

"EL-KANEMI"

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MADDE 100 BİLİMİNİN İZİNİ
SONRA GELİR DÜLUMAN

Western and Central Sudan

were in Saba.⁵⁴
To God be praise, first and last.
My poem is finished, and it is sweet to him
who relates it.

⁵⁴ Sheba, see *Quran*, xxxiv, 14.

9 AL-KANAMI THE CASE AGAINST THE JIHAD

In the late eighteenth century a Muslim cleric, Uthman dan Fodio, began to preach in the Hausa state of Gobir against religious corruption and pagan practices. Although the Sarki (King) of Gobir sought to counter the teachings of Uthman dan Fodio, he only provoked him to declare a jihad or holy war against the unbelievers in 1802. Thereafter, Uthman's Fulani followers defeated the Hausa armies, captured the Hausa city-states, and replaced the Hausa rulers. In 1805 Uthman's lieutenants carried the jihad into the Muslim state of Bornu, defeated the armies of the mai, or king, and convinced his councillors to request assistance from Muhammad al-Amin ibn Muhammad Ninga, more commonly known as Sheik al-Kanami. Al-Kanami was born in the Fezzan and studied in Cairo and Medina; upon his return to Kanem, he won a great following as a result of his piety, scholarship, and charisma. Rallying his army, he marched into Bornu, drove out the Fulani, and recaptured Ngazargamu, the capital. During the war he wrote a series of letters to Muhammad Bello, successor to Uthman dan Fodio, in an attempt to understand why the Fulani should attack fellow Muslims. Sheik al-Kanami continued to govern Bornu until his death in 1835.

Praise be to God, Opener of the doors of guidance, Giver of the means of happiness. Prayer and peace be on him who was sent with the liberal religion, and on his people who prepared the way for the observance of His law, and interpreted it.¹

From Thomas Hodgkin, *Nigerian Perspectives* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 198-201. Reprinted by permission.

¹ Further extracts from Muhammad Bello, *Infaq al-maysur*, Whitting edition, London, 1951, pp. 124-7, 142-4, 150, and 157, translated by Mr. Charles Smith. I am much indebted to Mr. Smith, not only for his translation, but also for advice about the historical significance of the whole lengthy al-Kanami-Bello correspondence, from which these brief extracts are taken. The interest of this correspondence lies in the light it throws on the relations between the rulers of Sokoto and Bornu after the Fulani jihad; on the methods of diplomacy of the period; and on the political standpoints and characters of the two principals. Copies of nine letters were published by Muhammad Bello in *Infaq al-maysur*, one from al-Kanami to Bello, five from Bello to al-Kanami, two from Uthman dan Fodio to al-Kanami, and one from al-Kanami to Uthman. Not all of Bello's letters appear to have been delivered. All belong to the period before 1813. The first of the extracts translated here is taken from letter

No. 1 in *Infaq*, an early letter of al-Kanami, written after the sack of Ngazargamu, the Bornu capital, by the Fulani under Gwani Mukhtar and their subsequent expulsion by al-Kanami. The second extract comes from letter No. 5 in *Infaq*, an apparently much later letter from Bello, which counters arguments put forward by al-Kanami in No. 1. Mr. Smith describes this letter as "a remarkable testimony to the literary leanings of Bello," and containing "evidence of his wide reading of the Islamic classics."

The correspondence ranges over the main questions in dispute between Bello and al-Kanami, i.e. between Sokoto and Bornu. Was the Fulani jihad justifiable on accepted Muslim principles? That is to say, was it conducted against states which were in the strict sense "pagan" (*kafir*), and therefore *dar al-harb*, not *dar al-Islam*? Was Bornu in fact such a state? Were there appropriate precedents for such a jihad? (Muhammad Bello argued at length that the actions of another reforming ruler, Muhammad Askia of Gao, three centuries previously, were in fact a precedent.) Was its real purpose the spreading of the frontiers of Islam, not of Fulani imperial power? Had the jihad been conducted according to the strict rules which ought to be applied in such cases, or had there been excesses? Had the Fulani been the aggressors, or had Bornu, by allying itself with supposedly pagan Hausa governments, been responsible for provoking the conflict? In the extracts quoted here the main issue under discussion is whether Bornu at the time of the jihad could properly be described as a land of paganism (*dar kufr*).

Al-Kanami

From him who is filthy with the dust of sin, wrapped in the cloak of shame, base and contemptible, Muhammad al-Amin ibn Muhammad al-Kanami to the Fulani "ulama" and their chiefs. Peace be on him who follows His guidance.

The reason for writing this letter is that when fate brought me to this country, I found the fire which was blazing between you and the people of the land. I asked the reason, and it was given as injustice by some and as religion by others. So according to our decision in the matter I wrote to those of your brothers who live near to us asking them the reason and instigation of their transgression, and they returned me a weak answer, not such as comes from an intelligent man, much less from a learned person, let alone a reformer. They listed the names of books, and we examined some of them, but we do not understand from them the things which they apparently understood. Then, while we were still perplexed, some of them attacked our capital, and the neighbouring Fulani came and camped near us. So we wrote to them a second time beseeching them in the name of God and Islam to desist from their evil doing. But they refused and attacked us. So, when our land was thus confined and we found no place even to dwell in, we rose in defence of ourselves, praying God to deliver us from the evil of their deeds; and we did what we did. Then when we found some respite, we desisted, and for the future God is all-knowing.

