analytical tools and techniques of Western codicology and paleography.

Nevertheless, Gacek reminds us that “[I]n spite of this undoubted progress (...), the field of Islamic manuscript studies is still in its infancy with hundreds of thousands, if not several millions, of manuscripts, yet to be properly explored.” Such a slow progress is, to some extent, the consequence of the fact that

Arabic manuscripts in the form of handwritten books have hitherto been studied first and foremost as vehicles of thought and not as objects in themselves. Some Arabists even today are primarily interested in the intellectual content of the book and not necessarily in understanding the mechanics of copying, text transmission, and styles of handwriting.

Much research remains to be done on almost all aspects of Arabic codicology and paleography. This research, to be successful, has to concentrate on gathering data for various regions and historical periods. We cannot have a complete picture of the history and development of

⁶⁰ “When, in 1978, I first came in contact with Arabic manuscripts, I was surprised to find that there was so little material of practical significance to be found for a beginner in this field (...) Moreover, catalogues of Arabic manuscripts concentrated on the identification of texts rather than providing data about the manuscripts themselves as archeological objects.” Adam Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts: A Vademecum for Readers* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), ix.

⁶¹ In particular, François Déroche et al., *Manuel de codicologie des manuscrits en écriture arabe* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 2000), Adam Gacek, *The Arabic Manuscript Tradition: A Glossary of Technical Terms and Bibliography* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), and *Arabic Manuscripts: A Vademecum for Readers* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

various practices in Arabic manuscripts unless this research is first conducted.⁶²

Therefore, it should not come as a surprise if Africa remains a sort of poor cousin within the (still orientalizing) field of Islamic Studies, and her Arabic manuscript tradition in particular is often marginalized, minimized or excluded by scholarly, academic and preservation initiatives.⁶³ This persistent neglect has a number of reasons—qualitative and quantitative, as well as historical, cultural and geographical—, all of them variously connected. To mention only the most obvious and relevant: the sparse distribution of typically small and privately-owned repositories over a vast area, mostly desert, difficult to navigate and far from major urban centers; the relatively late appearance on this scene of European colonial powers, whose control over the trans-Saharan network was a slow, strenuous, and never entirely successful process; the arguable “aesthetic inferiority” of African manuscripts, which, unlike those from other parts of the Islamic world, cannot bear comparison with Western equivalents in the same league; and, as a consequence of this, their milder appeal to European collectors and connoisseurs, if not also scholars and conservators.

Because of this, African manuscripts were collected sporadically and incidentally during colonial times, often in connection with intelligence work, diplomatic activities or military operations, and consequently their presence in Western collections is very limited. Few and far between, they are often outnumbered (and outshone) by finer examples from Abbasid Iraq and Iran, Mughal India or Ottoman Turkey, and usually placed on a back burner as far as cataloging, preservation and dissemination initiatives are concerned.

There are, of course, advantages and disadvantages to this situation. On the one hand, their scarcity in the West means that the majority of these manuscripts remains where they culturally belong, that is in the

⁶² Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts*, x.

⁶³ A couple of recent examples may clarify this point. One is *The Islamic Manuscript: A Conference on Conservation, Cataloguing, Accessibility, Copyright, and Digitisation*, organized by the Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation and the Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at the University of Cambridge (King’s College, 4–6 July 2005); the other, *Ink and Gold: A Symposium on Islamic Calligraphy* (Kunstgewerbemuseum, Kulturforum, Berlin, 14 July 2006), organized by the Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin, and Sam Fogg, London, to inaugurate the exhibition *Ink and Gold: Masterpieces of Islamic Calligraphy*, on display at the Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin, from 14 July to 31 August 2006. Neither of these two events included any contributions on, or made references to, African manuscripts.

hands of their legitimate owners, or at least in the countries and communities that produced or preserved them for the longest time; on the other hand, it is clear (and to some extent inevitable) that in these locations and conditions they do not receive the same amount of scholarly attention and expert care they would normally—although not necessarily—get if they were preserved in Europe or North America. Consequently, as a whole they remain largely beyond the compass, as well as below the radar, of Islamic studies and Islamic codicology.

Considering the amount of description and preservation initiatives implemented in the past one hundred years, since Massignon's ground-breaking review, one may reasonably wonder why the manuscript heritage of Islamic West Africa—and Islamic Africa in general—continue to occupy a marginal position within the fields that, more than others, should undertake and promote their study. A partial explanation involves cultural as well as practical reasons, such as the traditional eastward orientation of these disciplines (their persistent "Orientalist vocation"), and their natural reliance on materials closer at hand (i.e., those preserved in Western collections). More importantly, however, it should acknowledge the (more or less inevitable) shortcomings of past initiatives, and understand how and to what extent their failure to take into proper and full consideration the physical object, rather than focus primarily on the intellectual content, is *de facto* responsible for the lack of a more thorough and reliable record of information on the Arabic manuscript culture of Trans-Saharan Africa.

OLD AND NEW KNOWLEDGE NETWORKS

By looking south instead of east, and by focusing on a rather unusual library setting, Massignon carved a small but promising scholarly niche, which eventually grew and expanded into a new research field focused on the trans-Saharan manuscript heritage and its unique importance for the study of West African history, Islamic thought and written culture.

The foundations of such a field were laid in the first half of the twentieth century, when colonial occupation and related intelligence, diplomatic and military activities led to the discovery of manuscript caches in caravan towns and nomad camps across British and French West Africa. A few of these "desert libraries," glimpses of which had previously appeared in Muslim and European travel accounts, were

looted and brought to Europe as spoils of war, there to lie for decades in some institutional repository (as in the case of the Archinard/Ségou collection at the BnF); other manuscripts were collected by colonial agents in less predatory circumstances, but ended similarly overseas.⁶⁴ Most of them, however, remained where they belong—in the region if not also in the hands of the individuals, the families and the communities who had owned and preserved them for generations, treasuring them as part of their cultural identity, and referring to them for various spiritual, religious, juridical, educational or practical purposes. There, under increasingly attentive and focused Western eyes, they survived colonial attention and depredation, decolonization and post-colonial intervention to become, in today's "knowledge economy," a powerful and prestigious symbol of African civilization, an invaluable resource for the study of West African history and intellectual traditions, and a unique cultural asset.

At the same time, because of the growing interest generated by this type of cultural heritage, Africa, and Trans-Saharan Africa in particular, are becoming a sort of last frontier for such ripening disciplines as manuscript studies and history of the book⁶⁵—a borderland,

⁶⁴ The Gironcourt collection at the Bibliothèque de l'Institut de France, for example, consists of twelve miscellaneous volumes (Ms. 2405–2417) containing approximately four thousand originally unbound manuscript leaves. The manuscripts, dating from the eighteenth to the early twentieth century, were collected by the French agronomist Georges Reynard de Gironcourt (1878–1960) in May 1912, during his second mission to the Niger valley. Cf. P.F. De Moraes Farias, *Arabic Medieval Inscriptions from the Republic of Mali: Epigraphy, Chronicles and Songhay-Tuareg History* (New York: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 2003). A microfilm of the entire set is preserved at the Bibliothèque nationale de France (Reels 12960–12973) and the University of Naples "Orientale" (Reels 28710–28721). A catalog of the collection, by Mauro Nobili, is due to be published in 2011 by the Istituto per l'Oriente C.A. Nallino (Rome)/CNRS, "Mondes tranien et indien" (Paris), as no. IV in their "Series Catalogorum." I thank Dr. Nobili for the updated information on this collection, and Professor Charles Stewart for originally alerting me of this new cataloging initiative.

