THE HISTORY OF THE ISMA'ILIYYA TARIQA
IN THE SUDAN: 1792-1914

by

Mahmoud Abdalla Ibrahim

Thesis presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
University of London, School of Oriental and African
Studies, Department of History.

March 1980
ABSTRACT

This study hopes to shed some light on the history of a holy family and a Sufi tarīqa which developed in Kordofan. It traces the origin of the family of Sh. Ismā'īl al-Wallī, follows its progress through the Turco-Egyptian, the Mahdia and the Condominium periods, and sees its impact on the society of Kordofan in particular, and on Sudanese society in general. The progress of the tarīqa and its structure show that, although it borrowed from the Khatmiyya and the Qādiriyya, it developed into a distinct order. The main emphasis here is on the historical and structural development of the order.

The sources may be divided into two main categories: oral and written. Although a number of people have been interviewed, we have depended primarily on the written sources. Most of these are manuscripts in the Sudan Government Archives, Khartoum. In addition to these we have made use of other archival materials dealing with other tarīqas and other relevant topics in the Sudan Government Archives, Khartoum and in the Sudan Archives of the University of Durham Library.

The work has been divided into five chapters. The first deals with the environment in which Sh. Ismā'īl, his family and his tarīqa grew, and explains their geographical, historical and religious background. The second chapter deals with the founder of the family and the tarīqa, Sh. Ismā'īl, his genealogy, his educational background, his ideas and his writings. The third chapter follows the progress of the Ismā'īliyya during the Mahdia, and deals with their relationship with that movement. It traces some elements of schism which led to the emergence of a branch of the family under the new name of al-Azhari. The fourth chapter deals with the Ismā'īliyya after the establishment of the Condominium rule. During this period the Ismā'īliyya, both tarīqa and family, were exposed to new political and economic changes and were brought in touch with new social forces and experiences. The chapter deals with the impact of these new conditions on the Ismā'īliyya. The fifth chapter is devoted mainly to the distinctive organization and rituals of the tarīqa.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Abstract</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Abbreviations and Short References</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Acknowledgements</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter I</strong></td>
<td>Kordofan in the Time of Shaykh Isma'il al-Wali</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Geographical Factor</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Historical Factor</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Religious Factor</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter II</strong></td>
<td>The Founder of the Tariqa</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shaykh Isma'il al-Wali</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter III</strong></td>
<td>The Isma'ilyya and the Mahdia</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Nature of the Mahdia</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Tribal Attachment</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spiritual Attachments and Loyalties</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Attitude of Some Important Individuals</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter IV</strong></td>
<td>The Isma'ilyya After the Reconquest</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Government, Islam and the Isma'ilyya</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Government, Western Sudan and the Isma'ilyya</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social and Political Changes and the Isma'ilyya</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter V</strong></td>
<td>Organization and Practice of the Isma'ilyya</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Developmental Phases</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Structure of the Tariqa</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Practices and Rituals</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Glossary of Arabic and Colloquial Sudanese Terms</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appendix A</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appendix B</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appendix C</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bibliography</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABBREVIATIONS AND SHORT REFERENCES

Adāb  The Journal of the Faculty of Arts, University of Khartoum
Am.Anth. American Anthropologist
BSOAS Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies
BES Bulletin of Sudanese Studies
EI Encyclopaedia of Islam, 1st and 2nd editions
G.G. Reports Reports on the Finance, Administration and Conditions of the Sudan
GMS Gibbs Memorial Series
IRE Intelligence Reports, Egypt
MEA Middle Eastern Affairs
MW Muslim World
NMC Numismatic Chronicle
Sud.Govt.Arch.(Khart.) Sudan Government Archives, Khartoum
Sud.Govt.Arch.(Durham) Sudan Archives, Oriental Section, University of Durham Library
SUDINT Sudan Intelligence Files
SIR Sudan Intelligence Reports
SNR Sudan Notes and Records
H. MacMichael i) Tribes = The Tribes of Northern and Central Kordofan, Cambridge, 1912.
N. Shuqair Ta'rikh = Tarikh al-Sudan al-qadīm wa'l hadīth wa-jugrafiyatuh, Cairo, 1903.
Y. Mīkhā’īl  

Y.F. Hasan  

Syd.  
Sayyid, e.g. Syd. al-Makki or Syd. Abū al-Fadl.

Sh.  
Shaykh, e.g. Sh. Ismā‘īl.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am greatly indebted to a number of people who have kindly helped me in preparing this work and presenting it in this form. My gratitude goes first to Professor P.M. Holt, who supervised this study and selflessly gave it much of his time and attention. His advice and support during the dark moments when I struggled through confusion to develop a plan, have been a great help and source of encouragement to persevere. His valuable comments and criticism have enabled me to crystallize my ideas and expand on certain points, which would otherwise have remained vague and uncertain.

My thanks also go to the British Council and the University of Khartoum for their generous grants, which enabled me and my family to live comfortably during the three-and-a-half years while I was pursuing my studies.

A number of people have supplied me with information and documents: of these, I am especially grateful to Dr. M.I. Abū Salīm, the Director of the Sudan Government Archives in Khartoum, who made it easy for/to have access to all the manuscripts needed; \textit{Syd. }Abd al-Haфиз 'Abdalla introduced me to many informants, including the present Khalīfa of the Ismā'īliyya tariqa; Mrs. Asmā' Ibrahim, Deputy Librarian, University of Khartoum, and Miss J. Forbes, Keeper of Oriental Books, University of Durham.

I am also very grateful to Miss Janet Marks who typed this thesis, and helped in its final preparations before presenting it in this shape; and to Miss Elaine Holley, for her help with the map and genealogical tables.

Finally, although much of the credit for this work is shared with the above, the blame for any errors or shortcomings which it may still contain, is mine alone.
In many of his writings Sh. Ismā'īl emphasized his ties with Kordofan and stressed his deeply rooted cultural and social links with that part of the Nilotic Sudan. In his al-'Uḥūd al-wāfiyya,¹ he boastfully stated that he was born, grew up, was educated and initiated in the tarīqa in El-Obeid, and did not have to travel away from it like others in search of a master to guide him; His Shaykh, Muhammad 'Uthmān al-Mirghani,² met him in Kordofan. In fact, with the exception of two brief intervals - one shortly after the conquest of Kordofan by the Turco-Egyptian forces when he left El-Obeid for a self-imposed exile in the Nūba Mountains, and the other in 1841 when he went on pilgrimage - Ismā'īl did not leave Kordofan at all. His life there spanned the decades immediately preceding the Turco-Egyptian conquest of the Sudan in 1821 and the larger part of the transformation of Kordofan into a province of the Egyptian Sudan. The Ismā'īliya tarīqa which he created at that time was thus closely linked with that region and strongly tied to it. Such were those links and ties that when Sayyid al-Makki wanted to revive it after the end of the Mahdia, he had to take it back from Omdurman to its home in El-Obeid, where it has remained highly localized and strong up to this day. A study of the town of El-Obeid and the land of Kordofan in the latter part of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries may thus help in drawing a picture of the home in which the Ismā'īliya tarīqa was nursed and the environment in which it grew and took shape.

2. Muhammad 'Uthmān al-Mirghani I, one of the disciples of Ahmad b. Idrīs, al-Fāṣī, was sent to the Sudan in 1817 to propagate the ideas of ibn Idrīs; there Muhammad 'Uthmān was tempted to establish his own tarīqa the Khatmiyya, R. Hill, Biographical Dictionary, p.278.
Unfortunately for this account, there is very little written information to rely on. Many of the historians writing about the Sudan have always complained about the absence of recorded materials and scarcity of reliable information. The lack of literary traditions and the difficulties of transportation to the interior of this country rendered much of the information about it unrecorded and unknown to the outside world up to the nineteenth century. Those conditions were more particularly true of Kordofan than of many other parts. With no teaching religious institutions comparable to Masīd Wad 'Isa in the Gezira or Khalāwī al-Ghubush in Dongola, to combat illiteracy, reading and writing remained arts unknown to the people of Kordofan, let alone the recording of incidents and historical happenings. Furthermore, being the only break in a chain of kingdoms and sultantes extending through Central and Eastern Sudan from Bornu, Waddai, Darfur and Sennar, and with no tradition of a ruling dynasty interested in tracing the origins of its ancestors, or in recording the glories and achievements of its kings, Kordofan failed to attract or encourage any writer such as al-Tūnusī or a traveller like Reubeni. The result of this is the

1. About ten miles south of Khartoum, this institution founded by Ahmad Wad 'Isa al-Anṣārī, played an important role in the literary and religious progress of the Sudan. Se. I. al-Amīm, Qaryat Kutrūn, Khartoum 1975, p.21.
2. See Tabaqāt, pp.279-80.
3. Muhammad ibn 'Umar al-Tūnusī, Arab traveller who visited Darfur as a young boy (1803 to 1811) and wrote a very good account of the history and society of that kingdom. His work Tashkhtāh al-Adhān, ed. by K.M. 'Assākir and M.M. Musa'ad, Cairo, 1965, has been translated into French by Dr. Perron.
absence of any local historical works\(^1\) similar to Kitab al-Tabaqat,\(^2\) Tarih mu'lik Sennar,\(^3\) or Makhturat Katib al-Shuna.\(^4\) Thus much of the early history of Kordofan has to be pieced together from incidents mentioned in these chronicles, which were few; from oral traditions,\(^5\) of which not very much could be found; and from whatever has been written about this territory in the accounts of travellers visiting the neighbouring sultantes, which were not very reliable. Those early travellers depended on what they had heard about Kordofan from others, and in such accounts it is not difficult to find factual mistakes, mistranslations, misrepresentations and unfair judgments. Typical of these is James Bruce (1730-94) who is judged by Beckingham to be inaccurate and, "His method of composition, at least as described by Latrobe, was unlikely to promote accuracy or even clarity. He was obviously casual about details and his prejudices were violent"\(^6\).

He visited Sennar in 1772 and his account throws some light on the relationship between the Funj and Kordofan during this and the earlier period. The story which he told of the Funj conquest of Kordofan in

---

1. The only claim to the presence of such a kind of work was made by A.E. Robinson, S.N.R., VII, 1924, p.142, where he suggested that a manuscript containing a written history of Kordofan and Darfur was given to Koenig in 1824, and is now in 'Abdin Palace Archives in Cairo. This, however, does not seem to be traceable.

2. Muhammad al-Nur wa'd Dayf Allah, Kitab al-Tabaqat fī Khushū' al-asliyya' wa't Sālikūn, ed. Y.F. Ḥasan, is a biographical account of the saints, jurists and religious notables of the Funj sultanate.

3. Ahmad Kätib al-Shüna and three others, Tarih mu'lik Sennar, ed. M. Shibeika.


5. Some oral tradition about the Musabba'at was collected by H. MacMichael, Tribes and Arabs, his main informant being Hāmid Muhammad ūbr al-Dūr (d. 1933), last of the hereditary Musabba'awi sultans. Other stories have been collected by Muhammad 'Abd al-Rahīm, Abtāl al-Sūdūn, and R.S. O'Fahey whose informant was the son of MacMichael's informant. See O'Fahey and Spaulding, "Hāshim and the Musabba'at", B.S.O.A.S., XXX, 1972, pp.316-33.

produced some interesting remarks from H. MacMichael and O.G.S. Crawford, with regard to the date on which Kordofan was subjugated and the officer (Abū Likaylik) who led the victorious expedition.

Another eighteenth century traveller who mentioned something about Kordofan was W.G. Browne, who visited Darfur in 1793 and stayed there for three years up to 1796. During these years, however, his movements were restricted and his activities suspect. Most of his information then came from stories related to him by the traders whom he had met in Cobbe and in turn he proceeded to state some relations that were made to him concerning Kordofan and other adjacent countries.

The story which he told throws some light on the relationship between Kordofan and Darfur at a time of unrest in both. This was the time when Tayrāb of the Keira Fūr was leading an army against the Musabba'at in Kordofan, mainly to clear the way for his son Ishāq to rule in Darfur. The result was trouble in Kordofan and instability in Darfur. Browne thus was told that the people in Kordofan still remembered the good old days when Abū Likaylik ruled fourteen years back with justice.

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, and especially after the Turco-Egyptian conquest of Kordofan, a number of European travellers, encouraged by the relative safety of the routes or employed in Muhammad 'Alī's service, started to come to that territory for a variety of purposes: gold, minerals, trade, discoveries and adventure. They put.

2. O.G.S. Crawford, The Fung Kingdom, p.244.
3. In his preface of the third and last complete edition of the Travels, published 1813, Murray wrote that after 20 years' lapse, between his journey and the writing of his story, Bruce's dates were bound to be faulty.
their observations and adventures down in print and thus added some very valuable information to the otherwise extremely sketchy records of this area. But although they are very useful and informative, these accounts should be approached with some caution and their observations and moral judgments be considered in the light of their social and cultural backgrounds. Most of these travellers were the product of a European society which was witnessing a social and industrial revolution with an ever-growing nationalism and European patriotism. Coupled with a missionary feeling, this gave rise to the admiration of everything that was European and Christian, and an undisguised contempt for all things that were deviant from these. Accordingly, they saw almost everything through European eyes, and judged everything against the moral, material and cultural standards of their European societies of that period.

Another factor which also affected their writings was that the governments, or the public to whom those accounts were addressed, had preconceived ideas about these territories of "primitive natives" and the writers were expected to harmonize with these accepted views. So the accounts of their adventures in those remote areas were meant to appeal to a European imagination of those "primitive societies" rather than to offer objective observation and historical analysis. Many are meant to be interesting more than instructive: thus Pallme states that he noted down in his journal "everything that appeared to me remarkable, which I laid before my friends for their amusement on my return".  

This being said, we may now turn to mention something about some of these nineteenth-century travellers to Kordofan.

E. de Cadalvène and J. de Breuvery, two French travellers, did not actually visit Kordofan, but their account of it in *L'Égypte et la Nubie*, pp.197-215,\(^1\) seems to be a rare and valuable attempt to deal with the history of that territory from the fifteenth century to the eve of the Turco-Egyptian conquest in 1821. Their visit to the Sudan took them to Jabal al-Barkal in Dongola after which they returned to write a general account of their investigations in the Sudan which they published in Paris in 1841.\(^2\) Their information about Kordofan came mainly, as they acknowledged, from another French traveller, Mathieu-August Koenig (1802-1865). Koenig in turn seems to have got his information from a certain Sh. Tayma al-Musabba'at.\(^3\) This makes it especially valuable since it seems to be the only version that gives the Musabba'at story of this period to compare with that of the Funj and that of the Keira. Furthermore, the historical material in this account seems to be generally reliable, though the dates should be put in a more accurate chronological context and compared with other works.

Ignatius Pallme (1810-1841?), an Austrian traveller who came to Egypt as a trader. Between 1838-39 he visited El-Obeid on a mission to advise the viceroy of Egypt, Muhammad 'Ali, on the prospects of trade in that area. But in addition to commercial information, he was interested in the social and political activities of Kordofan. For information he said that he had depended on his own personal observations

---

3. A.E. Robinson, *S.N.R.*, VII, 42, suggests that this information was given to Koenig in the form of a written manuscript.
but these were supplemented by what he got from a man whose name he
did not give, but who he described as an old *faqih*, over seventy years
of age who had been an eye-witness of all recent events. This
information was published in his *Travels in Kordofan*, originally in
German in 1843, then shortly afterwards translated into English and
published in London in 1844.

In writing his *Travels* Pallme seems to have set himself to do three
things: to collect information on commerce; to note down everything
which appeared to him remarkable and interesting to his friends; and
to make some contribution which, as he put it, "Will at least form a
short guide for those who may be willing to explore those countries more
fully...."¹ To get these, he was luckier than his European predecessors
Dr. Rüppell² and Russegger,³ who, he said, had to travel in so much
company that it hindered their movements and limited their scope of
observation. He came at a time when the Turco-Egyptian rule had been
firmly established, and could thus travel safely with very little company.
He was therefore able to collect some valuable first-hand information
to satisfy the aims that he had set himself to achieve.

His writings, however, were highly and uncompromisingly critical
of the Egyptian administration of that area. He showed that the
system was excessively oppressive and the means used to implement the
government decision were inhumane. He observed that this was very

---

2. Dr. E.W. Rüppell (1794–1884), a German naturalist. He left Cairo in 1822
via Dongola for the northern approaches of Kordofan. He was there between
1822–25. His journey was recorded in *Reisen in Nubien...,* Frankfurt 1829.
Holroyd (d.1808) an English traveller, followed in Rüppell's footsteps and
recorded his account in the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*,
3. J. Russegger (1802–63) an Austrian geologist; in 1838 he was commissioned
by Muhammad 'Ali to explore the mineral resources of the Sudan; visited
the Nuba mountains; his very optimistic reports led Muhammad 'Ali to
spend much money and energy which were not rewarded; his *Reisen in Afrika* was published in Stuttgart, 1841–9. See R. Hill, *Biographical
Dictionary*, p.322.
damaging to the economy of that area; women who used to wear golden ornaments could no longer afford to do that and nomadic tribes found it easier to drive their herds out of the government's reach. He also talked about the twice-annually organized government raids on the Nuba mountains and neighbouring countries for slave hunting. In general he showed how the oppressive Turco-Egyptian rule was helping to break the tribal, social and economic systems of that territory. His account in this respect was very useful.

John Petherick (1813-82), a Welsh mining engineer, entered the service of Muhammad 'Ali in 1845 to look for coal in Upper Egypt, the Red Sea and Kordofan. In 1848 he gave up his service with Muhammad 'Ali and went to live in Kordofan as a trader – 1848 to 1853. He was British Vice-Consul in Khartoum from 1859 to 1864, when the post was suppressed because there were rumours that he was engaged in the slave trade.

His account of Kordofan appeared mainly in his book, Egypt, the Sudan and Central Africa. The other book which he wrote jointly with his wife, Travels in Central Africa, deals mainly with other parts of the Sudan, especially the Upper Nile regions in Southern Sudan. His writings about Kordofan are very interesting and full of details, especially on trade, commercial activity and society. His historical account, however, is very short, generalized and lacking in details. He gave as his authorities a certain Makkāwī, a schoolmaster whom he described as a grey-headed old faqīh; and the shaykh of the village (Bāra). From these he said, "After regaling them with coffee, I gleaned the following information connected with the history of Kordofan, in which Bāra and its inhabitants

2. See J. Petherick, Egypt, the Sudan and Central Africa, Edinburgh, 1861, pp.301-5.
4. Petherick, Egypt, the Sudan and Central Africa, Ch.XVII, pp.261-85.
occupied a conspicuous part.¹ Then followed about twenty-four pages of a general account of how Kordofan took its name, its aborigines, Arab immigrants to it, and the Funj-Fur conflict over it.

Though very valuable for its detailed and accurate information otherwise, Petherick's historical information does not add very much to what Pallme had said before him. In fact, MacMichael suggests that Petherick plagiarizes freely from Pallme and adds flowery details of his own. MacMichael then goes on to say that both Pallme and Petherick are vague and inaccurate.²

Le Comte D'Escayrac de Lauture (1826-1868), was a French traveller who came to live in Egypt between 1847 and 1850. In 1849 he went on a journey which took him up the Nile to Dongola, then he crossed the Bayūda desert to Kordofan and later to Sennar. He was corresponding with Dr. Charles Cuny³ and advised him on the preparations for his journey to Darfur where Cuny died in 1858.⁴ He later went on another journey, which took him to the Far East where he was imprisoned and died in China.

While in Kordofan, he met and was very much impressed by Sh. Isma'īl al-Walī. His remarks about this meeting were recorded in his Le Desert et le Soudan.⁵

Joseph H. Churi (1828- ), a Syrian Maronite traveller. In the company of Capt. W. Peel, the son of the British Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel, he set out on a journey of exploration to the interior of Africa in 1851. They crossed the Nubian desert and came to El-Obeid

¹. Ibid., p.261.
². See H. MacMichael, Tribes, p.10, n.2.
⁴. Charles Cuny (1811-1848), French traveller, see ibid., p.106.
where they were warmly welcomed by the Governor of the province. They were planning to continue their journey up to Darfur and further west, but their plans were frustrated first by a discouraging account related to them by a certain faqīh\(^1\) about his plight when he went to visit his shaykh in Bornu. He explained to them the dangers and the state of lawlessness in those areas and how he narrowly escaped death a number of times. A further blow to their plans came when they both suffered from a high fever and had to stay for a long time in El-Obeid before they decided to call off their journey and return speedily to Cairo. Chūrī's account of this journey appeared in a book called *Sea Nile, the Desert and Nigrita*\(^2\) which he published in London in 1853. The account is very personal and does not give much new information about that region. It seems that their travelling more or less in high government circles did not give them much chance for observation and limited their scope to the society round the governor and high-ranking officials. On the other hand, their illness must have added to their difficulties of getting first-hand information. So most of the book dealt with incidents directly affecting him and Capt. Peel, and the story of the fever in El-Obeid took a sizeable portion of that.

Having said all this about eighteenth and nineteenth century accounts generally and individually, one should necessarily point out that judging them by modern standards of historical scholarship and objectivity could be unjust and unfair. One should be grateful to the efforts they made - in spite of their many limitations and difficulties - to present some work which though prejudicial, ill-informed, naive and

faulty in some parts, have contributed very much to the present day stories of this territory. It is hoped that by comparing their notes and weighing their judgments against each other, we may form an opinion about the history of Kordofan during this period.

Dār Kurdūfān,¹ (the land of Kordofan) has been used in different forms and by many people— including Sh. Ismā‘īl— to refer loosely to the land between the Sultantes of Sennar and Darfur, which during the Turco-Egyptian rule and ever since came to be known as muḍṭariyyat Kordofan (the Province of Kordofan).² It included the lands bounded by the Libyan and Bayūda deserts, the White Nile, Bahr al-Ghazāl and the range of low mountains of Kaja al-Surūj. Thus surrounded by difficult natural barriers of the desert in the north, the sandy wasteland formerly known as Bājat Umm Lamā‘ī in the east, the muddy mountainout region in the south, and the sandy wastes in the west, Kordofan tended to be isolated from the rest of the country and the world. With the exception of a few modifying factors like Khor Abū Ḥabīl and Wādī al-Malīk (seasonal streams) which linked it with the White Nile and Dongola respectively, Kordofan was difficult of approach from all directions. This is clearly illustrated by the attitude of the King of Taqālī in the story told about him and the Sultān of Sennar.³ This king was said to have allowed a friend of Bādī II Abū Diqn to be robbed in Taqālī.

1. It has, and still is being used and written in various forms both in Arabic and English, e.g., Kordofan, Kurdūfān and Kordofal in English, and in Arabic: كوردوفان كوردوفان كوردوفال For more details on the term Kordofan, see H. MacMichael, Tribes, App. I, pp. 222-4, and M. ibn 'Umar al-Tūnisī, Tashḥīḥ al-adhḥan, ed. K.M. 'Asākir and M.M. Mus‘ād, Introduction.
2. During the Mahdiya this term temporarily lost its significance. Markaz Kordofan, mainly referring to El-Obeid and its vicinity, became part of Imārāt al-Gharb which included Kordofan and Darfur together.
When the king was warned of the consequences of this act, he did not seem to be worried and thought that he was beyond the reach of that sultan, since the unpassable desert known then as Bājat Umm Lammā' separated their two countries. Even as late as 1820, Maqdūm Musallam who was ruling Kordofan in the name of the Fur Sultan felt secure there and refused to believe the rumours brought by the riverain traders about an army advancing against him from Dongola.

Certain factors, however, have contributed towards turning this territory into a unique border zone of many complexities. It is a land of wandering nomads and sedentary cultivators and townspeople; of Arabized tribes and negroid Africans; of Muslims and pagans; and a cultural watershed for a Hijazi-Egyptian influence from the East and a Maghrībi-West African one from the West. The first of these factors is a geographical one.

The Geographical Factor

Situated in a unique intermediary position between the arid desert and the wet tropical forests of Bahr al-Ghazāl, and with no high mountains, except on its fringes, this area has very few sharp divisions into distinctive physical regions, but rather a gradation in which vegetation and soil are the most important elements of variation. These elements, to a large extent, governed the mode of life in each gradation, and dictated the economic activities of its inhabitants. With this in mind, Kordofan can thus be roughly divided into three regions descending from north to south.

The northern region is a vast area extending from the Libyan and Bayūda desert - part of the Great Sahara. Though its rainfall is too sparse and erratic for the cultivation of any crops, it cannot properly
be called a barren desert because some sorts of seeds do germinate and
grow into grass as soon as any rain falls on them, even if they have
been lying dry for years. It is a great open, empty space littered
with occasional rocky outcrops, few of which are of any considerable
height, and a scattering of some thorny bushes here and there. There
are very few khūrēs and wādīs (seasonal streams), most noticeable of
which is Wādī al-Malik, which runs from Dongola to the borders of Darfur.
With very little water and vegetation, it remained a desolate and very
thinly populated area. Very difficult to traverse and uneasy to control,
this region became a haven for unruly nomadic tribes and a refuge for
those who rebelled against any government which controlled the Nile.
Untamed by any government and unfettered by any laws, these nomads posed
a permanent threat to the trade routes crossing the desert from the north
to the interior of the country. W.G. Browne, who travelled from Asiyūt
to Cobbe' in 1793, tells us that the caravans coming that way had grown
accustomed to give certain dues to those marauding nomads in order to
avoid their attacks, which in spite of that, had claimed the lives of
many whose bones could still be seen littering the road between Dongola
and the Western Sudan.¹

Difficult as it may seem, this area supported a number of camel
nomadic tribes chief among whom are the Kabābīsh, al-Majānīn, Dār
Hāmid, Bānū Jarrār and al-Maṭaliya. These are Arabized tribes which
swept through Nūbia since the fourteenth century and finding these
lands suitable to their way of life, stuck to these plains and were
reluctant to change. A very important aspect in that pattern is a

¹. See W.G. Browne's _Travels_, pp. 240-1.
regular movement between their summer quarters near the watering places and a north and north-westerly limit varying from one year to another, according to the incidence of rain, which decided the availability of grass. This is a highly organized process and the shaykh enforces much discipline with regard to the routes to be followed by each group of the tribe to ensure the availability of grass for the animals on their return journey.

They are all dependent on themselves and their animals for most of their needs. They make a good part of their equipment, carpets, sacks and the like from the wool of their camels and sheep; but certain things like tea, sugar and clothes had to be bought from town. Thus, every year the nomad Arabs of Northern Kordofan sent male animals to Omdurman and Egypt, spending part of the price there on sugar, tea, clothes and ornaments for their women. And on the other hand, every year they also went southwards into areas where durra is cultivated to purchase their year's supply.

Apart from these economic contacts, the Arab nomads of Northern Kordofan preferred to roam freely in their Khalâ' (open space) to the contamination of towns, and considered them evil places which sapped morals and destroyed character. Thus with so very few contacts with the rest of Kordofan, the Arab tribes of the north kept much of their nomadic characteristics: loving the most complete liberty and independence, rebellious against any tie of discipline, always ready for wars and raids, and ever prepared to resist governmental restraints.

The southern region is mainly the mountainous territory generally known as Jibâl al-Nūba (the Nūba Mountains). With comparatively heavy rainfall, there is an abundant water supply for cultivation and enough
grass for animal grazing, though the tsetse fly in its southermmost part, closer to Bahr al-Chazal makes it unhealthy for both man and animal during the rainy season.

The region is inhabited mainly by the Nuba who are believed at one time to have been spread over the whole of the central plains of Kordofan before they were systematically pushed southwards in front of the thrust first of the riverain, then of the Baqqāra Arabs, which confined them to their present home.\(^1\) The well-guarded mountains and the rough climatic conditions during the muddy rainy season, gave this region a great degree of security and protection from any external attacks, but deprived it of much needed cultural contacts with the rest of the country and the world. Consequently this region, with the exception of the Eastern Hills where the Kingdom of Taqalī was founded with strong links with the Funj of Sennar, escaped the early effects of Arabization and Islamization, which were gradually gaining ground in Kordofan throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and afterwards. This isolation, though kept for some time, was, however, broken, mainly by the immigration in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries of Baqqāra tribes - namely, the Hawāzma, Awlād Hāmid, Kināna, Kawāhla, Missairiya and Habbāniya - some of whom intermarried with the Nuba and settled in the plains.\(^2\)

The coming of the Baqqāra in the eighteenth century brought about a great deal of change and activity to this area. They created a situation of restless fluidity in an area which once formed some sort of

---

a fixed border between the Arabized north, and the still predominantly negroid south. They were mainly cattle grazers, and like many other nomadic tribes, depended very much on the markets of settled people for their grain, clothes and other necessities, but at the same time had no desire to be subjected to any control of any government. Finding themselves in a territory lying between the Sultanate of Sennar and that of Darfur, and claimed by each, the Baqqāra tried to evade them both by allying each time with one against the other. Baqqāra horsemen then became an important part of the irregular armies of these sultans. In his *Travels*, W.G. Browne tells us that the Sultans of Darfur began to rely very much on them: "In their campaigns much reliance is placed on the Arabs who accompany them and who are properly tributaries rather than subjects".¹ The Turco-Egyptian conquest of Kordofan did not change the situation very much. Pallme describing the fluidity of the southern frontier of the province of Kordofan, suggests that still (in 1838) this attitude of the nomads had not changed. The frontier of the province, he states, "Increases or decreases accordingly as the inhabitants of this part of the country become tributary either by their own free will or are rendered subjects by force".²

Another aspect of the Baqqāra activity which very much influenced the stability of this area was their active role in the slave raids. Finding it a lucrative business, they formed groups which penetrated deep into the Nuba mountains and neighbouring territories for slave hunting. Through these raids and also through penetration and intermarriage, they helped to break the tribal, social and economic systems of this area.

The central region is a fertile plain, part of the savannah belt with moderately good rainfall, a variety of vegetation and acacia shrubs. While good rainfall and fertile land supported good agriculture for food crops, gum Arabic, collected from the acacia shrubs, provided the inhabitants of this area with a good source of cash. The fact that this gum is collected after the harvest of the food crops, makes it especially useful. Another source of income in this region was trade. Before the beginning of the nineteenth century, it seems that the trade route connecting Western Sudan to Egypt and the Nile via Kordofan, was beginning to flourish at the expense of the Nile-Red Sea route and the westernmost route via the Libyan oases. The Nile-Red Sea route leading to Sennār seems to have suffered because of the unstable conditions in the northern parts of the Funj Kingdom created by the Shāiqliya activities and the decline in the power of the Funj Sultan. The westerly route via the Libyan oases seems to have declined because of political unrest, but also because of the redirection of the Takrūr gold trade to the south, rather than the north. A number of caravan routes then began to converge into central Kordofan from the north, from the Nile and from the west carrying lucrative trade, and giving rise to a number of towns and trade centres, like El-Obeid, al-Nuhūd and Bāra, and attracting many settlers from the Nile regions who were looking for new opportunities in these new areas. The main items in this trade from the interior were gum Arabic, ivory and ostrich feathers, but when trade in these items began to decline, their place was taken by the slave traffic which engaged that route for some time and very much influenced the social and economic structure of that area.

Another important traffic connected with this route also, was that of the pilgrimage. Pilgrims from West Africa and Darfur took this route through Kordofan to the Nile and Suakin-Jiddaor to Egypt and thence to Mecca. This traffic also had a very profound effect on the social, economic and cultural conditions of this region. The West African pilgrims followed a certain pattern in their travelling which is worth mentioning here to illustrate the importance of this route as a cultural channel. They moved from one place to another by stages, earning their living as they moved and wherever they settled, they formed small distinctive communities of West African ethnic groups - known in the Sudan as Fallāṭa.

The inhabitants of this central region, as can been seen from what has been stated above, were a mixture of different peoples. In fact, it became a melting pot where the Awlād al-Bahr (as the riverain people are known there) met the Baqqāra, where the Arabized tribes from the north met the negroid Africans from the south and west, and where the nomads came to deal with the cultivators and townspeople.

A description of a town may give a fair picture of how this process was taking place, and at hand is the description of El-Obeid given by Pallme where he showed how the town was divided into a number of quarters, each dominated mainly by a group of people clustering together, either by ethnic origin or cultural background.¹

The Historical Factor

The second factor in the development of Kordofan in the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, was an historical one. Kordofan was essentially a no-man's land separating the two Sultanates of Sennar and Darfur. Too weak to maintain any independent rule, it tempted each of its neighbouring sultans to consider it a natural extension of his domains. Thus its history was that of a buffer zone which reflected the respective strengths and weaknesses of Sennar and Darfur.

Towards the close of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, Sennar was in decline and Darfur was greatly weakened by internal struggles between the various factions of the Keira family, on the one hand, and by costly wars with its western neighbours - Waddāi and Bornū - on the other. Although both Funj and Fur sultans were anxious to control Kordofan, none of them was capable of establishing a permanent and unchallenged rule there. That region continually changed hands between its two neighbours, and for the whole of this period it became the theatre of their bloody conflicts. A certain pattern is observable in this process of continuous change of sovereignty in Kordofan in that era: internal troubles in Sennar repeatedly forced the Funj governor of Kordofan to lead his strong army towards Sennar to set things in order there. His departure would leave a power vacuum and the Fur were tempted to fill it. In Darfur, where the succession to the throne was regulated by no definite law and no compelling ancient custom, disputes were only to be expected after the death of every

1. Details of this decline in Sennar and Darfur can be referred to in R.S. O'Fahey and J. Spaulding, Kingdoms, pp.78-88 and 129-140. See also Crawford, The Funj Kingdom, p.255-61.
sovereign and conflicts were only settled in combat between the claimants to the throne. The defeated faction would move eastwards, establish some kind of rule in Kordofan and after feeling strong enough, would return to make another bid for the throne of Darfur. That would again leave a power vacuum, which would be filled in by the Funj in their turn.

