

W I L L I A M   A .   B R O W N

## Toward a Chronology for the Caliphate of Hamdullahi (Māsina\*)

One of the more vexing problems posed in the study of events in the Caliphate of Hamdullahi during the revolutionary thirteenth century (1785/86-1882/83) has been that of chronology.

Traditionists usually cite 1233 H (1817/18) as the year in which Shaykh 'Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Sa'id Lobbo, al-Māsini, defeated the allied Bambara and Pulo armies and established the *Dina*, or Islamic State, which was to become the Caliphate of Hamdullahi (al-Ḥamdu 'llāhi).<sup>1</sup> Dates are offered for the reign of the Lobbo dynasty and for the conquest of the Caliphate by Shaykh 'Umar b. Sa'id Tall, al-Fūti. Chronologies of the reign of the Tall dynasty at Bandiagara and for their rivals, the Kunta and Lobbo princes, are also commonly cited. This handful of dates, from the rise of the *Dina* through the French conquest, constitutes the slender chronological framework into which researchers attempt to fit an abundance of events recounted by traditionists without dates and in no particular order.

Several manuscripts have recently come to light which may aid in establishing a chronological order and even specific dates for a number of important events hitherto undated.

One such manuscript, located in the Fonds Vieillard of the Institut Fondamental de l'Afrique Noire at Dakar,<sup>2</sup> is a purported *tāriḫh*, or Chronicle, of the Fittuga<sup>3</sup> during the thirteenth century. The

\* This name is preferable to that of Māsina for the Pulo State since the Caliphate embraced a much larger region than that of ancient Māsina. Māsina constituted but one of its provinces, and perhaps not the most important one inasmuch as the capital, Hamdullahi, was not located there.

1. See A. HAMPATÉ BA and J. DAGET, *L'Empire peul du Macina*, Paris, 1962.

2. *Fonds Vieillard*, Cahier 4, "Māsina".

3. A region of the Caliphate located on the right bank of the Niger, dominated by the Fittobé Pulo clan.

document was apparently discovered by Vieillard. It has been translated into French with marginal notes, probably by Vieillard himself.

The *tāriḫh* is attributed to al-Mukhtār b. 'Ismā'il b. Wadī'at 'Allāh (Yirkoy Talfi).<sup>1</sup> Written in the style of the Chronicles of Walata and Nema, the document sets forth events, by year, in the region of "Sudanic Takrūr between Timbuktu and Jenne," from 1201 to 1300 (1786/87-1882/83). It is principally concerned with wars, natural phenomena and catastrophies, and the deaths of rulers, saints, and scholars.

A second copy of the *tāriḫh* came to light in Timbuktu. Additional copies are being sought for the purposes of collation and translation. It appears that there existed a tradition of chronicle-writing in many of the villages, towns, and regions of the Caliphate, and a number of similar manuscripts may be recovered.

This particular Chronicle presents some serious problems. The attributed authorship is doubtful. According to tradition and, indeed, to the Chronicle itself, Shaykh 'Ibn Yirkoy Talfi was captured and executed by Pulo and Kunta armies following defeat of the Futanké at the battle of Konna (in 1280 [1863/64] according to the Chronicle). Hence, he could not have written this *tāriḫh*, apparently composed after 1300 (1882/83).

A cursory comparison of dates given for eclipses and appearances of comets with those cited in the Chronicles of Walata and Nema reveals curious discrepancies. Records of these phenomena support the dates of the Mauretanian *tāriḫh* rather than those of the Fittuga Chronicle. Most strikingly, the Chronicle disagrees with tradition on the year in which the *Dina* was founded. Almost to a man, traditionists cite 1233 (1817/18) as the historic year, while the Chronicle places the event in 1232 (1816/17). Further, the author's estimates of the reigns of the first three Lobbo *khulafā'* differ from those commonly and uniformly cited by traditionists.

This 'new' *tāriḫh* must, therefore, be approached cautiously. It was, perhaps, a consideration of these problems which discouraged Vieillard from going ahead with his obvious first thought to publish an edited translation of the manuscript. Nonetheless, the *Tariḫh Fittuga* is the first such document to become available to modern scholarship and can be viewed as a basis for establishing a tentative chronology for the Caliphate.

1. This is presumably the celebrated Shaykh al-Mukhtār 'Ibn Yirkoy Talfi (d. 1280) ("Yirkoy talfi" is the Songhay translation of the Arabic "wadī'at 'Allāh," i.e., entrusted to God), a leader of the Tijānī party at Hamdullahi before the Umariān conquest and subsequently a principal adviser to Shaykh 'Umar and to his nephew, Shaykh 'Aḥmad al-Tijānī [d. 1304 (1886/87)], ruler of the successor Caliphate of Bāndiagara.

