

Ṣulḥ in Chad, Coping with Colonisation.¹

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Key words: Wadai, colonial conquest, accomodation, decolonisation, kub-kub, fundamentalism, traditional Islam, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Sanūsī al-Tarjumī, oral history, Solomon.

Abstract:

In 1909, when the sultanate of Wadai, until then the last independent Muslim state in Africa, succumbed to French authority, the scholar ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Sanūsī al-Tarjumī wrote a treatise in which he explained why Muslims could remain in the country and live in “reconciliation” (ṣulḥ) with the Christian conqueror. More than a hundred years later, the author and this treatise, Tabṣirat al-ḥayrān min haul fitan al-zamān (Enlightenment of the Perplexed on the Horror of the Trials of our Time) have acquired a new reputation. This article explores the reasons why al-Tarjumī revives, and the relation between his work and his reputation. It will argue that his learned plea for reconciliation with the non-muslim colonial occupants of Wadai is now called upon to strenghten the position of traditional Muslims in Chad vis-a-vis fundamentalists; and that, with the help of King Solomon, al-Tarjumī has turned into the central figure of a narrative of wisdom literature. The study is based on three types of sources: a reading of al-Tarjumī’s treatise, secondary literature about the history of his time, and interviews carried out in november 2017 in the Chadian cities of Abeche, Mongo and Ndjamenā.

Muslim cemeteries in Chad are not easy to recognise. Graves are not marked and graveyards are just open spaces, usually outside towns or cities. The *Maqābir al-shuhadā’* (Cemetery of the martyrs) in Abeche, the capital of the province of Wadai, is a walled-in empty space in the Shiq al-fukara ward. It is said to be the burial place of a few dozen victims, all learned Muslims, of a massacre committed by order of a French colonial officer in 1917, which came to be known as the *kubkub* tragedy. At the foot of a large tree, one plot is delineated by bricks that stick obliquely out of the sand, like a ring of teeth. Here lies, according to the notables of the city, the body of ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Sanūsī al-Tarjumī, the most important scholar of his time. The demarcation, however, is of very recent date and the choice of this particular spot is based on an illusion.² The identification of al-Tarjumī’s grave is the result of the revival of his fame and part of a new tradition.

This article will explore the reasons why al-Tarjumī revives, and the relation between his work and his reputation. It will argue that his scholarly plea for reconciliation with the non-muslim colonial occupants of Wadai is now called upon to strenghten the position of traditional Muslims in Chad vis-a-vis fundamentalist co-religionists. The study is based on three types of sources: a reading of al-Tarjumī’s best known text *Tabṣirat al-ḥayrān min haul fitan al-zamān* (Enlightenment of the Perplexed on the Horror of the Trials of our Time) secondary literature about the history of his time, and interviews carried out in november 2017 in Abeche, Mongo and Ndjamenā.

¹ I dedicate this article to professor Mahamat Saleh Ayoub who suggested that I study ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Sanūsī, like he has done, and generously shared his thoughts and photocopies with me. I am also grateful to Andrea Brigaglia, for his introduction to sultan Ourada II, one of the doors he opened for me; to the future historian Bichara Abdoulaye and Djimet Seli for their assistance in Mongo, Abeche and Ndjamenā; to Ismail Warscheid, Stephane Colovic and the co-authors of this volume for their critical reading. I thank the Oosters Instituut in Leiden for sponsoring a research trip to Chad in 2017.

The spelling of Arabic names here reflects the context in which they are most used, in *fushḥā* or in dialect and written local practice. Thus e.g. sultan Yūsuf b. Muḥammad, but Mahamat Fadoul.

² I have not been able to find out exactly when the bricks were laid, but my guess from what I saw and heard is that it was not before 2010.

Given al-Tarjumī's reputation as an important scholar, it is remarkable that the content of his work is hardly known in Chad. The title of *Tabṣirat al-ḥayrān* has best survived, especially among intellectuals in Wadai. The Chadian historian Muḥammad Ṣaleh Ayoub had heard of it when, in 1992, he found a copy of the text itself with a descendant of al-Tarjumī in Biltine. He published it with a study of the intellectual environment in contemporary Wadai in 2001.³ Ayoub's work has contributed to the fact that intellectual Muslims outside Wadai, in Sudan and Mauritania, know the title of *Tabṣirat al-ḥayrān*. In Wadai many remember that al-Tarjumī was also a poet.⁴ But almost no-one has read his treatise or his poems, or has even had a chance to read them, because no copies circulate. What survives and revives today is al-Tarjumī's repute as a man of reconciliation (*sulu* in Showa Arabic, the spoken dialect) and peace ("silim"), a man of the middle (a "wasiti"), a great sufi of the Tijaniya ṭarīqa and an expert knower of the *Mukhtaṣar* of Khalīl, who argued in a scientific way that change is part of the human condition and cannot be avoided.

Shaykh Yusuf Mukhtar Hamid is of Wadaian descent and has a *gariye*, a qur'ān school under the straw shelter of his house in Mongo. What he knows about al-Tarjumī is this:

'Abd al-Ḥaqq was a great sufi who could tell the future. He was also a poet and a scholar of Khalīl's *Mukhtaṣar*, a book about the Sharia. This was in the days when the Nasara came to Abeche from the west. When they paused somewhere along the route, Dud Murra [sultan of Wadai 1902-1909] gathered the ulema. Among them was 'Abd al-Ḥaqq. Dud Murra asked them: "Until today we have all lived well together, but now the Nasara are on their way and they may chase us. What should we do?"

The ulema answered: "Muslims must never submit to Christians. We must fight them."

'Abd al-Ḥaqq did not agree and said: "No, we must reconcile with them, because militarily they are stronger than we are."

The sultan asked the other ulema: "Is it true, what he says?"

They answered: "No."

'Abd al-Ḥaqq said: "How is it not true? I have proof from the Qur'ān and from Khalīl."

From the Qur'ān he took the story of Sulayman and Zulaikha.⁵ Sulayman sent a *laglogo* (*hudhud*, hoopoe) to Zulaikha, with a letter saying that she should convert to Islam and submit to his power. She gathered her generals and asked them what her reaction must be. The generals said: "We are sufficiently strong, but you may decide."

She said: "When Sulayman's men come, they will violate us and do much damage. We must reconcile with them."

She wrote to Sulayman and organised *sulu*. Then she married Sulayman.

To this story, 'Abd al-Ḥaqq added arguments from Khalīl. When he had finished, the sultan asked the ulema again: "Is he right or not?"

And the ulema answered: "No. Muslims should never submit to unbelievers."

Then 'Abd al-Ḥaqq was grabbed, they took his *chechia* (skullcap) and *sibha* (prayerbeads), put him on a camel and brought him to the village of Murra, where he was imprisoned. He spent three months in prison. Then Asil [who helped the French to overthrow Dud Murra, see below] arrived with the Nasara, and the first thing he asked was: "Where is 'Abd al-Ḥaqq? Bring him here".

He was released but by then he was very weak. So they dug a long narrow hole in the earth and lined it with a cow's hide, with the hair on the open side and well oiled. He was put into that [the

³ Ayoub, Muḥammad Ṣaleh, *Al-dawr al-ijtimā'ī wa'l-siyāsī li'l-shaykh 'Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Tarjumī fī dār Wadāy, Shād (1853-1917)* Benghazi, 2001. And an unpublished article: *Al-ta'āyush al-islāmī – al-naṣranī ḥaula baḥīra shād min khilāl makḥṭūṭat al-tabṣira li'l-shaykh 'Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Tarjumī fī dār Wadāy (1853-1917)*. 2014.

⁴ With regard to Mauritania: http://www.alukah.net/literature_language/0/49435/. For Sudan, see note 20; One of the poems, one of two Nūniyya's al-Tarjumī composed, was discussed by 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ḥassan 'Fuchs' Issa (head of the Direction des Langues de l'Enseignement de Base under Tombalbaye) in the 1950s: *Lamḥa 'an ḥayāh al-shaykh 'Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Sanūsī*. Not published, Université Roy Faycal, Ndjamena.

⁵ The tale combines elements from older written and oral traditions: Ṣurat al-naml tells the story of king Sulaymān and the queen of Sheba. The queen, whose name is Bilqīs according to tafsīr, submits to Sulaymān and accepts Islam when she enters his palace and sees its wondrous floor. Zulaikha is the name of the pharaoh's wife who fell in love with Yūsuf.

shaykh makes a pushing gesture with his hands twenty centimeters apart, open towards each other], and when he came out he was restored.

This is where shaykh Yusuf's story ends. He and his friends faki Haroun Ali Adam and Abdoulaye Umar Mahamat are aware of 'Abd al-Ḥaqq's death in the *kubkub* event, but that is not part of their narrative. Their conclusion is: "Abd al-Ḥaqq was right. The Qur'ān says that if you don't have equal means, you should opt for *sulu*. *Ta'āyush*, living peacefully alongside the unbelievers, is a perfectly valid choice."

Two themes in this story always recur among people who have a notion of al-Tarjumī: *sulu* and wisdom, here represented by the figures of Khalīl and Solomon. What the arguments derived from Khalīl were, is not repeated, understandably, because in Chad, his legal work is not taught anymore. The third theme is expressed by a symbol known from other local stories, that of the vagina through which al-Tarjumī made a slippery re-entrance into the world. It is the theme of renaissance, pointing to the possibility of the revival of cultural and religious identity at a time when it is perceived to be threatened.

Who needs a hero?

Shaykh Yusuf, who has lived most of his life in Mongo, some 300 km removed from Abeche, had heard this story for the first time only "about three years ago", from a member of 'Abd al-Ḥaqq's family. Most of my other interlocutors too (see annex for a list) had not heard of al-Tarjumī until recent years, when he became, as I will argue, the intellectual and moral hero mainstream Muslims in Chad now need to restore their shaken confidence and even self-esteem.

Mainstream Islam in Chad today is what Muslims here label Tijaniyya Islam. They view the Tijani creed as an orientation, rather than a brotherhood or *ṭarīqa*. Only a very small percentage of Tijani Muslims seek a shaykh from whom they take the Tijani wīrd and with whom they walk the path of the sufi, although my impression is, that this number has been growing in recent years. Tijanis describe their orientation as outward and tolerant towards African religious traditions, towards Christianity (the religion of roughly half of the Chadian population), western culture and the *laïcité* of the state, and to small human missteps. It is juxtaposed to the extremism of "les jusqu'au-boutistes" (Mahamat Saleh Yacoub) as non-violent and a-political. Tijanism is, correctly, associated with a historical relation with the Maghrib and often also seen, wrongly, as the form in which Islam first arrived in the region. Since the 19th century, however, Muslims in the region which is now Chad have generally identified themselves as Tijani.

Since the 1990's, they have experienced pressure from the salafi interpretation of the religion, which they feel is especially promoted in a paternalist way by countries like Saudi-Arabia, Iraq, Qatar and Sudan. Apart from preaching, its partisans invest relatively large amounts of money in practical projects such as credit schemes, bore-holes and the building of mosques, as well as in cultural projects. The latter include schemes to reinforce the use of *fushḥā* Arabic in stead of the dialect, and the provision of scholarships for students who want to devote themselves to religious studies in Sudan and the Middle East and return to Chad as imams.⁶ Many Chadians, Muslims not in the least, fear that these activities in the field of language and education are an effort to "Arabise" their environment and erase the Islamic culture in which they have grown up.

In Chad, the meaning of the word "Arab" is not well-defined and is only partially related to ethnic groups of cattle raisers in the drier parts of the country. Those who do not identify themselves as Arab, often associate Arabic culture with slavery and *razzia*'s. Since a few decades the idea of "Arabic" is also burdened by the image of conflict and violence in the Middle East. Ateib Idriss Halawlaw, vice-rector of the University of Ndjamenā explains: "Saudi-Arabia's influence in Chad increases. Their

⁶ Maayke Kaag, 'Aid, Umma and Politics: Transnational NGO's in Chad'. In *Islam and Muslim Politics in Africa*. B.F. Soares and R. Otayek (eds). Palgrave MacMillan, 2007. 85-103

culture is very different from ours, but the Mashriq with its fratricide is coming very near now. Change is happening too fast, and it is beyond our control.”

