IN THIS ISSUE:

SOME ASPECTS OF THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CENTRAL AND EASTERN BILAD AL-SUDAN

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The Genesis of Islamic Law in the Sinnar Sultanate 1504 - 1821

Abdul-Rahman Ibrahim Elkhalifa

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Some Aspects of the Relationships between Central and Eastern Bilad al-Sudan *

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I wish in this paper to sketch briefly the relationships between Central and Eastern Bilad al-Sudan with special reference to the cultural aspects. These relations may have predated the penetration of Islam into Bilad al-Sudan.

Some cultural influences seem to have radiated from Christian Nubia in medieval times into the far west of the Nilotic Sudan. Christian traditions existed among the Garamantes, who are identified with the Goraan of Northern Dar Fur and Waday, since the 6th century AD. The language spoken by the Meidob of Northern Dar Fur is closely related to river Nubian. The discovery of Christian Nubian pottery in Koro Toro and Bochianaga, in Chad, is of considerable importance in documenting this relationship. In the words of P.L. Shinnie: "there are many stories which suggest strong Nile influence in the West".¹

Kisra, the folk ancestor of some Nigerians is said to be from the East. Some of the inhabitants of Bornu, claim to have come from Yemen. The abundance of such folk tales may contain elements of truth and suggest that some cultural influences came possibly from the Nilotic Sudan itself or further East.

In about 800 A.D. a group of Muslims came from Yemen and settled in Kawar Oasis which was then part of Kanem. This incident took place about 130 years after ‘Uqba b. Nafi‘ had led a Muslim army to Kawar.²

The Kingdom of Christian Nubia had first come in contact with the Muslim Arabs in 651-52 A.D. when ‘Abd Allah b. Sa‘d b. Abi Suhayl concluded the Baqt Treaty. The Nilotic Sudan though closest to the cradle of Islam and overrun by large numbers of Arab tribes was slowly Islamized.³

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DIRASAT IFRIQIYYA (٤٧٩)
Incidentally an offshoot of the great Arab irruption, that entered Nubia and continued up to Lake Chad, seemed to have deposited the ancestors of the Shuwa Arabs, before returning to the Nilotic Sudan.

Perhaps it was not until about the 16th century, with the emergence of the Funj Sultanate, the first major Islamic State in the Nilotic Sudan, that direct relationships between the Central and Eastern Bilad al-Sudan developed.

These relationships took several forms, covered a wide range of human endeavor and operated at varying degrees; but the following areas appear particularly important: trade routes, movement of scholars, religious orders, settlements, the Hajj Route, migration or hijra, the Mahdiyya and contemporary relations especially in the field of education.

Such relations were stimulated by the penetration of Islam all over the Sudanic belt and hence that region became the "principal theater for African Islamic history below the Mediterranean coast". Indeed the very name Bilad al-Sudan reflects the preponderance of Arab culture and Islamic civilization in the Middle Ages.

To the early Arab geographers, Bilad al-Sudan or the land of the blacks meant the trans-continental savannah belt stretching from the Red Sea coast to the Atlantic Ocean, and lying between the Sahara Desert and the tropical forests. The Sudan were thus different from the Zanj of the East African coast. Some Arab geographers made a further distinction between the Sudan in general, and the Nubians, and the Beja of the Nilotic Sudan in particular. The term Bilad al-Takrar was used to describe the region between Dar Fur and the Atlantic Ocean in the West.

The restrictive use of Bilad al-Sudan to the sub-Saharan region reflects certain characteristics: its inhabitants were predominantly Muslims, it witnessed the rise of the earliest Islamic Sultanates of the black people, it maintained commercial and diplomatic relations with North Africa and Arabia. The Islamic states that flourished, gradually adopted Islam as the basis of government, law and education.
In recent times some scholars divided the Sudanic belt into two zones namely Western and Eastern *Bilad al-Sudan*. The first zone comprises the lands west of Dar Fur which were also vaguely known as *Bilad al-Takur*, the second consists of the Nilotic Sudan or the Republic of the Sudan. Tringham and others prefer to divide it into three regions: Western, Central and Eastern. According to Tringham the Central Sudan stretched from the middle Niger to Waday with Lake Chad and the middle Niger areas as its main core.