Three additional 'new' documents may contribute to fixing dates for historic events in the Caliphate. One is an *'ajwibat* attributed to 'Abd 'Allāh 'Ibn Fūdī, 'Amīr of Gwandu. Two copies of the *'ajwibat* have been found: one is obviously quite old and was perhaps written in the thirteenth century; the other is a recent copy clearly made from the earlier one.

According to the manuscript, a certain 'Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Lobbo, al-Māsini, seemingly the head of a community of scholars, posed a series of questions to 'Ibn Fūdī in the year 1231 (1815/16). 'Ibn Fūdī is replying to those questions also in 1231. Subject matter ranges from interpretation of quranic verses to certain doubtful practices during the act of Prayer in the mosque. This latter point is particularly interesting since issues are raised which were also treated by Shaykh 'Aḥmad in his book, *al-'Idṭirār*.<sup>1</sup>

For chronological purposes, this document, if genuine, is important for negative reasons. There is no internal evidence suggesting that Shaykh 'Aḥmad was, as yet, the head of a political community. He is not addressed as *'amīr*, and there is no reason to assume that he was regarded by 'Ibn Fūdī, at this point, as a political or administrative subordinate, as was to be the case. Rather, the tone implies that Shaykh 'Aḥmad was, at this time, simply a scholar of some reputation dispensing instruction in a corner remote from Gwandu. This accords with tradition which would have Shaykh 'Aḥmad established as a teacher in the vicinity of Jenne until his fateful encounter with the Pulo-Bambara coalition. At any rate, the manuscript does establish the fact of communication between Shaykh 'Aḥmad and the Fūdī dynasty as early as 1231 (1815/16).

The second of these three manuscripts is a book attributed to Shaykh Sidi 'Aḥmad al-Bakkā'i b. Muḥammad b. al-Mukhtār, al-Kuntī, al-Wāfi, of Timbuktu (d. 1281 [1864/65]). The book is entitled *Bughyat al-'Ilfi fi Jawāb 'alā 'Ibn Yirkoy Talfi*. As its title indicates, the composition is supposed to be Shaykh al-Bakkā'i's reply to an earlier work by Shaykh 'Ibn Yirkoy Talfi. A preliminary reading suggests that this may be a commentary on Yirkoy Talfi's celebrated satirical poem commonly known as *Tabakkīyat al-Bakkā'i*.<sup>2</sup> In any event, it is clearly another tract in the series of works which was produced during the Qadiri-Tijāni ideological 'cold war' which preceded the Umarian conquest of the Caliphate.

The interest here lies in the fact that the author states that he is

1. Recently identified among manuscripts in Paris. Additional copies have now been located at Tenenkou, Timbuktu, and Sofara in the Republic of Mali.

2. But there is some question as to whether *Tabakkīyat* is a poem or a prose composition bearing the same title and recently come to light in Dakar (J. R. WILLIS), Segou, and Timbuktu.

replying, at the beginning of 1265 (1848), to *waraqāt* composed by Yirkoy Talfi in 1264 (1847/48). Thus the manuscript, if genuine, confirms that a Tijānī party was established at Hamdullahi, and apparently openly so, as early as 1264 (1847/48).

Tradition does hold that a Tijānī faction existed at Hamdullahi from the time of the passage of Shaykh 'Umar on his way home from the pilgrimage until it was outlawed by 'Amīr al-Muminīn 'Aḥmad b. 'Aḥmad b. 'Aḥmad b. Muḥammad (1268 [1851/52]-1278 [1861/62] according to *Fittuga*).<sup>1</sup> The *ṭarīqat* continued to exist, of course, as an underground movement and played an important, though as yet unclarified, role in the Umarian conquest.

The third manuscript is a fragment of a letter, presumably written by Muḥammad al-Makki, a son of Shaykh 'Umar and substantial author in his own right, and 'Aḥmad al-Tijānī, the Shaykh's nephew, to 'Aḥmad al-Kabīr, al-Madanī,<sup>2</sup> Shaykh 'Umar's eldest son and designated heir. The letter is a report to 'Aḥmad al-Madanī of Shaykh 'Umar's last triumphal campaign which culminated in his victory over the Pulo armies at Tíawal and his entry into Hamdullahi. Presumably, therefore, the account was written at Hamdullahi in 1278 (1861/62) or 1279 (1862/63) for the edification of the Futanké garrison remaining at Segou under the command of 'Aḥmad al-Madanī who was made governor of Segou by his father before he opened the Māsina campaign.

The chronological significance of the document is that it cites specific dates for the campaign from the march out of Segou until the entry into Hamdullahi. In general, it supports the dates given by the majority of the traditionists.

Assuming that these manuscripts are not spurious, they constitute important aids for the establishment of a tentative chronology so urgently needed in the historiography of the Caliphate of Hamdullahi.

