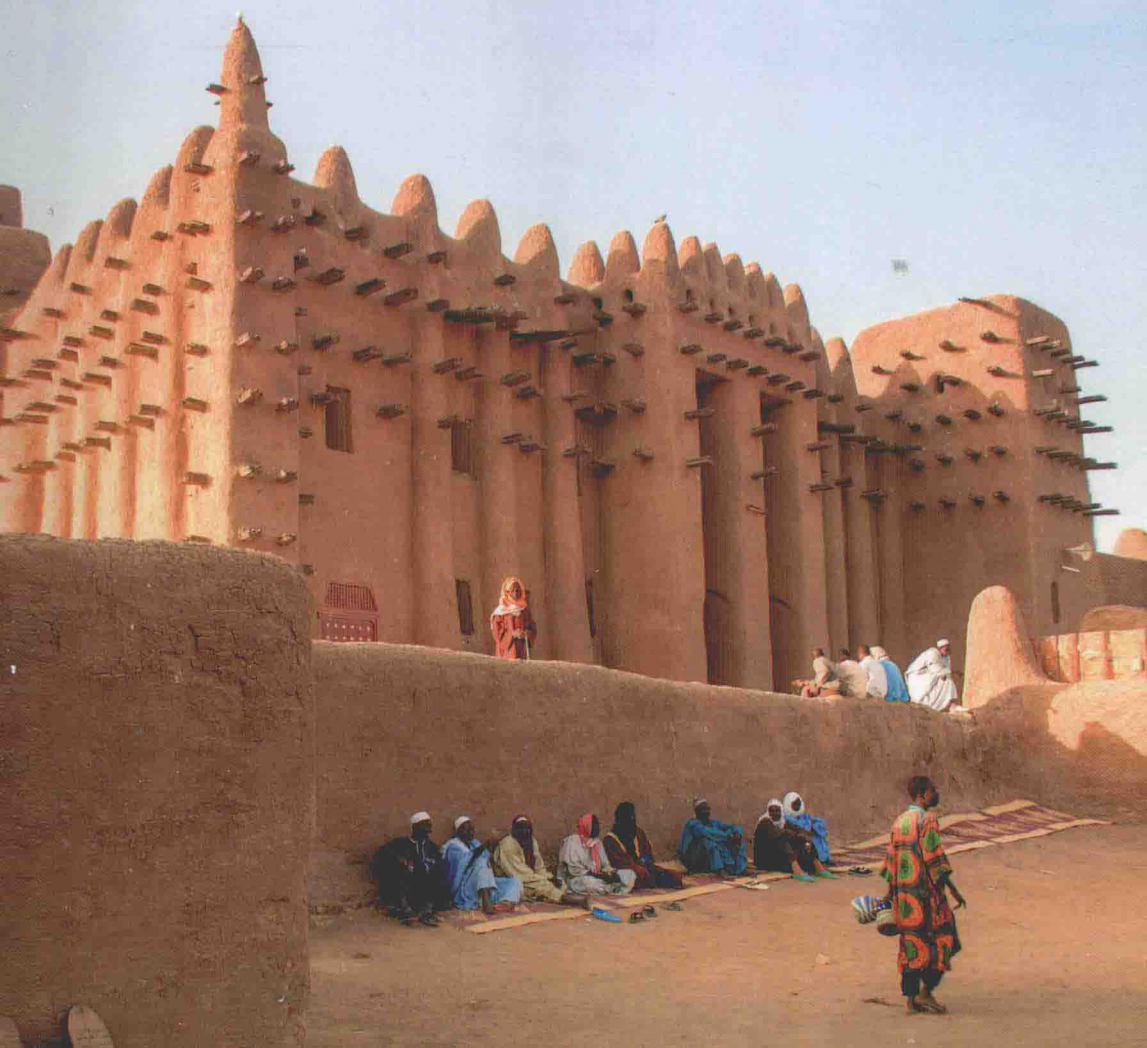


MUSLIM SOCIETIES IN AFRICA

A HISTORICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

ROMAN LOIMEIER



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Preface and Acknowledgments

"Europeans have tended to read the rest of world history as a function of European history."

THE ABOVE QUOTATION from Marshall G. S. Hodgson's 1974 work *The Venture of Islam* (3: 22) points to an important purpose of the present book, namely to see the history and development of African Muslim societies within African historical contexts. I do not propose, of course, to dissociate African Muslim history from European history, but I would like to look at African-European relations from a southern perspective. In such a perspective, Europe is only one of several points of reference; others are the territories of the Ottoman empire, Arabia, India, the Indian Ocean, Southeast Asia, and the Atlantic.