In the early 1960s, the Malian Institut National de Sciences Humaines assigned a research technician, Almamy Maliki Yattara, the task of tracking the manuscripts that had been shown to Gironcourt in 1911–12 at various stops along the Niger Bend. The mission is told in Bernard Salvaing and Almamy Maliki Yattara, *Almamy. Une jeunesse sur le rives du fleuve Niger* (Brinon sur Sauldre: Grandvaux, 2000), 160–7, which also recalls Almamy's later stint as research assistant to William A. Brown and Louis Brenner, two manuscript-seeking scholars from the United States.

⁶⁵ "Manuscript studies is (...) a part of the emerging discipline of the history of the book, insofar as it is distinguishable from traditional bibliographical study. Manuscript studies overlaps with and makes use of such disciplines as diplomatics, paleography, codicology, papyrology, the study of writing implements and scribal

scorching-edge research environment characterized by exotic appeal, extreme climate and terrain, infrastructural deficiencies and other challenging conditions. The simple—and remarkable—fact that manuscripts are preserved locally, in major institutional repositories as well as in a myriad of private libraries scattered over a vast and inhospitable territory, presents a number of logistical and technical challenges to any large-scale cataloging or preservation project. (Alternatively, manuscripts can be sent to better-equipped Western institutions for cataloging and reformatting, but this is only a partial and temporary solution—and a slightly patronizing one—which in fact has occurred rarely and only under particular circumstances.⁶⁶) Despite recent efforts to gather smaller collections in larger, national or local repositories, dispersion and fragmentation remain serious problems, which combined with the lack of adequate infrastructure, facilities, equipment and professional skills significantly hamper initiatives to protect, preserve and make these materials available on site, thus avoiding removal from their native soil.

But more than the widespread distribution and isolation of these libraries, or the poor conditions in which they survive (when they survive at all), it is the fragmentary, shortsighted, uncoordinated and often non-cooperative nature of many past initiatives that, in spite of several undeniable success stories,⁶⁷ has so far delayed the elaboration

methods, the study of book bindings; more generally, all aspects of manuscript production, dissemination, readership and reception, ownership and preservation are relevant to manuscript studies as we are using the term here.” Stephen R. Reimer, “Towards a Definition of ‘Manuscript Studies,’” available from <http://www.ualberta.ca/~sreimer/ms-course.htm> (accessed 31 January 2009).

⁶⁶ Such as the collaboration between the Library of Congress and the Mamma Haïdara Commemorative Library in Timbuktu, launched in June 2003 with an exhibition in Washington, D.C. of about thirty Islamic manuscripts from Mali. The manuscripts were later microfilmed, digitized and made available online as part of the exhibition “Ancient Manuscripts from the Desert Libraries of Timbuktu.” For an overview of the project, see The Library of Congress Global Gateway, “Islamic Manuscripts from Mali,” available from <http://international.loc.gov/intldl/malihtml/about.html> (accessed 31 January 2008).

⁶⁷ In addition to the Shaykh Sīdiyya Library, a basic list should include the Project for the Conservation of Malian Arabic Manuscripts, funded in 1980 by the National Endowment for the Humanities, which in turn grew out of the previous Malian Arabic Manuscript Microfilming Project (MAMMP); the microfilming and cataloging of Mauritanian manuscripts funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Foundation) in the 1980s; the almost twenty catalogs of West African manuscript collections published by the Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation since 1995 (and the relevant sections of the volume accompanying *World Survey of Islamic Manuscripts*); the Timbuktu Manuscripts Project, launched in 2000 with funding from

of a comprehensive, coordinated, effective and sustainable strategy to ensure the long-term preservation of, and access to, the manuscript heritage of Trans-Saharan Africa as both material culture and intellectual tradition.⁶⁸

As this cultural patrimony draws increasing—and increasingly focused and specialized—attention from both historians of Africa and historians of the book, it is crucial that new projects and initiatives are conceived, planned and coordinated to fit in a larger scheme defined by common strategies, methodologies and objectives. This calls for some basic, interconnected and interdependent measures, the adoption of which would have immediate benefits for all new and ongoing projects, while also providing reliable guidelines for the evaluation of past initiatives.

The first and foremost of these measures should be the appointment of an international advisory body representing the main disciplines (historical, anthropological, literary and book-related) and organizations (e.g., Al-Furqan, The Islamic Manuscript Association, national, academic and research institutions with substantial African manuscript collections, etc.) involved in the study and preservation of this patrimony. This body should be responsible for such overarching initiatives as: (1) developing, promulgating and maintaining standards, procedures and best practices for the planning, execution and evaluation of all projects focused on these libraries and their holdings; (2) implementing a multiple-stage review and evaluation process to ensure that all such projects comply with the standard requirements; and (3) coordinating and overseeing all documentary and promotional activities.

The latter task should be accomplished through the development and maintenance of a comprehensive, Web-based clearing-house for

the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) and the Ford Foundation; the South Africa-Mali Timbuktu Project, started in 2002 by the two governments with support from the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD); and the cooperation between the Library of Congress and the Mamma Haïdara Commemorative Library. To this list we should add specific reports, conferences, seminars, workshops, exhibitions and the published or unpublished work of a growing number of scholars, curators and conservators.

⁶⁸ While there is an obvious continuity in projects focused on Timbuktu, one wonders about the amount and type of consultation, collaboration or simply exchange of information (if any) between the South Africa-Mali partnership and, for example, the latest initiative, co-funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to develop manuscript preservation skills, techniques, and facilities in Mauritania.

the collection, organization and dissemination of information about the trans-Saharan manuscript heritage and any initiatives to preserve, describe, study and make available its intellectual content and material culture. This would provide, through a single gateway, an inclusive and authoritative resource and a powerful tool for researchers and scholars, as well as conservators, curators and other professional figures and stakeholders, thus creating a knowledgebase and, more importantly perhaps, a knowledge-sharing culture based on best practices and multifunctional expertise. To be exhaustive and effective, this resource should consist of at least four main components, each one structured as a relational database; namely:

1. A *collection database*, providing (a) detailed information about the history and composition of individual manuscript collections; and (b) full cataloging description (i.e., covering both intellectual content and physical aspects) of individual items in each collection, with links to their digitized versions (see next item).⁶⁹ Rather than being developed from scratch, this component could take full advantage of—and actually build onto—the AMMS database perfected by Charles C. Stewart and his colleagues over the past two decades (as it could also benefit from a comparison, if not a collaboration, between this resource and its German relative, OMAR.)
2. A *manuscript database* of (a) digital facsimiles of individual manuscript items (this component would provide an opportunity for mass digitization, which if properly pursued⁷⁰ could boost

⁶⁹ An exhaustive catalog (also called full-scale, scientific or analytical) involves “the description of both the content and physical appearance of a number of manuscripts. In it the contents of each text are identified and set in their cultural background and within their bibliographical context. In addition to this it contains a description of the outward appearance of the manuscript and of the techniques of bookmaking which have been employed in each volume. These are the codicological characteristics and are as essential as the identification of the contents. The employment of codicological techniques, by which the volume is studied as an object in itself, may be revealing for certain aspects of the contents of a volume, which otherwise would not easily, and certainly not so quickly, have come to the surface” (Witkam, 7). In distinguishing between summary (or synthetic) and analytical (full-scale) catalog, Armando Petrucci stresses the fact that, in either case, the cataloger must address and solve such basic issues as the date, origin and provenance of each manuscript; the definition of its writing styles and scripts; the identification of texts and authors; and the proper description of manuscript structure and material production. A. Petrucci, *La descrizione del manoscritto. Storia, problemi e metodi*. 2nd ed. (Roma: Carocci, 2001), 57.

⁷⁰ That is, by creating high-quality images and good searching tools. For example, in the case of the Timbuktu manuscripts, the Library of Congress produced master, or archival, versions (at 300 dpi) TIFF images, as well as high-quality and lower-quality

codicological and paleographic investigation without the need to handle original materials); and (b) full-text, searchable transcriptions and eventually English and French translations, to promote scholarly research and dissemination.

