

AN HISTORICAL STUDY OF  
ISMĀ'ĪL b. 'ABD AL-QĀDIR, KITĀB SA'ĀDAT AL-MUSTAHDĪ  
BI-SĪRAT AL-IMĀM AL-MAHDĪ

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A thesis submitted for the degree of  
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## ABSTRACT

Ismā'īl b. 'Abd al-Qādir (d. 1897), a member of a 'holy family' of Kordofan, had studied at al-Azhar and later served as muftī in El Obeid. In late 1882 he joined the Mahdi. His subsequent career cannot be fully reconstructed. On 2 Rabī' I 1306/6 November 1888, he completed his Sīra of the Mahdi, On 6 Shawwāl 1306/5 June 1889, he completed another work, dealing with the wars between the Khalifa and the Abyssinians. In 1893, at the Khalifa's order, Ismā'īl's writings were destroyed and he was banished to al-Rajjāf, where he died in the beginning of 1897.

The unique extant manuscript copy of Ismā'īl's Sīra, which forms the basis of the thesis, is a biography of the Mahdi by one of his adherents, which also contains elements of a chronicle. Its history, sources and contents are discussed in the introduction to the thesis. The main historical value of the Sīra lies in its presentation of the Turco-Egyptians, the Mahdi and the Khalifa. In addition, it contains many details on ideological, military and other affairs of the Mahdia, and provides an insight into the outlook and frame of mind of an educated Mahdist.

The second, and longer part of the thesis is a very full summary, at times approaching a translation, of the text of the Sīra. All historically relevant details, including all names of persons, tribes and places, have been retained and, in many cases, annotated. Also, the pagination of the original Arabic manuscript has been indicated.

The appendixes include source materials for Ismā'īl's life (one of them still in manuscript) and a list of proclamations and letters transcribed in the Sīra.

## PREFACE

Recent surveys of historical writing on the modern history of the Nilotic Sudan show the rather late appearance of critical historical studies which draw on contemporary Arabic source materials. Only in the last decade or so has the abundant contemporary Mahdist documentation been described, partly classified, and utilized by scholars. So far, few of these documents have been reproduced and, although some attempts to prepare critical editions of texts have been made, they remain unpublished.

The number of known Mahdist source materials which can be described as contemporary historical writings, in the sense of a conscious endeavour by a Mahdist to collect historical details, and arrange and preserve them in writing, is very small indeed. In this thesis an attempt has been made to discuss one of these sources, and to indicate its importance.

The thesis is divided into two parts. In the introduction to the manuscript, the known biographical details of its author have been collated and combined, to form a coherent biographical note. It is possible that the archives in the Sudan, or relatives of Ismā'īl b. 'Abd al-Qādir, might shed further light on several points. An analysis of the history, sources and subject-matter of the Sīra, and of its importance within the framework of the Mahdist documentation follows. The second part of the thesis is a very detailed summary of the manuscript. It includes, within the limitations imposed on the length of the thesis - all the historically relevant details, with brief annotations on names, terms etc. It is hoped that both the summary and its annotations will be incorporated, eventually, within a full critical edition of the Sīra.

For the transliteration of Arabic personal and tribal names, see the table on p. 5. As regards the Mahdi, the Khalifa and place names, I have adopted the system used by P.M. Holt in Mahdist state. The Arabic words Walad (shortened, colloquially, to wad) and ibn have been abbreviated to w. and b., respectively. Vertical lines (|) are used instead of square brackets. A list of abbreviations is given on p. 5, and short references will be found in the bibliography.

The preparation of this thesis has been facilitated by several institutions and persons, to whom my thanks are due. My teachers at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, particularly Professors D. Ayalon, G. Baer, and the late Prof. U. Heyd, introduced me to the study of Middle Eastern history. Tel Aviv University provided the financial means which enabled me to study in London. To the Tel Aviv University and, in particular, to Dr. S. Shamir and Dr. U. Dan, of its Department of Middle Eastern and African History, I owe much. I have also been aided, for a stay at the University of Durham: Sudan Archive, by a grant from the Central Research Fund of the University of London. Mr. I.J.C. Foster, Keeper of Oriental Books at the University of Durham, and his staff, kindly supplied photocopies of material and other assistance. Mr. M. Rabinowich and Mr. E. Rothman read, and commented on drafts of the thesis. Finally, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Prof. P.M. Holt, of the School of Oriental and African Studies, who supervised my work with great patience and encouragement, and whose advice and comments taught me a great deal.

H.S.

London, 1969

## ABBREVIATIONS

- BD: Biographical dictionary.
- BSOAS: Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, 1917- .
- EI<sup>1</sup>: Encyclopaedia of Islam, 1st edn., Leiden, 1913-34.
- EI<sup>2</sup>: Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd edn., Leiden, 1954- .
- GAL: C. Brockelman, Geschichte der arabischen Literatur, 2 vols., Leiden, 1943-9; 3 supplements, Leiden, 1937-42.
- IRE: Intelligence Report, Egypt, Nos. 1-59.
- JAH: Journal of African History, Cambridge, 1960- .
- SAD: University of Durham, School of Oriental Studies: Sudan Archive.
- SEI: H.A.R. Gibb and J.H. Kramers (eds.), Shorter encyclopadia of Islam, Leiden, 1953.
- SIR: Sudan Intelligence Report, No. 60.
- SNR: Sudan Notes and Records, Khartoum, 1918- .

## TRANSLITERATION

w - و	ḡ - ض	th - ث
' - ء	ṭ - ب	j - ج
iyya - يية	ẓ - ظ	ḡ - ج
iya - يية	' - ع	kh - خ
īyūn - يون	gh - غ	dh - ذ
īyin - يين	q - ق	sh - ش
		ṣ - ص



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## INTRODUCTION

## 1. Ismā'īl b. 'Abd al-Qādir, a biographical note

## a. Sources

The name and writings of Ismā'īl b. 'Abd al-Qādir<sup>1</sup> have been mentioned briefly in several printed works, all of which - except one<sup>2</sup> - seem to be based, in varying degrees of accuracy, on a short passage in R.C. (von) Slatin, Fire and sword in the Sudan,<sup>3</sup> and on references in Na'ūm Shuqayr, Ta'rīkh al-Sūdān al-qadīm wa'l-hadīth wa-jughrafiyyatuhu.<sup>4</sup> A third source of information which, apparently, has not hitherto been fully utilized in scholarly works, is a manuscript memorandum dated 25th June 1895, prepared and signed by Na'ūm Shuqayr (then) of the Sudan Section, Intelligence Department, Egyptian

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1. Referred to subsequently as Ismā'īl. His writings are referred to as the Sīra (or MS.) and Tirāz.
  2. See Ronald Wingate, 'Two African battles' (I).
  3. London, 1896, pp. 515-6. The same version is given in the 'popular' edn., abridged by Slatin, London, 1897, pp. 309-10. The version in the F.A. Brockhaus German edn., Leipzig, 1898, p. 474, is a summary of the English passage. (Cf. Hill, Slatin, p. 40: 'F.A. Brockhaus published a German version which was a straight translation from the first English edition'). See appendix A2.
  4. Cairo, n.d. [1903], in particular vol. iii, pp. 559-60 (Dietrich, p. 200, n.4). See appendix A4.

Army.<sup>1</sup> This Memorandum<sup>2</sup> accompanied two Arabic manuscripts by Ismā'īl and their English translations, and was submitted to Major (later General Sir) F.R. Wingate, at that time Director of Military Intelligence, Egyptian Army. Although brief in scope, the Memorandum is the most detailed account, known at present, of Ismā'īl's career and works.

My attempts to establish the relations among these three principal sources have not borne fruit, as neither Shuqayr nor Slatin give their sources of information concerning Ismā'īl. The Memorandum mentions the name of an agent who had brought the manuscript from the Sudan in April 1895.<sup>3</sup> He may have furnished Shuqayr with some biographical details of Ismā'īl. On the other hand,

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1. See Hill, BD, p. 293, s.v. Na'ūm Bey Shuqayr.
  2. SAD, Box 260/12. Listed in the author catalogue (card-index) as: Shuqayr, Na'ūm Bey, Memorandum to Director of Military Intelligence on Ismā'īl 'Abd al-Qādir and his Biography of the Mahdi. In the inventory catalogue (card-index) the Memorandum is described as: 'MS., ff.6, drafted and signed by Na'ūm Bey Shuqayr 29.6.1895'. Parts of this Memorandum (with some minor inaccuracies) are transcribed in\* Ronald Wingate, 'Two African battles' (I), p. 57.
  3. Memorandum, f.1. His name is given as 'ES Sheikh Ahmed Kawai', a relative of 'Abdallāh Sa'd Farah. IRE, 27 (June 1894), pp. 1-2, gives the following information on this agent: 'The most important arrival during the month of June from the Sudan was a certain Sheikh Ahmed Mohamed Kawai, a nephew of Abdulla Wad Sad... |Ahmad| left Berber on the 27th May, 1894, and travelling via Suakin, reached Cairo on the 12th June, 1894. He is a particularly intelligent young man, apparently of considerable influence with the Jaalin, and is well versed in the affairs of the Sudan'. See also Shuqayr to Wingate, 29 July 1895, pp. 7-8, SAD, Box 261. 'Abdallāh Sa'd Farah was a Ja'alī notable and amīr of al-Matamma. In 1897, when the Anglo-Egyptian army was approaching, he rebelled against the Khalifa 'Abdallāhi and was killed in battle. See Hill, BD, p.7, s.v. 'Abd Allāh Sa'd; Holt, Mahdist state, pp. 213-4.

\* See appendix A3.

in the Memorandum, Shuqayr states that he had pursued this matter for a considerable length of time, in the course of which he probably made enquiries about Ismā'īl.<sup>1</sup> Another problem, which has a rather more direct bearing on the evaluation of Shuqayr's information, is whether or not Slatin, who had escaped from Khartoum, and arrived in Aswān on the 16th, and in Cairo on the 19th March 1895,<sup>2</sup> was one of Shuqayr's sources of information. The passage concerning Ismā'īl in Slatin's Fire and sword, though much shorter than Shuqayr's Memorandum and differing with regard to some details, suggests a connexion between the two accounts. It is, however, difficult to establish the direction of this connexion. Does the resemblance in general tone and in some details mean that Slatin was a source of information for Shuqayr? Or was the relevant passage in Slatin's book fully or partly an addition of his translator (in fact, editor) - Wingate - to whom Shuqayr had submitted the Memorandum between Slatin's arrival in Cairo and the publication of the latter's book? The wish expressed at the end of Slatin's account that '...if these...chronicles could only be procured and translated into European Languages...', seems to stem either from Slatin's ignorance of the existence of the Memorandum and its enclosures or,

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1. See reference to enquiries on Ismā'īl which Shuqayr had made in Cairo (Memorandum, f.2).
2. See Hill, Slatin, pp. 34-6.

more probably, from Wingate's policy of publications.<sup>1</sup>

Shuqayr's Ta'rīkh was published several years after both his Memorandum and Slatin's book were written. In the meantime Shuqayr had obviously learnt more about Ismā'īl's career and fate. Still, Shuqayr's printed account appears to be based mainly on his Memorandum and it is not known whether he took precautions to verify all the details concerning Ismā'īl, which he incorporated in Ta'rīkh.

The inevitable conclusion is that at present it is impossible to establish whether or not these three principal sources are interdependent. One cannot, therefore, corroborate the details in one source from the two others. The rather surprising scarcity of clear autobiographical references by Ismā'īl in his known works, and of references to Ismā'īl in the known works of his contemporaries,

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1. The general criticisms of Slatin's Fire and sword as a source for the history of the Mahdia (see Holt, 'Source-materials', pp. 110-13; Hill, Slatin, pp. 38-45; Daniel, pp. 426-33) apply to the general tone and the setting of Slatin's passage about Ismā'īl. These criticisms cannot, however, be applied automatically to the whole factual subject-matter of Slatin's passage. However, it should be noted (a) that neither Ismā'īl nor his writings are mentioned in the General report on the Egyptian Sudan March 1895, compiled [by Wingate] from statements made by Slatin Pasha. (See also below, p. 20, n. 3); (b) that in all probability Wingate did have the Memorandum, the Arabic MSS, of Ismā'īl's works and their English translations, while he was engaged, in England, in preparing Fire and sword with Slatin (cf. Shuqayr to Wingate, 8 July 1895, pp. 1, 5, SAD, Box 261: 'By this time you have reached England... I send you herewith a literal translation of the lamentation for the Mahdi's Death [sic]. Please put it in its place in the translation'). See the Sīra, 396/7 - 398/12; 404/1 - 16 (i.e., pages/lines).

complicate any attempt to assess the credibility of the available biographical information. Consequently, the following biographical note presents a picture which is partly compiled from the accounts of Shuqayr and Slatin and, otherwise, is based on my own deductions and assumptions.

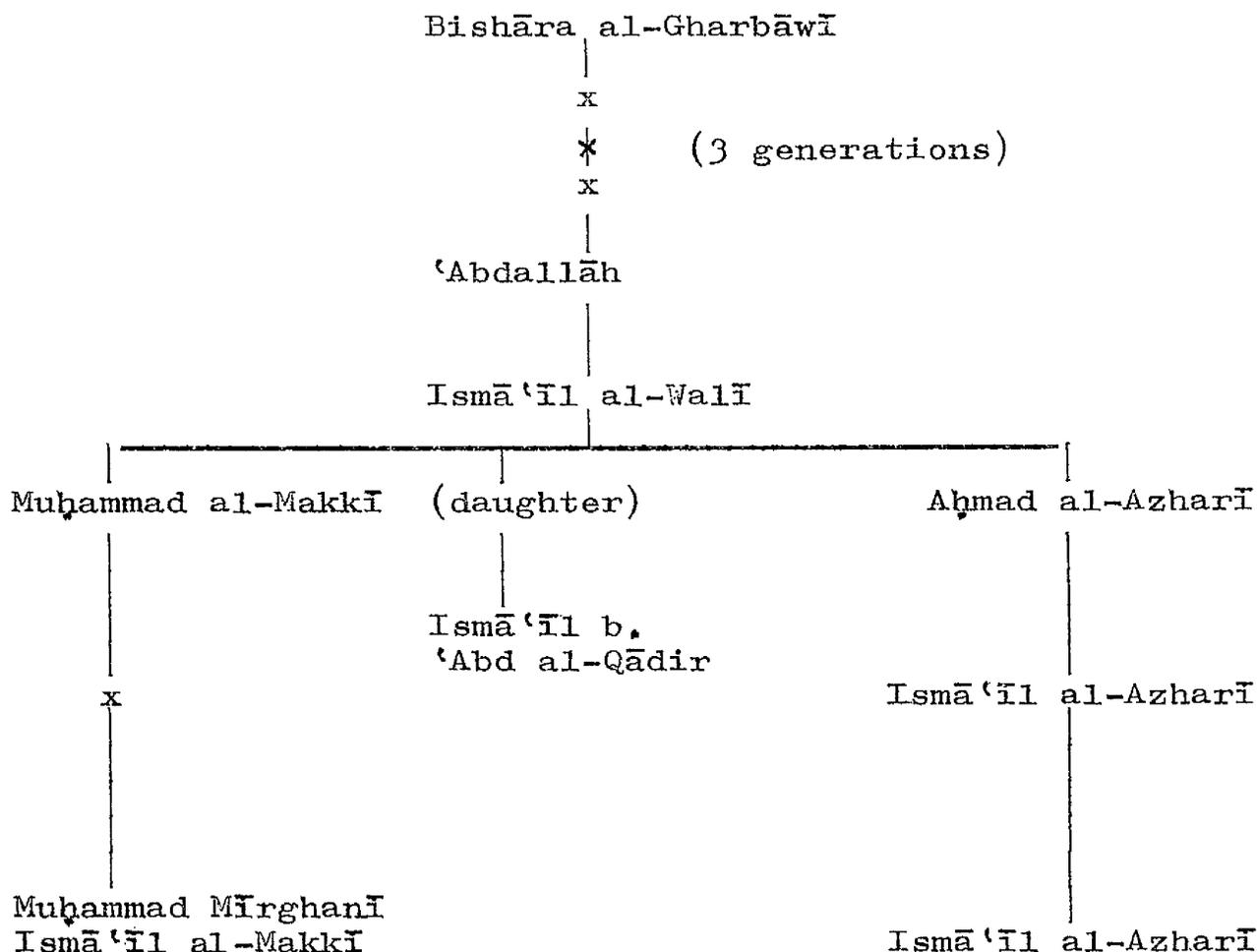
b. The life of Ismā'īl b. 'Abd al-Qādir

Ismā'īl b. 'Abd al-Qādir<sup>1</sup> was probably born in Kordofan. The accurate date of his birth is not known but it can be roughly estimated. Shuqayr says that Ismā'īl went with his (maternal) uncle to al-Azhar when he was 'young',<sup>2</sup> This maternal uncle, Aḥmad al-Azharī, went to al-Azhar about 1830-40. Provided that both statements are correct, it may perhaps be assumed that Ismā'īl was born in the late 1820's or the 1830's. Important for a proper understanding of Ismā'īl's career and works, is his relation to the family of Ismā'īl, known as al-Walī (the 'saint') al-Kurdūfānī.<sup>3</sup>

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1. This form has been chosen in conformity with the Sīra, 1/3; 2/9. Shuqayr, Ta'rīkh, iii, p. 529, adds the nisba al-Kurdūfānī to Ismā'īl's name. Other variants are: Ismail Abd El Kader (Memorandum, f.1); Ismail Wad Abdel Kader, and Abdel Kader (Slatin, Fire and sword, p. 515); 'Abd al-Qādir Ismā'īl (See below, p. 22, n. 3).
  2. Memorandum, f.2.
  3. See Hill, BD, p. 183, s.v. Ismā'īl 'Abd Allāhi al-Walī. For a discussion of the different types of holy families in the Nilotic Sudan see Holt, Holy families. Shuqayr (Memorandum and Ta'rīkh) is the only source of information concerning Ismā'īl b. 'Abd al-Qādir's descent. In his known works, Ismā'īl refers neither to his descent nor to his kin.

Table 1

The ancestry and family of Ismā'īl b. 'Abd al-Qādir<sup>1</sup>



1. Based on information in Holt, Holy families; Hill, BD; Shuqayr, Ta'rīkh, iii; Trimmingham, Islam, pp. 235-6; MacMichael, Arabs, iv, AB: A genealogical work, Khulāsāt al-iqtibās fi-ittisāl nasabīnā bi'l-Sayyid al-'Abbās, compiled by Aḥmad al-Azharī. The original draft of this genealogy was completed in 1263/1847, and in 1270/1854 it was produced in its revised and final form. Ismā'īl b. 'Abd al-Qādir is not mentioned in this work, but neither are the names of other relatives of its author, who were alive when the genealogy was composed. For this work see Y.F. Ḥasan, The Arabs and the Sudan, Edinburgh, 1967, pp. 206-7; Holt, Historical writing, pp. 13-18. I have checked only one of the extant MSS., copied 26 Rabī' I 1331/4 March 1913.

