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الدَّعْوَةُ الْإِسْلَامِيَّةُ

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أثر الإسلام في غانة ومالي في القرون الوسطى

القرن الرابع - الثامن الهجري / العاشر - الرابع عشر الميلادي

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يتناول هذا العرض التاريخي تأثير الحضارة العربية الإسلامية في رقعة تقع عند التحوم الجنوبية من المغرب العربي - ألا وهي السودان الغربي - والتي تعاقبت فيها حتى نهاية القرن الرابع عشر مملكتان عريقتان ، هما غانة ومالي . وقد شهدت هذه المنطقة بداية تأثيرات الحضارة العربية الإسلامية منذ أن توّطد الحكم العربي في الشمال الإفريقي ، أي منذ مطلع القرن الثامن للميلاد ، وظلت هذه التأثيرات في ازدياد بفضل نشاط التجار المغاربة عبر الصحراء الكبرى . وما يجدر التنويه به أن المصادر العربية - كتب التاريخ والجغرافيا والرحلات وكتب الطبقات والتراجم - هي المصادر المكتوبة الوحيدة المتوفرة عن تاريخ السودان الغربي في القرون الوسطى ، وذلك لأن قبائل السودان الغربي لم تكن تعرف الكتابة آنذاك . إن أهم هذه المصادر ما صنفه ابن حوقل والبكري والشريف الإدريسي وابن سعيد المغربي وابن بطوطة والعمرى وابن خلدون والقلقشندي .

إن انتشار الإسلام في السودان الغربي كان عاملاً من عوامل الوحدة بين قبائله ، كما أن الفوارق العنصرية والقبلية في هذه المنطقة الشاسعة أضعف من حدتها انتشار الإسلام واللغة العربية كلفة التعليم والثقافة في معاهد المدن السودانية - كتنبكتو وجني - ولغة التأليف في المواضيع الفقهية والتاريخية .

الإسلام في غانة وتكرور

إن مملكة غانة القديمة كانت تشغل المنطقة الواقعة في الطرف الجنوبي من الصحراء الكبرى إلى الشمال مباشرة من أعالي نهري السنغال والنيجر ، فهي تبعد بنحو خمسمائة ميل إلى الشمال الغربي من أقرب منطقة عند حدود غانة الحديثة ، التي اتخذت اسمها منها بوصفها أعرق ممالك السودان الغربي .

إن المعلومات المتوفرة لدينا عن مملكة غانة القديمة التي بلغت أوجها في القرن العاشر الميلادي مستمدة مما كتبه الجغرافيون العرب ، وبخاصة ابن حوقل والبكري . وكان الاسم غانة يُطلق على الملوك وكذلك على البلاد وعاصمتها ، وقد اندثرت مدينة غانة ، إلا أن الحفريات اهتمت إلى موقع الحي

الإسلامي منها في كُني - صالح (جنوبي موريتانيا) وعُثر فيه على حجارة نُقِشت عليها كتابات عربية تتضمن آيات من القرآن الكريم .

كان رخاء غانة يقوم بالدرجة الأولى على سيطرتها على تجارة الذهب ؛ يقول ابن حوقل : « وغانة أيسر من على وجه الأرض من ملوكها بما لديهم من الأموال المدخرة من التبر المثار . . . وحاجتهم إلى ملوك أودغست ماسة من أجل الملح الخارج إليهم من ناحية الإسلام ، فانه لا قوام لهم الا به » .

إن اوفى المعلومات عن مملكة غانة في القرن الحادي عشر الميلادي هي التي أوردها الأديب والجغرافي الأندلسي ابو عُبيد البكري (ت 487هـ / 1094م) في كتابه (المسالك والممالك) ، وقد استمد معلوماته عن حاضرة غانة من التجار المغاربة الذين عرفوا المدينة جيداً بحكم ترددهم عليها . ويتبين مما ذكره البكري ان ملك غانة ومعظم رعيته كانوا وثنيين ، وان الملك كان متسامحاً مع المسلمين بحيث أذن لهم بتشيد مدينة خاصة بهم وفيها مساجدهم ، كما انه كان يعتمد على المسلمين في إدارة مملكته .

وإلى الغرب من مدينة غانة كانت تقع مدينة تكرر عند المجرى الأدنى لنهر السنغال غير بعيد عن ساحل البحر المحيط . يقول البكري إن « اهل تكرر اليوم [أي سنة 460هـ / 1068 م] مسلمون » . ان التكاونة / التكاير كانوا اول من اعتنق الإسلام من اهل السودان الغربي وعملوا بنشاط على نشره بين القبائل المجاورة لهم ، وأصبحت التسمية (تكرر) مرادفة للسودان الغربي عند المؤرخين العرب بعد القرن الرابع عشر للميلاد .

المرابطون والسودان الغربي

إلى أن ظهر المرابطون على المسرح في غرب افريقيا في منتصف القرن الخامس الهجري / الحادي عشر الميلادي كان الإسلام ينتشر سلمياً وباضطراد في غرب افريقيا جنوبي الصحراء الكبرى على أيدي التجار المغاربة . وقد ادى جهاد المرابطين في الجنوب إلى استيلائهم على أودغست سنة 1054م من يد ملك غانة ، كما أدى الى استيلائهم على عاصمة غانة ذاتها سنة 1076م ، وإلى القضاء نهائياً على مملكة غانة . وقد أسلم أهلها المعروفون بالسوننكي وانتشروا في المناطق المجاورة يزاولون التجارة (ديولا) وإليهم يعود الفضل في نشر الإسلام في مناطق كثيرة من السودان الغربي .

لقد انتشر الإسلام بين قبائل غانة بعد مقدم المرابطين ؛ يؤكد ذلك ما يذكره الإدريسي - بعد قرن من رواية البكري - إذ يقول إن غانة « يقصدها التجار المياسير من جميع البلاد المحيطة بها من سائر بلاد المغرب الأقصى ، وأهلها مسلمون » .