But why should Islam be identified as a major defining factor for the analysis of societies and history in Africa? In fact, I do not claim that the analysis of the historical and societal development of Muslim and non-Muslim societies in Africa can be based on the single criteria of religious affiliation. Such an assumption would amount to crude Huntingtonian essentialism. I would rather contend that Africa and its adjoining regions, in particular the Mediterranean, the Arabian Peninsula, and the Indian Ocean can look back on a history of multiple entanglements. Yet in general histories of Africa, Muslim Africa has often been neglected and has not been seen as forming part of a larger Muslim ecumene. Also, sub-Saharan Africa including Muslim Africa has often been seen as belonging to the domain of anthropology, due to an alleged lack of written sources and texts in Arabic or vernacular languages. The publication of four volumes to date in the *Arabic Literature in Africa* (ALA) series, edited by John Hunwick and Sean R. O'Fahey or Ulrich Rebstock's *Maurische Literaturgeschichte* should have corrected such misrepresentations of African history. And yet knowledge of the existence of a multitude of traditions of Islamic learning has so far not been translated into a broader perception of African Muslim societies as core societies of Islam, although Arabic sources give access to a much deeper history of Muslim Africa: other parts of Africa (with the exception of Ethiopia) still have to rely on often scant archaeological evidence from before the sixteenth century, when European sources start to complement African oral traditions.

The present book thus tries to redress the periphery bias in the academic analysis of African Muslim societies. Such an approach is overdue: after all, Islam has, as of today, more than 450 million followers in Africa, constituting about half the population of

the continent. In other words, Africa is home to one of the largest agglomerations of Muslims in the world, second only to the number of Muslims on the Indian subcontinent. Due to their undeniable importance in numerical strength as well as political potential, Muslim societies in Africa deserve a thorough study that does justice to the complexity of Africa's historical and societal development.

Considering these facts, it may appear foolish to attempt to write a comprehensive history of African Muslim societies: not only is the time period too vast for a single scholar, but the geographical scope of such a book is also daunting. Edited volumes have consequently dominated the presentation of African Muslim history, uniting the expertise of eminent scholars such as Louis Brenner, Joseph Cuoq, James Kritzeck, William H. Lewis, Donal Cruise O'Brien, Christian Coulon, Nehemia Levtzion, Randall Pouwels, and Ioan Lewis. At the same time, authoritative texts on Muslim societies in Africa and their history or specific regions within Africa have been written by individual scholars such as Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, Peter Clarke, François Constan-tin, Mervyn Hiskett, B. G. Martin, Vincent Monteil, Charlotte and Frederick Quinn, David Robinson, John Spencer Trimingham, and John Ralph Willis. Each of these authors has identified one or several central themes that seem to pervade African Muslim history. At the same time, their work, as well as my own, has been built upon the efforts of a large community of scholars. For readability's sake and to avoid too many quotations, their contributions are acknowledged in the "Sources for Further Reading" section for each chapter at the end of this book.

This book proposes to venture into a study of African Muslim societies across times and places. The aim, however, is not to present an exhaustive overview of the history of all African Muslim societies from the beginning of the process of Islamiza-tion to the contemporary period, but to present the major regions of Islam in Africa through the lens of historical key periods, concentrating on local dynamics of societal development as well as relations with the larger world mentioned above. I specifically explore the dynamics of historical change and identify a number of key themes in the development of African Muslim societies, such as the legitimacy of political rule, the role of outsiders in religio-political movements, the relationship between center and periphery in African Muslim empires, and the pervading importance of trade and the struggle for control of long-distance trade routes. The volume stresses the agency of African Muslims as traders and scholars, as leaders of states and movements of *jihād*, but also as both organizers and victims of Africa's different slave trades, and it shows how Africans have developed multiple ways of "being Muslim" (Osella and Soares 2010: 12). Another basic argument of this book is that African Muslim societies have evolved in a dialogue with their respective geographical and ecological settings, and that African Muslim societies have to be understood as being informed, to this day, by multiple historical legacies that have given individual societies their specific social, economic, political, and religious role and position. For these reasons, I describe this book as a historical anthropology of African Muslim societies.