Ismā'īl al-Walī (1793-1863) was born in El Obeid to a merchant called 'Abdallāh, a descendant of a fakī from Dongola, Bishāra al-Gharbāwī,<sup>1</sup> who flourished in the seventeenth century, under the Fūnj. The family claimed an 'Abbāsī (that is, Ja'alī) descent. At first Ismā'īl had close connexions with Shaykh Aḥmad al-Tayyib b. al-Bashīr, who introduced the Sammāniyya tarīqa into the Nilotic Sudan. Later, he became one of the early adherents of Muḥammad 'Uthmān al-Mīrghanī and, in 1842, he formed an autonomous sub-tarīqa of the Khatmiyya, the Ismā'īliyya of Kordofan, with a highly localized following.<sup>2</sup> His elder son, Muḥammad al-Makkī (d. 1906),<sup>3</sup> succeeded him as head of the tarīqa, a succession which continued within this branch of the family.<sup>4</sup> The other branch, that of Ismā'īl al-Walī's younger son, Aḥmad al-Azharī (c. 1810-82),<sup>5</sup> has played a leading role in Sudanese (orthodox) religious life and politics.<sup>6</sup>

Ismā'īl b. 'Abd al-Qādir, a maternal grandson of Ismā'īl al-Walī,<sup>7</sup> was therefore a member of a well-established family of repute in Kordofan. The attitudes of his two maternal uncles to the Mahdia merit a close investigation. Muḥammad al-Makkī was one

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1. This nisba may account for Shuqayr's statement, Memorandum, f.1, that Ismā'īl b. 'Abd al-Qādir was 'a muwelled in Kordofan from a Moghraby origin'. Cf. MacMichael, Arabs, iv, lxxxviii-xciii.
  2. Holt, Holy families, p. 9.
  3. See Hill, BD, p. 228, s.v. al-Makkī Ismā'īl al-Walī.
  4. Trimmingham, Islam, p. 235.
  5. See Hill, BD, p. 34, s.v. Aḥmad Ismā'īl al-Azharī.
  6. Aḥmad's son, Ismā'īl al-Azharī (1868-1947), was a prominent Islamic jurist in the period of the condominium and he finally became muftī of the Sudan, 1924-32 (see Hill; BD, p. 184). His son, also named Ismā'īl al-Azharī, became the Sudan's first prime minister.
  7. I have not found any information concerning Ismā'īl b. 'Abd al-Qādir's father. Trimmingham, Islam, p. 157, says, without mention of his source, that Ismā'īl b. 'Abd al-Qādir was the son of Ismā'īl al-Walī,

of the Mahdi's veteran and ardent supporters, and the Mahdi stayed with him on his visit to Kordofan, before his public manifestation. On the eve of the Mahdi's first attack on El Obeid, Muḥammad al-Makkī deserted to his camp in Kābā (late 1892). In the course of the Mahdi's he became one of the most influential members of the so-called abkār al-Mahdī, and supported the Khalifa 'Abdallāhi,<sup>1</sup> Ismā'īl's other maternal uncle, Aḥmad al-Azharī, had an altogether different career. About 1830-40 he went to Cairo where he first studied, then taught, at al-Azhar. He then returned to El Obeid. When Muḥammad Aḥmad made his public manifestation, Aḥmad al-Azharī supported the government and wrote a treatise (risāla) in refutation of the Mahdi.<sup>2</sup> In 1882, going to take up an appointment as qādī and muftī of the Western Egyptian Sudan, he was killed in a battle near Bāra.<sup>3</sup>

Ismā'īl's early life appears to have been conducted under the aegis of Aḥmad al-Azharī. Together they went to Cairo, where Ismā'īl was educated, in his uncle's care, at al-Azhar. Accounts of the length of their stay in Cairo range between 16, 12 and 8 years.<sup>4</sup> Years later Shuqayr remarked that Ismā'īl was noted for his genius [sic] and acquired a high education in the Arabic literature. He is well known here in Cairo and the Olama

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1. Holt, Mahdist state, pp. 54, 117, 120-1.
  2. For the text of this treatise (completed on 6 July 1882) see Shuqayr, Ta'rīkh, iii, pp. 383-91.
  3. Holt, Holy families, p. 9; Shuqayr, Ta'rīkh, iii, p. 162. Hill, BD, p. 34, and Egypt, p. 165, states, erroneously, that Aḥmad died in the battle of Abā (August 1881).
  4. Shuqayr, Memorandum, f.2; MacMichael, Arabs, iv, p. 61 and others; Shuqayr Ta'rīkh, iii, p. 559, respectively.

of El Azhar Mosque hold a high opinion of him',<sup>1</sup>  
 Having completed his course of studies Ismā'īl returned,  
 according to Shuqayr, to El Obeid and served there as  
muftī until the rise of the Mahdi and his arrival in  
 Kordofan.<sup>2</sup>

In the next phase of Ismā'īl's career he is found  
 in the Mahdi's camp. Together with almost all the  
 inhabitants of El Obeid he deserted, according to  
 Shuqayr, to the Mahdi in Kābā, a few days before the  
 first (and abortive) Mahdist attack on the town.<sup>3</sup>  
 I have not found any information on the causes which  
 led Ismā'īl to his decision to join the Mahdi.<sup>4</sup> His

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1. Shuqayr, Memorandum, f.2. Shuqayr's high opinion of Ismā'īl should be taken with a grain of salt. He may have been keen on praising both the author and his work (which he places 'in the same rank as Ibn Athir, Ibn Khaldun, Abu El Fida and El Makrizi'), since he had acquired the MSS. with much effort and paid for them 'a good reward' (Memorandum, ff. 1, 5). It is noteworthy that Shuqayr's praise for Ismā'īl, unreservedly expressed in the Memorandum, was condensed in Ta'rīkh, iii, p. 559; into three words. Slatin, Fire and sword, p. 515, describes Ismā'īl rather laconically as one who 'had been well educated in Cairo'. The style of the Sīra attests to Ismā'īl's good education.
  2. In the Memorandum, f.2, Shuqayr states that, in El Obeid, Ismā'īl 'acquired a high fame for his knowledge and genius |sic|'. This statement was omitted in Ta'rīkh.
  3. Memorandum, f.2; Ta'rīkh, iii, p. 559. This is corroborated indirectly by Ismā'īl's statements in the Sīra, 2/20; 65/11-12; 177/1-2. The so-called 'Friday Battle' took place on 8 September 1882.
  4. The desertion of the inhabitants of El Obeid is described in the Sīra (167/19-170/17) in a completely detached manner. As has already been noted, Ismā'īl's uncle, Muḥammad al-Makkī, was one of the deserters from El Obeid, but there is no evidence that this had any bearing on Ismā'īl's own decision. Like all his other relatives, Muḥammad al-Makkī is not mentioned in Ismā'īl's known works.

subsequent career during the Mahdi's lifetime is even less clear. In the Memorandum Shuqayr says that Ismā'īl was present at the battle of Shaykān, where the Hicks expedition was annihilated on 5 November 1883.<sup>1</sup> He then accompanied the Mahdi to Khartoum and, after its siege and fall, settled in Omdurman. 'In the Mahdi's time Sheikh Ismail is not known to have done anything to distinguish him |sic|. <sup>2</sup> Slatin's account of Ismā'īl's career in the Mahdi's days conveys a different picture. According to him, Ismā'īl 'had gained great favour with the Mahdi by having written a laudatory account of his early victories. This had so fully gratified the great religious reformer that he instructed Abdel Kader to continue to chronicle the various important events as they happened...'.<sup>3</sup> I have not uncovered any additional independent information which would definitely establish which of these two versions is the more accurate. A statement by Ismā'īl himself that the Khalifa 'Abdallāhi had 'ordered me to compile' (ashāra ilayya an ajma'a) the Mahdi's sīra<sup>4</sup> does not exclude the possibility that he had been engaged in writing the Sīra while the Mahdi was still alive.

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1. This is corroborated indirectly by the Sīra, 22/12-13.
2. Memorandum, f.2. In Ta'rīkh, iii, p. 559, Shuqayr says only that Ismā'īl 'accompanied (ṣahiba) the Mahdi until he died'. This account is followed by 'Abdīn, Ta'rīkh al-thaqāfa, p. 137.
3. Fire and sword, p. 515. This is followed by Dietrich, 'Muḥammad Aḥmad' (without an explanation of this discrepancy with Shuqayr's version, which Dietrich had given in his article Der Mahdi), and by Trimmingham, Islam, p. 157.
4. Sīra, 2/21-3/8.

Thus it is difficult to reconstruct with accuracy the career of Ismā'īl in the later days of the Mahdi and in the first years of the Khalifa. In keeping with their different points of departure, Shuqayr and Slatin describe Ismā'īl's career, subsequent to the accession of the Khalifa, in mutually incompatible terms. Slatin says that 'after the Mahdi's death, the Khalifa, who had installed Abdel Kader as state chronicler, ordered the continuance of the work'.<sup>1</sup> According to Shuqayr's Memorandum, Ismā'īl, after the death of the Mahdi, 'in order to distinguish himself and rise up from the needy and obscure state which he was reduced to by the past events, began writing a book on the life of the Mahdi... when this book was completed to a certain extent, Sheikh Ismail read it to the Khalifa who was very pleased with it...'<sup>2</sup> and then Ismā'īl completed his work.

One point clearly emerges both from Shuqayr's and Slatin's accounts: the writings of Ismā'īl must have played a decisive role in determining his position in the Mahdist state. On 2 Rabī' I 1306/6 November 1888,<sup>3</sup> the Kitāb sa'ādat al-mustahdī bi-sīrat al-Imām al-Mahdī (The book of the bliss of him who seeks guidance by the life of the Imam the Mahdi), was completed, to be followed

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1. Fire and sword, p. 515.
  2. Memorandum, ff. 2-3. Shuqayr's view, which may have been based on his interpretation of a rather vague statement by Ismā'īl, Sīra, 3/11-18, is repeated in Ta'rīkh, iii, p. 559.
  3. See below, p. 25 and n.6. An approbation by Ismā'īl is appended (pp. 263-4) to al-Ḥasan b. Sa'd al-'Abbādī, Kitāb al-risāla al-musammāh al-anwār al-saniyya al-māhiya li-zalām al-munkirīn 'alā'l-hādra al-Mahdiyya, [Omdurman], 5 Dhū al-Qa'da 1305 | 14 July 1888 |. See Hand-list, item 116; Hill, BD, p. 159.

soon by its sequel: al-Tirāz al-manqūsh bi-bushrā qatl Yuhannā malik al-Hubūsh (The embroidery variegated with the good news of the slaying of John, the king of the Abyssinians),<sup>1</sup> This work, completed on 6 Shawwāl 1306/5 June 1889, deals mainly with the wars between the Khalifa and the Abyssinians, which culminated in the battle of al-Qallābāt (9 March 1889). The results of these efforts by Ismā'īl are narrated by Shuqayr (in some length in the Memorandum and in a somewhat shorter version in Ta'rīkh) as follows: 'The Khalifa was so pleased with the ...two books...that he...gave Sheikh Ismail a good office among the Kadis of his Court.'<sup>2</sup> Thus Sheikh

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1. Hand-list item 175. The colophon of the unique exemplar of Tirāz, which is at present at SAD, reads (p. 183): 'Completed by its copier and owner Muḥammad Aḥmad Hāshim in the forenoon of the day of 'Ashūrā' |10 Muḥarram| 1308'/26 August 1890. See also Holt, 'Mahdist archives', p. 196. For the English translation of Tirāz, by Shuqayr; see Hand-list, item 176. GAL, supplement 2, p. 519, mentions a work, by Abū al-Ma'ālī...al-Bukhārī al-Makkī (d.991/1583), entitled: al-Tirāz al-manqūsh fī mahāsin al-Hubūsh.
  2. Cf. IRE, 14 (May 1893), p. 2, where Ismā'īl is said to have been 'late acting Kadi of Omdurman... (formerly Mufti of Kordofan)'. In Ta'rīkh, iii, p. 560, Shuqayr does not repeat the information about the appointment of Ismā'īl as qādī. Slatin, Fire and sword, p. 515, describes Ismā'īl as 'a certian Kadi'. An edict of a council of notables dated 23 Sha'bān 1309/23 February 1892 (see Cambridge University Library, MS. Or. 234, reproduced in Holt, 'Mahdist archives', facing page 195), bears the seal of an Ismā'īl 'Abd al-Qādir. The same name is also listed on the sentence of imprisonment passed on the khalīfa Muḥammad Sharīf by a special court, on 2 March 1892 (see Shuqayr, Ta'rīkh, iii, pp. 552-3; Holt; Mahdist state, p. 183). The name of Aḥmad 'Alī, the Qādī al-Islām, is listed first on both documents.

Ismail got into high favour with the Khalifa and for some time he had an influence over him...'.<sup>1</sup>

The next known event in the life of Ismā'īl is his loss of the Khalifa's favour. There are three versions of the causes for this change of fortune. In the Memorandum, Shuqayr says that, in 1893, Ismā'īl could not bear any longer the vanity and ignorance of the Khalifa and consequently he once said, 'in a fit of anger...,"it is a great shame to the Sudan to be governed by such an ignorant and base Baggari"...' as the Khalifa. When Ismā'īl's words reached the Khalifa's ears he 'was so enraged... that he at once banished him' (in 1893).<sup>2</sup> Slatin produces another version. Without dating the decisive event, he puts it in the setting of 'a pleasure party' where Ismā'īl was 'overheard to say' that his position in the Sudan vis-à-vis the Khalifa was similar to that of Ismā'īl al-Mufattish in Egypt in relation to the Khedive Ismā'īl.<sup>3</sup> Unlike Shuqayr, and not in accordance

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1. Memorandum, ff. 3-4. Ismā'īl was also noted then by Shuqayr as one of the Khalifa's 'greatest Olamas' and 'the most learned man in the Sudan' (f.1),
  2. Memorandum, f.4. IRE, 14 (May 1893), p.2, reports that Ismā'īl 'has...been imprisoned'.
  3. Fire and sword, pp. 515-6. The same account (but, significantly, without the other details about Ismā'īl which are given in Fire and sword) appears also in Slatin, 'Meine Erlebnisse im Soudan', Mittheilungen der k.k. Geographischen Gesellschaft in Wien, xxxix, 1896, p. 52 (paper delivered on 22 October 1895, before Slatin's book was published). \* Ismā'īl Pasha Ṣadīq, known as al-mufattish (the inspector) served as the Khedive Ismā'īl's Minister of Finance. The comparison which, allegedly, was made by Ismā'īl, is also narrated in the Memorandum, f.4, but in a different context. There, Shuqayr mentions it as proof of Ismā'īl's high position with the Khalifa and he does not attribute Ismā'īl's downfall to this statement.

\* See appendix A1.

with the general tone of Slatin's (=Wingate's) book, which endeavours to defame the Khalifa, Slatin here credits him with having 'at once ordered the judges to assemble and make a full inquiry into the matter'. This enquiry proved that Ismā'īl was guilty and he was banished. A third version, produced by Shuqayr in Ta'rīkh,<sup>1</sup> attributes Ismā'īl's downfall to the envy of Aḥmad 'Alī, the Qādī al-Islām. He sent three confidants to the Khalifa, to malign Ismā'īl, and each of them gave witness to a different slander. The first slander is identical with Shuqayr's version in the Memorandum, that is, Ismā'īl's disgust of the Khalifa as a ruler. The second slander is identical with Slatin's explanation of Ismā'īl's downfall, that is, the equation of al-Mufattish and the Khedive with Ismā'īl and the Khalifa. The third slander is an allegation that the Sīra was full of hidden blemishes which proved Ismā'īl's disrespect towards, and denial of the Mahdia. Even if all these versions contain some truth they seem to have been based on rumours which reflect Ismā'īl's fate rather than explain the real causes of his downfall. In particular, it is unlikely that Ismā'īl attained a position high and influential enough to arouse the jealousy and fear of Aḥmad 'Alī.<sup>2</sup> A clue to the change of Ismā'īl's fortune

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1. Vol. iii, p. 560.

2. Aḥmad 'Alī is the only informant whose name Ismā'īl took care to mention in the Sīra (207/11; 391/16) and in Tirāz. He is also mentioned, not unfavourably, on two other occasions (Sīra, 134/8; 392/2. See Also Tirāz, pp. 104, 120). This suggests a relationship between Ismā'īl and Aḥmad 'Alī. See also above, p. 19, n. 2.

may perhaps be found in the Khalifa's order, made simultaneously with the banishment of Ismā'īl, to gather and destroy all the copies of his works, despite their high praise for the Khalifa. Changes from the zenith to the nadir did occur in the course of the Khalifa's rule, and one of the victims of such a change was Aḥmad 'Alī himself (May 1894).<sup>1</sup> Several other prominent persons fell foul of the Khalifa and it may be assumed, though with reservations, that the Khalifa wanted to eradicate the only contemporary chronicle which stressed the role of other eminent men in the development of the Mahdia.<sup>2</sup> If this assumption is correct, both the deportation of Ismā'īl to the outer fringes of the Mahdist state and the destruction of his writings become understandable.

An account of the final fate of Ismā'īl is furnished by Shuqayr, Ismā'īl was banished to al-Rajjāf, on the upper reaches of the Baḥr al-Jabal, on board a steamer with Muḥammad Khālid Zuqal.<sup>3</sup> When Shuqayr wrote his

1. See Holt, Mahdist state, pp. 190-1.
2. According to Holt, Mahdist state, passim; the following persons fell out of the Khalifa's favour, close to the banishment of Ismā'īl and the destruction of his works (those whose names are preceded by an asterisk are mentioned, almost always favourably, in the Sīra): \*Maḥmūd 'Abd al-Qādir, \*Muḥammad al-Khayr, \*Muḥammad Khālid Zuqal, Ilyās Umm Birayr, Aḥmad Sulaymān, Yūsuf Ibrāhīm, \*'Abd al-Raḥmān w. al-Nujūmī, Ibrāhīm Aḥmad 'Adlān, Muḥammad Sharīf, \*al-Zākī Ṭamal (in Tirāz), \*Aḥmad 'Alī, \*al-Ḥusayn Ibrāhīm w. al-Zāhrā'.
3. Ta'rīkh, iii, p. 560. Muḥammad Khālid Zuqal (see Hill, BD, pp. 261-2; Reid, 'Mahdi's emirs', pp. 311-12; Slatin, Fire and sword, by index: Zogal Bey; Sīra, 281/1-288/19) was exiled with the expedition of 'Arabī Dafa'allāh, who left Omdurman on 12 August 1883 with two steamers and 300 men, the majority of whom were political prisoners. See Holt, Mahdist state, p. 200; Collins, Southern Sudan, p. 111. In a report from 'Arabī Dafa'allāh to the Khalifa (Central Records Office, Khartoum, MAHDIA 1/32: 17/1 53/11), dated 12 Jumādā II 1311/21 December 1893, an 'Abd al-Qādir Ismā'īl is said to be 'held prisoner pending receipt of instructions'.

Memorandum, Ismā'īl was still believed to be alive.<sup>1</sup>  
 In Ta'rīkh, Shuqayr describes his end, in the beginning of 1897, as follows: 'It is said that a hyena snatched him while he was lying on his bed, unable to move owing to his being famished'.<sup>2</sup>

2. The Sīra, its composition and acquisition

The unique exemplar of the Sīra is now at the School of Oriental Studies, Durham: Sudan Archive.<sup>3</sup> The title-page contains the full name of the work and its

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1. Memorandum, f.6.  
 2. Vol. iii, p. 560. In November 1967, I heard privately that relatives of Ismā'īl in the Sudan deny this story. SIR, 60 (25 May-31 December 1898), p. 12, reports: 'On 29th November 1898, seven letters addressed to the Khalifa from Arabi Dafa'llāh...dated 31st July 1898, were brought into Sobat...The following are extracted from the above letters'. Extract No. 8 reads: 'Ismail Abd El Kader died before the desertion of the above [prisoners] to the Belgians'. (See translation of letter dated 12 Rabī' I 1316/31 July 1898, SIR, 60, p. 106). Extract No. 9 reads: 'After coming to Bor, Katib Yusef and Ras Miya Bekhit having attempted to murder Ismail Abd El Kader, he sentenced them to death'. From the translation of the relevant letter, SIR, 60, p. 168, it is obvious that Ismā'īl's name in the last extract is a mistake for 'Arabī Dafa'allāh. Al-Rajjāf was taken by a Belgian expedition on 17 February 1897. The Belgians released a number of political prisoners who were there, among them Muḥammad Khālid Zuqal. See Collins, Southern Sudan, pp. 156-72; Holt, Mahdist state, p. 220.  
 3. Box 99/6. See Hand-list, item 173. For the English translation and the detailed list of contents and dates, made by Shuqayr (SAD, Box 247/4), see Hand-list, item 174. The English translation has all the deficiencies mentioned in Holt's introduction to Wingate, Mahdism, p. ix.

author.<sup>1</sup> There is no colophon.<sup>2</sup> The MS. comprises 405 loose pages<sup>3</sup> (size of paper: 25.1x16.5 cms.), in a red leather case. The text seems to have been copied by two hands; A: pages 1-280, 305-8, 369-405, and B: pages 281-304, 309-368.<sup>4</sup> Both are in naskhī script, but the handwriting of B is smaller, finer and more compact than that of A. The number of lines ranges between 15 (pp.277-9) and 24 (p.384), the average number of lines in A being 17-18 and, in B, 19-20. Even pages bear (mostly one, sometimes two or three) catch-words at the outside of the tail-margin.<sup>5</sup> The text is marked by pencil in many places (by Shuqayr ?). There are rubrications (in two colours), some deletions and, mainly in B, some marginal additions. Several words, mostly personal and place names, are vocalized. The forms and spelling of names and words are not always consistent and there are some orthographic peculiarities and inconsistencies.

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 1. هذا كتاب سعادة المهدي  
 سيرة الامام المهدي  
 لجامعة اسماعيل بن عبد القادر  
 عفي الله عنه  
 عامين

2. The colophon of Tirāz (see above, p. 19, n.1 ) may also belong to the Sīra.
3. All pages, including the title-page, are consecutively numbered, at the outside of the head-margin, apparantly in a handwriting different from that of the text of the MS.(and from p. 40 onwards - in blue pencil). Each of most pages from 3 to 32 and from 65 to 71 bears two or three identical numbers. At their centre of the head-margin; pages 33-62 bear the numerals 35-64 and pp. 63, 64, the numerals 33, 34. These numerals are crossed out (mostly by blue pencil).
4. See appendixes B1 and B2.
5. The catch-words at the end of pp. 148, 208 are not repeated at the beginning of the pages following them, and from an integral part of the sentences.