The emergence of the Musabba'at dynasty in the early eighteenth century and the strenuous efforts of its leaders to establish themselves as a third power in that region, had added a new dimension to the state of unrest in Kordofan. Beginning with Janqal b. Bahr the Musabba'at, for three successive generations had persistently employed their limited resources and political skill to fulfil two ambitions: to establish a kingdom in Kordofan, and to use that as a springboard from which they could jump over to the throne of Darfur. Their relentless efforts to realize those dreams had repeatedly brought them into conflict with both Sennar and Darfur.

A fourth element which should not be overlooked in this struggle was the Ghidayyat, who by repeatedly changing allegiance from one party to the other, had helped to perpetuate this struggle and to sustain the state of unrest.

Details of the early phases of this struggle, in the first half of the eighteenth century, may not be relevant to this study and have been dealt with by O'Fahey and Hasan. The events of the second half of that century may, perhaps, give a clear picture of the relationships between these various factions, and may show how Kordofan had become the

theatre of their perpetual conflicts. During this period, the history of Kordofan was dominated by the activities of two leaders of the Musabba'ät, 'Īsāwī b. Janqal and his son, Hāshim, and the reactions of the Funj and the Ghidayyāt on the one hand, and the Fur on the other, to these activities.

The emergence of the Musabba'ät as a power in this region and their involvement in the affairs of Kordofan started with Janqal b. Bahr. Janqal and his family seem to have been driven out of Darfur after a struggle within the ruling family in which he was defeated by a certain Mūsā b. Sulaymān. Janqal then moved to the Darfur/Kordofan borderland where, for some time, he continued to gather supporters and established a base from which he and succeeding Musabba'ät leaders were able to invade central Kordofan. Janqal himself was associated with one of those invasions in which, after an initial success in which a certain ‘faqṭīr called Mukhtar b. Muhammad Jūdat Allāh was killed, Janqal was finally defeated and killed.

In 1745, his son ‘Īsāwī, succeeded where his father had failed. Taking advantage of the preoccupation of Sennar with its war on the eastern borders against Ethiopia, and of Darfur with its internal

---

2. Ibid., p.280. Mūsā's reign is dated here as from 1637 to 1682. In Cadalväne and Breuvery's list the dates are 1701-2 to 1704-5. Al-Tūnusī gives yet another different date - 1715-26. Though al-Tūnusī's dates seem to be more acceptable, he does not seem to have included all the years before and after Mūsā was temporarily deposed. Nachtigal states that he had ruled, in all, for about 45 years. His defeat and death appeared in Ṭabaqāt, ed. Y.F. Hasan, p.345, and attributed to a curse resulting from Janqal's killing of al-Faqīh Mukhtar b. Muhammad Jūdat Allāh. No date is given for the death of Janqal, but the date 1603 given by Cadalväne and Breuvery seems to be a century too early.
3. The preparations to meet the threat of an invasion by Iyāsū II in 1743-4 are described in Makhtūtät Kitāb al-Shūna, ed. al-Shātir Buṣaylī, p.21.
troubles,1 'Īsāwī marched to conquer central Kordofan. The Funj were offended and Bāḍī IV, who had just returned victorious from his engagement with the Ethiopians, immediately despatched an army to check 'Īsāwī's advance. Thus in 1747, an army led by some 'Abdallābi dignitaries, accompanied by Muhammad Abū Likaylik,2 the commander of the Funj cavalry, and Khamīs b. Jangał3 left Sennar for that purpose. In the two bloody battles which followed in Qihayf and Shamaqta, the Funj army was severely beaten and its leaders 'Abdallāh walad Tōma, the wāżîr, 'Abdallāh Rās Taira walad 'Ajb and his brother Shammām walad 'Ajb were all killed. It was only through the courage and cool-headedness of Muhammad Abū Likaylik that the Funj army was saved from a complete and humiliating disaster.4 'Īsāwī then started to settle at al-Rīl. But instead of consolidating his position there, he was anxious to use his newly found strength in a bid for the throne of Darfur. This proved in the end to be a very disastrous adventure. He was utterly defeated and his army was dispersed.5 On the other hand, his uncle Mustafā, whom he had entrusted with the government of Kordofan, proved to be disloyal. A conspiracy was hatched between this Mustafā and a certain 'Alī al-Karrār of the Ghidayyāt who had been sent by the Funj to reconquer Kordofan. Thus 'Alī al-Karrār abandoned his army and allowed the Funj to be massacred at Mitaiwi and 'Īsāwī was murdered - possibly

1. Reference is here made to the troubles around 1745 when the sons of Ahmad Bakr were robbed of their right to the throne in favour of their cousin 'Umar Layl. See Nachtigal, Sahara, op.cit., 284-5.
on orders of Mustafā — on his way back from his last campaign.¹

Mustafā then declared himself independent ruler of Kordofan; but his rule soon became unpopular and the province was once again plunged into a new phase of instability and unrest.

In 1755 the Funj despatched an army under the leadership of Muhammad Abū Likaylik who was able to reconquer Kordofan for the Funj without much resistance, and became governor of that province. His rule there was said to have been fair and just and very well remembered long after he had gone.² Internal troubles in Sennar, however, soon forced Abū Likaylik in 1760 to abandon Kordofan and return to settle matters in the capital of the sultanate.³ Once there, he found himself more and more involved in the intricate problems of Sennar, and the real government of Kordofan was left to his nephew Bādī wad Rajab. Then, when Abū Likaylik died in 1776, Sennar politics forced Bādī wad Rajab to go there in his turn leaving Kordofan to his young nephew Dakīn and a guardian, Muhammad wad Kannayr. Hāshim b. 'Īsāwī who had by this time succeeded to the leadership of the Musabba'āt was tempted to invade the province and regain his father's possessions. With the help of dissatisfied nomadic tribes and some assistance from Darfur, he marched over Kordofan and captured its capital, El-Obeid. He was hardly settled there when in 1780 he was forced to retreat north-westwards away from an advancing Funj army led by Rajab b. Muhammad Abū Likaylik. Rajab then secured central Kordofan for the Funj for six years, but in

1786, again the troubles of Sennar demanded the return of this governor of Kordofan with his troops. 1 Hashim was quick to seize the opportunity and was back in El-Obeid as soon as the Funj army had left. But he was not destined to remain there for long. The Sultan of Darfur, Tayrāb 2 had soon come to chase him out of it.

According to al-Tūnisī, 3 Tayrāb's invasion of Kordofan was prompted by the unfriendly activities of Hāshim near the eastern borders of Darfur. His real reasons, however, were more complicated and had very much to do with the internal affairs of Darfur itself. To secure an easy succession to the throne for his son Ishaq, Tayrāb planned this big campaign which he led himself and took with him every possible strong candidate to that throne. Tayrāb had an easy victory, but soon after the end of the campaign, the Fur became weary of Kordofan and wanted to return to their home. In 1789 Tayrāb suddenly became ill and died soon afterwards. The first thing his successor, 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Rashīd 4 did was to return with the army to Darfur, and Kordofan was once more abandoned to Hāshim of the Musabba'āt. This was only a short interlude, after which the Fur once again came back in a big army led jointly by Muhammad Kurra and Ibrahim b. Rammād, probably in 1791. 5 Hāshim refused to give battle to them and quickly withdrew from Kordofan, leaving it to be governed jointly by Kurra and wad Rammād for the Fur. In 1796 Hāshim made another appearance in Kordofan when a conflict between its two

---

1. See Ta'rikh Mutḥak Simmār, ed. Shibeika, pp.9-10.
2. Sultan of Darfur 1762-3, 1785-6, Cadalvène and Breuvery dates. 1768-1787 in Shuqair, and 1752-1785 in Nachtigal.
4. Sultan of Darfur 1789-90, and 1799-80, according to Cadalvène and Breuvery; 1787-1801 according to al-Tūnisī.
governors gave him the impression that the position of the Fur there was weakening. To check any further menace by Hāshim, the Sultan of Darfur, 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Rashīd despatched his eunuch Maqdūm Musallam with an army to go and fight this Musabba‘āwī even if he had to chase him up to Egypt. Hāshim again slipped out of Kordofan and the province remained as part of the Fur domains until it was conquered by the Turco-Egyptian armies in 1821. During this period of Fur rule, and particularly at the time when Maqdūm Musallam was governor, Kordofan enjoyed some years of peace and prosperity. More people came to settle there, particularly from Dongola and the Gezira, encouraged by this state of affairs, and trade was greatly revived. Those years of peace and prosperity came to an end when, in 1821, a Turco-Egyptian army led by Muhammad Bey Khusrū al-Daftardār came to conquer that province for Muhammad 'Alī of Egypt.

Under the Turco-Egyptian administration, though there was some sort of stability as far as the government of the province was concerned, the general feeling of unrest took other forms. Kordofan, like other parts of the Sudan during this era, was subjected to a great deal of oppression and maladministration. People were excessively taxed and the methods applied in the collection of those taxes were harsh and inhumane. As a result of this, the inhabitants, especially the nomads, began to move away from the areas where the government could reach them. They found it necessary to drive their herds and penetrate further south, thus coming into contact with the Nūba and the inhabitants of the Southern Sudan.

1. Ibid., p.331. See also note 73.
2. J. Petherick, Egypt, the Sudan and Central Africa, p.269-72, describes this period as "The happiest era of its existence."
Another aspect of this Turco-Egyptian administration was its involvement in and encouragement of the slave trade and slave raidings. Twice annually the government sent raiding parties to the Nuba mountains to bring slaves to be recruited into the army as *jihādiyya*. The effect of those raids and the recruitment of slaves in the army helped a great deal in breaking the tribal institutions in the Nuba mountains and in bringing about a noticeable social change.

Of this general history of Kordofan during this period therefore, little more can be said than that rulers of both Darfur and Sennar regarded that region as a province of their respective kingdoms, though without real justification. The Musabba'at, on the other hand, originally emigrants from Darfur who managed to establish some presence in Kordofan, considered themselves subject to neither, and steadily consolidated their power. Twice they came close to establishing a kingdom there, but were forced to abandon it by the Funj and the Ghidayyat, or by the Fur. Although there was some peace and stability towards the end of this period, under the Fur, which encouraged immigration to Kordofan, the Turco-Egyptian rule which followed brought about new forms of pressure and unrest in the region.

The Religious Factor

The third factor in the development of Kordofan was a religious one. Towards the close of the eighteenth century, Kordofan was growing into a frontier of Islamicization. The margin of Islamic territory in the Nilotic Sudan has been, and still is, continually shifting south and westwards since the Arabs came into contact with the Nubians after
the conquest of Egypt early in the seventh century A.D. A gradual but continuous penetration of Arab "or Arabized" Muslims has transplanted the frontier of Islam into the interior by stages. A certain pattern can be observed in the development of these stages and in the shifting of the frontier from one stage to the other: agents of the Islamic faith (mainly nomads and traders) migrated into the neighbouring lands, settled and intermarried with the local population many of whom adopted their religion, customs and their Arabic language. Gradually the territory was nominally Islamized: then in a second phase it would be properly Islamized, and a new frontier would start further inland and the same process repeated all over again.

Two approaches have been taken to explain this pattern: one with much emphasis on the religious motivation and the importance of individual missionaries is best represented by Y.F. Hasan, and the other emphasizing the commercial and cultural contacts, is that of J.S. Trimingham.

Hasan suggests that the main impact of the Arab migratory movement was exhausted in Nubia. When that area was sufficiently Arabized and Islamized, "Educated Nubians migrated further south to areas where the Arab migratory movement had just spent itself and where the process of Islamization had hardly begun". Thus, when the area north of the confluence of the two Niles was sufficiently Islamized, produced a number of jurists and Sufi missionaries who continued the job of Islamization in the Gezira, and later in the west. A two-way

1. Trimingham, *Islam in the Sudan*, p.100, states that it must be emphasized that the spread of Islam in Africa has always been the work of Africans and chiefly Hamites whatever Arab blood they had in them.
2. See Y.S. Hasan, "External Islamic influences...in the Eastern Sudan". *Sudan in Africa*, p.73.
traffic was maintained between the newly-Islamized area and the old Islamic centres to revive and revitalize the faith. Teachers, jurists and reformers came to the new areas from the old centres, and students came from the new areas to be educated there, and returned to their homes to take their share in the process.

Associated with this process of Islamization in marginal areas, was the phenomenon of the "wise stranger", probably an Arabized Muslim who settled among non-Arabs taught them new civilized habits and was thus accepted in the new home as a "wise stranger". Then after marrying into the indigenous population, he benefited from the practice of matrilineal succession and inherited a position of wealth and leadership.¹

Hasan then gives a number of names associated with the development of these stages and with the shifting of the frontiers of Islamization. Thus Ghulām Allāh b. 'Āid and Hamad Abū Dunnāna were associated with Dongola as learned Muslims who came from old centres, while Ibrāhim al-Bīlād and Mahmūd al-'Arakī were examples of students who went from the new areas and came back as 'ulamā'. Not only individuals, but also some families became part of this process. Thus the Rikābiya, the Dawālīb, the family of Sh. Abū Safiyya and that of al-Faqīh Bushāra al-Gharbāwī were all instrumental in this process of Islamization.²

Trimingham, however, suggests that the personal missionary work of traders and faqīhs has been overstressed, and that the religious factor

was given more importance than was its due. Instead he emphasized
the more pragmatic factors of commercial and cultural contacts: "The
nomad Arab, who is rarely fanatical and completely devoid of missionary
zeal makes no attempt at proselytization. The spread of Islam was
mainly through penetration, marriage, a strategic policy of winning
chiefs and group leaders (which includes forcible measures), trade and
the appropriation of slaves. As in the early days of the primary
Islamic conquest, conversion to Islam connected the convert with the
Arab tribal system as a client".¹

Arab penetration into the Nilotic Sudan, he suggests, was only
limited to a few nomadic tribes who settled in Nubia, wherefrom
Islamization, and Islam, spread into the interior by the Hamites "as the
civilization of aristocratic African people". Being Africans themselves
and possessing no prejudices or discriminations of any sort, they were
able to intermarry with the local population and live a common social
life with them. A continuous process of cultural and social change
took place as the Islamic frontier came into contact with the African
breaking down his existing social institutions and creating new social
groups. A number of factors combined to undermine the existing tribal
and social institutions and exposed the African to the wind of change.
Slave raiding and penetration by nomads and traders broke down his tribal
system, undermined his cultural and religious institutions leaving him
open to the temptations of a new and higher status. Daily practices
and behaviour of traders and *faqṭhs* demonstrated the actions of a more
attractive social system and a higher culture. A very lively
demonstration of this process in action can be seen in the example given

by J.W. Crowfoot in his description of the social change taking place among the Nuba of the Eastern Hills of Taqali. He observed that they began to wear clothes, to speak a good deal of Arabic and that some of them had pretended to Arab pedigrees. They also abandoned their habit of eating pigs, which is forbidden by Islam, and began to look down upon the "naked Nuba". They adopted Muhammadan customs with regards to weddings, rites, circumcision and the practice of infibulation.\(^1\)

It seems that a number of factors have all combined and contributed to this process of Islamization and continuous forward movement of the margin of Islamic territory and no single factor can be considered as decisive or more important than the others. Thus commercial interest, cultural contacts, religious zeal and individual missionary efforts have all contributed to this process from one stage to the other.

The frontier of Islamization was stabilized by the sixteenth century, roughly around lat.13°N,\(^2\) where it remained for three centuries before it started to shift again towards the beginning of the nineteenth century. During these three centuries, Kordofan was passing through the process of proper Islamization, which characterized earlier stages in the Sudan, and which transformed its frontiers into a marginal territory ready for the new phase to start.

The awakening of the activities in this frontier during the nineteenth century came as a result of various factors: important population movements brought about some profound social changes; political change was another active force; and a religious revival was a third one.

\(^1\) J.W. Crowfoot, "Further notes on pottery", *S.N.R.*, VIII, 125.
\(^2\) It seems that this has come to be generally accepted. See P.M. Holt, "Holy families", *P.N.E.P.*, No.4, p.1.
Three important population movements affected Kordofan during this period. The first of these was that of the riverain tribes from Dongola southwards and westwards into the Gezira, Kordofan and Darfur. Though this process had been going on for decades, it was increased during this period, particularly when the Shaiqiya raids had threatened the trade routes along the Nile and the livelihood of the tribes which lived there. Many inhabitants of Dongola moved to Kordofan and Darfur and Browne, who visited the latter region in 1793–4, noticed that the Danagla were a sizeable community in Cobbe and were an important element in the social and economic life of the sultanate.

The second movement was that of the Baqqara, who during the eighteenth century had found their way into some parts of Kordofan, and were very active in slave raiding in this area, especially in the Nuba mountains.

The third movement was that of the pilgrims from Darfur and further west, known in the Sudan as Fallātā or Takārīr, who came across the Sudan to the Red Sea and thence to Mecca. This process had also been going on for a long time, and was only interrupted for a short while during the Mahdia. The journey of the Takārīr to Mecca often took years as they walked and worked their way through it. They therefore made some settlements which became a permanent feature of many Sudanese towns along their routes.

The political change came with the Turco-Egyptian administration. This had helped a great deal in undermining the tribal, social and economic systems through the imposition of high taxation, the use of oppressive methods and the encouragement of slave traffic.

1. For more on the description of these population movements and their impact on the course of Sudanese history, see P.M. Holt, *The Mahdist State*, pp.9-12.
The religious revival had its origins outside the Sudan, however, but its effects were soon felt and it generated an activity which was very instrumental in this process. The general feeling of awakening and need for revival of the Islamic faith which took shape in the Wāḥābī movement and the reawakening of Sufism began to be felt throughout the whole of the Islamic world towards the close of the eighteenth century. The ideas of Ahmad b. Idrīs al-Ñāṣī began to reach the Sudan through a number of his disciples, one of whom was Muhammad 'Uthmān I who first introduced Sh. Ismā'īl to the Sufi path.

To conclude, Kordofan, during the time of Sh. Ismā'īl can be described as a border zone by virtue of its geographical position, its historical and religious development. The nature of that frontier zone should, however, be dealt with in brief in order to explain the kind of society that existed there and the nature of its people.

The frontiersmen are men who should be rated above the average for courage and initiative. In Kordofan this was demonstrated by the attitude of the riverain groups who settled there. They played a more active part in the Mahdīa than their kin who stayed at home. Their courage and endurance found its way into folk songs: a popular song praising the courage of some men from the village of Abū Juwaylī who went to Kordofan, is very well known and sung in many parts of the Nile valley.

Culturally this region turned into a cultural watershed subjected to the influence of the Hijāz and Egypt on the one hand, and that of al-

2. The song starts with the verses:

"Iyāl Abū Juwaylī al-kambalū wa 'adalū fī Dār Kordfān itgharrabū wa satarū darbu al jūn 'adīl dā'il hāsha ma dailū lī banāt al-balad samh al-khabar jābū".
Maghrib and West Africa on the other. Ideas from the north and the east were carried to Kordofan by traders, students who went to the Gezira and even as far as al-Azhar for education, and by faqīhs who came to settle there. From the Maghrib and West Africa, ideas were carried in by pilgrims and itinerant faqīhs, many of whom were Shanāqīt\(^1\) or Takārīr\(^2\).

Religiously this frontier region had attracted a number of fanatics and Sufi missionaries, as well as enthusiastic faqīhs such as Abū Safiyya, 'Arabi, Kantīsh, al-Dalīl and Jōdat Allāh\(^3\). It also attracted a number of holy families, such as Awlād Dolīb,\(^4\) the Rikābiyya\(^5\) and the Suwarāb.\(^6\)

With no established religious orders and no old holy families, Kordofan offered a good chance for those new arrivals to set new seeds for these orders and to strike new roots for their holy families.

---

1. Light-skinned religious men who came to the Sudan from north-west Africa, especially from Mauritania, and often claimed Sharīfī origins and were looked upon as carriers of baraka.
2. These came mainly as pilgrims on their way to Mecca, but settled down in the Sudan, see above p.36. In the Sudan they have gained a reputation as exorcists and they are the main followers of the Tijāniyya tarīqa.
3. All these faqīhs have got qubbas in El-Obeid except Jōdat Allāh, for whom see Tabaqat, ed. Y.F. Hasan, p.130.
6. Some of the descendents of Muhammad b. 'Isā Suwarāb al-Dahab, Tabaqat, p.347. Through their contact with Muhammad 'Uthmān I, the Suwarāb became and still are the principal Khalīfas of the Khatimyya in Kordofan.
CHAPTER II

THE FOUNDER OF THE TARíqa SHAYKH ISMÁ'IL

AL-WALI (1207-80/1793-1863)

The pedigree of Sh. Ismá'íl represents him as being the descendant in the fifth generation of al-Faqq Bushára al-Gharbáwi.¹ The genealogical work of his son Ahmad al-Azhari² tells us that Bushára was a holy man who lived in the first half of the twelfth/seventeenth century; that he descended from the Ja'áli ruling family - his predecessor being the kings of al-Dufár - and that he was linked directly with al-Makk Násir, the founder of the Maknasriyya branch who had their independent ṭaqiyya.³ Bushára, however, became famous as a religious man and founded his own clan which came to be called after him, al-Gharbáwiní. After Bushára Ahmad tells us that the fame of al-Gharbáwiní continued to grow, and that they accumulated enormous wealth and power, but not much seems to be recorded, and although the gap between Bushára and Ismá'íl is only five generations, we find very little information about them apart from al-Azhari's account and a few sometimes contradictory oral traditions and family anecdotes.⁴ Few as they are, both Ahmad's account and those oral traditions seem to be complicated and often confusing because of the habit amongst the family, more than many other Sudanese, of using the same name and popular title.

1. See al-Nash'á al-Ismá'íliyya (the obituary) of Sh. Ismá'íl which states that he is "Sh. Ismá'íl b. 'Abdulláhi b. Ismá'íl b. 'Abd al-Rahím Baba b. al-Hajj Hamad b. al-Faqq Bushára al-Gharbáwi". Ms. Sud. Govt. Archives (Khartoum), 1/83/1310.
2. See Ahmad al-Azhari, Khulasat al-iqtibájí, Ms. Sud. Govt. Archives (Khartoum), 1/14/75. This Ms. also appears translated in H. MacMichael, Arabs, Vol.II, AB.
3. Ṭaqiyya (head-cap) was one of the insignia of kingship in the Funj Sultanate. See O.G.S. Crawford, The Fung Kingdom, App.15, and N. Shuqair, Ta'rikh, II, 100.
4. One such tradition is the story which tries to explain the sudden departure of this family and associate it with an implication by al-Faqíh Muhammad wad Dálib after a quarrel between his descendants and Awlád Bushára. The outcome of this implication was that the family of Bushára were forced to fly away (tāða) from Dongola for good.
for different persons and repeating these in different generations. Thus it became difficult to know with such popular names as Bushāra and Ismāʿīl which one is referred to, and in which time. This seems to be the reason why N. Shuqair got his story about al-Faqīh Bushāra al-Gharbāwī rather confused. In his narrative about the village of al-Hattānī, Shuqair states, "There is an old building far from the Nile known as Hōsh Bāba, built by Bushāra Qaila, the grandfather of the famous Ismāʿīl al-Walī al-Kordofani. It is rumoured that he was notoriously rich, that he had used virgin maidens to build it and that he had spent uncounted money on it".¹ This story, as it is, seems to be distorted in many parts. The use of virgins in building a palace is clearly out of place and obviously contrary to the nature of al-Faqīh Bushāra who is represented as being a holy man; the statement that Bushāra Qaila was the grandfather of Sh. Ismāʿīl is misleading; and the association of Hōsh Bāba with Bushāra Qaila is erroneous. Shuqair seems to be confusing three persons here, namely, al-Faqīh Bushāra al-Gharbāwī, the founder of this holy family; Bushāra Qaila, a grandson of al-Gharbāwī, but not the immediate grandfather of Sh. Ismāʿīl, reputed for his enormous wealth and notorious extravagance; and 'Abd al-Rahīm Bāba, the immediate great-grandfather of Sh. Ismāʿīl, very rich and famous, but not extravagant.² The local traditions about the holiness of al-Gharbāwī, the extravagance of Qaila and the fame of Bāba were all fused into one story in Shuqair's narrative.

The re-establishment of the family in Kordofan, in a new environment and under a new head, Sh. Ismāʿīl, seems to have added to

¹ N. Shuqair, Taʿrīkh, I, 85.
² See genealogical tables, Appendix A, below.
this confusion. A story which took place only a few years before, at the time of Sh. Ismā'īl's father, cannot be clearly verified and its details are mixed up. The narrative of 'Abdullāhī's riding a horse in the presence of a holy man called al-Shaykh 'Arabi, to illustrate a prenatal karama of Sh. Ismā'īl leaves us uncertain about the place and time where and when it happened. As related by the present members of the Ismā'īliyya, the incident seems to have occurred in El-Obeid just before the birth of Sh. Ismā'īl; and it is associated with 'Arabi Makkāwī, a holy man who thrived in El-Obeid in the eighteenth century, and is now buried in a tomb not far from that of Sh. Ismā'īl. But as it is related in al-Azharī's account, the incident seems to have taken place in Dongola and is associated with an unidentified faqīh called 'Arabī of the well-known Rikābiyya clan. The local traditions and family anecdotes about the ancestors of Sh. Ismā'īl should therefore be considered with much caution, and the names, dates and places mentioned in them must be very carefully verified.

Ahmad al-Azharī's account, however, has the advantage of being written by a graduate of al-Azhar and of being presented in a rather sophisticated and organized shape. It is divided into five chapters, each devoted to a specific topic. He deals with the ancestral record of his family mainly in the third chapter, which he devoted to the descendants of Bushāra al-Gharbāwī. In his first chapter, he takes Bushāra's pedigree back to al-'Abbās, but more importantly, he explains in the second chapter how honourable is the kinship with al-'Abbās, uncle of the Prophet Muhammad. The account in these and the other

---

1. Ahmad al-Azharī, Khulāṣat al-īqtiṣād, p. 32. The story as known in El-Obeid was related to me by Šyd. Abu al-Fadl, Šyd. 'Abd al-Hafīz, and Hajj Ahmad al-Fakhr 'Abdalla, in 1975.
three chapters seems to be well researched and sufficiently illustrated and decorated with traditions where necessary. To present it in this shape Ahmad tells us that he had consulted the history books, the genealogical authorities and spent a long time sifting the information he had collected. But in spite of all its beautiful arrangement and illustrated arguments, Ahmad's work does not really add very much to what is generally known about the claim of the Ja'aliyyin to an 'Abbāsī origin. Ahmad's work, in fact, does not seem to have been intended for its historical value, nor was it meant just to clarify the confusion into which his relatives were falling about their real relations as he states in his introductory paragraph. He was anxious from the start to establish three things: the 'Abbāsī Qurayshī origin of his father; a continuous line of holy ancestors through whom the baraka was transferred uninterrupted to Sh. Ismā'īl; and a high social and economic status of their family, which was only matched by their piety and holiness.

Ahmad's intentions to prove their 'Abbāsī origins and his father's desire to assert that, are betrayed in the title chosen for this work, Khulasat al-iqtība fī itṣal nasabina bi'l 'Abbas; and also in the first few introductory lines where al-Azhari states his reasons for writing this genealogy by saying, "...The Imam of the age...my lord and my father...ordered me to make a genealogical record showing every one of the ancestors from whom were variously descended those that were yet alive and to point out all the seeds of our ancestor al-Faki Bishāra al-Ghurbawi...and to carry back his pedigree to al-Sayyid al-

1. See al-Tahir b. 'Abdalla, Ma'arif furū' uguūl al-'Arab, Sud. Archives (Durham), 97/5/1, pp.3-10. Also MacMichael, Arabs, Vol.II, AB, BA and other Ja'ali genealogies there.
"'Abbâs the uncle of the Prophet..."¹ Then he devoted most of his first chapter to the glorification of al-'Abbâs and the honour of all those who descended from him.

The honour of belonging to al-'Abbâs or establishing a shari'î origin had always been a very important prerequisite for any faqîh or ruler who wanted to gain recognition in Sudanese society since the advent of Islam. This became apparent in the Funj sultanate, where both the sultans and faqîhs went to great trouble to trace their origins back to a Sharîf, 'Abbâsî or a Qurayshî link. A number of genealogists were encouraged to come to the Funj sultanate, and many itinerant faqîhs found a very hospitable reception from the sultans who wanted them to write down their ancestral records. Many names such as al-Maghribî and al-Sanhûrî² began to be referred to as unquestioned authorities in genealogies and some works like those of Abî Mahmûd al-Samarqandi³ and Abu Salman 'Abd al-Rahmân al-'Iraqî⁴ were being accepted as authentic references in this field. So important was this claim to the Sharîf origin that some shaykhs who failed to establish good cases through their paternal lineage have tried to do so through their maternal one, or even through a spiritual

2. These two names seem to be very familiar at the time. We can only now identify them with (a) Sh. al-Sanusi al-Maghribi (d.1490), famous for his Risâlas (tracts) on al-'aqîd (the Creed) or possibly Sh. al-Salawi al-Maghribî, one of the 'ulama who accompanied the Turco-Egyptian army in 1820; (b) Salîm b. Muhammad al-Sanhûrî (d.1606) a known commentator on Muhktasâr Khalil. None of these had anything to do with genealogy.
4. Al-Tahir b. 'Abdalla, Ma'rif Furû' usul al-'Arâb, p.2.
adoption by the Prophet.\(^1\)

The importance of finding a Sharīfī, 'Abbāsī or Qurayshī link was not limited to the Nilotic Sudanese people only, but seems to be widespread throughout most parts of Muslim Africa and particularly the Sudanic Belt. Palmer's *Sudanese Memoires*\(^2\) is rich in examples of traditions intended for this purpose of a Sharīfī link.

This search for a Sharīfī origin has always been associated with an idea which has come to be widely accepted in all parts of Muslim Africa; that is the idea of the supremacy of Quraysh and their unchallenged right to both secular and religious leadership in the community.\(^3\) The idea seems to have originated since the early days of the Islamic Empire when the expansion brought the Arabs into contact with many non-Arab peoples who threatened to undermine their Arab culture and traditions. To preserve the Arabic nature of Islam and to keep their privileged status, the Arabs seem to have encouraged this idea of Qurayshī supremacy and right of leadership and many traditions were sought to support it. The Abbasids and the Fatimids later limited this right, the former to Āwlād al-'Abbāsī and the latter to Ahl al-Bayt, and each of these also sought the traditions which supported their case. When Islam came to the Sudan, many of these ideas had already become an accepted part of Islamic culture, and were thus transferred to the Sudan as such. Thus a number of traditions

---

3. A localized form of this idea is reflected in some of the Sudanese proverbs like, *Ast al-fud Juhayna, wa ast al maluk Sennar wa ast al-'izz Ja'al*. 

glorifying Quraysh and praising it found their way into many Sudanese writings, and aspirations for leadership had also come to be linked in their minds with Quraysh and a Sharīfī descent. Another reason for the importance attached to the Sharīfī origin came to the Sudan with the ideas associated with the Mahdi and al-Khatim who were believed to be of Ahl al-Bayt.

Ahmad's desire to establish the 'Abbāsī origin of his kin was obviously sparked by a new development in the history of the family, and the date on which he started to write very significantly indicates this. Ahmad states that the first draft was completed in Jumada II 1263/May 1847. He said that he had been working on it for some years before finishing it, which takes us back to 1260/1844. At this time Sh. Ismā'il was just coming back from pilgrimage. His tariqa was established and his place in the society recognized. What remained was to seal this with the establishment of his 'Abbāsī pedigree and give all this a form of legitimacy. Sh. Ismā'il himself expressed his personal desire of doing this by writing his Dīwān fāmi al-Shathāt

1. See al-Tahir b. 'Abdalla, Ma'ārif furu' usul al-'Arab, Sud.Gov. Arch. (Durham) 97/5/11, pp.9-10, and al-Azhari, Khulāṣat al-iqtibās Sud.Gov. Arch. (Khartoum) 1/14/75, p.8, for traditions like "Qaddımū Quraysh walā taqaddamūha, wa'lllamū min Quraysh walā tu'allimūhā..." and "Man arād thānat Quraysh aḥānahu Allāh".

2. This is discussed in more detail in our Chap.III, "The Ismā'īliyya and the Mahdia", below.

3. This is the date when the first draft of the work was completed - see al-Azhari, Khulāṣat al-iqtibās, p.3. Ahmad states that he had spent a number of years after that revising that draft until he wrote it in its final form. The date he puts for its completion (1207) - see last page of Ms. - was obviously wrong. MacMichael must have reached his date 1853 by correcting this date to read 1270 instead of 1207. See H. MacMichael, Arabs, Vol.II, AB.
which is full of praise for himself and glorification of his role.\(^1\)

Ahmad al-Azhari was writing this pedigree mainly to augment this new-found status and strengthen it.\(^2\) To do this Ahmad was not only anxious to trace their 'Abbāsi origin, but also to remind the reader continuously of Sh. Ismā'īl's honour and high status. His work is thus full of titles of honour and glorification, like al-Ustād, imām al 'Aṣr wa l tariqa, mujaddid 'ulūm al-Shari'a and Ustād al-namān.

He is also very keen on explaining why they came to be called al-Gharbāwinji to dismiss any possible confusion that may lead to the idea that their origin was in al-Gharb, i.e. the western Sudan and weaken their claim to the 'Abbāsi link.