We believe in writing, even if it makes no impression on you, it is better than silence. Know that if an intelligent man accepts some question in order to understand it, he will give a straightforward answer to it.

Tell us therefore why you are fighting us and enslaving our free people. If you say that you have done this to us because of our paganism, then I say that we are innocent of paganism, and it is far from our compound. If praying and the giving of alms, knowledge of God, fasting in

Ramadan and the building of mosques is paganism, what is Islam? These buildings in which you have been standing of a Friday, are they churches or synagogues or fire temples? If they were other than Muslim places of worship, then you would not pray in them when you capture them. Is this not a contradiction?

Among the biggest of your arguments for the paganism of the believers generally is the practice of the amirs of riding to certain places for the purpose of making alms-giving sacrifices there; the uncovering of the heads of free women; the taking of bribes; embezzlement of the property of orphans; oppression in the courts. But these five charges do not require you to do the things you are doing. As for this practice of the amirs, it is a disgraceful heresy and certainly blameworthy. It must be forbidden and disapproval of its perpetrators must be shown. But those who are guilty of it do not thereby become pagans; since not one of them claims that it is particularly efficacious, or intends by it to associate anything with God. On the contrary, the extent of their pretence is their ignorant idea that alms given in this way are better than otherwise. He who is versed in the books of *fiqh* [Muslim theology—ed.], and has paid attention to the talk of the imams in their disputation—when deviation from the right road in matters of burial and slaughter are spoken of—will know the test of what we have said. Consider Damietta, a great Islamic city between Egypt and Syria, a place of learning and Islam: in it there is a tree, and the common people do to this tree as did the non-Arabs. But not one of the "ulama" rises to fight them or has spoken of their paganism.

As for uncovering the head in free women, this is also *haram* [forbidden—ed.], and the *Quran* has prohibited it. But she who does it does not thereby become a pagan. It is denial which leads to paganism. Failing to do something while believing in it is rather to be described as disobedience requiring immedi-

century by the Tubu (Teda). This occupation seems to coincide with the accession to the throne of the Yazanīs, who claimed to be descendants of Sayf b. Dhī Yazan [q.v.] and became the disseminators of Islām, which had been introduced by al-Hādī al-‘Uḥmānī, the predecessor of the Yazanīs. The *Kitāb al-Istībār* (ed. von Kremer, Vienna 1852, 32, tr. Fagnan, 6r) places the conversion to Islam of Kanem about 500/1106-7. According to a Hausa legend, Abū Zayd al-Fazārī (end of 6th/12th and beginning of 7th/13th century) preached Islam in Kanem and Borku. Another tradition refers the introduction of Islam to the end of the 5th/11th century, under Sultan Oumé (1085-97), who was probably assassinated during a pilgrimage to Mecca.

Sultan Selma (‘Abd al-Djāfil) (1195-1220) enlarged the kingdom; his son Dunama I (1221-59) further extended it to Fezzān and Waday and in the west as far as Niger. During the latter's reign, some Muslims from Kanem founded a Maliki school in Cairo (between 640/1242 and 650/1252), and in 657/1257 an ambassador was sent to the Ḥafṣid court in Tunis. The soi-disant descendants of Sayf remained in power as long as the kingdom existed. During a troubled period beset with the So and Būlala revolts, four kings of Kanem fell in campaigns against the Būlala. These latter, after a century of incessant battles, eventually conquered the country. Sultan Dāwūd (1377-85) was driven from his capital, Nǧjimi. ‘Umar b. Idrīs (796/1394-800/1398) had to retire to the west bank of Lake Chad, where one of his successors founded the kingdom of Bornū [q.v.].

In the 16th century, the sovereigns of the new state took the offensive against the Būlala. ‘Alī Dunama (876/1472-909/1504) and his son Idrīs Katakarmabi (909/1504-932/1526) forced the Būlala to submit and regained their ancient capital of Nǧjimi, but the sovereigns were represented there by an *alifa* (*khalifa*) and remained in Bornu, of which Kanem became a province. The submission of the Būlala, however, remained precarious; Idrīs Alaoma (978/1571-1011/1603) was compelled to send five expeditions against them. In spite of this victory, the weakening of Bornū soon enabled the Būlala to regain their independence. But towards the middle of the 17th century they were in their turn conquered by the Tunǧjur, who came from Wādāy, and settled in the west of Baḥr al-Ḡhazal, and then in Fitri. Meanwhile the Tunǧjur had to endure the attacks of the rulers of Bornu, who reduced them to the state of tributaries. Their chief settled in Mao as an *alifa*. In the second half of the 18th century, part of Kanem was conquered by Mu‘ammad al-Amīn, ruler of Bagirmi [q.v.]. In 1809 the king of Bornu, driven from his home by the Peuls, appealed to al-Amīn, who had a reputation for piety and energy. He crossed the lake and wiped out the Peul forces, but henceforward Bornu was no more than a protectorate of Kanem. Taking the title of *shaykh*, al-Amīn al-Kanemī made his capital at Kuka and, after numerous campaigns, subdued the Bagirmi (1817).