The book thus views the history of Muslim societies in Africa as part of a larger world. Consequently, I focus on those regions and societies that have been influenced, in one way or another, by Islam, and have become, over time, Muslim in many different ways. In an introductory chapter, I present the geographical and anthropological setting for the development of Muslim societies in Africa. Both geography and anthropology offer key perspectives for a study of the history of Muslim societies in Africa. In addition, I discuss some basic themes and problems, such as whether we may talk of an African Islam or regard Muslim societies in Africa as a broad array of different realizations of Islam in distinct historical contexts, characterized by their different interfaces with Christianity, Judaism, and African indigenous religions. I also discuss historical patterns and peculiarities, continuities and discontinuities, and I point out where certain patterns of explanation apply and where they do not. Despite a large variety of societal development, historical experience, and regional and economic variation across Africa (and beyond), Islam over time has come to constitute a unifying force, a common denominator for many Africans. This is due not only to the development of traditions of learning based on a corpus of key Islamic texts, but also to the binding forces of trade, pilgrimage, and cultural exchange with the larger world of Islam, and, last but not least, the normative power of Islam in contexts of state building, especially in times of conflict. In a series of thematic chapters, I present distinct regions of Islam in Africa and focus on a number of historical key periods for the development of Muslims in these regions. By “key period” I refer to a period of time during which Muslim societies in a specific region were shaped in a decisive way. Such key periods are often remembered to this day, and are quoted as historical moments that define the “Islamicité” of a specific Muslim community or society. Finally, I look at the development of Muslim societies in Africa under colonial rule. The early twentieth century is treated from a historical “longue durée” perspective, focusing on the way in which the colonial period challenged established ways of “being Muslim” in Africa.

This book does not include two major historical periods, namely, the pre-Islamic history of Muslim societies in Africa and the postcolonial development of Muslim societies in Africa. Equally, while Egypt has received copious attention in academic research, it is presented here in marginal ways only. This is not meant to be a denial of pre-Islamic, Egyptian, and/or postcolonial histories, but reflects the fact that a thorough discussion of pre-Islamic history and postcolonial developments would exceed the limits of this volume. While pre-Islamic (and Egyptian) history are mentioned briefly where appropriate, the analysis of postcolonial history will be reserved for another time and another book. Even so, many relevant themes can be addressed only briefly and in passing. Such issues, which are central to the understanding of the larger context yet do not fit into the focus of a specific chapter, are discussed in a series of thematic insets.

I offer students and enthusiasts of African history an analysis of the dynamics of historical developments in Muslim Africa, but in addition I stress the necessity of multilingual research. Thus, in individual bibliographies at the end of each chapter that

also serve as guides to the interested reader for additional source material, I have not confined recommendations to titles in English. Any serious study of the history and development of Muslim societies in Africa has to consider sources in Arabic, as well as in a number of African languages, such as Kiswahili or Hausa, in which local sources such as the Kano, Pate, or Kilwa chronicles have been produced. In addition, valuable work on Islam and Muslim societies in Africa has been done and is still being done in languages such as French, German, and Italian.

With regard to the transliteration of Arabic terms, I follow the system of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (with the exception of 'q' which replaces 'k', and 'j' which replaces 'dj'). The Amharic 'ä' corresponds to 'a' in the Anglo-American 'Jack'. It has been claimed that the transliteration of Arabic terms can be confusing for the uninitiated, while scholars of Islam would have no problem in recognizing the proper Arabic root behind non-transliterated terms. I would like to hold against this opinion that a proper transliteration does not hurt and often helps to identify technical terms and, even more so, names and places.

For inspiration in the last twenty-five years and for constructive comments on my work during this period, including on this book, I would like to thank (in alphabetical order) Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, Chanfi Ahmed, Anne Bang, Anke Bosaller, Ulrich Braukämper, Louis Brenner, Patrick Desplat, Mamadou Diouf, the late 'Abd al-Rahmān Doi, the late Humphrey Fisher, Ulrike Freitag, John Hanson, Zulfikar Hirji, Albrecht Hofheinz, Valerie Hoffman, Albert Hourani, John Hunwick, Ousmane Kane, Franz Kogelmann, Kai Kresse, Murray Last, Robert Launay, the late John Lavers, the late Nehemia Levtzion, Christoph Marx, Gottfried Müller, Hassan Mwakimako, Terje Østebø, René Otayek, Scott Reese, Stephan Reichmuth, David Robinson, Rüdiger Seesemann, Abdul Sheriff, Benjamin Soares, Gerd Spittler, Abdulkader Tayob, Farouk Topan, Muhammad Sani Umar, Leonardo Villalon, Holger Weiss, and David Westerlund, as well as my students at the Universities of Bayreuth, Göttingen, and Florida and also at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris, who, with their critical questions and inspired comments, have helped me to focus on the important and basic questions of societal development. I would like to thank in particular Cornelia and Josefine, who have reminded me to not forget about the realities of life. Finally, Ruth Schubert, who has worked on the language in this book and tried hard to eradicate my Germanisms, as well as the editorial team at Indiana University Press, in particular Dee Mortensen, Darja Malcolm-Clarke, and Eric Schramm, deserve my unlimited gratitude.