3. A *project database*, providing comprehensive, detailed and updated information (including reports, articles and other documents) about each “sanctioned” initiative (i.e., planned and conducted in compliance with the standards and requirements mentioned above). Failure to comply with these requirements would prevent new projects from being added to the database (which, in this case, would function as a sort of peer-review process, ensuring quality and recognition at the same time).
4. A *resource database*, including supplementary materials (bibliographical, scholarly, documentary, etc.) that are relevant to the projects, the collections or the manuscripts covered by the other three databases.

Needless to say, to be effective and ultimately worthwhile, all databases should be extensively cross-referenced and fully searchable, since “every user values the availability of the largest possible assemblage of potentially relevant material,” but “sheer quantity is the greatest barrier to direct access,”⁷¹ and a catalog without indexes has been rightly compared to a house without doors or windows, which makes entry or exit equally impossible.⁷² This means that individual records should be carefully indexed to provide a wide spectrum of potential users with a satisfactory range of access points, the lack of which would seriously limit the usability—and therefore the usefulness and the value—of such a resource. In order to meet the specialized and particular needs of users who are interested in the intellectual content or the physical aspects and material culture of manuscripts (or both), access points should cover the whole gamut of geographical, textual, bibliographical, codicological and paleographic information available. This means that, in addition to basic index categories such as author, title, subject and provenance, they should include entries related to manuscript production (i.e., pagination, calligraphy, illumination,

JPEG images and thumbnail GIFs.” See: <http://international.loc.gov/intldld/malihtml/build.html> (accessed 31 January 2009).

⁷¹ Ronald Hagler, *The Bibliographic Record and Information Technology* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1997), 95.

⁷² Petrucci, 145.

decoration, etc.) technology (paper, ink, leather and binding, etc.), ownership, circulation and use (ownership marks, commentaries and marginal notes). This entails a competent and meticulous analysis of the physical artifact, followed by an accurate recording of relevant data into a concise yet comprehensive description that is, at one time, authoritative and (through the use of a controlled vocabulary) indexable. Gathering this kind of information, and organizing it for easy and meaningful access, are two very distinct and specific processes, each one requiring a sophisticated set of professional skills and tools that are the domain of codicologists and librarians, respectively. Combined, these two processes are a fundamental prerequisite of any cataloging or preservation initiative, *no matter how limited their purpose and scope*, since the ultimate success or failure of each activity is a direct consequence of the amount and type of information available—on the materials concerned, of course, but also on such related issues as their intended and potential uses, users and conditions of use.

Professional codicologists and librarians, however, have appeared only lately on the trans-Saharan scene, and often in peripheral or ancillary roles.⁷³ A review of major manuscript initiatives in the region (a worthwhile and overdue enterprise, although clearly beyond the purpose of this chapter) would show how, until recently, most of them were started and steered by academic scholars with a specific—and fateful—interest in these materials as a primary source for the study of West African history and Islam.⁷⁴ This resulted in a sustained commitment to securing and preserving access to these manuscripts as primarily sources (i.e., content), without much further consideration for their long-term preservation as physical artifacts and, as such, conveyors of precious information about their production and circulation, or their material and economic culture. The consequences of this approach are evident in the limited purpose and summary nature of virtually all inventories and catalogs produced so far, whose brief

⁷³ Thus perpetuating the traditional view of codicology, papyrology, epigraphy, paleography, diplomatics and related disciplines as *ancillae historiae*, in a form of interdisciplinary vassalage that betrays the medieval origins of academic institutions and scholarly pursuits as we know them today.

⁷⁴ Significantly, the “first research center in the United States devoted entirely to the study of Islam and Africa,” founded in 2000 by John Hunwick and Sean O’Fahey at Northwestern University, is called Institute for the Study of Islamic *Thought* in Africa (ISITA) (emphasis is mine).

entries and basic indexing fulfill the needs of students of intellectual and literary history, but fail to record significant information on the artistic, technological and economic aspects of these materials. While the narrow focus and practical concerns of earlier cataloging projects may be attributed to the pioneering conditions in which they were planned and implemented, any new or recent initiative that fails to properly consider the codicological dimension is likely to produce very limited and questionable results; and no matter how relevant to the study of African history and Islam, these results will represent a missed opportunity for disciplines such as manuscript studies and history of the book—and a giant step backward for all preservation purposes. This is not to deny the usefulness and practical value of summary catalogs or “first aid” preservation measures (provided they are effective, of course), but simply to stress the urgent need for a more comprehensive, accomplished and coordinated approach to the study of these manuscripts and their history and material culture. Such a need can only be fulfilled through a series of initial steps (i.e., a thorough analysis of the physical artifact, to be followed by the proper organization of data and information collected), whose full implementation should be considered a fundamental prerequisite of any proper cataloging, conservation, documentation or access initiative. These initial steps are, in fact, the building blocks of a Web resource such as the one outlined above, which in turn, and if carefully and properly developed, updated and maintained, would provide an invaluable tool for students of West African history and Islam, as well as a unique resource for the study of its manuscript culture and heritage. In other words, the survival of the trans-Saharan book legacy as a whole, body and soul, depends on the careful and effective building of new knowledge networks, navigational tools and forms of expertise, scholarly as well as technical and professional.

As the history of the book in non-Western cultures is slowly acquiring scholarly appeal, spurred by postcolonial overtures and current events, the written heritage of the trans-Saharan trade provides an excellent case for the study of manuscript culture and preservation in a unique geo-cultural environment over a thousand years, from the introduction of the Arabic writing by camel trails to its current traveling as pixels and bytes. It also offers unique opportunities for the implementation and assessment of strategies to ensure the long-term survival of, and access to, these manuscript libraries as intellectual content and material culture, or tangible and intangible heritage.

The spread of Islam to West Africa through a network of commercial and military routes reaching as far south as the Niger River basin and the savanna kingdoms; the foundation and flourishing of trading posts at the intersection of major routes, and the growth of some of them into prominent centers of intellectual activity and cultural exchange; the flourish and expansion of the caravan trade, increasingly influenced by external forces and events; the growing involvement of European players and stakeholders; the consequent rise of a competitive yet complementary transatlantic trade; the European military and economic expansion in the region, followed by a take-over and the consolidation of colonial power; the aftermath of colonialism and its afterlives of decolonization, post-colonialism and neo-colonialism—against this vivid historical background, the “business of books”—their trade and circulation, offer and demand, production and preservation—represents a complex and fascinating reality, yet also a persistently elusive one, which remains to this day scarcely documented and relatively unexplored (especially in comparison with other commodities of the trans-Saharan trade, such as gold, slaves and salt). This is partly due to the fact that, for a long time, scholarly and conservation projects focused mainly on the words—i.e., the textual dimension and intellectual content of manuscripts—rather than on the “accompanying harmonic system” represented by their material culture, technology and history.

During the ten centuries or so that encompass the rise and decline of the trans-Saharan trade, manuscript (and later printed) books were imported, produced, exchanged, collected, preserved and generally held in high esteem, both as commodities and intellectual resources. In this way, they traveled extensively across space and time, from one trading and learning center (or scholar’s tent) to another, within West Africa and beyond (and later also to European and North American institutions), as well as from one scholar’s generation to the next. Vulnerable to the “agents of time,” many of them disintegrated or were damaged beyond repair. Others were stolen and looted, destroyed or preventively hidden away; but also occasionally and diplomatically showed off, to curious and appreciative European travelers as well as to potentially instrumental colonial officers and administrators. They disappeared and resurfaced, scattered and mutilated and brittle, but beautiful—or at least exotic and intriguing enough to draw the attention of colonial and then academic scholars, eventually to become a magnet for a variety of national and international projects concerned with their protection, conservation and dissemination.