As has already been noted, the precise date or period of the commencement of the composition of the Sīra is not clear. It is obvious, however, that an enterprise of this kind and size must have required rather a long time. In the Memorandum, Shuqayr refers to the author's 'three years work' while in Ta'rīkh he mentions 'about ten months'.<sup>1</sup> The term now (al-ān) occurs several times in the text,<sup>2</sup> but only in one case is it significant with regard to the date of composition, and it designates the period between 7 October 1887 and 29 January 1889.<sup>3</sup> The date of completion is mentioned in the Sīra twice: (1) at the very end of a gasīda on the dome of the Mahdi's tomb, where the numerical value of the letters in the last hemistich is |the year| 1306/1888.<sup>4</sup> (2) A more accurate date is given by Ismā'īl in the text,<sup>5</sup> where he refers to the date of completion as Wednesday, 2 Rabī' I 1306, the day on which the building of the dome of the Mahdi's tomb commenced.<sup>6</sup> According to Shuqayr's information, which is partly corroborated by some indications in the Sīra, the present recension of the Sīra was preceded by a draft which, Shuqayr says,

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1. Memorandum, f.5; Ta'rīkh, iii, p. 560.
  2. MS., 134/9; 207/6; 244/7-8; 347/20. 340/13: ilā yawminā hādihā.
  3. MS., 327/7; 362/4. The context is Ḥamdān Abū 'Anja's expedition against the Abyssinians. Abū 'Anja was dispatched by the Khalifa on 7 October 1887 and died on 29 January 1889.
  4. MS., 405/16.
  5. MS., 398/13-399/14; 403/5-11.
  6. 2 Rabī' I 1306 corresponds to 6 November 1888; but this date fell on Tuesday, Shuqayr, Ta'rīkh, iii, p. 559 and Memorandum, f.3, dates the completion of the Sīra as 3 Rabī' I 1306 and 7 November 1886, respectively. For the discrepancy of one day between the hijriyya dates in the Sudan and in Egypt, see Holt, Mahdist state, p. vi; Shuqayr, Ta'rīkh, iii, p. 358.

had been read to, and approved by the Khalifa,<sup>1</sup> Shuqayr adds that the Khalifa ordered 'many copies to be made... on the topography |sic for lithography| and to be distributed',<sup>2</sup> When, in 1893, Ismā'īl was banished and the Khalifa ordered all the copies of his works to be destroyed, one copy of the Sīra and Tirāz was secretly retained, for reference, by the Khalifa's scribe, Muḥammad Aḥmad Hāshim.<sup>3</sup> Shuqayr had heard of the existence of these manuscripts and, after many endeavours, they were brought to him, in April 1895, from the Sudan by an agent called Shaykh 'Ahmed Kawai'.<sup>4</sup> From Shuqayr's references in the Memorandum<sup>5</sup> it is not clear whether the manuscript which is now at Durham is the original or a copy made at Shuqayr's order.

### 3. The sources, literary features and subject-matter of the Sīra

#### a. Sources

Ismā'īl mentions different sources for the information contained in the Sīra. Technically, these can be classified under several headings: (1) Explicit references to the

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1. Memorandum, f.3. Two passages in the Sīra (79/1; 188/10-11) begin with the phrase: *ثم بعد كتبها*.
  2. Memorandum, f.3; Ta'rīkh, iii, p. 560. Slatin, Fire and sword, p. 516, mentions 'several copies'. Ismā'īl's works are not listed in 'List of books printed in the lithographic taken press |sic| from Khartoum', SIR, 60, p. 63.
  3. Shuqayr, Memorandum, f.4; Ta'rīkh, iii, p. 560. See also Slatin, Fire and sword, p. 560, and colophon of Tirāz. See Hill, BD, p. 23, s.v. Abū'l-Qāsim Aḥmad Hāshim (cf. Holt, 'source-materials', p. 115, and n. 15).
  4. See above, p. 9.
  5. Memorandum, ff. 4-5.

author as a witness, once to the fall of shells on al-Janžāra, during the Mahdi's siege of El Obeid;<sup>1</sup> once to a miracle by the Mahdi in the battle against Hicks;<sup>2</sup> and once (only!) to a saying of the Mahdi.<sup>3</sup> (2) Informants. Both Slatin and Shuqayr mention orders by the Mahdi and the Khalifa, respectively, to furnish Ismā'īl with information.<sup>4</sup> Ismā'īl himself certainly made efforts to obtain information about several points.<sup>5</sup> Except for the Qādī al-Islām, Aḥmad 'Alī, who is explicitly named in the Sīra as an informant,<sup>6</sup> all other informants remain anonymous, and are referred to as reliable (al-thiqa, al-thiqāt etc.) persons.<sup>7</sup> 16 such references are made at

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1. MS., 177/1-3.
  2. MS., 22/12-18.
  3. MS., 93/4-5.
  4. Slatin, Fire and sword, p. 515; Shuqayr, Memorandum, ff. 2-3, cf. Ta'rīkh, iii, p. 559.
  5. E.g., MS., 164/19-165/1; 191/7-11; 374/3-4.
  6. See above, p. 21.
  7. Of 67 references, 51 are made to informants who are said to have furnished Ismā'īl with various details about the Mahdi. It is noteworthy that Ismā'īl's references to informants about the Mahdi are more frequent before p. 171 of the Sīra, (where the account of the Friday Battle begins) than in the subsequent parts of the narrative. Taken with Ismā'īl's own testimony as a witness (see above, notes 1-3) these may indirectly corroborate Shuqayr's dating of Ismā'īl's desertion to the Mahdi's camp at Kābā. In the following instances, however, the author's need to rely on informants, although explicable, would seem to be incompatible with his known biographical details: (a) The execution of the Mahdi's messengers to Muḥammad Sa'īd Wahbī in El Obeid (MS., 166/1-2); (b) Some details of the Friday Battle (MS., 173/7; 174/13-14); (c) Prices in El Obeid during the close siege after the Friday Battle (MS., 181/2-3); (d) The Mahdi's actions on entering El Obeid (MS., 187/12, 16); (e) The Khalifa's participation in the building of the Mahdi's tomb (MS., 400/9).

the beginning, in the course, or at the end of accounts of battles or expeditions, the usual formula being either:

حدثني ... جماعة من اصحاب المهدي ... الثقة وكل منهم حدثني بعنه  
الحديث فاجتمع حديثهم في سياق ما اذكره<sup>1</sup>

or

حدثني ... الثقة من اصحاب المهدي ... فاثبتتها علي هذا المنوال<sup>2</sup>

(3) Written source materials, The following source materials are merely mentioned in the course of the Sīra: The Mahdi's Rātib<sup>3</sup> and collections of poems 'like the Commendations (amdāh) of the Mahdi',<sup>4</sup> Other sources, mentioned and utilized by Ismā'īl, are Nasihat al-'Awwām li'l-khāss wa'l-'āmm (The advice of al-'Awwām to the special and the general),<sup>5</sup> and the Jāmi' al-manshūrāt (The collection of the proclamations),<sup>6</sup> A case in point is Ismā'īl's account of 'Uthmān Diqna's campaign in the eastern Sudan.<sup>7</sup> As in his other accounts of campaigns

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1. E.g., MS., 85/9-12.
  2. E.g., MS., 362/5.
  3. MS., 32/6-33/7. See Trimingham, Islam, pp. 156, 213. Several copies of the Mahdi's Rātib are extant. See Hand-list, note on p. 44 and items 274a-281; Dāghir, Usūl, items 103, 274-5; GAL, supplement 2, p. 896.
  4. MS., 398/13. Cf. Trimingham, Islam, p. 157, and note 3.
  5. MS., 79/1-12. See Hill, BD, p. 30; Shuqayr, Ta'rīkh, iii, p. 265; M.O. Beshir, 'Nasihat Al Awam', SNR, xii, 1960, pp. 59-65; Hand-list, items 53-4.
  6. MS., 43/8; 374/8-10. See Manshūrāt, and below, notes to proclamations in the summary. In the course of the Sīra, several proclamations and letters are mentioned and some are fully transcribed. See appendix C.
  7. MS., 222/19-280/13.

and expeditions, Ismā'īl refers here only to anonymous informants: as his source of information.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, it is clear that in fact he utilized a written source, namely, a report by 'Uthmān Diqna.<sup>2</sup> A comparison with the reproduction of the manuscript report of 'Uthmān Diqna unravels some of the methods employed by Ismā'īl in his use of written sources for the Sīra. In general, the account in the Sīra is a paraphrase, and sometimes a condensation, of the report which, although less fluent in style and less rigorous in grammar and syntax, contains more details of historical value than does the account in the Sīra. Apart from editing the text, Ismā'īl took the liberty of omitting important names,<sup>3</sup> explanations, dates etc. On the other hand, he adds some remarks of an "ideological", almost apologetic nature; explanations of battle tactics; and some other details.<sup>4</sup> Taken as

1. MS., 270/10-12: وقد اخبرني بسيرة عثمان... دقنه  
اي سواكن النقة من اصحاب المهدي

2. See Waqā'i': a reproduction of a manuscript report, by 'Uthmān Diqna, of various battles around Suakin. See also Wingate, Mahdism, pp. 509-21: a (faulty) translation of this manuscript report, which was captured by the British at 'Afāfīt, February 1891. Both in Wingate, Mahdism, pp. 509, 521, and in the reproduction of the Waqā'i', the reader's attention is drawn to missing pages at the end of the manuscript copy of the report. It seems that Ismā'īl had access to that copy of the report which had been sent to the Mahdi, and that an (inaccurate) recension of the pages missing in the Waqā'i' is retained in the Sīra, p. 252 ff.
3. For example, the Khatmiyya, which is mentioned several times in the Waqā'i', is altogether omitted in the Sīra, perhaps because of Ismā'īl's family ties with the Ismā'īliyya branch of this tarīqa.
4. See notes to summary, below, pp. 172 ff.

a case-study, it may be surmised that in his other accounts Ismā'īl owes much more than he admits to written reports which, indeed, are mentioned, though not acknowledged, in the Sīra.<sup>1</sup> In addition to the use of contemporary source materials, the Sīra abounds in quotations from the Qur'ān and the Hadīth literature,<sup>2</sup> Stylistic purposes apart, these citations are quoted in support of points or statements made by Ismā'īl. From what is known at present about the teachings and propaganda of the Mahdi,<sup>3</sup> it seems that Ismā'īl generally utilized Islamic sources at one remove, through the Mahdi's proclamations and correspondence.

b. Literary features and subject-matter

Although a systematic linguistic analysis of the Sīra is outside the scope of this thesis, some of its salient stylistic characteristics are noteworthy. In general, the style of the Sīra is typical of traditional Arabic literature of this kind. The dominant characteristics of the Sīra are a rather flowery, at times laudatory manner of expression in the passages dealing with the

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1. Ismā'īl mentions letters of the Mahdi to commanders and inhabitants (e.g., MS., 138/3-139/1; 147/10-13; 159/11; 164/18-19); of commanders to the Mahdi (e.g., MS., 309/17-19); of inhabitants to the Mahdi (e.g., MS., 272/6-10; 283/5-7); and of commanders to persons like Gordon (MS., 312/15-17) and the Negus Yohannes (MS., 326/10-14).
  2. Muhyi al-Dīn ibn al-'Arabī is quoted twice, MS., 8/19; 385/5.
  3. See Holt, Mahdist state, pp. 98-100; Soad El Fatih, The teachings of Muhammad Ahmad, the Sudanese Mahdi. Unpublished M.A. thesis, SOAS, London, 1961.

Mahdi's personality and mission,<sup>1</sup> and a fluent, factual style in the accounts of battles, expeditions, etc. Sayings<sup>2</sup> and dialogues, attributed mainly to the Mahdi, are narrated in direct speech.<sup>3</sup> The author breaks the narrative by a direct appeal to the reader or by digressions<sup>4</sup> of varying lengths. Rhymed-prose (saj') is used mainly at the beginnings or ends of chapters or when the author seems to have wished to express excitement. It is more frequent in the sections on the Mahdi's personality and mission than in the factual accounts. Verses are also quoted,<sup>5</sup> thrice with a mention of the poet's name.<sup>6</sup> Another of the Sīra's salient stylistic features is its abundant usage of Sūfī terminology and the author's fondness for homiletic interpretations of personal and tribal names,<sup>7</sup> places,<sup>8</sup> events<sup>9</sup> and terms,<sup>10</sup> as good omens

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1. When referring to the Mahdi, Ismā'īl uses in many cases the imperfect indicative form ( يَقُولُ ). It cannot be established whether this is due to Ismā'īl's wish to make a general statement, or that such references to the Mahdi were written when he was still alive.
  2. Sometimes in colloquial Arabic, e.g., MS., 71/1-6; 77/14-16
  3. Sayings of the Mahdi, e.g., MS., 144/4-10; 145/7-8, 205/12-16. Of the Khalifa, e.g., MS., 142/6-8. Dialogues of the Mahdi, e.g., MS., 57/7-58/8 (with Abū al-Su'ūd), 102/7-12 (with the inhabitants of Qadīr), 120/1-2 (with his scouts).
  4. E.g., MS., 101/14; 109/4.
  5. E.g., MS., 49/16; 108/7.
  6. (1) Verses from a gasīda on the Mahdi by Muḥammad b. al-Tāhir al-Majdhūb. See Hill, BD, p. 275 (MS., 252/14-16); (2) A eulogy on the Mahdi by Ibrāhīm b. Sharīf al-Kurdufānī (MS., 396/5-398/12. Text also in Shuqayr, Ta'rīkh, iii, pp. 359-60); (3) A gasīda on the dome of the Mahdi's tomb, by the author of the Sīra (MS., 404/3-405/16).
  7. E.g., MS., 55/12-56/18 (Abū al-Su'ūd); 98/18-99/6 (Makk Nāṣir); 124/13-17 (Manāsīr).
  8. E.g., MS., 86/18-87/2 (Qadīr).
  9. E.g., MS., 35/5-19 (the manifestation of the Mahdi in Abā).
  10. E.g., MS., 49/3-16 (the term umma in a Tradition).

for the Mahdia or as proof of his points.<sup>1</sup>

As regards its contents, the Sīra is a monograph which combines elements of both a biography and a chronicle.<sup>2</sup> Its contents should be appreciated and understood in the light of the following considerations. The declared purpose of Ismā'īl in composing the Sīra is didactic. His presentation of the Mahdi and the recording of what he considers to be important events in his life has a traditional Islamic function, namely, the teaching of pious qualities and the exemplification of a proper mode of behaviour through biography,<sup>3</sup> This can be discerned not only from the title of the Sīra, but also from explicit remarks made by Ismā'īl,<sup>4</sup> Other considerations are the established Islamic tradition in the writing of biographies and chronicles;<sup>5</sup> Ismā'īl's status as a believer

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1. In some cases the author refers to what he considers to be a 'secret' or 'wisdom', but does not expound, e.g., MS., 79/13-18 (the number of horses in the battles of Badr and Abā), 78/15-79/1 (the dates of the battles of Badr and Abā), 34/16-35/1 (a saying of the Mahdi).
  2. Holt's description, 'Mahdist archives', pp. 195-6, of the Sīra as a 'court-chronicle' or 'chronicle' is not comprehensive enough. A 'biographical chronicle' may be a more suitable term.
  3. See H. A. R. Gibb, 'Islamic biographical literature', in Lewis and Holt (eds.), Historians, pp. 54-8.
  4. MS., 2/9-19; 21/1-22/11.
  5. See G. Levi Della Vida, 'Sīra', EI<sup>1</sup>, iv, pp. 439<sup>b</sup>-443<sup>b</sup>; G. E. von Grunebaum, Medieval Islam, a study in cultural orientation, 2nd edn., Chicago, 1953, pp. 275-87; A. K. S. Lambton, 'Persian biographical literature', in Lewis and Holt (eds.), Historians, pp. 141-51; C. Cahen, Jean Sauvaget's introduction to the history of the Muslim East, a bibliographical guide, Berkeley, 1965, pp. 22-36; I. H. Qurashi, 'Historiography', in M. Sharif (ed.), A History of Muslim philosophy, Wiesbaden, 1966, vol. ii, pp. 1195-1219; F. Rosenthal, A history of Muslim historiography, 2nd edn., Leiden, 1968.

in, and adherent of the Mahdi;<sup>1</sup> and the period of completion, under the Khalifa's rule and before the decisive battle of Tūshkī (August 1889). The proximity of Ismā'īl to the events which he recorded is also of major importance. Although this may have limited his perspective, it enabled him, on the other hand, to rely less on fantasy, legends, hearsay, or idealized memories, and more on first-hand information, including written source materials. A less positive consequence is a certain distortion of past events, by the extension of conditions under the Khalifa's rule into the preceding period. The omission of the khalīfa Muḥammad Sharīf's name from the Sīra is an obvious example.<sup>2</sup>

The Sīra is by no means a biography in the modern literary sense of the term. It contains, however, the basic factual skeleton which is common in the traditional Arabic biographical literature: a nasab demonstrating the

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1. In his Ta'rīkh, iii, pp. 362, 560, Shuqayr was at pains to plead for Ismā'īl, saying that his presentation of the Mahdi resulted from compulsion under the circumstances and that he 'did not believe' in all that he wrote. More than an objective comment, Shuqayr's statement seems to reflect the war-propaganda atmosphere which Wingate was so keen on fostering (see Holt, 'Source-materials', pp. 110-13; Hill, Slatin, pp. 38-45; Daniel, pp. 426-33) and which, in this case, influenced the work of an official inside his Intelligence Department. There is no evidence that Ismā'īl did not believe in what he was writing or that he had any doubts concerning the mahdship of Muḥammad Aḥmad.
2. He is mentioned only once in the MS., 208/14, as a cousin of a Mahdist who was killed in battle.

descent of the Mahdi from the Prophet Muḥammad;<sup>1</sup> an (idealistic) physical description and elaborate lists of the Mahdi's attributes and qualities; his main activities; his writings; some of his relatives; the date of his death and anecdotes about him. The Sīra lacks many personal details appertaining to the Mahdi, and many events in his life prior to his public manifestation are merely hinted at. In general, the Sīra is far from an attempt to re-create the personality of the Mahdi, let alone a judgement of his ideas and activities.

As a chronicle, the focus of the narrative is, naturally, the Mahdi. This has an immediate bearing on the scope of the Sīra and limits not only its chronological, but also its geographical boundaries. Although formally divided by Ismā'īl into an introduction (muqaddima), eight chapters, and an epilogue (khātima),<sup>2</sup> the contents of the Sīra may be classified under two main headings: (1) the Mahdi's characteristics, behaviour and propaganda, written in the tradition of the manāqib literature (the introduction and mainly chapters I-IV, about 50 pages), (2) the Mahdi's campaigns, modelled upon the maghāzī literature (mainly chapters V-VIII, about 350 pages). The structural pattern of Ismā'īl's accounts of campaigns and expeditions comprises, basically, a short note about the author's (anonymous) informants; the preparations of both sides; the battle or siege etc.; the casualties; outstanding acts of bravery committed by Mahdists; and miracles, anecdotes, or special events.<sup>3</sup>

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1. MS., 11/12-12/4. See below, pp. 48, 92.

2. For a detailed contents of the Sīra, see below, pp. 81-5.

3. It should be noted that in some accounts of expeditions (e.g., MS., 301-2; 314-15; 325-6) the author mentions an event, diverges to deal with its causes and then returns to the same event and continues his narrative.

The evaluation of the Sīra as a chronicle cannot be complete without a few general observations regarding the main characteristics of the historical concept and method of its author. In many parts the subject-matter of the Sīra forms, in fact, a juxtaposition of what may be designated akhbār. Each shorter or longer khabar, in particular accounts of battles, is narrated in excessive detail (with occasional inaccuracies)<sup>1</sup> without much attempt to assess the significance of the events (for example, the battles of El Obeid and Khartoum). Another feature is the idealization of the Mahdists' activities,<sup>2</sup> coupled with a continuous effort to furnish proof of their righteousness. The following passage demonstrates Ismā'īl's logic. The defenders of Sinkāt asked for three days' delay (i.e., truce) from 'Uthmān Diqna, but he declined. Ismā'īl adds that:

'Perhaps 'Uthmān knew... that they were not sincere and truthful in asking for the said delay (imhāl). For if he knew that they were |sincere|, he would have granted them even more than three days' delay, perhaps God might yet guide them. His |'Uthmān's| relinquishment of the said delay proves that they were not truthful'.<sup>3</sup>

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1. For details see below, notes to summary. For Ismā'īl's efforts to record names of Mahdists, see MS., 89/15; 111/5.
  2. For example, MS., 86/2-7, describing how those who left Abā with the Mahdi were pleased to leave behind their belongings and properties.
  3. MS., 226/3-11. This remark is not in Waqā'i'.