#### A TENTATIVE CHRONOLOGY OF THE CALIPHATE OF HAMDULLAHI IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

(Based on *Tarikh Fittuga*)

- 1201 (1786/87) Famine in the Fittuga.
- 1202 (1787/88) 'Alī Samba b. 'Ismā'īl, chief of the Sangare, *i.e.*, the Fittuga, died.
- 1218 (1803/04) The Kel Tadmakkat vanquished the Sangare of Fittuga.

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1. Some claim that his father, 'Amīr al-Muminīn 'Aḥmad b. 'Aḥmad b. Muḥammad, outlawed the *ṭarīqat* earlier.

2. Also known in the Māsina as Amadou Sekou and *lamdo juulbe*, *i.e.*, 'Commander of the Faithful' in Fulfulde.

- 1224 (1809/10) Hammadi Bodejo (Hambodéio) conquered the towns of Arkodia and Sa.
- 1226 (1811/12) Shaykh Sīdī al-Mukhtār al-Kabīr b. 'Aḥmad b. 'Abī Bakr, al-Kuntī, died.
- 1228 (1813) The Bambara of Segu attacked and defeated Sunjojo (a province of the Fittuga), capturing its chief, Muḥammad b. Banna b. 'Abd al-Raḥīm, the Arma.
- 1231 (1815/16) Mālam 'Ibn Sa'id came from Sokoto and incited the people of the Guimbala (a large region on the right bank of the Niger embracing the Fittuga) against the Tuareg. The Guimbala was defeated and Mālam 'Ibn Sa'id departed.
- 1232 (1816/17) Shaykh 'Aḥmad defeated the Pulo-Bambara coalition, founding the *Dina*.
- 1234 (1818/19) Shaykh 'Aḥmad conquered Jenne and named a governor of the city.  
Shaykh Sīdī Muḥammad b. Sīdī al-Mukhtār, al-Kuntī, installed himself in Timbuktu.
- 1235 (1819/20) Galajio b. Hammadi Bodejo went to Timbuktu to meet Shaykh Sīdī Muḥammad.
- 1236 (1820/21) Appearance of a Diawando *faqīh*, al-Ḥusayn Koyta in Baki (apparently in dissidence from Hamdullahi).
- 1238 (1822/23) Al-Ḥāj b. Sa'id, nephew of Shaykh 'Aḥmad, defeated the forces of al-Ḥusayn and executed him.
- 1239 (1823/24) Battle of Teleginde between Fulbe and Tuareg.
- 1240 (1824/25) Revolt of Galajio b. Hammadi Bodejo.
- 1241 (1825/26) Battle of 'Andukuway between Fulbe and Tuareg. Fulbe conquered Bamba.  
Shaykh Sīdī Muḥammad, al-Kuntī, died.
- 1245 (1829/30) Solar eclipse.
- 1248 (1832/33) Arma expedition from Timbuktu to the Fittuga was defeated at Dara.
- 1250 (1834/35) Shaykh Sīdī al-Mukhtār, al-Ṣaghīr, al-Kuntī, installed himself in Timbuktu.
- 1253 (1837/38) Battle of 'Ibisa between Fulbe and Dogon.
- 1256 (1840/41) The Kel Tadmakkat raided the town of Goundam.
- 1257 (1841/42) Battle of N'giri Toya between Fulbe and Tuareg.
- 1258 (1842/43) A comet appeared.
- 1259 (1843/44) Hamdullahi attacked the Kaarta, liberating the Diawambé there.
- 1260 (1844/45) Death of Shaykh 'Aḥmad.
- 1262 (1845/46) Death of Shaykh Sīdī al-Mukhtār al-Ṣaghīr, al-Kuntī.
- 1263 (1846/47) Death of 'Uthmān al-Qā'id, chief of the Arma of Timbuktu.
- 1264 (1847/48) Death of al-Ḥāj b. Sa'id, nephew of Shaykh 'Aḥmad.
- 1265 (1848/49) Death of Ṣirim Ag Badu, chief of the Tengerigif.
- 1267 (1850/51) Death of the 'Imām 'Aḥmad, son of Shaykh 'Aḥmad.  
Battle of Tuju, or Tugu, between Fulbe and Dogon.
- 1271 (1854/55) Death of Gouro Malado.
- 1272 (1855/56) Revolt of Farimaké against Hamdullahi was crushed.
- 1273 (1856/57) Al-Ḥāj 'Alī b. 'Ibrāhīm, al-Sankarī, the noted *faqīh*, died.
- 1274 (1857/58) Death of Alfa Nuḥ b. al-Ṭāhir.

