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Mā' al-'Aynayn

Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā l-Qalqamī (1831–1910), known as **Mā' al-'Aynayn**, was a leading Ṣūfī and anti-colonial resistance leader in Mauritania, the Western Sahara, and southern Morocco. He was also deeply involved in Moroccan politics in his later years.

1. EARLY LIFE

Mā' al-'Aynayn (lit., the water of two eyes, so called perhaps from his mother's affection for him) was the son of Muḥammad Fādīl b. Māmīn (al-Amīn) al-Qalqamī (d. 1869), who had founded the Fāḍiliyya Ṣūfī order, a branch of the Qādiriyya. The world-wide Qādiriyya order was a minority order in the Maghrib but had a strong following in the Sahara, particularly through the work of al-Mukhtār al-Kuntī (d. 1811) of the Kunta Arab tribe, which became a rival to the Fāḍiliyya.

Mā' al-'Aynayn stayed with his family in the Ḥawḍ district of present-day Mauritania until he made the pilgrimage to Mecca in 1858–9. On his return, he left the Ḥawḍ for the Sāqiyat al-Ḥamrā'

(Saguía el-Hamra) region further north and established his first *zāwiya* (Ṣūfī lodge) there, at Dār al-Ḥamrā', in 1871–2. His renown as a Ṣūfī and scholar spread throughout the region, and, by the 1890s, he was said to have ten thousand followers. He also built relationships with the local tribes through strategic marriages; he was said to have married and often quickly divorced 116 wives during his life.

In 1898 he began construction of a large new religious centre at Smāra, which later became the central town of the Sāqiyat al-Ḥamrā'. There he collected a library of more than five thousand manuscripts, and he began spreading his branch of the Fāḍiliyya brotherhood from there.

2. ENTRY INTO POLITICS

While his activities and renown were primarily religious, he did become more involved in politics during this period. French forces were advancing from the south, and Mā' al-'Aynayn mobilised to halt their advance. He did, however, have friendly relations with the Spanish authorities on the coast of the Sahara. Mā' al-'Aynayn had made contacts with the Moroccan sultans during his pilgrimage