At the same time, Tijani Muslims feel that their knowledge of religion does in fact lag behind that of many co-religionists. Their explanation is, on the one hand, that since the colonial period, they have neglected the transfer of knowledge from one generation of specialists to the next. Shaykh Adoum Muazzal for instance tells us that his own shaykh, in the 1960-ies and 70-ies could not find anyone in or around Abeche who could teach him from *al-Ājurrumiya*, a famous work on grammar by the thirteenth-century author Ibn Ājurrūm, which still belonged to the standard curriculum in Wadai at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁷ And not many Tijanis go abroad to study at Islamic universities, because there are no aid schemes for universities in countries where Tijanism is strong.

Although the number of Chadian Muslims who profess salafism and call themselves Anṣār al-sunna (or Sarasunna in colloquial speech) is relatively small (the figure of 5% is often mentioned, but only based on estimates), the tension between Tijani and salafi believers has been growing. In recent years, members of each community have accused the other of unbelief. Anṣār al-sunna maintain that Tijani Muslims understand very little of Islam. They describe their rituals of prayer and learning as *bid‘a* and (pretend to) believe that nightly sessions of Tijani *dhikr* attended by men and women are a front for fornication. In wards to the north of Ndjamena such as Diguel-Ryad, Ndjari and Gouji and in towns and villages in Wadai, Anṣār al-sunna avoid all contact with Tijani Muslims and prohibit their children to play with the children of Tijani neighbours. They reject the authority of the national *Conseil Islamique* and of the local islamic committees (*lajnat*) whose dealings with conflicts are important in a country where the national legal system hardly functions at all.

The theological discussion between the two groups has focused on the issue of jihad. For Anṣār al-sunna jihad is an important consignment. Tijanis resent what they call the ‘Wahhabi’ appropriation of the term jihad, and the associated condoning of the terrorism of Boko Haram, IS and other extremist groups, and they fear this may in time provoke new bloodshed in Chad itself. Although their number is small, the Anṣār al-sunna’s vigour in the battle for public space, financed from outside and producing buildings and other expressions in styles that are new to Chad, intimidates many others.

The trials in al-Tarjumī’s time

Now to the days of ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Sanūsī al-Tarjumī. Probably in 1909 ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq wrote an epistle for – in the first place - his colleagues in Abeche “about what people of faith must know without any doubt, with regard to countries where the Christians have become dominant, while their [own] fundamentals have been shaken and the population is confused. I have [...] called it *Enlightenment of the Perplexed on the Horror of the Trials of our Time* [...] It is meant especially for these times, which, when one considers them, make one doubt more than a lizard and err more than a one-eyed crow in worldly matters that are perceptible to the eye, let alone with regard to things that can only be perceived by the heart.”⁸

In “our time” Wadai was in crisis: the sovereignty, welfare and cultural identity of the last independent state in Muslim Africa, one of the last bastions of resistance against European colonial powers, were seriously threatened.⁹ Much was at stake. When Gustav Nachtigal visited Wadai, in

⁷ See Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur (GAL)*. Brill, 2012. II, 237, 238.

⁸ وسميتها تبصيرة الحيران من هول فتن الزمان ... فهو خصوصاً في هذا الزمان الذي لو شهده صحبان لصار فيه أحير من ضبّ 8 Manuscript f1, Ayoub 2001, 305.

⁹ Since 1898 neighbouring Darfur was occupied by the British in name, but not in practice. For studies of the region just before the colonial era, see e.g. Jean-Claude Zeltner, *Les pays du Tchad dans la tourmente 1880-1903*. L’Harmattan, 1988; Adoum Doutoum, *La colonisation Française et la question musulmane au Tchad: Exemple du sultanat Ouaddai. (1895-1946)*. Thèse pour le doctorat de 3^e cycle, Université de Ndjamena 1983 (unpublished, Bibliothèque CEFOD Ndjamena); J.-L. Triaud, *Tchad 1900-1902: une guerre Franco-Libyenne oubliée? Une confrerie musulmane, la Sanusiyya, face à la France*. L’Harmattan, 1987;

1873 and 1874, the sultanate was at the zenith of its power. Its external trade benefitted from the establishment on its northwestern boundary of the Sanusi brotherhood, a society of sufis who taught Islam and controlled the trade routes to Tripoli, from zawiyas along the routes where caravans could safely stop and revitalise. Abeche (the capital since 1850) was a crossroad where traders, students and pilgrims on the routes to the east (Al Fasher – Kordofan-Cairo-Mecca) and the north (Zawila – Tripoli) met. During part of the reign of sultan Yūsuf b. Muḥammad Sharīf (r. 1874-1899) an annual caravan left Wadai with ivory, animal skins and some thousands of slaves, who had been captured or claimed from regions south of Wadai. Other caravans came back with commodities such as sugar, textile and guns, possibly as many as 17.000 of the latter in 1905 and 1906.¹⁰ Education in Wadai flourished. Nachtigal (who was unfortunately not as interested in Muslim scholarship and scholars as he was in so many other topics) reports that “religious education is much more general and more advanced in Wadai than in Bornu and practically all the other neighbouring central African countries. [...] More advanced schools exist to the number of thirty”.¹¹ His observation is illustrated by the list of books on theology and fiqh that the Wadaian Muḥammad Burmah b. al-Dalīl, al-Tarjūmī’s junior by about two decades, studied in Wadai, according to Ibrāhīm Šāleḥ’s *Kitāb al-istidhkār*.¹² Many of the titles listed are also mentioned in *Tabṣirat al-ḥayrān*.

Wadai’s power, however, was not undisputed. Neighbouring countries like Dar Sila, Dar Massalit and Baghirmi were at times tributary to Wadai, but rivals and the sponsors of attacks on the caravans at other times. And during the last two decades of the 19th century, the powerful army of the Sudanese slavetrader Rabah ravaged the region just south of Wadai, plundering, capturing slaves, devastating villages on its way to Baghirmi and Bornu. Adding to the confusion was the emergence of Muḥammad Aḥmad, the Sudanese who claimed to be the expected Mahdi. He did not receive the support he sought from the sultan of Wadai, but his preaching did strike a cord among inhabitants of Wadai, which reverberates in *Tabṣirat al-ḥayrān*.

Then, in 1899, sultan Yūsuf died. He had designated his son ‘Abd al-Azīz as his successor, but many of the ruling elite preferred other candidates. Strife and social unrest ensued. In the same year, an addition to the Franco-British treaty of Berlin (1884) indicated the Nile valley as territory the British could colonise, and northern Chad as French. French colonial forces made their way up the Oubangui and the Chari to Lake Chad, and from there headed to Wadai. Their mission was to “*reprimer tout ce qui est contraire à l’humanité*” as colonel Largeau wrote, and they saw much of that coming from Wadai: not only the razzias for slaves and cattle, but also extortion of the population through taxes that could amount to 20% of goods owned or traded.¹³ Once the French had taken power over Baghirmi, made an end to Rabah’s life and army in 1900 and conquered the Sanusi town of Bir Alali in 1902,

Lidwien Kapteijns, ‘Dar Sila, the Sultanate in Precolonial Times, 1870-1916’ in S. Samatar, *The Shadow of Conquest*. Red Sea Press, 1992; R.J. Bret, *Vie du sultan Mohamed Bakhit 1856-1916. La pénétration française au Dar Sila, Tchad*. Editions du CNRS, 1987; H. Gaden, ‘Etats musulmans de l’Afrique centrale’ in *Questions diplomatiques et coloniales* (1907) (online, Gallica via University Libraries Leiden); M.-J. Tubiana, ‘Un document inédit sur les sultans du Wadday’ in *Cahiers d’Etudes Africaines* 2 (1960), 49-112.

¹⁰ Siegel, E. *Trade in Wadai c. 1800-1909*. Unpublished paper, 1971. (Bibliothèque de l’Université de Ndjamena)

¹¹ Gustav Nachtigal, *Sahara and Sudan*, Vol IV: Wadai and Darfur. A.G.B. and H.J. Fisher eds. Hurst & Company, 1971. 189.

¹² See J. O. Hunwick and R. Abubakre, *The Arabic Literature of Africa*. Volume II: The Writings of Central Sudanic Africa. (ALA II) Leiden: Brill, 1995, 427, 428. The list there is based on *Kitāb al-istidhkār li-‘ulamā’ kānim burnū min al-akhbār wa’l-athār*, (not catalogued, Melville Herskovits Library, Northwestern University), 529-534. Works that are mentioned in *Tabṣirat al-ḥayrān* and this list include Khalīl’s *Mukhtaṣar*, Dardīr’s *Aqrab al-masālik*, *tafsīr al-Jalalayn* and the *ḥashiyas* of al-Šawī and Sulaymān al-Jamal, the *tafsīr* of al-Khāzin, the *Alfiyya* by Ibn Mālik, work by al-Suyūṭī, the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī, works by ‘Uthmān dan Fodio, the *Alfiyya al-‘Iraqī fī ‘ulūm al-hadīth* (by al-Hāfiz ‘Abd al-Rahīm al-‘Iraqī, d. 806/1404).

¹³ Largeau used the cliché in January 1912. See R.J. Bret, *Vie du sultan Mohamed Bakhit 1856-1916. La pénétration française au Dar Sila, Tchad*. Paris, editions du CNRS, 1987., 57.

they sent a letter to the new sultan of Wadai, Dūd Murra (r. 1902-1909), inviting him to come under French protection.¹⁴ “The Lion of Murra” refused.

For years, his army resisted the French, until Abeche was overpowered in June 1909 and Dud Murra fled. The conquerors installed his cousin Adoum Aṣīl on the sultan’s throne, but the sultanate, now also a *circonscription* within French Equatorial Africa, was effectively ruled by a French military commander. The following period was not bright. From 1910 onwards there were significant protests in the neighbouring country of the Massalit, in Darfur and Wadai against European rule. Many of them were led by people who were called *faki* or prophet, and protests against extortion were put in religious terms.¹⁵ It is not unlikely that the leaders of different clans in Wadai were discussing the possibilities to regain independence and reduce the power of the occupants. The name of the Aguid Dokom, the military commander of the Dokom section of the sultanate, figures in this respect in literature and oral history.¹⁶ The French found Aṣīl “*nerveux et fantasque*” and deposed him in 1912.¹⁷ No one succeeded the sultan until 1935. Governance was chaotic, while the region was also struck by consecutive years of drought. Moreover, trade declined, first because the Sanusiyya (and Darfur’s sultan) blocked traders’ access to Wadai, later because the former could not protect the desert routes as before. And, although lower taxation had been one of the coloniser’s rationalisations for occupying the country, the new administration demanded more tax payment than it invested. The situation was so desperate that many people emigrated to the neighbouring countries of Dar Sila and Dar Fur. The population of Abeche, estimated at 20 to 28.000 people around 1900, dropped to about 6000 fifteen years later.¹⁸

There were other reasons adding to the unease experienced by the handful of French military men in Wadai (the troops were *tirailleurs* recruited from West Africa, especially from today’s Senegal and Mali). They feared that protests in Darfur against the English would spill over, they dreaded the “plotting Arabs” and the “fanatic Fellata” and in 1917 they apprehended the subversive activities of a German and a Turc who were rumoured to be on their way to Wadai, in response to the call to jihad against the allied forces of World War I by the mufti of Istanbul in 1914.¹⁹

Then, on an October evening in 1917, a French sergeant was killed by a drunk in a public place in Abeche. The commander of the *circonscription*, Gérard, suspected a complot by the dignitaries of Wadai and three weeks later, on the morning of November 15, he ordered his *tirailleurs* to assassinate not only the Aguid Dokom and his men, but also the ulema and fukara who were gathered for prayer at the mosque of the neighbourhood Shiq al-fukara, and to do so as silently as possible, with machetes or *coupe-coupes*. The massacre is remembered by the name of those arms: *kubkub*. The total number of victims is estimated between about 80 and 150.²⁰ Oral history has it that some of the fukara

¹⁴ M.A. Doutoum, *La colonisation Française et la question musulmane au Tchad: exemple du sultanat Ouaddai. (1895-1946)* 1983 107.