- 1277 (1860/61) Al-Ḥāj 'Umar al-Fūtī conquered Segu.
- 1278 (1861/62) Battle of Tíawal; fall of Hamdullahi to al-Ḥāj 'Umar.  
Death of 'Amīr al-Muminīn 'Aḥmad b. 'Aḥmad b. 'Aḥmad b. Muḥammad.  
Fall of Timbuktu; city rejects al-Ḥāj 'Umar's governor, Magha.  
Revolt of Farimaké and Fittuga against al-Ḥāj 'Umar; submit to Shaykh al-Bakkā'i.
- 1280 (1863/64) Battle between armies of Shaykh Sīdī 'Aḥmad al-Bakkā'i and the Futanké under Tierno 'Umar near Dār al-Salām; al-Bakkā'i defeated.  
Battle of Mani-Mani; defeat of Futanké and death of Tierno 'Umar.  
San Sirfi, *qadi* of Timbuktu, died in the battle.  
Battle of Sege between the Kunta under Sidiā b. Muḥammad al-'Amīn, cousin of al-Bakkā'i and the Futanké; Kunta triumph.  
Siege of Futanké at Hamdullahi by Pulo-Kunta coalition.  
'Disappearance' of al-Ḥāj 'Umar al-Fūtī at Degembere.  
Sack of Sofara, the Kunari, and Konna by the Futanké under Shaykh 'Aḥmad al-Tijānī.  
Battle of Konna between Futanké and Pulo-Kunta coalition; Futanké defeated.  
Death of al-Mukhtār b. Wadī'at 'Allāh (Yirkoy Talfi) after the battle of Konna.
- 1281 (1864/65) Death of Shaykh Sīdī 'Aḥmad al-Bakkā'i, al-Kuntī, at Sare Dina.  
War between Fulbe under Ba Lobbo and the Kunta-Tuareg under al-Bakkā'i b. Muhammad al-'Amīn, successor of Sīdī 'Aḥmad al-Bakkā'i and son of al-Bakkā'i's paternal uncle.  
Battle of Tummay between Fulbe and Kunta; Kunta defeated. Al-Bakkā'i established capital at Sare Seini.
- 1283 (1866/67) Battle of Wanjaka; Fulbe capture town under Ba Lobbo.  
Battle of Tina between Fulbe under Ba Lobbo and Kunta under al-Bakkā'i; Fulbe beaten.  
Death of 'Abd al-Salām b. 'Abī Bakr b. Muḥammad b. Ṣaliḥ (Abdessalam Bori Hamsallah).  
Shaykh 'Aḥmad al-Tijānī raided the Sebera; clashed with Ba Lobbo.  
Battle of Sena Saju between the Fulbe under Ba Lobbo and Futanké; Fulbe beaten.  
Died 'Abd 'Allāh b. 'Abī Bakr b. Muḥammad b. Ṣaliḥ (Allaye Bori Hamsallah).  
Shaykh 'Aḥmad al-Tijānī established himself at Say where he built a 'fort'.
- 1284 (1867/68) Cattle epidemic.  
Shaykh 'Aḥmad al-Tijānī established his capital at Bandiagara.
- 1287 (1870/71) Fulbe of Māsina attacked Shaykh 'Aḥmad al-Tijānī near Bandiagara and were defeated.
- 1288 (1871/72) Ba Lobbo besieged Shaykh 'Aḥmad al-Tijānī at Dimana. Animal and human epidemics kill many people in the Sudan.
- 1289 (1872/73) Shaykh 'Aḥmad al-Tijānī sacked Sare Yamu.
- 1290 (1873/74) Shaykh 'Aḥmad al-Tijānī raided Tenenkou and took away the population as captives.

- Battle of Ninari between Shaykh 'Aḥmad al-Tijānī and the Fulbe of Māsina; the Pulo-Kunta coalition was defeated. Al-Bakkā'i b. Muḥammad al-'Amīn died and was succeeded by his son, 'Abidīn b. al-Bakkā'i.
- 1291 (1874/75) Battle of Nemende between Shaykh 'Aḥmad al-Tijānī and the Pulo-Kunta coalition; Futanké defeated.
- 1292 (1875/76) Fandaguma Ag Şirim raided Sare Yamu.
- 1293 (1876/77) War between the Kunta and the Kel 'Antaşār.
- 1297 (1879/80) Revolt of Fulbe of Māsina against 'Abidīn b. al-Bakkā'i, led by Muḥammad b. 'Abī Bakr (Mamadu b. Ham Bori), a nephew of Ba Lobbo. 'Abidīn fled to Kigiri; succeeded by his cousin, 'Abidīn b. Sīdī 'Aḥmad al-Bakkā'i, who defeated the Fulbe and drove Ba Lobbo to Bobola.
- 1298 (1880/81) Ba Lobbo invaded the Farimaké.
- 1299 (1881/82) Battle of Yumayra between the Futanké and Pulo-Kunta coalition; Futanké defeated.