الإسلام في مالي

نظراً لتحول أنظار المرابطين نحو الشمال ، ونتيجة لما نشب من خلافات بين قبائل صنهاجة

الصحراء ذاتها ، عادت غانة إلى الظهور ثانية ولكن على نطاق أضيق رقعة وأقل ثراء من قبل . ولم تلبث غانة أن تجزأت وآل تراثها آخر الأمر إلى زعيم إحدى قبائل ماندي القاطنة في وادي النيجر الأعلى .

إن امبراطورية مالي التي ازدهرت في القرنين الثالث عشر والرابع عشر للميلاد كان قوامها الأول قبائل ماندينكا القاطنة في الرقعة الواقعة إلى الجنوب من غانة ما بين أعالي نهري النيجر والسنغال . وكانت مالي معروفة في القرن الحادي عشر ويسمّيها البكري ملئ . وهو يروي حكاية طريقة عن إسلام ملكها آنذاك .

إن أشهر سلاطين مالي منسى موسى (حَكَمَ 1312 - 1337 م) وقد اشتهر بالورع والتقوى ، وفي عهده شهدت مالي أوج رخائها وازدهارها . ادى منسى موسى فريضة الحج عام 1324م ، فعزّز ذلك من مكانة الإسلام في البلاد ، وأشاع اختيار تراثها بالذهب في أرجاء العالم الإسلامي بل وفي أوروبا ، واجتذب إلى بلاده الكثيرين من التجار والعلماء المسلمين الذين ساهموا في تنمية البلاد اقتصادياً وثقافياً ومعمارياً .

وقد عمل منسى موسى على توطيد علاقاته بالممالك الإسلامية كمصر وتونس والمغرب الأقصى ، وكان للتكارة / التكاير - كما عُرف أهل مالي - جالية كبيرة في مصر ، وخُصص في الجامع الأزهر رواق للتكاير عُرف باسمهم .

ويذكر القلقشندي أن كتابة أهل مالي بالخط العربي على طريقة المغاربة ، وأن لباسهم شبيه بلباس أهل المغرب - جباب ودرايع بلا تفريج - ويركب أهل مالي الخيول بالسروج ، وهم في غالب أحوالهم في الركوب كأنهم العرب .

لدينا مادة وفيرة عن مالي في منتصف القرن الثامن الهجري / الرابع عشر الميلادي وعن سلطانها منسى سليمان شقي منسى موسى . فبالإضافة إلى ما ذكره العمري لدينا معلومات من شاهد عيان هو الرحالة المغربي الشهير ابن بطوطة الذي أمضى أكثر من تسعة شهور في زيارة مالي (2 - 1353م) .

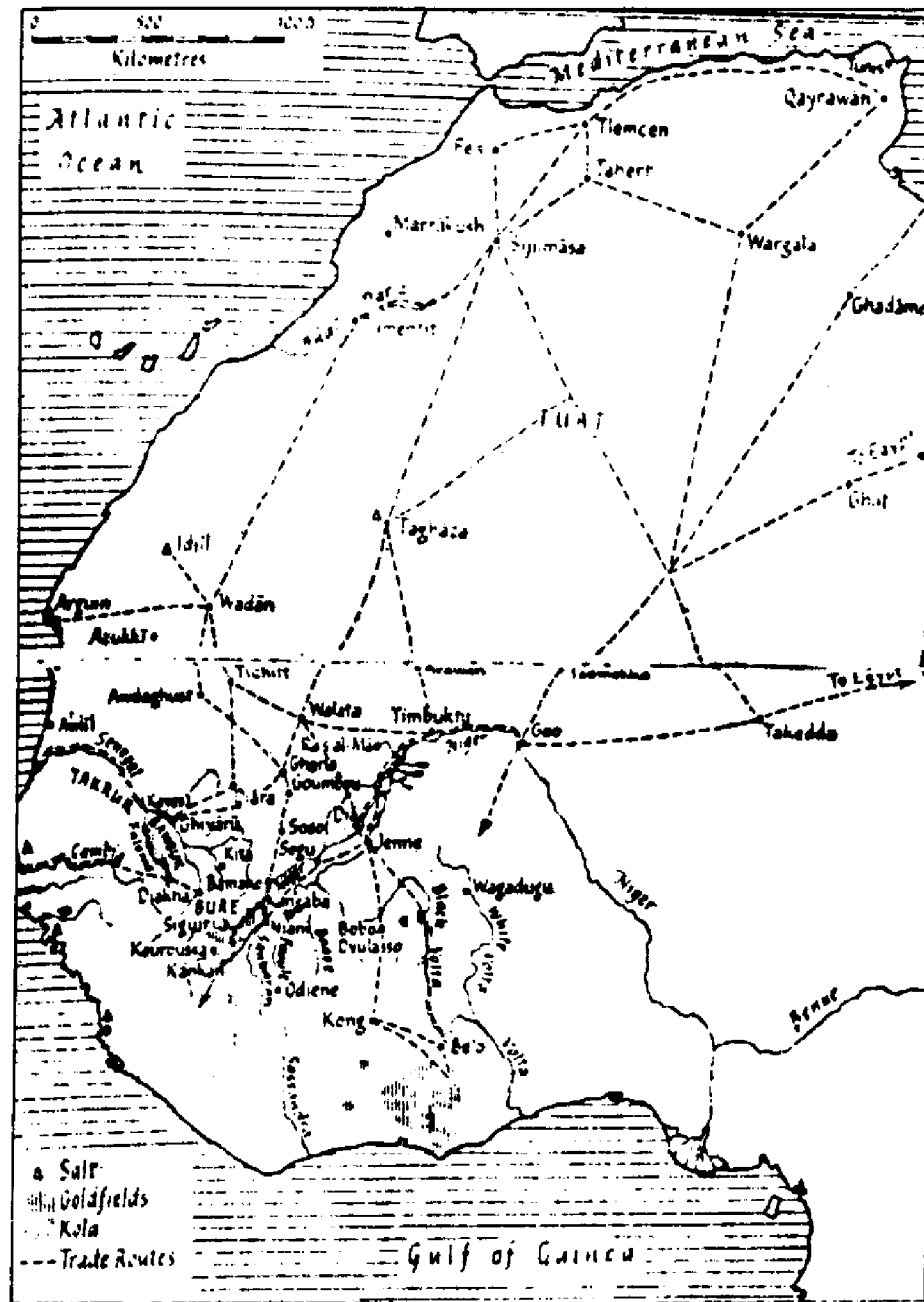
إن رواية ابن بطوطة تدل على أن الإسلام كان قد توطد في مالي ، ومع ذلك فإن السلطان كان يراعي العادات والتقاليد المحلية المنتشرة بين الوثنيين من رعيته . وقد أعجب ابن بطوطة باستيابة الأمن والعدالة في مالي ، كما أعجب بتدين القوم وأدائهم الصلوات وحفظهم القرآن الكريم .