¹⁵ A. Terrier, ‘La pacification du territoire militaire du Tchad’ in *Bulletin Mensuel du Comité du Maroc*, 1912/22; Stéphane Colovic, *L’occupation Française du Waday (1909-1912). Conquête, administration et réactions Wadayennes*. Mémoire de deuxième année de master. Institut des Mondes Africains. 2018; For Darfur see Kapteijns 1985, 393. She speaks of ‘faqihs’, but the word must perhaps be read as faki. In shuwa Arabic, the language spoken in the region, the word faki which is used for religious specialists is derived from faqir, poor, and not from faqih, judge. The plural of faki is fukara.

¹⁶ Doutoum 1983, 175-177.

¹⁷ Y. Kelinguen, ‘Renaissance d’un sultanat dans l’Afrique centrale Française: le Ouaddai’ in *L’Afrique et l’Asie*, no 13 (1951) 36-40.

¹⁸ Nachtigal IV, 66; Gaden 1907, 444; Arditi, C., ‘Commerce, Islam et État au Tchad (1900-1990)’ in *Grands commerçants d’Afrique de l’Ouest*. Karthala 1993, 183; Siegel 1971, 25; Bret 1987, 157.

¹⁹ Bret 1987, 59, 105; Doutoum 1983, 174.

²⁰ Bernard Lanne, ‘Résistances et mouvements anticoloniaux au Tchad (1914-1940)’ in *Revue Française d’histoire d’outre-mer*, t.80 (1993), no. 300; 425-442; Doutoum 1983, 178; A. Doutoum, *Abéché 15 novembre 1917, Chronique d’un massacre au coupe-coupe*. Université de N’Djamena 1997, 5, 6. The exceptional character of the event is bitterly nuanced by the fact that a similar one took place in Agadez in march 1917,

survived, because they became invisible. In the chaos of the massacre, among ululating women and crying children, some fukara could escape by flying away, but out of solidarity some of those returned again, to be killed with their brothers. Some twenty fukara died, and they were buried at the *Maqābir al-shuhadā*. ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Sanūsī al-Tarjumī, then 62 or 64 years old, was one of them.

It is reported that after the tragedy, most of the surviving ulema fled to Darfur and the French dumped Arabic books in wells or took them to France. Whether this is fact or fiction, the history of *kubkub* is closely related to the idea of the loss and destruction of the knowledge of the Arabic language and Islam in which Wadai had until then excelled.

Biography

Bits and pieces of ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Sanūsī al-Tarjumī’s biography have been remembered in the first place by descendants of the royal and learned families of Wadai, and they are now passed on in the study by Mahamat Saleh Ayoub mentioned above. Much of what follows in the next section comes from his work.²¹

‘Abd al-Ḥaqq was born in 1853 or 1855 in a village called Tarjem, west of Abeche, into a family with a respectable history of learning in the Māliki and sufi tradition.²² Members of the family held high positions in the sultanate, as advisors to the sultan and keeper of the central mosque. Amidst confused traces of the family’s records, it seems certain that ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq’s grandfather Shaykh Ya‘qūb Abū Kuwisa or Kuyisa, was *ṣāhib al-jāmi‘*, keeper of the main mosque of Abeche. This Ya‘qūb had studied religious law in the Maghrib and is considered one of seven shaykhs who brought the Tijani *ṭarīqa* to Wadai. One of his students was Muḥammad Ḥillū (also transcribed as Ḥilw, 1864-1942), a scholar who is relatively well-known in Chad.²³ As a child or young man, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq studied with his grandfather and with imam Sulaymān al-Jazūlī. Then he traveled not west to Bornu, Tunis or the Maghrib, as many Wadai students of generations before him had done, but east, to shaykh Abu Rā’s in Manawashi (Darfur) and to al-Azhar, on a detour from his pilgrimage to the holy cities. He studied hadiths, *tafsīr* and *fiqh*. Within the latter two fields the *Tafsīr al-Jalalayn* and the *Mukhtaṣar* by Khalīl b. Ishāq al-Jundī stood out, but the many citations in *Tabṣīrat al-ḥayrān* show (assuming that most come from his own pen, see note 29) how much he read, ranging from al-Qazwīnī’s work on rhetoric to the defense of the Tijani *ṭarīqa* by a 19-century author from Shinqīt (*Al-jaysh al-kafīl bi akhdh al-tha’r mimma ‘allā ‘alā ‘l-shaykh al-Tijānī* by Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Saghīr al-Shinqītī).

Since he was born around 1855 and returned home before the death of sultan Yūsuf in 1899, al-Tarjumī probably traveled to Egypt and the Mashriq sometime between 1880 and 1895. It means that in Cairo he may have met a man whom he mentions a few times: Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad ‘Ulaysh (or ‘Illaysh, 1802-1882).²⁴ He certainly heard much about him. ‘Ulaysh was chief mufti of the Māliki madhhab in the city. He taught grammar and *fiqh* at al-Azhar and commented on Khalīl’s *Mukhtaṣar*. He was also a well-known defender of the Arab-Islamic culture against European influence, whose

when perhaps a hundred ‘marabouts’ or ulema, suspected of fomenting revolt against the French, were killed. See Jean-Louis Triaud, ‘Un épisode oublié de la guerre de Kaosen. La lettre des savants et des notables musulmans d’Agadès au colonel Mourin (4 mars 1917)’ in *Annales de l’Université de Niamey* (1978) 263-271.

²¹ A short biography of al-Tarjumi is more easily available in Muḥammad Nihār Zayn, *Dawr al-shi‘r al-tashādī fī l-da‘wa al-islāmiya*. Khartoum 2015, 142 ff; Ayoub, 2014, 12. The information in *ALA II*, pages 431 and 432, is confused. It combines data about ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Sanūsī al-Tarjumī, born in 1853 or 1855, with data about another ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Sanūsī, who was born in 1908 and whose biography is given in Issa Hassan Khayar’s *Tchad, regards sur les élites ouaddaiennes*, Paris, 1984, 93-114. To avoid that confusion, Mahamat Saleh Ayoub refers to ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq as al-Tarjumī. Although the author of *Tabṣīrat al-ḥayrān* is indeed often called al-Sanūsī by descendants and shaykhs in Chad, I follow Ayoub’s example. However, even with the information presented to and by Ayoub, it is difficult to make out the family-tree.

²² According to Mahamat Madani Fadoul, a grandson of ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq’s sister, the family came from Iraq.

²³ Al-ḥājj Makki ‘Abdallah al-Tijānī, *Ṭarīqa al-hudā w’al-rashād fī taṣawwuf al-qawīm wa tārīkh dakhūl al-islām wa’l-ṭarīqa al-tijāniya fī Tshād*. For Muḥammad Ḥillū see *ALA II*, 429.

²⁴ *GAL II* 486, S II 738; F. de Jong, ‘‘Illaysh’ *Encyclopaedia of Islam III*.

work circulated in Muslim Africa. At a very advanced age he took part in the ‘Urabi Revolt, in which Egyptians rose up against the economic and political influence in the country of Britain and France. In 1882, he published a number of fatwa’s, calling for jihad against the colonisers, among other things. In the same year however, the revolt ended in bloodshed and defeat for the nationalist Egyptians, and ‘Ulaysh’ life ended in a prison hospital. Al-Tarjumī was an immediate or almost immediate witness to this disastrous result of resistance against European military power.

Ayoub and the Sudanese historian M.H. Zayn point out that al-Tarjumī was impressed by the ideas of religious reformers, who convinced him that the office of sultan should not be hereditary, as it had been in Wadai traditionally, but that the sultanate should be attributed to the leader who could best defend the interests of the Muslims.²⁵ After his return to Abeche, and after the death of sultan Yūsuf, this opinion placed him on the side of people (around the Salamat leader Sharīf al-Dīn) who supported the candidacy of al-Ghazālī, a son of Yūsuf’s brother ‘Alī, as the next sultan, instead of Yūsuf’s son ‘Abd al-‘Azīz. Al-Ghazālī was killed, however, as was another pretendent to the throne. That left two main candidates, sultan Yūsuf’s son Dūd Murra and Adoum Aṣīl, a son of Yūsuf’s older brother (and a slave woman). Al-Tarjumī preferred Aṣīl, for reasons that have not been transmitted.²⁶ But Aṣīl did not have many supporters. When he had heard that his cousin Dūd Murra intended to have him blinded, as was customary for pretendants to the throne after the designation of a new sultan, he fled to the country of the Bilala, Wadai’s long-time enemy. The Bilala were putting up resistance against the French, and Aṣīl offered them his services as an experienced military commander. However, as soon as the French defeated Rabah, in 1900, and overpowered Baghirmi, Aṣīl realised that the chances of stopping them were small. He changed his strategy and chose to help them overthrow Dūd Murra.²⁷

Some sort of co-operation with the French was also what al-Tarjumī regarded as the best strategy to protect the Wadai way of life. According to Muhammad Ayoub’s oral explanation, based on what he heard in his interviews in 1990-1992, al-Tarjumī initially trusted the French. His trust may have been inspired, in part, by arguments that were being put forward by ulema farther west, in regions that had been colonised some time earlier. In a fascinating short *risāla*, also written at the beginning of the 20th century to defend the choice of submitting to French domination, the Targui scholar Ḥammād b. Muḥammad al-Sūqī (in present-day Mali) is very explicit about some excellent qualities ascribed to the colonisers. “*Les Français ont trois qualités. La première est que quand ils font la paix, cette paix est pure, quand ils font la guerre, leur guerre est une fierté [...] La deuxième, ils ne prennent personne par injustice [...] La troisième, ils ne contraignent personne à changer sa religion pour une autre.*”²⁸ However, when al-Tarjumī advised Dud Murra to seek co-operation or “reconciliation” with the French, he was imprisoned, as shaykh Yūsuf Mukhtar told us. He was freed in June 1909, when a French army unit with the help of Aṣīl, took Abeche. He then wrote *Tabṣirat al-ḥayrān*, to support the legitimacy of Aṣīl’s sultanate and his acceptance of French dominance.

We do not know much about ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq in the last years of his life. Ayoub writes that he was soon disappointed to see that the French were not as civilised as he thought, but ruled like despots. His sadness and nostalgia are expressed in his best known poem, a classical *nūniyya* of 165 verses, starting with *Sā’il diyāra Abasha ‘an jirānī /w’arwā ‘l-ḥadīth lahum ‘an al-jidrānī* (Ask Abeche’s grounds about their protegés’ farewell / of what happened to its walls, do tell).²⁹

²⁵ Muḥammad Nihār Zayn, *Dawr al-shi‘r al-tashādī fī l-da‘wa al-islāmiya*. Khartoum 2015, 142 ff; Ayoub, 2014, 12.

²⁶ Aṣīl seems to have been a violent man, see Doutoum 1983, 100-105.

²⁷ The information about his initial alliance with the Bilala against the French comes from Ayoub, 2014, 14.

²⁸ For the *risāla* by Ḥammād b. Muḥammad al-Sūqī (no 2515 in the Collections Manuscrits Arabes et Ajamis (MARA) de l’Université Abdou Moumouni, Niamey) see Camille Lefebvre, Abdelaziz el-Aloui, ‘Un musulman peut-il vivre en terre chrétienne? L’avis d’Ḥammād b. Muḥammad, un ‘ālim touareg sur la colonisation française’, *Arabica*, forthcoming 2020.