Central *Bilad al-Sudan* witnessed the rise of several Islamic states. The most ancient is Kanem whose origin according to oral traditions, is attributed to a descendant of Sayf Ibn Dhi Yazan of pre-Islamic Southern Arabia. The second important Kingdom is Bornu which was in origin an offshoot of Kanem. It became a prominent power in the 16th century, and under Mai Idris Aloma (1569 - 1619) embassies were sent to the Ottoman and Sa'di Sultans to establish diplomatic and military relations. To the west of Lake Chad were the Hausa States which became prominent in the second half of 15th century. The continuous conflicts between the Hausa States prevented them from establishing a unified central authority. However at the end of the 18th century Shaykh 'Uthman dan Fodio launched a *jihad*, which led to the conquest of the region known today as Northern Nigeria.

The Kingdom of Bagirmi emerged in the 16th century. Besides its original inhabitants it was populated by Fulani, Shuwa Arabs, and Kanuri people. As a result of its expansion Bagirmi came in conflict with Bornu, Waday and Dar Fur.

The Kingdom of Waday flourished in the 16th century, but its Tunjur kings were overthrown early in the 17th century by 'Abd al-Karim b. Salih, who established a new dynasty. 'Abd al Karim claimed a Ja'ali Abbasi pedigree and is said to have come from Shendi area in the Nilotic Sudan. Traders and teachers came from the Funj Kingdom to Waday and from there pupils went to the Nilotic Sudan.

Recently M.A. Al-Hajj modified Tringham’s concept of Central *Bilad al-Sudan* and added Dar Fur to it. He argued that the history of Dar Fur is closely linked to that of Waday; and that ethnic groups such as the Zaghawa, Daju and Tunjur have lived in both states and that Islam seems to

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**DIRASAT IFRIQIYYA ('MM)**
have penetrated primarily from the west in general and from Kanem and Bornu in particular.\(^8\)

However, it seems to me that Trimingham is probably correct in placing Dar Fur within his Eastern or Nilotic zone of Islamic penetration which is characterized by the penetration of large numbers of Arab tribes; profound Arabization and the predominance of the *sufi tariqas*. Yet despite the considerable political, cultural, and religious influence emanating from the west in general and Kanem and Bornu in particular, the main thrust towards Islamization came from the Islamized and Arabized Nubians namely the Danoqla and the Ja'aliyyin. The two groups were forced over the centuries by economic necessity and political pressure to migrate to Kordufan, Dar Fur and further west. They included traders and religious teachers.\(^9\) However Dar Fur seems to have shared many characteristics with both regions and hence occupied an intermediary position between the eastern and central zones.

Dar Fur was equally an important focal point in commercial transactions. The Fur Sultanate (1640 - 1916 ?) was at the centre of three main caravan routes that led to Egypt through *Darb al-Arba’in* or the Forty Days Road, to Tripoli via Fezzan, and to Waday, Bornu and Western *Bilad al-Sudan* and eastward to Kordufan, Sinnar via the ports of Sawakin and Masawwaw to the Hijaz. This was probably the oldest trade route between the Niger and the Nile. Besides its commercial transactions it also carried Muslim pilgrims to Mecca and came to be called the "Sudan Road" or *Tariq al-Hajj" Pilgrim Road".

Evidence of trade between central and eastern *Bilad al-Sudan* is rather circumstantial. The trade route that carried slaves to Egypt through Christian Nubia seems to have started from Central *Bilad al-Sudan*.\(^10\) The earliest reference to trade between the Funj Kingdom and Dar Fur - Waday region is mentioned in the *Tabaqat* of Ibn Dayf Allah where Shaykh Hasan b. Hasuna was reputed to have traded in swift horses with several kings including those of Dar Fur and Dar Borgu.\(^11\) Other local produce and luxury goods imported from Egypt and India were carried to Dar Fur and Waday from Sinnar (later Shendi) which controlled the long distance trade. From Shendi merchants carried cloves, ginger, sugar, coffee beans, fine Indian cloth and beads, and *Dammur* or coarse cloth from Sinnar. Luxury
items like sandal wood were traded as far as Bagirmi. Most of the East - West trade was controlled by the Jallaba (or travelling merchants) of the J'a'aliyyin and the Daniaqia diaspora, alluded to earlier. The Nilotic traders were able to transfer their commercial skills further to the West.