When the Ulād Slimān Arabs arrived in the middle of the 19th century, the sultan of Bornū entrusted them with the defence of the frontier against Wādāy, but they seized this opportunity to pillage the country; by the time of Nachtigal's visit to Kanem in 1871, they were its real masters.

‘Umar b. al-Amīn moved his capital to Kuka; on his death, he was succeeded by his three sons, Abū Bakr I, Ibrāhīm and Hāshim (1884-93). The latter was unable to prevent Rabah from seizing the fortified town of Mamfa and proclaiming himself sultan

of Bornu. ‘Umar Sawda, Hāshim's eldest son, finally became in 1902 the sultan of German Bornū.

Kanem, which was included in the French zone of influence at the Anglo-French conference of 21 March 1899, was occupied between 1901 and 1905. European domination provoked the hostility of the Sanūsiyya [q.v.], but the capture of their *zāwiya* at Bi'r Alalī in 1902 weakened the rebels and their chief, *Shaykh* Ahmad, submitted in 1905.

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AL-KĀNEMĪ (AL-ḤĀDĪDĪ MUḤAMMAD AL-AMĪN b. MUḤAMMAD NINKĀH), b. 1189/1775-6 1253/1837, a scholar of Kanembu origin who founded the Shehu dynasty of Bornū [q.v.]. Brought up in Murzuk (Fazzān) where his father had property, he received an Arabic education, travelled in Egypt and the Hijāz, and eventually settled in eastern Bornū. There, his learning and the following he acquired among Arab and Kanembu tribesmen enabled him to play a decisive role in Bornuan politics at the time of the Fulani rebellion. Eventually the Mai Ibrāhīm (1818-46) came completely under his control, and he struck a seal in his own name in 1235/1819-20.

As the power behind the throne of the Mais, he succeeded in defending the ancient empire of Bornū from the serious dangers which faced it. His support of the Mai Dūnama ended the Fulani rebellion. Although he was unable to prevent the establishment of Sokoto emirates in the old western dependencies, he

gia) between Iran and the Byzantine Empire, at the moment when Khusraw—in order to get rid of the Mazdakites, partisans of Mazdak (d. c.524 or 528 C.E.), a Zoroastrian activist who claimed to be a prophet of Ahura Mazda and instituted communal possessions and social-welfare programmes—grants more power to the Zoroastrian clergy and the Christians revolt circa 548–51. Kamālī denounces the malevolence of the Zoroastrian priests, by depicting one of them, who is in love with a young girl who does not return his love. In order to take revenge, he commits all kinds of misdeeds, including betrayals and murders. The work is imbued with mediaeval oral literature, including *‘ayyār* (member of a brotherhood of vagabonds, who became a chivalric character in mediaeval Iranian romances) characters, such as this young girl, who can dress like a man, ride a horse, and defend her family like a man.

Kamālī's works generally display a certain Manichaeism in the depiction of characters. The fight against the oppressor in Khusraw's time echoes Kamālī's struggle for the Constitutional Revolution and the power of the poor.

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JULIE DUVIGNEAU

al-Kānimī

Muḥammad al-Amīn b. Muḥammad **al-Kānimī** (locally al-Kānemī, c. 1775–1837) became de facto ruler of Borno as a result of his military and scholarly interventions in defence of that kingdom against the *jihād* of Shaykh ‘Uthmān b. Muḥammad Fūdī (d. 1817), teacher, writer, religious activist, and founder of the Sokoto Caliphate (1804–1903). Following his studies in Murzuk (his birthplace, an oasis town in present-day southwestern Libya), Tripoli, and Birni Gazargamo (the Borno capital, in present-day northeastern Nigeria), and having performed the pilgrimage, he settled in Ngala, in Nigeria south of Lake Chad, in about 1807. There, he became involved in resisting attacks by local Fulani who claimed allegiance to Shaykh ‘Uthmān in Sokoto. His military successes attracted the attention of the ruler of Borno, Mai Dunama (r. 1808–11 and 1814–7) (*mai* means “king” in Kanuri), who sought his assistance in defending the kingdom from the *jihādī* armies that had driven him from his capital, Birni Gazargamo.

Subsequent years of almost continual warfare against local *jihādīs* combined with internal political intrigue to increase the power and influence of al-Kānimī at the expense of the *mai* and his entourage. In 1809, Dunama was deposed by dissident elements in his court but was soon reinstated by al-Kānimī, an act that confirmed the latter's political and military dominance. In 1820, Dunama was killed during an unsuccessful plot to eliminate al-Kānimī, who now appointed a younger *mai* whom he could control. He took the title of *shaykh*, built his own capital, Kukawa, near the new residence of the