²⁹ Ayoub 2014, 12. In one version, the first line is *Sā’il Abasha ‘an nawan al-jirānī*. A study of this poem as a key to the biography of ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Sanūsī was written by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Ḥassan ‘Fuchs’ in the 1950-ies:

Text of *Tabṣirat al-ḥayrān*

My reading of *Tabṣirat al-ḥayrān min haul fitan al-zamān* is based on a photocopy of the manuscript (of 12 folios, 26 lines per folio in a small hand) Mahamat Saleh Ayoub discovered in 1992, which he published (typed pp 305-339 and as photograph pp 340-351) and annotated in his book *Al-dawr al-ijtimāʿī wa'l-siyāsī li'l-shaykh ʿAbd al-ḥaqq al-tarjumī fī dār wadāy, Shād (1853-1917)*. The copy was written in 1944 and has marginal notes in a different hand, which were added before Ayoub obtained it.³⁰ Other copies are said to be owned by families in Wadai.

The main body of the text is arranged by seven issues (*masāʿil*) concerning the concept of *dār al-islām*, *hijra*, associating with unbelievers, paying them, fighting unbelievers, litigation and being called under command. The argument it makes is that cohabitation with non-Muslims is permitted and **beste is om zich afzijdig te houden**. It is supported by quranic verses and hadiths and then with references to mostly legal texts of which Khalīl b. Ishāq al-Jundī's *Mukhtaṣar* is the backbone. Since its publication in the 14th century, this abridgement of Maliki law had gained great popularity as a handbook in West Africa, although its style makes it almost impenetrable for ordinary readers. It was, however, discussed, taught and commented upon by experts from Shinqīt to Katsina. In *Tabṣirat al-ḥayrān* the work itself is quoted twice, and about half of the jurists who are mentioned, stand directly in the tradition of commenting on (a comment on) the *Mukhtaṣar* (notably al-Dardīr, al-Ṣawī, al-Dasūqī, al-Kharāshī, al-Zurqānī, Abū'l-Baqā al-Damīrī and ʿUlaysh) as did al-Tarjumī's teacher imam Sulaymān al-Jazūlī.³¹

In this arrangement, one part of the text stands out, and one part exceeds the framework altogether. The first is a section of the fifth issue, which discusses whether the Christians must be fought. It is a relatively long rejection of the claim of the Sudanese Muḥammad Aḥmad - who had led a movement of violent opposition to the colonial powers in Sudan - that he was the expected Mahdī. The second is a discussion in a more popular style, at the end of the text, of different kinds of knowledge, which is illustrated by an anecdote about the heritage of King Solomon's knowledge. It sustains the plea to remain calm amidst radical political change and not to succumb to superstition, but be guided by rational knowledge. It could be that this latter part was composed separately and was later added to *Tabṣira*. According to the people Ayoub interviewed in the 90-ies, al-Tarjumī's political views cut him off from his audience in and around the sultan's court, and he therefore addressed ordinary people.³² The recollection of such a shift from one audience to another seems to correspond with the shift in style at this point of the text. Its main body, however, was definitely meant for well-informed Muslims.

Al-Tarjumī calls his work *badīʿat al-bayān*, a marvel of explanation. It is, however, a very compact sort of explanation, stringing quotes from dozens of authors together, while the presentation of the argument itself is dense. Sometimes, names of authors or titles are mentioned, but not their actual stance on a question.

Lamḥa ʿan ḥayāt al-shaykh ʿAbd al-ḥaqq al-Sanūsī. Not published. A photocopy is kept at the Université Roy Faycal, Ndjamena.

³⁰ In Mahamat Saleh Ayoub's edition, most of the marginal notes have been incorporated as integral parts of the text. Editors and copyists before him may of course have done the same and without other manuscripts it is impossible to say how much of the tekst was actually written by al-Tarjumī.

³¹ ʿAbd al-Baqī b. Y. al-Zurqānī (1611-1688, GAL II 318, SII 438) commented on the *Mukhtaṣar*. But the reference, in the conclusion of *Tabṣirat al-ḥayrān*, is to a *nazm* by al-Zurqānī and may therefore indicate his son Abū ʿAl. Shams ad-Dīn (GAL II 316, SII 439). For Sulaymān al-Jazūlī, see ALA II, 426 and U. Rebstock, *Maurische Literaturgeschichte*, Würzburg 2001, 2197-13. For references to the other authors, see below.

³² Ayoub 2014, 7. NB Ayoub also argues here that al-Tarjumī shared with common people a favourable opinion of the Mahdi. My understanding, explained below, is different.

The text starts with the least ambiguous of the seven issues, that is the question whether Wadai is still *dār al-islām*, now that the country is effectively dominated by unbelievers. In Mālikī fiqh, this was not an indisputable matter.³³ For al-Tarjumī, however, it is, and his answer is brief. He refers to al-Dasūqī, who wrote in his annotation to al-Dardīr’s commentary to Khalīl’s *Mukhtaṣar*: “[even] if they enter [a Muslim country] with force and superior power, it does not become *dār al-ḥarb* as long as the fundamental principles of Islam hold out without impediment. Respect of these is crucial.”³⁴ To which al-Tarjumī adds: “I say, God knows that our country now represents *dār al-islām*, because the Muslim rules prevail without impediment or interference.”

The issue of *hijra*, emigration for the sake of Islam, is second. In the 19th century, much protest against colonialism, throughout the Muslim world, took the form of discussions about *hijra*, because in a strict sense, a good Muslim life can only be lived in *dār al-islām*.³⁵ In practice, the criterion for many jurists for living a Muslim life was whether believers could openly practice their religion and apply the shari‘a. If they could, *hijra* was not obligatory. When, in 1893, the gouverneur general of French West Africa, Jules Cambon, asked for a fatwa from the chief muftis of the four *madhāhib* in Mecca about the question whether Muslims could remain in a country under non-Muslim sovereignty, the Ḥanafī and Shāfi‘ī muftis replied in this sense.³⁶

Mālikī jurists tended to be more uncompromising. For them, the criterion was whether Muslims were subject or not to non-Muslim rule. In a country ruled by unbelievers Muslims were at risk of sinning by assisting non-Muslims.³⁷ In *Bayān wujūb al-hijra*, ‘Uthmān dan Fodio argued this and he therefore left Gobir to establish the caliphate of Sokoto.³⁸ A hundred years later, between 1900 and 1903, the Sokoto caliphate was conquered by British colonialists and its caliph, Attahiru Ahmad I, and most of the emirs governing under him also chose to emigrate in stead of submitting to unbelievers. Thousands joined them on a journey to the east, hoping to reach Mecca. Many passed through Wadai but settled in Darfur.

‘Abd al-Ḥaqq, however, adopted the Ḥanafī and Shāfi‘ī point of view on *hijra*. In spite of French domination, emigration from Wadai is not necessary, he states. For support he refers to an annotation by (the Mālikī) al-Ṣāwī to the *Tafsīr al-Jalalayn* and to al-Khāzin’s comment on the quranic verse “and those who believed, but did not leave their homes, do not be close to them”.³⁹ He feels no need to say that these Mālikī’s had argued that *hijra* is only obligatory where islamic laws do not apply

³³ For a discussion of various positions regarding the definition of *dār al-islām*, depending on historic circumstances, see Khalid Abou el Fadl, ‘Islamic Law and Muslim minorities: the juristic discourse on muslim minorities from the second/eighth to the eleventh/seventeenth centuries’ in *Islamic Law and Society* 1. 2 Brill 1994.

³⁴ Al-Dasūqī, Muḥammad b. A.b. ‘Arafa al-Dasūqī (d.1815), Maliki in Cairo, wrote *Ḥashiyyat ‘alā Sharḥ al-Dardīr ‘alā Khalīl*. GAL S II, 98 and GAL II 485; Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Dardīr (1715-1786), Maliki in Cairo, wrote *Sharḥ al-dardīr li-mukhtaṣar khalīl*. GAL II 353.

³⁵ See R. Peters, *Islam and Colonisation. The Doctrine of Jihad in Modern History*. Mouton Publishers 1979, chapter 3.

³⁶ For a translation of the two fatwa’s, see Depont, Octave and Coppolani, *Les confréries religieuses musulmanes*. Alger, Alphonse Jourdan, 1897, 33-37. Also see Peters 1979, 61-62. Depont e.a. give only the name of the Shāfi‘ī mufti, Mohammed Saïd ben Mohammed.

³⁷ Hendrickson, Jocelyn, ‘Is al-Andalus different ? Continuity as Contested, Constructed and Performed across Three Mālikī Fatwās’ in *Islamic Law and Society* 20-4 (2013) 371-424, 412.

³⁸ ‘Uthmān Ibn Fūdī, *Bayān wujūb al-hijra ‘alā ‘l-‘ibād*. Edited and translated by F.H. El Masri, Khartoum University Press: Oxford University Press, 1978. 51.

³⁹ Q 39:10; Aḥmad al-Mālikī al-Ṣāwī (d. 1825; GAL II 353, SII 743; ALA II, 427) was a pupil of Dardīr and wrote glosses to a number of his works, including one about Khalīl’s *Mukhtasar*, and to the *Tafsīr al-Jalalayn*. With regard to *hijra*, al-Ṣāwī deviated from the opinion of most Maliki’s and argued that even under non-Muslim sovereignty, Muslim territory remains Dar al-Islam, if the laws regarding Muslims remain Islamic. Of course, *hijra* is not necessary in that case. See Abou al-Fadl, 1994, 156. ‘Alā’ addīn Al-Khāzin, d. 3140, author of Qur’ān exegesis *Lubāb al-ta’wīl*. GAL S II, 135.

anymore. In line with scholarly custom, he does quote the opinion of the Shāf'ī al-Jamal that “emigration for the sake of Islam from a country where Muslims are not in command, is subject to conditions” and adds that “there is something similar in *Ḍiyā al-ta'wīl* [by ‘Abdallāh dan Fodio] you may look it up.”⁴⁰

The third question was more sensitive and receives more attention. It regards the various forms of friendship or association (*wilāya* or *muwāla*) with unbelievers in a country dominated by them, as distinguished by (Uthmān dan Fodio in his *Najm al-ikhwān* (written in 1812, after his hijra to Sokoto). On the trail of the French and British coloniser, from west to east, such relations were a matter that was widely discussed in West Africa. In what became Mali, al-Ḥajj ‘Umar b. Sa‘īd al-Fūtī (d. 1864) for instance discussed these categories of permitted and prohibited forms of associating with unbelievers in his *Bayān mā waqa‘a*, and came to the conclusion that relations with unbelievers could only compromise and if they could not be avoided, hijra was the best option.⁴¹ Forty years later, some of the emirs of Sokoto took this point of view as well. On the other hand, Sokoto’s wazīr Muḥammad al-Bukhārī, who was left to govern and deal with the unbelievers after the caliph’s departure in 1903, explained his attitude of what we would now call “accommodation” in a *risāla* translated and discussed by R.A. Adeleye.

Because it was written just six years before *Tabṣirat al-ḥayrān* it is interesting to compare these two texts.⁴² The wazīr had clearly been in great doubts regarding his moral duty and counsel to others. *Hijra* was the most pious choice, but it was not possible for everyone. Based on advice from a religious scholar and another treatise by ‘Uthmān dan Fodio, *Masā’il muhimma*, he had come to the same conclusion as ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq, that *hijra* was not obligatory and neither were Muslims obliged to fight unbelievers in a situation where they were not strong enough. But as long as they could preserve their faith, they could have intercourse with the unbelievers and accept their rule.