Ismā'īl's need to reassure his readers should be understood both in the light of the basic conditions, which had created and moulded the Mahdi's self-image, teachings and propaganda, and as their product. Four main complex problems to which Ismā'īl attempts, implicitly, to offer a convincing answer, can be discerned in the Sīra. First, proof of the truth of Muḥammad Aḥmad's mahdiship and the correctness of his actions.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, a reconciliation of contradictions within the Mahdist "ideological" framework (for example, the Mahdi's death before the accomplishment of his promised conquests<sup>2</sup>). Thirdly, a legitimization of the Mahdīa as a movement of opposition to the established regime,<sup>3</sup> and of the Mahdists' warfare against Muslims.<sup>4</sup> Fourthly, the presentation of the Khalifa as the true successor of the Mahdi.<sup>5</sup>

Ismā'īl's treatment of cause and effect is another revealing part of his historical attitude. Questions of historical causality, though not phrased as such, seem to underly many passages of the narrative. The teachings and actions of the Mahdi are sanctioned or initiated by a metaphysical causation, namely, God, Divine voices (hawātif Ilāhiyya) or Prophetic colloquies (ḥadra nabawiyya).<sup>6</sup> Far from being merely a conventional phrase, the act or will of God is also the explanation furnished for Mahdist

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1. For details see below, pp. 43-67.

2. See MS., 142/2-8.

3. See MS., 62/14-19.

4. See below, pp. 57-8.

5. See below, pp. 67-73.

6. The term ḥadra (lit. 'presence') designates, in Sūfī (and Mahdist) usage, a form of vision in which the Prophet is present and converses with the receiver of the vision. See D.B. Macdonald, 'Ḥadra', EI<sup>2</sup>, p. 51<sup>a-b</sup>; Trimingham, Islam, p. 215, n.2.

victories and enemy defeats.<sup>1</sup> Significantly, almost all the author's attempts at rational explanations of cause and effect, whenever these occur, are confined to the Mahdi's adversaries and enemies.<sup>2</sup> Ismā'īl's attitude to Mahdist defeats or military difficulties in taking a place is another case in point. Obviously, his dilemma is one of reconciliation of a military setback with the righteousness of the Mahdi's cause and its divine sanction. In such cases, he sometimes resorts to explanations of a combined rational and metaphysical

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1. For example, God as causing: (a) Mahdi's appearance and manifestation (MS., 12/15; 23/17-19; 36/5-6; 325/20); (b) Mahdists' success and victories (MS., 18/8-9; 51/16-18; 68/15-17; 69/13-14; 70/7; 130/7-8; 294/9-12; 303/9-10); (c) people to join the Mahdi (MS., 46/14-16; 311/14-15); (d) fear to be cast in the enemies' hearts (MS., 106/16-17; 233/2; 246/4-6; 252/6-7; 257/14-15; 331/3); (e) misdemeanour of the enemy (MS., 110/10-11; 163/15-19; 331/13-14. Satan as a cause for misdemeanour: MS., 184/7-9; (f) smallpox in Suakin (MS., 270/9-10); (g) damage of the enemy's firearms to be negligible (MS., 167/7-17; 238/16). God as preventing the enemy's victory (MS., 99/17-18). God as supporting the Khalifa (MS., 175/1-2; 392/18-19). Al-Khidr as supporting the Khalifa: e.g., MS., 30/10.
2. See, for example, MS., 107/8-108/1 (the 'Urābī revolt preventing the Khedive from sending Egyptian troops to fight the Mahdi); MS., 120/8-121/7 (Yusūf b. Ḥasan al-Shallālī's deviation from the customary route from Shaqq al-Ḥajar to Qadīr and his encampment at Jabal al-Jarāda, are explained by tactical military considerations); MS., 255/11-14 (the collaboration of the 'Ummār'ar with the government is explained by their trading interests); MS., 99/14-100/5 (Rāshid Bey Aymān's being driven by his greed to fight the Mahdi).

nature.<sup>1</sup> Otherwise, they are glossed over or described as near-victories of the Mahdia.<sup>2</sup>

#### 4. The presentation of the Turk

An analysis of Ismā'īl's general historical approach would not be complete without an exposition of his basic attitude to the Turco-Egyptians (referred to in the Sīra as Turk<sup>3</sup>), and to the Mahdi. The distinction made here between these two themes is an arbitrary and artificial one; in the Sīra they are interrelated as they probably were in the author's mind. Written by a Mahdist, the Sīra clearly represents one of the main functions of the Mahdia as a movement of protest against an existing situation for which the Turk were held responsible. Thus, in the Sīra, the images of the Turk and of the Mahdi become two contrasting, though complementary patterns of the same picture. Ismā'īl's image of the Turk and his attitude to them should therefore be understood as an integral part of his view of the Mahdi.

A significant feature of Ismā'īl's presentation of the Turk is their dominant role in his set of terms pertaining to the 'external' world, that is, the world

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1. For example, the campaign against El Obeid and the abortive Friday Battle (MS., 144/3-145/15; 176/1-4); the defeat of the Mahdists in Sennar (MS., 365/15-367/9). The author's emphasis on the importance of the well-being of the commander should be noted in this context. See, e.g., MS., 81/8-82/1; 315/20-316/7; 370/9-371/11.
  2. MS., 245/6-248/3 (the third battle of the Coast, Cf. Holt, Mahdist state, p. 78); MS., 225/14-230/8 (the battle of Sinkāt, Cf. Holt, Mahdist state, p. 76); MS., 312/12-316/10 (the unsuccess of Abū Qarja at Khartoum, glossed over); MS., 348/13-350/7 (the battle of Abū Ṭulayḥ, described as a near-victory of the Mahdists, Cf. Holt, Mahdist state, pp. 94-5).
  3. See below, p. 39.

outside the 'body Mahdist'. A comparison of the number of references in the Sīra to the Turk and to any other 'external' group (like the Christians in general, the Europeans and British in particular) brings out this point in a most striking manner.

Ismā'īl's application of the term Turk follows the general Sudanese usage, namely, it designates the so called Turco-Egyptian administrators of the Sudan.<sup>1</sup> To many Sudanese their administration must have represented, at least from the religious point of view, a combination of a degenerate form of Islam and a deviation from the accepted traditional way of life. The term Turk became a collective noun for a group of people, primarily Muslims, who were, in fact, the (unconscious) agents of the (Egyptian) process of westernization. Thus, and owing to their political domination of the Sudan; the Turk became the major object of the Mahdi's jihād.<sup>2</sup>

Naturally, their characteristics, as presented in the Sīra, are absolutely negative. The adjectives applied to them as well as the description of their behaviour, appear to follow in the steps of the Mahdi's own terminology, which, in turn, derived from the traditional Islamic vocabulary used in denouncing heretics and secessionist groups. One of the synonyms used frequently

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1. See Hill, Egypt, pp. 1-4; Holt, Mahdist state, p. 14; Holt, Modern history, p. 37.
2. See Holt, Mahdist state, p. 23. Cf. J.R. Willis, 'Jihād fī sabīl Allāh - its doctrinal basis in Islam and some aspects of its evolution in nineteenth century West Africa'. JAH, viii, 1967, pp. 395-415.

by Ismā'īl for Turk is the enemies of God (a'dā' Allāh).<sup>1</sup> This is presented by Ismā'īl in different shades: the Turk are 'unbelievers (kuffār) and only the sword could expurgate them',<sup>2</sup> and they are 'the band which strays from the Muḥammadan way (al-tarīqa al-Muḥammadiyya)'.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the motives for their infidelity and refutation of the Mahdi are denounced by Ismā'īl as the worldly 'love of rank (jāh) and primacy (ri'āsa)'.<sup>4</sup> They are denounced for their opposition to the Mahdi<sup>5</sup> and their wrong and sinful behaviour. The following is a typical passage, which gives Ismā'īl's condensed view of <sup>the</sup> evil of the Turk:

The land 'was filled with oppression and tyranny by the Turks (al-Atrāk), who desecrated the shrines of the Religion and imposed the poll-tax (jizya) on the Muslims.<sup>6</sup> Falsity and defamity spread amongst them, and they obeyed Satan<sup>7</sup> and rebelled against the Merciful |God|. They

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1. MS., 230/5-6; 264/passim; 265/2, 10; 337/17. 292/17: a'dā' al-dīn. The term enemies of God. is not only applied to the Turk. See, e.g., MS., 255/12; 256/3 (applied to tribes); 251/5; 265/6 (to the British).
  2. MS., 108/10. Cf. The Mahdi's use of kāfirīn (MS., 209/18).
  3. MS., 55/14-15.
  4. MS., 54/6. See also the motivation attributed to Rāshid Bey Aymān in wishing to fight the Mahdi, MS., 99/13-18.
  5. See MS., 54/8-55/10.
  6. According to the Sharī'a, poll-tax (jizya) must not be levied from the Muslims. For a reference of the Mahdi to this matter see quotation in Holt, Mahdist state, p. 34. Cf. Report Stewart, p.13.
  7. See also MS., 68/4; 124/5. Cf. Mahdi's letter, MS., 118/9.

hastened to obliterate the traces (rusūm) of Islam and they did not observe Allāh in the Community (umma) of the Lord of Mankind (Sayyid al-anām)',<sup>1</sup>

Another example of the conduct of the Turk, which is produced as a contrast to the pious behaviour of the Mahdists, is the following description of preparations for battle in Yūsuf b. Ḥasan al-Shallālī's and the Mahdi's camps:

'And they |the Turk| started all manner of entertainment and amusements, and playing the musical instruments and the stringed instruments and songs |?|, and firing rockets (itlāq al-sawārīkh) during the night. And the wine cups revolved amongst them, challenging with disobedience the Lord of Creation, being heedless - in the recklessness of their behaviour - of the divine strength and punishment, relying on these instruments and military equipment... On the other hand, the Companions of the Mahdi... |were| either standing, bowing and prostrating |themselves in prayer|, weeping, performing the dhikr, asking God's forgiveness, uttering the tahlīl and the takbīr mornings and evening |sic|. These are in the obedience of the merciful |God| and those are in obedience of Satan'.<sup>2</sup>

The same attitude also characterizes Ismā'īl's account of events in El Obeid before the surrender of the town to the Mahdi. Ismā'īl describes the killing and robbing

1. MS., 12/11-15.

2. MS., 123/13-124/5. See also MS., 110/5-12.

of the townsfolk by the soldiers of the Turk and their violation of the sanctity of the mosques.<sup>1</sup> Another aspect of his attitude to the Turk is born out by other statements of contempt or subtle mockery. An interesting example is the dialogue ascribed by Ismā'īl to the Mahdi and the emissary of the government, in their first encounter in Abā:

Abū al-Su'ūd entered the Mahdi's khalwa<sup>2</sup> (after |having obtained| permission to enter. When he stood in front of the Mahdi,..he greeted him. The Mahdi answered his greetings and told him to be seated. Having sat down |Abū al-Su'ūd| asked for the Mahdi's permission to speak and he |the Mahdi|...said: "speak". He |Abū al-Su'ūd| said unto him:"Verily, the Pasha heard of the Mahdia and rejoiced in it. He now requests your coming with me to him, in the town of Khartoum, so as to support you, and to stay with you and to follow you. Moreover, the one who sent me unto you is the ruler (walī al-amr) whom you are in duty bound to obey". |The Mahdi| said to him: "As for your request that I come with you to your superiors, this is impossible for I am the ruler whom the whole Islamic community is in duty bound to obey...",and |the Mahdi| softened his speech to him and he treated him with kindness,in accordance with what his |Abū al-Su'ūd's| brain could comprehend...".<sup>3</sup>

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1. MS., 169/13-170/1; 178/12-179/6.
  2. For the place and significance of the khalwa in Sudanese religious life see Trimmingham, Islam, passim.
  3. MS., 57/3-16. See also the statement concerning Muṣṭafā Yawar, MS., 329/14-15.

All the above mentioned examples summarize, to some extent, the main lines of the Mahdi's own propaganda against the Turk. They also demonstrate some of the major grievances against them: their infringement of strict Islamic observances and their worldly, arrogant behaviour. The reference to the unlawful imposition of jizya on Muslims echoes the economic difficulties which were a major cause for the outbreak of the Mahdia.<sup>1</sup> Yet, the most important point is brought out by the reported dialogue between Abū al-Su'ūd, the representative of the established regime, and its challenger - the Mahdi. Ismā'īl's whole presentation of the Mahdi is, in a way, an elaboration on the problem of the legitimacy of the Mahdia.

## 5. The presentation of the Mahdi

### a. Ismā'īl's 'model' of a mahdī

The antithesis to the negative image of the Turk is produced by Ismā'īl as both an abstract notion - a 'model' of a mahdī, and a personification of this notion in Muḥammad Aḥmad. Although the distinction drawn in the Sīra between the two is sometimes very fine, its existence in the mind of Ismā'īl cannot be doubted. Such a differentiation was probably necessitated by a twofold problem which Ismā'īl faced. On the one hand, he wanted to establish the principle that the appearance of a mahdī was the positive contrast to the existence of the Turk and their evil. On the other hand, Ismā'īl had to prove that Muḥammad Aḥmad actually was that mahdī. In order to achieve his twofold purpose, Ismā'īl compiled

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1. See Holt, Mahdist state, pp. 24-7.

Traditions concerning the mahdī,<sup>1</sup> and attempted to prove that Muḥammad Aḥmad fulfilled the criteria laid down by those Traditions. The composite concept of a mahdī which emerges from the Traditions selected and incorporated in the Sīra<sup>2</sup> defines the background to the mahdī's appearance, outlines his signs of identification and draws the basic lines of his call and mission.

The situation in which a mahdī appears is clearly eschatological in nature. The period of his emergence is identified with the end of the age (ākhir al-zamān)<sup>3</sup> and the Hour (al-sā'a),<sup>4</sup> The prevailing conditions at that crucial time are expressed in negative terms, namely, a complete decline and decay. Matters 'reached their extreme end' through the 'spread of darkness, sin and blindness'.<sup>5</sup> The land is filled with oppression (jawr), tyranny (zulm)<sup>6</sup> and enmity ('udwān).<sup>7</sup> A man cannot find a shelter whereunto he would take refuge from the tyranny,<sup>8</sup>

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1. Unlike the presentation of the Turk, the notion of a mahdī is treated by Ismā'īl systematically (mainly in the introduction to the Sīra).
  2. Owing to the lack of detailed and systematic studies of the development of the mahdī concept in Islam, no attempt has been made here to discuss the relationship between Ismā'īl's 'model' mahdī and the composite picture of the mahdī in the Islamic sources. The best comprehensive analyses so far have been C. Snouck Hurgronje, 'Der Mahdi', (1885), in Verspreide geschriften, Bonn, 1923, pp. 145-81; and Macdonald, 'Mahdī', See also Sa'd Muḥammad Ḥasan, al-Mahdiyya fī'l-Islām, Cairo, 1953; Holt, Mahdist state, pp. 21-3. There is no published thorough study of Muḥammad Aḥmad's own concept of a mahdī.
  3. MS., 6/13-14; 8/8-9; 8/15; 23/9-10. See also, MS., 7/6-7.
  4. MS., 7/16; 8/1; 35/10.
  5. MS., 6/16-7/1. See also MS., 23/9-13.
  6. MS., 7/5; 7/8-9; 7/11-12; 7/17; 8/5-6.
  7. MS., 7/16.
  8. MS., 7/9-11.

and whenever one says "Allah, Allah" he is killed.<sup>1</sup> In this situation a redeemer<sup>2</sup> appears. Two features of his manifestation are emphasized: he is sent by God,<sup>3</sup> and his emergence is sudden - 'he will come unto you unexpectedly from a direction which you do not know'.<sup>4</sup>

The mahdī is depicted by a number of attributes which both characterize him and serve as signs of identification. First and foremost, he is a perfect personality. He is truth (huwa haqq)<sup>5</sup> and the master of the age (sāhib al-zamān).<sup>6</sup> A number of attributes stress the link between the mahdī and the Prophet Muḥammad: the mahdī is a descendant of the Prophet's family,<sup>7</sup> and his name is identical with the name of the Prophet.<sup>8</sup> In addition to the rather formal links with the Prophet, the mahdī, in his activities, will repeat the role of Muḥammad. 'He | the mahdī | will follow in the footsteps of

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1. MS., 8/15-16.
  2. Referred to in the Traditions as mahdī, imām, mahdī muntazar, (also khalīfa and raju)
  3. MS., 6/16-18; 7/7; 7/11; 7/18. His appearance was foretold by the Prophet Muḥammad (MS., 2/4-7).
  4. MS., 35/10-11. Cf. MS., 7/18.
  5. MS., 7/14.
  6. MS., 8/10. According to other Traditions he is the peacock of paradise (MS., 8/3), and he understands the language of animals (MS., 9/17).
  7. MS., 7/4; 7/7; 7/11; 7/14; 7/16; 7/18; 7/20; 8/1; 8/4; 8/11-13; 8/21-9/1.
  8. MS., 7/8; 8/13; 9/1-2. One Tradition adds that the name of the mahdī's father is identical with that of the Prophet's father: 'Abdallāh (MS., 7/8). Another Tradition identifies the mahdī's kunya with that of al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī's (MS., 9/1-2).

the Messenger of God... and he will rule (yahkum) as if he was the Messenger of God'.<sup>1</sup> He will resemble him |the Prophet| in disposition (khulq), and he will not resemble him |the Prophet| in bodily features (khalq)',<sup>2</sup> and 'with him |the Mahdi| God will seal (yakhtim) as with us |the Prophet| he started (fataha).<sup>3</sup> Other signs of identification are the mahdi's extraordinary physical features,<sup>4</sup> his life-span,<sup>5</sup> and the length of his reign<sup>6</sup> and the boundaries of his realm.<sup>7</sup>

Numerous references are made to the mahdi's call and mission, and his main activities and their outcome are mentioned. In contrast with the prevailing conditions on the eve of the mahdi's appearance, he will 'fill the earth with equity (qist) and justice ('adl)'.<sup>8</sup> Another consequence of his actions is that 'he will strengthen the Muslims and cause the |true| religion of the Ḥanīfīyeh to be manifested'.<sup>9</sup> The following characteristics of

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1. MS.; 100/17-101/2. See also MS., 82/15.
  2. MS., 8/13.
  3. MS., 7/20.
  4. He will have a bald forehead and an aquiline nose (MS., 7/4-5). 'His countenance (wajh) is like the brilliant star, the complexion is an Arab complexion and the body (jism) is an Israelite body' (MS., 8/4-5).
  5. He will live five, seven or nine |years after his manifestation ?| (MS., 7/5-6).
  6. Defined as bida' (several years), expounded by the author as: any number between three and nine years and, in other variants, 40 or 70 years. Ismā'īl adds that the number of 40 or 70 years includes not only the mahdi's period but also that of his khalīfas (MS., 9/11-13).
  7. 'The kingdom of the earth will be his lot' (MS., 9/10). See also MS., 140/7-8.
  8. MS., 7/5; 7/8-9; 7/11-12; 7/17; 8/5-6; 8/14; 9/7; 9/10.
  9. MS., 9/10-11.

revitalization - a return to the true religion, the renovation of Islam<sup>1</sup> and the revival (ihyā') of prophecy and Islam,<sup>2</sup> are also mentioned. In consequence, 'he who denies the mahdī is become an unbeliever'.<sup>3</sup> The mahdī's adversaries, whom he will fight,<sup>4</sup> are twice identified: once as the Ottomans (al-rāya al-'Uthmāniyya),<sup>5</sup> and once as the 'ulamā'.<sup>6</sup> The mahdī's followers, on the other hand, are depicted as righteous and pious men.<sup>7</sup>

b. Muḥammad Aḥmad b. 'Abdallāh

In his portrayal of Muḥammad Aḥmad, Ismā'īl was restricted by several factors. First, the genre of his work, its purpose and Ismā'īl's belief in the mahdiship of Muḥammad Aḥmad. Secondly, the model of the mahdī; although the components of this model were selected rather arbitrarily, and were known to the Mahdi (who had shaped his own image accordingly), once the model was formulated, it assumed an independent existence into whose framework the portrayal of Muḥammad Aḥmad should fit. Thirdly, the Sīra was completed within a few years of the death of the Mahdi, and its author had to take into account the living memory of his disciples.