Besides commercial benefits, trade routes had considerable religious and cultural consequences: they facilitated the mobility of students, scholars and ideas between the two regions under consideration. Indeed the ascendancy of the Maliki School of Law, the similarity of educational techniques, curricula and text books throughout the Sudanic belt also eased the free movement of both teacher and student from one region to another. Such mobility was a two way traffic.

When the Nilotic Sudan was amply Islamized it produced a number of fakis and fugara or jurists and sufi missionaries whose centres of learning attracted students. Others motivated by the traditions of the "wandering scholars" moved to other centres at home and abroad.

Kitab al-Tabaqat records a few examples of centres of learning that flourished in the Funj Kingdom and attracted students from Central Bilad al-Sudan. Shaykh al-Zayna Saghayrun (d. 1695), the famous jurist, had no less than one thousand students and most of the jurists and qadis who lived in the region between the Funj Sultanate and Dar Salih or Waday were once his students. Shaykh Muhammad al-Qaddal classes were attended by two thousand students of whom 1700 were from the Takhir. The Takhir (a term synonymous with Fullani or Fallata) is used by Nilotic Sudanese to describe "westerners" coming from regions to the west of Dar Fur and includes Takhir, Fulani, Hausa and the inhabitants of Bornu and Dar Borgu. Shaykh Arbab al-Khashin (d. 1102 AH) who taught Tawhid and Tasawwuf in Sinnar had more than one thousand students who came from the area stretching from "Dar Funj to Dar Bornu".

Despite the paucity of written data there is mention of three scholars who made their way to Central Bilad al-Sudan. The first is Abu Surur al-Fadli al-Ja'ali, a distinguished jurist who taught in al-Halfaya (or Halfayat al-Muluk) the capital of the "Abdallab chiefs". He travelled to the west where he taught first in Dar Fur and then moved on to Waday where he spent the rest of his life. There he was well received by King Ya'qub b. 'Arus (r.
1681- 1707). The second scholar Shaykh Abu Zayd b. ʿAbdal-Qadir, followed the footsteps of his colleague Shaykh Surur to the same place. After building a mosque at Kassab in Dar Fur, he travelled to Wadayn in the late 17th century.17

Information on the third scholar, Shaykh Abu-ʿĪbābās Ahmad b. Muhammad al-Nubī Al-Khalīl Abī ʿAbd Allah b. Muhammad b. ʿAl-Walī al-Kabīr al-ʿArīf al-Shāhīr abī Falāh Idrīs al-Shārif al-Ḥasānī al-Qadīrī al-Yamanī al-Mālikī, comes from Moroccan sources. Shaykh Ahmad al-Yamani was born in 1630 at al-Halfaya in a family of celebrated scholars. He studied in his father’s Khatwa before moving on to study in Arbajī, the important centre of learning and commerce on the Blue Nile. There he had many teachers including Shaykh Daffa ʿAbd Allah b. Muhammad al-ʿArāqī (d. 1694), the celebrated head of the ʿArākiyyīn Qadīrī order, who instructed him in sufism. The introduction of the Qadīrī tariqa in the Funj Sultanate possibly pre-dates its penetration in many other areas of Central Bilad al-Sudan.

In 1666 Shaykh Ahmad set out from Arbajī on a journey of a "wandering scholar" that took him to Bornu, Air and Morocco. While in Bornu his teacher ʿAbdullāhī Al-Barnawi advised him to go on to Fez in al-Maghrib - an area probably not unknown in the Funj Kingdom.