Sources for Further Reading

As mentioned, a number of major studies have been written on the history of Muslim societies in Africa or major regions of Africa. Most prominent are, in alphabetical

order by author, Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period*, Cambridge, 1987; J.F.A. Ajayi and M. Crowder, *History of West Africa*, Burnt Mill, 1976; Rene Bravmann, *African Islam*, London, 1983; Louis Brenner, *Muslim Identity and Social Change in Sub-Saharan Africa*, London, 1993; Peter B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, London, 1982; François Constantin, *Les voies de l'islam en Afrique orientale*, Paris, 1987; Christian Coulon, *Les musulmans et le pouvoir*, Paris, 1983; Donal B. Cruise O'Brien and Christian Coulon, *Charisma and Brotherhood in African Islam*, Oxford, 1988; Joseph M. Cuq, *Les Musulmans en Afrique*, Paris, 1975; Mervyn Hiskett, *The Development of Islam in West Africa*, London, 1984; Mervyn Hiskett, *The Course of Islam in Africa*, Edinburgh, 1994; James Kritzeck and W. H. Lewis, *Islam in Africa*, New York, 1969; Nehemia Levtzion and H. Fisher, *Rural and Urban Islam in West Africa*, Boulder, 1987; Nehemia Levtzion and Randall L. Pouwels, *The History of Islam in Africa*, Oxford, 2000; Ioan M. Lewis, *Islam in Tropical Africa*, London, 1980; B. G. Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods in Nineteenth Century Africa*, Cambridge, 1976; Vincent Monteil, *L'Islam Noir: Une religion à la conquête de l'Afrique*, Paris, 1980; David Robinson, *Muslim Societies in African History: New Approaches to African History*, Cambridge, 2004; Charlotte A. Quinn and Frederick Quinn, *Pride, Faith, and Fear: Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Oxford, 2003; Eva Evers-Rosander and David Westerlund (eds.), *African Islam and Islam in Africa: Encounters between Sufis and Islamists*, London, 1997; several works by John Spencer Trimingham, in particular *Islam in West Africa*, Oxford, 1959, *Islam in East Africa*, Oxford, 1964, *Islam in the Sudan*, London, 1965, *Islam in Ethiopia*, London, 1976, and *The Influence of Islam upon Africa*, London, 1980; and John Ralph Willis, *Studies in West African Islamic History, I: The Cultivators of Islam*, London, 1979.

For general reading on the history of Islam, Marshall G.S. Hodgson's work is still most recommendable: *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, 3 vols., Chicago, 1974; an excellent overview of the development of Arabic (and vernacular) writing is provided by the four volumes published to date in the Arabic Literature in Africa (ALA) series, edited by John Hunwick and Sean R. O'Fahey, Leiden, 1994–, as well as by Ulrich Rebstock's *Maurische Literaturgeschichte*, 3 vols., Würzburg, 2001.

For a general history of Africa, I recommend John Iliffe, *Africans: History of a Continent*, Cambridge, 1995.

An excellent introduction into the “anthropology of Islam” is provided by Filippo Osella and Benjamin Soares, *Islam, Politics, Anthropology*, Milton Keynes, 2010.

Abbreviations

Afr.	Afrikaans
Amh.	Amharic
Arab.	Arabic
Ful.	FulFulde
Hau.	Hausa
Ind.	Bahasa Indonesia
Som.	Somaal
Swa.	Swahili
Tam.	Tamazight (Berber languages)
Wol.	Wolof
BSOAS	Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies
CHA	Cambridge History of Africa
IJAHS	International Journal of African Historical Studies
IJMES	International Journal of Middle East Studies
ISSS	Islam et sociétés au sud du Sahara
JAHS	Journal of African History
JHSN	Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria
JIMMA	Journal (of the) Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs
JRA	Journal of Religion in Africa
SA	Sudanic Africa

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Introduction

The Geographical and Anthropological Setting

AFRICA'S DIFFERENT HABITATS and ecosystems, as well as its surrounding seas and oceans, have been major formative forces in the development of societies on the continent. Before delving into the analysis of the history of Muslims in Africa, it may be helpful to have a look at the anthropo-geographic context in which Africa's Muslim societies have developed since the mid-seventh century.

Anyone coming from western Asia and entering Africa from the northeast will inevitably encounter the Nile. The “nīl miṣr” (Egyptian Nile) of the Arab geographers, with its huge delta and densely settled valley, has been a major center of cultural and political development for more than 6,000 years. The Nile was of major formative importance for a whole series of cultures in the Nile valley, not only Egypt but also the countries upstream, in particular Nubia, the land between the first cataract south of Aswan and the sixth cataract north of the confluence of the Blue Nile and the White Nile. Despite these natural obstacles, especially the “baṭn al-ḥajar,” the “belly of stones” between the second and the third cataracts, the Nile constituted a major highway of exchange between the Mediterranean and the lands of the Upper Nile valley, with the adjacent steppes and savannahs. Due to their dependence on its waters, the societies on the Nile developed intricate and in many ways unique strategies of calculation, technologies of irrigation and storage, administration of surplus and scarcity, defense and warfare, which subsequently informed the formation of states, principalities, and empires in the Nile valley. The empires on the Nile exerted a major influence on the surrounding regions, attracting people across Africa and Asia to come to Egypt as traders, conquerors, pilgrims, or students.