ومما يدل على عدم وجود أي تمييز عنصري عند المسلمين ما ذكره ابن بطوطة من أن كبير جماعة البيضان (المغاربة) في عاصمة مالي كان متزوجاً من ابنة عم السلطان ، ويلاحظ كذلك أن المساجد كانت حرماً يلجأ إليها المستجيرون من بطش الحاكم ، وكان علماء المسلمين يبادرون إلى المصالحة بين المتنازعين حقناً للدماء ، فإن بطوطة يذكر أنه أثناء إقامته بتكدا توجه القاضي والخطيب والمدرس والشيخ بها إلى أميرها للإصلاح بينه وبين أمير آخر .

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Trimingham, J.S., *A History of Islam in West Africa*, Oxford 1970, p. 49.
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- 18) Al-Bakrī, p. 175.
- 19) Ibid., p. 176.
- 20) Ibid., p. 172.
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- 29) Al-Bakrī, p. 183.
- 30) Al-Idrīsī, p. 7.
- 31) Cf. *al-Hulal al-mawshiyya* (anonymous author), Rabat 1936, p. 7.
- 32) Ibn Sa'īd, p. 92.
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In June, 1980, Mozambique adopted a new currency in place of the Portuguese escudo and named it "metical" – a renewal of a 6th century usage current in the Iberian Peninsula when the Portuguese colonized the territory (1505).



Trade routes of the Sahara and the Sudan, c. 1000-1500

khatib [preacher]. It is a custom of theirs to seek refuge in the mosque but should this prove impossible, they seek refuge in the house of the **khatib**".⁴⁹ Muslim jurists would promptly offer to mediate between disputants in order to spare bloodshed. Ibn Battūta reports that, during his stay in Takedda, the **qādi**, the **khatib**, the school-master (**al-mudarris**) and the **shaykh** proceeded to the **amīr** of Takedda with a view to bringing about a reconciliation between him and another **amir**.⁵⁰

While in Niani, Ibn Battūta attended a condolence party held by Mansā Sulaymān in memory of the Marinid sultan Abu'l-Hasan 'Alī (d. 1351 A.D.) – an indication of the close relations between Mali and Morocco and between their monarchs. The whole Qur'ān was recited at the ceremony which was attended by the Mansā and, among others, the **amirs**, the **fuqahā'**, the **qādi** and the **Khatib**.⁵¹

On his arrival at the capital of Mali, Ibn Battūta was welcomed and entertained by a number of Maghribī and Egyptian residents and, on falling ill, was treated by an Egyptian doctor.⁵² The Massūfa of Walata wore clothes made of fine Egyptian cloth.⁵³ All this indicates that Mali's relations with both the Maghrib and Egypt were growing all the time following Mansā Mūsā's pilgrimage in 1324.

Ibn Battūta was very impressed by a number of good attributes among the Sudanese. These include "absence of injustice... Public security prevailed throughout the country... [The Sudanese] do not molest or interfere with estates of Maghribis (**al-bidān**) who happen to die in their country, however large they may be, but entrust them to a reliable Maghribī to hand over to those legally entitled to them. [These attributes also include] their punctilliousness in observing the prayer sequence, their assiduity in attending congregational prayers and bringing up their children to observe them. On Fridays, so great is the crowd that unless one goes early to the mosque, it is impossible to find a place... Another of their good traits is their wearing pretty white garments on Fridays. Should one possess no more than one old garment, one would still wash it, clean it and wear it for the Friday prayer. Yet another of their good traits is their keenness to learn the Qur'ān by heart. If their children show negligence in this duty, they put leg-shackles on them and do not free them until they have memorized it".⁵⁴

Remarking on the impact of Islam on Mali at the end of the fourteenth century when its decline began, Thomas Hodgkin says, "The relatively rich documentary sources for 14th century Mali provide some basis for judging the extent to which, by this period, the impact of Islam had modified indigenous, pre-Islamic institutions: e.g. as regards court ritual, the observance of Ramadān and the 'ids, the employment of **qādīs** (in the towns), the establishment of Koranic schools, the use of foreign specialists (associated with the diversification of external relations to include Egypt and the Hijāz as well as Morocco).⁵⁵

shows in the middle of the Sahara the figure of Mansā Mūsā holding a sceptre in one hand and a gold nugget in the other.⁴⁴ In the fourteenth century, Europe's gold reserves were depleted and so Europeans considered the Sudan as very rich in gold, some of which was reaching them through trade with the Maghrib.