The second thing which Ahmad wanted to establish was a continuous chain of holy ancestors who transferred the baraka\(^3\) to his father. To do this, he went to great trouble to single out each of his ancestors, starting with Bushāra, who were directly connected with his father, and showed how this baraka was transferred through them, and even supported that with suitable anecdotes where necessary. Thus, Bushāra's father, 'Ali Bursī was selected out of his brothers to be represented as a very religious person who learnt the Qur'ān by heart and encouraged his son Bushāra to follow his example. When Ibrāhīm al-Bulād\(^4\) came to the Island of Turunj in Dongola, Bushāra as a young boy went to study under his guidance. As a holy man, Bushāra became

---

1. Ms. Sh. Ismā'īl, Dīwān jāmi' Shatahāt, Sud. Gov. Archives (Khartoum)
3. Baraka, meaning 'benediction; blessing or holiness' in the Sudanese Islamic sense, is granted by God to those whom He chooses and it enables them to perform miracles. Baraka is possessed in its highest degree by the wažis who, it is generally believed in the Sudan, are able to transmit it to their successors.
4. One of the sons of Jābir, who played a very important role in the proper Islamization of the Northern Sudan. See P.M. Holt, "The Sons of Jabir", BSOAS, XXX, 1967, and Tabaqat, ed. Y.F. Hasan, p.45.
so famous that by 1145/1732-3, the Funj Sultan Bādi b. Nūl gave him a big plot of land in recognition of his holiness and in a bid to gain his favours and baraka. Of Bushāra’s two sons, al-Hajj Hamad was chosen rather than Muhammad to be the carrier of this baraka. Of Muhammad nothing much is said, and his descendants are only mentioned in connection with their riches and extravagance.1 Hamad, on the other hand, is shown as a very religious man whom God had given great wealth, which Hamad in turn spent in gaining divine favour. He repeatedly went on pilgrimage until he numbered seven visits, each time taking with him many members of his household. The next person selected for this honour from amongst the numerous sons of al-Hajj Hamad is 'Abd al-Rahim, bāba. The name bāba itself is linked with his visit to the Holy Lands to add to his baraka. It is related that when he was in Jedda as a young boy with his father on one of his visits to Mecca, there were some a'ajīm2 (non-Arabs) attending to 'Abd al-Rahim's mother. These used to call him bāba as a sign of respect. Since that time, the name stuck to him and he began to be known by it. 'Abd al-Rahim is also associated with some ṭādāt (taboos)

1. See Ahmad’s reference to Bushāra Qailla in Khulāqat al-īqṭībās, p.25.
2. The use of a'ajīm needs to be explained here since it is often used in most Arabic texts to refer to the Persians who earned the title by virtue of their being the first non-Arabs to come in touch with the Arabs. Ahmad here must be using it in its Sudanese context which refers mainly to the non-Arabic speaking people from the Sudanic Belt, more commonly called Fallātā, who could possibly be in the household of Hajj Hamad as attendants. Another probability is that it could be referring to the Beja tribes where the use of the title bāba for respect was common. One of their famous kings who fought against the Muslim armies led by ibn al-Qummi during the reign of al-Mutawakkil, was called 'Alī bāba. See N. Daftar, "The Medallion of al-Mutawakkil", The Numismatic Chronicle, 1977. All Hajj Hamad’s trips on pilgrimage were through Beja lands to Egypt and then Mecca. And still another possible explanation is that he could be referring to some Turks whom Hajj Hamad had met in Mecca. These Turks could have given him this name bāba, which they often use for reverence.
which were kept in the family until Sh. Ismā'īl came to break them and these are quoted also as some of the karamat of Sh. Ismā'īl. It is related that when a baby was born to 'Abd al-Rahim, he slew a hundred heads of each kind of domestic animals for the child's naming ceremony. Only seven days after that, the child died. Since that incident, these ceremonies became ḥadat (taboos) for the members of that family until Sh. Ismā'īl came to abolish them and revive the tradition of entertaining his guests to a big feast on the occasion of naming his sons.

Other than 'Abd al-Rahim Bāba, the rest of Hamad's sons were mentioned only in connection with their wealth, except al-Khawāja whose daughter Khalīsa was the grandmother of Sh. Ismā'īl. Al-Khawāja is shown as a religious man and ten of his sons are said to have memorized the Qur'ān. Khalīsa herself was endowed with baraka and her maternal uncle, al-Faqih Abū Salāma told her in a prophecy that one of her descendants would be a holy man who would outshine all others. Since then people began to look out for the realization of that prophecy until Sh. Ismā'īl was born.

After 'Abd al-Rahim Bāba, the baraka passed to his only son, Ismā'īl after whom Sh. Ismā'īl himself was named. From Ismā'īl the baraka then passed to 'Abdullāhi who is said to have studied under a very pious walī called al-Hajj 'Arabī, a descendant of the famous

1. Ahmad al-Azhari, Khulaṣat al-iqtibās, p.29.  
2. A number of stories have been cited in Ṭabaqāt about such prenatal prophecies. See Ṭabaqāt, ed., Y.F. Ḥasan, notices of Abū Sinayna, p.89, Mukhtar Abū 'Inayya, p.446, and Makkī al-Daqlāshi, p.332. Both Azhari and Wad Dayfalla must have had in mind such similar stories mentioned in the books of al-Sīra of the Prophet.
Habīb Nāsir al-Riṣākī. Hajj 'Arabī was said to have been pleased with 'Abdullāhī and even made a prophecy that his son would grow to outshine all the shaykhīs of his time. \(^2\)

The third thing which al-Azhari wanted to assert in addition to their honourable pedigree and their unbroken chain of holy ancestors, was the social and economic prestige of that family. Thus he tells us that Sh. Ismā'īl had come from a very wealthy family which handed its riches from one generation to the other until the time of Sh. Ismā'īl. It was in keeping with this desire to emphasize the wealth and influence enjoyed by this family that Sh. Ismā'īl is represented as a very rich man who could afford to slay sixty rams in a feast to celebrate the naming of his eldest son Mohammad al-Makki, and another forty and a bull for the naming ceremony of Ahmad himself. \(^3\)

Ahmad's account of the wealth of his family could be exaggerated, and his description of the riches of his father may now be questioned in the light of what has been written by D'Escayrac de Lütüre, who had met Sh. Ismā'īl in El-Obeid in 1849. \(^4\)

The Early Life of Sh. Ismā'īl

Sh. Ismā'īl was born the eldest son in a family of four, two boys and two girls. \(^5\) Famous though his predecessors might have been before,
the reputation and power of the family when Sh. Ismā'Il was born by 1792, had surely declined and its fame was evidently reduced. His father 'Abdullāhi was hardly known in El-Obeid and he could scarcely make any claim to a reputable position in that region, either by virtue of his wealth or his piety. After his death he was even further neglected, and very little is now known about him; not even the place in which he was buried.

'Abdullāhi was the first member of the family to settle in Kordofan. He came there as a trader, and then made his home in El-Obeid where his son Ismā'Il was destined to revive the family reputation under a new name. The circumstances in which 'Abdullāhi had left Dongola are not clear, and the works of al-Azhari and Shuqair give very little help in this connection. In fact, Ahmad's account takes us through the history of the family, both in Dongola and Kordofan, as though they were one and the same region, and he does not make any reference to a change in the social or economic status of that family. Shuqair deals with them in two different places in his book, and treats them as two different groups, that of al-Faqīh Bushāra and that of Sh. Ismā'Il, without making any effort to bridge the gap between them. He makes a reference to the change of the family fortune, and clearly states that their once famous ḥāsh has now been reduced to ruins; but he does not attempt to explain how and when it happened, nor does he venture to suggest any link between this change of fortune and 'Abdullāhi's emigration from Dongola. 'Abdullāhi's emigration and the loss of power and prestige of his family, should not, however, be considered in

1. N. Shuqair, Ta'rikh, 1/139.
2. See A. al-Azhari, Khulāṣat al-īqtibās, p.32.
3. N. Shuqair, Ta'rikh, 1/85 and 1/139.
isolation of what was taking place in that region in the second half of the eighteenth century. The decline of the Funj sultanate, the raids of the Shayqiya and the disruption of trade along the Nile, referred to earlier, had all contributed to the emigration of many inhabitants out of Dongola. The departure of the family of Bushāra should be viewed in the light of this exodus. 'Abdullāhi, probably the head of the remaining family of Bushāra, then very much reduced in wealth and power, was part of the waves of riverain tribesmen whose fortunes had turned in their homeland and who were coming to Kordofan looking for a new and better life. It was in such a modest family of a riverain frontiersman that Sh. Ismā’Il was born, rather than the big and wealthy one which is suggested in al-Azhari’s account.

As a young boy, Sh. Ismā’Il started his education in the Khalwa and showed a great interest and desire to learn. He memorized the Qur’ān even before reaching manhood. In addition to that, he learnt Arabic, religious laws and related subjects. He must have studied under a number of known faqīhs who were teaching in El-Obeid at that time, like al-Hajj 'Arabī Makkāwī, al-Faqīh Dalīf and others; but neither Sh. Ismā’Il, nor his son Ahmad, ever mentioned any of those who taught Sh. Ismā’Il by name. Rather than that, Sh. Ismā’Il states "....I was educated at the hands of some eminent, respectable and pious shaykhs from whom I learnt some of the earthly sciences like usūl, fiqih, ancillary subjects and suchlike". Ahmad who at one time went out of

his way to give a lengthy account of Ibrahim al-Bulād, the teacher of his grandfather Bushāra al-Ghārbāwī, declines to mention any of those who taught his father. This silence about the teachers of Sh. Ismā'īl may be intended to strengthen the idea, often advocated by his descendants and followers, that his real education was of a higher status and that it was 'Ilm Ladunī i.e., given directly from God. Getting this 'ilm ladunī is one of the greatest privileges to which a faqīḥ may aspire, since it raises him to a status close to that of al-Khādir who is very highly regarded by the Sufis; and also associates him with the Prophet Muhammad who did not have any formal education. Claims to this special privilege have been made by many faqīḥs in the Sudan and the Tabaqat of Wad Dayf Allah has a number of these to tell. Sh. Ismā'īl's desire to be associated with this special heavenly knowledge is expressed in a number of his writings in which he explains how these favours may descend by the grace of God on a person if he works rightly and hard for that purpose. He showed how he himself had done that, and how he was rewarded.

As a young man, Sh. Ismā'īl spent most of his life in Kordofan and never left it for any other place in search of knowledge, and so his education was limited to what he could get in that part of the Sudan at that time. This was limited to the traditional Islamic subjects which begin with the memorization of the whole, or some parts

2. The story which is often quoted in support of this 'ilm ladunī is that of al-Khādir in Qur'ān (18:65), "(فَخَضَبَهَا عَبْدُهُمُّ عِيَادَانِ) كَذَٰلِكَ الْحَبَشَاءُ لَمَّا كَفَّرَ". See also J. Wensinck, "Al-Khādir", Encyclopedia of Islam, 11, 2, 861-5.
of the Qur'ān and Traditions, then Fiqh and Tawhīd, then a few related subjects like Arabic, arithmetic and a little astrology. The teachers of these subjects were unoriginal, uncreative and very limited in scope to the ideas which they found in the orthodox Islamic literature, which they learnt and reproduced without any discussion.

The majority of these faqīhs did not take teaching as a full-time profession, and they often mixed it with trade or agricultural activities. This left them very little time to devote to the luxury of studies in philosophy, science or any such controversial subjects. Even in the orthodox Islamic subjects of usūl (Qur'ān and Sunna), fiqh (religious law) and tawhīd (theology) no critical studies of the standard texts had been attempted. Thus the Risāla of Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qirawanī (d.996), and al-Mukhtasar (abridgement) by Khalil (d.1374), were considered the pinnacles of learning in fiqh; and the three tracts of al-Sanūsī al-Maghribī were the climax in al-Tawhīd. No one ever dared to question their contents, express a personal opinion or pass a judgment on the value of knowledge presented by the authors of these books. Any faqīh who could only manage to write a Sharḥ (commentary), a hāshiya (glossary), or an ikhtisār (abridgement) was highly praised for that kind of effort.

1. Sh. Ismā'īl, al-'Uhūd al-Ḥafiya, p.4, referring to the subjects which he had studied there mentioned the usūl (i.e. Qur'ān and Sunna), Fiqh and Ğa (ancillary subjects) al-Qirawanī.
2. Abdullahi Abu Muhammad b. Abī Zayd al-Qirawanī, one of the most prominent shaykh of the Mālikī madhhab wrote a number of books and tracts, most famous of which was his al-Risāla.
3. Khalil b. Ḫisāq b. Mūsa b. Shu'ayb is another famous Mālikī shaykh in Egypt. He composed his Mukhtasar in this madhhab and became famous for it.
4. These are known as (a) Risalat ahl al-tawhīd; (b) Umm al-barāhin or al-Sanūsīya al-Sughra; and (c) al-Murehīda or al-Sanūsīya a ṭusta.
Kordofan did not see any blossoming of Islamic schools like those of the Funj sultanate in Dongola and the Gezira, but a few students from Kordofan who sought education in those comparatively older Islamic centres came back to their homes to set up their own Khalwas. In Tabaqat we are told that Jodat Alla of Banī Muhammad who lived in al-Zalata, north-east of El-Obeid, in Dār-al-Rīh, had come to study in the Gezira under al-Faqīh Muhammad al-Qaddāl. He then returned and established his own centre there and after his death his son Mukhtar continued his work. Then there were Joda and al-Dūma of Banī 'Umrān, who studied under Shaykh Sughayrun in al-Qoz near Shendi. These names mentioned in the Tabaqat should not, however, lead us to think that they have made any new contributions or innovations. Their Khalwas were not more than smaller copies of the original centres where they had studied. Thus Sh. Ismā'īl in Kordofan, could only come in touch with a limited religious and cultural experience. The effect of this on his tarīqa was to make it also very limited and very much localized in outlook.

The next stage in Sh. Ismā'īl's life was when he himself became a faqīh. In addition to teaching the Qur'ān to the young children, he was devoting much of his time to the recitation of the Qur'ān, praying for the Prophet and other acts of worship. One function of the faqīh, however, did not appeal to him and he very much disapproved of it: that is, the writing of amulets. Though it was a very lucrative job at that time, he considered it degrading to use the verses of Qur'ān to harm some people or to achieve some worldly gains.5

1. Ibid., notice No.60(A), p.130.
2. Ibid., notice No.20, p.79.
3. Ibid., notice No.60(B), p.130.
4. Ibid., notice No.14, p.73.
5. See Sh. Ismā'īl, Tahdhīr al-Salikīn, Ms. Sud.Govt. Archives (Khartoum), 1/82/1334.
At this stage, Sh. Ismā'īl was following an energetic devotional life. He tells us that he was subjecting himself to a very rigorous discipline by keeping the nights reciting the Qur'ān and praying for the Prophet. Sometimes he would recite the whole Book, and at others he would read only parts of it; then after finishing that he would turn to the prayer for the Prophet until the break of dawn. He continued to do so until he met Muhammad 'Uthmān al-Mirghānī who initiated him in the Khatmiyya tariqa.

When Muhammad 'Uthmān came to Kordofan in Shawwāl (Shawwāl 1231/September 1816) Sh. Ismā'īl became one of his devoted followers. Once initiated, Sh. Ismā'īl showed much enthusiasm and soon became a very active member in the order. Muhammad 'Uthmān was so impressed by his devotion that he chose him to be a mursīd (director) and encouraged him to attract more people to their tariqa. During Muhammad 'Uthmān's absence in the Gezira, Sh. Ismā'īl exerted himself in recruiting followers, and in organizing the tariqa. When Muhammad 'Uthmān returned to El-Obeid, he found that Sh. Ismā'īl had, as he puts it, "....set the tariqa in the most perfect form and in the best organization. I recruited many followers who are keenly bent on worshipping God and eagerly seeking gnosis. While he was still with us, I attained perfection and before his departure I attended the hadrāt [colloquia of saints] and became one of the heads of the diwān [register of saints] by the Grace of God. I became a master directing to God and leading towards Him".

1. See Sh. Ismā'īl, al-'Uḥūd al-Waṭiya, p.5
2. Muhammad 'Uthmān I al-Mirghānī, was one of the disciples of Ahmad b. Idrīs who was sent to propagate his ideas in the Sudan. There he (al-Mirghānī) managed to establish his own tariqa, which came to be known as al-Khatmiyya.
Muhammad 'Uthman's stay in Kordofan was not long enough to establish a firm base for his tarīqa or a strong bond with the people of that region. In all he stayed for about three years and three months and even these three years were interrupted by a visit of some months to the Gezira. In his efforts to establish the Khatmiyya tarīqa and recruit people to it, therefore, Sh. Ismā'Il was depending on his own power of persuasion. This must have tempted him to think of establishing his own tarīqa even while Muhammad 'Uthman was still in Kordofan, especially as Muhammad 'Uthman was the same age as he, and had established his tarīqa in the same way by breaking away from his Shaykh Ahmad b. Idrīs. These temptations are betrayed in his claim that he had attained the status of sainthood only seven months after having been initiated in the tarīqa. He suppressed these intentions, however, because he did not want to risk any conflict with his shaykh and followers at that time. Thus, while Muhammad 'Uthman was in Kordofan and for a short time after his departure, Sh. Ismā'Il was torn between his desire to break away and announce his own tarīqa and his obligation and loyalty to his shaykh. He thus states, "...So the Divine orders were heaped upon me in conformity with the Prophetic permission that I should bring out my own tarīqa from the intimate place of visions of my drinking place at my spring, and thereby enable the disciples to travel to the Presence of the Lord. I held back from doing so in respect to my honourable shaykh...hoping that I might be relieved of these orders from above". He could only extricate himself

2. Ibid. Sh. Ismā'Il also mentioned in Miftah tab al-dukhul, p.4, that in 1235 - i.e., the last days of Muhammad 'Uthman in Kordofan - he was favoured with al-fātih al-rabbānī.
from this dilemma by claiming that the act of breaking away from his
shaykh was by a Divine order which neither he nor anybody else could
ignore or disobey. Even a delay in its implementation had already
resulted in catastrophes which fell on the people of Kordofan and on
him personally. It was only after obeying these orders that, as he
states, "The sufferings and miseries were lifted, when I declared it,
by Divine Assistance and matters were set in order".¹

The catastrophes to which Sh. Isma'il referred coincided with the
departure of Muhammad 'Uthmān in about 1235/1819-20. Shortly after
his departure the Turco-Egyptian armies invaded Kordofan and overran
Bara and El-Obeid in two bloody battles. The rule of Muhammad Bey
al-Daftardār which followed was very harsh and destructive. Sh.
Ismā'il's personal tragedy came in 1237/1821-22 when he was confined
to prison for three days. Why Sh. Isma'il was imprisoned is not
explained and how he came to be released after three days also remains
unknown to us. Much attention is given to the mystical connotations
of that incident, how Sh. Isma'il had known beforehand what was going
to happen and in the end, the whole episode is told as one of the
karāmas of Sh. Isma'il. In this respect, the story of the
imprisonment of Sh. Isma'il is very similar to that of Sayyīdī Abū
al-Ḥasan al-Shāhidī in Tunisia known as the story of Bayt al-arba'īn
in which also a story of the imprisonment of a shaykh, Sayyīdī Abū

¹ Sh. Isma'il, al-'Uḥūd al-Wafiya, p.6.
² Sh. Isma'il in fact does not give any date for this incident in
any of his writings. Ahmad never even mentions it. The above
date is arrived at from what is said by Abū al-Fadlā and Abū al-
Haftī, that after his release he went to the Nūba mountains and
that at that time his eldest son al-Makkī was born.
al-Hasan, is related with much emphasis on the religious and mystical connotations and is then turned into a karōma of that saint.1

After his release from prison, Sh. Ismā'il went into a self-imposed seclusion in the Nūba Mountains in Kundukur and Kundukaira.2 It was during this period that Sh. Ismā'il began to think seriously of forming his own ṭariqa. He was by this time free from the direct influence of his shaykh, and two years had elapsed since they last met. He began to feel more independent and confident of himself and of his place in the society of El-Obeid. When he was imprisoned, it is said that many people gathered round the prison and would not move until he was released. The birth of his eldest son Muhammad al-Makki in 1237/1821-2 was an additional factor in his newly-felt paternalism and sense of responsibility. He also discovered his writing talents when he produced his first works - about ten books and tracts in 1237/1821-2 - which were followed by many others after that. By 1239/1823-24, his writings betrayed a feeling of frustration and dissatisfaction with the religious and political situation around him. His Intidham al-rī'āsa3 was an expression of his desire for change. The ideas of an expected saviour - al-Mahdi or al-Khatim - which were becoming very popular in the Sudan at that time,4 inspired him to write

1. In its popular form, the story of Abū al-Hasan, as related in the Tunisian magazine al-Ma'rifat, 1, 5, p.340, has borrowed much from the Qur'anic story of Aḥl al-Kāfif. Abū al-Hasan and his disciples were said to have been kept in prison for forty days without food and water, and when they came to take them, they were found to be safe and healthy.

2. These are two small villages situated in the deep south-western part of the Nūba mountains. See map Appendix B, below.


three tracts on this subject. In these he expressed an anxiety about
the state of affairs around him and indicated the way they were going
to be corrected through a proper return to God and the Islamic
principles. On his part he was taking some practical steps in this
direction. He tells us that by that time, 1239/1823-24, he was
beginning to lay the foundations of his tariqa. Some of awrad al-
tariqa and its khalwa had already been written then. The announcement
of the new tariqa, however, had to wait for another two years, until
1241/1825-26.

In addition to his own desires, a number of factors had favoured
the breaking away of Sh. Isma'il from the Khatmiyya and the declaration
of his own tariqa on that date.

The first of these was the position of the Khatmiyya as a tariqa
in Kordofan. Though Muhammad 'Uthman did not meet in Kordofan the
enmity and aggression with which he was met in Dongola and the Gezira,
neither did he win the hearts of the people completely, since his stay
with them was not long. Then soon his followers began to lose the
sympathy of the people as the Khatmiyya moved closer and closer towards
the new oppressive government. The favouritism with which their
Khaliyas were treated began to alienate them from the people. So
Sh. Isma'il would do better by dissociating himself from the Khatmiyya
without offending them.

The second factor is that some of the followers of Muhammad 'Uthman
were said to have tried to spoil the good relationship between him and

1. Sh. Isma'il, (a) al-Lam' al-bad'i 'an kashf haqiqat al-Khatim wa-
tamam al-hadd; (b) al-Tumi' al-Kalim wa waqita al-nadim fit ma'rifat al-
sayyid al-imam al-hadd wal-Khatim; (c) al-Bayan al-Komil fit
ma'rifat al-kawka al-faqii al-imam al-Mahdi wal-Khatim al-shamal
liavar al-ğali wal-nastil.

2. See our Chap.III on the Isma'Iliyya and the Mahdia, p. 84.
Sh. Ismā‘īl. They went about telling Muhammad 'Uthmān many unfavourable things about Sh. Ismā‘īl hoping that he might dismiss him from his position as a marshal (director) in the tarīqa. A group of these are associated with one of the miracles of Sh. Ismā‘īl. These were called Jamā‘at Rayra, who were said to have gone all the way to Kasala to convince Muhammad 'Uthmān that Sh. Ismā‘īl was not worthy of his favours. They never returned, but died of thirst in Rayra, a small village in Eastern Sudan. Sh. Ismā‘īl refers to these groups in some of his writings and expressed his feelings and concern about them.  

By declaring his own tarīqa he would have no need to take any notice of such people.

The third factor was that by 1241/1825-26, conditions in Kordofan were favourable to take this step without fear of reprisal from the government or acts of repression. By this time the notorious Daftardār had left the country, and his harsh and unjust rule was replaced by a more tolerable one. Muhammad 'Ali Pasha was beginning to think of establishing some sort of good government and stop the unjustified harshness.

The establishment of the Tarīqa

Though no specific reason can be cited to explain why he decided to declare his tarīqa in 1241/1825-26, the choice of the last ten days of Ramadan in that year is significant. These are some of the most important days in the Muslim calendar. Laylat al-qa‘d "The Night of  

Power" in which the Qur'ān descended to earth is an unspecified night in the last days of Ramadān. Many popular beliefs are associated with it, and many good happenings are attributed to that special night. Muslims worship until very late in the last ten nights of Ramadān in the hope of meeting with some of its favours.

The new ṭartīqa - the Ismā'īliyya - was no different in many aspects from the Khatmiyya. A comparison between the two may show this great interrelationship. There are only some minor differences in their awrād, their Khalwas and their organizations and administration. The Sanad "spiritual support", i.e., bases of teaching of the Khatmiyya ṭartīqa has been summarized by Muhammad 'Uṭmān in the expression Naqshjām referring to the Naqshbandiyya, Qadriyya, Shaziliyya, Junādīyya and Mirghaniyya ṭartīqa. For his sanad Sh. Ismā'il simply took the same with some rearrangement of the letters and added one to represent the Khatmiyya. Then he summarized it in the expression Najshqamkh. Sh. Ismā'il further added that for his Najshqamkhe depended entirely on that of his Shaykh Muhammad 'Uṭmān and that they both in turn depended heavily on the sanad of the Naqshbandiyya "...and the sanad on which we mainly depend now is one sanad in the Naqshbandiyya ṭartīqa from which all our adhkār are borrowed sometimes in shape as well as in meaning".¹

As for the stīla "chain of spiritual descent", Sh. Ismā'il again took that of the Khatmiyya and states that he is connected to it through Muhammad 'Uṭmān. Then he added that in addition he had a closer and more important one to Abu Bakr al-Siddīq and 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭalib and

¹. Ms. Sh. Ismā'il, al-Sanad wa al-tjāsa, Sud.Govt. Archives (Khartoum), 1/82/1309.
even a still closer contact directly with the Prophet since some of
his litanies had come directly from him.

The procedure of initiating the murid "novice", in both tartqa
is basically the same with very insignificant differences. The
aspirant is asked in both to make an ablution on Monday at noon, then
pray two rak'as reciting in the first one al-fatiha (Qur'an 1) and
al-Khāfîrūn (Qur'an 109); in the second he reads al-fatiha and
al-naşr (Qur'an 110) in the Khatmiyya or al-fatiha and al-îkhâs
(Qur'an 112) in the Ismā'Iliyya. Then he is given a collection of
awrād "litanies" which may keep him busy for a day or two. All this
is considered to be a muqaddima "introduction". After going through
this muqaddima, he makes another ablution on a Wednesday noon, and his
shaykh prompts him in the dhikr and instructs him in the asās (basic
litany); and lets him take the covenant.¹

The awrād "litanies" of the Khatmiyya are very elaborate and
detailed. Sh. Ismā'Il, though, sometimes used the same wording,
managed to shorten these and rearranged some of them. Thus the asās
which Muhammad 'Uthmān presents in eight pages is cut down to one page
by Sh. Ismā'Il. In al-Tawassul "supplication", which is in verse,
al-Tahâjudjud "all-night prayers", and al-munâjāh "meditation", the
wording and construction are different, but the essence and meaning
are the same. One dhikr, that is al-dhikr al-Qalbi, which Sh.
Ismā'Il says is the basic litany of the tartqa seems to be original
and different in many ways. It describes in seven pages how the
follower should approach the dhikr, how to sit for it, what to say

¹. For more details on Ismā'Iliyya initiation procedure see Sh.
Ismā'Il, al-'Uhūd al-Wafiya, p.6. For that of the Khatmiyya, see
Muhammad 'Uthmān, Majmu' al-awrād, p.62.
and what to expect from it in reward if it is performed in the right manner.\textsuperscript{1}

The \textit{Khalwa} "seclusion" in both \textit{tariqa}s follows the same pattern also. A worshipper should choose a clean place in which he will retire; make the ablution and when entering that place he should step with the right foot first. While reciting his litanies he should always keep his eyes closed, keep the image of his \textit{shaykh} in his mind and continually recall his name in prayers.\textsuperscript{2}

As for the organization and administration of the \textit{tariqa}, the \textit{Ismā'īliyya} was limited by two factors in its initial stage: the experience and organizational ability of its founder, and the boundaries of its influence. The only experience Sh. Ismā'īl had in this respect was gained from Muhammad 'Uthmān and from his experience as a \textit{faqīh} in a \textit{Khalwa} in El-Obeid. The influence of the \textit{tariqa} in the time of Sh. Ismā'īl did not spread very far beyond the boundaries of Kordofan, and particularly the areas round El.Obeid. For these reasons the need did not arise for any elaborate structure or complicated administration. When he needed, Sh. Ismā'īl borrowed freely from the \textit{Khatmiyya} system and terminology; and until his death, the Ismā'īliyya was administered like a big household. The present organization of the Ismā'īliyya owes much more to its first \textit{Khālīfa} Muhammad al-Makki than to its founder Sh. Ismā'īl.\textsuperscript{3}

\textsuperscript{1} Sh. Ismā'īl, \textit{al-'Uḥūd}, pp.20-26.
\textsuperscript{2} For his \textit{Khalwa} of the Ismā'īliyya, see Sh. Ismā'īl, \textit{Mashāriq Shumās al-anwār}, pp.162-68, and for that of the \textit{Khatmiyya} see Muhammad 'Uthmān, \textit{Majmu' al-awrad}, p.63-66.
\textsuperscript{3} This will come in detail in our Chap.V below on the organization and administration of the \textit{tariqa}. 
The Writings of Sh. Isma'il

By 1257/1842-3 the Isma'iliyya tarīqa was well established in Kordofan and Sh. Isma'il was able to let his son Muhammad al-Makki take charge so that he could go on pilgrimage. When he returned to El-Obeid, he decided to retire in the Khalwa for a life of literary activity, as he considered this to be of the highest importance for the propagation and preservation of his ideas and tarīqa, "....whoever desires to see the greatness of our tarīqa and our command of the secrets of all the other tarīqas, should read our writings....because my books carry my thoughts wherever they may be while I live or after my death".¹ The next twenty years or so after his return from pilgrimage were thus devoted mainly to writing. When he died, Sh. Isma'il left behind a great wealth of works, most of which remain in manuscript.²

His works followed the pattern of development in his character and the phases through which he had passed in his life. Thus they reflect three stages from the time he is said to have started writing in 1237/1821-2, until his death in 1280/1863.

The first of these is the period 1237/1821-1241/1825). These were troubled years in which Sh. Isma'il's life was in turmoil and his character undergoing a great deal of change. His initiation in the tarīqa had introduced him to the ideas of Sufism in which he became absorbed, but these were still raw in his mind and still undigested. He was personally troubled by his conflicting desires

¹ Sh. Isma'il, al-'Ukhād al-Wafiya, p.11.
² He is reported to have written about 45 books and tracts. For list see Appendix C. Of these, seven at least have been printed. See Trimingham, Islam, p.235, n.2.
of declaring his own tarīqa and keeping loyal to his Shaykh Muhammad 'Uthmān. He was further troubled by the coming of the Turco-Egyptian armies, which not only conquered Kordofan and subjected it to many miseries, but also affected his own personal life by committing him to prison for three days. He was restless and felt insecure, a matter which led him to leave El-Obeid in 1237/1821-2, and travel far south in the Nuba mountains to Kundukur and Kundukaira. His writings during this period thus reflected these conflicts and this disturbed character. Some of them were only primitive attempts at tackling some of the Sufi ideas to which he was newly introduced, and others were an expression of his hidden feelings towards the new invaders and his longing for an expected saviour. His ideas in this period were not original, but a poor reproduction of what he had learnt as a faqīh and as a newcomer to Sufism. He made no attempts to discuss these ideas or challenge their argumentation. His style was familiar, easy and close to the minds of the semi-illiterate people of Kordofan. The words were easy and of everyday use - sometimes colloquial - and composed in short sentences with sweet ornamental rhythmic sounds of saj'. His experience as a faqīh teaching in the Khalwa accounts very much for this simplicity and choice of easy words.

The second period which marks the development in Sh. Ismā'īl's literary activity is 1241/1825-1251/1842, which is dominated mainly by his attempts to establish his own tarīqa and find his place among the

1. Examples of these are Munyat al-Tullāb ft tafsīr qawlihim 'ilm al-Zahir hijab in 1237/1822, and Risālah al-Kamāl ft adhwaq al-rifā'ī 1238/1823.
Sufi shaykhs. His Sufi ideas were now well developed and digested, and he became familiar with many mystical terms and versed in technical Sufi expressions. His social position now changed, and not only in El-Obeid, but also through the whole of Kordofan and parts of Darfur. His audience also changed, and instead of addressing the simple and common people, he was now addressing Sufis whom he was trying to impress and convince in their own field using their own ideas and style. According to these new developments, the nature of his writings changed. They now showed a greater tendency towards mysticism and Sufism. His style followed the same pattern. The topics which he chose to tackle in this period were related mainly to his tarīqa and showing his tendency to be independent. His words became more flowery and his expressions more ornamental. His use of some vague terms, complicated phrases and a lot of Sufi vocabulary was intended to give these writings an atmosphere of mysticism and place them outside the range of the ordinary person.