The development of a distinct, irrigation-based Nile valley civilization has been directly linked with an important ecological process of longue durée, namely the desertification of the Sahara in the Mesolithic period (c. 10,000–4,000), which almost stopped movement across the Sahara entirely. Only the introduction of the camel in the first century BCE and the subsequent emergence of a camel-based economy, first in North Africa and later in the Saharan oases, made large-scale transport and movement across the Sahara possible again. The lands north of the Sahara, the Roman provinces of Africa and Numidia, which came to be called “Ifriqiyya” after the Arab conquest, or simply the “lands of the sunset” (Arab. bilād al-maghrib), were characterized by three major features: they constituted the southern shore of the Mediterranean and thus connected Africa with Europe; at the same time, they constituted the northern

shore of the Sahara, and thus connected the Mediterranean with the lands south of the Sahara; and finally, they constituted a cosmos of mountains and valleys, high plateaus, mountain deserts and river valleys, most often small floodplains, in sum, a rather rugged and difficult terrain, ideal for transhumant pastoralism, precarious for farmers, the home of a multitude of “Imasighen” (sing. *Amasigh*, colloquially known as Berber) tribes, fragmented politically, seldom under the control of one empire for an extended period of time, home to a few urban centers only.

To the south of the *bilād al-maghrib* lay the great desert (Arab. *al-ṣaḥrā' al-kubrā*), stretching 5,000 kilometers from the Atlantic to the Red Sea, as well as 2,000 kilometers from its northern shores, the Atlas Mountains and the Mediterranean, to its southern rim (Arab.: *sāḥil*) in sub-Saharan West and Central Africa. The Sahara was not a monotonous wasteland of sand, but an ever-changing array of sand dunes (in Imasighen languages, *iguīdi*), sands (*erg*), stony plateaus (*reg*), high plateaus (*tassili*), flat bedrock plains (*hammada*), and mountains (*ādrār*), interrupted by dry *wādīs* and oases. During the winter rains in the *bilād al-maghrib* in the north (November–March), as well as the summer rains in the *bilād al-sūdān* in the south (May–August), erratic rains could create not only fine pastures in the midst of the desert but also flash floods in *wādīs*, which, besides sandstorms, were the most dangerous feature of life and trade in the Sahara (see map 1).

The growth of the Sahara in the Mesolithic period forced Saharan populations apart. In the north, Mediterranean peoples came to dominate, including a multitude of Imasighen tribes, but also Greek, Phoenician, Jewish, Roman, and, later, Arab settlers, while the south turned increasingly black. Islets of black populations inhabited Saharan oases far north, such as Ghāt and Ghadāmis until fairly recent times; but only the Tibesti mountains and the oases of Bilma still have black populations today. Labeled Tubu (mountain people) by the Kanuri in the south, and Goran (Qoran) by the Arabs in the north, the Teda in the Tibesti mountains and the Daza in the Ennedi and Borku regions were able to retain control over trans-Saharan routes in this central part of the Sahara. In other parts of the Sahara, Imasighen (Tuareg) as well as Arab populations, often organized in tribes of warriors and scholars, gained the upper hand. While the warrior tribes protected the scholars (Tam. *ineslemen*, lit. Muslims; Arab. *zawāya*, lit. those who live in a Sufi-center), the scholarly tribes organized trade and maintained Islamic education. Together, warriors and *zawāya* formed the social, political, and religious elites of the Sahara. The most famous warrior tribes were the Banū Ḥasan groups in the Western Sahara, but also a number of Tuareg tribes such as the Kel Tadamakkat, who came to dominate Timbuktu in the early eighteenth century. Famous *zawāya/ineslemen* tribes were the Kunta in the central Sahara, as well as the Awlād Ibirri and Awlād Daymān in the western Sahara. Subordinated to warrior and *zawāya/ineslemen* tribes were client (Tam. *imgad*, Arab. *laḥma*, lit. meat, or *talāmīdh*, disciples) groups, craft (smiths, weavers, etc., Tam. *inaden*) groups as well as the *ḥaratīn* (Arab. former slaves, who were still part of their respective households) and *ʿabīd* (Arab. full slaves;

Tam. iklan), which were of paramount importance for the Saharan oases and were set to work to dig wells and to maintain irrigation systems. These Imasighen and Arab tribal populations not only gained control over a multitude of Saharan oases such as Tuwāt, Ghadāmis, Ghāt, Fazzān, Kufra, and the Ādrār and Ahīr (Aīr) mountains, as entrepôts for the trans-Saharan trade, but were also the major intermediaries between the bilād al-maghrib, the lands north of the Sahara, and the lands of the blacks (Arab. bilād al-sūdān) south of the Sahara.