Moroccan pilgrims often travelled through the Nilotic Sudan more frequently as they returned to the West.18 The Tabaqat contains references to some pilgrims, or their descendants, who settled there. There was ʿAbd Allah al-Shārif who came from Fez and lived in al-Halfaya. The same town witnessed the birth of ʿAbd al-Halīm b. Sultan al-Maghribī al-Fāsī, a student of al-Shaykh Saghayrūn and a disciple of Shaykh Idrīs. There is mention of Mustafi al-Shārif al-Maghribī, who came from Sus and lived in Abu Haraz, the chief centre of the ʿArākiyyīn Qadīrī tariqa. There he died after 1774. The grandfather of the famous Hasan b. Hasuna b. Al-Hajj Musa (d. 1664-5) also came from the Maghrib.19

In a brilliant study John Lavers examined in detail the career of Shaykh Ahmad al-Yamani and how he carried as a "wandering scholar" the Nilotic Qadiri to the tradition west. He explained that his journeys linked the world of the Nile Valley with communities in the Chad Basin, the central
Sahara and in Morocco. Since space does not permit a detailed examination of this connection, it would suffice to indicate some of the salient points.

In the 17th century, the rulers of the newly established Sultanates of Dar Fur and Waday encouraged the immigration of 'ulama and traders to their respective states. As indicated earlier, many came from the Nile Valley. In the same century, the Sudan Road began to attract more western pilgrims. As a result, settlements of Fulani, Hausa and Kanuri gradually grew up in Bornu, Waday, Dar Fur and in the Funj Kingdom.

Bornu was then at the height of its power; its rulers were acclaimed as the caliphs of the Takrur. Its prominent scholars and celebrated schools attached students and teachers. Several settlements of scholars blossomed throughout Bornu, the most celebrated of which was Klinbar or Kalmbaro, the settlement of Shaykh ‘Abdullahi al-Barnawi. Shaykh al-Yamani joined this community in 1671 and stayed there for some time before he moved on to Air. Although it was claimed that "Shaykh ‘Abdullahi had studied little and that he had no shaykh in the tariqa..." John Lavers observed that Ahmad al-Sadiq b. Muhammad, the Tuareg scholar of Air, was one of the teachers of Shaykh ‘Abdullahi, he had also travelled to Arbaji where he studied under al-Yamani’s own master Dafa ‘Allah. Hence Shaykh ‘Abdulahi was well acquainted with the teachings and practices of the Qadariyya. Indeed Trimingham had drawn attention to the similarities of ‘Abdullahi’s practices and those performed in Nilotic Sudan well before the Moroccan sources were unveiled.

Sufi tariqas or religious orders maintained a tradition of brotherhood that knew no tribal limits, geographical boundaries or political frontiers. Their followers often journeyed for weeks in order to visit their shaykhs. Hence religious orders were of immense value in promoting a sense of fraternity and integration among the peoples of the Sudanic belt.

Anyhow it seems that by the 19th century religious orders, particularly the Qadiriyya order, later rivalled by the Tijaniyya, had won the hearts of many people all over Western and Central Sudan. The Tijaniyya order was founded by Ahmad al-Tijani (1737 - 1815) at 'Ayn Madi in Algeria. From there it spread across the Sahara into Western Bilad al-Sudan where the Jihad
of al-Hājj ʿUmar led to its wide diffusion. From Hausaland it took an easterly direction.

The Tijaniyya was introduced in the Sudan, from Egypt, by Muhammad al-Mukhtar al-Shanqiti, who traded in Egypt and the Sudan. He lived at Sawakin, Berber and Shendi where he died in 1882. Another current flowed from Central Bilad al-Sudan through the activities of sahlas like the Hausa ʿUmar Gambo (d. 1918) and the Fulani Alfa Hashim who visited the country in 1925). 23 Most of their followers came from communities of "westerners" in Dar Fur, Kordufan and along the Blue Nile.

Immigration from Western and Central Bilad al-Sudan is an old phenomenon which is perhaps "related to the cyclical drift of the Fulani nomads". The migrants started their slow undramatic movements from the west, possibly in the fourteenth century. 24 The majority of the migrants set out in search of water and pasture for their long-horned cattle. Others were basically prompted by the desire to perform the pilgrimage at the Holy Places.