The final stage of development in his writings came in 1260/1843-1280/1863. Now Sh. Ismail is mature, confident, no longer excited, under no pressure from the government or from his relationship with his Shaykh Muhammad 'Uthmān, and above all, his tarīqa is now recognized and his respectable place in the society is ensured. His pilgrimage to Mecca had added to his experience and increased his knowledge. All this is reflected in his writings which now show more substance, greater depth, and a better approach to the subjects discussed. When dealing with a sophisticated topic, he followed his

arguments intelligently and consistently, even making sure that they are supported by appropriate verses from the Qur'ān, some Traditions and some quotations from known and respectable authorities. Though many of the ideas he presented in these writings were part of the Sufi culture, his approach to them is original and different.¹

On the topics related to his tārīqa, this maturity is also reflected and his clarity of mind shown. He retraced his steps soberly, reassessing his previous works, giving them a new appreciation and presenting them in a better shape. Thus he took all his dispersed awrād (liturgies), arranged them according to the days of the week and times of the day, and then explained clearly and convincingly why he did that in a well-argued introduction.² The arguments he presented in these writings are also sound and systematic. His attitude in this period in contrast to the previous one is that of persuasion and by producing convincing arguments rather than threatening his opponents and promising them trouble and addressing them in mystical and complicated language. Here again in this period he carefully supports his arguments by quotations from the Qur'ān, the Sunna and known authorities, because he thought that any work which is not authenticated is considered to be unsound, even to 'ulamā' al-rusūm (earthly sciences).³

His enthusiasm for quotation is only equalled by his attention to dates. He very carefully punctuated the development of his career by fixing dates, marking every important event in his life. He is so obsessed by

---

1. For example, see Sh. Ismā’īl, Mashāriq, pp.60-77, for his approach to the ideas of al-Wilāya, al-Urūj (ascension) and his description of al-marādīb of al-Istām, al-Imān and al-Inśān.
2. See Sh. Ismā’īl, Rawdat al-sa’ilīn.
the importance of dates that he is careful to mention the day and even the time of the day on which a particular incident had taken place. Thus, in showing how he came to write one of his books he says, ",...And then on the blessed Monday eighteen days before the end of Ramadân 1263 A.H., an idea flashed in my mind that I should collect all the prayers which I had written before in one book". ¹

To close this chapter on the founder of the Ismā'īliyya, it may be stated that, although his pedigree represents him as a descendent of honourable and very wealthy ancestors, Sh. Ismā'īl himself was born and grew up in a modest family. It was through his own efforts, rather than an inherited fame that the Ismā'īliyya was established in Kordofan. His education was limited to the study of traditional Islamic literature, Arabic and a few ancillary subjects, and his cultural experience did not go beyond what he could get in Kordofan at that time, which was neither original nor stimulating. It was through his contact with Muhammad 'Uthmān al-Mirghanī that he was first introduced to Sufism, in which he was destined to make some contribution to the Sudanese society.

It was these elements of his family background, his educational experience and his cultural contacts that determined the development of Sh. Ismā'īl's character, the quality of his writing and the nature of his tārīqa.

¹ Sh. Ismā'īl, Rawdat al-Sālikīn, introduction.
CHAPTER III

THE ISMA'ILIYYA AND THE MAHDIA

The Isma'iliyya were one of the many Sudanese families which towards the beginning of the nineteenth century tended to be satisfied with their limited role as religious teachers and their place as faqîhs in the society. The founder of the family (under this name) Shaykh Ismâ'îl al-Walî was, at most, hoping to establish his reputation as a faqîh in the new community of Khorodfan and at best to revive the prestige and fame of his ancestors as far back as al-Faqîh Bushâra al-Garbawi in Dongola, through whom he claimed descent from al-'Abbâs, the uncle of the Prophet.¹

Ismâ'îl was successful in gaining a good reputation for himself and his family. Le Comte d'Escayrac de Lauture, who met him in El-Obeid in 1849, was very much impressed by the holiness of his life, his active and heartfelt charity, and his religious teachings; qualities which earned him a reputation celebrated as far as Darfur. The Comte observed that the people of El-Obeid, where Ismâ'îl had made his home, professed a profound veneration for him, and that even the government officials, who did not do the same with others, were very polite with him: "I saw one of them recently arriving from Cairo, show him respect such as Turks rarely show to natives, or soldiers to faqîhs. As he approached, this governor, who was a colonel, rose, went to receive him at his palace-gate, and kissed his hand".²

1. See Chapter II, pp.39 and 44-6, above
The satisfaction of the Ismāʿīliyya with their limited role of the traditional faqīh's family is further illustrated by some of the writings of Sh. Ismāʿīl himself. In his al-ʿUḥūd al-Wafayā, he states that until he met al-Sayyid Muhammad ʿUthmān al-Mīrghānī, he was content with the recitation of the Qurʾān, prayer, the study of some religious and earthly sciences and teaching the children of Muslims - a typical attitude of a faqīh of that time. He made no effort to go and look for any new role or any new idea like some of his contemporaries, such as Sh. Ahmad al-Tayyib al-Bashīr and Muhammad al-Majdhūb al-Saghib, who went to Mecca about 1800 and were influenced by some of the reformist ideas.

Two developments combined to bring about some very important changes in the history of the Ismāʿīliyya. The first of these was Sh. Ismāʿīl's contact with Muhammad ʿUthmān al-Mīrghānī (al-Kabīr) who introduced him to the Sufi ideas and initiated him in the ṭarīqa in Shawwāl 1231/August 1816, a matter which is discussed elsewhere. The second was the contact of the Ismāʿīliyya with the Mahdia. The present chapter examines the various factors that affected the relationship between the Ismāʿīliyya as a family, as a ṭarīqa and as individuals, and the Mahdia. Then it deals with the effects of the Mahdia on the family structure, and thirdly with its effects on the structure of the ṭarīqa.

The relationship between the Ismāʿīliyya and the Mahdia was determined on the one hand by the nature and development of the Mahdia, and on the other by the reactions of the Ismāʿīliyya to that movement throughout the various phases of its development.

2. Ibid., p.4.
The Nature of the Mahdia

The Mahdia was a revolutionary movement both in its religious and political contexts. It sought to revive the Faith and to reform society by uprooting the existing social and political systems and establishing an ideal Islamic umma governed by the Sharī‘a. To do that, the Mahdi claimed an authority for his actions derived directly from God and the Prophet, by divine inspiration, which was unrestricted by any worldly powers. Thus, by taking the title of Khalīfat Rasūl Allāh, Muhammad Ahmad, the Mahdi of the Sudan, was challenging the authority of the Khedive and asserting a higher sanction for his acts over the authority of the Khedival administration. By assuming the title of Imām al-Muṣliμīn, he claimed special initiative (ijtihād) in the interpretation of the Qur'ān and the Sunna unchecked by any established madhhab or any religious institution.

By the nature of his movement, therefore, Muhammad Ahmad was in direct conflict with the existing establishment, the Khedival officials and troops, and with the official religious institutions, the cadre of 'Ulamā', the qādis and muftīs who compromised with the administration and gave it moral support. The former he called al-Turk and to the latter he gave the term 'ulamā' al-Sūr).

On the other hand, Muhammad Ahmad found immediate support from those who had suffered socially and politically under the existing system, and the Mahdist ideas were readily accepted and propagated by the faqīhs, shaykhs, tarīqas and the common people who had looked forward to his manifestation as a saviour from the tyranny and injustices of their Turco-Egyptian oppressors, and had expected his appearance at that time. Reflecting

---

these attitudes of the common people, Yusuf Mikha'il described the state of affairs in El-Obeid at that time in these words, "One would hear nothing but curses on the rulers and on everyone who controlled one of the government departments. Indeed by the will of God Most High, most people, both men and women, began to ask: Isn't there a Mahdi for us? Isn't it said that this is the right time for the reappearance of the Mahdi?" Then when these heard of Muhammad Ahmad, they did not go, like the 'ulamā', to test him or to look for the canonical criteria of the True Mahdi but, in Yusuf Mikha'il's words, "...they came to him in large numbers for his blessing...."

Atitudes towards the Sudanese Mahdia and loyalty to its ideals were also influenced and modified by the progress of that movement in stages from a religious reformist organization, through a short phase of a theocracy, to an autocracy under the Khalīfa 'Abdullāhi al-Ta'ishī. In its initial stages thus, when Muhammad Ahmad was mainly a faqīh and a religious reformer, his movement appealed to the faqīhs, Sufis and shaykhs of tariqas. His earliest associates - who later came to be known as Abkār al-Mahdi (the first born of the Mahdi) - were from amongst these. After 1881, the movement developed a political and militant attitude, thus attracting to its support groups of people who were motivated not only by religious enthusiasm, but also by political and economic reasons. The Mahdi provided a link between religious, social and political grievances, "Verily these Turks...judged by other than God's revelation and altered the Sharī'ā of Our Lord Muhammad, the Apostle of God and corrupted the Faith of God and placed poll tax (al-īzya) on your necks.

2. Ibid., p.74.
3. The significance of this is that al-īzya is levied on the non-Muslims.
together with the rest of the Muslims. . . . Verily the Turks would drag
away your men in chains, imprison them in fetters, take captive your
women and children. . . . Moreover, they had no mercy upon the small among
you nor respect for the great among you. . . . Amongst the chief supporters
of the Mahdia at this stage were the jallaba. These were men of
riverain origin, mainly Ja'aliyya and Danâqla, who came to settle in
the Western Sudan as traders, particularly in slaves, and as carriers
of Arab and Islamic culture.

Two things are worth emphasizing about the attitude of these
jallaba: the first is that their active support of the Mahdia was in
marked contrast to the passive attitude of their kinsmen who remained
in their original homelands; and the second is that this support
originated from a negative rather than a positive motivation. They
were mainly inspired by a feeling of hatred towards a government which
adopted a policy of suppression of their slave trade which was enforced
by Christian administrators, and they were motivated by a desire to get
rid of that government rather than by a genuine belief in Muhammad
Ahmad's Divine mission. These two factors may partly explain the lack
of enthusiasm amongst these jallaba and their changed attitudes towards
the Mahdia in its next phases after the fall of Khartoum in 1885. The
final defeat of the hated Khedival government removed the main motive
which attracted their enthusiastic support, and with the establishment
of the new Mahdist capital in Omdurman, they came back nearer to their
homelands and thus closer to the attitudes of their kinsmen.

1. Manshûrât, l. 15-16; Ms. Nujumi, 7, trans. P.M. Holt, Mahdist
State, 2nd ed., p.110.
2. P.M. Holt, "The Place in History of the Sudanese Mahdia", SNR.XL,
The next important date marking these stages in the development of the Mahdïja was 1885 in which Khartoum, the capital of the Khedival government fell (in January) and then Muhammad Ahmad, the leader of this movement died (in June). The call for a jihâd against a common enemy, and the charisma of Muhammad Ahmad were two very important unifying factors which kept the Ansâr together. The fall of Khartoum, signifying the defeat of the common enemy, removed one of these unifying factors, the death of al-Mahdi removed the other. After the death of al-Mahdi, the struggle for succession to the Khilâfa created a rift between 'Abdullâhi al-Ta'Ishî and the Ashrâf (relatives of the Mahdi). The struggle was, however, settled in favour of 'Abdullâhi, but by no means could the rift between the Ansâr be closed afterwards. It even grew wider and developed into a feeling of distrust between the Khâlîfa Abdullâhi and his kinsmen, the Baqqâra on the one hand, and Awlâd al-Balad (people of riverain origin) on the other. Events which followed after 1885 led those two factions to drift further and further apart from each other. Natural catastrophes¹ and checks in military progress before the fulfilment of the Mahdï's predictions, which promised the conquest of Egypt and Mecca,² left the Ansâr dismayed and disillusioned. Gradually between 1885 and 1898, their religious zeal began to subside, and their desire to establish a theocracy to give way to a form of secular despotism depending on the military support of the Baqqâra. The loyalty of Awlâd al-Balad was more and more doubtful, and they were further and further alienated as internal and external pressures continued.

1. Most famous of these was majâ'ät sanât sittâ, the famine of A.H. 1306 (1888/89).
on the Khalîfa's rule. Towards the closing years of the Mahdia, many of Awlād al-Balad were conspiring against the Khalîfa and some riverain tribes rose in open rebellion against his rule.

The reaction of the Ismā'īliyya to the Mahdia and to the events that marked the various stages of its development was influenced by their tribal attachments, their religious and spiritual loyalties and by the attitudes of some important individuals among them.

The Tribal Attachment

The Bidayriyya to whom the family of Sh. Ismā'īl belong had shown much support and enthusiasm for the Mahdia from the start. Their famous religious leaders, such as 'Abd al-Rahmān b. Badawī Abū Safiyya and al-Makkī b. Sh. Ismā'īl were amongst the earliest adherents of the Mahdi, and the Bidayriyya tribesmen were among the first groups to make successful raids against the government forces in Abū Harāz, al-Birka and other similar outposts in Kordofan. Their early support and enthusiasm were an expression of a protest against an intolerable Turco-Egyptian rule towards which they were feeling bitter and frustrated.

The Bidayriyya in Kordofan were a large sedentary tribe living around El-Obeid as cultivators, traders and faqīhs. It was those three categories, more than any other, which felt the oppression and injustices of the Turco-Egyptian rule. Nomads could drive their herds and move out of the government's reach when they were pressed, but as sedentary people, the Bidayriyya could only stay and bear the burden. As cultivators they

3. P.M. Holt, A Modern History, 2nd ed., p.43, observed that while the taxes levied on the settled riverain people were unbelievably onerous, there was no mention of a camel tax and that the nomads were practically outside government control.
found the government policies to be harmful in various ways. Because taxes were high and were mainly paid in cash, much of their effort was directed to the collection of that cash, either by selling their slaves or by engaging them in the collection of gum; both of which meant a shortage of labour on the farms. This in turn also led to much good land being left uncultivated and to a great deal of reduction in output. And on top of all that, the government armies were an additional heavy burden on those people since the soldiers, who were always on the move in Kordofan, had to be fed by the villages out of their continually depleted resources. Referring to the misery of these people, Pallme states,

"...It is impossible to describe the cruelty with which the taxes and contributions are collected.... Droughts, or excess of rains may cause the harvest, in many districts, to fail, or the locusts may totally devour it..., but none of these circumstances is ever taken into consideration, and the contributions are levied without mercy or compassion".¹

He thought that such an oppressive policy could only lead to trouble in that province and he, therefore, predicted that the people would, in fact, eventually be obliged to emigrate, as they had already, from several parts, or a general insurrection would be the result.²

As traders, the Bidayriyya were also provoked and irritated by the government policies and by repeated harassment. Prior to the establishment of the Turco-Egyptian rule in Kordofan, the Bidayriyya had found very favourable conditions for commercial activities in the Western Sudan. The disruption of trade along the Nile in the eighteenth century and the revival of the Trans-Saharan caravan routes brought about

2. Ibid., p.38.
a great deal of commerce and prosperity to Kordofan. A long period of peace under the Fur, especially between 1790 and 1821, was a blessing and a further incentive for the creation of wealth. Taking advantage of these conditions, the Bidayriyya were able to spread as successful traders in various parts of Kordofan and the Nuba mountains where many of their famous families can be found up to the present day. With contacts in both Kordofan and Dongola, they must have found this very advantageous; and it was during this period that their influence in Kordofan was appreciated.

During the Turco-Egyptian rule 1821-1881, a strong government and a stricter enforcement of law and order brought about a greater degree of safety to the caravan routes, and an encouragement to trade, but unfortunately, this did not mean more prosperity for the inhabitants. The government monopoly on the sale of practically every item of importance very much impeded trade in general, and hurt the jallāba. The unaccustomed and inequitable system of taxation was another impediment for trade, and the violence and extortion which accompanied it was a permanent source of bitterness and discontent. More harmful than these was the government interference with the slave trade. The recruitment of slaves in Muhammad 'Ali's armies as jihādīya brought about some changes in the social and economic pattern of the society, which were not appreciated by the jallāba, but their greater disappointment came

2. See Pallme, Travels, pp.279-304. The term jallāba (small traders) came to be associated with riverain tribesmen and particularly the Ja'aliyyīn who traded between Egypt, the Nile, Western Sudan and, later, on the Southern Sudan.
when the government started to implement the policy of abolition of the slave trade. The situation was even more aggravated by the appointment in 1877 of Gordon as Governor-General of the Sudan. He started to implement this policy with more enthusiasm and rigidity. His policy made life intolerable for the riverain people (\textit{awlād al-balād}) in general and the \textit{jallāba}, traders, in particular in the Western Sudan. In an effort to curtail their activity in the areas south of El-Obeid, he ordered them to evacuate all the districts south of the route from El-Obeid to Dārā in southern Darfur. When they ignored this order, he instructed the tribal \textit{shaykhs} of the area to seize the \textit{jallāba} and bring them to the government posts and warned them that they would be held responsible for any \textit{jallāba} found in their districts. This order was happily received by the \textit{shaykhs} and their people, as it gave them a chance for looting and robbery from the \textit{jallāba}. In this harrying of the \textit{jallāba}, the Ja'aliyyīn were perhaps the principal sufferers....

The Bidayriyya as Ja'aliyyīn and as \textit{jallāba} shared the plight of their kinsmen.

The \textit{faqīhs} of the Bidayriyya also found the Turco-Egyptian regime odious, and had more than one reason to be dissatisfied with it. These were genuinely pious men who were active as missionaries in the frontier of Islamization. It was to some groups of those Bidayriyya \textit{faqīhs} with some Rikābiyya that R.C. Stevenson gives credit for the spreading of Islam among the mixed Arab-Nūba population of the central plains and outlying hills in the Nūba mountains. These \textit{faqīhs} were primarily

---

motivated by a religious zeal and a true desire to spread the Faith. They went out to establish centres of worship in the midst of a pagan population on the fringes of the Islamic frontier, and through their piety and teaching attracted many converts. Typical examples of such men were Sh. Ismā'īl al-Wāli and Badawi Abū Sāfiyya who is described by Pallme as:

"A pious man and anything but a hypocrit, hence he is beloved and enjoys the good opinion of all men. He settles disputes and gives friendly advice to all who come to ask for it, knows no partiality and in no instance receives a present....In short he is a Mahommedan missionary. He had made thousands of proselytes among the heathen negroes....He also defends his faith according to the letter of the Koran, sword in hand, and has even lost a son in the fight for the good cause."\(^1\)

Towards the close of the eighteenth century, the ascendancy of the Fur, following the campaign of Sultan Tayrāb, missionary activities, especially in the Nūba mountains, received much encouragement. Under Tayrāb's successor, 'Abd al-Rahmān, who was himself a faqīh in Kordofan before coming to the throne, conditions were even better, and the faqīhs were happier. These favourable conditions were upset during the Turco-Egyptian administration. Apart from the fact that the status of the faqīhs in this province - like that of their colleagues in other parts of the Sudan - had declined, some had suffered personally as individuals and their activities had been hampered. Sh. Ismā'īl was actually imprisoned,\(^2\) and Badawi could only evade capture by keeping out of government reach far away in the Nūba mountains.\(^3\) The discontent of the Bidayriyya faqīhs with the Turco-Egyptian regime was clearly expressed

---

2. See our Chapter II, p.57, above.
by Badawi Abu Safiyya addressing an Egyptian, "You call yourself Muslim, God alone knows the truth, but to me you are only the oppressors of my country." \(^1\)

In all those aspects, as cultivators, as traders and asfaqīḥs, the Bidayriyya had shared the injustices with other inhabitants of Kordofan, but on top of that, they were sometimes the victims of ill-advised tribal policies carried out by some of the governors of that province. Yūsuf Mikḥā'Il relates in his memoirs how the Bidayriyya and the Ghidayyat tribes were drawn, through such policies, into the conflict between Ahmad wad Dafa'Alla and Ilyās Umm Barīr; and how both these tribes were disappointed in the end. When Ilyās was appointed Pasha and Governor of Kordofan, Ahmad wad Dafa'Alla urged 'Alī Kanōna of the Ghidayyat to revolt against such an appointment of a jallābi as his governor. 'Alī did rise and defeated the government forces sent against him. Ilyās turned to the Bidayriyya who came to his rescue. 'Alī Kanōna was defeated and killed. But soon after that a new governor, Muhammad Sa'id, was appointed in Kordofan and the first thing he did was to change the policy adopted by Ilyās in relation to the tribes. He came to terms with the Ghidayyat and held their chiefs, the sons of 'Alī Kanōna, in great respect and honour. Ilyās Umm Barīr, on the other hand, was deposed, discredited, and with him also were his allies the Bidayriyya. \(^2\)

Thus frustrated, the Bidayriyya would be expected to be only too glad to join a movement which promised them an opportunity to challenge the Turco-Egyptian regime.

---

Spiritual Attachments and Loyalties

The second influence on the Ismā'īliyya's attitude towards the Mahdia is connected with their spiritual attachments and loyalties: i.e. the loyalty of the family of Sh. Ismā'īl to its faqīh and Sufi tradition as opposed to a growing trend among some of its members who were becoming 'ulamā'1 and loyalty to the Khatmiyya whose founder was the spiritual master of Sh. Ismā'īl.

The tradition of the family as faqīhs goes back five generations to a founding father, al-Faqīh Bushāra al-Garbāwi to whom reference is made elsewhere.2 After al-Faqīh Bushāra very little is known about the family for some time. With Sh. Ismā'īl al-Walī (1792-1863) the prestige of the family was revived and through him it became famous as far as Darfur. Not only was he a devoted religious man, but he was also very active as a missionary spreading Islam in some areas, especially in the Nūba mountains. This made him and his family feel a sense of responsibility towards the Muslims of that area in general, and his new recruits in particular. Under the Turco-Egyptian administration the status of the faqīhs in general began to decline. Although the authorities continued to give subsidies to their Khalwas and to be conciliatory towards them, their political influence was undermined by the establishment of an official cadre of 'ulamā' and their prestige was challenged by the encouragement given to the graduates of al-Azhar as the true and authoritative expositors of the religious sciences. As

1. In addition to Ahmad al-Azharī and Ismā'īl al-Kurdufānī, this family had a number of other 'ulamā' some of whom later joined the Mahdia and took important jobs as qādis and muftīs: e.g. al-Bāqīr b. Sh. Ismā'īl qādis of al-Sābīl in the Gezīra. See, H. Sfād Ahmad al-Muftī, Tājawwār ridda al-qādis, 1, 132, 149 and 150.
2. See Chapter II, p.39, above.
the 'ulamā' were drawing closer and closer towards government circles, gaining higher status and more material benefits, the faqīhs were farther and farther alienated and becoming more and more deprived of the comforts of life, but nearer to the hearts of the common people.

D'Escayrac de Lauture describes the drifting apart of these two categories in these words,

"The 'ulamā' are met with in the Sudan only in the large towns, particularly in the capitals and beside the rulers. In the villages, one only sees a secondary order of clergy [sic] - insignificant and poor clergy, unknown everywhere else; holding their powers only by public confidence, living on alms and hardships, yet asking nothing of anyone, and lavishing to all what a pure heart and lively fraternal love can give - the bread of the spirit".1

True to the tradition of their family, Sh. Ismā'īl was leading the life of a simple and poor faqīh. His elder son, Muḥammad al-Makkī inherited his baraka and following in the steps of his father, was keeping this tradition: he had a khalwa for teaching the Qur'ān, worshipped God and led a simple life. Challenge to this tradition started with Ahmad al-Azhari, a younger son of Sh. Ismā'īl who pursued a different line in life. In fact, his dissatisfaction with the traditions of the family became apparent even before the start of the Mahdia. It was said that when he returned from al-Azhar, he began to be very critical about many of his elder brother's practices, and particularly his beating of the drums - darb al-nōba - during the ḍhikr. Al-Makkī reluctantly ordered his followers to pack up the drums, store them inside the tomb of Sh. Ismā'īl and beat them no more. But as soon as the ḍhikr started, we are told, everyone began to hear the drums making a sound by themselves inside the tomb, thus convincing all those present, including Ahmad, that the practice

of darb al-nūba was not to be challenged any more. During the Mahdia the difference between the two brothers became very evident. Al-Makkī became one of the first and strongest supporters of the Mahdia, while Ahmad came to be one of its bitterest enemies and was killed in one of battles against the Mahdists near Bara.

Loyalty and spiritual attachment to the Khatmiyya were also a very important factor in determining the attitudes of the descendants of Sh. Isma‘īl and the followers of his ṭarīqa towards the Mahdia.

Muhammad ‘Uthmān I al-Mirghani was the spiritual master of Sh. Isma‘īl and his guide in the Sufi path. Sh. Isma‘īl thus had the greatest respect and veneration for him and for the Mirghani family, which is reflected in most of his writings; wherever the name of Muhammad ‘Uthmān is mentioned in them, it is preceded by many alqāb (titles) of distinction and honour. The Khatmiyya ṭarīqa is equally respected and venerated. This tradition of respect for the Mirghaniyya and their Khatmiyya ṭarīqa continued amongst the members of Sh. Isma‘īl’s family and the followers of his Isma‘īliyya ṭarīqa even up to the present day. It would have been expected thus that the Isma‘īliyya would have followed the Khatmiyya in their opposition to the Mahdia. Instead, the Isma‘īliyya showed an independent attitude. This may have been because the Khatmiyya were at that time associated with the Shayqiyya, and also with the Turco-Egyptian administration, both of which were unpopular with the people, especially those in Kordofan.

The unpopularity of the Shayqiyya was associated first with their raids during the eighteenth century, which disrupted trade and forced many people to leave their homes in Dongola. Secondly, the Shayqiyya

1. This story is often related as a karama of al-Makkī was told me by Hājj ‘Almād al-Fakī ‘Abdalla, in El-Obeid, 1975.
2. Chapter I, p.36, above.
were associated with the unpopular Turco-Egyptian regime which they served very enthusiastically. They were the special protégés of that alien administration, and a number of them were appointed to government office, especially in the collection of taxes, and as such they incurred hatred.

The Mirghaniyya as a family, and their ṭarīqa as well, were also linked in the minds of the Sudanese people with the Turco-Egyptian regime. The coming of Muhammad 'Uthmān al-Mirghanī himself to the Sudan was only a few years before the armies of Muhammad 'Alī invaded the country, and some people did not fail to correlate his coming with that invasion. Even before the invasion, the presence of Muhammad 'Uthmān was not welcomed, and Ahmad Kātīb al-Shūna tells us how he was ill-treated in Kordofan.1 Unpopularity of the Khatmiyya was also increased by the preferential treatment which they received from the rulers over the other Sudanese ṭarīqas, thus giving them more prestige and power. Their followers increased, especially among the Shayqiyya and their Khalīfas began to behave arrogantly.

Association with the Khatmiyya would have meant for the Ismā'īliyya an association with the Shayqiyya and with the rulers, both of whom were very unpopular with the Sudanese, especially the religious men and heads of ṭarīqas. Furthermore, closer links with the Khatmiyya brought the Ismā'īliyya into conflict with some of their relatives, and renewed some old quarrels which they both hoped to settle and forget. Those were known as al-Dufariyyin or Awdād Abū Qussī or Jamā'at Reirā, who were relatives of the family of al-Faqīh Bushāra al-Ghabāwī, with whom they

1. See Makhūṭat Khāṭīb al-Shūna, ed. al-Shāṭir Buṣaylī, p. 73.
had some conflicts in Dongola. These, forgotten in Kordofan, were about to be renewed when Ismā'īl began to gain importance among the Khatmiyya. Further still, association with the Khatmiyya would have isolated the Ismā'Iliyya from the tribes with whom they were living in Kordofan. Muhammad 'Uthmān al-Mirghanī did not stay very long in Kordofan - only a mere three years and a half, during which time he did not find many followers among the indigenous tribes of the Western Sudan. Being far away from the centre of the Khatmiyya in Kassala, the Ismā'Iliyya were more inclined to be influenced by their local environment, tribal and family interests in their relationships with the Mahdia, rather than their spiritual attachments.

The Attitude of Some Important Individuals

The attitudes of some important individual members of the family of Sh. Ismā'īl were also a determining factor in the relationship between the Ismā'Iliyya and the Mahdia. The importance of the attitude of these particular individuals may best be appreciated if taken in the context of the tribal structure, since the religious orders and holy families in the Sudan were very closely connected with tribal systems. A look at some aspects of this may offer some help in understanding the nature of these different attitudes.

The title of shaykh was given both to the chief of the tribe as well as to the head of the religious order or of a holy family. The authority of the tribal shaykh was not formalized, but rested on

1. Sh. Ismā'īl referred to this possibility of a renewed conflict in his Wasiyyat al-Muhibbin. The story of their conflict in Dongola and that of Jamī'at Reira" are dealt with in Chapter II, p.60.
2. See Burckhardt, Travels, 256-70, for a description of the Majdhdīb of al-Dīmar. Also see P.M. Holt, "Holy families", P.N.E.P., for Majdhdīb and others.
tradition. It rested not on force, but rather on the renown and esteem he enjoyed. Loyalty to the shaykh depended on an intricate and complicated structure of kinship ties and relationships. He commanded the respect and loyalty of his people so long as he could keep his prestige and use his wisdom and tact in settling conflicts between individuals or groups, so that they would not fall apart. Divisions and subdivisions were always a threat and a possibility. Any important member might, for one reason or another, split and form a clan, a branch or a ḥāsh. At the beginning of his movement, the Mahdi very rightly assessed the benefits of this structure, and by contacting the right people, soon gained much support. Thus it was to Sayyid al-Makki, Faqih al-Manna, Shaykh al-Mukashfi, and the rest of the shaykhs of religious orders, the faqīhs in holy families and tribal chiefs that he made his appeal.

The individuals with whom we are concerned are: Muhammad al-Makki, Ahmad al-Azhari and Ismā'īl 'Abd al-Qādir al-Kurdufāni.

Muhammad al-Makki (1822-1906) was the eldest son of Sh. Ismā'īl, and his successor as the head of the Ismā'īliyya tariqa. Educated in the khalwa of his father in the traditional Sudanese religious studies, and brought up in a traditional tribal setting, he was very appropriately prepared for leadership in his role both as head of a religious order and a chief of his family. Like a typical tribal chief, he was married to four wives - one a cousin and three from different other families and tribes - so as to widen the scope of his influence through intermarriage. As a teaching faqīh in his father's khalwa, he established his place as one of the faqīhs of El-Obeid. To promote him as a leader, his
father appointed him as head of the tarīqa before he himself died, and stood behind him in prayer.\(^1\)

Thus equipped, al-Makki smoothly replaced his father as head of the Ismā'īliyya and demonstrated some remarkable qualities of leadership. To illustrate this, two anecdotes are told about him in this context. In the first one he demonstrated his ability of persuasion, hence *al-wasāṭa* or *al-shafā‘a*,\(^2\) and in the second he demonstrated the qualities of a shrewd politician and a valued adviser.

The first of these was connected with his brother Ahmad al-Azhari. When Ahmad wanted to go to Egypt to join al-Azhar, his father was not willing to let him go. All efforts to make Sh. Ismā‘īl change his mind failed. So Ahmad went to al-Makki, the favourite of their father, and asked him to intercede. When al-Makki talked to his father, he was warned that he would be the first to suffer when Ahmad came back from al-Azhar. But in spite of that, al-Makki insisted, and the father gave permission.\(^3\)

The second story is related in connection with the *bay‘a* to the Khalīfa and the conditions in which the Khalīfa 'Abdullāhī succeeded after the death of the Mahdi. The Khalīfa was said to have asked al-Makki for advice on three points: whether he, the Khalīfa, should

---

1. This is an unusual practice in succession. The Khalīfa took over the leadership of the tarīqa while the Shaykh was still alive. See *al-Nash'i al-Ismā‘īliyya*, ms. (Qur‘ān XII) The usual practice would have been *al-wasāṭa* which was what the Prophet had done, and also the Mahdī in the Sudan. This unusual practice was followed later by al-Makki himself.

2. The ability to intercede on behalf of others against punishment (*Shafā‘a*) or in order to achieve something (*wasāṭa*) is a highly valued quality of leadership in the Sudan. See Chapter IV, p.103, below.

3. The influence of the story of Yūsūf (Qur‘ān XII) is very evident here. Al-Makki here is made like Yūsuf the favourite son amongst his brothers and Sh. Ismā‘īl, like Ya‘qūb a man of vision on whom God had bestowed the power of seeing into the future. The end of the story confirms this, and shows that after his return from al-Azhar, Ahmad was always contradicting al-Makki.
announce the Mahdi's death immediately or after some delay; whether he should wash the Mahdi's body and prepare it for burial, or leave that to the Ashrāf, the Mahdi's relatives; whether he should lead the people in prayer for the burial, or leave that to someone else. Al-Makki advised him to declare the death immediately, to let the Ashrāf prepare the body for burial, but to lead the people in prayer. The burial over, al-Makki was said to have taken the hand of 'Abdullāh and declared his bay'ā, then the others followed him.¹

The death of the Mahdi and the subsequent events leading to the accession of the Khalīfa, received much attention, especially from Yusuf Makhlīl whose version of the incident has generally been accepted by subsequent writers. In his version Yusuf Makhlīl makes al-Makki the third or fourth person to declare his bay'ā after al-Faqīh al-Dādārī, Ahmad Sharīfī, the grand sire of the Ashrāf, and 'Alī wad Hilū. He stated that after the burial the people then began to dispute the question of the succession.

"But the Khalīfa 'Abdullāh was silent and did not say a word. . . . Then al-faqīh al-Dādārī stood up and took the Khalīfa 'Abdullāh's hand by the hand and said to him: 'we swear allegiance, Khalīfat al-Mahdi'. The grand sire of the Ashrāf, Ahmad Sharīfī then stood up, took the Mahdi's sword and turban and handed them over to the Khalīfa 'Abdullāh and said to him: 'we swear allegiance'. Thereafter Khalīfat al-Faruq [Alī w. Hilū] and al-Sayyid al-Makki came forward and took the oath".²

This account of the bay'ā by Yusuf Makhlīl, which makes al-Makki the third or fourth person to swear allegiance, may bring into question

¹. This has very much resemblance to bay'at al-Saqīfa where 'Umar b. al-Khattāb, seeing the possibility of a division between the Muslims after the death of the Prophet, immediately took the hand of Abū Bakr and declared him Khalīfa, thus obliging others to follow. The story is very well known amongst the Ismā'īliyya, and was related to me by Abū al-Fadlā, a grandson of al-Makki, in 1975.

the whole of the Ismāʿīliyya story; and consequently, the explanation of the Khalīfa's special respect for al-Makki, which was based on it. But their account is supported by the story related by Slatin, which comes very close to that of the Ismāʿīliyya, especially with regard to the order in which the oath was taken – al-Makki being the first to do so.¹

In dealing with al-Makki in the few preceding paragraphs, we have tried to indicate his qualities as a shaykh who was capable of acting and leading both as a tribal chief and as a religious faqīh. Those qualities made him ready to follow the Mahdia and most capable of commanding the respect and loyalty of his people.