Saharan and North African populations (as well as the Bija and Somaal in Ethiopia and in the Horn of Africa) have often been classified by anthropologists as segmentary societies based on extended family groups (tents, Arab. buyūt), tribal subdivisions and tribes (Tam. kel, Arab. qabīla). Evans-Pritchard has characterized segmentary societies as "a system of balanced opposition between tribes and tribal sections from the largest to the smallest divisions" (Evans-Pritchard 1949: 56–59), marked by a lack of absolute authority but the acceptance of rules of group solidarity in case of conflict. The logic of segmentation that stresses conflict as a major driving force of social formation should not be seen as an automatism, however. Segmentary societies are keen to prevent conflict and feud, as "a feud knows no beginning and has no end" (Peters 1969: 268). Segmentary societies have thus formed so-called diya groups that accept "blood money" (Arab. diya) as compensation for a murder in order to prevent escalation of a conflict into a feud. Segmentary societies have also developed a tradition of accepting the mediation of neutral outsiders, such as holy men, in order to prevent conflict and to form leagues (Tam., Arab. leff, reff, or saff) and alliances that transcend the logic of segmentation and provide venues of social and political integration. Steven Caton has thus concluded that (Middle Eastern) "tribesmen . . . are talking to each other probably more than they are fighting" (Caton 1987: 83).

The lands to the south of the Sahara, the lands of the blacks, can be divided into four distinct ecological regions, all oriented toward a major system of rivers or lakes: the lands in the Atlantic west, oriented toward the rivers Senegal and Gambia, which we refer to here as the Senegambian Sudan; the lands converging on the Niger, the nīl ghāna of the Arab geographers, referred to here as the Niger Sudan; the lands converging on Lake Chad and the Shari, called here Chad-Sudan, and, finally, the lands converging on the Nile, called here Nile-Sudan. Like the Nile, the rivers and lakes of the Sudanic regions had paramount importance for the development of riverine civilizations and trade and equally stimulated the emergence of river-based empires such as Mālī and Songhay. In addition, the centers of settlement on the southern shores of the Sahara became harbors for a multitude of trans-Saharan trade routes and tried to gain control over trans-Saharan trade, often in competition with Saharan populations. The bilād al-sūdān were thus direct partners of the trading regions north of the Sahara, the Saharan populations acting as the transmission belt. The ecology of the bilād al-sūdān informed the nature of the trading networks in the region: when they reached the southern shores of the Sahara, goods had to be reloaded from camels to

boats, oxen and donkeys, which were more viable in the increasingly humid regions of the south, where sleeping sickness was widely spread. The ecology and the resulting logistics of transport in the Sahara and the bilād al-sūdān explains both the emergence of distinct regional trade networks and the fact that North African and Saharan traders never gained control over Sudanic trade routes and vice versa: Sudanic traders were never able to establish control over the Saharan or North African trade routes. The vast stretches of the bilād al-sūdān and their major axes of transport, the rivers, did, however, support the emergence of “Sudanic” trading empires and trading emporia, as well as urban centers such as Kano, Katsina, Timbuktu, and Jenné. These emporia in turn acted as transmission belts for trade further south, into the tropical lands of the Guinea coast.

The tropical forests of the Guinea coast constituted another distinct ecological region, connected by a multitude of rivers and rivulets, subdivided by mountain ranges and marked by swampy lowlands, as well as dry and temperate plateaus, such as those of Fuuta Jalon in Guinea, Jos (Nigeria), and Adamawa (Cameroons). Both savannahs and tropical forests were settled by a multitude of populations, the Wolof, Serer, the different Mande groups (Sarakolle, Soninke, Malinke, Bambara, Marka, Juula), the Mossi and Hausa, the Kanuri and Jerma-Songhay, the Senufo, Dogon, and Nupe, as well as the Yoruba and Akan groups that fought for control over trade routes and resources, especially gold. In their endeavors to master a difficult tropical environment, they developed a plethora of local and regional chiefdoms and kingdoms. The populations of the savannah and the tropical forest regions represent a broad array of social systems, from highly centralized to highly fragmented societies, from highly egalitarian to highly stratified, organized in both patrilineal and matrilineal descent systems. Apart from nobles and free peasant populations, as well as slaves, many stratified societies knew endogamous caste groups, identified by their specific crafts, such as smiths, leatherworkers, weavers, or potters, in addition to griots who transmitted family genealogies, sang the praises of the nobles, and could thus be regarded as word workers, indispensable transmitters of local traditions and history.