The essays collected in this volume represent a first attempt to bring together, under the same scholarly tent, representatives of the two Western traditions of the book: an older and more established one, which sees it primarily as a source of intellectual content, and a more recent and specialized approach, mainly—although not solely—concerned with its physical aspects and characteristics, its material and technological nature, its cultural and economic history. This latter approach is largely responsible for generating the amount and type of information necessary to develop and implement effective conservation strategies, procedures and policies. Yet in spite of their differences, their particular interests and objectives (and occasionally their parochial concerns), these two traditions are more closely related, more intimately bound and more interdependent than they are generally aware of—or ready to admit. And only their constant interaction, cooperation and coordination of efforts will make it possible to properly and fully preserve, understand and appreciate the manuscript heritage of Trans-Saharan Africa—both as material culture and intellectual tradition, or simply as a unique and evolving knowledge economy.

GLOSSARY

<i>abū ibriq</i> (Arabic)	Jug or pitcher (<i>ibriq</i>) watermark on Venetian-made paper exported to Egypt
<i>adab al-qāḍī</i> (Arabic)	Rules and code of behavior of the <i>qāḍī</i> or Muslim judge
<i>Ādrār</i> (Berber)	A mountain in the Sahara region
<i>Agalawa</i> (sing. <i>Ba'agalī</i>)	Hausa-speaking group of Tuareg merchants active in the savanna trade
<i>ahl, ahl</i> (Arabic)	People, used to designate ethnic or family lineages
<i>Aïssāwa</i> (Aïssawa, Issawa)	North African Sufi order centered on the tomb of its founder, Shaykh Muḥammad b. 'Īsā (d. 933/1527), in Meknès, Morocco
'ajamī (Arabic)	The Arabic script as used to write West African languages, such as Fulfulde, Hausa, or Kanuri
<i>alghāz</i> (sg. <i>lughz</i> , Arabic)	Symbols, enigmas, riddles
'ālim (Arabic)	See 'ulamā'
<i>Almajiri</i> (Hausa)	Pupil (from the Arabic <i>al-Muhājir</i> , "seeker of [Islamic] knowledge") and, by extension, the system of Islamic education practiced in northern Nigeria.
<i>àlùfàà, àfàà</i> (Yoruba)	Muslim cleric
<i>Andalusī script</i> (<i>al-khatt</i> <i>al-andalusī</i>)	Variant of Maghribi script
<i>Ash'arī</i> (Arabic)	School of Muslim speculative theology founded in 10th-century Iraq by the theologian Abū al- Ḥasan al-Ash'arī (d. 324/936)
<i>awlād</i> (Arabic, sing. <i>walād</i> , "sons, descendent")	In Mauritania, a lineage group claiming common descent
<i>Badawī script</i> (<i>al-khatt</i> <i>al-badawī</i>)	Variant of Maghribi script, used predominantly in rural areas
<i>baraka</i> (Arabic)	Term (literally "blessings") referring to the manifestation of a divine grace in various forms and circumstances
<i>Barghawata</i>	Medieval confederation of Berber groups that dominated the Atlantic plains of Morocco from the 8th to the 11th century C.E.
<i>bayt</i> (Arabic)	Room, house; also meaning verse
<i>bazara</i> (Hausa)	The hottest part of the dry season, just before the beginning of the rains

<i>bid'a</i> (Arabic)	Innovation, religious heresy
<i>Biḍān</i> (sing. m. <i>Biḍānī</i> , sing. f. <i>Biḍāniya</i>)	Arabic-derived term used by the Ḥasaniya-speaking people of western Sahara (of mixed African, Arabic and Berber descent) to designate themselves as “whites,” as opposed to the “blacks” of the Sudan
<i>Bilād Shinqīt</i>	The “Land of Shinqīt,” an expression used once to indicate much of today’s Mauritania
<i>Bilād al-Sūdān</i>	The “Land of the Blacks,” as the Arab geographers termed the savanna belt of West Africa
<i>Bilād al-Takrūr</i>	Other name used by medieval Arab geographers to indicate the Bilād al-Sūdān, or parts of it
<i>birni</i> (Hausa)	Town, typically large and walled (e.g., Birnin Kano)
<i>boko</i> (Hausa: “fraud,” “deceit,” “bogus”)	Term used to indicate the Roman script and, by association, Western learning and knowledge
<i>chott</i> (Arabic <i>ṣaṭṭ</i> , “bank,” “coast”)	Dry salt lake in the Saharan region
<i>dārīja</i>	Colloquial Arabic or dialect
<i>dasta</i> (“a dozen”)	A quire of paper in modern Egyptian Arabic
<i>dhar</i>	Sandstone escarpment, especially in western Sahara
<i>dhikr</i> (Arabic)	Remembrance (of Allah), Sufi ritual performance
<i>Digawa</i>	A closed fundamentalist group with many communities in eastern Kano
<i>erg</i> (Arabic)	Desert area covered with wind-swept dunes
<i>fansa</i> (Hausa)	Revenge, redemption (e.g., from slavery)
<i>faqīh</i> (Arabic, pl. <i>fuqahā</i>)	Expert of Islamic jurisprudence (<i>fiqh</i>)
<i>Fāsi script</i> (<i>al-khaṭṭ</i> <i>al-fāsi</i>)	Variant of Maghribi script, named after a style developed in the town of Fez
<i>fatwā</i> (Arabic, pl. <i>fatāwā</i>)	Legal opinion issued by a <i>muftī</i> (v.) versed in Islamic jurisprudence
<i>fiqh</i> (Arabic)	Islamic jurisprudence
<i>furū' al-fiqh</i> (Arabic)	Branches of Islamic jurisprudence (<i>fiqh</i>)
<i>fuṣḥā</i> (Arabic)	Classical Arabic language
<i>gado</i> (Hausa)	Inheritance
<i>gafaka</i> (pl. <i>gafakoki</i> , Hausa)	Small leather bag for a book
<i>Gnāwa</i>	Moroccan musical and cultural tradition of West African heritage
<i>Habasha</i> (Arabic)	Abyssinian, Ethiopian
<i>ḥabūs</i> or <i>aḥbās</i> (sing. <i>ḥabs</i>)	Term used in the Maghrib to indicate endowments (see <i>waqf</i>)
<i>ḥadīth</i> (Arabic)	Traditions related to the words and deeds of the Prophet Muḥammad or Prophetic traditions
<i>ḥāfiẓ</i> (pl. <i>ḥufāẓ</i>)	designation and title for one who has memorized the Qur'ān.

- Ḥamadsha* Members of two closely-related Moroccan Sufi brotherhoods, the 'Allaliyya, followers of Sīdī 'Alī b. Ḥamdush (d. 1131 or 1135/1718–9 or 1722–3), and the Dghughiyya, followers of Sīdī 'Alī's servant Aḥmad Dghughī. Both saints are buried and venerated in shrines northwest of Meknès
- Ḥamalliya (Ḥamawiya)* West African Sufi order, a branch of the Tijāniyya, founded at the beginning of the twentieth century by Shaykh Aḥmad Ḥamaullah b. al-Sharīf Muḥammad (d. 1362/1943) in Niōro du Sahel (in today's Mali)
- ḥammāda* (North Africa) Type of desert formed by a hard and compact layer of bedrock covered with a thin layer of sand, pebbles, etc.
- ḥurr* (Arabic) Born free, as opposed to someone of noble birth
- ḥartāni* (pl. *ḥarātīn*) Freed slave. In Mauritania they are generally assimilated to *Biḍān* culture
- Ḥasānī* (Arabic) Nomadic warrior groups of the Sahara
- Ḥasaniya* (Arabic) Language spoken by the *Biḍān* (v.) of west and southwestern Sahara, This is an Arabic-based language which includes grammar and vocabulary from Amazigh (Berber) and other African languages
- hijra* (Arabic) Islamic calendar, dating from Muḥammad's flight (*al-hijra*) to Medina in 622 c.E
- 'ilm* (Arabic) Knowledge. In parts of West Africa (e.g., Nigeria), the term is used to indicate collectively the books or disciplines forming the Islamic curriculum
- ijāza* (pl. *ijāzāt*, Arabic) certification of scholarly authority on a particular work issued by a learned *'ālim* (v.). The recipient is qualified to transmit such knowledge to other students
- Isawa* A millenarian group in southeastern Kano and northern Zaria (Nigeria)
- jallāba* (Arabic) Muslim travelling merchant from the Nile valley (mostly Danaqla and Ja'aliyyin) who in the early 19th century moved south to Sudan
- jalūt, jalutawa* Term used in Hausaland to indicate a non-Muslim Hausa
- jamā'a* (Arabic) Assembly or gathering of the wisest and most influential leaders of a group or town
- jihād* (Arabic: "struggle," "effort") Islamic holy war
- kāff* (Arabic: "Palm of the hand") Watermark on Venetian-made paper exported to Egypt