In contrast to al-Makki, the second person with whom we are dealing, Ahmad al-Azharī (d. 1881), was a completely different character: very much detribalized and little concerned with the popular beliefs of his family. Although he started his education as a student in the khalwā of his father, learning the same subjects as those taught to his elder brother, al-Makki, and exposed to the same popular religious beliefs, he showed a different attitude and a singular determination to go to al-Azhar for further education. His father's objection did not change his mind, and he persisted until, as mentioned above,² his father finally gave his consent. His long stay of ten or twelve years in Egypt detached him from his tribal and provincial background. When he came back to Kordofan, it seems that he felt a stranger to the atmosphere of El-Obeid and could not adjust himself easily to its provincial community. So, as

¹. See R. Slatin, *Fire and Sword*, p. 370.
². See p. 87, above.
we are told by Shuqair, he left it for Khartoum and was about to return to Cairo when the Mahdia broke out. He was requested by the Governor-General at that time, Ra‘ūf Pasha, to accompany an expedition to relieve the town of Bāra where he was killed by the Mahdist forces in 1881.¹

Some of his writings, however, may suggest that he was still associated with the traditional Sudanese religious and tribal background. His *Khulāsât al-īqtibās*² may, therefore, be compared with the efforts of those Sudanese *faqīhs* and tribal chiefs who considered the establishment of a *Sharīf* or *'Abbāsī* pedigree to be most essential; and his poems³ in praise of his father and his brother al-Makkī may also be taken as an indication of a deeply rooted desire to establish the holiness and prestige of his family, and through that, to establish his own holiness and his possession of an inherited *baraka*. But this suggestion is immediately dismissed once Ahmad has explained why he was making this pedigree. In writing this *nasab* he said that he was obeying an order from his father Sh. Ismā‘īl who was obviously keen on establishing his *'Abbāsī* origin and inheritance of *baraka*. Ahmad’s personal lack of interest was very clearly shown in the first few lines of this treatise when he says:

"Since the study of the pedigrees of men is one of which the knowledge is useless and ignorance is harmless, and since by expending one’s energies on such study one shortens one’s days, I paid no attention to it nor did I feel any tendency to do so..."⁴

Rather than his sharīfi origin or baraka, Ahmad, in the true spirit of the 'ulamā', was keen on demonstrating his abilities of investigation, and by his application of his newly acquired techniques of 'ilm al-hadīth, he showed how much he was absorbed in his role as one of the 'ulamā', and how much satisfaction he was getting from this academic exercise. In a style very similar to that of al-Bukhārī in investigation, examination of documents and cross references, Ahmad went about collecting the information for his nasab. He said that he had collected numerous manuscripts related to the pedigrees of the Ja'aliyyin and compared these with some which were copied in the holy lands by authentic pious saints such as Muḥammad b. 'Isā b. 'Abd al-Baqī and al-Sanhūrī. Then after having made a rough copy of his work, he continued to study the contents for several years, ascertaining the truth from the authentic works of famous imāms. After finishing this work in prose, Ahmad then went on to put it into verse to demonstrate some other abilities, and to impress people with his skill in this field as well.

In contrast to al-Makki then, Ahmad was an 'ālim who was much more at home in the company of the 'ulamā' and orthodox Muslims than of faqīhs and holymen. He was very competent and sure when dealing with topics related to the sharī'a and orthodox beliefs, but quite a stranger to the world of Sufism and popular Islamic beliefs. He was perfectly convinced and happy with the Islam of the Qur'ān and Sunna contained in

1. He is Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī (809-870), the famous traditionalist who is believed to have been very meticulous in his investigations.
2. It was common practice amongst Sudanese genealogists to refer to the works of some pious medieval authors even though they may have nothing to do with genealogy. Of the two names mentioned by al-Azhari here, one can be identified with Sālim b. Muḥammad al-Sanhūrī, a known commentator on Mukhtasār Khalīl on the Mālikī madhhab.
books to which he could refer, but he was unable to comprehend the idea of having Islamic rules superior to the Sharī'ā derived from a superior knowledge bestowed upon certain chosen awliyā' who claimed direct contact with the Prophet al-Khadīr.¹

The Mahdi whom Ahmad al-Azharī expected could not have come from amongst the faqīhas and awliyā'. His idea of the Mahdi was confined to the sharī'ā and had to conform with its criteria. At most, to Ahmad, the Sudanese Mahdi could only be a mujaddid² with no special supernatural powers or any extra esoteric knowledge. Muhammad Ahmad did not fit into the frame of al-Azharī of the Mahdi, so he refuted his claim, giving eleven reasons in a published manifesto.³ His aggressive attitude towards the Mahdi did not win al-Azharī much support amongst the members of his family or amongst the Ismā'īliyya at first, and most of them followed the leadership of al-Makki throughout the Mahdi. But by this attitude Ahmad made it possible for many of the family members and followers of the Ismā'īliyya ṭarāqqa later on to discontinue their relationship with the Mahdists without much difficulty, and easily turn in the twentieth century under a great-grandson of al-Azharī into the main rival political group to the Mahdists.

The third person whose attitude towards the Mahdi could have affected that of the Ismā'īliyya was Ismā'īl 'Abd al-Qādir al-Kurdufanī (1844-1893). He was related to the family through his mother 'A'isha,

---

¹. Prophet al-Khadīr is generally believed to be the intermediary between God and the founder of a religious order, and to exercise great influence with holy men to unveil the future to them and give them supernatural powers. The Mahdi made very much use of this popular belief for the success of his movement. The Khalīfa 'Abdullāhī tried but failed. See also A.J. Wensinck, "al-Khadīr", E.I., vol. II, Part 2, p. 361.
². For more details on the various views about the Mahdi amongst the Sunnis and Shi'is, refer to Ibn Khaldūn, Muqaddimah, trans. Rosenthal, vol. II, pp. 156-200.
³. See "Risalat al-Azharī", Shuqair, Ta'rikh, 3, 383.
daughter of Sh. Ismā'īl al-Walī. Authority and baraka in the Ismā'īliyya family and tarīqa continued to be transmitted through the men only and none of the women achieved recognition similar to that of Fātimah b. Jābir or Maryam al-Mirghaniyyah, although some of them were said to have studied in khālwās. Thus al-Kurdufanī being related to the family on his mother's side, had very little chance of being a shaykh or establishing a ḥāsh (a branch of the holy family), but through his own efforts and personal abilities, he managed to rise to a very respectable position comparable to those of his uncles Ahmad and al-Makkī. Though his attitude towards the Mahdia did not reflect directly on the Ismā'īliyya, and could not be equated with those of al-Azhari and al-Makkī, it must, however, have contributed its share to that relationship. His approach to the Mahdia was different from that of either of his uncles; he was, on the one hand an 'ālim like Ahmad, but on the other he was closely associated with Sudanese provincial society like al-Makkī. Like al-Azhari, after early training in his grandfather's khālwā in El-Obeid, he went to study at al-Azhar where he showed a great deal of interest and intelligence. On his return to Kordofan, he was appointed as muftī and settled in El-Obeid. But unlike al-Azhari, he had a strong feeling towards Kordofan. This was clearly expressed by the nisba which was affixed to his name in preference to the name of his grandfather, and even to the more glamorous one of al-Azhari to which his education would have entitled him. It was also shown in his desire to return to Kordofan

1. Inheritance of baraka and fame in Sudanese holy families has normally descended always through male members, but in some cases a number of women have managed to establish their own lines, such as Fātimah bint Jābir, grandmother of Awlād Sighayrūn, see P.M. Holt, "The Sons of Jābir", BSOS, XXX, p.151; another is Maryam bint Hāshim b. Muhammad 'Uthmān. She was married to 'Uthmān Tājal-Sīr b. Muhammad Sīr al-Khatim; together with her husband she provided the leadership of the Khatmiyya in the Eastern Sudan, especially during the Mahdia. See Voll., Khatmiyya, p.258.

in spite of the fact that he was very honourably received in Darfur and could have risen to a very prominent place if he had stayed there. His association with Kordofan is also shown by his style of writing - he quite often used Kordofani words and expressions, typical only of that area. Unlike Ahmad al-Azhari also, he seemed satisfied with the provincial community of El-Obeid where he decided to settle down rather than go to Khartoum or even return to Cairo.

When the Mahdia broke out al-Kurdufani must have found himself in a situation very similar to that of the 'ufr and religious men whom Sh. Mudawwi 'Abd al-Rahman had found with al-Mahdi when he went to meet him in QadIr and whom he described in his statement to Na'um Shuqair later in 1890. Al-Kurdufani was in a state of uncertainty and indecision. But soon after the Mahdi had reached Kaba, al-Kurdufani made up his mind and defected from El-Obeid to the Mahdi's camp. He was quick to show his abilities and utilize his talents. He demonstrated that by applying himself to writing down the events of the Mahdia in *Sa'ddat al-mustahdit bi-strat al-'Imām al-Mahdi* which must have pleased the Mahdi and the Khalifa. When that was finished he was commissioned with another similar task, that of writing the events of the Mahdia in Eastern Sudan, which he entitled *al-Tirās al-manqush bi-bushra qatīl al-Hamāh malik al-Hubūsh*. Al-Kurdufani continuously gained favours and importance until suddenly in August 1893, he came into disfavour, was caught and banished to al-Rajjaf.

2. See *Sa'ddat al-Mustahdī*, ed. Abu Salīm, p. 203, an example is.
3. Ibid., p. 18. This gives three possible reasons for this defection: (a) his dissatisfaction with the whole political system (influenced by Egyptian reformists), (b) genuinely belief in the Mahdi like the rest of his family, except Azhari, (c) that it was an unavoidable evil since he became sure that the Turkish rule was coming to an end.
This sudden and tragic end cannot easily be explained, and a number of suggestions have been examined in detail by H. Shâked and M.I. Abû Salîm. Shâked discusses three of these, two given by Shuqair, and the third by Slatin, then he puts forward his own version: that the Khalîfa wanted to eradicate the only contemporary chronicle which stressed the roles of eminent men in the development of the Mahdia other than the Khalîfa himself. Thus he ordered all the books of al-Kurdufânî to be burnt and he himself to be banished to a remote place. To support this argument Shâked notes that simultaneously with the banishment of Ismâ'îl and the burning of his books, a number of prominent people had fallen foul of the Khalîfa. Shâked, however, does not seem to be very much satisfied with this suggestion, and puts it "with reservation". The reason given by him does not merit such a drastic measure, especially as these books were very few in number and too limited in circulation to be of any particular importance or threat.

Abû Salîm also follows these versions critically, including that of Shâked. Then he tries to find a link between the cause of this tragedy and the writings of al-Kurdufânî which betray him as being out of step with the system. In his books al-Kurdufani shows respect to the Mirghaniyya, does not condemn their opposition to the Mahdia, and calls

3. N. Shuqair, the first version is in Memorandum, fols.2-3, and the second is in Ta’rîkh III, 559.
5. H. Shâked, "A manuscript biography of the Sudanese Mahdi", op. cit., 532, n.34, quoting P.M. Holt, The Mahdist State (passeim), gives the names of many such persons who had fallen out of the Khalîfa's favour close to the banishment of al-Kurdufânî, and who had always been mentioned favourably in his books. Eg. Mahmûd 'Abd al-Qâdir, Muhammad al-Khayr, al-Zâkî Tamal and Wad al-Zâhrî.
them a holy family; he does not condemn al-Ashraf and presents their role in the Mahdia in a better light than that of the Baqqara and he does not paint a good picture of Ya'qūb, the Khalīfa's brother and his right hand, in these writings. But again, Abū Salīm fails to give the reasons why these writings suddenly became so important in 1893 as to turn the Khalīfa's heart so dramatically against al-Kurdufānī.

A possible explanation may be sought in the Khalīfa's growing distrust of the 'ulamā' in general, and Awlād al-Balad among them, in particular. The revolt of the Ashrāf, in which some of his closest advisers took active part, had convinced 'Adullahī that he could no longer trust those close to him who were of riverain stock. Thus, after successfully dealing with that revolt, the Khalīfa started to consolidate his powers and systematically eliminated all those who were suspected of having sympathy with the Ashrāf or any others who posed any threat to the Khalīfa's power. Between 1893 and 1895 he cracked down upon a number of such men, one after the other. Al-Kurdufānī's banishment was, therefore, immediately followed by the arrest of Ahmad wad 'Alī, Qādi al-Islām, in May 1894, and soon afterwards his successor al-Husayn Ibrāhīm wad al-Zahrā was imprisoned as well.1

Most interesting for the purpose of this study are two explanations given for the tragedy of al-Kurdufānī by some members of his family.

The first of these related to M.I. Abū Salīm by Mīrghanī al-Sayyid al-Bāqīr, a grandson of al-Kurdufānī, suggests that he had fallen victim to the suspicions of the Khalīfa. The Khalīfa was said to have stated to an assembly of elders that al-Kurdufānī had done nothing to offend him, but only aroused his suspicions. Whenever the Khalīfa asked for

an opinion on any matter, al-Kurdufānī would come up with a variety of answers which bewildered the Khalīfa, and made his opinion look comparably very weak. Suspecting that al-Kurdufānī might be inclined by his tribal attachment to sympathize with the Ashrāf, and fearing that with such talents, that man could be harmful if he should turn to their side, the Khalīfa decided to get rid of him.¹

The second explanation related by a grandson of al-Makkī² links al-Kurdufānī's disaster with his unjustified hostility towards his uncle al-Makkī, and as such, it may also help to explain why the latter had kept silent throughout the whole tragedy. The story suggests that for an unknown reason al-Kurdufānī was trying to spoil the good relationship between al-Makkī and the Khalīfa. Thus he told the Khalīfa that al-Makkī was not an honest believer because he went back to his house to repeat his prayer every time he prayed behind the Khalīfa—meaning that he did not recognize the latter as imām and prayer behind him was invalid. He reported also that al-Makkī had encouraged the people to kiss the hands of the Mirghānī boys who were under his custody, thus increasing their popularity and prestige, though they should have been treated as enemies of the Mahdīa. This report was said to have made the Khalīfa very angry. He ordered that al-Makkī should be summoned to his presence immediately. Miraculously, however, when al-Makkī reached the Khalīfa that night, things took a different turn. The Khalīfa instead invited al-Makkī to supper on a special Western Sudanese

dish ('asīda) and a few days later al-Kurdufānī was sent to al-Rajjāf in the same boat which was supposedly brought to take al-Makki. As one of the 'ulama', al-Kurdufānī must have been one of those who were giving advice which turned out always to be misleading and confusing. By 1893, the Khalīfa grew impatient with these 'ulama' and many of them suffered at his hands.

The attitude of al-Kurdufānī to the Mahdia must have affected the Ismā'īliyya in two ways: his decision to join the Mahdia, being an 'ulūm, must have served to counterbalance the attitude of Ahmad al-Azhari and encouraged some members of their family to join the Mahdist cause. His banishment and unfair treatment later must, on the other hand, have made some members of his immediate family waver in their loyalty to the Mahdia and perhaps to the leadership of al-Makki as shaykh of the Ismā'īliyya. There was no immediate reaction to what had happened to al-Kurdufānī, but as in the case of Ahmad al-Azhari, this incident must have contributed to the development during the Condominium period which made increasing numbers of this family turn away from any association with the Mahdia.

As a result of their contact with the Mahdia, the structure of the Ismā'īliyya, both as a family and a tarīqa, began to undergo some important developments. A rift in the family which began, in its early stages, with occasional disagreements between al-Makki and al-Azhari over social and religious matters, widened during the Mahdia and led to the polarization of the family into two distinct groups. Those who followed

---

1. After his return from Al-Azhar, Ahmad was said to have been very critical of al-Makki's Sufi activities, and especially objected to the beating of the drums during the dhīkr, see p.80, above.
al-Makki remained loyal to him and to the Mahdia until the Mahdist state was brought to an end in 1899. Then they returned to Kordofan to form the bulk of the present Isma'Iliyya family and ṭartqa in that region. The other group which opposed the Mahdia with Ahmad, began to take a new identity under the name of al-Azhari. The two groups continued to drift apart, and during the Condominium period their separate developments were expressed in their different religious, social and political outlooks.\(^1\)

The followers of al-Makki stuck to the traditions of the family, those of al-Azhari opted for change. Thus, while al-Bashîr b. al-Makki\(^2\) was very reluctant to allow his children to take modern education, a grandson of al-Azhari, Ismâ'il, was one of the first Sudanese to be sent abroad for a modern university education in Beirut. To emphasize this rift further, the separation of these two groups took a geographical form with the Azharis centred mainly in Omdurman and Khartoum, away from the Isma'Iliyya main branch in El-Obeid.

This trend had also found its way to the ṭartqa itself, and at times even threatened its unity. Differences between its third khalîfa, Mirghani\(^-\) (1908-1950), his uncles and the elders of the family, created a great deal of tension within the order, and divided the loyalties of its followers. During Mirghani's long term of office as Khalîfa, the ṭartqa was evidently divided between its original headquarters in El-Obeid and its centre in Omdurman, where the recognized Khalîfa lived. A permanent schism was only averted when Mirghani returned to El-Obeid early in 1950 to make peace with his uncles, and remained there until his death in April of the same year.

---

1. See Chapter IV, pp.123-4, below.
2. Bashîr was the youngest son of al-Makki, see genealogical tables, Appendix A below. He lived long after the death of his father, and though he did not become Khalîfa of the order, he was for a long time the real head of the family in El-Obeid.
CHAPTER IV

THE ISMA'I ILIYYA AFTER THE RECONQUEST

The defeat and final collapse of the Mahdist state in the Sudan in 1899 and the establishment of an Anglo-Egyptian Condominium rule in its place, marked the beginning of a new era in the history and development of religious tarīqas and Sudanese holy families. During the Mahdia, though the rise and quick success of Muhammad Ahmad owed a great deal to their support, all the tarīqas were abolished and their practices suspended. The early years of the Condominium Government witnessed continuous efforts on the part of these tarīqas and families to reorganize their orders, rally their supports and re-establish their places and fame in the society. This chapter attempts to follow the efforts of the Ismā'Iliyya - both as a tariqa and as a family - in this respect. It will discuss the facts which favoured an early revival of the tariqa and then the conditions which led later on to its decline and reversion into a localized organization. It will also deal with the conflicting tendencies in the family which, after having remained dormant throughout the Mahdia, were now finding expression in a clear division between those who kept the tradition of the family and the tariqa under al-Makki and a new forward-looking branch under the name of al-Azhari.

The revival of the Ismā'Iliyya religious and political powers during this period, after such a long eclipse throughout the Mahdia, was a rather difficult and laborious process. They were lucky to have al-Makki to lead them in the early phases through these difficulties, and it was to him that much of the credit goes for the rebirth of the tariqa.
and its revitalization. His abilities, referred to earlier, enabled him to come to terms very quickly with the new government and thus paved the way for an easy return for himself and for the Ismāʿīliyya to an active and distinguished role in the society. His earlier support of the Mahdia and the respectable position he held during the Khalīfa's reign meant that most of the writings of his father were not destroyed and many of the family's belongings, which were connected with the tarīqa, were also saved. This also helped very much in the process of revival.

Al-Makki set himself to do two things: to regain a position of prestige for himself and his family with the new rulers, and to re-establish his tarīqa and take it back to its original home in Kordofan. The first task was not as difficult as the second. Soon after the battle of Omdurman in 1898 al-Makki was beginning to feel his way about establishing some contacts with the new regime. His personal friendships and some of his family relationships were found to be very useful and were readily utilized. One of these was their spiritual ties with the Mirghaniyya family. Faithful to the memory of the shaykh of his father, al-Makki maintained a good relationship with the Mirghaniyya who were forced to stay in Omdurman during the Mahdia. A number of the Mirghaniyya youngsters found refuge in al-Makki's house where they remained.

2. Ahmad, Mirghanī and al-Hasan were said to have lived with al-Makki and studied with his sons 'Abd al-Rahīm, Karrār and others. Related to me by Ṣajj 'Abd al-Ḥafīz, in El-Obeid, 1975. Mirghanī ladies Fatima and Naṭīṣa were also believed to have been there. See INTEL, Reports, Egypt, No.32, November 1894, Father Rosignoli's statements.
in his custody until the reconquest. In spite of the fact that their presence with him had sometimes caused much embarrassment, they were treated with respect and they were given an education with his own children. This must have gained him some sympathy from the new rulers since the Mirghaniyya and their associates were considered to be very loyal to the government and were held in great respect.

Another thing which recommended al-Makki to the new government was his acquaintance with Muhammad wad al-Badawi, a graduate of al-Azhar who had formed a friendship with al-Mir in Omdurman. Wad al-Badawi was a citizen of Kordofan and during the Mahdia he maintained a very close and friendly relationship with al-Makki and the Isma"il"Iliyya family. Through him al-Makki must have obtained some access to the leaders of the new regime. Al-Makki was soon selected as a member of the Board of Ulama' and religious notables headed by wad al-Badawi to interrogate 'Ali wad 'Abd al-Karîm in 1900.

Throughout this period and until his death in 1906, al-Makki built on these early contacts and continually improved his relationship with the government officials in the capital, and then later with its provincial representatives in Kordofan. Thus when in 1898 he was asked to pay the rates, he took that opportunity to write a petition to the ma'âmr of Omdurman stating his case for an exemption. He significantly

1. A number of rumours designed to spoil the relationship between al-Makki and the Khalîfa were connected with these Mirghani youths. The most common of those rumours was that al-Makki had allowed their followers to see them secretly and kiss their hands in respect. See above pp.108.
2. See N. Shuqair, Ta'Mkh, 3, 670, for a list of names of the eight members of this board.
3. 'Ali wad 'Abd al-Karîm was a relative of the Mahdi who advocated some heretical ideas after the end of the Mahdist state, see ibid.
4. Sud.Govt. Archives (Khartoum) 1/82/1308, al-Makki to ma'âmr, Omdurman, 10 November 1898.
indicated that he was a faqīḥ whose family had enjoyed this privilege of tax exemption even during the Turco-Egyptian rule. The ma‘mūr of Omdurman not only agreed to his request for exemption from paying those rates, but also recognized al-Makki’s status and expressed a desire to meet him.¹ Al-Makki’s friendly attitude was not limited to the government quarters and official contacts only, but was also extended to personal relationships with a number of Egyptian officers. Some of those who made his acquaintance continued their relationship and kept correspondence with him even after they were transferred far away. Typical of those was Yuzbashi Sa’id ‘Uthmān, who, in April 1900, wrote to al-Makki from Halfa expressing his gratitude for the receipt of three papers "probably hijābs containing some Qur’ānic verses" and asking for other services.² Other officers who were personally impressed by al-Makki when they met him in Kordofan included Ibrāhīm Effendi, the ex-director of investigation in Kordofan Province, Yuzbashi Labīb Effendi, and Muhammad Effendi Tawfiq, the ma‘mūr of al-Kawwa district in the White Nile.³

Al-Makki’s efforts to strengthen his ties with the government and to impress its officials were very much in keeping with the tradition of the Sudanese holy men who, although different in their approach, have always aimed at enjoying some influence with the rulers. This was essential to facilitate one of the most important functions in the society: that of interceding with the rulers on behalf of the oppressed (al-Shafā‘a

---

¹ See Sud. Govt. Archives (Khartoum) 1/82/1308, al-Makki’s petition to ma‘mūr Omdurman, 1898.
104

1. The importance of this function is clearly emphasized by Wad Dayf Allah in the Tabaqāt. He seldom mentions any great shaykh without attributing this privilege to him. E.g., see Tabaqāt, ed. Y.F. Hasan, pp. 83, 106, 150 and 188.


4. For a list of these works see al-nash'a al-Makkiyya, Sud. Govt. Archives (Khartoum), 1/82/1321.

 inadvert al-mulūk). It was this tradition which tempted 'Ali Dīnār, the Sultan of Darfur, to write to al-Makki in 1902 in the hope of getting him to intercede on his behalf with the Sudan Government and help him in his delicate relationship with it. Al-Makki was also very quick to restore his reputation as a faqīḥ and soon after the battle of Omdurman he began to devote more attention to his khalwā where he was teaching the Qur'ān. This was turned into a rallying centre for many of his relatives, countrymen and followers and developed into one of Omdurman's important quarters still carrying his names (hayy al-sayyid al-Makki). By 1902 his followers had grown to be no less in importance than those of 'Ali al-Mirghāni. When he made his way back to Kordofan in 1902, al-Makki's first task was the re-establishment of the Ismā'ilīyya khalwā where he continued his teaching of the Qur'ān; but more important than that was his return to hayy-al Qubba, a quarter around the tomb of Sh. Ismā'il, to which were attracted most of the returning riverain merchants, and which became the most important quarter in El-Obeid. He also began to revive the literary tradition of the family and wrote a number of religious works. He also went on pilgrimage in 1904 for the second time, an act which, in those days, appealed very much to the religious sentiments of the people and added to the veneration of al-Makki and his family and to their association with piety and holiness. Before al-Makki's death, therefore,
the family of Sh. Ismā'īl had already restored much of their prestige and respect especially in the Western Sudan. Mindful of this, Slatin, who was otherwise very suspicious of all tariqa shaykhs, found it necessary to recognize al-Makkī's place and importance in that area, and to try to use his influence in dealing with the people there. In 1902, Slatin was consulting him on the affairs of Darfur and expressing the Government's anxiety over the Sanūsī activities there.1 In 1906 the Governor of Kordofan considered al-Makkī to be an important man, "...who had great influence in religious circles".2 Thus, when he died, his funeral was attended by very many notable people or their representatives and many learned men, such as al-Tāhir al-Majdūb, Muhammad Hāshim and his son, Ahmad Hāshim, and Muhammad wad al-Bannā. All praised him in poetry and prose.3

It was at his second task of re-establishing the Ismā'īliyya tariqa that al-Makkī had to labour to achieve his end. His attempts in this respect were influenced by three main factors: the first stemming from the Condominium Government's attitude towards Islam and Islamic organizations; the second related to its position and its administrative policy in the Western Sudan, especially the efforts directed towards the pacification and resettlement of the people in Kordofan and Darfur; and the third, to the adjustment of the Ismā'īliyya and its adaptation to the changing social and political trends during this period.

3. A number of these are mentioned in al-Nash'a al-Makkiyya, Sud.Govt. Archives (Khartoum), 1/82/1321.
The Government, Islam and the Ismā'īliyya

The attitude of the Sudan government to Islam in the early condominium period has been discussed very thoroughly by Warburg, to whose works reference can be made for more details. Suffice it here to consider very briefly the main features of this attitude, see how it had affected the Ismā'īliyya and how they had responded to it.

Warburg suggests that the main principle underlying the government's attitude towards Islam during this period was that of fostering orthodox Islam, as opposed to the unorthodox Sufi beliefs. While making every effort to raise the status of the 'ulamā’, encourage the rebuilding of mosques in towns, and facilitate pilgrimage, its attitude towards the tarīqas and Sufi leaders remained that of suspicion bordering on hostility. This attitude was clearly formulated in a religious policy which was consistently pursued throughout this period from 1899 to 1914. The general principles of that policy were laid down by Lord Cromer as early as January 1899 in his speech to the 'ulamā’ and notables of the Sudan, and then formulated in a memorandum by Kitchener, the first Governor-General, to all his subordinates in the provinces. After Kitchener, the policy was pursued with much enthusiasm and vigour by Wingate, as Governor-General, assisted by Slatin as Inspector-General.

The realization of that policy is indicated by the creation of the Board of Ulema, the establishment of sharī’ā courts, the assistance in the building of central mosques and other acts which encouraged orthodox

---

2. See FO/633/25, Cromer speech to the sheikhs and notables of the Sudan.
4. This body first established to deal with the heresy of 'Alī wad al-Karīm, was soon to be useful in giving official Islamic recognition to government policies related to Islam.
Muslim organizations. On the other hand, hostility to tariqas and Sufism was clearly spelled out in the government circulars and official correspondence. Administrators were continually reminded that tariqas were an evil which they should always discountenance and that the heads of these organizations should always be suspected as a potential threat to stability and public security. They even became the subject of scornful comments and unfavourable remarks in government papers and personal diaries of its officials.\(^1\)

Apart from Warburg's works, much has been written on this subject of the government's attitude to Islam during this period; and they practically all agree with him on this generally accepted theme that it tended to favour orthodox Islam as opposed to unorthodox Sufi beliefs. It should, however, be pointed out here that these explanations rest mainly on the implicit acceptance of the idea that there was a clear division between orthodox and unorthodox Islam. This assumption may have to be reconsidered in the light of the nature of Sudanese Islam and the difficulty of making such a division. The suggestion also that the Condominium government had, at such an early date - January 1899 - been able to formulate an attitude based on such a clear-cut distinction between these two categories may be unrealistic. The inconsistency of the government in its relationship with the various Islamic leaders and organizations at different times and places in this period may illustrate this. While a number of Sufi shaykhs and heads of tariqas, such as 'Ali al-Mirghanî of the Khatmiyya, Muhammad al-Makki of the Ismā'Iliyya and Muhammad Sharîf Nur al-Dayîn of the Sammaniyya, had received government favours, not a few of those who could be described as orthodox,  

1. E.g., Butler's Journal, 1911, Sud.Govt. Archives (Durham) 422/12.
such as al-Mudawwi, were actually ill-treated. Rather than being suppressed, tariqas were in fact revived, some like the Khatmiyya were even thriving, and a few new orders were coming to life, such as the Hindiyya and the 'Azmiyya. The explanation of the government's attitude to Islam through this categorization, therefore, may not be full and satisfactory. It may, perhaps, be claimed that the government's attitude to Islam during this period had two different aspects: a declared government policy which was expressed in broad lines in Cromer's speech of January 1899, then detailed in Kitchener's memorandum to the provincial governors, and other similar official circulars; and an actual applied practice of contacts and relationships with individual Muslim leaders and groups at different times and in various circumstances.

In its declared policy, the government maintained throughout the whole of this period an attitude which favoured orthodox Islam and distrusted Sufi tariqas. A hostile attitude can, therefore, be seen consistently coming out in all the government proclamations, intelligence reports and administrative circulars. This attitude was particularly evident in the first few months after the reconquest when the government was anxious to regain the confidence of the people and undermine the influence of Mahdism. In its actual relationships with the various individuals and religious groups, the government's attitude was continually changing and modifying according to the political needs prevailing, and in response to the requirements of sound administration. Thus, after the initial few years of uncertainty, the Condominium government began to

develop some understanding of the nature of Sudanese popular Islam and to appreciate the importance and deeply rooted traditions of Sufism in Sudanese society. It therefore started to be tolerant of these *shaykhs* and of their followers, provided they did not get involved in politics or subversive activities which interfered with government administration and plans for reform. The key personality in the direction and implementation of these practical relationships was Slatin, who as Inspector-General, was the chief adviser to the Governor-General on all matters pertaining to religion and tribal affairs. Slatin's personal experience in the Sudan, and especially his long years of captivity with the Khalīfa in Omdurman, had taught him to be very suspicious of all the heads of *tawīlas* and to consider them as frauds and profit seekers. His prejudiced attitude was reflected in his relationships with those religious leaders and weighed heavily against them. Slatin, however, had also made some friends during this period among those Sufi and tribal notables. It was through his personal contacts with those friends that his prejudices were modified and the government was able to court some important leaders.

The attitude of the Condominium government towards the Ismā'īliyya followed this same pattern. While on the one hand it maintained a feeling of suspicion and hostility towards the *tawīla* throughout this period, it continued, on the other, to have a relationship with its leaders which was based on pragmatic considerations, and which kept on changing with different persons and at different times. Like all other *tawīlas*, the Ismā'īliyya was viewed with distrust and got its share of hostility in the government reports and circulars, but at the same time and out of sheer political expediency, the co-operation and support of
its leaders was sought from time to time. Thus, early in 1899, al-Makkî's co-operation was sought and obtained when he was selected to the membership of the Board of Ulema. A cordial relationship was then started which made it possible for the Ismâ'Iliyya to be revived in favourable conditions. So long as its activities were confined to religious affairs, it was tolerated and its practices condoned. By 1902, it had become one of the two most influential tariqas in the Sudan. Its quick revival and growth obviously led to some rivalry and conflict with the Khatmiyya, which was then also regaining its strength and fame. The government had no reason or desire to favour one tariqa or the other in their rivalries, but it was quite evident from its dealings with the heads of these two orders that 'Alî al-Mirghani, and through him the Khatmiyya, were getting the better treatment. A conflict which ensued between the followers of these tariqas in that year during the Mawlid celebrations was one of the most pressing reasons which convinced al-Makkî of the need to return with his tariqa to its home in El-Obeid. This proved to be a very crucial decision which affected the history and future development of the Ismâ'Iliyya tariqa and family. Its immediate result was the quick resettlement of the tariqa and its flourishing in the Western Sudan. The long-term result was that the centre of the Ismâ'Iliyya having been drawn away from the capital, was that its head was no longer in touch with national affairs at first hand.