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1. 'Until they return to the Truth (al-haqq)' (MS., 8/1-2); 'With him God will renovate (yujaddid) Islam' (MS., 9/9).
  2. MS., 6/16-7/1.
  3. MS., 8/7.
  4. MS., 109/1-2.
  5. MS., 83/7-8.
  6. MS., 108/18-109/1. The contempt for the 'ulamā', brought out clearly by this passage, reflects the Mahdi's dispute with the established Islamic scholars.
  7. MS., 8/16-19; 8/20-21; 9/2-6. They are compared to the people who fought with the Prophet in the battle of Badr, and their number is given as 360. Cf. MS., 79/19-80/3.

The picture which can be reconstructed from the Sīra should therefore be regarded as a resonance of the Mahdi's self-image, as this was absorbed by the mind of an educated adherent. The mosaic of facts, anecdotes, beliefs and interpretations (some of them homiletic) recorded in the Sīra, comprises the following themes: the Mahdi's descent and kindred, his personage, and his call and activities. These are meant to achieve one major purpose, namely, to prove that Muḥammad Aḥmad actually was the expected mahdī. Significantly, a certain ambivalence can be traced in Ismā'īl's approach to this problem. On the one hand, he states that the Mahdi 'does not need...an attestation (shahāda)'<sup>1</sup> and that to prove his mahdiship is as unreasonable as an attempt to prove the existence of the day.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the Sīra abounds in explicit and implicit references which indicate Ismā'īl's awareness of the need to convince the reader of the mahdiship of Muḥammad Aḥmad.

The Mahdi's descent and kindred are only briefly mentioned in the Sīra. Like many holy families in the Sudan, he traced his ancestry back to the Prophet. By producing the Mahdi's patrilineal nasab,<sup>3</sup> Ismā'īl maintains that Muḥammad Aḥmad was a descendant of al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib,<sup>4</sup> namely, that the Mahdi was a sharīf.

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1. MS., 108/8-9.
  2. MS., 21/16-27/1.
  3. MS., 11/10-12/4. The nasab is fully transcribed in the summary, p. 92.
  4. On his father's and mother's (maternal) side. His mother's paternal link is claimed to be with al-'Abbās, the Prophet's uncle (i.e., Ja'alī). See also MS., 11/10; 13/12-14; 27/4-5; 28/17. Holt, Mahdist state, p. 100, states that the Mahdi traced his ancestry back to al-Ḥusayn. Cf. Mahdi's proclamation, MS., 43/3-6, where he refers to al-Ḥasan, not al-Ḥusayn. The same version is given in Manshūrāt, ii, p. 52.

Content with establishing that Muḥammad Aḥmad's descent conforms with the criteria laid down by the Traditions concerning the mahdī, Iṣmā'īl did not incorporate any additional information on the occupation and position of the Mahdi's family before the Mahdia.<sup>1</sup>

The presentation of the Mahdi's personage is schematic and the references in this respect are merely stereotypes. The Mahdi's physical features (ṣifāt), attributes and conduct are put forward as proof of his righteousness, piety and perfection. Thus they form another level in the demonstration of Muḥammad Aḥmad's conformity with the model mahdī. 'His forehead is bald and his nose is aquiline, his countenance is like the brilliant star and his complexion ...inclines to brown, like the colour of the Arabs', and he was a very tall man (wamā jālasahu aḥad wamāshahu illā tāla 'alayhi).<sup>2</sup> The Mahdi's portrait is further embellished by the following features:

He had 'a bright complexion, deep-black and large eyes, long eyelashes, and serene and beautifully arched eye-brows. When he revealed his teeth, smiling, |they| gleamed like the flash of lightning. |He had| a broad forehead, a broad chest, large shoulders, stout bones, wide palms and soles, long fingers,<sup>3</sup> a sturdy

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1. The Mahdi's 'blessed wives' are mentioned once, casually, in connexion with the Mahdi's building of dwellings for them in Qadīr, after his arrival there (MS., 98/13). The brothers and some relatives of the Mahdi, and their activities during the Mahdia, are mentioned in the Sīra, passim.
2. MS., 12/5-7.
3. The MS., reads سائل الاطراف. Shuqayr, Ta'rīkh, iii, p. 361, corrects to سائل الاطراف. His English translation of the Sīra reads: 'His extremities were round'. Cf. Lane, Arabic English Lexicon, s.v. سائل.

body, a well-balanced constitution and a cleft between the teeth (mufallaj al-asnān)'.<sup>1</sup> The perfection of the Mahdi's physique is complemented by references to his attributes.<sup>2</sup> A basic concept which can be culled from the numerous flowery adjectives and the alliterative style of Ismā'īl is that of the Mahdi as the perfect man (al-insān al-kāmil).<sup>3</sup> The Mahdi is not at fault

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1. MS., 14/7-12. See also MS., 13/15-14/7. Cf. the description of the Mahdi in the commentary of al-Ḥusayn b. Ibrāhīm al-Zahrā' to Nasīhat al-'Awwam, p. 83 (see Hand-list, items, 53-4). The cleft (falj) between the teeth is regarded in the Sudan as a sign of good luck. Shuqayr, Ta'rīkh, iii, p. 361, says that the Mahdi smiled frequently in order to show his cleft, and that the Sudanese nicknamed him 'Abū Falja'. See also Slatin, Fire and sword, p. 289; Ohrwalder, Ten years' captivity; p. 13.
  2. Mainly in chapter II, pp. 15/6-26/19. Note Ismā'īl's differentiation, in this chapter, between Muḥammad Aḥmad's attributes before and after his manifestation (akhlāq wa-sifāt, 15/11-18/8; ḥasā'is al-sifāt, 18/8-20/14, respectively). See also MS., 83/18-84/2.
  3. MS., 20/15-19. See also MS., 10/1; 15/11-15; 49/3-16. According to the Ṣūfī doctrine of the Muḥammadan Light, in the beginning God created a handful of light which became incarnate in Adam and later in all the prophets and saints - who were 'perfect men' in various degrees. Muḥammad was the perfect man par excellence and the Light passed from him to his descendants through 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and Fāṭima. See R.A. Nicholson, 'al-Insān al-Kāmil', SEI, p. 170<sup>b</sup>; Trimmingham, Islam, pp. 209-11; Holt, Mahdist state, p. 99. Cf. Mahdi's proclamation, MS., 39/17-18. The perfection of the Mahdi is also implied by the statement, repeated frequently in the Sīra, that it is beyond the ability of an ordinary human being to trace, list and describe all the Mahdi's attributes. See MS., 3/8-11; 17/12-15; 18/7-8; 20/16; 31/17-32/6; 38/2; 373/17-374/5. The Mahdi's attributes are defined as unique (MS., 18/11-12; 23/1-24/4; 83/18-84/8), and as innate (MS., 17/18-18/8).

(lā yukhtī)<sup>1</sup> and he is immune from error and sin (dhū al-‘isma).<sup>2</sup> He is the 'means for the attainment of the most splendid happiness'.<sup>3</sup> Like these concepts, the Mahdi's other attributes and patterns of behaviour are suffused with Sūfī terminology. He is the master of the saints (sayyid al-awliyā'),<sup>4</sup> and he is endowed with

'patience, knowledge, forbearance, gratitude, justice, ascetism, modesty, forgiveness, abstinence, overcoming, diffidence, chivalry, generosity, munificence, courage, silence save for the dhikr of God, calmness, dignity, and compassion for the believers (hilm, 'ilm, sabr, shukr, 'adl, zuhd, tawādu', 'afw, 'iffa, taqawwī, hiyā', murūwa, jūd, samāha, shajā'a, samt illā 'an dhikr Allāh, tu'ada, waqār, rahma bi'l-mu'minīn)'.<sup>5</sup>

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1. MS.; 19/6-7; 101/1.
  2. MS., 44/8. This attribute which is, among the Shī'īs, one of the articles of faith, occurs only once in the Sīra (the term ma'sūm appears once, in a poem quoted by Ismā'īl, MS., 396/11). It is interesting that another Shī'ī concept, that of the 'hidden imām', is also attributed (implicitly and once only) to the Mahdi in the Sīra, 10/5: God 'caused that guarded pearl and the jewel which is kept in the truth of the world of concealment ('ālam al-ghayb), to come out to the world of manifestation ('ālam al-zuhūr)'. See Holt, Mahdist state, pp. 21-2.
  3. MS., 373/17-18. The same notion is expressed in the title of the Sīra. See also MS., 2/20-21; 56/3-6.
  4. MS., 101/10-11. For the main popular beliefs concerning the living and dead awliyā', see B. Carra de Vaux, 'Walī', SEI, pp. 629<sup>a</sup>-631<sup>a</sup>; Trimmingham, Islam, passim.
  5. MS., 17/4-6. See also MS., 28/7-10; 393/5-10. Apparently, these are the characteristics of what the author calls the 'way of life (ādāb) of the Mahdia' (MS., 328/21).

Modesty and ascetic behaviour appear to be the keynotes in Ismā'īl's exaltation of the Mahdi's way of life.<sup>1</sup>

A major part of the portrayal of the Mahdi is dedicated to his call and activities, the basic attitude of Ismā'īl in this respect being identical with the one underlying his presentation of the Mahdi's personage. The manifestation, mission, 'distinctive attributes' and death of the Mahdi appear to be the main sub-headings in point. The passages dealing with the manifestation of the Mahdi are dominated by Ismā'īl's argument that these were a direct outcome of the will of God<sup>2</sup> - thus maintaining that Muḥammad Aḥmad's mahdīship is beyond any dispute. Once the claim that Providence bestowed on Muḥammad Aḥmad the role of a mahdī was asserted, his call and all his activities assumed an intrinsic logical sequence and any opposition to him implied unbelief - not only in the Mahdi but also in God. This concept should be understood within a broader Islamic context, that is, the idea of an active participation of God in events on earth. By claiming that Muḥammad Aḥmad was sent and guided by God, Ismā'īl follows the Mahdi's own attempts to defy the polemics of the representatives of 'orthodox', established Islam - the 'ulamā'. Another interesting point is Ismā'īl's explanation of the reason for the appearance of the Mahdi in the Sudan, of all places:

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1. E.g., the Mahdi's modesty in accepting the advice of his followers (MS., 74/1-3; 90/8-10); the kind and clement treatment of his followers (MS., 190/8-10; 166/11-13; 184/9-11; 331/5-8); his humble, ascetic behaviour and strict observation of the religious law (MS., 17/9-12; 27/4-29/3; 29/13-30/13; 31/5-12; 187/11-16; 332/14-333/2).
  2. MS., 6/15-7/2; 10/2-9; 18/5-10.

God 'singled out the region (iqlīm) of the Sudan for |His| manifestation |of the Mahdi| therein, because...|the Sudanese| are the weakest and most incapable among the people of all regions in the attainment of moral excellence (fadā'īl) and |religious| teachings (ta'ālīm),<sup>1</sup>

Taken at face value, this statement amounts to a subtle rebuke of the Sudanese. The deeper meaning of Ismā'īl's explanation may have been a need to reconcile the appearance of the Mahdi in the Sudan with Traditions which proclaim the appearance of a mahdī in the Maghrib.<sup>2</sup> The Mahdi himself changed the name of a place near Qadīr to Jabal Māsa, to conform with this Tradition.<sup>3</sup>

Ismā'īl's perception of the Mahdi's mission consists of three basic topics: the scope of the Mahdi's call, its contents, and its implementation. As regards the scope of the Mahdi's call, there is a discrepancy between the different statements made by Ismā'īl. In some cases he describes the Mahdia as extending to the whole Islamic community,<sup>4</sup> while in other, more frequent statements in the Sīra, the Mahdia is supposed to spread throughout the entire world (through the activities of the Mahdi and the Khalifa).<sup>5</sup> This discrepancy may be explained

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1. MS., 10/9-13.
  2. In a place traditionally identified as Jabal Māsa. See Macdonald; 'Mahdī', p. 312<sup>a</sup>; Dietrich, p. 222, n.1.; Shuqayr; Ta'rīkh, iii, pp. 130, 377; Holt, Mahdist state, p. 48.
  3. See MS., 5/9-10; 85/3-15; 133/19; and the Mahdi's proclamations, MS., 40/5; 376/9.
  4. MS., 19/18-19; 57/12-13. Cf. Holt, Mahdist state, p. 23, and n.1.
  5. MS., 25/12 (jamī' al-bilād); 18/10 (azharahu mahdiyyan li-kāfat al-barī'a); 27/3 (...li'l-barī'a); 33/19-34/1 (...li'l-kāfa min al-nās ajma'īn). See also MS., 49/3-4; 61/4-6; 139/16-144/2.

as a result of Ismā'īl's being carried away by his own exaltation of the Mahdī. Another, more likely explanation may be that the author, writing in the Khalifa's reign, extended the prevailing concept of a wider jihād to the Mahdi's teachings.

Like in the traditional concept of a mahdī, the contents of Muḥammad Aḥmad's call, as expressed in the Sīra, contrasts with the existing degenerate state of Islam under the Turk.<sup>1</sup> The Mahdi's manifestation (zuhūr) and existence (wujūd) are associated with the concept of the resurrection (qiyāma),<sup>2</sup> and his mission is closely associated with the very important idea of revival (ihyā').<sup>3</sup> A good indication of Ismā'īl's perception of Muḥammad Aḥmad's mission can be seen in his use of titles for Muḥammad Aḥmad. The most frequent titles are, naturally, those of al-mahdī and sayyiduna, but it is the other, less stereotyped use of titles, which provides a deeper insight into Ismā'īl's conception of the Mahdi's mission. In the Sīra, the Mahdi is entitled alternatively as: the deputy of God (khalīfat Allāh),<sup>4</sup> the deputy of the Messenger of God (khalīfat rasūl Allāh),<sup>5</sup> the caller to

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1. MS., 12/10-11; 12/15-13/1; 27/15; 29/3-6 (explaining the reasons for the Mahdi's settlement in Abā); 108/14-16. See also the statements pertaining to conditions in Kordofan before the Mahdia (MS., 138/1-3; 152/4-7).
  2. MS., 385/2-8.
  3. E.g., MS., 10/8-9; 18/13-14; 35/4; 38/12-13; See also MS., 322/3-5 (taqwīm al-dīn) and 176/13-14 (nasr al-dīn).
  4. MS., 141/9-10; 125/10-11. The Mahdi himself does not seem to have used this title in his own proclamations. For the term khalīfa see W. Montgomery Watt, Islamic political thought, Edinburgh, 1968, pp. 32-4; Holt, Mahdist state, pp. 102-3.
  5. E.g., MS., 2/15; 45/4; 81/10.

God (al-dā'ī ilā Allā<sup>h</sup>),<sup>1</sup> the master of the age (sāhib al-zāmān),<sup>2</sup> the sword of God (sayf Allāh),<sup>3</sup> the expected Imam (al-imām al-muntazar),<sup>4</sup> the expected Mahdī (al-mahdī al-muntazar),<sup>5</sup> and the expected Fāṭimī.<sup>6</sup> Apart from these titles, the Mahdi's mission is synonymous, in Ismā'īl's usage, with truth (haqq)<sup>7</sup> and the straight religion (al-dīn al-mustaqīm).<sup>8</sup> In a few instances Ismā'īl attempts a general formulation of the Mahdi's call and of his main demands from his adherents. The following is a general definition, by Ismā'īl, of the religious pattern of the Mahdi's call (after his manifestation):

'and he arose, publicly calling the people to God Most High, for the revival (ihyā') of the religion and the rectification (taqwīm) of the Custom (sunna) of the Lord of the Messengers, and the rising up in support of the Truth (al-haqq=God) and in resistance to the innovators (ahl al-bida') and preventing them |from their conduct| and returning them to the more direct path. And this is the unadulterated religion (al-dīn al-khālīṣ), which the Messenger of God...and his Companions...practised. And that is in consistency with the Book and the Custom,

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1. MS., 19/1; 93/17-18; 95/14-16; 134/17-18; 202/3-4; 283/19; 325/18; 326/4-5; 328/7-8; 332/6-7; 336/4.
  2. MS.; 15/5.
  3. MS., 12/15-16.
  4. E.g.; MS.; 45/9; 63/4; 84/1.
  5. E.g.; MS., 374/14.
  6. MS., 7/1; 49/4-5. Referring to the Tradition of the Mahdi's descent from Fāṭima, the Prophet's daughter, who married 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib.
  7. MS.; 278/11; 291/11; 312/16.
  8. MS., 54/6-7; 178/7.

for the acts - if they are not consistent with the Book and the Custom - shall be rejected. |The Mahdi|...proceeded with what he was commanded concerning the calling of the people to the revival of the religion, the support of the Truth and the erection of the scales of justice among mankind, and he is still...commanding them |his followers| to pursue the straight path, prohibiting them innovations and the forbidden |actions| (munkarāt)...'.<sup>1</sup>

Another passage summarizes the socio-economic contents of the Mahdi's call, according to Ismā'īl, as:

'It was his wont...to make the rich poor, because he...requested the rich to spend their money on the jihād...and |he used| to make the distinguished (sharīf) like the lowly (wadī') by emendation of the soul, lack of arrogance and good conduct...'.<sup>2</sup>

This passage reflects one of the basic and recurrent elements in the Mahdi's own proclamations, namely, the vanity of this world (dunyā) in relation to the eternity of the other world (ākhirā). Although this concept appears in the Sīra,<sup>3</sup> it seems to be expressed with a somewhat lesser zeal in Ismā'īl's work than in the Mahdi's proclamations and correspondence. In the Mahdi's lifetime the Mahdia began to undergo a transformation from what had

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1. MS., 37/7-17. The end of this passage echoes the famous Islamic dictum of 'al-amr bi'l-ma'rūf wa'l-nahy. 'an al-munkar'. See MS., 28/12-13; 31/1-4.
  2. MS., 52/18-53/4.
  3. MS., 52/17-18, 329/16-18.

primarily been a protest movement into a theocratic state, with all the usual accretions which accompany such a basic change of nature. The apparently diminishing role of the ascetic idea, as reflected in the relation of the Sīra to the Mahdi's own teachings in this respect, may be regarded as a symptom of this transformation.

Three basic elements are prominent in Ismā'īl's presentation of the implementation of the Mahdi's call. The first two are treated in the Sīra in a manner which suggests that Ismā'īl regarded them as interrelated. These are, in his own words, 'the call (da'wa) to God by the sword', that is, warfare, and the furnishing of evidence (iqāmat al-hujja),<sup>1</sup> that is, propaganda and polemics. The Mahdi's warfare is synonymous, in Ismā'īl's usage, with jihād and martyrdom (shahāda).<sup>2</sup> As this war was waged against Muslims and against the established regime, Ismā'īl took care to denounce in detail the evil of the Turk. In addition, he emphasized that God had permitted the Mahdi to fight his adversaries.<sup>3</sup> Also,

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1. MS., 77/6-13; 189/10-15. See also, MS., 19/1-2: 'and he is the caller to God by the guidance (hidāya) and by the sword'.
2. Whenever Ismā'īl mentions the death of a Mahdist in battle, the phrasing is 'he died as a martyr', while the death in battle of the enemies of the Mahdi is invariably expressed by the term 'perished' (halaka).
3. MS., 63/4-5, 77/6-13. See also MS., 62/14-19: '...the Imam the Mahdi...said: "One of the...brethren (ikhwān)...in Abā, when I called them to arms (al-nafīr) against the Turk who came to us in Abā, called his friends to the jihād and they refrained, saying: "How shall we fight the regime (dawla) ?"'. This man then heard a voice (hātif) urging them to comply with their oath of allegiance and all of them promptly reported to the Mahdi.