Apart from this conclusion, the two texts are quite different. For al-Tarjumī, the option of *ṣulḥ* was obvious and the fact that, after Macina, Egypt and Sudan, the Sokoto caliphate had also recently succumbed, probably added to his certainty that there and then Muslims could not win from the *naṣara*. More remarkably perhaps is the fact that, apart from Khalīl’s *Mukhtaṣar*, the sources to which the wazīr and the shaykh refer are all different. While both founded their argument on classical sources, there is no overlap in the works they have consulted. Even the works by the Fulani founders of the Sokoto caliphate, are not the same. The wazīr refers to ‘Abdallah dan Fodio’s *Ḍiyā’ al-Ḥukkām* and ‘Uthmān dan Fodio’s *Masā’il muhimma*; al-Tarjumī to ‘Abdallah’s *Ḍiyā al-ta’wīl fī ma‘ānī ‘l-tanzīl*, and ‘Uthmān’s *Najm al-ikhwān*.

Al-Tarjumi opens his discussion of relations with unbelievers with an explanation he found in al-Jamal’s *Hāshiya* of a quranic verse often quoted with regard to *hijra*: “You will not find folk who believe in Allah and the Last Day loving those who oppose Allah and His messenger”.⁴³ Al-Jamal had noted “that there are two categories with regard to being dominated by unbelievers: a category of

⁴⁰ Sulaymān b. ‘Umar al-‘Ajīlī al-Shāf’ī al-Jamal (d. 1789/90) was also a Shadhilī ṣūfī and wrote glosses to the *Tafsīr al-Jalalayn*. GAL II 353, 354. For familiarity of these authors in Wadai see ALA II, 427. The Dan Fodios later changed their view of *hijra*, which became a central principle in their politics and religion. Jocelyn Hendrickson, ‘Is al-Andalus Different? Continuity as Contested, Constructed, and Performed across Three Mālikī Fatwās’, *Islamic Law and Society* 20-4 (2013), 371-424, who mentions that in fatwa’s evidence was not required for opinions that were in line with those of one’s own *madhhab*.

⁴¹ Sidi Mohamed Mahibou and Jean-Louis Triaud, *Voilà ce qui est arrivé*. Bayān mā waqa‘a d’al-ḥajj ‘Umar al-Fūtī. CNRS, Paris 1983

⁴² R.A. Adeleye, ‘The dilemma of the Wazir: the place of the risālat al-wazīr ila ahl al-‘ilm wa’l-tadabbur in the history of the conquest of the Sokoto caliphate’ in *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* (1968) Vol IV, no. 2, 285-311.

⁴³ Q 58:22. In 1806 ‘Uthmān dan Fodio had used the verse in his *Bayān wujūb al-hijra* to explain the necessity of *hijra*, and the Sudanese Mahdi had quoted it in a letter to the Ottoman Khedive in Cairo, in which he urged him to leave the patronage of the English and join him, the Mahdi. See R. Peters, 1979, 69.

things not permitted, notably giving them sincere advice and wishing the best for them in this life and the here-after [...], and another category of things that are permitted, notably assistance in other cases, [when this is] for the benefit of the umma, in accordance with the permission to associate with them and deal with them”. ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq then adds the elaboration ‘Uthmān dan Fodio gave in his *Najm al-ikhwān*. Dan Fodio had distinguished five kinds of association with unbelievers, two of which he labeled as unbelief or forbidden, while the other three were permitted. Not permitted were ‘supporting unbelievers in their fight against Muslims and all that is sacred, and following and obeying unbelievers in that which is forbidden’. Permitted were “natural love, that is to enjoy beauty and sexual relations with unbelievers; maintaining social relations in speech, out of fear for the unbelievers; supporting an unbeliever before a judge, if the judge is a Muslim”.

Contemporary to al-Tarjumī, Ḥammād b. Muḥammad al-Sūqī, mentioned above, referred to *Najm al-ikhwān* to convince his readers that there was no objection to most kinds of associating with unbelievers.⁴⁴ Al-Tarjumī goes one step farther, saying that Abū’l-Baqā’ wrote that it is absolutely forbidden to harm the Christians.⁴⁵ A certain Qāḍī Isma’il, Ibn Daqīq, and ‘Ullaysh had all said similar things, he writes, and moreover: “Allah forbiddeth you not [to be good to] those who warred not against you on account of religion and drove you not from your houses, that ye should show them kindness and deal justly with them”.⁴⁶

In the fourth section al-Tarjumī argues that financial settlements with unbelievers, including paying taxes or bribes to them, are only permitted when it protects Muslims against evil or perpetrating sins, as al-Dasūqī had explained.⁴⁷

The sixth question regards litigation. ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq says that it is not permitted to seek justice with “them”, the *naṣara*, nor to seek help from them. His first proof comes from two verses in *Ṣurat al-nisā’*: “Hast thou not seen those who pretend that they believe in that which is revealed unto thee and that which was revealed before thee; how they would go for judgment (in their disputes) to false deities when they have been ordered to abjure them?” and “choose no friend among them”.⁴⁸ Then he refers to a remark by Khalīl (it is prohibited to seek help from polytheists except for services) and his commentator al-Dardīr and finally again to a fatwa by ‘Ullaysh, which all say that an unbeliever should not be allowed to act as judge or apply his laws to Muslims.

The seventh issue discusses the situation of muslims who are called under command by the French. Al-Tarjumī refers to the opinions of ‘Uthmān dan Fodio (they are unbelievers) and ‘Abdallah dan Fodio, that what they do is unbelief or *harām*, depending of the extent to which they obey the unbelievers and let forbidden things pass as allowed. He then nuances this, saying that people who have been conscripted by some form of coercion – threatened with death, or forced by violence, overpowered and put in chains – are not guilty if they keep their faith in their heart. Al-Tarjumī supports this with reference to a statement by Khalīl b. Ishāq and continues to say that those who were forced to wear European caps or uniforms are unbelievers only in appearance. In 1909 the French army had not yet recruited people from Wadai or Baguirmi, or not at a large scale, but their *tirailleurs* were recruited in West Africa. The purpose of this paragraph seems to be to argue that those among them who said they were muslims, were indeed not necessarily unbelievers.

⁴⁴ Sidi Mohamed Mahibou and Jean-Louis Triaud, *Voilà ce qui est arrivé*. Bayān mā waqa‘a d’al-ḥajj ‘Umar al-Fūtī. CNRS, Paris 1983.

⁴⁵ M. Ayoub (2001, 311) identifies him as Muḥyī al-Dīn Abū ‘l-Baqā’ ‘Abdallāh b. al-Ḥassan al-‘Akbarī. It could also be Abū’l-Baqā’ Tāj al-Dīn Bahrām b. ‘Abdallāh al-Damīrī (d. 805/1402), an Egyptian Malikī who wrote several commentaries on Khalīl’s *Mukhtaṣar*.

⁴⁶ Qāḍī Isma’il may be al-Qāḍī Ismā’il b. Ishāq al-Mālikī (d. 282/896), hadith scholar and qāḍī in Bagdad; Ibn Daqīq d. 1302, see *GAL* II, 63; Q 60:8.

⁴⁷ For a detailed discussion of three interrelated fatwa’s on trading with the enemy, see Jocelyn Hendrickson, ‘Is al-Andalus different? Continuity as Contested, Constructed, and Performed across Three Mālikī Fatwās’ in *Islamic Law and Society* 20-4 (2013) 371-424. Also Ruud Peters 1979, 56.

⁴⁸ Q 4:60 and Q 4:89.

A common theme in all these paragraphs, is the legal independence of the muslims of Wadai. As long as that was maintained, al-Tarjumi saw no reason to emigrate or refuse all contact with the naṣara. It was a practical stance in a bad economic situation, where families were moreover weakened by meagre harvests as a result of droughts. It may have agreed with Wadaian pride, the characteristic that had so struck Nachtigal and later French travellers. (A tricky aspect was that legal independence would only be possible under authoritative leadership of the sultan. This would soon prove to be missing - after Aṣīl's destitution in 1912 Wadai had no sultan until 1935-, but al-Tarjumī's hope in 1909 was that he could help to reinforce sultan Aṣīl's authority.⁴⁹) But most of all, al-Tarjumī's plea was to withhold rash judgement and drastic decisions, because, as he said in one of his first lines, if was difficult to know what was in people's hearts in these chaotic circumstances. Since there were so many different interpretations of the political situation and its meaning in the divine plan, so many factions and not one single imam to follow, the best was to keep away from discord. In these conditions "jihad is not obligatory, but detachment and flight are."⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the implication that it was not necessary to fight the naṣara and so withdraw more men from work in the fields needed much convincing.

Against fighting and its advocate

The fifth section is the most substantial and was at the time undoubtedly the most debated part of the text. It opens with a short discussion whether fighting the naṣara (*qitālhum*) is obligatory. Al-Tarjumī's answer is, no. Just like shaykh Bāy al-Kuntī (d. 1929) and Sa'd Būh (ca 1850-1917) in Mali and Mauritania and Sayyid Aḥmad Khān in India, he justifies this by pointing to the weakness of the Muslims of Wadai at that time and their lack of union.⁵¹ He refers to a hadith (Strike your sword against stone, when they enter [your land, to kill you], and be like the better of the two sons of Adam), a quranic verse (Even though thou stretcheth out thy hand against me to kill me, I shall not stretch out ...), and three books, *Rauḍat al-rayāḥīn*, *Kawkab al-sāṭi'* and al-Buṣīrī's *Hamziya*.⁵² "Indeed", says al-Tarjumī, "it is therefore not incumbent on us to fight them, when at the same time we observe a weakness of the Muslims and disagreement among them". Those who are burdened and weak may flee. Fighting is for those whom God strengthens.

Then he turns to four jurists for proof. Apart from 'Abd al-Salām (his commentary to Ibrahīm al-Laḳānī's *Jawharat al-tawḥīd*) and al-Kharashī (a passage on martyrdom in his comment to the *Mukhtaṣar*), he mentions al-Tasūlī (d. 1842) and 'Ullaysh, both his fatwa's and his *Manḥ al-jalīl*. The names of al-Tasūlī and 'Ullaysh were closely associated with the heated discussion about jihād against colonial powers.⁵³ Al-Tarjumī acknowledges that al-Tasūlī commended death in the path of

⁴⁹ In October 1935 Mahamat Ourada I was installed as sultan. Mahamat Saleh Yacoub, *Abéché, hier et aujourd'hui. Une ville tchadienne cosmopolite*. L'Harmattan, 2017. 47.

⁵⁰ إذا لم يكن للمؤمنين إمام ولا جماعة فلا يتعين الجهاد بل يتعين الاعتزال والفرار Manuscript f9.

⁵¹ Houari Touati, Aïcha Belabid, 'En islam malien. Shaykh Bāy al-Kuntī (m. 1347/1929) et ses *Nawāzil*', *Cahiers d'études africaines*, (2016) 4, 224. 775-798. 790-791; Sa'd Būh's letter was dispersed in the French territories in French and Arabic. Robinson, David, *Paths of Accommodation. Muslim Societies and French Colonial Authorities in Senegal and Mauritania, 1880-1920*. Ohio University Press, Athens 2000. 175, 233, 305 (note 76). Ruud Peters argues that the idea that jihad was not obligatory if Muslims had no chance to win, was a new trend in the colonial period, which started in India. R. Peters, *Islam and colonialism*. Mouton Publishers, The Hague, 1979, Chapter 4.

⁵² The hadith can be found in the *Sunan* of Abū Daūd, Book 35: *Kitāb al-fitān wa'l-malahim*. Q 5:28. *Rauḍat al-rayāḥīn* may be *Rauḍat al-rayāḥīn fī ḥikāyāt (manāqib) al-ṣāliḥīn* by the mystic 'Afīfaddīn 'Al. b. As'ad al-Yāfī'ī (d. 768/1367) GAL SII 228; *Kawkab al-sāṭi'* is the versification by al-Subki of al-Suyūṭī's *Jam' al-jawāmi' fī l-uṣūl* GAL II 89 and SII 106. Ayoub identifies the *Hamziya* as al-Buṣīrī's, based on the quoted words *wa liḥukmi min zamān iqtidā'*.