1. N. Shuqair, Tarîkh, 3, 670.
2. S.I.R., No.95, June 1902, described the Sammaniyya as the most widespread and possibly the most numerous, and the Khatmiyya and Ismâ'Iliyya as the most influential.
3. Although his tariqa was not officially recognized, 'Alî al-Mirghani's position of respect was recognized, and he was always referred to as being loyal and worthy of respect. See Sud.Govt. Archives (Durham), 201/2, Wingate to Cecil, 5 July 1916.
and consequently he and his followers were becoming more and more confined to provincial issues and highly localized in their outlook. The influence of the tartqa in the western Sudan, however, remained paramount and unchallenged for quite some time. By 1904, only two years after his return to El-Obeid, al-Makki felt so confident about its prospects, that he decided to leave it under the leadership of his eldest son - Ismā'īl - and went on pilgrimage, where he is claimed to have enlisted some followers.¹

This love-hate relationship between the government and the Ismā'īliyya continued throughout the remaining lifetime of al-Makki. At one time he was praised by Slatin as being a loyal person, "who acted in our interest",² and his advice and co-operation were sought, especially with regards to the affairs in Darfur,³ but at the same time he was still distrusted and his interpretations of the affairs of Darfur were viewed with suspicion. When Slatin conveyed to him the government's fears of the spread of the Sanusiyya in Darfur, al-Makki dismissed that possibility because the Sultan of Darfur was one of his followers. Slatin thought that was presumptuous, and suspected that it was only an indication of al-Makki's own anxiety and fear of losing the income which came to him from his followers there.⁴

As long as al-Makki was living, his tartqa was still benefiting from his established fame and his good relationship with the government, and thus saw much of the brighter side of its attitude towards Islamic

². S.I.R., No.80, March 1901, Appendix E.
³. See R. Hill, Slatin, p.88.
⁴. S.I.R., No.97, October 1901, and No.93, April 1902. See also R. Hill, Slatin, p.88.
organizations. With al-Makki dead in 1906 and his tarīqa suffering from internal conflicts and in decline, the Ismā'īliyya began to see the other and more gloomy side of that government attitude. An intelligence report of 1907 described its second khalīfa, Ismā'il al-Raqīq as unco-operative and obstructive to the government efforts to clean El-Obeid.  

In 1908, he was even reported as being on friendly terms with a faqīh who was viewed as a possible cause of unrest. The third khalīfa - Mirghanī - was on no better terms, and his closer ties with 'Abbād al-Rahman al-Mahdi at that time, brought about a more hostile reaction from the government. This became apparent in 1911 when Savile, then acting Governor of Kordofan, was trying to support the appointment of 'Abbād b. al-Makki as head of the order, rather than Mirghanī, because the former was thought to be more co-operative. Savile was advised to stop interfering with the internal affairs of the order since such an interference could be interpreted as a recognition of the tarīqa. The unfriendly attitude persisted throughout the rest of the period in which Mirghanī was head of the Ismā'īliyya, i.e. until 1950. Although the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 had forced the government to modify its attitude towards the tarīqas, and although Mirghanī's friend 'Abbād al-Rahman al-Mahdi and his associates were no longer considered enemies of the government the Ismā'īliyya was still viewed with some suspicion. One of the virtues that recommended Ismā'il b. Ahmad al-Azhari to the government was his dissociation from the tarīqa. A report in 1915 described him as having nothing to do with it. It was this member of the family who was seen to be more suitable

1. S.I.R., No.159, October 1907, Appendix B.
2. S.I.R., No.169, August 1908.
than the head of the Ismā'īliyya ṭartīqa as a member of the Sudanese
delegation of notables to London to congratulate King George V in 1919.

The Government, the Western Sudan and the Ismā'īliyya

The second factor which affected the revival and development of the
Ismā'īliyya in this period was related to the delicate position of the
government in its early days in the western Sudan. Taking advantage of
that situation, the Ismā'īliyya, both ṭartīqa and family, managed quickly
to restore their prestige, and making use of the favourable conditions
at the time, to extend their influence more widely than before. Then,
after their early good start, they began to settle down to the role of
a localized traditional ṭartīqa and a holy family.

The government position in Kordofan and Darfur was very sensitive
and vulnerable in the early years after the reconquest. These are two
vast areas, remote from the capital and had always been rebellious
against all forms of central authority in Khartoum. During the Mahdia
they saw a great deal of unrest, and for a long time after the reconquest
no effective government authority was established in them. The
government was hoping to reconquer those parts of the Sudan by stages,
but while doing so it did not want its claim to sovereignty over them
to be challenged. Thus after the battle of Omdurman, Kitchener, finding
himself in no position to advance immediately to the west, published
a proclamation in November 1898 to all the shaykhīs of Kordofan and Darfur
in which he stated that the government intended to resume its authority
there, but that would be delayed until he had settled things in the Nile.
When that was done, he promised, "...The government will turn its
attention to the western Sudan, restore its authority and organize it to
the best advantage and welfare of the tribes and inhabitants". The quick defeat of the Khalifa in Um-Dibaykrat in the following year made it easy for the government to despatch a small force under Mahon to reconquer El-Obeid in December 1899. In Darfur it was thought better to lay claims to the area leaving its administration to the Sultan 'Ali Dīnār, a descendant of its last ruler, Muhammad al-Fadl. The main preoccupation of the government was with the pacification of these areas and then the establishment of a just and effective administrative structure. After the reconquest of El-Obeid, therefore, Wingate issued a proclamation to all the people of Kordofan encouraging them to return to their homes and promising to help them with transport and seeds for cultivation. He also sent a letter to 'Ali Dīnār asking him to encourage the people to cultivate their lands, open schools and mosques and to resume trade with Kordofan and Khartoum. Those government promises were not fulfilled, and consequently its hopes for an immediate pacification of the inhabitants there were not achieved. The state of unrest in those areas continued, and up to 1916 no single year passed without a reported rising or conflict of one sort or another, in which the government was involved. A number of factors had contributed to this: the inhabitants of those regions - and especially Kordofan - had a deep-rooted and probably well-justified distrust of any foreign government or central authority. The fact that the new government was partly Christian and at the same time associated with the Khedivial rule had added to its unpopularity. Moreover, the fact that its presence was not always felt had tempted many to disregard its orders

3. Sud. Govt. Archives (Khartoum), Int.2/3/14, Wingate to Dīnār, 3 June 1900.
and ignore its decisions. Furthermore, the religious feelings and fanaticism were still very high there and the incidents which occurred during the early years of the Condominium showed that north of Omdurman, fanaticism had waned, but southwards, along the White Nile and in the western Sudan, it remained very strong and active.¹

The government's efforts to establish a good administration were also frustrated. It was hoped that the government would gain the confidence and co-operation of what Kitchener termed "the better class of natives", through whom the whole population could gradually be influenced.² Therefore one of the most important duties of Slatin, as Inspector-General under Wingate, was, "To acquaint himself with the names and characters of the principal sheikhs and other persons who either through their wealth, position or for reasons connected with religion, have influence over the natives".³ Slatin had no great difficulty in this respect in the Gezira and the Nile areas, where there were a number of shaykhs and tribal chiefs with whom he could establish contacts. In the western Sudan, tribal structure was disrupted during the Mahdia, and with the exception of a few notables like 'Ali al-Tōm of the Kabābīš and Mūsā Madībbū of the Rizayqāt, there were no strong chiefs who could be of any real use to the government in influencing the population in its favour. Under the circumstances, the presence of an influential ṭarāqa whose leader was willing to co-operate was a blessing. Thus, like the Khātiyya in Kasala, the Majādīb in the eastern Sudan and the Ahmādiyya in Dongola, the Ismā'Īliyya presence in

¹. A number of these movements have been cited in A. Cudsi, "Sudanese resistance to British rule 1900-1920", unpublished MSc thesis, University of Khartoum, 1969.
³. Sudan Gov. Archives (Durham), 403/6/4 April 1902, "Duties of Inspector-General, Sudan"
the western Sudan was a great help as a very important element of stability. The revival of the Ismā‘Iliyya and the restoration of its zawiyas and organizations were therefore encouraged as a natural and healthy phenomenon. Though the government did not treat them to the same privileges given to the Mīrghaniyya when they came back to Kasala, the Ismā‘Iliyya returned to a very welcoming atmosphere in Kordofan. Even before the return of al-Makkī to Kordofan, his envoys were tempted by the favourable conditions to restore their old zawiyas and to expand by establishing new centres, especially in the Nūba mountains. Soon after settling down, the Ismā‘Iliyya, both the family and the tariqa, were set on the real task of adjustment to their new conditions. Unlike the Khatmiyya, their leaders were not in receipt of financial grants from the government, and none of them had accumulated any wealth during the Mahdia on which they could prosper. Al-Makkī was even complaining that they were in no position to pay the rates which the new government had imposed on houses. The chances of improving their financial position in Omdurman did not look promising. In Kordofan, and with the government’s favourable attitude, their chances looked far better. For this, they tried a number of sources. The first and the most important of these was trade. Although they could not be compared, in this context, with the Majādhīb, the members of Sh. Ismā‘Il’s family had become very instrumental in the revival of trade and commercial activities all over Kordofan, the Nūba mountains and many parts of Darfur. Through

1. When the Mīrghaniyya returned to Kasala after the Mahdia, they were given many privileges in the forms of land and government services. E.g., the Department of Public Works took part in rebuilding their mosques and zawiyas. See Egyp.Int.Reports, No.57, November-December 1898, and Warburg, The Sudan under Wingate, pp.98-9.
2. See p.107 above.
3. For a good description of the role of this holy family in trade and religious activities, see J.L.Buckhardt, Travels in Nubia, pp.256-8.
their relatives and associates, they penetrated into the remotest parts of these regions for trade, and their zawiyas in towns like El-Obeid, al-Dalanj and Kadugli were very closely associated with commercial activities. The heads of these zawiyas were themselves normally traders by profession as well as religious faqīhs; and as such they were able to play a very important role in the religious and economic life of that region. A good example of such men was al-Makki b. Bashir, a great grandson of Sh. Ismā'īl, who went to settle in al-Dalanj. Taking advantage of the relative peace and security in the region after the reconquest, and the good contacts his family had made before the Mahdia, he managed to establish a profitable business in that town and a big Ismā'īliyya zawiyah too. Then, through active agents, both his trade and religious interests spread to the neighbouring villages, and covered a wide area. He was joined later by a few of his relatives, such as his brother Munir and his cousin Ahmad b. Ibrahīm, and so their business expanded and their influence increased, and has remained so until the present day. They owned a number of shops and houses, and most of the trade in the region passed through them or their associates. Being respected both for his wealth and his religious status, al-Makki was always referred to in cases of conflicts between traders, when there was need for a guarantor (dāmin), and for the settlement of inheritance according to the Shari'ā law rather than taking it to court. His zawiyah served both as a shelter for his followers and a meeting centre for itinerant traders visiting the town. Another member related to the family by marriage was Makki Hamad, through whom the influence of the Ismā'īliyya was extended to Kadugli and neighbouring villages. He was a very wealthy trader and his sons now carry the same social and economic
weight in the region. Apart from these members of the family, there were also very prominent khalifas such as Ismā'īl Shaybūn and Ahmad Bābiker who are still big merchants in Kadugli.

The second source which the Ismā'īliyya had tried was agriculture. With vast fertile lands and a fair amount of rainfall, the most important factor in agriculture in Kordofan continued to be the labour force. On his return to El-Obeid, al-Makki brought some of his slaves with him, and these were very useful as a productive labour force. But this force was continually in decline as ex-slaves were finding good prospects as recruits in the army on the one hand, and on the other the anti-slavery pressures were getting greater every year. Al-Makki and his family were lucky however, in that their slaves remained with them for quite a long time; but more important than that was the alternative source of free labour which they began to get from the followers of the tariqa. In a number of villages near El-Obeid, those hīrān willingly gave their services free in the large plots of land which were acquired by the head of the order or other senior members of Sh. Ismā'īl's family. Thus al-Jikka, al-Jallābiyya, Umm‘Arada and other villages\(^1\) were becoming very closely associated with the agricultural activities of the Ismā'īliyya and are until now the main source of their grain supply. In addition to these, some members of the family also began to take some interest in their lands in Dongola. The products of their date palms and wheat from small plots of land in al-Dabba were collected and sent over to Kordofan.

The third source from which the Ismā'īliyya had benefited was the zakat. The zakat is an obligatory due on every Muslim and is paid to laŷt al-māl in an Islamic state.\(^2\) In a non-Islamic state, people found

---

1. See map, Appendix B, below.
2. See Qur'ān, 9:103, l:154, 73:20. On how the zakat can best be distributed, see Qur'ān 9:60.
themselves in a dilemma and could not comprehend the idea of paying it to such a government. Paying it directly through their religious shaykhs and faqīhs was the easiest way out of this dilemma. In the first few years of the Condominium rule, the zakat was a very good source of income and economic power to all the shaykhs and faqīhs throughout the Sudan. The income from this zakat was so recognizable that an intelligence report of 1908 had even suggested that those shaykhs and faqīhs were actually collecting more money in this way than the government itself from taxes.\(^1\) In Kordofan, much of that income was going to the Ismā'iliyya in the early days of Anglo-Egyptian rule. As time went by, the Ismā'iliyya income from this source began to decline gradually. On the one hand economic pressures and new social attitudes made the people less enthusiastic to pay this zakat, and on the other, there was now more organized competition with the Ismā'iliyya for the collection of this zakat, especially from the Mahdists under the new leadership of 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Mahdī, and also from the Tijāniyya.

Another source of income, closely related to the zakat was that of the siyārāt (pious gifts of pilgrims), and al-nudhūr (fulfilments of conditional vows and offerings) which were paid sometimes in cash, and at others in kind. Though payments for the siyārā of the qubba or the head of the order was by no means obligatory, it grew into a custom and no visitor would come there empty-handed. Though the income from this source was not sizeable, it was enough to maintain some of the shrines and to keep those who guarded them happy.

In addition to all these sources, there was also the contribution of the wealthier members of the order for the big occasions, such as the hawliyya of the shaykh or the Mawlid of the Prophet.

\(^1\) See S.I.R., No.162, January 1908, Appendix C.
Though the income from all these different sources was fairly large, the Ismā'iliyya did not manage it in such a manner as to make a central financial establishment like Dā'irat al-Mahḍī or Dā'irat al-Mirghānī. Instead of investing this income in capital expenditure, the Ismā'iliyya used it in their daily maintenance of the tariqā duties, the upkeep of the khalīfa's household, and the feeding of the numerous disciples who made their lodgings in the khalwas and zawiyās of that order. Up to 1906, although there was no central dā'ira to organize the finances of the Ismā'iliyya, al-Makki, as the unchallenged head of the order and the family, was taking care of that fairly well. After his death, and following the gradual disintegration of the family, there was a growing tendency to tear the income from these sources apart, and for each household to insist on its share from it rather than pool it centrally. The lack of such financial management and the absence of a central dā'ira to control their income, left the Ismā'iliyya less capable of developing their resources, and as time passed these grew more and more inadequate. With a declining financial power, the political and social influences of the Ismā'iliyya were also in decline. They could no longer cope with the increasing demands of a central tariqā and the requirements of a big holy family, and therefore had to accept a secondary position after the Ansār and the Khatmiyya in political and social affairs.

Social and Political Change and the Ismā'iliyya

The third influence on the development of the Ismā'iliyya during this period is related to the changing social and political trends in the Sudan.
at that time and the response of the tariqa and the members of the family to those changes.

The reconquest of the Sudan by the Anglo-Egyptian forces brought about two important developments which greatly affected the society: the first was that Sudanese people had come in contact with outside influence in a more effective way. Up to the first half of the nineteenth century, the only influences to which they were exposed came in small doses through Egypt and the Hijaz, and even those were stopped during the Mahdia. With the conquest, there was a dramatic change and Sudanese society was once again exposed to foreign influence on a wider scale. Though the effects were not felt immediately, some tendencies towards an impending change began to be apparent. Many young people started to appreciate the material benefits of modern education and European technology. They began to look for inspiration and guidance towards a new "modern" type of leadership rather than their traditional tribal or religious shaykhs. The introduction of a new system of education, improvement of transport and the development of new economic tastes and trends had all fostered these tendencies and encouraged the emergence of some new social groups with modern attitudes and goals.

Modern education gave the young Sudanese access to new ideas and introduced them to new concepts. Better communications and new economic trends tempted many of them to urban centres and big towns where they could hope to get better opportunities for employment and greater chances for an improved and modern life. New social relationships and organizations were created which cut across tribalism and religious ties. Social clubs, thus, replaced sawiyas, takiyas and khalwas as places for social gatherings in big towns. Economic interests were also beginning to take
the place of tribal and religious relationships as bases for social groupings. New social and political ideas, such as nationalism, progress and enlightenment, were also finding their way into the minds of those young men.

The second development arising from the conquest was of a psychological nature. The crushing defeat of the Mahdist-state and the imposition of a rule which was partly Christian in the Sudan, generated a feeling of frustration amongst the people who were brought up to believe that as Islam is the true religion of God, it should dominate the world. The victory of the infidels was seen not only as evidence that something had gone wrong with the universe, but also as proof that they themselves had deviated from the right path. This frustration was deepest among the religious people, and especially the Sufis. They reacted in two ways: the first was a violent reaction finding expression in the numerous religious uprisings against the government after 1900 which were inspired by the Sudanese popular beliefs about the Nabī 'Īsā and al-Masīḥ al-Dajjāl. The victory of a Christian power over the Mahdists led many Sudanese to associate the British administration with al-Maṣḥūḥ al-Dajjāl (anti-Christ) and brought to life the prophecy of al-Shaykh Farah Wad Taktūk: "At the end of time the English will come to you, whose soldiers are called police: they will measure the earth even to the blades of the sedge grass. There will be no deliverance except through the coming of 'Īsā". The second one was a passive reaction: that of accepting the blame for what had

---

1. These uprisings have been discussed in detail by A. Cudsi, "Sudanese resistance to British Rule: 1900-1920", unpublished MSc dissertation, University of Khartoum, 1969.
befallen as a just punishment for not abiding by the rules of God.
The only cure for that was for the Muslims to purify their souls by
returning to God and following the path of righteousness. Accepting
their fate and seeing that they were no match for the superior armies
of Britain and Egypt, many Sudanese gave up the idea of jihād al-sayf
(the holy war) and comforting themselves with the belief that the Prophet
himself had ranked jihād al-nafs (earnest striving with the carnal soul)
as the greater jihād and they turned to worshipping God with passionate
dedication. There was a renewed and vigorous revival of Sufi
attitudes and tariqa activities.

Two distinct tendencies can therefore be discerned from these
developments: the first was a gradual and continuous process of
secularization which undermined the religious orders and subsequently
led to their decline and eclipse. People, especially young men, no
longer looked to religion alone for an explanation of all aspects of
their lives. But parallel to that there was also a growing tendency
among the Sudanese to return to Islam, to trust their faith in God and
be satisfied with His designs.

Among the Ismā'īliyya, these conflicting tendencies found expression
in a division, which had already been manifested during the Mahdia, between
two of Sh. Ismā'īl's sons - al-Makki and Ahmad al-Azhari. The early
years of the Condominium rule showed how these two branches of the family
had reacted to these tendencies, and how they continued to drift apart
in this respect. Though they both gained importance during this period,

1. A tradition by the Prophet to this effect is often quoted by many
A. Nicholson, p.200. Qur'ān 29:69 is also commonly quoted in
this respect.
it was continually becoming apparent that the Azharis, with more readiness to adjust to modern society, were attracting more attention, were more appealing to the younger generation and were thus gaining more national prominence. Al-Makkī and the tariqa, on the other hand, though still strong and famous in Kordofan, had failed to adjust readily to such changes and could not attain to similar status on the national level.

After their retreat to El-Obeid in 1902, the Ismā'iliyya tended to be more conservative and more inclined to adopt a traditional and reactionary attitude of Islam which suspected anything new as bid'ā (innovation, heresy) and rejected any modernization as a threat to their accepted way of life. When Bashīr b. al-Makkī was advised to send his eldest son, al-Makkī, to take a modern education, he adamantly refused to do so regarding it as being contrary to their traditional style of education. It was not until late in the Condominium rule that the descendants of al-Makkī had come to appreciate the importance of modern education and to benefit from it. Another leader of the Ismā'iliyya, Ībrahīm b. al-Makkī, the head of the order in El-Obeid (1908-1917) was considered by the authorities there to be a hindrance to the government plans for reforms and improvements.3

Another area in which the Ismā'iliyya did not appreciate the need for change and modernization was in relation to the role of women. Although a number of them had been educated during and after the Mahdia,

2. See genealogical tables appendix below.
none of them was allowed to aspire to a status similar or even close to that of ladies like 'Alawiyya or Maryam of the Mirghaniyya. They all remained confined to their traditional inactive role in the tariqa, except during the big occasions when they could take part in the festivities, mainly in the preparation of food and the encouragement of the participants in the various functions and rituals.

The Ismā'iliyya reluctance to reform and modernize was also reflected in the subsiding spiritual vigour and mystical power of the tariqa during this period. There were now very few and insignificant karamat performed by its successive khalīfas and as the time went by the feelings of awe and reverence to those khalīfas were diminishing. In fact, after the death of al-Makki, the head of the order ceased to be the main centre of spiritual attraction which emotionally drew the followers to the tariqa. The qubba of Sh. Ismā'Il, rather than the living head of the order, became the centre of inspiration; and the madad (help) was sought from it more than from the khalīfa. Thus, to preserve the unity and cohesion in the tariqa, there was an increased attention to this qubba and to the rituals associated with it, more respect for the sacred relics of Sh. Ismā'Il, and more glorification for his work and his karamat.  

The Ismā'iliyya also chose to be dormant even in literary activities. A tradition of writing on religious subjects started by Sh. Ismā'Il and then followed by his son al-Makki, was allowed to die out after that, and the only efforts made in this field by Bashīr b. al-Makki, were a

---

1. Daughter of Hāshim b. Muhammad 'Uthman; known as bint Masawwa'; became famous amongst the Banī 'Amīr in the eastern Sudan, died in 1949 and has a shrine in Masawwa'. See Voll, Khatmiyya, Appendix II.
2. Another daughter of Hāshim; with her husband gained fame in Sinkāt; died in 1951. See Chapter III, p.93n, above.
reproduction of Sh. Ismā'īl's and al-Makkī's works, the mere copying of which was considered to be an act of karaka.¹

Unlike the Khatmiyya and the Ansār, the Ismā'Iliyya also failed to appreciate the importance of the para-military youth organizations known as al-shalāb, and did not offer any alternative which could have appealed to their young followers who were beginning to lose interest in their traditional organizations, rituals and mysticism. They also failed to provide for the rise of educated and prominent men outside the family to a position of leadership through the Ismā'Iliyya. Thus, unlike the above mentioned two organizations, the Ismā'Iliyya could not attract those young educated men who were destined to become the future leaders of the country.

In politics the tariqa was also very reluctant to take any initiative and its leaders were satisfied with a secondary position in this field. The Ismā'Iliyya, therefore, did not attempt to patronize any political party and even refused to tie itself to one or the other of the then two rising political groups of the Ansār (Mahdists), and the Ashiqqā' (Mirghanis). The failure of the Ismā'Iliyya leaders to see the nature of the new political trends and to comprehend their importance, left them in a dilemma and they could not even unite themselves as one pressure group behind their head. With no unifying ideology and no clear directives, the Ismā'Iliyya leaders and followers were left to decide their political affiliations according to their personal individual judgments and in response to local issues rather than a comprehensive national outlook. In the early years of the Condominium rule, therefore,

¹ All the copies reproduced from these works therefore finished with the names of their copier and a form of request from God to help him as a reward for this act of copying. E.g. وقَرَّ صَرَأَ إِنْ شَاءَ مَعَنَّا، وَإِنْ شَاءَ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ،ْ إِنَّيْ بِذَلِكَ ذَلِكَ بِغَفُورٍ رَحِيمٍ
al-Makki collaborated with al-Mirghani, and his family at that time were in close contact with and highly respected by the government officials. But this co-operation between al-Makki and the Mirghaniyya soon gave way to competition and rivalry, which sometimes broke into open conflict. This conflict could be one of the main reasons which forced al-Makki to leave Omdurman, though his tariqa was growing there. After his departure, his khalifa in Omdurman, Mirghani, was left in an even weaker position against the growing pressure of the Khatmiyya. It was this situation rather than any conflicting national issues that affected the attitude of Mirghani and the Isma'Iliyya of Omdurman towards the Ashiqqa and the Khatmiyya. In Kordofan, the Isma'Iliyya found no competition at first, but after 1910 this situation changed—especially with the beginning of 'Abd al-Rahmân al-Mahdi's restoration to political and religious power. 'Abd al-Rahmân hoped to get his support for this revival mainly from Kordofan and Darfur. With better organization and greater financial resources, the Ansâr grew up to be the main competitors of the Isma'Iliyya and a threat to their, until then, unquestionable predominance in those areas. This situation then became the main issue which decided the political attitude of the Isma'Iliyya in El-Obeid towards the Ansâr and the Mahdists.

Those views based on local situations were also reinforced by personal relationships and attitudes. Mirghani, the head of the Isma'Iliyya in Omdurman, was known to have been a very close friend of 'Abd al-Rahmân al-Mahdi and was more inclined to his way of thinking in politics. On the other hand, Bashîr, the senior member of the Isma'Iliyya

1. See p. 110, above.
in El-Obeid, and Muhammad Sālih Suwār al-Dhahab, the head khalīfa of the Khātmiyya there, were on the best of terms and were said to have been at one time colleagues as clerks in the Grand Court of Islam in Omdurman during the Mahdia. They too were more inclined to have closer attitudes in political affairs.

Divided as they were on regional issues and with different personal inclinations, the leaders of the Ismā'īliyya tariqa could not form an effective political group, and as such made very little and continually diminishing impact on national political affairs.

With the tariqa in decline, internal strife and inability to cope with modern developments in the Sudan, there was no temptation for the youngsters of the family of Sh. Ismā'il to take any active role in it. Thus, although the tariqa has continued to be respected in Kordofan until the present day, it was the Azhari branch of the family which was beginning to gain more national importance and prestige, and to revive the name of Sh. Ismā'il's family under a new name, al-Azhari, in a new geographical location, Omdurman, and under new circumstances, political activities.

Following in the steps of Ahmad al-Azhari, his descendants chose to be more susceptible to change and more open to modernization. Benefiting from Ahmad's earlier contacts with Egypt and his good reputation there, many of the young members of the family joined al-Azhar university and returned to the Sudan as Shari'a jurists. For a long time, a number of these filled the posts of qadis and muftis in various parts of the country.

1. Most prominent of these was Ismā'il b. Ahmad al-Azhari, see R. Hill, Biographical Dictionary, p.184. For others, see Husayn S.A. al-Mufti, Tattawir niḥām al-qada' fi al-Sudan.
The Azhāris also readily accepted modern education and sent their children to benefit from it. They also preferred modern life in the capital to the provincial environment of El-Obeid. This also became a further attraction to the youngsters of the family who continued to move into the big towns, and to draw closer to the attitudes and ways of thinking of this Azhari branch. What attracted more fame and prestige to the Azhāris during this period, however, was their attitude in politics and their leaders' understanding of the nature of the new issues and emerging forces in this field. The continued residence of the Azhāris in Omdurman allowed them to have first-hand information on current affairs and kept them always in touch with new developments on the national level. Their contacts with Egypt and modern education introduced them to new concepts and ideas such as nationalism and the quest for independence. They also came to realize that clubs and political parties, rather than the traditional religious and tribal ties, were the new and more effective methods of political organization. With this background, the Azhāris were more suited to engage in the nationalist movements and more equipped to tackle the new political trends and comprehend the new methods.

The nature of political change in the Sudan during this period has been discussed in various works to which reference can be made for further details.\(^1\) The most important aspects of this change were the development of a nationalistic spirit and a growing awareness of the need

---

for political organizations. Political activities, however, developed amongst the educated elite and continued, primarily, to engage the enlightened section of the population. Although those continued, for some time, to depend for support on the blessing of the traditional religious and tribal leaders, it was becoming evidently clear that those new politicians had their new approaches and tactics to match their new political issues.

The Ismā'īliyya failed to adapt quickly to these new changes and, in this field, they were still lagging behind. Their involvement in political activities and national affairs were, therefore, minimal and even when it became necessary for them to do so, their participation was half-hearted and their role was marginal. In 1919, when the heads of the religious orders saw fit to sign a declaration of loyalty\(^1\) to the British Government in the face of growing Egyptian nationalism, the signature of Mirghani, the head of the Ismā'īliyya ṭariqa then, came at the tail of the list in that document. Not only did the Ismā'īliyya leaders fail to take an active role in national politics, but they also declined to give any clear guidance to their followers to help them in their political allegiances. Disagreements between Ismā'īliyya leaders on political issues, were reflected also amongst the followers; and the ṭariqa, in this respect was never united behind its head on any issue\(^2\).

In contrast, the involvement of the Azharīs in political activities and national affairs was evident and more positive. They did this, not through the establishment of a mass organization, nor by the patronizing

---

1. This is often referred to as Ṣifr al-waLa', and was handed to the Governor-General on 23 April 1919. See Milner Papers, Oxford, for an official translation of this document.
2. See Chapter V, p.146, below.
of a political party, as did the Mahdists and the Mirghanis, but their fame and reputation were raised mainly through the emergence of some national figures from their members. One of these was Isma'Il b. Ahmad al-Azhari (1869-1949) who in addition to his distinguished career as an Islamic qadi and mufti, had also gained for himself and his family some reputation as a national figure, and did not hesitate to take an active role in political affairs. His involvement in politics was detected as early as 1911 by Butler, who registered in his diary on the 31st of October 1911, "Interviewed Ismail El Azhari, Kadi of Sennar. A clever powerful man. Was sent away from El-Obeid because he took an important part in the Morghani trika dispute". More evident was his involvement through the Board of Ulema, of which he was a member, and through his involvement in the support of the government against the Egyptian nationalistic tide of 1919. He was one of the signatories of sifr al-wila (the declaration of loyalty), and he was one of the distinguished members of the delegation to congratulate King George V that year.

Another member of the Azharians whose involvement in this field was more significant, and whose fame even more closely associated with his career as a politician, was a great grandson of Ahmad al-Azhari, also with the name of Isma'Il al-Azhari (1900-1969). Isma'Il's involvement in politics started as early as his student days at the American University of Beirut, where he had tried unsuccessfully to stand for the presidency of the students' union. His years of study there (1927-30) were very

2. Sud.Govt.Archives (Durham), 400/10, Butler's diary, October-November 1911.
informative. He came in touch with many students from various parts of the Arab world and was influenced by many ideas to which he was exposed through his reading of the papers and his discussions with fellow students. When he returned to the Sudan in 1931, he began to take an active role in politics. That year he was elected Chairman of the Graduates Club in Omdurman. In 1938 he became the first Sudanese president of that club, and then in the same year was elected as one of four presidents of the Graduates Congress which he helped to found to unify all the graduates of the different schools in the Sudan under one organization. Through his activities in this Congress and in association with its members, al-Azhari built his political career and brought himself up to hold the balance between the two major political organizations patronized by the Mahdists and the Khatmiyya. He became the first prime minister of the Sudan in 1954, and saw the country through the final stages leading to independence in January 1956.

Before his death in 1969, Isma'il al-Azhari had managed to establish himself at the head of a political party - the National Unionist Party - and gained a political reputation which gave the family under this name a new fame and prestige.

To conclude, the Isma'iliyya, in the early years of the Condominium had passed through two phases. The first under the wise and unchallenged leadership of al-Makki, both the tariqa and the family were making use of

---

1. This was originally a social club first established with the help of Sayyed 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Mahdī in 1919 to counter balance the growing pro-Egyptian tendencies amongst the graduates of Gordon Memorial College, higher schools, army officers and such educated Sudanese. The Club developed later into one of the great centres of political activity.
his good leadership, of the favourable attitude of the government to
them and of the state of affairs in the western Sudan to restore their
prestige and revive their fame. In the second phase, mainly after the
death of al-Makki in 1906, a number of factors combined to bring about
a division in the family and a decline in the *tariqa*. Internal strife
and lack of good leadership forced the Isma'iliyya to turn into a highly
localized *tariqa* and greatly reduced its importance and national
standing. At the same time, another branch of the family of Sh. Isma'il,
under the different name of al-Azhari and with new social and political
attitudes, was beginning to gain fame and prestige during this second
phase.
CHAPTER V
ORGANIZATION AND PRACTICE OF THE ISMĀ'ILĪYYA

In its initial stages the Ismā'īliyya started as a small group of followers around Sh. Ismā'īl in El-Obeid. By 1917, though still not comparable with the Ansar and the Khatmiyya in this respect, the order had branches in various parts of the Sudan, with an elaborate structure and regulations to control its members and with its own ritual ceremonials. This process of transformation passed through different phases and was influenced by a variety of factors, some of which the Ismā'īliyya shared with all other similar religious orders as an inevitable result of their natural expansion, but some factors were particular to the Ismā'īliyya and its social and political environment. This chapter attempts to look into these organizations, practices and rituals, their development through these phases and some of the factors that influenced these developments.

The Developmental Phases

Sh. Ismā'īl started this religious association with a limited number of disciples who were attracted by his baraka and who considered him to be a wa'āfī endowed with special links with God and capable, through these, of helping them in this and in the other world. They joined him of their own free will to teach and guide them in the path of righteousness and to cure them of their physical and spiritual ailments. In return, Sh. Ismā'īl received their unquestioned obedience, and his authority and judgment were placed above any doubts or disputes. His relationship with them was direct, face-to-face and personal. They were all looking
up to him for direct guidance and personal assistance, and they were all linked together by a common devotion and desire to attain, by methods of spiritual discipline, a vision of Reality. In this respect, Ismā'īl and his group were a continuation of the tradition of the faqīh system of the Funj Sultanate of Sennar where all the followers were equal ħinān (singular, ħusār) or fuqara (singular, faqīn) each humbly serving the Shaykh and the group and none of them expecting any distinctive rank or special treatment. There was no hierarchy, there were no ranks and there were no barriers between the ħusār and his Shaykh. Some of Ismā'īl's disciples, however, managed to gain his special favour and closer attention – like al-Faqīh Abū Zumām – but this was in no way reflected in a structural or hierarchical order, nor did it in any way affect the direct, face-to-face, personal relationship between Sh. Ismā'īl and his followers.