Ismā'īl frequently stresses that the Mahdi and his commanders always warned and admonished their enemies and gave them an opportunity to surrender before the Mahdist attack commenced.<sup>1</sup> The third element in Ismā'īl's presentation of the Mahdi's implementation of his call is the abolition of the Madhāhib and the introduction of new legislation, based on the Mahdi's direct inspiration by the Prophet.<sup>2</sup>

A close examination of the presentation of the Mahdi's activities in the Sīra reveals several recurrent traits which form the backbone of Ismā'īl's image of the Mahdi. By enumerating the Mahdi's so-called 'distinctive attributes', Ismā'īl augments his description of Muḥammad Aḥmad's supreme qualities. The first of these 'distinctive attributes' can be summed up as the guarding of the Mahdi by metaphysical and superhuman forces. God guards him and grants him victory.<sup>3</sup> Al-Khiḍr<sup>4</sup> takes an active part in the Mahdi's actions, particularly in battles,<sup>5</sup> and so are the angels (malā'ika) and the inhabitants of the world of concealment (ahl al-ghayb), through whom God supported his Mahdi.<sup>6</sup> Another attribute is the Mahdi's

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1. E.g., 290/6-9; 356/4-13; 363/4-7. In MS., 297/4-8, this is formulated as a general principle of the Mahdists' conduct of battles.
  2. MS., 19/11-17. See Holt, Mahdist state, pp. 107, n.1; 112-6.
  3. MS., 61/4-5; 70/4-7; 86/13-18; 121/7-12; 130/1; 346/3-4.
  4. See A.J. Wensinck, 'al-Khiḍr'; SEI, pp. 232<sup>a</sup>-235<sup>b</sup>. According to Trimingham, Islam, p. 153, in the Sudan 'all saints are believed ...to associate freely with the Prophet, Al-Khiḍr' etc. On the place of al-Khiḍr in Mahdist propoganda see Holt, Mahdist state, pp. 99, 123-4.
  5. E.g., MS., 70/4-7.
  6. MS., 25/9-11.

possession of baraka<sup>1</sup> and karāma, a term which has been defined as 'the miraculous gifts and graces with which Allāh surrounds, protects and aids his Saints'.<sup>2</sup> The following is a list of all the miracles which are attributed to, or associated with the Mahdi in the Sīra.<sup>3</sup> Two miracles are said to have been performed by the Mahdi: the superabundance of food and water as a result of the Mahdi's baraka;<sup>4</sup> and the Mahdi's ability to foretell events,<sup>5</sup> Other miracles are supernatural phenomena connected with the Mahdi's battles: fire emerged of the wounds of the enemies' corpses, and scorched them;<sup>6</sup> when the Mahdi contemplated a military expedition, a fire appeared on the 'tongues of the lances and the edges of the swords', as a good omen for the Mahdi's victory;<sup>7</sup> the corpses of the enemy's dead were seen to pile-up - an apparition ascribed by Ismā'īl to the work of the angels;<sup>8</sup> the immunity of the Mahdi's adherents from the effect of firearms.<sup>9</sup>

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1. For the meaning of baraka and its association with holy men in the Sudan, see Holt, Holy families, p.2.
  2. See D.B. Macdonald, 'Karāma', SEI, p. 216<sup>b</sup>. The Mahdi's miracles are also called by Ismā'īl preternatural phenomena (khawāriq al-'ādāt), MS., 69/13.
  3. For details of these miracles and their interpretation by Ismā'īl see summary.
  4. MS., 26/3-6. For a detailed description of the Mahdi's baraka concerning water, see MS., 197/7-198/5.
  5. MS., 64/9-10 (where this ability of the Mahdi is explicitly defined as one of his 'clearest karāmāt'). See also MS., 100/11-12; 151/17-152/7; 156/18-157/2; 176/11; 199/14-17; 204/6-8; 207/17-18; 385/10-11.
  6. MS., 22/3-23/1; 133/7-17; 208/1-9. Cf. Mahdi's statement, MS., 113/19-114/2.
  7. MS.; 24/4-25/4.
  8. MS.; 25/4-16.
  9. MS., 238/14-239/11. See also Ismā'īl's interesting commentary, MS., 167/7-19. Cf. Mahdi's statement, MS., 342/2-5.

Several miracles are listed by Ismā'īl in connexion with the battle of Abā, the Mahdi's first military encounter with the Turk: the battle-ground, muddied by rain, hindered the Turk and aided the Mahdi's adherents;<sup>1</sup> the lack of arms on the side of Mahdi's fighters and their victory over the better equipped and prepared Turk;<sup>2</sup> and the Mahdi's miraculous escape from death, owing to the Khalifa.<sup>3</sup> Only one miracle, though connected with Muḥammad Aḥmad, is not attributed to him: the appearance of his name and title (=mahdī) on hens' eggs, leaves of trees and stones.<sup>4</sup> All these miracles are produced as proof of the truth of Muḥammad Aḥmad's claim to be the mahdī.<sup>5</sup>

Ismā'īl also connects these miracles with the concept that Muḥammad Aḥmad was repeating the role of the Prophet Muḥammad.<sup>6</sup> This is the most salient feature of the Mahdi's portrayal in the Sīra and the use of this particular term as well as its incorporation in the title of Ismā'īl's work is significant in itself.<sup>7</sup> Ismā'īl's numerous references to this theme suggest that he was at great pains to follow the Mahdi's own endeavours to demonstrate his repetition of the Prophet's role. The Mahdi is referred to as the deputy (khalīfa) of the Prophet, the 'follower in the footsteps' of the Prophet,<sup>8</sup> the heir of Muḥammad,<sup>9</sup> and the man who attained the

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1. MS., 68/15-69/4.
  2. MS.; 69/4-15; 70/7-17.
  3. MS., 69/14-70/7. See also MS., 70/18-73/2; 129/3-130/8.
  4. MS., 25/17-26/2.
  5. E.g., MS., 21/1-22/2; 26/6-19; 70/16.
  6. See MS., 82/13-17.
  7. See also MS., 2/8-19.
  8. The usual phrasing is gāfī athar rasūl Allāh. E.g., MS., 19/6-7; 38/11; 45/4; 48/7-9; 86/15; 125/10-11; 190/7-8.
  9. MS., 18/9-10; 20/11; 28/17; 33/9-10; 36/7; 37/4-5; 55/18.

highest degree, below prophecy, since the time of Muḥammad.<sup>1</sup> Introducing an idea which is central to Sūfī thought, Ismā'īl also mentions that 'the Mahdi was created of the prophetic light (anwār nabawiyya)'.<sup>2</sup> Ismā'īl does not confine himself to these general statements, and in the course of the Sīra he tries to draw a parallel, wherever possible, between the lives of the Mahdi and the Prophet.<sup>3</sup> The Mahdi is said to have resembled the Prophet in his name,<sup>4</sup> physical features<sup>5</sup> and character (akhlāq),<sup>6</sup> and to have followed, to the letter, the Qur'ān and the Sunna.<sup>7</sup> Events in the careers of the Mahdi and the Prophet are compared in detail and Ismā'īl does not neglect any opportunity to assert their similarity. When he encounters a difference in detail (for example, in the days of the Months in which the battles of Abā and Badr took place) he explains the discrepancy as having an inherent secret meaning.<sup>8</sup> The following examples show the variety of attempts to equate the two careers. Like the Prophet's, the Mahdi's appearance and manifestation were an act of God, of which the ultimate aim was to spread the true religion and ensure

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1. MS., 82/5-6; 141/9-17.
  2. MS., 10/18-11/2. See Holt, Mahdist state, pp. 99-100.
  3. ~~Muḥammad~~ The technical term used normally before such parallels is 'uswa nabawiyya' (e.g., MS., 58/17).
  4. Muḥammad Aḥmād's omission of his second name (Aḥmad): MS., 13/3-11. The names of the Mahdi's and the Prophet's fathers ('Abdallāh): MS., 13/11-12.
  5. MS., 14/2-3; 14/15-15/3.
  6. MS., 17/18-18/4; 54/18-55/1; 57/19-58/1.
  7. MS., 126/12-15; 141/9-142/2.
  8. MS., 78/10-79/5.

the happiness of its followers.<sup>1</sup> Like the Prophet's, the Mahdi's call was refuted and denied.<sup>2</sup> The Mahdi, too, had to fight his opponents, and his first military encounter with the Turk, in Abā, is compared in detail with the battles of Badr and Uhud.<sup>3</sup> The mission of Muḥammad Abū al-Su'ūd to the Mahdi in Abā is compared with a mission sent by Chosroes to the Prophet.<sup>4</sup> The equation of the Mahdi and the Prophet is extended also to their followers.<sup>5</sup> The Mahdi's followers are usually referred to in the Sīra as the ashāb, a term reminiscent of the Prophet's Companions (sahāba).<sup>6</sup> The parallels drawn between the Mahdi and the Prophet cover all the main activities of the Mahdi. Like the Prophet, the Mahdi was compelled to emigrate (hijra). Other examples are the Mahdi's correspondence,<sup>7</sup> his conduct of military affairs and

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1. MS., 6/16-7/2: God's manifestation of the Mahdi as a 'revival of Prophecy (ihgā' amr al-nubuwwa). See also MS., 11/2-11. By the manifestation of the Mahdi, God linked the 13th (hijriyya) century with the Prophet's century (MS., 10/2-6). On this point see summary, p. 91, n.2. In MS., 34/17-18, Ismā'īl quotes the Mahdi as having said: 'Verily, God manifested you with the mahdiyya before the [age of] forty in the honour (karāma) of the Khalifa 'Abdallāhi'. The author refers, without elaborating, to a hidden meaning of this saying. Its first part alludes to a parallel with the Prophet. I have not found any information which might explain its last part.
  2. MS., 54/12-13.
  3. MS., 76/11-82/1.
  4. MS., 58/15-59/10.
  5. MS., 48/6-51/13.
  6. The Prophet's adherents are also referred to as ashāb (MS., 62/2; 90/12; 119/15-16; 190/13). The Mahdi's followers are once named ansār (in a proclamation of the Mahdi, MS., 380/8), and darāwish (this term is put in the mouth of a messenger of the Turk, MS., 101/18). In the Mahdi's documents transcribed in the Sīra, the Mahdi refers to his followers as ahbāb. See Holt, Mahdist state, pp. 48, 106.
  7. MS., 44/3-4; 44/12-45/4; 57/17-18.

details of military organization and preparations,<sup>1</sup> the Mahdi's nomination of a governor to rule in his name while he was engaged in battle,<sup>2</sup> the Mahdi's prohibitions concerning booty (ghanā'im),<sup>3</sup> and his alteration of the names of people<sup>4</sup> and places.<sup>5</sup>

This elaborate parallel, emphasized in the presentation of the Mahdi, is an extension of the Mahdi's own policy and practice in this respect. By equating the Prophet and the Mahdi, the latter acquired, ipso facto, a supreme authority over his Muslim adversaries, whether these were political authorities - the Turk, or the 'ulamā'. The Mahdi and, following in his footsteps, Ismā'īl thus attempted to legitimize the Mahdi's rule and justify his warfare against the established Muslim authorities. Apparently, it was not sufficient to demonstrate that Muḥammad Aḥmad conformed with the categories laid down by the Traditions heralding the appearance of a mahdī, that he was a perfect personage and that he emulated the Prophet. Consequently, both the Mahdi and the author of his Sīra laboured to establish a direct link with the Prophet, to add sanctity and authority to all the Mahdi's teachings and actions,

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1. The Mahdi's permission to his followers to withdraw from participation in the battle of Abā (MS., 61/18-62/13); his acceptance of the tactical advice of followers (MS., 90/10-13); the holding of a parade ('ard) before the battle (MS., 119/15-16); the rousing (tahrīd) of the troops before the battle (MS., 126/14-14); the organization and officering of expeditions (MS., 125/12-14; 189/16-18; 190/11); the giving of counsel (wisāya) to the commander of an expedition (MS., 281/9-282/14).
2. MS., 135/7-11.
3. MS., 132/12-133/2.
4. MS., 148/3-7.
5. MS., 333/19-334/3.

These the Mahdi based on a series of colloquies (hadra)<sup>1</sup> and divine voices (hawātif ilāhiyya), some of which were incorporated in the Sīra.<sup>2</sup> The concept of a continuous direct guidance of the Mahdi by the Prophet<sup>3</sup> has very clear implications. If the Mahdi is the Prophet's vicegerent and in continuous contact with him, then all his teachings and activities have compelling authority and his Sīra attains an importance similar to that of the Prophet's Sunna. This explains such of Ismā'īl's statements as: the Mahdi's proclamations' (manshūrāt) are 'a verse (āyā) of the |Qur'ānic| verses';<sup>4</sup> the Mahdi's religious observances ('ibādāt) should be imitated;<sup>5</sup> the oath of allegiance (bay'a) to the Mahdi is similar to the bay'a to God and his Messenger;<sup>6</sup> and 'the Mahdi's act (fi'l) is like the act of the Messenger of God'.<sup>7</sup>

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1. See above, p.36, n. 6. The information given to the Mahdi by the Prophet is sometimes called habar. See, e.g., MS., 77/14,15; 78/1; 110/20; 124/11.
  2. Colloquies: e.g., MS., 138/1-3; 139/16-17; 145/7-9; 144/3-10. Divine voices: e.g., MS., 5/10; 33/10; 85/4. The Prophet as a source for the Mahdi's information and ability to tell the future: e.g., MS., 66/12-67/3; 100/11-12.
  3. 'The Mahdi... is not veiled (lā yuhjab) from the Messenger of God even for the twinkling of an eye...' (MS., 101/4-13). See also MS., 19/11-14. The omission from the Sīra of any details about the Mahdi's teachers before his manifestation (cf; Holt, Mahdist state, pp. 37-40) is, perhaps, part of this attempt to establish a direct link between the Mahdi and the Prophet.
  4. MS., 5/18-19. For Ismā'īl's attitude to the Mahdi's correspondence and proclamations see MS., 43/9-46/5.
  5. MS.; 19/14-20/14.
  6. MS., 93/3-4. For the contents of the bay'a, see Holt, Mahdist state, pp. 45, 101.
  7. MS., 20/1.

A very interesting feature is the presentation of the Mahdi as a man-of-arms. The scattered references to the Mahdi as a fighter create an impression that Ismā'īl here deviates from his general attitude. More often than not, accounts of the Mahdi's participation in battles are in dissonance with the portrayal of his perfection in all other matters. In the battle of Abā, the Mahdi was 'standing in the rear of the army' - a statement which would seem insignificant, but for Ismā'īl's immediate justification, that this was 'in accordance with a Prophetic command'.<sup>1</sup> During the same battle, at the height of the Turk's counter-attack, the Mahdi took shelter in a nearby booth.<sup>2</sup> In connexion with the same battle Ismā'īl says that he is not sure if the Mahdi actually participated in the fighting.<sup>3</sup> On his way to Jabal Qadīr, at the beginning of the hijra, the Mahdi, while in a place called al-Zamziyya, learnt that Muḥammad Sa'īd Wahbī, the governor of Kordofan, was on his way to attack him.

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1. MS., 70/18-19. Cf. MS., 254/12-16: Ismā'īl's implicit criticism of an enemy commander who survived a battle because he was 'in the rear of the people' during the fighting; and Preston (ed.), Wolseley's journal, p. 59 (entry for 4.11.1884): '...the people... say, if he were the Mahdi he would expose himself to danger and go into action, but this Mahmūd [sic] Ahmed always remains miles in the rear when we are fighting for him...'
  2. MS., 73/15-74/6. The Mahdi did this, according to the account in the Sīra, on the Khalifa's advice.
  3. MS., 75/7-13. See also MS., 105/17-106/1, and in particular MS., 191/7-14: Ismā'īl's reference to his unfruitful efforts to establish whether or not the Mahdi participated in the fighting.

The Mahdi ordered his followers to make preparations for the encounter of the Turk at al-Zamziyya. One of the Mahdi's followers suggested a move to another, more suitable battle-ground for the Mahdists, and the Mahdi agreed. Again, the explanation provided by Ismā'īl is the significant part of the story: the Mahdi 'did not contradict his adherents...especially in matters of war' and this was in accordance with the Prophet's conduct.<sup>1</sup> It is inconceivable that Ismā'īl would want to mention anything which might diminish the greatness of the Mahdi's image. Consequently, all these statements, though wrapped in explanations and produced as a positive trait of the Mahdi, seem to contain a clue to the Mahdi's real role as a commander.

Ismā'īl's account of the Mahdi's career concludes with his death. The following details pertaining to this event are given in the Sīra: the Mahdi was sick with a severe fever (humma shadīda) which commenced on 3 Ramaḍān 1302/16 June 1885 and ended, with the Mahdi's death, on the forenoon of 8 Ramaḍān/21 June.<sup>2</sup> He was buried on the same day by noon. The interpretation of the Mahdi's death by Ismā'īl appears to reflect the difficult dilemma which this event posed for the Mahdi's followers.<sup>3</sup> First, Ismā'īl points out that the Mahdi's death was in accordance with the Traditions, and he equates the deaths of the Mahdi and the Prophet.<sup>4</sup>

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1. MS., 89/17-90/13. Yet, before the battle of Abā it was suggested to the Mahdi to move to the west bank of the Nile in anticipation of the Turk, but the Mahdi rejected this proposal (MS., 63/11-64/4).
  2. MS., 387/2-13; 388/4-9. See Holt, Mahdist state, p. vi; Daniel, p. 557, and n.16.
  3. See MS., 384/17-20; 387/15; 141/2-144/2.
  4. MS., 13/1-3; 380/7-8; 384/20-385/8.

Secondly, he states that the Mahdi's 'period was completed, therefore God... transferred him to Him'.<sup>1</sup> Thirdly, Ismā'īl tries to reconcile the contradiction between the Mahdi's promised victories, which should extend over the entire world, and his death before their accomplishment, Ismā'īl's reply follows the Khalifa's propaganda for the continuation of the jihād. He says that the Prophet's conquests did not extend beyond the taking of Mecca and Khaybar, and that the rest was conquered by his khalīfas.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the rest of the world will be conquered by the Khalifa 'Abdallāhi.<sup>3</sup> Both Ismā'īl's and the Khalifa's statements and the need to produce them, suggest that one of the immediate consequences of the Mahdi's death may have been the casting of a certain doubt, in the minds of his followers, as to whether Muḥammad Aḥmad actually was the expected mahdī.

#### 6. The presentation of the Khalifa

In his Memorandum, Shuqayr describes the Sīra as:

'a book on...the Khalifa's conquests in the Sudan. Knowing well the vain nature of his master he introduced him in nearly every page of the book and represented him as a most pious and holy man full of mercy and zeal for the Faith and the Mahdi's Creed. He also exalted the Mahdi and raised him high but

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1. MS., 380/7-8. See also MS., 135/13-14.
  2. MS., 143/5-144/2.
  3. MS., 139/19-140/2; 142/11-144/2 (an excerpt from a proclamation of the Khalifa to that effect). See also Holt, Mahdist state, pp. 132-4.

indeed he raised the Mahdi in order to make higher the position of his Khalifa Abdallah as his 1st Khalifa',<sup>1</sup>

In another passage Shuqayr adds that:

'the whole book is made to suit the Vanity of Khalifa Abdallah...he [Ismā'īl] in many instances sacrifices the truth in order to please the vanity of his master who is represented as a real Khalifa of a real Mahdi - and the book, from this point of view, is indeed quite misleading to a common reader'.<sup>2</sup>

Both statements reflect Shuqayr's preconceptions rather than detached, objective observations. It is certainly not accurate that the Khalifa's name was 'introduced...in nearly every page'; in large parts of the Sīra (and of Tirāz) he is not mentioned at all. Shuqayr's other remark, that Ismā'īl 'raised the Mahdi high in order to make higher the position of his Khalifa' would seem to an unbiased reader as a perversion of the subject-matter of the Sīra.

Ismā'īl's presentation of the Khalifa appears to have been conditioned by two basic factors. First, when the Sīra was completed the Mahdi had been dead for several years and the Khalifa was the ruler of the Mahdist state. Hence the panegyric, almost fawning style of Ismā'īl's references to the Khalifa's personage, behaviour and activities.<sup>3</sup> A second, no less important factor, was the

1. Memorandum; ff. 2-3.

2. Memorandum, f.6.

3. One of the main characteristics of these references is the elaborate chains of titles which in many cases precede the name of the Khalifa when mentioned in the Sīra. See, e.g., MS., 2/21-3/8.

political situation, namely, the accession of 'Abdallāhi, the consolidation of his control in the centre and in the outlying provinces, and the continuation of the jihād.<sup>1</sup> Hence the emphasis, in the Sīra, on 'Abdallāhi's status as the Mahdi's senior lieutenant and true successor.