Some of the Fulani settled in Hausaland, others marched via Bornu, Bagirmi, Waday and Dar Fur to the Nilotic Sudan. Among the early settlers at Konni, in Nigeria, were the ancestors of Shaykh ʿUthman dan Fodio who came from Futa Toro in about the mid-fifteenth century. 25

Indeed with the advance of Islamization a steady flow of pilgrims drifted from Western and Central Bilad al-Sudan into the Fur and Fuju Sultanates. Many of these pilgrims were excessively poor and had to depend on charity or work their way slowly on manual labour. Some never completed their journey others settled on their return trip.

Consequently the slow migratory movements and the pilgrims traffic have established, throughout Dar Fur and the Nilotic Sudan, communities of Fulani, Hausa, Kanuri, Kanembo, Kotoko and Maba. The settlement of these communities are to be found in places like Kerio, Khiriban, Manawashi, Um Tulus, Shaykh Talha and Qallabat. The last named was a colony of Takur settlers that developed into a powerful frontier state on the Sudanese Ethiopian border in the 19th century. 26
The nucleus of these communities, though established about two hundred and fifty years ago, in a dominantly Arabized culture, its members have by and large retained their own cultural and linguistic traits intact until the present day. Among these settlers were teachers (mostly of the Qur'an) who participated in the expanding of teaching opportunities and helped in raising the level of intellectual awareness. Indeed these "ulama" and fujara were to play an increasingly active role in political matters. Among these were the Fulani Malik al-Futawi, the wazir of Sultan Muhammad al-Fadl of Dar Fur, and Abdullah b. Muhammad the second ruler of the Mahdist state (1885 - 98) His great grandfather, Ali al-Karrar, came from the area between Bornu and Waday on his way to Mecca. He settled among the Td'ailha Arabs of Southern Dar Fur.  

These contacts were to assume greater importance and become intellectually more dynamic as a result of three significant developments: the increase in the pilgrimage traffic, the start of the hijra and the beginning of the Mahdiyya.

Perhaps even before the Sudan Route or Tariq al-Hajj became popular in the 18th century pilgrims from the Central and even Western Bilad al-Sudan may have been using it for their journey to the Hijaz. For indeed the geographical factors favoured this route over other routes that crossed the dry desert to Egypt. But by the 18th century the 'Sudan Road' carried the bulk of the pilgrim traffic from Central Bilad al-Sudan to Mecca. This route was fed by a number of minor roads which ultimately culminated into one major route. However it seems to have had two major starting points: one from Maiduguri in Bornu and the other from Katsina (through Adamawa) in Hausaland both of which entered the Nilotic Sudan via Dar Fur.

It seems that despite the frequent conflicts between the states of the region pilgrims could easily pass unmolested. Indeed, at times the Sokoto caliphs paid due regard to the pilgrimage traffic, while the Sultans of Bornu showed great concern for its safety.

The Hajj traffic, augmented in the 19th century by the flux of people under the impulse of hijra to the "East", brought the peoples of Central and Eastern Bilad al-Sudan closer and generated an impressive degree of ethnic and cultural integration. This traffic continued along the Sudan Road until
only a few decades ago when developments in air travel made the air route more convenient.

So far the eastward movement of the people of western and central Sudan has been largely motivated by economic factors, legendary beliefs, a desire to comply with a religious obligation and a doctrinal conviction, expressed in mass hijra to the East.

In the early years of the 19th century the religious leader Shaykh ‘Uthman dan Fodio launched a jihad in Hausaland which led to the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate. The preparatory stages of this jihad coincided roughly with the beginning of the thirteenth century of the Hijra (1200-1300/1785-1883), the century associated in Muslim eschatology with the manifestation of the "expected Mahdi" or the awaited deliverer and thereafter the end of time. This belief had a wide circulation in west Africa and might have strengthened the jihad spirit in Hausaland. Shaykh, ‘Uthman had at first encouraged, then tried to restrain, the expectations of his followers. Yet while rejecting any claims of his followers that he was the "expected Mahdi", he accepted the current traditions that the time of manifestation of the Mahdi was imminent. "The jihad" (in Hausaland), the Shaykh is claimed to have said, "will not end until it gets to the Mahdi".