⁵³ Al-Tasūlī had put his opinion forward in a widespread treatise regarding jihād against the French in Algeria. *Ajwibat al-Tasūlī 'an masā'il al-amīr 'Abd al-Qādir fī'l-jihād*.

God, and ‘Ulayhs said that in principle everyone can do jihad. But even he had argued that those who were not capable, were not obliged to fight.⁵⁴ “And the best jihad”, he says, “is the one that upholds the word of God”. Secondly, not every individual was obliged to participate directly in the effort.

The next paragraphs are devoted to the credibility of the Sudanese Mahdi, although this man had died about twentyfive years earlier. The Mahdi’s significance, however, had everything to do with fighting colonial powers. Since 1874 West Sudan (Darfur and Wadai) had been under the control of the Khedive who ruled Egypt and Sudan in the name of the Ottoman sultan. Financial trouble of this government in Cairo led to great dependence on Great Britain and the installation of a British governor (Charles Gordon) for the Equatorial Sudan Provinces in 1877. This did not have much impact on daily life in Wadai, but the population of neighbouring Darfur and Dar Sila were affected by the economic problems and political arrangements, notably by heavy taxes.⁵⁵ In 1882 Muḥammad Aḥmad b. ‘Abdallāh (1834-1885), who had proclaimed that he was the expected Mahdi the year before, started a military campaign in Darfur to free Sudan from its foreign rulers. As is well-known, it was initially very successful and the Mahdi’s army took Khartoum in January 1885.

Muḥammad Aḥmad’s military strategy was supported by a religiously revivalist ideology, of returning to the holy sources without the clutter of interpretation that would only lead the believer astray. The Mahdi denounced the scholarship of ‘ulamā’, spoke of the *‘ulamā’ al-sū’* (evil scholars) at al-Azhar, ordered the burning of legal books from all four schools of law and although he had been educated as a sufi, he tried to ban sufi brotherhoods once he proclaimed himself Mahdi.⁵⁶

As a political leader, he spread the word of his calling through dozens of letters to the leaders of neighbouring countries. He appointed four khalifas and one of them was to be the leader of the Sanusi brotherhood in Yaghbūb, Muḥammad al-Mahdī al-Sanūsī, whom he offered the position in a letter that was sent via sultan Yūsuf of Wadai. Muḥammad al-Mahdi was not impressed by “that fakir from Dongolo” and refused immediately.⁵⁷ Sultan Yūsuf, also invited to pledge his allegiance and support the fight against “the Turks” in Egypt, initially sent 500 riyal. By the end of 1888, however, after the Mahdi’s own death in 1885, Wadai’s leadership revolted against the Mahdist movement’s abuses and political aspirations and fought its army, together with Dar Sila and smaller sultanates west of Dar Fur.⁵⁸

Tabṣirat al-ḥayrān shows, however, that the idea of the Mahdiyya and the call for jihad still resonated in Wadai in the first decade of the 20th century. From Sokoto to Sudan, many people saw the anarchy and conflict that were caused by the approach of the colonial powers and were uprooting the world order as they had known it, as signs of the Dajjāl, who heralded the appearance of the Mahdi.⁵⁹ The credibility of the signs of the Dajjāl confirmed the credibility of the Mahdi. Al-Tarjumī, the scholar, sufi and pacifist, separates the two, with all his intellectual muscle. He starts with the person of Muḥammad Aḥmad and his claim to Mahdi-ship.

⁵⁴ I thank Camille Lefebvre et Abdalaziz el-Aloui for the reference to Muḥammad ‘Illaysh, *Faḥ al-alī al-malik fal-fatwa ‘alā madhhab al-imām Mālik*, Vol I. Cairo, Shariqat maktabi wa matba‘i Mustāfa al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1958. 375-376.

⁵⁵ Lidwien Kapteijns, ‘Dar Sila, the Sultanate in Precolonial Times, 1870-1916’ in S. Samatar (ed.), *The Shadow of Conquest*. Red Sea Press, 1992, 25-26.

⁵⁶ Nicoll 116, 154, 271

⁵⁷ Alexander Boddy, *To Kairwān the Holy: scenes in Muhammedan Africa*. London 1885, K. Paul, 104.

⁵⁸ Holt, P.M. ‘The sudanese Mahdia and the outside world: 1881-9’ in *BSOAS* 1958/ 21, 276-290; 278, 279; Kapteijns, Lidwien, ‘Mahdist faith and the legitimation of popular revolt in western Sudan’ in *Africa* 55/4 (1985), 390-399.

⁵⁹ See the wazir Bukhārī’s letter (Adeleye, 1968) and also S. Biobaku and M. al-Hajj, ‘The Sudanese Mahdiyya and the Niger-Chad region’ in *Islam in Tropical Africa* (1966) 425-439; Lidwien Kapteijns, *Mahdist faith and Sudanic tradition. The history of the Masālīt sultanate 1870-1930*. London, KPI 1985, Chapter 3.

He [Muḥammad Aḥmad] says: “It does no harm that some of the signs that are mentioned in the hadith about the Mahdiyya appear inconsistent with some of his signs and his place [of provenance], because the divine and prophetic presence are what they are to him, and the rule of abrogation is still valid for [the hadiths]. The difference with the said hadiths, be it in terms of abrogation or lack of conditions or the presence of objections, or their being early or late or their incidence at one moment, [be they] relevant to all or just for one’s personal need, or interpreted as metaphor or metonym, as allusion or symbol – only specialists can say anything about it.”⁶⁰

The issue is that according to tradition, the Mahdi would have been born in Mecca and appeared in Medina, while Muḥammad Aḥmad was born in Dongola and appeared in Kordofan, while the signs he reported (a banner of light and a mole on his right cheek) were not mentioned in any tradition. After a short reference to the honour and fairness which characterise the expected Mahdi according to various authors, al-Tarjumī goes on:

It must be conceded that “the Mahdi”, as a general term, may apply to one and many whenever someone expresses such a “call”. Ibn Khaldūn mentioned a whole bunch of such people, you may check it if you like.⁶¹ But [the idea of mahdiyya] is not a pillar of religion in the sense that someone who denies him [and says that] he is like the rest of the *khulafā’*, is an unbeliever; in that rising against him is unlawful (*ḥarām*) except for one who has good grounds for his interpretation.⁶²

[This,] believing that disavowing him amounts to unbelief, exceeds the proper bounds of religion. [...] There is no way of accusing each other of unbelief when everyone acknowledges the Muslim principles. And there is no way of killing Muslims under that pretext, because of the word of the Exalted: “But if they repent and establish worship and pay the poordue, then leave their way free” and another verse: “then are they your brethren in religion”; and the hadith: “I have been commanded to fight the people until they say ‘There is no god except God’ and establish prayer and pay zakat.”⁶³ If they say that, their blood and goods are safe by me, except in legal matters, and their reckoning will be with God” unless, indeed, they fight out of sheer war lust, tyranny or aggression. Then it is allowed [to kill Muslims], in the right manner, without anathematising a Muslim or insult him, unless there somehow appears apostasy as defined in the *fiqh* books.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ لا يضر تخلف بعض اوصاف الاحاديث الواردة في المهديّة عن بعض اوصافه او مكانه لان الحضرة الالهية والنبوية كانت على ما كانت عليه وحكم النسخ جار فيها الى الان والمتخلف من الاحاديث المذكورة اما نسخ او لفقد شرط او وجود مانع او لتقديم او تاخير او لوقوع في لحظة او في الجملة او مؤونة او على طريق المجاز او الكتابة او التعريض او الرمز ولا يعد فيها الا الخواص اه

Tabṣīrat manuscript f4. In his article, Ayoub writes that al-Tarjumī secretly believed in the Mahdi’s cause. (2014, 7) In his book he struggles with the attitudes of Wadai’s elite and al-Tarjumī regarding the Mahdi. (2001, 253). I believe it is the result of reading the passage above not as a quote, but as direct discourse by al-Tarjumī. However, although I have not found a source where Muḥammad Aḥmad said or wrote these exact words, they do resemble a passage in one of the letters by Muḥammad Aḥmad preserved in al-Nujūmī’s letterbook. See ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ta’ishī (ed.) *The letterbook of al-Nujūmī*. Khartoum, 1954. Digital copy: SOAS Library, classmark Ex. 36/101492, page 126 -127 (photo 121-122).

⁶¹ I did check: see Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah. An Introduction to History*. Translation and introduction by Franz Rosenthal. Pantheon Books, NY 1958. Vol II, 725.

⁶² Muḥammad Aḥmad had indeed proclaimed as much in a letter copied in Na’ ūm Shuqayr, *Tarīkh al-Sūdān al-qadīm wa-l-ḥadīth wa-djuḥrāfiyyatuhu*. Cairo, Maṭba‘at al-a‘ārif, 1903. Vol. 3, 134. An English translation of the passage can be found in Peters 1979, 68.

⁶³ Q 9:5, Q 9:11

⁶⁴ Manuscript folios 4, 5; Ayoub 2001, 318.

لاحتمال ان المهدي اسم جنس يصدق على الواحد والكثير لما ادعاها من قبله وذكر ابن خلدون منهم جماعة راجعه ان شئت ولكن ليس هو ركنا في الدين حتى يكفر من انكره بل هو كبقية الخلفاء يحرم الخروج عليه لغير المتأول واعتقاد كفر منكره من الغلو في الدين ... ولا سبيل الى تكفير بعضهم بعضا مع اقرار الجميع بقواعد الاسلام ولا سبيل الى قتال بعض المسلمين بذلك الوجه مع قوله تعالى "فان تابوا واقاموا الصلاة واتوا الزكاة فخلوا سبيلهم" وفي آية أخرى "فاخوانهم في الدين" وحديث امرت أن أقاتل الناس حتى يقولوا لا اله الا الله ويقيموا الصلاة ويؤتوا الزكوات فاذا قالوا ذلك عصموا مني دماءهم واموالهم الا بحقها وحسابهم على الله اللهم الا أن

The “Mahdi” may have said that fighting the Nasara was obligatory, and his followers may still maintain that, but the fact that he anathemised and killed Muslims who did not acknowledge him, proved that he was not the real Mahdi. His opinion about the duty to fight the naṣara was just an opinion. At the same time, the conflict, drought, distress and even insanity which were partly a result of the French presence, seemed so deep that they could well be signs of the Dajjāl.

Is it the riot of the Dajjāl, from which our Prophet seeks refuge, and its preliminary stage? Because everything has a preliminary and preparatory stage, as says the Exalted: “See they not how We visit the land, reducing it of its outlying parts?” [Q 13:41] And the hadith about the thirty impostors that will show up - are they the leaders of those states, the authorities and their people and leaders who dominate on the strength of their strange customs, which include many signs of the Dajjāl as they have been recorded: among them are the carrying of fire, that is gunpowder (*bārūd*), and insanity and ornaments [medals?] that are neither exempted nor prohibited from pay and proviant of all who do them service; for this is a sign of insanity, and there is no sign without that what is designated by it. Among them are also high prices, lack of rain, lack of authority and trust, and the flight away from discord and its misfortunes⁶⁵ in most of the regions. [...] and the steam engine (*bābūr*), which resembles the donkey of the Dajjāl in sound and movement and in the way it bears heaven and hell.⁶⁶

Then some signs of the Dajjāl are put in a different light. In a difficult passage, we are reminded that the word *barūd* occurs in a hadith that Hudhaifa told about the Dajjāl, but that it has a very different meaning there, that has nothing to do with gunpowder. In this hadith “about the command to fall in it”, the word *barūd* means coldness. (He has a hadith in mind recorded as number 4-659 in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Bukhārī, that says: “when the Dajjāl appears, he will have fire and water along with him. What the people will consider as cold water, will be fire that will burn things. So, if anyone of you comes across this, he should fall in the thing which will appear to him as fire, for in reality, it will be cold water”). Moreover, with reference to the kind of scholarship presented in al-Qazwīnī’s *Takhlīṣ al-miftāḥ* on rhetoric, al-Tarjumī explains that coldness can be also be a metaphor for truth. Similar considerations are applied to the concepts of the Night of the Dajjāl and to his single eye. **Here too, the point is that it is almost impossible to understand the signs and that the many opinions divide rather than unify the believers.**

Knowledge

By way of conclusion (*khātima*), the last folios (9, 10, 11) of the manuscript are about knowledge. Written in a much more popular style, these paragraphs clearly come from a different context, from sermons and folk-tales. They contain a furtive warning against religious practitioners who blind reasonable thinking by offering the troubled believers magic and bigotry.