As regards 'personal data' of the Khalifa, the information contained in the Sīra is very poor. Generally, his name is given as 'Abdallāhi b. Muḥammad<sup>2</sup> or al-Khalīfa 'Abdallāhi.<sup>3</sup> Of his family<sup>4</sup> only his half-brother Ya'qūb is mentioned in the Sīra, in the context of a short account of his arrival at the Mahdi's camp during the latter's hijra to Qadīr.<sup>5</sup> The Ta'āīshā are not mentioned at all, and the Baqqāra - only twice, in one of the Mahdi's letters.<sup>6</sup> The pattern of the Khalifa's behaviour and activities as presented in the Sīra resembles, in its broader lines, the presentation of the Mahdi.<sup>7</sup> As in his presentation of the Mahdi, Ismā'īl states that it is beyond human ability to enumerate all the Khalifa's

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1. For details see Holt, Mahdist state, pp. 132-64. The accession of the Khalifa is very briefly mentioned in the epilogue to the Sīra (388/11-389/6). The consolidation of control is glossed-over and implicitly referred to in the vague statement that 'he fought those who showed their opposition' (MS.; 388/17).
  2. E.g.; MS.; 3/5.
  3. E.g., MS.; 34/18.
  4. See Holt, Mahdist state, p. 43-4.
  5. MS.; 88/14-89/1.
  6. MS., 114/16 & 116/2.
  7. It should be noted, however, that the number of references to the Khalifa and the space allocated to them in the Sīra are very much smaller than those pertaining to the Mahdi.

attributes and merits.<sup>1</sup> The following characteristics, all of them reminiscent of the Mahdi's portrayal, are mentioned in connexion with the Khalifa. He is unique amongst the rest of mankind;<sup>2</sup> God strengthens him and grants him His support<sup>3</sup> and the help of al-Khiḍr;<sup>4</sup> all his actions are 'by order of the Prophet';<sup>5</sup> in accordance with the Sunna, the Khalifa constantly consulted (istashāra) the Ashāb;<sup>6</sup> His piety, modesty and asceticism are praised.<sup>7</sup> Two of the Khalifa's miracles (karāmāt) are described: The public prayer in the mosque of Omdurman which, according to Ismā'īl, superseded public prayer in other countries,<sup>8</sup> and the short period in which the building of this mosque was accomplished.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to this similarity in the presentation of the Mahdi's and the Khalifa's behaviour and attributes, the Sīra contains many references to the Khalifa's seniority amongst the Mahdi's disciples. Four interrelated

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1. MS., 395/3-7; 395/14-396/2.
  2. MS., 72/15-73/2.
  3. MS., 72/17; 393/10-17.
  4. MS., 30/10-11; 72/15-73/2. See Holt, Mahdist state, pp. 123-4.
  5. MS., 380/1-3. Cf. Mahdi's proclamation, MS., 381/1-2. The appearance of the Prophet in a dream of the Khalifa, in the Mahdi's lifetime, is mentioned once MS., 14/15-15/3.
  6. MS., 399/8-11.
  7. MS., 393/10-17: The Khalifa's frugality in Abā; MS., 392/17-396/5: A detailed account of the Khalifa's services to the brethren (ikhwān); such as bringing them water for drink and ablution, fetching grass for their livestock and attending to their sick.
  8. MS., 389/6-390/5.
  9. MS., 391/5-12.

arguments can be discerned from these references. First, the equation of the Mahdi and Khalifa: 'he | the Khalifa | is of the Mahdi...and the Mahdi...is of him',<sup>1</sup> Secondly, the relationship between the Khalifa and the Mahdi is identical with that of the Mahdi and the Prophet. This is implied both by Abdallāhi's title: Khalīfat al-Siddīq, that is, the Successor of Abū Bakr<sup>2</sup> and by the following statement, phrased in the same words as the relationship between the Mahdi and the Prophet: 'he | the Khalifa | is the heir of the Mahdi...and follows in his footsteps',<sup>3</sup> Thirdly, the ascendancy of the Khalifa amongst the Mahdi's principal assistants. This follows from the virtual elimination of the other khalīfas from the Mahdi's Sīra,<sup>4</sup> and the resulting over-magnification of 'Abdallāhi's role in the Mahdist movement.<sup>5</sup> In the course of the Sīra, the following points are highlighted: the Khalifa accompanied the Mahdi before his manifestation,<sup>6</sup> and he was the first person to whom Muḥammad Ahmad disclosed his mahdship,<sup>7</sup> and to recognize the Mahdi,<sup>8</sup> The Mahdi was

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1. MS., 380/1-3. Cf. Mahdi's proclamation, MS., 381/1-2. The term hidāya is also associated with the Khalifa, MS., 328/3.
  2. E.g., MS., 58/6-7. See also MS., 74/7-12; Holt, Mahdist state, p. 103. Another title of 'Abdallāhi, common in the Sīra, is the senior Khalīfa (al-khalīfa al-akbar) (e.g., MS., 74/2-3). The Mahdi maintained that the Prophet had conferred upon him the very same title, MS., 34/3.
  3. E.g., MS., 152/8-14. See also MS., 142/3-6.
  4. See above, p. 33 and n.2.
  5. Cf. Holt, Mahdist state, pp. 101-9.
  6. MS., 393/3-5.
  7. MS., 33/11-14.
  8. MS., 30/8-12. Cf. Holt, Mahdist state, p. 43.

always quick to accept his advice,<sup>1</sup> and 'Abdallāhi constantly looked after the 'matters of the Mahdia ...in particular military affairs'.<sup>2</sup> Ismā'īl mentions several times that the Khalifa saved the Mahdi's life in battle, either by shielding him with his own body or by his wise counsel.<sup>3</sup> Fourthly, the Khalifa continues the Mahdi's mission. He is 'reviving the traces of justice'<sup>4</sup> and 'through him God revived (ahyā) the Community (umma)'<sup>5</sup> and 'purified the land from the darkness of tyranny'.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the Khalifa carries on the Mahdi's jihād and he will attain the promised conquests.<sup>7</sup>

All these arguments point in one direction - the duty to obey and follow the Khalifa and this, indeed, is their main function within the context of the Sīra. One of three proclamations of the Mahdi, which Ismā'īl puts at the end of his account of the Mahdi's battles and ..

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1. MS., 74/2-6.
  2. MS., 339/19-340/13. See also the alleged dialogue between the Mahdi and Abū al-Su'ūd, before the battle of Abā (MS., 58/5-13).
  3. In the battle of Abā (MS., 69/14-70/7; 70/18-73/2; 73/15-75/4); in the battle with Rāshid Bey Aymān (MS., 106/1-3); and in the Friday Battle at El Obeid (MS., 174/10-13). Significantly, Ismā'īl thinks it fit to add that the Khalifa knew that God was protecting His Mahdi, but his compassion for the Mahdi made the Khalifa shield him with his body (MS., 74/19-75/4).
  4. MS., 30/9. See also MS., 328/4.
  5. MS., 30/13. See also MS., 6/2.
  6. MS., 6/4.
  7. MS., 139/1-140/4.

before the epilogue, nominates 'Abdallāhi as the successor.<sup>1</sup> Thus Ismā'īl tries to prove his assertion that redemption from distress, affliction and hardship can be attained only by joining the Khalifa and swearing allegiance to him.<sup>2</sup>

7. The Sīra as a source for the history of the Mahdia

As a source for the history of the Mahdia or, more accurately, for the period of the Mahdi, the Sīra should be assessed in relation to other known source materials as well as judged independently, on its own merit.

The Mahdist documentation and contemporary European literature have already been systematically described in several published studies.<sup>3</sup> The following notes give

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1. MS., 380/3-384/2. The two other proclamations are the vision of the investiture of the Mahdi and a prohibition of fraudulence in booty. Ismā'īl's selection of these three themes attests, in a way, to their importance in the Mahdist ideological and administrative framework.
  2. MS., 152/8-14.
  3. See R.L. Hill, 'The Gordon literature', Durham University Journal, NS, xvi, 1955, pp. 97-103; P.M. Holt, 'The archives of the Mahdia', SNR, xxxvi/1, 1955, pp. 71-8; P.M. Holt, 'Three Mahdist letter-books', BSOAS, xviii, 1956, pp. 227-38; Holt, 'Source-materials' (1958); R.L. Hill, 'Historical writing on the Sudan since 1820', in Lewis and Holt (eds.), Historians, (1962), pp. 357-66; G.N. Sanderson, 'The modern Sudan, 1820-1956: The present position of historical studies', JAH, iv, 1963, pp. 435-61; R.O. Collins, 'Egypt and the Sudan', in R.W. Winks (ed.), The historiography of the British Empire-Commonwealth, Durham, North Carolina, 1966, pp. 279-95. The only critical publication of a Mahdist document is G. Sverdrup Jr., 'A letter from the Mahdi Muhammad |sic| Ahmad to General C.G. Gordon', Journal of the American Oriental Society, xxxi, 1911, pp. 368-88.

an indication of the place and importance of the Sīra among the contemporary source materials and within the development of scholarly studies of the Mahdia.

Within the abundant Mahdist source materials known at present, the Sīra (and its sequel, Tirāz) is a unique example of either a biography or a chronicle written by a Muslim, Mahdist and during the Mahdia.<sup>1</sup> Ismā'īl's work is not only unique in its genre but also in its position as an intermediate link between the more primary Mahdist documentation and Shuqayr's Ta'rīkh,

The relevant part of Shuqayr's Ta'rīkh (1903) was, after the Anglo-Egyptian conquest of the Sudan, the first serious attempt by a non-Mahdist to draw a composite picture based on Mahdist and other contemporary source materials. His work, still an important source for the Mahdia, has been the only attempt to draw extensively on the information contained in the Sīra. In Ta'rīkh, Shuqayr acknowledges his debt to the Sīra<sup>2</sup> but, since he seldom mentions his sources of information in the

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1. For a later biography of the Mahdi see M.O. Beshir, 'Abdel Rahman Ibn Hussein El Jabri and his book "History of the Mahdi"', SNR, xliv, 1963; pp. 136-9. See also Holt, Mahdist state, p. 37, n.1, and Dāghir, Uṣūl, passim. Yūsuf Mikhā'īl's memoirs (see S.M. Nur, A critical edition of the Memoirs of Yūsif [sic] Mikhā'īl [etc.], unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, London, 1962. Ibrāhīm Faẓẓī, Kitāb al-Sūdān bayna yaday Ghurdūn wa-Kitshinir, 3 vols. Cairo, 1319 [1901-2] (I have had access only to the first 2 vols.); and Bābikr Badrī, Ta'rīkh hayātī, 3 vols., Khartoum, 1959-61 (see Nasr al Hag Ali, 'Shaykh Babiker Badri's autobiography: Ta'rīkh Ḥayātī', SNR, xlvi, 1967, pp. 71-6) were composed after the Anglo-Egyptian conquest of the Sudan.
2. See above, p. 8, . and Ta'rīkh, i, pp. 3, 7; iii, p. 362.

course of his narrative, it may be revealing to detect what he borrowed, and sometimes copied, from the Sīra. To the best of my knowledge, E.L. Dietrich (in 1925) was the first European student of the Mahdia to mention Ismā'īl's work, apparently without having consulted it.<sup>1</sup> Trimingham (in 1949), when referring to the Sīra, already thought it necessary to add: 'Shuqair says that he was able to find a copy, but if it still exists it has never been published'.<sup>2</sup> Since then, the Sīra was neither mentioned nor referred to in printed scholarly studies of the Mahdia, and its first accurate, though general, description ~~appeared~~ appeared as late as 1962, in Holt, 'Mahdist archives'.<sup>3</sup> In Sir Ronald Wingate's articles,<sup>4</sup> only a very small part of the Sīra (and Tirāz) were utilized. It should also be noted that he drew his information from their (faulty) manuscript English translation.

The importance of the subject-matter of the Sīra is twofold: its detailed information, and its author's view of the Mahdi and his movement. Even after a critical sifting of its details and despite some deficiencies in the narrative of the Sīra, it is possible to extract much significant historical material from it. The presentation of the Turk, the Mahdi and the Khalifa 'Abdallāhi are of a particular historical value, since

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1. Dietrich, p. 200, n.4; Dietrich, 'Muḥammad Aḥmad', says that Shuqayr 'claims to have had in his hands a copy that was said to have survived'.
  2. Islam, p. 157, n.2.
  3. See pp. 195-7. The biographical information on Ismā'īl given there, is based on Shuqayr, Ta'rīkh.
  4. See above, p. 9, n. 2.

they give an indication of their images in the eyes of an educated Mahdist, as well as an important insight into the ideological framework of the Mahdist movement. The Sīra is also indispensable for the following matters: battles, including preparations and operations; the Mahdist military organization; biographical details of persons; and the connexion of tribes and places with the development of the Mahdist movement. Not surprisingly, Ismā'īl was not concerned with administrative or fiscal affairs, and part of his evidence on these matters may perhaps be regarded as anachronistic. Nevertheless, there are at least three subjects to which the contribution of the Sīra may be regarded as important, though not decisive. First, many remarks are made, throughout the Sīra, about the booty (ghanīma pl. ghanā'im).<sup>1</sup> Secondly, information is given about relatives of the Mahdi and their role in the development of the movement.<sup>2</sup> Thirdly, the Sīra is a unique presentation, by a Mahdist, of the Mahdi's teachings and propaganda. In addition to interesting summaries of the Mahdi's propaganda before and after his manifestation<sup>3</sup> and a remark about its

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1. See, e.g., MS., 131/8-173/6; 188/2-6; 209/2-8; 285/7-12; 288/12-14. The obligation to forward the booty to the Mahdi; MS., 359/6-7; Warning against being fraudulent in the booty; MS., 384/3-11 (Mahdi's proclamation); Preoccupation with booty in the heat of a battle and its disastrous consequences, see summary. Cf. Holt, Mahdist state, pp. 109-12.
  2. E.g., The Mahdi's brothers Muḥammad (and his son Aḥmad), 'Abdallāh and Ḥāmid; The Mahdi's relatives in Dongola and their imprisonment by the British during the withdrawal from the Sudan (MS., 329/5-8; 353/16-355/7), Maḥmūd b. 'Abd al-Qādir and others. For details see summary.
  3. See MS., 36/5-38/9.

method,<sup>1</sup> there are several significant comments about jihād<sup>2</sup> and martyrdom (shahāda).<sup>3</sup> No less significant is the omission, by Ismā'īl, of facts or events which he should have known very well. In the light of his meticulous incorporation of other details, it is most unlikely that the omission of such facts and events was a result of negligence on his behalf. By considering Ismā'īl's account not only as history as he saw it but also as a product of the conditions when he recorded it, much can thus be learnt about the Khalifa's policies in the first years of his rule.

The Sīra is also a unique source for the reconstruction of the image of the Mahdia in relation to its immediate surroundings, as reflected in the writings of an educated contemporary adherent. Ismā'īl's knowledge of external events, forces and factors during the Mahdia may have been very limited, but his attitude towards them is most significant. Although the Sīra was composed while the Mahdia was still at its peak, this alone cannot account for the minor place allocated in it to external forces and factors. This point can be illustrated by a comparison of the place of Gordon's last mission to the Sudan in the relevant European literature and the dearth of references to him in the Sīra. This may perhaps give an indication of both Gordon's meagre chances to succeed in the task he assumed and

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1. MS., 57/17-18. For the polemics with the 'ulamā' see, e.g., MS., 107/13-108/7. For the arrival of a man called al-Kaḥḥāl from Damascus (al-Shām) and the Mahdi's letter, dispatched with him to a pious man in Jerusalem, see MS., 333/14-17.
  2. E.g., MS., 77/6-13; 189/13-15.
  3. E.g., MS., 92/10-13.

the basic error in the assessment of the Mahdia which dominated the views of so many contemporary Europeans. Another point which emerges quite clearly from the Sīra, is its author's differentiation between the Turk and the local Sudanese inhabitants. Those cases in which the latter collaborated with the Turk or showed a lack of sympathy towards the Mahdia, are ascribed by Ismā'īl to compulsion. This reflects perhaps the first and probably unconscious signs of a local Sudanese self-awareness, in whose emergence the Mahdia played an important role.

In conclusion, if the Sīra was the only available source for the history of the Mahdia, it might have furnished the students of this movement with an incomplete and rather distorted picture. As supplementary material, the Sīra provides an important insight. In the final analysis, Slatin's remark that '...these strange chronicles...would expose to the civilised world the methods of Mahdism in all its barefaced mendacity',<sup>1</sup> is certainly a symptom of his (or Wingate's ?) biased attitude. On the other hand, the last part of Shuqayr's statement, derogatory as it is: '...by the burning of Sheikh Isma'il's book, the Khalifa had done, though unpurposely, the 1st right and just act - One copy of this book in our hand is enough to make the necessary and right use of Sheikh Ismail's three years work',<sup>2</sup> seems, ironically, to be very true indeed.

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1. Fire and sword, p. 516.
  2. Memorandum, f.6.

Summary of the Sira

## Explanatory notes

1. The following summary is an attempt both to present a condensed paraphrase of the factual account of the Sīra, and to retain - as far as possible - the spirit of the Arabic text. Generally, the accounts of historical events (mainly battles) have been rendered in greater detail than proof-texts, panegyrics, etc.
2. All the personal names, tribes, and places mentioned in the Arabic text, have been incorporated in the summary. No attempt has been made to standardize the renderings of a given name (e.g., the inclusion or omission by the author of the Arabic words walad, ibn) throughout the Sīra.
3. The division of chapters into sections and paragraphs and all the additions in square brackets are mine. All the non-italicized words in round brackets are apparent errors in the Arabic text.
4. The author makes many digressions. These are indicated in the summary by wide blanks within the lines.
5. References to the pages of the MS. are given in the left-hand margin of the summary and marked in the text by a stroke (/). References to the Qur'ān are to the standard Egyptian edition.

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1 The book of  
the bliss of him who seeks guidance by  
the life of the Imam the Mahdi  
by  
Ismā'īl b. 'Abd al-Qādir/

2 Preface<sup>1</sup>

1. General remarks<sup>2</sup>

Following the basmala, thanksgiving to God and prayers for the Prophet, his family and Companions, the author identifies himself as Ismā'īl b. 'Abd al-Qādir and proceeds to draw a parallel between the biographies (sīra) of the Prophet and the Mahdi. The sīra of the Prophet was compiled by throngs<sup>of</sup> virtuous people and was thus preserved and handed down throughout the generations without alteration. Since the expected master of the age (ṣāhib al-zamān al-muntazar) is the successor (khalīfa)<sup>3</sup> of the Prophet, all the Muslims are in duty bound by religion to spread his sīra and thus prevent its corruption (tahrīf) with the passage of time.

The author, describing himself as one who swore allegiance to the Mahdi and was in his companionship

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1. MS., 2/1 - 6/12.
  2. MS., 2/1 - 4/4.
  3. See introduction, p. 54, and n.4.

3 had been ordered / by the Khalifa 'Abdallāhi to  
 compile part of the Mahdi's sīra, since it is beyond  
 human ability to compile it in full. Without delay,  
 says the author, he obeyed the Khalifa's order,  
 hoping that he would thereby be incorporated amongst  
 the Mahdi's Companions (ashāb)<sup>1</sup> and attain the  
 satisfaction of the Mahdi and the Khalifa.

The author names the work 'the bliss of him who  
 seeks guidance by the life of the Imam the Mahdi',  
 4 and asks that God/assist him to complete it without  
 errors.

## 2. The contents of the Sīra<sup>2</sup>

4-5 The author lists the titles of the introduction,  
 6 eight chapters and epilogue of the Sīra./ The preface  
 is concluded with another prayer for the faultless  
 completion of the work.

Introduction: Traditions announcing the manifestation  
 of the mahdī in the end of the age<sup>3</sup>

1. Prophetic Traditions (ahādīth nabawiyya)<sup>4</sup>  
 concerning the mahdī and his manifestation in  
 the end of the age<sup>5</sup>

Since it is the unchanging custom (sunna) and  
 practica ('āda) of God to return matters to their  
 beginning after they have reached their extreme end,

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1. For the use of the term Ashāb to designate the Mahdi's  
 followers, see introduction, p. 62.  
 2. MS., 4/4 - 6/12.                      5. MS., 6/12-8/9.  
 3. MS., 6/12 - 9/20.  
 4. Like the Mahdi (see MS., 41/6-8), Ismā'īl distinguishes  
 between hadīth (al-ahādīth al-nabawiyya) and athar  
 (al-āthār al-salafiyya). These are technical terms used  
 in the traditional Muslim classification of Hadīth  
 literature.