Colonial historiography and academic research has granted one linguistic group in the bilād al-sūdān particular attention, namely the so-called FulBe (sing. Pulo; Fulani/Peulh in British and French sources; or, more neutrally, Halpulaaren, those who speak the language of the FulBe, FulFulde). The fact that FulFulde-speaking groups played a major role in certain jihād movements in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was seen by colonial historians as a sign of the “racial superiority” of these pastoralists, who sometimes tended to be light-skinned. They were seen as the rulers of empires that were then, in an evolutionary analogy, taken over in due course by even lighter-skinned Europeans. These theories ignore the fact that FulBe pastoralists had no share in the earlier formation of the great trading empires of the bilād al-sūdān, and that the leaders of the jihād movements were not FulBe pastoralists but a class of FulFulde-speaking TorodBe scholars, who often represented larger, marginalized, and

disaffected populations, even if FulBe pastoralists were among their chief supporters. The remarkable expansion of FulBe pastoralists from the Senegal in the west to the east can be explained in ecological terms: in pre-recorded times, when pastures for the cattle of the sedentary FulFulde-speaking populations (Tukulóór) in the Senegal valley started to become scarce, their herdsmen, the FulBe, started to move to new pastures in the east. The west, the north, and the south were not viable for obvious reasons: the Atlantic, the Sahara, and the tropical forests of the Guinea coast prevented expansion into these directions. On their way east, FulBe herdsmen moved within a strip of cattle-viable steppes, savannahs, and highlands, intermarrying with Arabs and Berber from the north and thus gradually becoming lighter along the way (or darker in regions where they intermarried with sedentary black populations): The FulBe reached Masina in the fourteenth century, Hausaland in the sixteenth century, Adamawa in the nineteenth century, and the Nile in the twentieth century. The example of the FulBe shows that African (Islamic) history was often informed by movements of migration that transformed geographical regions: the expansion of Berber populations across the Sahara; the settlement of Arab tribes in North Africa, on the Nile, in the Lake Chad region, and in the western Sahara; the expansion of the FulBe pastoralists across the Sudanic savannahs from the Atlantic to the Red Sea; and the migrations of the Bija, Oromo, and Somaal in the mountains and deserts of northeastern Africa.

As in the western and central Sudanic savannahs, open steppes also facilitated trade, migration, and exchange further east in the lands bordering on the Nile. The steppes and savannahs of the Nile Sudan, both to the north and south of the confluence of the White Nile and Blue Nile, as well as a number of lesser confluent, such as the 'Atbara, became a theater of exchanges for both camel and cattle nomads. The history of these lands on the Nile were characterized by efforts to maintain a precarious peace between mostly Arab herdsmen and sedentary populations, a situation complicated, as in the western bilād al-sūdān, by recurring droughts. The Arab populations in the Sudan were divided into numerous tribal groups. The oldest and most important group was that of the Ja'aliyyīn, who were split into the Shā'iqiyya, the Rubātāb, the Manāšīr, the Mirāfāb, and the Ja'aliyyīn proper. These tribal groups have largely merged over time with the sedentary Nubian populations of the Nile valley and become farmers. Another Arab tribal federation, the Juhayna, has kept its nomadic character and continues to own large herds of either cattle (Arab. baqqāra, Sudan Arab. baggāra) or camels (Arab. abbāla). The Juhayna are again split today into the Kabābīsh, the Rizayqāt, the Shukriyya, and the Kawāhla tribes. Depending on rainfall patterns and the long-term development of pastures, northern sections of these tribes have specialized in camel breeding, while southern sections have become cattle herders, often in symbiotic relations with the sedentary populations of Kordofan and Dārfūr, and have developed an intricate system of passageways from northern to southern pastures in an annual transhumant rhythm. These conventions of exchange collapsed, however, in situations of crisis such as drought, epidemics, or continual raiding of sedentary

populations by slave traders in the nineteenth century. The so-called *baggāra* belt, the rich cattle grazing lands of Kordofan stretching from the Nile to Dārfūr, and beyond Dārfūr and Wadai to Lake Chad, has thus become home to numerous cattle tribes, such as the Rizayqāt, the Tāāisha, the Missiriyya, and the Awlād Rashīd. The westernmost Baggāra, the Shūwa, reached the Shari in the eighteenth century and today have established settlements in Borno (northeastern Nigeria). On their way west, the Baggāra met FulBe cattle herders drifting east. Today, FulBe cattle herders have reached and crossed the Nile.