The term "Manding" comprises at present a number of West African peoples who speak various dialects which stem from the same language, in the writing of which Arabic characters, with some modification, were used. Al-Qalqashandī quotes Abū Sa'īd 'Uthmān al-Dukālī, who had spent some thirty five years travelling throughout Mali, as saying that the people of Mali wear turbans with wraps (*'amā'im bi hanak*), while their costumes are not unlike those of Maghribis, i.e. *jubbās* and *durrā'as* – **loose outer garments – without a front opening (*bilā tafrij*)**. The Malis mount saddled horses and their riding style (*rukūb*) is similar to that of the Arabs.⁴⁵

We have an abundance of material about Mali in the middle of the fourteenth century and about its reigning sultan, Mansā Sulaymān brother of Mansā Mūsā, thanks to the contemporary accounts of al-'Umarī and Ibn Battūta. Sulaymān is said to have built mosques and instituted weekly prayers and 'id ceremonials. He attracted Mālikī jurists to his country, and was himself a student of *fiqh*.⁴⁶ In addition to al-'Umarī's account (Written 1342-9), we have an eye-witness account, namely that of the famous Maghribi traveller Ibn Battūta, who spent some nine months in Mali (1352-3 A.D.).

Ibn Battūta's interesting and illuminating account shows that Islam was already well established in Mali's chief cities, yet, perhaps for political and economic reasons, the sultan tolerated a number of pagan traditions and customs such as cannibalism, eating of dogs, donkeys and corpses, woman nakedness and sprinkling dust and ashes on themselves as a mark of respect for the sultan.

Ibn Battūta was impressed by the prevalence of public security and justice in Mali, by the people's devoutness and piety, their strict performance of prayers and their zeal in memorizing the Qur'ān.

The absence of racial or colour prejudice on the part of Muslims is attested, for instance, by the fact that the head of the Maghribi community (*al-bidan*) in Mali's capital, Muhammad b. *al-faqīh* al-Jazūlī, was married to a cousin of the sultan.⁴⁷ Among the foreign traders in Walata in the thirteenth century were the prosperous Maqqarī brothers from Tlemcen who built stone houses and married local women.⁴⁸

It is noteworthy, too, that mosques were considered as sanctuaries in which people fleeing from the tyranny of a ruler could seek asylum. Ibn Battūta relates that Mansā Sulaymān was angry with his senior wife and cousin, Qāsā, having accused her of plotting a coup against him. "Qāsā was afraid... and sought refuge in the house of the

and Surt whence he took the coastal road to Cairo. It is said that he took with him 100 camel loads of gold all of which he spent or gave away in the course of his journey. In Cairo, he gave one load of gold to the Mamlūk sultan's treasury and he gave liberally to senior state functionaries. As a result, the price of gold in Egypt is said to have depreciated considerably.⁴⁰

In Mecca, Mansā Mūsā invited four *shurafā'* to accompany him, with their families, to Mali. In Cairo, the Mansā invited a number of scholars and *fuqahā'* to accompany him back to his capital, and he purchased a large number of books on *fiqh* in order to provide his country with proper Islamic culture. Sometime after his return, Mansā Mūsā sent a book, written by one of his scribes, to the sultan of Egypt.

While in Mecca, Mansā Mūsā met the Andalusian poet and architect Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm al-Sāhili (d. in Timbuctu 1346 A.D.) and invited him to accompany him back to Mali where he was charged with the construction of a number of mosques and palaces in Timbuctu, Gao and elsewhere. Al-Sāhili used burnt bricks, the use of which was till then unknown in the Sudan. These new buildings were adorned with the battlemented terraces and pyramidal towers characteristic of the Sudanese style.⁴¹ It was thanks to al-Sāhili that the Andalusian-Maghribi style of architecture was introduced to the Western Sudan.

Mansā Mūsā's Islamic policy was more ardently pursued after his pilgrimage. He gave Mali the characteristics of an Islamic state by constructing mosques and instituting the ceremonials connected with the Friday prayers and the 'ids. He began to send scholars to pursue their studies in Fez and Cairo. It was thanks to Mansā Mūsā that close relations were established with the Mamlūks of Egypt, the Hafsiids of Tunisia and the Marinids of Morocco, with the result that Mali became an integral part of the Muslim world.⁴²

The Takrūrīs or Takārira, as the people of Mali were known in the East, had a large community in Egypt where they had a special *riwāq* (section) in al-Azhar Mosque in Cairo bearing their name. In fact, the Takrūrīs had a large community in Cairo since Fātimid days. When the pious Takrūrī, Yūsuf b. 'Abd Allāh al-Takrūrī, a contemporary of the Fātimid Caliph al-'Azīz (d. 386/996), died, the Caliph built, in his memory, a domed mosque which came to be known as Jāmi' al-Takrūrī. A number of Takrūrīs were later to serve in the Mamlūk army. One of them, 'Anbar al-Takrūrī was promoted by Sultan Qaytabai to the rank of an army commander (*muqaddam*) in 905/1499.⁴³

The first reference to Mali in European maps was made in the Italian *mappa mundi* in 1339. Drawing on information obtained from Jewish merchants in North Africa, the Majorcan Jewish cartographer, Abraham Cresques, compiled the Catalan Atlas (1375) which locates a number of Mali cities, such as Gao and Timbuctu, and

benefit upon the people of your country and thereby incite all your enemies and adversaries to envy'. He persisted with him until he agreed to embrace Islam, and that in sincerity. He taught him to recite easy passages from the Book of God and instructed him in those obligations which even the most ignorant should know. He waited until Friday night, then told him to make a total ablution, clothed him in a cotton robe which he had by him, and they went together to a rise in the ground. There the Muslim with the king on his right began to pray throughout the night that God's will be done, the Muslim doing the petitioning and the king repeating the "Amen". As dawn began to break, behold, God enveloped the land with abundant rain. In consequence of this, the king ordered the destruction of the idols and the expulsion of the magicians from his country. He is sincerely attached to Islam, as are his heir and courtiers, but the people of his kingdom remain idolators. Since that time, their kings have borne the title of **al-muslimānī**."³⁷

As has been noted by one modern scholar, the role of the chiefs as early recipients of Islamic influence is a salient feature in the process of Islamization in other parts of West Africa.³⁸

The history of the Mali empire begins with Sundiata (r. 1230-1255 A.D.) who made Niani his capital and bore the title "Mansā" (i.e. sultan). The new empire covered a vast territory from Niani on the upper Niger to the Atlantic coast in the west. Eastwards, the empire extended up to Hausaland. It included within its boundaries the main sources of mineral wealth, such as the salt mines in Taghaza, the copper mines in Takedda and the goldfields in the south. The new empire contained also the main trading centers such as Walata, Jenne, Gao and Timbuctu.