- kāghad* (*kāghid*,
kāghadh, *kāghīt*;
pl. *kawāghid*) One of the terms used in the Arabic world for “paper.” Possibly of Chinese origin, *kāghad* was adopted in various languages (and spellings) including Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Kurdish and Urdu
- Kel* (Tamasheq) “People,” used as a prefix to a confederation of Tuareg groups (e.g., Kel Adrar, Kel Essouk, etc.)
- keyīt* (Wolof) Paper, most probably derived from the Arabic *kāghīt* (v.)
- khalwa* (Arabic) Withdrawal, retreat, seclusion, and by extension a place where a Muslim holy man can withdraw and meditate. In the Sudan it was also a place where the Qur’ān was taught
- khātima* (Arabic) Conclusion, epilogue of a manuscript or book
- khaṭṭ* (pl. *khuṭūṭ*,
Arabic) Calligraphy, script, handwriting
- kitāb* (pl. *kutub*,
Arabic) Book, piece of writing
- ksar* (pl. *ksour*) See *qaṣr*
- Kūfī* (*Kufic*) script Arabic script originally from the city of Kufa, in today’s Iraq
- kundi* (pl. *kundaye*,
Hausa) A book, or scrap of paper with writing
- kurrās* (pl. *karāris*,
Arabic) Quire (unit of measure for paper), also used for paper in the western Sahara
- kuttāb* (Arabic) Qur’ānic school in many parts of North Africa
- lawḥ* (pl. *alwāḥ*) wooden slates or tablets for learning the Qur’ān
- al-mabsūṭ* (*al-khaṭṭ*
al-mabsūṭ) Maghribi script used predominantly for the copying of the Qur’ān or other religious books
- madhhab* Legal school or doctrine (e.g. Mālikī *madhhab*)
- (pl. *madhāhib*;
Arabic)
- madrasa* school, usually residential and attached to a mosque, where Islamic knowledge is taught
- (pl. *madāris*)
- maḥaḍra* schooling system in Mauritania, designating both Qur’ānic schools and institutions of higher-learning such as desert colleges
- (pl. *maḥādīr*)
- Maghribi script* (*al-*
khaṭṭ al-maghribī) Cursive style developed in the Maghrib and Spain
- mai* (Kanuri; Hausa) Ruler of Borno, or “owner of”
- maita* (Hausa) Witchcraft
- majūs* Arabic for Term used in Hausaland (together with *maguzawa*) to indicate a non-Muslim Hausa, from the Arabic adherent of Mazdaism
- Magians or
Zoroastrians
(i.e., Persians)
- maguzawa* (Hausa) Term used in Hausaland (together with *majūs*) to indicate a non-Muslim Hausa

<i>mallam</i> (Hausa)	Islamic scholar (<i>mu'allim</i>), from the Arabic for knowledge ('ilm)
<i>mallamari</i> (Kanuri)	Scholars' (<i>mallam</i>) settlements in Borno and Hausaland
<i>marabout</i> (from the Arabic <i>murābit</i>)	Muslim mystic or holy man, especially in western Africa
<i>maṣāḥif</i> (<i>qalam al-maṣāḥif</i>)	Cursive script commonly used for copying the Qur'an. From the Arabic <i>muṣḥaf</i> , indicating a codex or collection of sheets, pages or documents (<i>ṣuḥuf</i>), and also the collection of the Qur'an
<i>mashriqī</i> (from the Arabic <i>al-Mashriq</i> , "the East")	Eastern Kufī script, as opposed to <i>maghribī</i> , or "Western"
<i>mawsim</i> (pl. <i>mawāsīm</i> , Arabic for "season")	Religious festival typically associated with a market fair
<i>ma'alimāt</i> (Ḥasaniya)	women of the blacksmith class who specialize in tanning and painting leather and fabricating manuscript jackets or book covers
<i>miṣṭarah</i> (Arabic)	Ruling board or frame and, by extension, the ruling of a manuscript page
<i>muftī</i> (pl. <i>muftiyu</i> , Arabic)	Legal scholar qualified to issue <i>fatāwā</i> and <i>nawāzil</i> (v.)
<i>mujaddid</i> (Arabic)	Religious reviver or reformer
<i>mujāhidūn</i> (pl. of <i>mujāhid</i> , Arabic)	Those who participate in jihad
<i>mujallid</i>	Bookbinder (in the Islamic East)
<i>al-mujawhar</i> (Arabic: "Adorned, especially with gems or pearls")	Variant of Maghribi script, also called <i>thuluth maghribī</i>
<i>muqallid</i> (Arabic)	One who practices <i>taqlid</i> (i.e., who follows a religious authority)
<i>musaffir</i>	Bookbinder (in the Islamic West)
<i>musnad</i> (Arabic: "Support")	Variant of <i>maghribī</i> script, also called <i>al-zimāmī</i> ; also term for the ancient script of Yemen
<i>mutakallim</i> (pl. <i>mutakallimūn</i> , Arabic)	Muslim talker, storyteller and, by extension, theologian
<i>naira</i>	Nigerian currency introduced in 1973 to replace the pound
<i>naskh, naskhī</i> (from the Arabic word for "copying, transcription")	Cursive calligraphic style commonly used to write (and, with certain modifications, print) the Arabic alphabet

<i>nawāzil</i> (sg. <i>nāzila</i> , Arabic)	Short legal replies written by jurists in response to the concerns of the general public (known as <i>ajwiba</i> in other parts of the Muslim world)
<i>niṣf fiḍḍa</i>	Small silver coin used in Egypt since the early 15th century C.E. and called <i>pāra</i> or <i>pāre</i> from the mid-seventeenth century onward
<i>Nizāmiyya</i>	Medieval institution of higher education (<i>madrasa</i>) established by the 11th-century Persian scholar Nizām al-Mulk
<i>ould</i> , see <i>wuld</i>	
<i>qabīla</i> (pl. <i>qabā'il</i>)	Clan or group of lineages descended from a common ancestor
<i>qabḍa</i>	Unit of measure for paper in south and western Sahara meaning "handful"
<i>qāḍī</i> (pl. <i>quḍāh</i> , Arabic)	Qadi (cadi) or Muslim judge
<i>Qādiriyya</i>	One of the oldest and the most widespread of the Sufi orders, founded in the 12th century C.E. by the Persian preacher 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī (470–561/1077–1166)
<i>qaṣīda</i> (plur. <i>qasā'id</i> , Arabic)	Form of poetry originated in pre-Islamic Arabia and consisting of an ode of more than 50 lines
<i>qaṣr</i> (pl., <i>qṣūr</i> , Arabic; Berber <i>ksar</i> , pl. <i>ksour</i>)	Fortified village in northern Africa
<i>qawā'id al-fiqhiyya</i> (Arabic)	General principles governing Islamic jurisprudence
<i>Qayrawānī script</i> (<i>al-khaṭṭ al-qayrawānī</i>)	Variant of Maghribi script, named after the Tunisian city of al-Qayrawān
<i>qirtās</i> (fr. Gr. <i>chartes</i> , Lat. <i>Charta</i> , Ar. pl <i>qarātīs</i>)	One of the terms used in the Arabic world for sheet of paper or other writing material
<i>Qur'ān</i> (Arabic: "Recitation")	The Holy Book of Islam
<i>qurṭubī</i> (from the Andalusian city of Córdoba)	Variant of Maghribi script
<i>rānī</i> (Hausa)	Dry season, or the first part of the hot season, beginning around March
<i>ramzi</i> (Hausa)	the poetic writing of a date using letters instead of numbers
<i>raqq</i> or <i>riqq</i> (Arabic)	Tanned leather parchment prepared for writing (e.g., <i>riqq al-ghazāla</i> of tanned gazelle parchment)
<i>raqqāq</i> (pl. <i>raqqāqīn</i>)	Parchment marker
<i>real grande</i> (or <i>imperiale</i>)	Variety of Italian paper
<i>real mezzana</i> (or <i>real lunga</i>)	Variety of Italian paper