While the lands on the Nile and the savannahs of Kordofan to the west came to be dominated by Arab tribes, the lands toward the east and on the Red Sea coast were dominated by the Bija. The Bija (Beja) consisted of a large number of mostly nomadic tribes of herdsmen and families of traders in the mountainous regions on the western shores of the Red Sea, speaking a language related to Oromo and Somaal. Possibly due to processes of desertification, Bija tribes migrated south and reached the confines of Axum in Ethiopia by the sixth century CE. Bija tribes not only resisted political domination by Mamlūk Egypt or Nubia, but also Christian Ethiopia, and in fact

Epidemics and diseases are major yet often neglected features of African history, including the history of Muslim societies. In the late nineteenth century, an epidemic of rinderpest thus annihilated a major part of Africa's cattle. Imported in 1887 from India to Mas-sawa by the Italian navy, a harbor on the coast of Eritrea, this disease killed most of Ethiopia's cattle in 1888 and then spread into the lands on the Nile and the bilād al-sūdān in the north and west, as well as to the Horn of Africa and the East African interior in the south, finally reaching South Africa, killing more than 90 percent of all African cattle and wild animals until 1898: "The epidemic spread like fire: when cattle were counted in the evening, all animals were still healthy. On the next morning, they were sick and all were dead on the second or third day" (Weiss 1995: 51). In Ethiopia, 90–100 percent of all cattle died and not only deprived farmers of their chief means of production, but also led to hunger and instability. This crisis paved the way for the Italian occupation of Eritrea in 1889. The rinderpest epidemic led to the temporary collapse of most transhumant or nomadic populations in sub-Saharan Africa in the late nineteenth century and allowed European colonial powers the almost unobstructed occupation of vast steppe and savannah regions in both West and East Africa. Only Ethiopia was able to overcome the shock of the rinderpest in time to defeat an Italian invasion in 1896.

have controlled the Red Sea region up to present times, including trade and pilgrimage routes (see map 2).

The Ethiopian highlands to the south and east of the Nile-Sudan constitute an abrupt change in geography, the lands rising from a level of a few hundred meters to elevations of more than 2,000 or 3,000 meters, and continuing to rise, in mountain blocks such as the Semien in northern Ethiopia, to almost 5,000 meters. Ethiopia has thus always been seen, by the surrounding lowlanders and by the inhabitants of the mountains, as an island. In truth, Ethiopia should be seen as a series of highlands, separated by the great African Rift Valley. Both the northwestern and the southeastern highlands are interrupted by deep gorges and divided by high mountain ranges and plateaus (Amh. *amba*), which were often difficult to cross. From each highland region, a number of mountain ranges branch out into western and southeastern directions, forming plateaus and fertile lake basins such as the Lake Tana basin. In the south, hilly and fertile regions such as Kaffa form Ethiopia's southern marches, which eventually drop into the deserts and dry steppes of the Horn and the Omo-Turkana region. However, Ethiopia is not only structured as a multitude of mountain ranges and highlands divided by deep gorges, it is also differentiated in vertical terms: the lower reaches of the mountains up to an elevation of about 1,700 meters are called *qolla*. *Qolla* lands are hot and humid, in particular in the rainy seasons, yet fertile, and were thus, where possible, intensively farmed. The temperate *woyna dega* regions up to elevations of about 2,500 meters have been major regions of settlement and intensive agriculture. The cool *dega* lands up to elevations of about 3,700 meters have been settled and farmed less but have also provided niches for specific crops. Due to their elevation, Ethiopian mountain ranges catch the tropical summer rains of equatorial Africa, and Ethiopia has thus come to form a green island in an otherwise rather arid climatic zone. The heart of the western highlands of Ethiopia, Lake Tana, is the source of the Blue Nile that annually transports fertile soil down the Nile to Egypt. Colonized by immigrants from southwestern Arabia, the Ethiopian highlands are in many ways related to neighboring Yemen. In contrast to Yemen, Ethiopia has become a domain of orthodox Christianity, in particular among the Tigre, Tigrinya, and Amharic-speaking populations of the northern, central, and southwestern highlands, while other major groups, such as the Oromo, have turned to either Christianity or Islam or have remained loyal to their own religions. The Afar and Somaal populations in the Danakil lowlands and the Ogaden region in the east are mostly Muslim today.

Toward the east and south of the Ethiopian mountain ranges, the Horn of Africa, like the Sahara, forms a vast and arid region, devoid of major oases, crossed by two major rivers only, the Shebelle and the Juba. Few harbors (Persian: *banādīr*, sing. *bandar*), such as Mogadishu, Brawa, and Marka, opened the hinterland to the Indian Ocean. The coastal settlements on the Horn may be seen as an extension of either the East African coast, as in the case of Brawa, Kismayu, Marka, Mogadishu, or as an extension of Ḥaḍramawt across the Gulf of Aden, as in the case of Berbera and