The linkage of this statement with the Fulani jihad and the appearance of the Mahdi inspired a wide range of prophecies. The focal point in these expectations is that the Mahdi will appear in the "East" and his manifestation will be preceded by a period of calamities and turmoil in the western regions of the Sudanic belt. In some of these prophecies, it was stated that the Mahdi would appear on the Nile or Mecca. The Shaykh himself expected his followers to migrate in masses in a hijra to meet the Mahdi.

Hijra from the Central to the Eastern Bilad al-Sudan must have started since the beginning of the 19th century, especially following the death of Shaykh ‘Uthman dan Fodio. But it was about the late 1830s that it grew out of proportions which gave the Sokoto rulers a great deal of worry. Motivated by a desire to meet the Mahdi this exodus, as some described it, continued well after the appearance of the Mahdi in 1881 in the Sudan.
European incursions in the area prompted another exodus from Central to the Eastern *Bilad al-Sudan*, the most dramatic being of the Caliph Attahiru I whose large following proceeded to the Sudan despite the killing of their leader at the battle of Burni in 1903, by the British army. They settled in the Gezira in the Sudan in a village they named and still known Mai Wurmu - after Attahiru’s fifth son Muhammad Bello. There they discovered that the British had already extended their rule over the Nile. Several settlements grew around Mai Wurmu as subsequent waves of immigrants arrived, augmenting the number of the people of Central *Bilad al-Sudan* in the Nile Valley. The settlement of Mai Wurmu represents the aftermath of the resistance of a section of the Fulani aristocracy to British imperialism.

The people of the Nilotic Sudan were equally aware of the Muslim traditions that predicted the advent of the "expected Mahdi", "who will fill the world with equity and justice after it has been filled with tyranny and oppression". Muhammad Ahmad b. ‘Abd Allah (1844 - 1885) was essentially a religious reformer who had been influenced by the current belief in the impending manifestation of *al-Mahdi al-Munazar*. The news of the Fulani *jihad* movement and the teachings of its leader ‘Uthman dan Fodio, especially those related to the "expected Mahdi", were undoubtedly current at least in the western regions of the Nilotic Sudan. The arrival of migrants in the *Hijra*, induced by Mahdist expectations, must have helped in creating an atmosphere congenial to the appearance of the Mahdi. The general Sudanese public appeared to have been well prepared to receive the Mahdi’s call for a *jihad*.

The manifestation of the Mahdi occurred in the island of Abl in June 1881. Then Muhammad Ahmad Al-Mahdi made public his divine mission. He appeared towards the end of the thirteenth century A. H (1298) thus fulfilling earlier expectations. In an endeavor to establish a true Muslim state he declared the *jihad* on the corrupt Turco-Egyptian administration. The astounding victories he won had an enormous impact on the Sudanese people and eventful consequences on Central *Bilad al-Sudan*.

No sooner had al-Mahdi captured al-Obeid in January 1883 than he began to look for allies outside the Egyptian domain. He opened correspondence with the rulers of Sokoto, Bornu and Waday asking for
recognition and support: He wrote three letters to Muhammad Yusuf, the Sultan of Waday, inviting him to obey his call and make the *hijra* to him. Though the establishment of these states did not respond to the Mahdi’s call many of their subjects did. Hayatu b. Sa‘id, a grand son of Shaykh ‘Uthman b. Fodio readily accepted. He asserted his unequivocal support in the following words: “I and my father and all that belong to me swore allegiance to you before your manifestation was perceived...Shaykh ‘Uthman dan Fodio recommended us to emigrate to you to assist you and help you when you were made manifest”.

Hayatu, who had claims to the Sokoto Caliphate, was appointed by the Mahdi (and later confirmed by the *Khalifa*) as his ‘*amīl*’ or agent responsible for the affairs of the people of Sokoto. Armed with al-Mahdi’s authority Hayatu declared the *jihād* and gained numerous following in Adamawa and Mandara region. Though Hayatu himself was unable to emigrate to the Mahdi, as the latter requested, many people from the Central *Bilad al-Sudan* seemed to have made it to the Nile Valley.