يكون قتالهم لحرابة او بغى او صيالة فيجوز على وجهه من غير تكفير مسلم ولا سبه او يظهر وجهه من وجوه الردة المنصوصة في كتب الفقه

⁶⁵ Cf manuscript f5 and Ayoub 2001, 319: the ms has دائرتها . Ayoub suggests دائرتها but a Chadian slip of the pen/ear would not replace *tha* by *dāl* (rather by *sin*). Therefore دائرة, misfortunes seems more probable.

⁶⁶ Ms f5, Ayoub 2001, 319-321: مقدمة: هل هي فتنة الدجال التي استعاذ منها رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ومقدماتها لأن لكل شئ مقدمة: وتوطئة لقوله تعالى أَوْلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا نَأْتِي الْأَرْضَ نَنْقُصُهَا مِنْ أَطْرَافِهَا وَالثلاثون دجالا الوارد بهم الحديث هل هم رؤساء تلك الدول لتسود تلك الحكومات وأهلها ورؤساؤها على خوارق العادات ولاشتمالها على كثير من علامات الدجال الواردات منها حمل النار وهي البارود ومنها الجنة ومنها الزخارف التي ليست بمقطوعة ولا ممنوعة من المواهي والمعاش المرتب لكل من خدمهم لان هذه اوصف الجنة والوصف لا يتحقق بدون موصوفه ومنها غلاء الأسعار وقحط الأمطار ومنها عدم القدرة والخلوص والفرار من فتنهم وابدالها ودائرتها في جمل الأقطار ... ومنها البأبور الذي يقرب من حمار الدجال في الصوت والمشى والحمل للنار والجنة

In Wadai, engines were still unknown, but al-Tarjumī had apparently seen and heard them in Egypt.

The section begins: “I say, in these times it behoves the reasonable person to use first of all the learning obtained by religious duty and practice [...] and to beware of obstinacy and indifference with regard to excellent knowledge and acting according to it, for those are the main ingredients of piety.” The reader is then reminded that knowledge comes in various forms. There is book-knowledge, the knowledge of saints and of sufis and knowledge of illicit sorcery. Verses 101 and 102 in *ṣūrat al-baqqara* are quoted, which relate how people followed the false teachings – magic and sorcery – that originated with the angels Hārūt and Mārūt. Al-Tarjumī explains the verses with a well-known story:

Two devils imparted the knowledge of sorcery to a certain man in the time of Solomon. Solomon – peace be upon him - fought [that man] and struggled with him for more than a year. Then he made him surrender and [the man] said: I have done that only to learn about the benefits of this knowledge. Solomon collected a number of books from him and hid them under his throne, prohibiting people to study them. But when he died, the devils brought these books out and told the people: Solomon collected these worldly possessions and could only dominate you through the knowledge of these books. After that, other kings gathered [those books] and put them in a building, which they never opened, except once a year for scholars who would study them for three days. Then the building was locked again, until the next year. Then Ibn Sina appeared, who, with his great integrity, is said to have memorised the Qur’ān in two days; another person, as intelligent as he, accompanied him. He consulted the liver of a gazelle with pistache oil, and was informed that he would be in no need of food or drink. Upon that they mixed with the crowd on the day of the opening of this building, and they hid there on the day [the others] left, and they memorised all that was in the archive. People were not aware of this until the next time [the building] was opened. When they wanted to arrest both men, they did some trick they had learned and freed [themselves] from them and left that country. Ibn Sina settled in Egypt and his friend in the East and they divulged these books from memory and taught them to the people, after Hārūt and Mārūt. Among this knowledge is what is now called the science of chemistry and the specialised sciences of animals and plants and of minerals and their classification based on their components and nature. From these [sciences], division may arise between man and wife and all those who love each other, as stipulated in the verse, as well as affection and other [positive emotions]: various sorts of benefits and also harm. Among the latter is blowing on knots - as in the verse of the Daybreak - which Lubayd ibn Āṣam applied⁶⁷; and the sorcery of the pharaoh [...] and those who make talismans [...] Among them is also, [however], what we find in the books of philosophers and physicians and in stories of things whose origin is not known, such as the story of the Ring of Solomon, the temples, the source of youth, the red wind. [...]

Among the magic sciences [and these are negative again] is also asking Allah for guidance by opening books [on a random page] and by letters and [*musabaḥāt?*] and divination and calculating the numerical value of the letters and the signs of the zodiac. Indeed, all that is part of divination and seeking oracles with arrows. To put one’s trust in such things amounts to unbelief. [...] Among them is also summoning jinns and communicating with the help of narcotics, as [mentioned] in the fatwa of ‘Ullaysh, where it is called the art of *mandal*.⁶⁸

An intelligent person, says al-Tarjumī, does not resort to these things nor to spells or iron amulets for increasing his livelihood or other [forms of] greed. Remedies that may be used, for medical treatment or protection, are *shannan* (purification?), blood-cupping and honey. But it is not allowed to make oneself dependent on magic or written words that “are made to go up in the sky”, because Allah guarantees protection in the Revelation, not in sleep or illumination or inspiration. Ordinary believers must rely on what is manifest as the sign of intrinsic truth. The advice al-Tarjumī gives with this long

⁶⁷ The verse of Daybreak is Q 11, which is commonly recited as protection against fear arising from the unknown; A hadith in Sahih Bukhari (Vol 8, book 73, nr 89) recounts that Ibn Asam was a magician who had cast a spell on the prophet.

⁶⁸ Manuscript f11, Ayoub 2001, 338. Re مسيحات : Informants in Mongo or Abéché did not recognise this term. Wehr’s dictionary (fourth edition) explains: a magic practice in which a fortuneteller, or a medium, prophecies while contemplating a mirror-like surface.

paragraph is to form one's opinion about the conflicts of the times on the basis of the appropriate type of knowledge, that is the knowledge of jurists.

Meaning today

For M. S. Ayoub and M. Zayn, al-Tarjumī's work is proof of the advanced level of local Muslim culture of his time. They emphasise that he adopted reformist ideas from his teachers at al-Azhar and from the Dan Fodios ('Uthmān, his brother 'Abdallāh and his son Muḥammad Bello), especially the idea that a sultan should not be appointed by rules of inheritance. But reform is not what characterises the figure of al-Tarjumī that is discussed among a cultural elite in Chad today. For most people who know the name of 'Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Sanūsī al-Tarjumī, it stands, first of all, for *sulu* (*ṣulh*, reconciliation), a word that does not play a significant role in *Tabṣirat al-ḥayrān*, but does summarise the gist of that text. Secondly, the name stands for the possibility of renaissance of the vernacular Muslim identity of Wadai, and Chad by extension. But two other elements, conspicuous by their absence from discussions of al-Tarjumī today, must be considered first: the Mahdi and collaboration with the coloniser. The fact that they are *not* associated with the author gives way to the positive role attributed to him.

Remarkably, the Sudanese Mahdi of the 1880-ies, so important when *Tabṣirat al-ḥayrān* was written, has completely lost his meaning in the contemporary narrative of al-Tarjumī. Not one of the people I interviewed (except of course professor Ayoub) saw any connection between the two. In Abeche, the aged shaykh Mahamat Abid Hissein, shaykh Abakar al-Khalifa, mr. Mahamat Ateib and dr. Abdoulaye Taha reminded me that the Mahdi belonged to a period before al-Tarjumī's.⁶⁹ My question about stories relating the colonisers or the chaos of the time with the Dajjāl rather shocked them. No, no-one had ever compared the French or anyone else with the "Dijl", then or now. "These days, some people might think of the Chinese like that", whispered one of the gentlemen, an octogenarian, and louder he added: "but not the French!... and certainly not now. We need them, with all the unsafety around us. We still depend on them." "He is still afraid of them," said one of his friends. And he explained that with 'the unsafety around us' they all meant the increasing attraction of salafī preachers on the youth of the city. In the month (november 2017) when a group of Anṣār al-sunna circumvented the Wadaian Islamic Council to obtain permission from the gouverneur of Wadai – a political authority, that is – to build their own mosque, the increasing influence of salafism was the talk of the day. In that talk it is often linked to the "example" of Boko Haram in Nigeria and the violence by the fundamentalist "*destructeurs des mausolées de Tombouctou*", where Chadian soldiers took part in a UN mission to protect the population.⁷⁰ In such a context, the presence of one thousand French soldiers at a military base near Abeche to many represents stability.

This continued feeling of dependency on France is related to the second absent element. In the first decades of the twentieth century, the French administration became increasingly repressive and unpopular.⁷¹ Notably in Wadai the majority of the population refused French schooling, fearing that this would precipitate the loss of their own culture.⁷² (Until today the universities of Abeche have many more students from other provinces than from Wadai itself.) Aṣīl, the puppet-sultan al-Tarjumī defended, is presently regarded as a traitor, who brought the coloniser to Wadai in return for worldly

⁶⁹ They did tell me a story about another shaykh, Tahir al-Tilbi, who helped the sultan of Goz Beida to defend his country against the Mahdi's army. Tahir al-Tilbi was captured and tied by Mahdists, but he was miraculously capable of freeing himself for each prayer: he remained a believer *in spite* of the Mahdi.

⁷⁰ A. A. Hagggar, 'Préface' in Mahamat Saleh Yacoub, 2017; To the relief of many Chadians, French military airplanes bombed more than fifty trucks from rebel groups that left the northernmost region of Chad, bordering with Libya, on February 7, 2019.

⁷¹ About the negative economic effects of French rule, see Raymond Gervais, 'La plus riche des colonies pauvres: la politique monétaire et fiscale de la France au Tchad 1900-1920' *Revue Canadienne des études africaines*. Vol 16, no. 1, 1982: 93-112.

⁷² Issa Hassan Khayar, *Le refus de l'école. Contribution à l'étude des problèmes de l'éducation chez les Musulmans du Ouaddai (Tchad)*. Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient. Paris 1976.

power for himself. But the author of *Tabṣīrat al-ḥayrān* himself is seen as an “*alim basit*” (in Shuwa Arabic), a simple scholar, who only spoke the truth: that Wadai could not fight the French, and that no human being can stop history from evolving.⁷³ The most negative (but rather correct) description of his policy that I have heard (from the retired lawyer Abazène Seid) was *musayyara*, going along for strategic reasons, without really helping the coloniser. Of course, the fact that al-Tarjumī’s reputation remained untouched by the idea of collaboration is partly because, as some of the interviewees admitted, he was a victim of the *kubkub* massacre. On the other hand, it was often said that if the rulers of Wadai had listened to al-Tarjumī, the sultanate (and Chad by extension) would not be as weak as it is now. Both Abazène Seid in Ndjamenā and Yacoub Mukhtar in Abeche said: “They would have negotiated with the French, like the rulers of Morocco have done. And look how much better than we they are doing now.”

The relationship with the French administration changed during the second World War. During the war, France recruited Chadian soldiers to fight in Libya, and workers to build the infrastructure for the transport of soldiers and aircraft to the Horn of Africa. It is often remembered in conversations about the colonial period, that the workers and soldiers were paid and therefore felt respected as French citizens. Moreover, French investments stimulated commerce and services.⁷⁴ As mentioned, the copy of *Tabṣīrat al-ḥayrān* Muhammad Saleh Ayoub found was written in 1944, very likely for people who were interested in the legal justification for working with the French.