Sundiata appears to have been pagan at the start of his reign, but he soon adopted Islam. Until the decline of Mali in the fifteenth century, its rulers were all Muslims, and many of them performed the pilgrimage to Mecca, thereby enhancing their own prestige among their Muslim subjects and in the Muslim world at large. As a result, Islam went on spreading in Mali and served to break the distance between the social classes. Islamic identity began to rival ethnic or tribal consciousness.³⁹

The most famous ruler of Mali was Mansā Mūsā (r. 1312-1337 A.D.) who was known and popular for his piety and open-handed generosity. During his reign, Mali attained the zenith of its power and prosperity; the fame of its gold wealth spread throughout the Muslim world and Europe.

In 1324 A.D., Mansā Mūsā went on pilgrimage which became a landmark in the history of Mali. Following Mansā Mūsā's pilgrimage, Mali attracted a host of traders and scholars who contributed to its economic and cultural well-being and to its architectural development.

On his way to Mecca, Mansā Mūsā and his large entourage passed through Aujla

far as to call them the "dollars" of the Middle Ages. One possible reason for this reputation is that the gold from which these *mithqāls* were struck was very renowned among Medieval merchants who consistently referred to Sudanese gold as "very pure".³⁴

Mention must be made of the traveller Ibn Fātima, often quoted by Ibn Sa'īd, Ibn Khaldūn and al-Qalqashandī, as a source of information about the Western Sudan and the regions further to the south. He is a son of the Western Sudan (Senegal or Ghana) and lived towards the end of the sixth/twelfth century. The naming of sons after their mothers was quite common among the Sanhāja of the western Sahara and in the Sudan (e.g. Ibn Ghāniya, Ibn 'Ā'isha, Ibn al-Sahrāwiyya). Although only quotations from Ibn Fātima's work have survived, they show that he was widely travelled and well informed.³⁵

Islam in Mali

As a result of the pre-occupation of the Almoravids with the affairs of Morocco and al-Andalus as well as the inter-tribal disputes within the Sanhāja in the Sahara, Ghana re-emerged in a smaller area to the south of the old kingdom. In 1203, the ruler of the Sosso took Ghana from which the Muslim Soninke had to flee to Walata (1224), which replaced Ghana as a center of trade and Muslim education, and to Jenne (1250).³⁶ Soon, however, Ghana was conquered by a chieftain of one of the Mandingo tribes in the upper basin of the Niger.

The Mali empire, which flourished in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, had as its nucleus the Mande tribes which inhabited the area lying between the upper Niger and Senegal basins. Mali was already known to Muslim traders in the eleventh century and was called "Malel" by al-Bakrī who gives the following account about the conversion of its king to Islam which must have taken place early in the eleventh century, before Ghana was conquered by the Almoravids in 1076.

"[Malel's] king is known as *al-muslimānī* [i.e. new convert to Islam]. The reason for his being so called came about in this way. Year after year, his country was afflicted with drought. The people tried to obtain rain by making many sacrifices of cattle to such an extent that they almost exterminated the breed but achieved nothing except dearth and distress. Now the king had staying with him as a guest a Muslim who passed his time reciting the Qur'ān and studying the *sunna* of the Prophet. The king complained to this man about his people's sufferings. He replied, 'O King, if you only believed in God Almighty, acknowledged His unity and the mission of Muhammad, and believed in all the articles of faith, then I would pray on your behalf for relief from what you are suffering and from what has befallen you. Thus you could bring universal

that Islam was diffused in many areas of the Western Sudan.²⁶

Although the control of Ghana by the Almoravids was short-lived in view of their pre-occupation with the affairs of Morocco and al-Andalus, reference in Arabic sources show that close relations were maintained between the Almoravid rulers in Marrakesh and some rulers in the Western Sudan. The fact that 4000 Sudanese troops constituted part of the Almoravid army at the battle of al-Zallāqa (Sacralias) in 479/1086 suggests a possible alliance between the Almoravids and their Takrūrī co-religionists.²⁷

The unity which the Almoravids created in the Muslim West, from al-Andalus to the Western Sudan, is attested by the group of Muslim royal tombstones, dated between 1100 and 1110 A.D., which probably had been sculptured and inscribed in Muslim Spain and then carried across the Sahara to be erected at the graves of two kings and a queen of Gao (Kawkaw) who had been recently converted to Islam.²⁸

According to al-Sa'dī, Gao's ruling dynasty had been converted to Islam in 400/1009. Al-Bakrī says that on their accession, the rulers of Gao received "a ring, a sword and a copy of the Qur'ān which, they claim, had been presented to them from the *amīr al-mu'minīn* [i.e. the Umayyad Caliph in Cordoba]".²⁹

Islam spread among the pagan tribes of Ghana after the advent of the Almoravids. This is attested by what al-Idrīsī says, one century after al-Bakrī's report: "[Ghana] is visited by wealthy merchants from all adjoining areas in Morocco. Its people are Muslims".³⁰ Al-Zuhri, writing about the same time as al-Idrīsī, says that "formerly the inhabitants of Ghana were infidels but, in the year 469 [1076], they became good Muslims under the influence of the Lamtuna [i.e. the Almoravids]".³¹ Thirty years later, Ibn Sa'īd adds that the king of Ghana "wages many campaigns of *jihād* against the pagans. His dynasty is well known for this".³²