<i>real più leggera</i> (or <i>sott'imperiale</i>)	Variety of Italian paper
<i>reg</i> (Berber)	Stony plateaus and hard undulating surfaces in Saharan regions
<i>riḥla</i> (plur. <i>riḥalāt</i>)	Pilgrimage travelogue; term derived from the Arabic to travel
<i>risāla</i> (Arabic: "message")	Islamic revealed scriptures; title of one of the most popular abridgments of Mālikī law (written by Ibn Abī Zayd)
<i>Rumawa</i> (Hausa: "Byzantines")	Term used in Hausaland to indicate a non-Muslim Hausa group
<i>saḥḥāfīn</i> (Arabic)	The writers association in Cairo
<i>Sahrawi</i> (<i>Saharan</i>) <i>script</i> (<i>al-khatt al-ṣaḥrāwī</i>)	Variant of Maghribi script, used in the Sahara region
<i>Salihawa</i>	A closed fundamentalist group with many communities in southern Katsina (Nigeria)
<i>ṣaqqālīn</i> (Arabic)	Paper glazers
<i>sarkin</i> (Hausa)	Chief
<i>sarkin tsafi</i> (Hausa)	Local chief in charge of magical, non-Islamic rites
<i>scriptio defectiva</i> and <i>scriptio plena</i>	In Arabic and Hebrew paleography, expressions referring to vowelless (i.e., "defective") and vocalized ("full") scripts, respectively
<i>sabkha</i> (<i>sebkha</i> , Arabic)	Salt deposits or pans in Saharan regions
<i>sharī'a</i> (Arabic)	Divine law, chiefly used for "Islamic law"
<i>sharīf</i> (also spelled <i>sharif</i> , <i>cherif</i> , pl. <i>ashrāf</i>)	Term denoting a descendent of the Prophet Muḥammad, used as a title by and for certain Arab sovereigns and tribal leaders
<i>shāsh</i> (Arabic)	Muslin, turban cloth
<i>shaykh</i> (also spelled <i>shaikh</i> , <i>sheikh</i> , <i>sheik</i> or <i>cheikh</i>)	Honorific term used to designate a revered elder or Islamic scholar (e.g., Shaykh Sidiyya al-Kabīr)
<i>shurūṭ</i> (plural of <i>shart</i>)	Legal prerequisites or conditions; term also used to designate contractual models (known in the western Muslim world as <i>wathā'iq</i>)
<i>silsila</i> (pl. <i>salāsīl</i> , Arabic)	Chain of spiritual authority (going back to Muḥammad) that constitutes one of the strongest features of a Sufi order
<i>sīra</i>	Lifestory of the Prophet Muḥammad
<i>Sūdānī script</i>	Generic term used to indicate a variety of scripts found in the western Saharan-Sahelian region (and mostly derived from the Maghribi script)
<i>Sufi</i> (<i>Ṣūfī</i>)	The esoteric, inward dimension of Islam. By extension Sufism. Term originally derived from the word for cotton (<i>al-ṣūf</i>) to connote the typical dress of a "mystic." See <i>taṣawwuf</i>

<i>al-sūsī, al-khaṭṭ</i> (Arabic)	Variant of a Moroccan script from the southern Moroccan region known as al-Sūs, Sous, or Souss
<i>tafsīr</i> (Arabic)	Qur'ānic exegesis, commentary or interpretation
<i>al-tajlīd</i>	Bookbinding (in the Islamic East)
<i>takhmīs</i> (Arabic)	Classical Arabic poetic process consisting in the amplification of an existing poem by adding three lines to an existing couplet (usually by a renowned master)
<i>Ṭalhī paper</i>	Type of paper manufactured in Egypt during the eleventh and twelfth centuries and named after Ṭalḥa b. Ṭāhir, a ninth-century governor of Khorāsān
<i>Ṭālib/ṭāliba</i> (pl. <i>ṭulāb</i> , Arabic)	Student
<i>ṭarīq</i> (pl. <i>ṭuruq</i> , Arabic)	road, trail or pathway; <i>ṭarīqa</i> is a term used to designate Sufi orders
<i>ṭarthūth</i>	Parasitic plant (<i>Cynomorium coccineum</i>) found in the southern Mediterranean region and North Africa, where it is traditionally used for medicinal purposes and to manufacture certain types of ink
<i>taṣawwuf</i> (Arabic)	Sufism, the esoteric, inward dimension of Islam
<i>al-tasfīr</i> (Arabic)	Bookbinding (in the Islamic West)
<i>tawḥīd</i> (<i>tauḥīd</i> , <i>tawhid</i> , <i>tawheed</i>)	Monotheism, Islamic doctrine of oneness of God
<i>Tijāniyya</i>	West African Sufi order founded around 1780 in North Africa by Aḥmad al-Tijānī (1737–1815)
<i>Ṭrāb al-Bīḍān</i>	The land of the <i>Bīḍān</i> (<i>v.</i>), or the western part of the Sahara region, including its northern and southern fringes
<i>tre lune</i> (Italian: “three moons”)	Watermark in the shape of three crescent moons in decreasing size, commonly found on Italian paper manufactured from the 17th century onward for exportation to the Levant
<i>trois lunes</i> (French: “three moons”) or <i>trois croissants</i> (“three crescent moons”)	Watermarks found on paper manufactured in southern France in the 18th century for exportation to the Levant
<i>tsafi</i> (Hausa)	Magic, idolatry, and related worship
<i>tsangaya</i> (Hausa)	Grass hut used for an Islamic student settlement
<i>Tuareg</i> (<i>Twareg</i> , <i>Touareg</i>)	Berber nomadic pastoralist people of the central Sahara (southern Algeria, northern Mali and Niger)
<i>‘ulamā’</i> (also spelled <i>ulama</i> or <i>ulema</i> ; pl. of <i>‘ālim</i> , Arabic)	Generic term for scholars of all levels and specializations
<i>‘ulūm al-ḥadīth</i>	Sciences of <i>ḥadīth</i>