Another Mahdist supporter, initiated by Hayatu, was Mallam Gibrella Gaini, a Fulani of Katagum established at Burm, on the Sokoto Bornu border, an autonomous Mahadist state. Though he was captured by the British in 1902, his militant followers remained irreconcilable and defiant and made a last ditch stand with Caliph Attahiru 1 in the battle of Burmi.

The early 1920’s witnessed a revival of Mahdism in Northern Nigeria under the leadership of Mallam Sa‘id son of Hayatu. He communicated with Sayyid ‘Abd Rahman al-Mahdi, the *Imam* of the Mahdists in the Sudan. Sa‘id was able to mobilize a considerable following from the Fulani of Burmi and Gombe regions. Though Sa‘id himself was deported to the Cameroons the Mahdist spirit continued to thrive.

Mahdist activities were also carried to Central *Bilad al-Sudan* by Rabbi b. Fadl Allah, a former follower of al-Zubayr Rahama Pasha. When defeated by R. Gessi in 1879, he retreated with some soldiers to the country of the Azande in 1885. Dressed in patched uniform and carrying a Mahdist flag he invaded Dar Banda and proceeded through Dar Runga and Bagirmi to Bornu. By 1893 he became the ruler of a powerful military state that included most of the territories east of the Sokoto Caliphate. He established
his capital at Dikwa, where he was joined by Hayatu b. Sa'īd. The Mahdi and his successor 'Abdullahi sought unsuccessfully to enlist Rabih's support and urged him to join them. Though he never went, he achieved his military adventures under the Mahdist banner. He made Bornu, during the last six years of the last century, if only ostensibly, a Mahdist state. Rabih's short lived empire was annexed by the French Government.

In short, the Mahdiyya caused quite a stir in the Central Bilad al-Sudan, stimulating rising of many Mahdist pretenders and prompting numerous rebellions during those restive periods of European occupation.

Relationship between the Central and Eastern Bilad al-Sudan did not end with the European occupation of these areas, even as the French occupying Chad appeared to have meant to block this flow of people and ideas which had gone on for centuries. It only meant contacts became more frequent between Nigeria and Sudan who happened to have a common colonizing power. Contacts especially at the educational level continued throughout the colonial period and beyond. When the School for Arabic Studies (and that for training qadis) was opened in Kano a substantial part of the teaching staff came from the Sudan.) So was the first Provost of 'Abdullahi Bayero College, now Bayero University, Kano. Nigerian students also continued to come to the Sudan from the early days of Bakht al-Ruda Institute of Education to this day. A considerable number of Sudanese students are now studying in Nigerian universities.

Some ideological interplay between Nigeria and Sudan took other forms. When the Nigerian government was considering ways of reforming the judicial system during the colonial era, it looked at the Sudanese experience for some possible guide lines in the sphere of Islamic life. Recently the Republic of the Sudan reciprocated by borrowing some aspects of the Nigerian federal system of government.

It is gratifying to note some young Nigerians have been calling for revival of the Sudan Hajj Route; they have already made a trial trip.(46) We should see more contacts and more cooperation as we grow out of our colonial past.
In all these contacts, to conclude, Islam occupies a central position. From it the peoples of Central and Eastern Bilad al-Sudan drew their inspiration, example and basic traits. The tools of these contacts were the "wandering scholars", the fakis and the fugara or the jurists and missionary sufis. It was they who sustained the resilience of these cultural linkages in an Islamic framework all over the two regions. These contacts brought about mutual understanding between the peoples of the Central and Eastern Bilad al-Sudan and laid the foundation for further academic, economic, and political cooperation. It is only through further research and comparative studies that the significance of these linkages can be assessed and appreciated fully.
NOTES


2. Ibid, 47 - 49.


13. Ibn Dayf Allah, op. cit, 73.


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5. Ibid, 100.
6. Ibid, 73.
7. Ibid, 106.
0. Lavers "op. cit", The Central Bilad al-Sudan, 219 - 21, 224.
2. Muhammad Hashim Awad, "The Bilad al-Sudan, the Common Heritage as a Basis for Integration", in Central Bilad al-Sudan, 310.
9. "Umar Al-Naqar", The Historical Background to the Road", in Sudan in Africa, 103.
0. Ibid, 82.

DIRASATIFRIQIYYA(IV)