It is noteworthy that the Almoravid *mithqāl* (*dinār*), struck of pure gold, was in great demand outside their empire, including the Christian kingdoms of northern Spain where it was known as *metical/metcal/mitical*. Alfonso VIII, King of Castile and Leon, began, as from 1173 A.D., to strike similar dinars known as "*le morabeti Alphonsi*" and, until the fifteenth century, dinars were known throughout Spain as "*maravedis*".³³

A radio-chemical analysis of a number of Almoravid *mithqāls* has recently been carried out in order to verify the claim by economic historians that Western Sudanese gold played a significant role in Medieval Mediterranean economic life. The investigation has been successful in proving the claim and has shown the major role played by the Almoravid dynasty in distributing West African gold to other parts of the Mediterranean basin where Maghribī merchants were very active. The Almoravid *mithqāls* enjoyed a great international reputation and one modern scholar has gone so

Al-Bakrī says that one of the means of exchange at Silla is by pretty cotton strips called *al-shakkiyyāt*, a word derived from the Arabic *shuqqa* (Hassāniyya *shegge*).²²

This suggests that cotton growing and cloth manufacture were introduced to Takrur and the Western Sudan through trade and Islam.²³

The Almoravids and the Western Sudan

Until the advent of the Almoravids in West Africa in the middle of the 5th/11th century, Islam was spreading peacefully and continuously in the Western Sudan at the hands of Muslim traders from the Maghrib. There were Muslim communities in many stations, markets and towns through which trans-Saharan caravans passed on their way from the Maghrib to Ghana.

The Almoravid state (*dawlat al-murābitin*) emerged in the western Sahara to the south of Morocco, thanks, primarily, to the work of the Mālikī *faqīh* and reformer, “Abd Allāh b. Yāsīn, who sought to enforce - in the tradition of the Mālikī school of Qayrawān - a rigorous observance of the *sharīʿa* in the Sanhājī Saharan society which was notorious for its laxity and its ignorance of orthodox Islam. After Ibn Yāsīn had succeeded in his mission, not without encountering considerable difficulties, the Almoravid state emerged, based on the Lamtūna, Guddāla and Massūfa tribes which formed the Sanhāja confederation in the western Sahara. From its inception, the Almoravid state, as its name implies, was characterized by the *jihād* or struggle for the consolidation and propagation of *sunnī* (orthodox) Islam and the eradication of heresies (*bidaʿ*) and paganism. Ibn Abī Zarʿ says that, on seeing that sections of the Sanhāja had turned away from him at first, Ibn Yāsīn “wanted to leave them for the Sudan (*bilād al-sūdān*) who had embraced Islam [a reference probably to the Takrūrīs] since Islam had already spread there”.²⁴ After his cousin Yūsuf b. Tāshufīn had consolidated his position in Morocco, the Almoravid *amīr* Abū Bakr b. ʿUmar returned to “the Sahara where he stayed for some time fighting the pagans among the Sudanese until he died as a martyr in the course of one of his campaigns [480/1087]... after the Sahara country up to the gold mountains in the Sudan had submitted to him”.²⁵

In the south, and in alliance with the Muslim king of Takrūr, the Almoravids retook Awdaghust in 1054 A.D. from the king of Ghana who had seized it from the Sanhāja in 990 A.D. The Almoravids also seized the capital of Ghana itself in 1076 A.D., thereby bringing to an end the pagan kingdom of Ghana. The people of Ghana, known as Soninke, embraced Islam and spread as itinerant traders (*dyūla*) throughout the neighbouring areas to the south. It was largely thanks to these Soninke traders

al-Warrāq(d. 362/973) who was brought up in Qayrawān and later joined, in Cordoba, the court of the Umayyad Caliph al-Hakam al-Mustansir for whom he wrote a number of books on North Africa including its trade links with the Sudan.¹⁷ Al-Bakrī says, "The capital of Ghana consists of two towns lying in a plain, one of which is inhabited by Muslims and is large, possessing twelve mosques, one being a *jāmi'* (for Friday prayers), each having its *imām*, *muadhdhin* and Qur'ān reciters (*rātībūn*) as well as jurists (*fuqahā'*) and scholars... The royal town is some six miles from it [the Muslim town] and is called al-Ghāba (the grove)... In the royal town near the king's residence, there is a mosque in which his Muslim visitors pray. The royal town is surrounded by huts, groves and coverts(*sha'rā'*), where live their magicians who are their priests, and they contain their idols (*dakākīr*) and the burial places of their kings... The interpreters of the king are Muslims, and so are his treasurer and most of his ministers..."¹⁸

This account shows that the king of Ghana and most of his subjects, up to the middle of the eleventh century A.D., were pagans and that the king was tolerant towards Muslims, for he permitted them to have their own town and their own mosques, and he depended upon Muslims for the running of his administration. This reminds one of the Norman kings who, on conquering Sicily from the Muslims (484/1091), continued to depend largely on Muslim Functionaries in their court and administration.

Al-Bakrī goes on to describe how the subjects behaved when they were in the presence of the king: "When the king's co-religionists come near him, they prostrate themselves and sprinkle dust on their heads. That is their greeting to him. Muslims, however, greet him by clapping their hands".¹⁹

To the west of the capital of Ghana lay the capital of Takrūr, on the lower course of the Senegal not far from the Atlantic coast. The people of Takrūr had been pagans until their king, Wār-jābī, son of Rābīs, embraced Islam in 432/1041, i.e. peacefully before the arrival of the Almoravids in the Sudan. Al-Bakrī says that "the people of takrūr today [i.e. 460/1068] are Muslims".²⁰ The Takrūrīs were the first people in Western Sudan to embrace Islam and they became active, and were instrumental, in spreading Islam among the tribes surrounding them. The term 'Takrūr' later became synonymous with the Western Sudan in the writings of Arab historians in the East, such as al-'Umarī and al-Qalqashandī, after the fourteenth century A.D.