<i>urjūza</i> (Arabic)	Long poem in the <i>rajaz</i> meter dating from the 17th century C.E
<i>uṣūl al-fiqh</i>	Sources of Islamic law, or legal theory
<i>wākà</i> (Hausa)	Song, poem
<i>Wangarawa</i>	Merchant group in northern Nigeria
<i>waqf</i> (pl. <i>awqāf</i>)	Endowment in Islamic legal tradition that renders property inalienable in perpetuity and its proceeds or profits a public good. Library collections and individual manuscripts were so endowed, as were schools, mosques and fountains or wells.
<i>waqfiyya</i> (Arabic)	Document defining the condition of an endowment (<i>waqf</i>)
<i>waraq, waraqa</i> (pl. <i>awraq</i>)	One of the terms used in the Arabic world for “paper”
<i>waraq baladī</i>	Local paper (in Egypt)
<i>waraq ḥamāwī</i>	paper from the central Syrian city of Hama (Hamāh)
<i>waraq hilālī</i>	Three moons (<i>tre lune</i>) paper, as it is sometimes called in Egyptian inventories
<i>warrāq</i> (pl. <i>warrāqīn</i>)	Scribe, bookseller, paper-maker
<i>wazīfa</i> (pl. <i>wazāʿif</i>)	Repetition of sacred phrases or formulas specific to a Sufi order, especially the Tijāniyya
<i>wird</i> (pl. <i>awrād</i>)	A specific prayer, or litany, recited by members of a Sufi order and marking membership to that order
<i>wuld</i> (spelled <i>ould</i> in French sources)	“Son of,” used particularly in Mauritanian names (e.g., Mukhtār wuld Ḥāmidun). <i>Bint</i> (or <i>mint</i> in Ḥasaniya) is the equivalent for female names
<i>zāwiya</i> (pl. <i>zawāyā</i> ; also spelled <i>zawiya</i> , <i>zaouiya</i> or <i>zaouia</i>)	Term used in the Maghrib and West Africa to designate a Sufi lodge, where members of the order meet for recitations and prayers and where lessons in Islamic sciences are conducted. The term is also used to indicate the clerical groups in the western Saharan region, typically in charge of Islamic learning and the production of scholarship
<i>znāga</i>	Berber language spoken in most of Mauritania until it was superseded by Ḥasaniya

AFRICAN TOPONYMS MENTIONED IN THE VOLUME

<i>Adrar</i>	City and department in southwestern Algeria
<i>Ādrār (Adrar)</i>	Region and city of northern Mauritania
<i>Adrar des Ifoghas</i> (<i>Adṛar-n-Ifoṛas</i>)	Sandstone massif in the Kidal region of northeastern Mali
<i>Agadez</i>	City in northern Niger
<i>Agadir-Tissint</i>	Main town of the Tissint Oasis, in Morocco's Jabal Bānī range. Province of Tātā.
<i>Air Mountains</i>	Granitic massif in central Niger.
<i>Akjoujt</i>	Capital town of the Inchiri region of western Mauritania
<i>Akka</i>	Large oasis at the foot of Morocco's Anti Atlas range. Province of Tātā.
<i>Alkalawa</i>	Capital of the Hausa city-state of Gobir, in today's northern Nigeria. It was captured by Muḥammad Bello in 1808.
<i>Arawān (Arawan, Araouane)</i>	Village of northern Mali (Essouk district, region of Timbuktu)
<i>Awdaghust</i> (<i>Aoudaghost, Audaghost, modern Tegdaoust</i>)	Medieval town of West Africa, in today's southern Mauritania
<i>Āwlīl</i>	Medieval salt mine on the coast of Mauritania
<i>Azawād (Azaouad, Azawad)</i>	Region of northern Mali and northern Niger
<i>Azūgī</i>	Early Almoravid town next to Āṭār, in the Ādrār region of northern Mauritania
<i>Bamba</i>	Town of Mali (Bourem district, region of Gao), on the Niger River
<i>Bambuk (Bambouk)</i>	Once an important source of gold in eastern Senegal and western Mali
<i>Banjul</i> (formerly <i>Bathurst</i>)	Capital of The Gambia, founded in 1816 as a British trading post on an island (St. Mary/Banjul) at the mouth of the Gambia River
<i>Baraya Zaki</i>	Historical town of northern Nigeria, within the territory of the former Hausa city-state of Gobir
<i>Barīsā (Yaresna)</i>	Medieval town on the upper Senegal River, mentioned by the 6th/12th century Arab geographer al-Idrīsī in his major work <i>al-Kitāb al-Rujārī</i>
<i>Béchar</i>	City and department in western Algeria
<i>Béjaia (Bougie; Kabyle Bgayet)</i>	Mediterranean port and department in northeastern Algeria

<i>Beni Wartilan</i> (<i>Beni Ouartilène</i> , <i>At-Ouartilène</i> , Kabyle <i>Aithwarthilane</i>)	Region in Lower Kabylia, north-eastern Algeria, corresponding to a former clan
<i>Ber</i>	Village in the Timbuktu region of Mali
<i>Bilma</i>	Oasis town in northeastern Niger with a major saltpan
<i>Borno (Bornu)</i>	Medieval empire and modern state of northeastern Nigeria
<i>Boù Djébéha</i>	Village of Mali in the region of Timbuktu
<i>Bourem</i>	Town of Mali on the Niger River and in the Gao region
<i>Boutilimit (Bū Tilimīt)</i>	Town in the Trārza region of southwestern Mauritania
<i>Brākna (Brakna)</i>	Former emirate and modern region of southwestern Mauritania
<i>Chaouia Plain</i> (<i>as-Shāwīyā</i>)	Coastal plain of north-central Morocco, south of Casablanca
<i>Dar'a</i> ,	River valley in central Morocco.
<i>Darfur (Dār Fūr)</i>	Region and also kingdom in eastern Sudan
<i>Diakha (Dia, Arabic</i> <i>Zāgha)</i>	Clerical town on the Middle Niger, corresponding to the village of Dia, in Mali's Mopti region
<i>Elmina</i>	Coastal town of Ghana
<i>Erg Chech</i>	Desert area of sand dunes in southwestern Algeria and northern Mali
<i>Erg Iguidi</i>	Desert area of sand dunes in western Algeria and northern Mauritania
<i>Erg Waran</i> (<i>Erg Ouarane</i>)	Desert area of sand dunes in northwestern Mauritania
<i>Fayyūm (Fayum,</i> <i>Faiyūm, Fayoum)</i>	City and governorate of northern Egypt
<i>Fdèrik-Zouérat</i>	Iron-ore complex mines in northern Mauritania
<i>Fez (Fes, Arabic Fās)</i>	City in northern Morocco and center of Islamic learning out of the Qarawiyyin mosque
<i>Fezzan</i>	Southwestern region of Libya
<i>Fustat (al-Fuṣṭāṭ)</i>	Historical capital and modern town of northern Egypt
<i>Fuwa (Fūwa)</i>	City of northern Egypt
<i>Gao</i>	Town and district of Mali
<i>Ghadamès</i> (<i>Ghadāmis</i>)	Oasis town of western Libya, on the Algerian-Tunisian border
<i>Gibla (Qibla)</i>	The southwestern part of Mauritania, coextensive with the Brākna and Trārza regions
<i>Gobir</i>	Historic city-state of Hausaland (Nigeria)
<i>Goundam</i> (<i>Goundame</i>)	Town of central Mali, southwest of Timbuktu