Sulu, renaissance, wisdom

After decades of civil war Chad seemed to have set out on the track of restoration and development with a Conférence Nationale in 1993. Soon, however, (and in spite of the start of oil production in 2003) the social situation started to deteriorate. Since the turn of the millennium, the country has fallen on the UN Human Development Index from place 162 (out of 174) to 186 (out of 188). A series of attempted *coups d'état*, a failing state and recently hardly two consecutive years without prolonged strikes in schools and universities are only some of the dramas that have led to the lack of control people have over their own life. Continuing violence in neighbouring countries adds to their insecurity. Every Chadian feels threatened, and many wonder at what point in history things started to go wrong.

This question was the implicit core of a two-day conference organised by historians in november 2017, to commemorate the Kubkub drama that took place one hundred years earlier.⁷⁵ The answer, and indeed the entire preparation of the conference, divided the Muslim community, to the point where, in the end, two separate conferences were held. The first was initiated by the *Union Générale des Institutions de Soutien de la Langue Arabe au Tchad* (financed by ISESCO). The aim of this conference, according to the invitation, was to divulge the Arabic language, to strengthen national unity around Islam, and to summon France to pay retribution.

It was to take place at, and be sponsored by the *Ministère du développement touristique, de l'artisanat et de la culture*. Its minister, however, the filmmaker Mahamat Saleh Haroun, withdrew his support, because he did not wish to sponsor a debate about a historical event which was so much inspired by the political aims of the day. The conference was postponed a week and moved to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁷⁶

For the organisers and the audience, which consisted mainly of students from the Université Roy Faycal, loss of knowledge of Islam and loss of the islamic identity of the leading culture in Chad is the

⁷³ Shaykh Mahamat Abid Hissein, Atteib Hussein, Issa H. Khayyar, Zakari Mahamat a.o.

⁷⁴ Claude Arditi, ‘Le Tchad et le monde arabe: essai d’analyse des relations commerciales de la période précoloniale à aujourd’hui’ in *Afrique Contemporaine*, Autumn 2003; 191, 192.

⁷⁵ 25, 26 november 2017, Colloque scientifique ‘Le massacre au coupe-coupe et son impact sur la langue arabe et la société tchadienne’.

⁷⁶ A parallel conference in Abéché was cancelled altogether, according to a Ndjamenā newspaper for fear that it would lead to violence against French citizens in Wadai. *L’Observateur* no 85, 25 octobre-1 novembre 2017, 5.

root cause of the chaos in the country and the impossibility for politicians and ordinary people to unite around shared goals for the nation. The question that surfaced in some of the presentations and in the debate, was why, in November 1917, specifically ulema had been killed. The answer: to destroy our Muslim culture. And that was why France should financially compensate the country or at least its Muslim population, and the use of French as one of the two official languages should be abolished. That would be an important step towards the necessary emancipation from France.

Meanwhile, many students of the Université Roy Fayçal work hard to retrieve knowledge of Islamic sciences. Some even describe their studies as *nahḍa*, renaissance. With financial support from ISESCO (Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) Saudi-Arabia and other Muslim countries, there is a return to written fuṣḥā Arabic (also outside of the University) which has allowed the renewal of interest in authors of the last generation before the cultural rupture, such as al-Tarjumī, Adam Jabar Ḥillū and Muḥammad Oulech.

During the conference, Al-Tarjumī was sometimes brought into the discussion by participants who wanted to talk about the past and present benefits of tolerance and negotiation with France. The reply by the president of the organising committee (and nephew of al-Tarjumi, see n. 21) Mahamat Madani Fadoul, was that al-Tarjumī was an important figure because his family held all the chief offices in Wadai at the end of the 19th century, but that his ideas were strange.

A week earlier, Muslim historians who objected to the way the presentations of the Union Générale conference were going to be framed, quickly organised their own conference at the Centre al-Mouna, a research centre run by Catholic Arabophone clergy from Lebanon that aims to promote relations between Chadians, “without distinction of cultural, religious or political background”. These mostly amateur historians identify themselves as Tijani Muslims, and hold diplomas from Francophone secondary or professional schools before Chad’s independence.⁷⁷ With much reference to French sources, they discussed the Kubkub drama as the unfortunate but unintended result of historical accidents, a matter of the wrong man in the wrong place. The colonial period was not altogether positive; they too see especially its beginning as a time of struggle for cultural identity, which was threatened by the Christian culture, and their desire for renaissance is just as deep. However, “our minds have not been colonised”, they said. “Our own” culture has survived and can revive, just like ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Sanūsī al-Tarjumī, victim of the Kubkub event, now revives.

The question what this “own culture” is or was, has inspired a steady flow of autobiographic and semi-fictional books by Chadian authors in the past two decades, of a quite nostalgic nature. Ali A. Hagggar’s *Le mendiant de l’espoir* (Centre al-Mouna, 1999), Baba Moustapha’s *Le souffle de l’harmattan* (Sepia, 2000) and Khayar Oumar Defallah’s *Fils de Nomade* (L’Harmattan, 2008), to name some of the best, describe the cohabitation, tolerance and friendship among people from various ethnic and religious communities as fundamental to the Chadian way of living. Mahamat Saleh Yacoub gave his book about the city of Abeche the subtitle *Une ville tchadienne cosmopolite*.

Cosmopolitanism and tolerance is what these authors, their audience and many Tijani Chadians wish to defend – against the ‘Arabisation’ and the intolerance of Anṣār al-sunna. They fear that, if their prejudice would spread, it would do great harm to the already unstable social relations in the country. In the figure of the prominent Tijani scholar al-Tarjumī they have found an excellent ally, because, as some have heard from others, he argued that one can live a perfect Muslim life alongside the French (or Nasara in general), and that this can even be the rescue of the essence of their religious culture.

But what can they reply when the “*arabisants*” students tell them they do not have the education to understand the work of authors such as al-Tarjumī, because they do not read classical Arabic or know enough about Islamic sciences? In the colonial period, schooling in Arabic changed. In Abeche it first suffered when ulema fled after the Kubkub tragedy. When Muḥamad Awuda Oulech founded a *Maḥad al-‘ilmi* in Abeche in 1947, to prepare students for advanced Islamic studies in Sudan or

⁷⁷ One of them my informant Alhadj Garoude Djarma.

Egypt, the colonial government, concerned about panislamism, soon forced him to leave Chad. In 1952 it opened the *College Franco-Arabe* to compete with this religious education. It offered lessons in French and Arabic, but only on secular subjects. It succeeded in attracting both staff and students away from the *Ma'had al-ʿilmi*.⁷⁸ Consequently, the teaching of Islamic sciences has dropped to an elementary level. The *fiqh* course that Yūsuf Mukhtar and many other Tijani shaykhs now teach to advanced students is “*fiqh al-Akhḍārī*” and “*fiqh al-ʿAshmāwī*”, based on excerpts of 16-century didactic texts on the rituals of worship.⁷⁹ It would be difficult to find more than a handful of readers in Abeche or elsewhere in the country to appreciate the details of al-Tarjumī’s expertise in the field of *fiqh*. “*Tabsīra* is like a book by Herodotus. Everything is in it, including a summary of the entire Khalīl”, said one informant, who, also, had not actually read it. He admitted it readily: “today, no-one has such knowledge anymore”.

However, whereas al-Tarjumī’s factual knowledge is lost for his present audience, he has gained wisdom. What most of my informants knew about him, was that he had the insight that “the essential things” would certainly be lost in battle, but could be saved by peace and “going along”. A number of them pointed out the wisdom of his acceptance that one cannot stop the times from changing. It makes one realise that the reconciliation for which his memory is cherished, is not only between Muslims and Christians, but ultimately between tradition and modernity, between old and new. (For the same reason, all visitors to Abeche are made to admire the two minarets - one brick-coloured and heavy, the other finer and plastered white, one “old” (19th century), the other “new” - of the mosque al-Atīq, in the same Shiq al-fukara ward where al-Tarjumī is buried.) The upgrading of al-Tarjumī’s knowledge to wisdom was realised with the help of the archetype of wisdom, King Solomon. While his role has shifted (from emphasising mastery of knowledge in the tale quoted in *Tabsīrat al-ḥayrān* to wisely commending reconciliation in shaykh Yusuf Mukhtar’s story), Solomon’s symbolic value has become an attribute of the narrative of al-Tarjumī. Perhaps we can even say that the narrative is an example of oral wisdom literature. It makes al-Tarjumī the ideal figure to embody cultural salvation in a time of crisis – that is today.

Interviews October 30 to November 28, 2017:

In Ndjamena:

Dr. Ateib Idriss Halawlaw, vice-recteur Université de Ndjamena.

Dr. Mahamat Madani Fadoul, grandson of a sister of ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Tarjumī, Université de Ndjamena.

Ibrahim Kebir, entrepreneur in hydraulic systems.

Mrs Fatime Ngare, secretary at an ngo.

Mrs Alizata Triande, entrepreneur in catering.

Abazene Seid, retired lawyer.

Dr. Abakar Walar Modou, professor of Islamic sciences and *secrétaire général* of the Université Roy Faycal; member of the *Conseil Islamique du Tchad*.

Issa Mahamat, history student at the Université de Ndjamena

Dr. Issa Hassan Khayar, historian.

Mahamat Bodingar, director of a local ngo, secretary of the Association Tchadienne pour les Droits de l’Homme

Sintal Moustapha, entrepreneur in photocopying.

Mahamat Nour, retired head of a department of the Ministry of Culture.

Garoude Djarma, retired nurse, amateur historien.

Ousmane Moumine, history student at the Université Roy Faycal.

⁷⁸ Mahamat Saleh Yacoub, *Abéché, hier et aujourd’hui. Une ville tchadienne cosmopolite*. L’Harmattan, 2017, 54-66; David Gardinier, ‘Muhammad Awuda Ouléch at Abéché: a reformist Islamic challenge to French and traditionalist interests in Ouaddai, Chad, 1947-1956’ In *Islam et sociétés au sud du Sahara : notes et documents : cahiers annuels pluridisciplinaires*, no. 3, p. 159-185.

⁷⁹ ‘Abd al-Bārī al-Rifā’ī al-ʿAshmāwī (fl. 16th century), *Matn al-Ashmāwīyya*; ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad al-Akhḍārī (d. 1585), *Mukhtaṣar fī l-ʿibādāt alā madhhab al-imām Mālik*.

Moussa Mahamat, owner travel agency.
Yahya Mahmout, rector of the Université de Sarh.
Mahamat Saleh Haroun, Minister of Culture.
Ali Abderahman Haggar, directeur HEC (Ecole des Hautes Etudes Commerciales) Tchad, author.

Many short exchanges with participants of the Kubkub conference at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, November 25 and 26, 2017.

In Mongo:

Shaykh Yusuf Mukhtar Hamid.
Abdoulaye Umar Muhammad.
Faki Haroun Ali Adam.
Zakari Mahamat, primary school teacher.
Hamid Ibedou, member of parliament.
Thomas Alkali, secondary school teacher.
Moussa Saleh, protestant vicar.
Henri Coudray sj, scholar of islamic studies, bishop.
Franco Martelozzo sj, priest.

In Abeche:

Bichara Abdoulaye, student of history at the Université Adam Barka.
dr. Mahamat Saleh Yacoub, historian, vice-rector of the Université Adam Barka.
Yacoub Mukhtar, délégué du Collège de l'Education Générale in Abeche.
Shaykh Abakar al-Khalifa.
Arrachdi Saboun, librarian of sultan Ourada II.
Mrs. Achta Kerim, secondary school teacher.
Mrs. Haram Mahamat, tradeswoman, and her daughters.
Shaykh Adoum Muazzal and two of his students.
Dr. Mahamat Atteib, retired professor of history.
Shaykh Mahamat Abid Hissein, professor of Arabic literature, Université Adam Barka.
Dr. Abdoulaye Taha, director of the Institut d'Enseignement Secondaire Am-Siogo.