On the impact of the Maghribīs on the Takrūrīs, Ibn Sa'id says, "Those [Takrūrīs] who associated with the whites [i.e. the Maghribīs] and became urbanized (*tahaddara*) began to wear imported clothes made of wool and cotton... Whereas those who lived in rural areas were naked – the Muslims cover their private parts with bones or skins, while the pagans stay naked".²¹

dispute over the estate of a trader from Ifrīqiya who died in intestate in the Sudan.¹²

It is interesting to recall that Abū Yazid Makhlad b. Kaydād, the famous rebel against the Fātimids (943-7 A.D.) was referred to as **al-habashī al-aswad** (black Ethiop) because it is said that he was born to a merchant of the Djerid in Ifrīqiya (southern Tunisia) by a black woman at Tadmekka.¹³

The founder of the Midrarid dynasty at Sijilmasa, ISA b. Mazid, described by al-Bakri as al-**auswad** (the black), was also of Subanese origin and was chosen by The Sufris as their ruler in 104/722-3.¹⁴

This shows that Maghribīs had been in contact with the Western Sudan since an early period and had intermarried with the Sudanese.

Islam in Ghana and Takrūr

The ancient kingdom of Ghana occupied the area situated at the southern extremity of the Sahara (**al-Majaba al-Kubra**) immediately to the north of the upper basins of the Senegal and Niger rivers. It lies north east of modern Mali's capital, Bamaku, and some 500 miles to the north west of modern Ghana whose name it took, following independence in 1957, on account of ancient Ghana having been the Oldest kinglom in the Western Sudan.

Ancient Ghana reached the zenith of its power in the tenth century A.D. and our information about it is primarily derived from the accounts of the Arab geographers Ibn Hawqal and, in particular, al-Bakrī. The capital of ancient Ghana has disappeared, but recent excavations have discovered the site of its Muslim quarter at KoumbiSaleh in the south-eastern corner of Mauretania. The upper section the town was built of stone not a very common practice in the il, with spacious, often two-storey buildings. Stones were discovered the site bearing Arabic inscriptions of verses from the Qur'ān.¹⁵

Ancient Ghana's prosperity was derived primarily from its control of the trans-Saharan gold trade, hence the name **bilād al-dhahab** (gold country) given to it by all Medieval Arab authors. Ibn Hawqal says, "Ghana is the richest king in the world on account of the plentiful resources of gold dust (**al-tibr al-muthār**) ... [The Kings of Ghana] badly need the Kings of Awdaghust on account of the salt which they import from the land of Islam, as it is an indispensable item to them."¹⁶

The fullest account we have about the kingdom of Ghana in the eleventh century is furnished by the celebrated Andalusian biographer and man of letters, Abū 'Ubayd al-Bakri, who completed his valuable book **Al-Masalik wa'L-mamalik mamaulik** in 460 A.H./1067-8 A.D. In spite the fact that al-Bakrī had not travelled outside his native Andalus (Muslim Spain), he obtained his information about Ghana from reliable sources, the Umayyad archives in Cordoba and from North African traders who, thanks to their frequent visits to the Sudan, were fully acquainted with Ghana. Al-Bakrī must have derived much of his information from Muhammad b. Yūsuf

well-being of both the Western Sudan and the Muslim states which were established in the leading cities of the Maghrib, such as Sijilmāsa, Aghmāt, Tlemcen, Tahert, Wargala, Qayrawān, Mahdiyya and Marrakesh as well as Muslim Spain, Sicily and Egypt.

The chief wares carried by caravans to the Western Sudan consisted of grains, dates, textiles, manufactured metal and leather goods and various types of beads (**nazm**) made of glass and shells, rings, tar (**al-qatran**), timber, perfumes and, above all, salt (from Taghāza and Awlīl) of which the Sudan was in dire need. Al-Idrisī, a son of Sabta (Ceuta), says that there exists in Sabta a market "for processing [coral], rubbing it and turning it into beads which were then pierced and strung... Most of it is carried to Ghana and all countries of the Sudan as it is much in demand in these countries".⁸ These commodities used to be exchanged by traders for the products of the Sudan, namely gold, ivory and ebony. The main Sudanese export, however, was gold dust (**tibr al-dhahab**) from Wangara in the Senegal basin (Bambuk and Bure goldfields?).⁹

Traffic in goods between the Maghrib and the Western Sudan was on such a scale that debit notes (**sukk**) were introduced in order to expedite and facilitate commercial transactions. Ibn Hawqal says, "In Awdaghust [in 340 A.H./951-2 A.D.], I saw a debit note (**sukk**) for forty two thousand dinars drawn on a Sijilmāsi merchant in Awdaghust. I have never seen or heard of such a thing in the East, and when I related this story in Iraq, Persia and Khurāsān, it was considered an interesting story (**istutrifat**)".¹⁰ The use of debit notes, however, seems to have been common in the Near East in the eleventh century, for the Persian traveller Nāsir-i-Kusraw used on during his stay at 'Aydhāb, the Egyptian Red Sea port, in 442/1050.