<i>Gourara</i> (<i>Ghūrāra</i> , <i>Gurara</i>)	Agglomeration of oases in southern Algeria
<i>Guelb er-Richat</i> (<i>Qalb al-Rishāt</i>)	Vast crater in the Adrar region of central Mauritania
<i>Guelmīm</i> (<i>Aglmīm</i> , <i>Goulimine</i>)	Town in southern Morocco
<i>Gwandu</i>	Town and emirate in Kebbi State, northwestern Nigeria
<i>Harūj al-Aswad</i>	Basaltic plateau in central Libya
<i>Ḥawḍ</i> (<i>Hodh</i>)	Region of southeastern Mauritania, divided in two administrative territories, Hodh El Gharbi and Hodh Ech Chargui
<i>Hijāz</i> (Arabic)	Mecca and surrounding region; Arabia
<i>Hoggar</i> (Arabic <i>al-Huwqār</i>)	Mountain plateau region of southern Algeria
<i>Ibadan</i>	City and capital of the Oyo state in southwestern Nigeria
<i>Ifriqiya</i> (<i>Ifriqiyya</i> , <i>Ifriqiyah</i>)	Early Arabic name for the eastern Maghrib, including Algeria, Tunisia and Libya
<i>Ijil</i> (<i>Idjil</i>)	Salt mine in northwestern Mauritania
<i>Iḷorin</i>	City of west-central Nigeria, capital of the Kwara State
<i>Jabal Nafūsa</i>	Mountain region of western Libya
<i>Jenné</i> (<i>Djenné</i>)	A Malian town on the Niger River and one of the oldest urban centers in western Africa
<i>Kabylia</i> (<i>Kabylie</i>)	Berber-speaking area of northeastern Algeria
<i>Kaduna</i>	State and capital of north-central Nigeria
<i>Kano</i>	City and state of northern Nigeria
<i>Katsina</i>	City of northwestern Nigeria, capital of the Katsina State
<i>Kawār</i>	Oasis group in the Sahara, west of the Tibesti Mountains and on the caravan trail connecting Tripoli, Fezzan and Kanem
<i>Kayes</i>	City, district and region of western Mali, on the Senegal River
<i>Kebbi</i>	State of northwestern Nigeria
<i>Kharga</i> (<i>El Kharga</i> , <i>al-Kharijāh</i>)	Oasis of southern Egypt, in the Libyan Desert
<i>Kidal</i>	Town and district of northeastern Mali
<i>Kufra</i> (<i>Al-Kufrah</i>)	Oasis in southeastern Libya
<i>Kukawa</i>	Town of northeastern Nigeria; a former capital of Borno
<i>Kūkya</i>	Medieval capital of the Songhay empire
<i>Kumasi</i>	City and market in central Ghana, and capital of the Asante Kingdom
<i>Kumbi Saleh</i> (<i>Koumbi Saleh</i>)	Archeological site in southeastern Mauritania, thought by some to be the capital of the Ghana Empire

<i>Kurmin Dan Ranko</i>	Ancient trading town of northern Nigeria
<i>Laghouat</i>	City and department in central Algeria, in the Atlas Mountains.
<i>Al-Maghrib al-aqṣā</i> ("The Far West")	Expression used to designate the region south of Morocco
<i>Meknès (Meknes)</i>	City of northern Morocco, capital of the Meknès-Tafilalet region
<i>Mghimima</i>	Oasis and <i>zāwiya</i> of central-western Morocco
<i>Mopti</i>	City and region of central Mali, at the confluence of the Niger and Bani rivers, between Timbuktu and Ségou
<i>M'zab (Mzāb)</i>	Valley of central Algeria, within the limits of the Sahara desert
<i>Nūl (or Nūl Lamṭa)</i>	Almoravid town in the Wād Nūn region of what is today southern Morocco
<i>Qalanbū (Galambū)</i>	Historical town on the Senegal River
<i>Qayrawān (Kairouan)</i>	City and governorate of north-central Tunisia, formerly an important center of trade and scholarship
<i>Río de Oro</i>	Southernmost region of the Western Sahara, once a Spanish colonial territory
<i>Al-Ṣawīra (Essaouira, formerly Mogador)</i>	Coastal city of western Morocco; until the end of the 19th century it served as major port for goods traded across the Sahara
<i>Ségou (Segu)</i>	City, cercle and region of south-central Mali, on the Niger River
<i>Sélibaby</i>	Capital town of the Guidimakha region of southern Mauritania
<i>Shinqīṭī (Shingiti, Chinguetti)</i>	Oasis town and department in the Ādrār region of northern Mauritania
<i>Sijilmāsa (Sijilmassa)</i>	Medieval trading center in the Tafilālt oases of southeastern Morocco
<i>Sillā</i>	Medieval city-state on the west bank of the Senegal River, near the modern town of Bakel
<i>Siwa (Wāḥat Sīwah)</i>	Oasis of northwestern Egypt
<i>Sokoto</i>	City, state and former capital of the Sokoto Caliphate of northwestern Nigeria
<i>Sūf (Souf, in full El Wad Sūf, Oued Souf)</i>	Oasis group in eastern Algeria
<i>Souss (Sous, Sūs)</i>	Region of southern Morocco
<i>Tādmekka (Essouk)</i>	Ancient town in the Adrar des Ifoghas region of northeastern Mali
<i>Tafilālt (Tafilalet, Tafilet)</i>	Region and oasis group of southern Morocco
<i>Tagānīt (Tagant)</i>	Region and plateau of south-central Mauritania
<i>Taghāza</i>	Former salt-mining center in northern Mali
<i>Tagidda (Takedda)</i>	Group of settlements in northwestern Niger

- Tahert* (Algeria) See Tiaret
- Takrūr* (*Tekrur*,
Tekrour) Early Muslim state of West Africa, located in the Senegal River valley
- Tala Ouzrar* Village in northeastern Algeria
- Tamantit* Qsar in the Touat in southwestern Algeria
- Tamchakett* Town in the Hodh El-Gharbi region of southern Mauritania
- Tamgrūt*
(*Tamgrout*,
Tamegroute) Village of southern Morocco
- Tassili n' Ajjer* Mountain range in the Sahara Desert of southeastern Algeria
- Tawdānni* (*Taoudenni*,
Taoudeni) Village and salt-mining center in northern Mali
- Tāzarwālit*
(*Tazerwalt*) Region of southern Morocco
- Tegdaoust* Archeological site of southern Mauritania, ca. 750 km east of Nouakchott, where the ruins of the medieval town of Awdaghust (v.) have been excavated
- Ténéré* Desert region in south-central Sahara (northeastern Niger and southern Chad)
- Tétouan* (*Tetuan*,
Titawin; Spanish
Tetuán) City in northern Morocco
- Tiaret* (Berber *Tahert*) Town and district of northern Algeria
- Tibesti* (*Tībistī*) Mountain range in the central Sahara Desert (northeastern Chad and southern Libya)
- Tidikelt* Agglomeration of oases in the southern Algerian Sahara
- Tidjikja* (*Tijǧja*) Small oasis town and former caravan center of south-central Mauritania, capital of the Tagant region
- Timbuktu* (*Timbuctoo*,
Tombouctou) City and district in central Mali
- Tindirma* Village in central Mali, southwest of Timbuktu
- Tīrīs* Region of northern Mauritania and southern Western Sahara, inhabited by nomadic communities and their herds
- Tīshīt* (*Tichit*, *Tichitt*) Oasis town and former caravan center in the Tagānit region of south-central Mauritania
- Tlemcen* (*Tlīmsān*) City and district in northwestern Algeria, once an important center of scholarship and papermaking
- Trārza* (*Trarza*) Region of southwestern Mauritania
- Tripolitania* Historic region and former administrative province of northern Libya

<i>Touat</i> (<i>Tuwāt, Twāt, Twat</i>)	Agglomeration of oases in southwestern Algeria
<i>Wadāi</i> (<i>Wadai, Ouaddai</i>)	Ancient kingdom situated between Lake Chad and Darfur, corresponding to the modern region of Ouaddai, in eastern Chad
<i>Wādān</i> (<i>Wadan, Ouadane</i>)	Small oasis town and former caravan center in northern Mauritania
<i>Wād Nūn</i>	Region in southern Morocco, often used interchangeably with Guelmīm, the name of its principle town
<i>Walāta</i> (<i>Walata, Wallata, Oualata</i>)	Oasis town and former caravan terminus in the Hodh El Gharbi region of southeastern Mauritania
<i>Wargla</i> (<i>Ouargla</i>)	City in east-central Algeria
<i>Yandoto</i>	Town of northwestern Nigeria, in today's Zamfara State
<i>Zāgha</i> (Mali)	See Diakha
<i>Zaria</i>	City in the Kaduna State of north-central Nigeria
<i>Zemmūr</i> (<i>Zemmour</i>)	Region of northern Mauritania and Western Sahara

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