In 1816, when Sh. Ismā'īl became a follower of Muḥammad 'Uthmān al-Mīrghanī, he came in touch with a new experience. As an ordinary disciple and then as a marṣīḥ in the Khatmiyya tariqā, he began to appreciate some new forms of relationships between the adepts and their shaykhs, and to see a hierarchy in which the followers were elevated to what could be termed marātīb (stages). Those marātīb were based mainly on the closeness of the person to the shaykh on the one hand, and on his efforts in worshipping on the other. Muḥammad 'Uthmān divided these into three stages, each of which is in turn divided into two sections. He explained how these stages could be attained, the

---

1. Y.B. Badrī, in "al-Makk wal-faqīh", Sudan Society, No.5, Vol.5, 1972, p.5, describes the group of ħinān called awlād al-marātīb as some sort of hierarchy under al-faqīh. Those, however, were mainly his bodyguard.

responsibilities attached to each one of them, and the duties of the
followers towards those who held them. According to his explanation,
the stage of shaykh al-tahqiq is a stage granted by God alone to those
who, through their spiritual purification and by His Grace, are chosen
for that honour. But that of shaykh al-tabarruk is a stage granted
by the head of an Order to any of his disciples authorizing him to act
as his deputy, often called a khalifa, naqib or a murshid.¹

Sh. Ismā’Il, however, did not commit himself to these divisions,
and although the influence of Muhammad ’Uthmān’s ideas can be traced
in some of Sh. Ismā’Il’s writings in this respect,² he did not actually
implement them in his tariqa during his lifetime. He felt no need for
that at the time. His followers were still both numerically and
g eographically manageable. Unlike the Khatmiyya who were scattered
in many parts of the Sudan, Sh. Ismā’Il’s followers were gathered in one
g eographical area; and unlike Muhammad ’Uthmān, who was continually
travelling, Ismā’Il was settled in El-Obeid. The conditions which
forced Muhammad ’Uthmān to implement these stages in his order to
maintain some links between him and his dispersed disciples through his
shayākh al-tabarruk did not arise for the Ismā’Ilīya. Sh. Ismā’Il
maintained his direct face-to-face personal relationship with the members
of his order. Although he talked about the spread of his tariqa into
many countries and among different peoples,³ he did not in fact experience
any real expansion of the order beyond the boundaries of Kordofan, and
did not envisage anything further than that during his lifetime. For

³ See Sh. Ismā’Il, Miṣṭān bāb al-dakhīl, p. 5.
those manageable disciples, therefore, he did not need any system of
delegation or any form of hierarchy. Furthermore, Sh. Isma'il believed
that he had a Divine mission to guide his followers to God through his
order; that he was personally chosen for that duty even though he did
not go out in the world looking for it; it was rather forced on him. Therefore, he could not run away from it nor could he delegate it to
anyone else. Accordingly, apart from appointing his only khalifa, his
son Muhammad al-Makki, Sh. Isma'il did not attempt to establish any kind
of administrative structure, nor did he try to delegate his authority
through any organizational links. He saw no alternative to the personal
contact between him and his follower so long as he was living; and even
after his death, his writings, he thought, would be the best to deputise
for him. He consequently spent much of his time trying to reduce his
ideas to writing, thus giving the tarīqā its theoretical basis and a bank
of literature leaving all the practical administration and organization
to his son and khalifa, Muhammad al-Makki. Until his death in 1863,
therefore, Sh. Isma'il's contribution to the Order in this aspect was
very small. The developments introduced by al-Makki came in two
phases: one starting before the death of his father up to the outbreak
of the Mahdia, and the second starting after the end of the Mahdia up
to his own death in 1906.

In the first phase the change was not dramatic and the process of
development followed the pattern common to all other similar religious
orders. In their natural desire for expansion, both numerically and
geographically, they were faced with the problem of their tendency to
lose their central control and cohesion. In order to maintain their

2. Ibid., p.7.
unity, they developed some methods of liaison to ensure the spiritual and administrative links between the head of the Order and the followers. Even before the death of Sh. Ismā'il, the tarīqa was already stretched to the point of tension, and al-Makkī had to develop some means by which he could keep in touch with the regional centres. The death of Sh. Ismā'il presented the Order with another problem. His charisma, his baraka and his special connections with God had been very central to attracting the followers to the Order. His death removed this power of attraction and other methods had to be developed to attract and maintain membership in the Order. The first step in this direction was the building of a dome (qubba) for the shaykh to be a focal point of veneration to which ziyaţa (pilgrimage) was encouraged. The ziyaţa had its manners (ādāb) and rituals which were continually developed and added to. The spiritual ties of the followers with their shaykh were also kept by fixing the anniversary of his birth (mawlid) and death (hawliyya) to be celebrated centrally, and all the members from the various regions would participate. Then the transfer of baraka and spiritual qualities from Sh. Ismā'il to his son and Khalīfa al-Makkī, was also emphasized. People were reminded immediately after the death of Ismā'il that he had chosen his son al-Makkī as his deputy in all matters related to his sons, his finances and all that concerned the family, and that he had appointed him as his heir and Khalīfa of his tarīqa during his life and after his death. And to stress this fact even further, Ismā'il had allowed al-Makkī to precede him in prayer as imām for twenty years.

1. Ziyaţa: pilgrimage to the shrine of a holy man as distinct from ḥaţj, pilgrimage to Mecca.
2. See al-Nash'a al-Saniyya (the obituary of Sh. Ismā'il), ms. Sud. Govt. Archives, 1/182/1310.
The first phase of al-Makki's Khilāfa, therefore, witnessed a gradual development of administrative links and spiritual ties between the headquarters of the Order in El-Obeid and the affiliated regional groups of followers, as well as some new developments in forms of rituals. These developments were particularly evident in areas where the members of the family of Ismā'il had settled as traders, especially in the Nūba Mountains. In such places as Kundukur, Kundukair and Kadugli, people gathered round one of the members of Sh. Ismā'il's family or a relative by marriage and established a local centre with some spiritual and administrative liaison with El-Obeid. Those links, however, did not get enough time to develop gradually into a proper structure of a centralized tarīqa organization. When the Mahdia broke out, therefore, the Ismā'iliyya were, but not dramatically, beginning to change. Sayyid al-Makki whom the Mahdi met was a head of a religious order rather than a local faqīh. People gathered around him not only to be educated in the Qur'an and other orthodox Islamic studies, but also to perform certain rituals and practices of the tarīqa. Yūsuf Mīkhā'il in his memoirs gives a description of how Muhammad Ahmad al-Mahdi used to come with some of his followers to participate in these ritual and Sufi practices.  

It was the second phase of al-Makki's Khilāfa after the Mahdia, which witnessed the greater change and development that transformed the Ismā'iliyya into an organized religious order, not very much different from the presentday tarīqa. Like all other religious orders during the Mahdia, the Ismā'iliyya was disbanded and its practices suspended. By accepting the overlordship of the Mahdia, it had forfeited much of its

1. See map Appendix B, below.
claim to spiritual leadership; and by moving with the Mahdi to Omdurman, al-Makki had weakened the social and religious ties with his followers whom he had left behind. Without those ties and without its founding saint to give it renewed spiritual support, the Ismā'iliyya had to depend on other methods for revival after the Mahdia. To re-attract its old followers, it could no longer depend on the charisma of Sh. Ismā'il, but it had to renew their faith in the continued strength and vitality of the ṭarīqa. To ensure continuity, methods had to be developed to recruit new members and for the order to survive it had to make some rules to regulate the relationship among its members, between the followers and the head of the ṭarīqa and between the ṭarīqa and the community. Then in order to facilitate and strengthen the ties between the head of the ṭarīqa and its members, now dispersed all over Omdurman and the western Sudan, a form of administration had to be organized.

The Ismā'iliyya attempted to regain the confidence of its followers first by reasserting their beliefs in the saintly powers of Sh. Ismā'il and secondly by reassuring them of the transmission of those saintly privileges and baraka to his son and Khalīfa, al-Makki. To stimulate the zeal of the followers, the qubba was renovated, a hārīs (guard) was appointed to keep it clean, to guard its sanctuary, to instruct the visitors on the pilgrimage observances, and to collect the offerings and gifts. The followers were strongly urged to make regular visits to the tomb for the blessing, to invoke the assistance of God through the wali, or simply to renew their spiritual ties with him. The mosque - adjacent to the qubba - also became a focal point for the
followers to gather regularly for prayers and to maintain their contacts with the Shaykh. Then there was a renewed enthusiasm for the collection and preservation of the relics of Sh. Ismā'īl, especially his writings. His works were therefore very carefully gathered together and copied by his grandson Bashīr b. al-Makki. Those with some other items possessed by Ismā'īl came to acquire a great sentimental value and were kept in much respect. Furthermore, the anniversary of his death was also fixed to be celebrated by all his followers.

Al-Makki's position as the true heir of the spiritual powers and baraka of the saint was also emphasized and in this respect the favourable attitude of the Condominium Government towards him was a great help. The fact that he was chosen as one of the religious notables and the respect shown to him by the Government officials and some of the army officers was portrayed as convincing proof that God had bestowed His grace upon him, so that he could easily obtain audience of the rulers (wa-laqiya'il qabūl), and could therefore mediate with them and arbitrate on behalf of his followers. His powers to perform miracles were widely asserted. Many of these were collected in a special book called al-nafaṣat al-miskiyya fil Karamāt al-Makkiyya.1 Prophetic dreams which suggested the ultimate victory of the disciples of al-Makki over all others, such as the one related by a certain 'Ubayd Nāsir, were widely spread and held to be proof of al-Makki's sainthood. 'Ubayd related that he had seen al-Makki in a dream leading people in the Friday prayer. After finishing his sermon, al-Makki ordered the congregation to stand up for prayer stating that only those who really believed in him

1. I could not obtain this book, though reference has often been made to it. See al-nash'ā al-Makkiyya (obituary of al-Makki), ms. Sud. Govt. Archives, 1/82/1321.
would be able to do so. Only some – of whom 'Ubayd was one – managed
to obey the order, but the rest failed to stand. 'Ubayd who was not a
follower of al-Makki prior to this incident, was then convinced after
that dream and came to be one of his devoted disciples.¹

Furthermore, in order to induce the followers to return to their
tariqa and to recruit more, al-Makki wrote a treatise, enumerating its
good qualities and virtues, called Kitāb al-ahādīth al-Saniyya...² by
which he hoped to convince them that the Ismā‘Iliyya was mainly based on
the Qur‘an and the Sunna and thus offered a most direct and easy way
leading towards God.

By 1902, as a result of all those efforts and some other factors
which favoured its development,³ the Ismā‘Iliyya tariqa regained much
of its vitality and was already becoming one of the two most important
tariqas in the country.⁴ By this time also al-Makki, for a variety
of reasons referred to earlier,⁵ decided to return with his tariqa to
El-Obeid to give it a headquarters. Encouraged by the continued success
and expansion, he also began to send a number of propagandists (singular,
da‘ī) to various parts of the western Sudan and the Northern Province where
he hoped to recruit new followers. To maintain close links with those
whom he had left behind in Omdurman, and to keep in touch and to control
those whom he was sending around, a structure had to be devised. Then
to preserve the uniformity of practice within the tariqa some regulations
had to be made to govern the various activities of its members.

1. Ms. letter from 'Ubaid Nasir to al-Makki, Sud.Govt. Archives,
   Khartoum, 1/82/1333.
2. Muhammad al-Makki, Kitāb al-ahādīth al-Saniyya fi'l tāriqah
   wa'l tarhīb 'alā al-tariqa al-Ismā‘Iliyya, ms. Sud.Govt. Archives,
   Khartoum, 1/82/1331.
3. See Chapter IV, pp.105-20, above.
5. See Chapter IV, p.110n, above.
Starting with Omdurman, al-Makki, therefore, appointed some regional representatives (singular, *khaliţa*) to whom he delegated some of his authority so that they could take care of the affairs of the order and look after the welfare of its members in their local centres. On the other hand, *al-ʻādāb al-jaliyya fi ma yalsam al-mufrit fi'l tariqa al-Isma'īliyya* provided those regional centres, with the same code of conduct as that applicable to the members in El-Obeid. Through those usages it was hoped that a continued active involvement in the affairs of the *tariqa* would be maintained among its members; and that through the disciplinary procedures in them, the relations between the members, between members and *khaliţas* and between them all the community could be regulated. Since members' activities both as individuals and as groups, reflected on the reputation of the Order, they were advised to maintain good relationships between themselves: help each other, show respect to their leaders and maintain a regular and orderly presence in the *zawiya* for the *dhikr*.

To keep pace with those developments, the headquarters of the Order in El-Obeid started to develop some systematic procedures through which al-Makki was able to keep in touch with and exercise some control over his regional *khaliţas*. A system of official correspondence was therefore set up, al-Makki kept an official seal and appointed his son al-Bashîr to what developed, for a brief period, into the important post of *kâtîm ašrâr wa ḥâmil akhtâm al-khalîfa* (keeper of confidential records and bearer of the *khaliţa*'s seals). His duties were mainly administrative and as such he had very little to do with the religious

---

1. The author of these regulations is not given in the manuscript, nor is the date. Judging by what is written in it, it seems to have been written or dictated by al-Makki towards the end of Sh. Ishma'il's life but were not applied earnestly until after the Mahdis. See *al-ʻādāb al-jaliyya*, ms. Sud.Govt. Archives (Khartoum) 1/82/1334.
hierarchy of the tarīqa. A further illustration of this growing bureaucratic trend could be seen in the development of al-Makki’s reception room into an administrative centre for the Order to which all the secular affairs were transferred, thus leaving the khalwā mainly for the religious activities and rituals. The administrative role of this room was also closely linked with its social function. High-ranking government officials and other important guests were entertained by the head of the Order in that room and there also he held receptions for non-religious occasions. Thus, just as the qubba, the mosque and the zāwīya had each a certain role to play in the spiritual life of the tarīqa, al-Makki’s reception room was beginning to acquire an important position in its social and administrative set up and came to be known as al-dīwān to distinguish it from the khalwā and other rooms.

Under al-Makki, and especially during the period 1898-1906, the Ismā‘īliyya was transformed into a centralized religious order and the basic framework for its organization was laid down. A central authority was established with al-Makki being venerated as the inheritor of the position of Ismā‘īl al-Walī, whose sainthood had already been recognized. A hierarchical structure was constructed to link the central office of the Order with its regional centres through spiritual as well as administrative ties of varying degrees. A system of recruitment was developed and propagandists were sent around for that purpose. A set of disciplinary principles was also made to govern the behaviour of the members. And the rituals of the tarīqa were defined and its shrines rebuilt, which gave the Ismā‘īliyya its own distinctive character. By 1902 it had already grown into one of the most highly organized tarīqas
of the Sudan and an Intelligence Report of that year found it more important than the Sammaniyya Order in this respect, although the latter had more followers.\(^1\) By 1904 its head, al-Makki, felt quite confident to go on pilgrimage and leave the affairs of the Order in the hands of his son without fear of having any disruption during his absence. In 1906, a report of the Governor of Kordofan still found the head of the Ismā'Iliyya to be one of the most influential religious figures in El-Obeid.\(^2\)

After the death of al-Makki these organizations which he had developed did not find enough time to strike roots. The second Khalīfa of the Order, Ismā'Il al-Raqīq, lived for only two years after his father, and the Khilāfa went after him to his son Mirghani, who lived most of his time in Omdurman. The continued absence of Mirghani from El-Obeid, the spiritual centre of the ṭarīqa and the differences which developed between him and the elders of the family had both weakened the central organization of the Ismā'Iliyya. Competition between the various branches of the family led to divided loyalties, and lack of a centralized control led to disintegration and lack of uniformity within the Order. During his period of office which extended up to 1950, Mirghani allowed the organizations of the Ismā'Iliyya to decay and some of the important functions and offices to be discontinued.\(^3\) In the regional centres, the Khalīfas were left with very little contacts with the headquarters of the order and with their loyalties more divided. The zawiyas thus tended to be more independent with the minimum of ties to either El-Obeid or

---

1. S.I.R., No.95, June 1902.
3. The most significant of these was the office of Kātim asrūr wa hāmil akhtām al-khalīfa.
Omdurman. The decline in the organization of the Ismā'īliyya was reflected also in their lack of interest in the modern trends which were adopted by similar ṭarīqās such as the para-military organizations called al-Shabāb, the increased use of the press for the circulation of their literature and ideas, photography\(^1\) to distribute the photograph of the shaykh to the followers, thus giving them some feeling of closeness to him, or any other new method of propaganda.

Thus by 1914 the Ismā'īliyya organizations were in decline and by the 1920s even its very existence was being threatened by the advancing Tijāniyya ṭarīqa which had a better organization.\(^2\) By the 1940s, its central authority was so weak that it was not only unable to form its own political party, but it could not even stand united behind the one which its head had chosen to join. When Mirghanī asked his followers to join the Umma party they did not only refuse, but some of them in El-Obeid were even offended when he asked them to hold a tea-party for Siddiq al-Mahdī, the patron of the Umma. The rift between Mirghanī, the head of the Order, and his relatives in this respect was reflected in many other parts of the country among the followers, and each member chose his own political party and affiliation.

Though greatly weakened during Mirghanī's period of office, the ṭarīqa remained basically the same in its structure, rituals and practice as those had developed during the khilāfa of al-Makki. We may now turn to consider the structure, rituals and practices as they came through the above-mentioned phases.

---

1. Photography was only very recently becoming popular in the Sudan, and even though it is still unaccepted by strict Muslims, the distribution of photographs of Syd 'Alī al-Mirghanī, Syd 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Mahdī and Sh.Aḥmad wad Badr had for some time become very fashionable, and their photographs were kept in great honour by their followers.

The Structure of the Tarīqa

The main offices in the structure of the tarīqa are those of the shaykh and the khalīfa.

The shaykh is the divinely guided founder of the order who, it is claimed, was ordered by God to establish it and give it its spiritual and moral authority. His own authority, it is claimed, had come to him by divine grace directly from God, and as such it was supreme and unquestionable. He has absolute right to obedience and no question or proof was to be asked of him, for he is considered to be the trustee of God. He is also considered to be the source from whom all the khalīfas of the Order derive their powers, and to whom all those taking the covenant ('ahd) declare their allegiance. It is he who guides the people in the path of righteousness, who cures their souls and who assists them in their lives and comes to their rescue in times of difficulties. In the Ismā'īliyya tarīqa there is only one shaykh, and in fact the title shaykh itself is reserved only for al-Shaykh Ismā'il al-Walī its founder, and is given to no one after him. He is often referred to simply as al-Shaykh or sometimes as al-Ustādh. During his lifetime Ismā'il had formed the Order, given it a name and established its authority. After his death, he is still regarded as playing the important role of the saint who could still be invoked for support and assistance. His tomb is now the centre of attraction to all his followers. The celebrations of his death anniversary (hawl-iyya) is amongst the most important functions of the Order.

In its early phases the Ismā'īliyya had about seven more offices under the shaykh which were mainly concerned with the spiritual welfare and religious practices and discipline in the tarīqa. As described in
those offices were: (1) The khaliṣa, sometimes referred to as al-Khalīṣa al-mutawallī or khaliṣat al-ustādī; (2) the wasīr who was the deputy of the khaliṣa; (3) the naqīb al-Umaṇā'; (4) the wakīl al-naqīb; and (5) the sven umanā', whose duty it was to carry out the day-to-day observation and reporting on the functions of the Order and the activities of the ordinary members to their wakīl and naqīb. There was (6) an officer responsible for the sanctity of the mosque and for the organization of the rows and their correct adjustment in prayers, called al-wā'is; and finally (7) the officer responsible for the implementation of punishment and disciplinary duties on the members, called al-ṣawī.

The officers of the Order could meet every day in their daily five ritual prayers, or in the evening when they came for their dhikr and discuss the business of the tariqa. With the natural expansion of the Order outside El-Obeid, more Umaṇā' were needed to carry out these functions.

The death of Sh. Ismā'il and the erection of a qubba on his grave, brought about another officer to the Order, that of harīs al-darīk whose duty was to look after its sanctuary, its cleaning and to ensure that the pilgrimage observances were properly followed so that the visitors might return with the maximum bakṣa from it.

The adoption of the drums (al-nūba) for the dhikr by al-Makki brought about some new duties such as the bearing of standards, the beating of the drums, the chanting of canticles (anāshīd) and the orchestration of the dhikr. But with the exception of this last function for which a certain officer called shaykh al-dhikr, is appointed, all these duties have no fixed officers and no fixed post in the hierarchy of the Order, and are carried out by whoever is present and capable of doing the job.

This structure of the Order was dissolved during the Mahdia, and when it was revived after that it had to undergo a great deal of change to suit the new conditions in which the *tariqa* was transformed. More emphasis was beginning to be laid on the secular and administrative affairs of the Order. The centres of the *tariqa* were growing bigger and geographically lying farther apart from the headquarters in El-Obeid, thus demanding a more elaborate administrative structure and a more senior officer to represent the head of the Order. The first significant development in this connection was the appointment of Mirghanî - a grandson of al-Makkî - as a *khalîfa* to the centre in Omdurman in 1902. After that a number of *khalîfas* were appointed to represent al-Makkî in various parts of western Sudan, and especially in the Nūba mountains. So many *khalîfas* were appointed during this period that there was confusion as to whom the term referred to. This was even further complicated by the fact that in their efforts to gain more followers, the *khalîfas* themselves were given the authority to recommend new members to the office of *khalîfa*. To differentiate between these various *khalîfas*, additions were sometimes used. Thus, the head of the Order is referred to as *al-Khalîfa al-Kabîr* (the grand *khalîfa*) or as *Khalîfat al-sajjâda* (*khalîfa* of the prayer mat). Then in each big centre there is a *khalîfat al-khulafâ*', the most important of them being those in El-Obeid and Omdurman. Then there are the regional *khalîfas* who are: either a senior *khalîfa bi-nôba* or a junior *khalîfa bîlî nôba*. There is, however, very little difference between *khalîfat al-khulafâ*', *khalîfat al-nôba* and the *khalîfa bîlî nôba* with regard to their authority, their responsibilities or in their relationship with *khalîfa al-sajjâda*. They are all invested with the *khalîfa* in exactly the same manner and by the
same procedure. Their duties are also the same: mainly to provide a zawiya for the followers, to hold the dhikr of the tarīqa, to celebrate its important occasions and to represent the Order at religious and official gatherings. Because of its financial and social obligations, recruitment to the khilāfa is often made from among the same social group in the community - that of the upper-middle class. The only differences between these khālīfās seems to be set by the number of their followers and the sizes and importance of their zawiyas.

The Ismā'iliyya also vaguely used the terms khālīfāt ab (khālīfa of the father) and khālīfāt maqām (khālīfa of a position) to make a distinction between the head of the Order and all the others.

Accession to the post of khālīfāt al-sajjāda is by inheritance from father to the eldest living son. Thus the first khālīfa, al-Makki, inherited the sajjāda of his father Sh. Ismā'il, then passed it to his eldest son Ismā'il al-Raqīq who in turn handed it to his son, Mirghani. Mirghani, however, died without a son and the Khilāfa after him went to Ismā'il's next son in line, Tāj al-Asfiya', and then to the latter's son, al-Bakri, the present khālīfa. The post of khālīfāt al-maqqām is not inherited, although a number of families have, for a long time now, been associated with an Ismā'iliyya khilāfa which has been transmitted from one generation to the other. Appointment to the post is made by khālīfāt al-sajjāda either through his own choice, by recommendation from another khālīfa or from a group of followers electing one of them for the leadership of their zawiya.

Under the khālīfa a number of lieutenants are also elected to help him in his religious and ever-increasing administrative responsibilities,

1. See pp.161-2, below for more details on investiture rituals.
but the indiscriminate application of the term *khalīfa* to any officer in the Order is now making it extremely difficult to distinguish between the various ranks which these lieutenants occupy. The Ismā'īliyya again vaguely use terms like *naqīb, mawṣīd* and *wakīl* without specifying where exactly they fit in the hierarchy of the Order.

There are also some ranks which are not strictly part of the hierarchy of the *tariqa*, but have gained a great deal of importance. The most important of these is that of the *mandūb* (emissary) who is chosen by *khalīf at al-sajjāda* from amongst his closest associates to do a specific job—often connected with the collection of money for the Order or settling a problem among some followers. Because of its delicate nature, and since he represents the *khalīfa*, the status of *mandūb* has come to gain a great deal of respect and honour. The choice of the *mandūb* is mainly decided by the nature of the mission for which he is intended to be sent, and thus it is not of a permanent nature, though certain individuals have come to be associated with specific types of these missions—like collecting the *zakāt* and offerings for the Order in certain areas—and have come to be permanently known as *mandūbs*. Other similar ranks are the *munshidūn* (precentors), the *tabl* and *nūba* beaters and the standard bearers, for which members qualify by their personal abilities, such as a good voice, the ability to memorize the elegies, and the desire to do the job.

Though many of the rules and qualifications for the various ranks in the *tariqa* have not been clearly specified, there are, however, some generally accepted conventions for electing members to them. Any member chosen for a rank of leadership in the Order is expected to be of high spiritual quality and have some status in the society. He must have some knowledge of the Qur'an, the *Sunna* and other related Islamic
subjects. He should also be very well acquainted with the dhikr and rituals of the tarīqa and be able to read some Sufi books. His promotion in the ranks of the Order is primarily decided by his devotion and efforts for it. At every stage he has a dual responsibility of being able to recruit members and to lead them. He must be fit to perform both his religious obligation of guiding the followers in the way of their shaykh, and that of helping and assisting them in their worldly problems. He should also be able to portray the dual characteristics of dignity and humility: of being "the servant of the people", and at the same time their master.

Once appointed, a khalīfa is then not very easily removed. This, in addition to the physical distances between some of the zawiyas and the headquarters in El-Obeid, could lead to disintegration in the Order, and a tendency towards independence among the khalīfas. This is counteracted on one hand by the fact that khalīfat al-sajjāda retained some of the essential powers to himself which made the regional khalīfas and zawiyas dependent for their existence upon his goodwill, while his post does not depend on theirs, he alone has the right of investiture and dismissal. On the other hand, unity and harmony are preserved in the Order through its practices and its rituals.

Practices and Rituals

The rituals and practices of the Ismā'īliyya also passed through some phases of development from a simple form of worshipping under Sh. Ismā'īl to more and more elaborate ceremonials and complex procedures as the gap widened, through time, between him and his followers.¹ Under

---

¹. See Gilsenan, *Saint and Sufi in Modern Egypt*, p.76 for a description of this relationship between the development of these rituals and the passage of time after the death of the founder of the Order. See also p.156, below.
Sh. Isma'il the Order was a very loose voluntary association in which the followers were integrated by spirit and aim rather than by any formal controls. Joining the Order was a very simple process and membership was obtained with the minimum of formalities. There was no bar to entry and no test which the aspirant had to pass in order to be a member. He was subject to no examination and was not required to show any special qualities to make him fit to join the group. He was only required to come forward with a true desire (niyya sādiqa), take the covenant (al-'ahd) and he was a member. After that, the amount of work he wanted to put into the Order was his own affair, and there was no formal pressure on him to participate in any of the rituals or occasions of the tarīqa, which were, in any case, only very few and limited. The two most important ceremonies then were the initiation procedure (al-bay'ā) and the dhikr.

As described in al-'Uhud, the bay'ā is a very short and simple formality. The initiate is required to make a ritual ablution on Monday at noon and immediately start his first stage by making his intention (niyya) of repentance to God and genuine desire to redirect his life from self to God by following the path of Sh. Isma'il. He then starts his introductory dhikr which he should take with ease. On the following Wednesday at noon, he makes another ritual ablution, takes the covenant (akhḍ al-'ad) and is then given the instructions of the dhikr by word of mouth (al-talqīn).

The 'ahd is very similar, in word and structure to that of the Qadiriyya and other tarīqas which came after it in the Sudan. After his ablution, the initiate prays two rak'as and then sits facing his shaykh.

as though they are both in the act of prayer with the latter facing
the qibla. Then with their right hands clasped together (muḍāfaha)
and their eyes closed, the shaykh dictates and the initiate follows
him sentence by sentence, some specified litanies, Qur'ānic verses
and then closes with the declaration of the Faith (al-shahāda) and
al-istighfar (asking for God's forgiveness) and finally concluding
with the prayer for the Prophet, and the du'ā' for the shaykh, the chain
of his spiritual support, his family and his followers.

The dhikr, the central and most important function of the Order was
also very simple and straightforward under Sh. Ismā'īl. Purification
of the soul and unity with God were sought through simple disciplined
worship and the recitation of some specified invocations, Qur'ānic
verses and awrād (phrase-patterned devotions) of the Ismā'īliyya without
the use of any musical instruments, extraordinary rituals or special
movements. The most important aspect of the dhikr was the talqīn
(giving the secrets of the dhikr by word of mouth) and no aspirant could
take the dhikr on his own without the permission and guidance of his
shaykh; and if he did, he could only fall an easy prey to the wiles of
the devil. It was important also to see to it that the acolyte was
gradually initiated in the precepts and guided easily (bi-hashab taqatīh),¹
until his soul was gradually fortified and strengthened.

The dhikr of the Order under Sh. Ismā'īl was basically a personal
duty and each individual follower was prescribed a specified dhikr task
('adād) in accordance with his own personal capacity. Al-dhikr al-
khāss was the backbone of this practice and the halqa (circle of dhikr
devotees), though much recommended, was not an essential part of

the *dhikr*. *Al-dhikr al-khass*, as described in a number of Sh. Ismā'īl's works, is the repetition of some specially composed *awrād* a certain number of times, and some extra prayers performed in addition to the five ritual ones. These devotional duties are divided amongst the seven days of the week and then amongst the different times of the days so that the worshipper may continuously be engaged in the *dhikr*. The main emphasis is laid on the spiritual exercise through the recitation of some Qur'ānic verses, invocation of God's names and special prayers devoted to the Prophet, rather than any ritual acts or movements. The worshipper is free to stand up, sit or even lie down while reciting, so long as he is continuously engaged in his *dhikr*. Only in *al-dhikr al-qalbī* (the heart recollection), which Sh. Ismā'īl describes as the basic and most important *wird* of his *tarīqa*, are some special manners prescribed. This *dhikr al-qalbī* is not particularly different from the other *awrād* in words, although he suggests that it should be performed with more dignity and respect. It is performed after the *'Ishā*, and although each one can still do it on his own, it is considered to be more beneficial if the followers sit for it in a *halqa* where the *dhikr* is recited loudly and when mention is made of the Names of God, half of them audibly and the other half secretly. This should also be in such a manner that the pronunciation is made with a deep voice coming from inside the chest and with the Name clearly defined. Apart from the special emphasis on this extra respect for it and more attention, which is expressed in their sitting as though for prayer, and in closing their

2. See Sh. Ismā'īl, *al-Uhūd al-Wafīya*, p.13, the worshipper may choose to perform *al-'adad al-aqghar* 2,000 times, *al-mawsat* 3,000, or *al-akbar* 4,000 times.
eyes, imagining the presence of their shaykh, the *halqa* has no additional practice or ritual.

The gradual withdrawal of Sh. Ismā'īl from active involvement in the practical affairs of the Order made it necessary for it to resort to some formal ceremonies and ritual behaviour to compensate for the increasing spiritual separation of the *shaykh* from the followers. Gilsenan suggests that there is, in fact, a relationship between the development of these ceremonials and rituals and the degree of the spiritual separation between the founding *shaykh* of the Order and his followers. Thus he describes how these ceremonials and rituals progressively grew in the Ḥāmidiyā Shādhalīyya *tarīqa* of Egypt in relation to the growing spiritual distance between its founder, al-Shaykh Salama al-Raḍī, and his followers.

Following this analysis we may find a similar trend in the Ismā'īliyya *tarīqa*. Sh. Ismā'īl's retirement, towards the end of his life, from active participation in the Order, brought about new additions to his simple form of the *dhikr* even before his death. The attendance of the congregational *dhikr* was becoming obligatory and more formal with the recitation of Sh. Ismā'īl's poem *al-Shidda* becoming the most important function in it; and to omit that recitation could, in effect, invalidate the whole *dhikr*.

An important development immediately after the death of Sh. Ismā'īl was the adoption of the *nūba* (drums) in the Ismā'īliyya *dhikr*. Gradually after that, the *dhikr* which with Ismā'īl was a calm devotional act of

---

1. Gilsenan, *Saint and Sufi in Modern Egypt*, p.76.
3. The introduction of the *nūba* is associated with a *karāma* of Sh. Ismā'īl's prophetic powers and another of al-Makki's *baraka*. See Chapter III, p.44, above.
worship, became a popular means of arousing collective religious enthusiasm. The traditional form of the dhikr - i.e. the recitation of the awrad - continued in the tariqa as dhikr al-awrad to distinguish it from the popular one, dhikr al-noba, and in both its variations the dhikr continued to be the most emphasized form of spiritual advancement in the tariqa. In its traditional form - i.e. dhikr al-awrad - not much has been added to the words or to the procedure of the dhikr after Sh. Ismā'īl, but in its popular form - dhikr al-noba - it came to be associated with a number of ceremonials and ritual acts. The layliyyas (dhikr on specific nights) became the most important function, and twice a week on every Sunday and Thursday evenings a dhikr halqa is held in every zāwīya of the Ismā'īliyya. The performance of the dhikr in these halqas borrowed very much from the Sudanese Qadiriyya tariqa omitting much of its overt emotionalism and movements. Usually after the evening prayer has been completed, the members sit around talking to each other or drinking tea before one of the officials of the Order asked them to arrange themselves for the dhikr. They then sit in a circle with the noba in the middle and the chanters of canticles al-mawshidīn) nearest to the khalīfa. Before beating the noba the khalīfa or, in his absence, shaykh al-dhikr opens the layliyya by reciting some verses of the Qur'ān then he proclaims al-tawhīd, "lā ilāh illā Allāh" in a rhythmic tone and the others follow him for some time. Then he rises up and begins the dhikr accompanied by the noba starting very softly and slowly, then gradually increasing the tone of the dhikr and its movement until they

1. For a description of the Qadiriyya dhikr, see Trimingham, *Sufi Orders*, p.206.
reach a peak, after which, with a sign of his hands, the leader slows the dhikr down gradually to a complete halt. Then the munshidin take over with a religious poem or a Sufi hymn and continue for a short time before the dhikr is resumed again. The dhikr is finally concluded by the shahada and some verses of the Qur'ān.