Biographical works (**kutub al-tarājim**) shed a light on the subject of trans-Saharan caravan trade and the contacts which exist between the Maghrib and the Western Sudan since the early Middle Age. In his voluminous **Al-Mi'yār al-mu'rib**, al-Wansharisī for example, mentions two **fatwās** (legal opinions) given by the Qayrawānī **faqih** (jurist) al-Qābisī (d. 403 1012) which provide direct evidence for the period (10th century) when the Western Sudan was still largely pagan. The first **fatwā** deals with an unfulfilled **qirād** contract (commenda) made in Ifriqiya from the West Sudan. The second **fatwā** concerns a dispute over the inheritance of a merchant who had died in the Sudan. Both **fatwās** deal with trade by Maghribi Muslims across the Sahara. The first **fatwā** concerns an investment loan made in Qayrawān to a merchant who proceeded to Tadmekka, Ghana and Awdaghust where he got married, had children and was away from home for eleven years. This merchant owed a debt in his native land and, following this man's death, the **qādī** sold his estate when the creditor approached the **qādī** claiming his money back. The second **fatwā** concerns a

basins of the Senegal and the upper Niger. As their kings and most of their subjects adopted Islam, the Sudanese themselves assumed the role of propagators of Islam in their homelands and surrounding territories. Thus, the Hausa and Dyula, when converted to Islam, extended the faith through their wide-ranging trading connections throughout West Africa.²

The spread of Islam in the Western Sudan served as a unifying factor among the tribes, as the new faith conferred upon them a sense of brotherhood. Ethnic distinctions in this vast area were reduced by the spread of Islam and through the adoption of Arabic as the language of instruction in schools and as a language in which works on *fiqh* (jurisprudence) and *tārīkh* (history) were written.³ Islam as a supratribal religion thus contributed to the cohesiveness of the multi-ethnic empires which emerged in the Western Sudan. Muslim rulers (*mansās* and *askiyās*) were also able to consolidate their traditional authority and were provided with "a doctrine, a flag and an arm and", occasionally, with a justification for the conquest of surrounding pagan kingdoms.⁴

Islam and Islamic culture contributed to the solution of a major internal problem which for so long had bedevilled the states in the Western Sudan, namely the problem of tribalism and tribal allegiance. Muslim rulers resorted to the creation of a central administration which could transcend the allegiance based on tribe or kinship. Thanks to the increase in the number of Islamic schools, a cadre of literate Muslims came into being and these were recruited by the sultans to run their administrations. Thus, of Ghana, al-Bakrī says, "The King's interpreters, the official in charge of his treasury (*bayt al-māl*) and most of his ministers are Muslims."⁵

Trade and Trans-Saharan Caravan Routes

Four major trans-Saharan caravan routes linked North Africa with the Western Sudan. The first route ran alongside the Atlantic coast and had its terminal in the Senegal basin (Takarur and Silla). The second route ran from Sijilmāsa in southern Morocco to Taghaza and terminated in Awdaghust in the southern fringe of the Sahara. The third route started from Tahert, the Rustumid capital in the Central Maghrib, passed through either Taghaza and Awdaghust or through Tadmekka (al-Sūq) and terminated in Gao (Kawkaw) on the Niger bend. The fourth route began in Ifrīqiya (Qayrawān or Tripoli), passed through Ghadames and Tadmekka and had its terminal either on the Niger or in Kanem (Lake Chad area).⁶ Under the Fātimids and the Mamlūks, Egypt, too, had close and active trade links with the Western Sudan, caravans reaching Cairo by way of Fezzan and Kanem and Upper Egypt.⁷

Through these routes, gold from the Western Sudan reached the Maghrib and the Muslim East as well as southern Europe. This gold led to the prosperity and

This historical survey discusses the impact of Islam in an area which lies at the southern periphery of the Maghrib, namely the Western Sudan – the basins of the Niger and the Senegal – known as al-Sāhil and al-Hawd, in which until the fifteenth century two ancient African states, Ghana and Mali, flourished. This area saw the beginning of the impact of Islamic civilization after Arab rule in North Africa had been consolidated at the beginning of the eighth century A.D. These Islamic influences continued to grow, thanks to the activities of Maghribī traders across the Sahara. It was largely due to the activities and settlement of these traders that Islam began to spread, initially among the Sahara tribes (Sanhāja al-Sahrā) and then in those areas of the Western Sudan which they frequented.

It is noteworthy that the Arabic sources – geographical books, travels and biographical dictionaries – are the only literary sources available to us concerning the history of the Western Sudan in the Middle Ages, since the tribes of the Western Sudan had not yet known writing at that time. These Arabic sources are, therefore, per se a great contribution to the history of civilization. The most important of these sources, in chronological order, are the works of Ibn Hawqal (10th century), Abū 'Ubayd al-Bakrī (11th century) al-Idrīsī (12th century), Ibn Sa'īd (13th century), Ibn Battūta, al-'Umari and Ibn Khaldūn (14th century), al-Qalqashandī (15th century), and al-Hasan al-Wazzān, better known as Leo Africanus, (16th century). From among the Sudanese themselves, we have 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Sa'dī, author of **Tārīkh al-sūdān**, and Mahmūd Ka't (Ibn al-Mukhtār), author of **Tārīkh al-fattāsh**, (both of whom lived in the 17th century), and the celebrated scholar and **faqīh** Ahmad Bābā al-Tunbuktī (late 16th and early 17th century), author of **Nayl al-ibtihāj bi tatrīz al-dibāj**. In addition, there are the biographical dictionaries, in the compilation of which Maghribī and Andalusian scholars in particular distinguished themselves, for these works contain valuable pieces of information about contacts made by Muslim traders in the Sudan.

It must be emphasized that Islam penetrated into most areas of the Western Sudan not through military conquest but peacefully through the influence of traders and nomadic groups from the Sahara who used to frequent the fringes of the Western Sudan for trade and who set up stations and markets where they could exchange their wares for those of the Sudanese.¹ Thanks to these Maghribī traders, Islam began to spread not through missionary activities but through contact and example, particularly among pagan monarchs and their pagan functionaries. The emergence of the Almoravid state in the western Sahara in the middle of the 11th century – a state based on **jihād** and the propagation of orthodox Islam – played a significant role in the diffusion of the Mālikī school (**madhhab**) of Islam among the tribes of the western Sahara as well as in the Sudan, thereby accelerating the pace of Islamization in the