Closely linked with the dhikr and the ḥalqa ceremonials is the procession which usually starts from the qubba, in El-Obeid, or from the zāwiyya, elsewhere, to celebrate an occasion outside the usual place specified for the regular layliyya. It consists mainly of two long rows with the khalīfa in the middle of the first row and the standard bearers and his senior officers close to him on both sides. Between the two rows are the drum beaters and the munshidin. Since the procession reflects the outward appearance and the place of the Order in the society, much emphasis is laid on the appearance and behaviour of the members taking part in it. Proper and clean clothes should be worn and discipline in behaviour and step should be observed while in the procession. Much attention is given to this appearance and discipline so as to impress possible recruits to the Order. This procession started to gain importance particularly after the Mahdia, especially when it began to be seen as a true measure of the strength of the Order in society. In 1915, therefore, the Ismā'īliyya were angry when their procession was not given its proper place in the public celebrations of Mawlid al-Nabī. ¹

Participation in the public celebrations of the birth of the Prophet Mohammad also became an important ceremony of the Order. Contributions

¹. Sud.Govt. Archives (Khartoum) Intel.2/32/261-9 May 1915. The Ismā'īliyya complained to the Governor about the Khatmiyya being placed in the same position as that of the Ismā'īliyya in the procession contrary to the earlier arrangements prior to that year.
are collected from all members and as many of them as possible are expected to take part in the festivities and *dhikr* in the Ismā'īliyya tent (*khayma*) during the eleven days and particularly on the twelfth night of Rabīʿ I in the Muslim calendar. The tent is nicely decorated and illuminated; *madiḥ* (praise-songs), *dhikr* and Qur'ān are continually chanted in it every evening until the celebrations are over.

An occasion which grew to be the most important ceremony of the Order is that of the *hawliyya*. The death dates of the founder of the Order, Sh. Ismā'īl and each of his successive *khalīfas* have been fixed to be celebrated every year in all the *zāwiyās* of the Order in addition to the public celebration in the central *zāwiyā* in El-Obeid. Contributions to this central celebration are gathered from all members and as much as possible the followers are also expected to participate in the ceremonies themselves to give the occasion its grandeur and importance.

In all these occasions of popular *dhikr*, celebrations and *hawliyyas* serving food and tea have become an integral part of the ceremony. On a big occasion, usually one or more oxen and a number of rams are slain to feed the visitors. It is also an occasion on which all members of the family participate: women take part in preparing the food, while men and children take part in the festivities of the occasion.

The holding of such feasts and the presentation of great quantities of food in them, have always been considered an important social and religious duty for every reputable holy man or family to perform. Emphasizing this, Hillelson suggests that in the Sudan, "Three forms of action, pertaining to the affairs of this world are much lauded in the saints: to offer lavish hospitality to travellers and pilgrims, to
intercede... on behalf of the oppressed..., and to give asylum to fugitives...\textsuperscript{1} A good example of such lavishness is seen in the description of a Ramadan breakfast to which a famous saint, Hasan wad Husūna was said to have entertained some guests: "It was served by 120 gorgeously dressed slave girls, adorned with precious jewels, carrying dishes of kisra. Each of these was followed by another still more gorgeously dressed, who carried a plate and after each of these followed another with a gourd. The food served to the narrator consisted of two cocks, and inside each cock there were two pigeons and two small birds".\textsuperscript{2} Hillelson explains this in the light of a growing tendency amongst the holy men in the Funj Kingdom, to assert their position in the society as compared with the rulers. Thus he suggests that it was in keeping with the wealth and influence enjoyed by these men that they surrounded themselves with the outward semblance of royal state, ceremonies and pomp of the court.\textsuperscript{3}

The holding of such feasts and the distribution of food should, however, be considered in the light of a broader religious and social context. The slaying of animals as sacrifice (karma), and the preparation of great quantities of food for visitors, have come to acquire some social and religious connotations and to be associated with wider and more important meanings than mere hospitality and socialization.\textsuperscript{4} The parallel between the duty of feeding the visitors of a holy man or his shrine, and that of feeding the pilgrimage in Mecca (al-rifā'ā), can

\begin{enumerate}
\item See S. Hillelson, "Tabaqat Wad Dayf Allah", S.N.R., VI, 1, 1923, p.228.
\item Ibid., p.230.
\item Ibid., p.229.
\end{enumerate}
hardly be overlooked. *Al-nifāda* was a highly regarded honour reserved for Quraysh and could only be performed by Banī Hāshim, the ancestors of the Prophet. No book of the *Sira* would fail to mention this and explain how Hāshim, the Prophet's grandfather, got his name from the action of breaking the bread *(hasham)* for the preparation of food.\(^1\)

Apart from their religious significance and their social functions as opportunities when friends and neighbours could meet, these celebrations also served the purpose of gathering the followers together and giving the *khalīfa* a chance to meet his officers and discuss with them the affairs of the *tarīqa* in their different regions. The increasing number of *hawlīyyas* and the tendency of each *ḥāš* (branch of the holy family) to celebrate the *hawlīyya* of its head, did not lead to disintegration in the Order, since the main emphasis is still laid on the central *hawlīyyas* which are celebrated by the *khalīfat al-sajjāda* in El-Obeid.

An important development also after the death of Sh. Isma'īl is the ceremony of investiture in the *khillāfa*. The only *khillāfa* appointed by Isma'īl was his son al-Makki, for whom he did not have any ceremony. As described in *al-nash'a*, he only proclaimed that decision in front of legal witnesses (*shuhūd ʿudūl*) and put it in a written document which was signed by him in front of those witnesses. This was not very different

---

1. The most commonly used term is *wa summā Hāshim laʾnnahu hasham al-tharīd*, He was said to have made the *tharīd* by mixing broken bread with cooked meat and rice. It is significant to note that only this exact mixture is presented on Sudanese religious occasions and is called the *fatta*. See Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahāb, *Mukhtasar šrat al-Rasūl*.

from the procedure of the *ijāza*,¹ which was currently in use at that time amongst the Sufis and probably very much in line with that of Muhammad *Uthmān al-Mirghanī* to Ismā'īl himself. In fact, the expression used to describe the procedure in both is the same.² After the death of Sh. Ismā'īl, and especially during the second phase of al-Makki's *khilāfa*, a number of new *khalīfas* were appointed. Since the appointments were not made by the founding saint himself, and in order to give the act an air of respect and some degree of solemnity, the investiture of a new *khalīfa* became a more elaborate ceremony with its special rituals. A special *dhikr* is made for the occasion in which the new *khalīfa* swears obedience to the *shaykh* (*akhāl al-bay'a*) and a special turban is also brought to be wound by *Khalīfat al-Saggada* around the head of the appointed *khalīfa*. The new *khalīfa* is also required to show his ability to lead the followers by leading the *dhikr* in the presence of *Khalīfat al-Saggada*. In the case of the initiation of a new *zawiya* a special *dhikr* is also performed led by its new *khalīfa* in front of *Khalīfat al-Khulafa* in the region or in front of the *Khalīfat al-Saggada* himself, if possible.

On the whole, these ceremonial practices and rituals of the Ismā'īliyya are not strikingly different from the other Sudanese Sufi orders, all of which have borrowed, in varying degrees, from the Qādiriyya in this respect. But, as they are, in some of the details, these ceremonials and practices have developed to give the Ismā'īliyya its own personality and through conformity to them, the *tariqa* maintained some uniformity and cohesion.

² The expression used in both is, "Wa dhalik bi-muqtada mukataba 'alayhkh tīta mām shuḥūd 'Udul". See *al-Nash'a*, Sudanese Govt. Archives (Khartoum), 1/82/1310.
To conclude, the religious association over which Sh. Ismā'īl presided was, until his death, primarily a group of ḥārān (disciples) under the guidance of their faqīḥ, hoping through his mediation to find their way to salvation. In this association they maintained a great deal of equality in status, easiness in their relationship with Sh. Ismā'īl, and with each other, and simplicity in the methods of their worship. The geographical and numerical expansion of this group and the historical phases through which it passed, brought about some changes in these direct and easy relationships, and also to the simple form of worship. The change reflected mainly three stages of development: an early stage in which there was a gradual expansion of the Order and a gradual development in its structure and rituals; followed by a second phase after the Mahdia in which there was a need for change, which entailed a more dramatic development in these structures and rituals; then a third stage, after the death of al-Makki, which saw conflicts and divisions in the Order and a decline in its structures and ceremonials. By 1914, the Order to which Sh. Ismā'īl had given his name, though still keeping much of its original practices and forms of worship, had greatly changed, both in form and practice.
To close this account on the Ismā'īliyya, reference may be made to a pattern which has been observed about Sudanese holy families and their revival.1 This account shows how one of these families whose reputation and fame were fading away, had been revived under a new name and a new leadership. Through the efforts of Sh. Ismā'īl and his new tarīqa, the family of Bushāra al-Gharbāwi, which once thrived in Dongola, is now being revived under the name of the Ismā'īliyya. The process started by Sh. Ismā'īl continued after him to give the family more reputation under one of his grandsons - al-Azhari, thus starting a new branch for it.

The tarīqa which Sh. Ismā'īl had established and the books he had written, though not original in ideas and adding very little to the Sufi thought, were, in fact, very useful and effective in their local setting. Their impact on the people of Kordofan is felt up to the present day.2 Of particular importance is the effect of his tarīqa in the process of Islamization in the Nūba mountains. It proved more attractive and appealing to the Nūba, and through it more people were converted to Islam than through the traditional methods of teaching in the Khalwas or the jiḥād of Abū Sufiyya. In many parts of these Nūba mountains, and especially in the Dalanj and Kadugli areas, the Ismā'īliyya now claims the greatest number of followers.

2. Many of his contemporaries seem to have been impressed by the quantity and quality of his writings. Of those was a Qāḍī of Kordofan Province who praised Sh. Ismā'īl in a long poem in which he mentioned his endowment with unequalled abilities in this respect: see, Shuqair Ta'rikh, 1, 139.Trimingham, also accepting this praise, indicated that seven of his books and tracts have been printed; see Trimingham, Islam, p.235.
GLOSSARY OF ARABIC AND COLLOQUIAL SUDANESE TERMS

A'ājim (sing. A'jamī) Unable to speak Arabic; of non-Arab origins: 47.


A'dāb Manners, etiquette, observances, usages: 130.

'Adad Specified number of times: 154.
  al-'adad al'agghar - the smaller number
  al-'adad al-'awṣaf - the medium number
  al-'adad al-'akbar - the greater number


Aḍhkar See dhikr: 61.

'Āḥd Covenant: 147, 153.

Alaqāb (sing. laqab) Titles of distinction and honour: 83.

Anashīd Canticles: 148.

Al-'aqā'id (sing. 'aqīda) The creeds: 43n.

Asās Lit. the foundation - the basic litanies: 62.

'Aṣīda Sorghum porridge: 98.

Awliyāʾ (sing. walī) Saints, protégés of God: 93.


Bāba Lit. father - title of respect: 47.

Bid'ā Innovation which amounts to heresy: 124.

Baraka Benediction, blessing or holiness: 38(n), 42, 46, 47, 48, 82, 90, 93, 128, 134, 138, 140, 141, 148.

  akhḍāh al-bayʿa - took the oath of allegiance: 162.

Bayt al-māl The treasury in an Islamic state: 118.
According to his ability: 154.

Propagandist: 142.

Lit. circle - body which administers the finances of a big family and runs its commercial activities: 121.

Guarantor: 117.

Beating the drum for the dhikr: 82, 83.

Shrine of a saint: 148.

A spiritual exercise designed to render God’s presence in one’s being: 61; the rhythmical repetition of God’s names to attain spiritual realization: 82, 143, 148, 150, 152, 153-59, 162; dhikr al-awrad - the daily set repetition of phrase-patterned devotions: 157; dhikr al-noba - the popular communal exercise of dhikr accompanied by the beating of the drums: 157; al-dhikr al-qalbi - the heart recollection: 62, 155; al-dhikr al-khass - the private or elected dhikr: 154, 155.

(i) Register of saints: 55;
(ii) Reception room: 144;
(iii) Book of poetic works, diwan jamif al-shathat - the anthology of ecstatic utterances: 48n.

Prayer, supplication: 154.

Sorghum: 18.

Traditional Qur'anic teacher in a small khalwa, a local religious man (to be distinguished from faqīh - one who is trained in fiqh, i.e. canonical system: 12, 13, 15, 26, 33, 34, 38, 41, 43, 51-4, 63, 65, 69-72, 75, 78-82, 86, 89-92, 103, 104, 112, 117, 118, 135, 138, 163.

The Divine revelation: 56n.

A mixture of rice, bread, lamb broth and some meat: 16ln.

Religious law, canonical system: 51, 53.
Al-Gharb

Hadrat (sing. hadra)

Halqa

Haris

Hasham

Hashiya

Hawliyya

Hijab

Hizn (sing. hizn)

Ijaza

Ikhtisar

'Ilm

Imam

Al-'Isha'

Istighfar

Jallaba

Jihad

The west: 46.


Circle of dhikr devotees: 154-8.

Guard: 140, 148.

Broke into piece: 161n.

Glossary: 53.


Amulet: 103.

Disciples: 118, 135, 162.

Licence testifying to the holder's link with a certain shaykh, madhab or tariqa: 162.

Abridgment: 53.

Knowledge, science; 'ilm laduni - knowledge which is inspired into the hearts of saints directly from God: 52;

'ilm al-hadith - the art of investigating the authenticity of the Traditions of the Prophet and the chain of witnesses who reported them: 91.

Leader in public prayer: 91, 97, 138;

imam al-'asr - the spiritual leader of the age: 48;

imam al-Muslimin - the spiritual and temporal leader of the Muslims: 71.

The night ritual prayer: 155.

Asking forgiveness from God, the repetition of the formula, "I ask forgiveness of God": 154.

A party or group of traders, pedlars; in the Southern and the Western Sudan - traders of riverain origins, especially Ja'aliyyin: 73, 77, 78.

Holy war: 74, 164.

jihad al-nafs - earnest striving with the carnal soul: 123.
Jihadiyya

Mercenaries of black origin: 31, 77.

Al-Jizya

The poll-tax levied on the People of the Book (the Christians and Jews) in a Muslim state: 72.

Karâma

(i) Grace, miracle, the gift of performing wonders and miracles: 41, 48, 57, 58, 83n.
(ii) Sacrifice: 160.

Khalâ'

Open space: 19.

Khalîfa

Deputy, the leader of a religious order or a branch of it: 38n, 59, 63, 84, 99n, 112, 117, 120, 125, 126, 127, 136, 137, 140, 142, 143, 145, 147, 149, 150, 152, 157-9, 161, 162;
Khalîfat Rasûl Allâh - the successor of the Apostle of God: 71;
Khalîfat abb - the successor to the leadership of an order after his father: 150;
Khalîfat maqâm - representative of the head of the order: 151;
Khalîfat al-sajjâda - the inheritor of the prayer-mat of the founder of the order: 150, 152, 161, 162;
al-Khalîfa al-Kabîr - the grand Khalîfa: 149;
Khalîfat al-Khulafâ' - the most senior Khalîfa: 149, 162.

Khalwa

(i) Small Islamic school, usually in rural areas, where Qur'ân, Arabic and such related subjects are taught: 51, 54, 63, 65, 81, 82, 86, 89, 93, 104, 164;
(ii) Retreat, seclusion, place of retreat or seclusion for the purpose of worshipping: 59, 61, 63, 64;
(iii) Lodge: 120, 121, 144.

Khayma

Tent: 158.

Khilafa

Succession to the leadership of the order or the office of representative of the head of the order: 74, 139, 145, 146, 150, 161, 162.

Késra

Baked flat wafers made of sorghum flour: 160.

Khor

Seasonal stream: 18.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laylat al-Qadr</td>
<td>The Night of Power: 60.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layliyya</td>
<td>Session of dhikr on certain specified nights; term by which these sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>are known in some orders: 157, 158.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madad</td>
<td>Help, support: 125.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhhab (pl. madhahib)</td>
<td>Legal school of thought in Sunni Islam: 53n, 71, 91n.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madrīḥ</td>
<td>Praise songs: 159.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ma'mur</td>
<td>An administrative officer: 102, 103.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandūb</td>
<td>Emissary: 151.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marāṭīb</td>
<td>Stages: 67n, 135.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maxīlīd</td>
<td>Birth anniversary: 110, 119, 138; Mawlid al-Nabī - the celebrations in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the first twelve nights of Rabi' I in the Muslim calendar in honour of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the birth of the Prophet: 158.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mudār</td>
<td>Governor: 117; Mudarrisyya - Province: 16.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muftī</td>
<td>A canon 'lawyer authorized to promulgate a fatwa or a formal legal opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>on religious matters: 71, 81n, 93, 128, 131.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mujaddid</td>
<td>Reformer, innovator, renewer: 46, 92.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mukhtasār</td>
<td>Abridged: 53.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Munafah</td>
<td>Meditation: 62.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musāhidīn</td>
<td>Precentors, chanters of canticles: 151, 157, 158.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muqaddima</td>
<td>Introduction: 61.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muṣīd</td>
<td>An aspirant, a novice: 61.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muṣhīd</td>
<td>Director: 55, 60, 135, 136, 151.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musāfaha</td>
<td>Handclasp: 154.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naṣab</td>
<td>Genealogy, pedigree: 90, 91.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nisba</td>
<td>Epithet of origin, affiliation: 93.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Niyya Sādiqa**
True intention, genuine desire: 153.

**Al-Noba**
The drum: 82, 83, 148, 151, 156, 157.

**Nudhar (sing. nadhr)**
Fulfilment of conditional vows, offerings: 121.

**Qādī**
A Muslim judge: 71, 81n, 131; Qādī al-Islām (in the Mahdia) - the chief judge of the grand court in Omdurman: 96.

**Qibla**
The direction which a worshipper faces while in ritual prayer - always towards Mecca: 154.

**Qubba**
Domed tomb of a saint: 119, 125, 138, 140, 144, 148, 158.

**Rak'a**
The cycle of words and acts surrounding a prostration in ritual prayer: 62.

**Al-Rifadā**
The honourable duty of feeding the pilgrims of Mecca: 160, 161.

**Risāla**
Tract: 43n, 53.

**Saj'**
Rhyming: 65.

**Sanad**
Chain of spiritual support: 61.

**Al-Shabāb**
Lit. the youth - a para-military organization for the youths of the tariqa: 126, 146.

**Al-Shafā'ā**
To intercede on behalf of the oppressed: 87, 103.

**Al-Shahāda**
Testimony, to witness, the act of professing the Islamic faith by declaring "There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is the Prophet of God": 154, 158.

**Sharh**
Explanation, commentary: 53.

**Sharī'ā**
The body of formally established Islamic law based primarily on God's commandments found in the Qur'ān and Traditions: 71, 91, 92, 96, 117, 118.

**Sharīfī**
One who claims descent from the Prophet Mohammad: 43.
Shaykh
Lit. old man:
(i) head of an Arab family, clan, tribe or village: 13, 18, 78, 85, 86, 89, 113;
(ii) head of a religious order; holy man: 15, 49, 51, 53n, 56, 58, 66, 71, 93, 98, 105, 107, 108, 115, 117, 119, 135, 146, 147, 152, 156;
(iii) a form of respectful address: 101, 121.

Shuhud 'udul
Legal witnesses: 161.

Silsila
Chain of spiritual descent: 61.

Al-Sīra
The Biography of the Prophet: 148n, 161.

Sīfr al-walā'
The declaration of loyalty: 130n, 131.

Sunna
Custom, tradition of custom, saying or act of the Prophet Muhammad: 151.

Tabl
Kettle drum: 151.

Al-Tahajjud
The all-night prayer: 62.

Takfiyya
A lodge for the poor and vagrant faqīḥs, maintained by charitable donations: 121.

Taqīf
Teaching the secrets of the dhikr by word of mouth: 153, 154.

Taqīyya
Head cap: 121.

Tarīqah
Flew away: 39.

Tarīqa
A way, Sufi path, religious order: passim throughout.

Al-Taxassul
Supplication: 62.

Tawḥid
Testimony of the unity and unicity of God: 53.

Tharīd
Food composed of bread, rice, broth and meat mixed together: 161n.

'Ulama' (sing. 'alim)
Muslim theologians and scholars who are concerned and occupied with the interpretation of the canonical systems as derived from a close study and a strict adherence to the Qur'an and Hadīth: 33, 43, 71, 72, 81, 82, 91, 93, 94, 96, 98, 106;
'Ulama' al-rusūm = scholars of: 67.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'Ulam</td>
<td>See 'ilm: 46.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umma</td>
<td>Community: 71.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Ustādhn</td>
<td>The teacher: 46, 147.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usūl</td>
<td>Roots, fundamental principles: 51.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wādī</td>
<td>Valley: 18.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wākil</td>
<td>Custodian, officer in a religious order: 151.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wali</td>
<td>A saint, a protégé of God: 48, 134, 140.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wasāta</td>
<td>Mediation, arbitration, go-between: 87.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zakāt</td>
<td>Alms - tax paid by every capable Muslim as a religious duty; or offerings to the poor. It is used for charitable or religious purposes: 118, 151.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Zaman</td>
<td>The time, the age: 46.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zāwiya</td>
<td>Lit. corner: (i) centre for the religious activities of a tarīqa; smaller and distinct from the mosque: 116, 117, 143, 144, 145, 150, 152, 157, 159, 162; (ii) lodge: 120, 121.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ziyārāt</td>
<td>(i) Pilgrimage to the shrine of a saint as distinct from Hajj, pilgrimage to Mecca: 138; (ii) pious gifts of pilgrims: 119.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX A

Genealogical Table I
APPENDIX A

Genealogical Table II.
Kordofan Province.
THE WORKS OF SH. ISMA'IL IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

At least nine of Sh. Isma'il's works, shown here with a star *, against each, have been published. The rest are still in manuscript in the hands of various members of his family. Some of these have been acquired by the Sudanese Government Archive (Khartoum), and are kept mainly under the classification 1/83/1308-1334 and 1/15/187-189.

It is very difficult to make a comprehensive list of these works now since those who keep them are very reluctant to part with them.

This list has been compiled mainly from (a) al-nash'a (the obituary of Sh. Isma'il, Sudanese Government Archives (Khartoum), 1/82/1310; (b) an incomplete and often erroneous list in Sh. Isma'il's Nashariq Shumus al-Anwar (Beirut, 1973); and (c) his al-'Uhind al-wafiya (Khartoum, undated).

1237 (1821/2)


177

1238 (1822/23)


1239 (1823/24)


18. Kitāb: Jami' ma'ānī al-kalim wa wayis al-nās fī ma'rīfat sayyīdī al-imām al-mahdī wa'l-khatim.


1240 (1824/25)


27. Qasīda: al-jawāhir al-sākiyya fī madh sayyīdīna Muḥammad Khayr al-baṭīyya
1241 (1825/26)


1242 (1826/27)


32. Tafsir: Verses "Wa nufikh fi al-sur fasu'ilq man fi al-samawat was man fi al-ard..." up to the end of the Sura (Qur'an

1254 (1838-39)


1260 (1844)


1261 (1845)

37. Risala: Muwaddihat al-muram fi daf' ma yatawahham fih ba'd al-'awam.

38. Khutbat 'Id al-fitr.

39. Khutbat 'Id al-nahr.

40. Khutbat al-istisqa'.
1261 (1845) (cont'd)

*41 Kitāb: Mashāriq Shumus al-anwar wa magharib kisētha fī man naway 'uyün al-'Ulm wa'l-asrār.

*42 Kitāb: Miftah bāb al-dakhūl fī hadrat Allah wa'l-Rasūl.

*43 Kitāb: Rawdat al-salikīn wa minhat ahl al-dunya wa'l-dīn.

*44 Kitāb: Diwan al-shathāt

*45 Kitāb: Ruh takhlīs al-mu'mīnīn 'an sulūk tariq al-mukheirīn.

1265 (1848/49)


47. Du'a' Khatm al-Qur'ān (in prose and poetry).

Undated

*48 Kitāb: Al-barq al-sāṭl.

*49 Kitāb: Minhat al-wahhab fī madhāl-nabi al-awwāb.

50. His famous odes entitled al-Shidda and al-Munfarija.
General Notes

I. In placing the names of writers who have works both in
Arabic and English, two main difficulties have been encountered:

a) When the writer has a compounded surname, such as 'Abbās
Ibrahim Muḥammad 'Alī should he be placed under M or A?
b) When the writer has used two different forms of his name,
e.g. 'Uthmān Sīd Ahmad Ismā'īl for works in Arabic, and
O.S.A. Ismail for those in English, should he appear under
U, O or I?

To avoid any confusion, we stuck to the Arabic form with the
writer placed under his first name, the name rigorously
transliterated and the English form shown in brackets where
necessary. Therefore, 'Uthmān Sīd Ahmad will appear under U as
follows: 'Uthmān Sīd Ahmad Ismā'īl (O.S.A. Ismail).

II. Arabic names to which the definitive article al- is prefixed, will
be found under their initial letter; thus al-Makkī will appear
under the letter M.

III. The b. between two names stands for ibn (son of).
II. Manuscripts and Archival Material, Comprising

a) The works of Sh. Ismā’īl (see separate list, Appendix C) and other documents directly related to the Ismā’īliyya, classified in Sudan Government Archives (Khartoum) under Miscellaneous as follows:

1/82/1308 Al-Makkl’s petition to the ma’mur of Omdurman in 1898
1/82/1309 The sanad and the ījāsa of the tariqa
1/82/1310 Al-Nāsh’ā (the obituary of Sh. Ismā’īl)
1/82/1311 Sh. Ismā’īl, Rahmat al-Wahhāb
1/82/1312 Sh. Ismā’īl, al-Parīda al-manṣūma
1/82/1313 Anonymous author, A study of the metres of Arabic poetry
1/82/1314 Sh. Ismā’īl, al-Sāhm al-Sharqa
1/82/1315 Sh. Ismā’īl, al-‘Uḥūd al-Wafiya
1/82/1316 Al-Makkl ??, al-Nafṣ al-'anbariyya fī al-Khutab al-minbariyya
1/82/1317 Sh. Ismā’īl, al-Fuyūḥat al-zahira
1/82/1318 Sh. Ismā’īl, Muwaḍihat at-muḥāmmāt
1/82/1319 Sh. Ismā’īl, Takhīṣ al-ikh投放
1/82/1320 Sh. Ismā’īl, Du‘ā’ Khatm al-Qur’ān
1/82/1321 Al-Nāsh’ā al-Makklīyya (the obituary of al-Makkl)
1/82/1322 Sh. Ismā’īl, Rahmat al-Wahhāb (another copy)
1/82/1323 The ādāb (manners and etiquette) of the tariqa
1/82/1324 Sh. Ismā’īl, Wasiyyat al-muhibbīn
1/82/1325 A tract written in praise of Sh. Ismā’īl – anonymous author
1/82/1326 A poem by al-Makkl
1/82/1327 Copies of some writings by the famous mystic al-Junayd,
1/82/1328 Poem in praise of Sh. Ismā’īl by his son, al-‘Iṣāqir.
1/82/1329 Copies of some works in
1/82/1330 Poem by al-Makkl
1/82/1331 Al-Makkl, al-qādāth al-saniyya fī al-ḥath wa’il-targhib fī al-tariqa al-Ismā’īliyya
1/82/1332 Letters from Sultan ‘Alī Dīnār to al-Makkl
1/82/1333 A letter from ‘Ubayd Nāṣir to al-Makkl relating a dream in which he suggests a karāma of al-Makkl
1/82/1334 A collection of unclassified documents, mostly related to al-Makkl
1/15/187 Sh. Ismā’īl, al-Kayra
1/15/188 Sh. Ismā’īl, Dīwan al-Shathāt
1/15/189 Sh. Ismā’īl, al-Mawlid
1/14/175 Ahmad al-Azhari’s genealogy, al-iqtibās fī ittīqal nasabīna bi’l-‘Abbās
1/11/87 The Constitution (dustūr) of the Association of Sufī Orders in the Sudan
b) Intelligence Reports: monthly reports which contained some information on the affairs of the Sudan. Numbers 1 to 59 appeared in Intelligence Reports Egypt (IRE); then after that from Number 60, Sudan affairs appeared independently as Sudan Intelligence Reports (SIR).

i) Intelligence Reports Egypt (IRE)

No.1, April 1892: An account of the Ashraf revolt in Omdurman.
No.11, 1893: Report on the Sudan by Col. D.H. Stewart
No.12, March 1893: The movement of Muzil al-Dalal in Kordofan against the Khalifa 'Abdullahi.
No.32, November 1894: Father Rosignoli's statement concerning the Mirghani family in Omdurman.
No.37, April 1895; App.D: On the Sanusi activities and those of Rabih Zubayr in the Western Sudan.
No.38, May 1895, App.: On the activities of Rabih Zubayr in Bornu and on Islamic activities there.
No.43, January 1896, App.A: Account of some pilgrims on the nature of Sanusi movement and that of Rabih Zubayr.
No.44, February-March 1896, App.D: On the affairs of the Western Sudan and the favourable conditions for trade there.
No.50, August 1896: On the growing weakness of the Mahdist rule in Kordofan-Darfur, and the fear of a possible Sanusi influence.
No.57, November and December 1897: The Mirghaniyya in Kassala.

ii) Sudan Intelligence Reports (SIR)

No.60, 1899, Apps. 95 and 96: Correspondence between Kitchener and Ibrahiim 'Ali, a claimant to the throne of Darfur.
No.60, 1899, App.97: Proclamation of the Sirdar to the shaykhs of Kordofan and Darfur.
No.85, 1901: Case of Shaykh al-Mudawwi.
No.95, June 1902: Reports on the jur'as.
No.159, October 1907: Government dissatisfaction and distrust of the leaders of the Ismai'Iyya in El-Obeid.
No.169, August 1908: As No.159.

iii) Sudan Intelligence Files (SUDINT)

1/18/89 Mahdism (reports on Mahdist influence in the country).
2/3/260 CS/SCR/8, C. Harold to Intelligence Office (Khartoum) concerning the formation of the "Board of of Ulema".
2/27/218) "Religious fanatics", a collection of 220) reports on a number of religious faqhīhs 221) whom the British administration viewed 2/28/223) with concern.
224) 229) 231)
2/32/260- 264 Contain correspondence elucidating the 220) Sudan Government policy towards the 223) religious tariqās.
2/32/271 Threat to Īsmā'īliyya from the spread of 220) the Tijāniyya.
2/43/361 A history of West African pilgrims in 220) the Sudan
4/7/55 Fallata settlers in the Sudan.

c) Reports and Official Publications

i) Reports on the Finance, Administration and Conditions 220) in the Sudan; Short (G.G. Reports). These are annual 220) reports published in Khartoum by the Sudan Government 220) between 1899-1913. They provided a good summary of 220) affairs in the country in those years, and contained the 220) annual reports of the various provinces. See reports 220) of Kordofan province.

ii) Kordofan and the region to the West of the White Nile, 220) compiled in the Intelligence Department, Anglo-Egyptian 220) Government Handbook Series, No.2, December 1912.

d) Sudan Archives in the School of Oriental Studies, University 220) of Durham; short (Sud.Arch.Durham), numbers:

97/5/11 al-Tahir b. 'Abd Allah, Kitāb ma'ārif furu' 220) uṣūl al-'Arab wa'l-ḥasab wa'l-nasab 220) Wingate Papers
192/2 H.E. the Governor-General's speech to the 220) Ulema, November 1917.
195/7 Majdhubia Tariqa in the Red Sea Province.
237/11 Sudanese delegation to congratulate 220) King George V, 1919.
494/11 Īsmā'il al-Azhārī, Muftī El-Sudan.
III. People Interviewed in El-Obeid and Khartoum in 1975/76

1. Syd Muṣṭafa al-Bakrī b. Tāj al-Asfīyā', present head of the Ismā'īliyya tarqā
3. Hājj 'Abd al-Hafīz 'Abdalla, grandson of al-Makki - maternal, took active part in politics in El-Obeid in the 1930s and 40s.
4. Hājj Ahmad al-Faki 'Abdalla, merchant and has many contacts with Ismā'īliyya trade and religious activities in Kordofan and Nūba Mountains.
7. Dr. 'Uthmān Sīd Ahmad Ismā'īl al-Bili, of the Bidayriyya Dahmashiyya of Dongola.

IV. Unpublished Works


V. Bibliographical Works

VI. General Works, Books and Articles


68. Ibn Khalāṣīn, see 'Abd al-Raẓūm Muhammad ibn Khalāṣīn.


71. T. Izutso, The Structure of the Ethical Terms in the Koran, Tokyo, 1959.


75. Jalāl al-Dīn al-Siūtī, al-Itqān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān, Cairo, 1941.


93. J.W. MacPherson, The Mauls of Egypt, Cairo, 1941.
114. Neʿem Shuququr [N. Shuquair], Ta'rikh al-Sudan al-qadīm wa'll-hadīth wa fughrāfiyyatuh, 3 vols., Cairo 1903.
133. J.W. Sagar, "Notes on the History and Customs of the Nuba", *SNR*, V, 1922, 137-156.
139. al-Shāṭīr Buṣaylī Ḥādī al-Jalīl (ed.), *Makhtūtāt Kāṭib al-Shīnā*, see Ahmad b. al-Ḥājj Abū 'Alī.
144. R. Slatin, Fire and Sword in the Sudan, London, 1896.
161. 'Uthman Sīd Ahmad Ismā'īl, al-Dīn wa'l-Šuyū'a wa nash'at wa taṭwur al-Khatmiyya wa'l-Anṣār, Khartoum, 1970.