7 His wisdom and will necessitated the revival (ihyā') of Prophecy by the manifestation of the good news of the Lord of Mankind (sayyid al-anām), through whom God revived the traits of Islam, / the expected Fāṭimī Imām,<sup>1</sup> Muḥammad al-Mahdī b. 'Abdallāh. The following Traditions announce it: (1) The Prophet said: 'He is nothing but a revelation which will be revealed, the mahdī is of me, he has a bald forehead and an aquiline nose. He will fill the earth with equity and justice as it was filled with oppression and tyranny and he will live five, seven or nine |years|. (2) The Prophet said: 'If but one day remained of this world, God would lengthen that day until He sent in it a man of me or of the people of my house. His name would be identical with my name and his father's name with my father's name. He would fill the earth with equity and justice as it was filled with tyranny and oppression'. (3) Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī said: 'The Apostle of God...mentioned an affliction which would befall this Community (umma), until a man would not find a shelter whereunto he would take refuge from the tyranny. Then God would send a man of my family and through him He would fill the earth with equity and justice as it was filled with tyranny and oppression. The dweller in heaven and the dweller on earth will be satisfied with him'. (4) Umm Salama heard the Prophet mention the Mahdi and he said: 'Certainly, he is truth (ḥaqq) and he is of Fāṭima's offspring'. (5) Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī said that the Prophet had said: 'The Hour (al-sā'a) will not come until the earth will be full of oppression, tyranny and enmity. Then, from the people of my house will emerge

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1. See introduction, p. 55.

a man who will fill it with equity and justice as it was filled with tyranny and enmity'. (6) The Prophet also said: 'The mahdī is of us, the people of the house. Through him God will make |things| well in a night'. (7) 'Alī |b. Abī Ṭālib| said that he had asked the Prophet: '"Is the mahdī of us or of others, O Messenger of God?" |The Prophet| said: "Nay, of us. With him God will seal as with us he started"'. (8) Abū Hurayra said that his friend, Abū al-Qāsim, / had said: 'The Hour will not come until a man of the people of my house will emerge against them and he will coerce them until they return to the Truth'. (9) Ibn 'Abbās said that the Prophet had said: 'The Mahdī is the peacock of the people of paradise'. (10) Al-Ṭabarānī narrated, in the Prophet's name, that he had said: 'The mahdī is of my offspring. His countenance is like the brilliant star, The complexion is an Arab complexion and the body is an Israelite body. He will fill the earth with justice as it was filled with oppression'. (11) Jābir said that the Prophet had said: 'He who denied the mahdī is become an unbeliever'. This is the essence of the Prophetic Traditions concerning the mahdī and his emergence in the end of the age.

2. Traditions of the forefathers (āthār salafiyya) which speak clearly of the master of the age<sup>1</sup>

(1) One of the forefathers said in the name of 'Alī |b. Abī Ṭālib| that 'Alī, looking at his son al-Ḥasan, had said: 'Verily, this son of mine is a sayyid,<sup>2</sup> as the apostle of God...named him. From his loins will emerge a man who will be called by

1. MS., 8/9 - 9/15.

2. For the connection between the title sayyid and the 'Alīds, or descendants of the Prophet, see C. van Arendonk, 'Sharīf', SEI, p. 530<sup>ab</sup>.

the name of your Prophet. He will resemble him in disposition (khulq) and he will not resemble him in bodily features (khalq). He will fill the earth with justice'. (2) Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafīyya said: 'We were with 'Alī...and a man asked him about the mahdī, and he said: "That one will emerge in the end of the age, if a man says: "Allah, Allah!" he will be killed. God will gather unto him a people, tattered like tattered clouds, whose hearts God will reconcile. They will not miss anyone |who left them?|and they will not rejoice in anyone who entered amongst them. Their number is in accordance with the number of the people of Badr. The first ones did not surpass them and the last ones did not attain them"'. (3) The author of al-Futūhāt al-Makiyya (Muḥyi al-Dīn b. al-'Arabī | said of the mahdī that there would be with him 360 men of God's perfect (kāmil) men and that this khalīfa |i.e., the mahdī| is of the family of the Prophet, / of Fāṭima's offspring. His name is the name of the Prophet and his kunya is that of his grandfather, al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī. Those who have knowledge of God will swear allegiance to him. They are godly men, they will raise up his call (yuqīmūn da'watihi) and support him, and they are the ministers (wuzarā') who will bear the burdens of the kingdom. (4) He also said that God would appoint as his ministers a group whom He had hidden and shown the truths (al-ḥaqā'iq).<sup>1</sup> This khalīfa will understand the language of the animals and his justice will spread among people and jinns. (5) One of the forefathers said that, from the beginning of the 'Muḥammadan day', the good news of the mahdī's time has been successively narrated. 'By him God will renovate (yujaddid) Islam and manifest justice. The kingdom of the earth will be his lot. He will

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1. See Trimmingham, Islam, p. 207, n.2.

strengthen the Muslims and manifest the |true| religion of the Ḥanīfites, and the period of his reign will be several (bida') |years|. The meaning of 'several' is from three to nine |years|. According to other variants |the period of his reign will be| forty or seventy. Forty |years| is his and his khalīfas' period |of rule|. This is the essence of the Traditions of the forefathers. The author adds that the Traditions concerning the expected Imam follow in an uninterrupted succession and therefore should not be doubted.

10 Chapter I: The fulfilment of the Traditions / in respect of the Mahdi's characteristics and perfection<sup>1</sup>

When God wanted to make the people of the thirteenth century<sup>2</sup> happy, and to link it with the century which was honoured by the exist<sup>5</sup>ence of the Prophet, He caused the Mahdi to be manifested from the world of concealment in spirit and in body. Through him He revived Islam after it had become merely a trace (rasm), nay, a name. God singled out the Sudan for the manifestation of the Mahdi so as to strengthen its people who, spiritually, are the weakest people of all the countries.

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1. MS., 9/20 - 15/6.
  2. The Mahdi's public manifestation (zuhūr) took place in the island of Abā on 1 Sha'bān 1298/29 June 1881, i.e., almost at the end of the thirteenth hijriyya century. The turn of the century has great significance in Islamic eschatology since this is traditionally considered to be the time of the appearance of a mujaddid or mahdī. See Holt, Mahdist state, p. 42, n.2. Cf. M.A. al-Hajj, 'The thirteenth century in Muslim eschatology: Mahdist expectations in the Sokoto Caliphate', Research Bulletin (Ibadan), iii, 1967, pp. 100-15.

For a long time people of perfection were anxiously awaiting the Mahdi and sought to meet him.

- 11 The Mahdi is created / from the Prophetic Light (al-anwār al-nabawīyya)<sup>1</sup> and he is the Successor (khalīfa) of the Prophet and follows in the Prophet's footsteps. God caused Muḥammad to <sup>be</sup> manifested amongst Quraysh when they were worshipping stones and bowing to the sun and the moon. Those of them who followed the Prophet attained authority and were elevated in honours and bliss.

- All the Prophetic Traditions were fulfilled in the Hāshimī scion - the Mahdi. He is of the people of the Prophet's house. His father 'Abdallāh<sup>2</sup> is an offspring of al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī on his mother's and father's side. The Mahdi's mother is a descendant of al-Ḥasan on her mother's side and her father is an 'Abbāsī.<sup>3</sup> The Mahdi's lineage (nasab)<sup>4</sup> is as follows: he is Muḥammad al-Mahdī b. 'Abdallāh b. Faḥl b. 'Abd al-Walī b. 'Abdallāh b. Muḥammad b. Ḥājj Sharīf b. 'Alī b. Aḥmad b. 'Alī b. Ḥasab al-Nabī b. Ṣabr b. Naṣr b. 'Abd al-Karīm b. Ḥusayn b. 'Awnallāh b. Najm al-Dīn / b. 'Uthmān b. Mūsā b. Abī al-'Abbās b. Yūnus b. 'Uthmān b. Ya'qūb b. 'Abd al-Qādir b. al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī b. 'Ulwān<sup>5</sup> b. 'Abd al-Bāqī b. Ṣakhra b. Ya'qūb b. al-Ḥasan the grandson | of the Prophet | b. 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib.

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1. See introduction, p. 50.
  2. See Holt, Mahdist state, p. 37.
  3. I.e., of Ja'alī origin.
  4. See introduction, p. 48. Shuqayr's nasab of the Mahdi (Ta'rīkh, iii, p.114) is identical with this nasab and may have been copied from the Sīra.
  5. MS., reads علون .

He has a bald forehead and an aquiline nose. His countenance is like the brilliant star and his complexion inclines to brown, like that of the Arabs. While sitting and walking he is taller than anyone. This is witnessed by people of the Community who beheld him and they are legion.

The Mahdi filled the earth with equity and justice after it had been filled with oppression and tyranny by the Turks (Turk),<sup>1</sup> who desecrated the shrines of the religion and imposed the poll-tax (jizya)<sup>2</sup> on the Muslims. Falsity and calumny spread amongst them, and they obeyed Satan and rebelled against the Merciful |God|. They hastened to obliterate the traces of Islam, until God manifested the Mahdi who extirpated the tyranny and its people and, consequently, the country and the worshippers were relieved, and justice prevailed. /

13           The Mahdi lived among us five years as had been foretold.<sup>3</sup>

His name corresponds to the name of the Prophet. At first the Mahdi was called Muḥammad Aḥmad. Then the Prophet ordered him to confine his name to its first part, that is, Muḥammad.           The author substantiates this statement by a colloquy (ḥadra)<sup>4</sup> of the Mahdi.           The name of the Mahdi's father corresponds to that of the Prophet's father.

14           God made the Mahdi's bodily features perfect / so that his beautiful body would be suited for the perfect soul. All this is in the way of inheritance

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1. See introduction, p. 39.  
 2. See introduction, p. 40.  
 3. Cf. MS., 7/5. The years account for the period 1881-1885.  
 4. See introduction, p. 36, n.6.

from, and resemblance to Muḥammad. A detailed description of the Mahdi's bodily features follows. As proof that the Mahdi fully resembled the Prophet in his bodily features, the author relates, in the name of the Mahdi, a vision /  
 15 of the Prophet which the Khalifa had had |in his dream|.

## Chapter II: The Mahdi's characteristics, attributes and miracles<sup>1</sup>

### 1. The Mahdi's spiritual characteristics and esoteric attributes<sup>2</sup>

The above account demonstrated the unprecedented and unsurpassable perfection of the Mahdi's bodily features. As for his spiritual characteristics (akhlāw ma'nawīyya) and his esoteric attributes (ṣifāt bātiniyya), only God could encompass the details of their beauty. The following is a fragment  
 16 of his characteristics. / The author enumerates the Mahdi's merits, emphasizing his goodheartedness, moderation and patience, and his kind, equal and lenient treatment of people. His behaviour was moulded by the Qur'ān and by obedience to God. He was severe  
 17 with his enemies / and he cared for the worshippers and the followers, leading them towards the good of both worlds. A list of the Mahdi's attributes follows. Finally, the author stresses the Mahdi's modesty and pious behaviour, pointing out again that it is unfeasible to list all his characteristics.

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1. MS., 15/6 - 26/19.  
 2. MS., 15/11 - 18/8.

18 Prophetic characteristics are worthy of a pure / personality and a clear soul, which has been preserved from childhood. Indeed, from his childhood the Mahdi was the best of people in character, the most truthful in conversation, the greatest in faith and the most perfect in religious matters, God's bestowal of honours upon, and His care for this expected Imam, are more numerous than can be encompassed.

## 2. The Mahdi's distinctive attributes<sup>1</sup>

When God elevated the Mahdi, distinguished him in the Prophetic heritage, and manifested him as mahdī of the whole creation, He bestowed upon him distinctive attributes (khaṣā'īs al-sifāt) and unique miracles (badā'ī' al-karāmāt)<sup>2</sup> which cannot be surpassed. God manifested him, and through him He revived the religion and erected the Prophet's

19 Sharī'a which had been obliterated. / By the guidance (hidāya) and by the sword he called |people| to God, and he wiped out the tyranny and tyrants. He manifested justice, and those who fought him would be killed. He manifested the real religion which, were the Prophet alive, he himself would have enacted. He followed in the footsteps of the Prophet and he was not liable to error (lā yukhtī'). Hence, the wisdom of his abolition of the madhāhib;<sup>3</sup> the Mahdi derived all his laws (aḥkām) from the niche of prophecy (mishkāt al-nubuwwa) without mediator. He was the interpreter (turjumān) of the Prophetic colloquy (al-hadra al-nabawiyya), and the greatest mediator between ourselves and the Prophet in the transmission (tablīgh) of all the Islamic laws (aḥkām). All the

1. MS., 18/8 - 20/19.

2. For a list of the Mahdi's miracles see introduction, pp. 59-60.

3. See introduction, p. 58.

religious observances ('ibādāt), like ablution and prayer, and the practices ('ādāt) should be performed in imitation of the Mahdi, without regard to the madhāhib. The Prophet said: 'Pray as you have seen me pray' and the Mahdi was the one who transmitted (muballigh) in the name of the Prophet. Consequently, all the Muslims are in duty bound to practise that which was brought forth by the Mahdi, / for his act was like the act of the Prophet. The Community is forbidden to oppose him on any matter, and it is only by following the Mahdi to the letter that one can attain the love (mahabba) of God and His Messenger. Even in his wrath, the Mahdi did not exceed the divinely ordained punishments (hudūd Allāh). In conclusion, the Mahdi was the perfect man (al-insān al-kāmil)<sup>1</sup> who was favoured with unique and unprecedented miracles. /

21 3. The Mahdi's miracles<sup>2</sup>

Although it contains material which can deny their claims, the Sīra was not compiled for the sake of those who doubt the Mahdi. It was compiled for those who accept his mahdship, in order to confirm their love and add to the correctness of their belief and faith. Therefore, the author says, he has incorporated in it the principal miracles and the clearest signs (āya) of the Mahdi. In <sup>the</sup> light of the above description of the Mahdi, his mahdship cannot be doubted. To prove the truthfulness of his mahdship is like an attempt to prove the existence of the day. /

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1. See introduction, p. 50.  
2. MS., 21/1 - 26/19.

22 A list of the Mahdi's miracles (karāma pl. karāmāt)<sup>1</sup> follows: (1) In the Mahdi's wars, the enemies' corpses were scorched by a fire which emerged from their wounds. The author was informed that this fire was a hastening of the enemies' punishment. It occurred repeatedly, and was witnessed by those who participated in the wars. The author himself witnessed

23 it in the Mahdi's campaign against Hicks. / This is one of the Mahdi's greatest miracles and signs and one of his distinctive attributes, by means of which God singled him out. Such a thing has not been heard of since the beginning of Islam. The wisdom in the restriction of the occurrence of such a miracle to the time of the expected Imam, which coincides with the end of the age, is perhaps due to the false pretenders to the stage (maqām) of mahdship. God brought this fire into being only by this expected

24 Imam, Muḥammad al-Mahdī b. 'Abdallāh, as proof / of his mahdship. (2) During the Mahdia, fire appeared on the blades of spears and edges of swords when unsheathed. This occurred mostly when a campaign or the dispatch of an expedition was considered, and it augured victory. The fire was witnessed by masses and should not be doubted. This, too, is one of the Mahdi's distinctive miracles since such a thing has not been heard of before. The author remarks on the importance of the use of spears in the jihād and supports his remark by Traditions.

25 Consequently, the Khalifa stressed / the need for an abundant use of spears. (3) In the Mahdi's campaigns, the enemies' corpses were seen to pile up in one hour like a large mound, without any action on the part of the |Mahdist| army. God knows that this was the deed of angels and inhabitants of the

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1. See introduction, pp. 59-60.

world of concealment, through whom God supported his mahdī and who were with him in all his battles. The Mahdi referred to them in one of his proclamations. This miracle, too, has not previously happened to others. (4) The Mahdi's name and his depiction as the mahdī, drawn by the hand of the Eternal Omnipotence, was seen on eggs, tree-leaves and some stones. / It is unimaginable that this would have happened to any other being. This miracle is also confirmed by eyewitnesses and is therefore beyond any doubt. (5) The Mahdi's baraka<sup>1</sup> in food which satisfied many people, and his encampment near wells and watering-places (manhal), then containing little water, which caused their overflowing. The author remarks that other of the Mahdi's many miracles will be mentioned in the course of the Sīra. He emphasizes again that there is no need for the Mahdi to prove his mahdīship through miracles. /

27 Chapter III: The Mahdi's religious observances, until his manifestation<sup>2</sup>

1. The Mahdi's religious observances ('ibādāt)<sup>3</sup>

By the time God bestowed upon the scion of the Hāshimīs the advance along the ascensions of the bliss (ma'ārij al-sa'ādāt),<sup>4</sup> and brought him to the

1. See introduction, p. 59.

2. MS., 27/1 - 35/19.

3. MS., 27/4 - 33/8.

4. To the Sūfīs, the mi'rāj, or the ascension of the Prophet to heaven from Jerusalem, became a symbol of the rise of the soul to the heights of mystic knowledge. See J. Horowitz, 'Mi'rādj', SEI, p. 383<sup>b</sup>.

realm of nearness |to Him| and miracles, the Mahdi had already been cared for by God. He had shown him the beauty of His oneness (ahadiyya) and had made him behold the perfection of His eternity. God evoked in the Mahdi the love of seclusion (khalwa)<sup>1</sup> and retirement ('uzla) from people, so that he would be purified and the lights of wisdom and knowledge would shine on him. From the Mahdi's early life, the khalwa and solitude were the things he loved most, particularly when people were in a state of vanity, like the people of the time. From his childhood, the Mahdi habituated the khalwa, till God honoured /

28 him with the mahdship. The author elaborates on the Mahdi's piety, devotion, asceticism, observances and his instruction of his followers. /

29 When the Mahdi saw the spread of vanity and the universality of wickedness, he fled for his religion (reading: farra bi-dīnihi)<sup>2</sup> from his habitual dwelling-place (mahall iqāmatihi al-waṭaniyya), until he arrived, in 1286 |1869-70|, at the island of Abā - one of the White Nile islands in the south. There he and his people stayed in accordance with the divine voices (al-hawātif al-rabbāniyya) and with the orders he had received in the Prophetic colloquies. He manifested the religion, revived the Custom of the Prophet and called the people to the religion of the Truth. The people of bliss and those who had been singled out responded to his call. The author elaborates on the Mahdi's piety, devotion, asceticism and observances during that period, and on his /

30 teachings and instruction of those who joined him. They were from different countries and tribes, and

1. See introduction, p. 42.

2. Referring to the hijra to Qadīr.

they were godly men (rijāl ilāhīyūn), whom God chose to accompany and support the Mahdi. They sacrificed themselves in his support and bore the burdens of his kingdom. The author indicates, in a laudatory manner, the seniority and superiority of the Khalifa 'Abdallāhi among them.

While pursuing these religious observances, the Mahdi would travel with some of his veteran /  
 31 Companions (al-sābiqūn min ashābihi)<sup>1</sup> warn the Community,<sup>2</sup> preach to them, call them to God, caution them, forbid the reprehensible (al-nahy 'an al-munkar), do away with innovations (bida') and errors, and repent. Then he would return to Abā. This was the Mahdi's practice and manner. He would not relax his attendance at prayer or the repetition of the Qur'ān, admonishing, reciting a wird,<sup>3</sup> supplicating God or endeavouring to cater to the needs of the community. From his early life he was always obedient to God. The author emphasizes that it is impossible to bring together all the Mahdi's 'ibādāt in the Sīra. This is beyond human ability, since the Mahdi's 'ibādāt and mystical  
 32 states (ahwāl) are innumerable.

The author praises the Mahdi's Rātib<sup>4</sup> and emphasizes the obligation to recite it mornings and

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1. Cf. Holt, Mahdist state, p. 117 (on Abkār al-Mahdi).
  2. Before his manifestation the Mahdi made, in 1879, one major journey from Abā to Kordofan. See Holt, Mahdist state, pp. 40-2.
  3. The term wird means both a definite time of the day or the night which the pious believer devotes daily to praying in addition to the five obligatory prayers, and a formula of prayer recited on this occasion (also called hizb or rātib). See L. Massignon, 'Wird', SEI, pp. 634<sup>ab</sup>; Trimmingham, Islam, p. 213, m.1.
  4. See introduction, p. 28.

33 evenings. / He mentions a proclamation (ranshūr) of the Mahdi concerning the Rātib, and quotes the Khalifa as having said that the road which leads to God Most High is confined to several matters, the Rātib being one of them.

## 2. The Mahdi's manifestation<sup>1</sup>

When the first qualities of his mahdship and the tidings of the Prophetic heritage were shown to the Mahdi by divine voices and Prophetic messages (khitābāt), he informed some of his closest Companions about it. The first person to know and to accept it was his senior khalīfa, 'Abdallāhi. Then, the Mahdi informed the rest of the Companions and also corresponded with some of the Companions in the districts, urging them to support the religion, make the hijra and join him. When the time for his dawn came, God manifested him as mahdī of mankind. /

34 With his own eyes and while he was awake, the Mahdi then beheld the Prophet, who informed him that he was the senior khalīfa and the expected mahdī, and that he who doubted his mahdship was an unbeliever. The author summarizes the Mahdi's vision of his investiture.<sup>2</sup>

The manifestation of the Mahdi took place in Ramaḍān 1298 |August-September 1881|. <sup>3</sup> At that time the Mahdi was undoubtedly under forty years of age. In this the author sees a great secret, but he does  
35 not elaborate.<sup>4</sup> / The location of the Mahdi's

1. MS., 33/8 - 35/19.

2. See MS., 38/15 - 43/7.

3. Cf. Holt, Mahdist state, p. 46, where the manifestation is dated 1 Sha'bān 1298/29 June 1881.

4. Hinting, most probably, to the parallel with the Prophet's career. The Mahdi was said to be born on 27 Rajab 1260/12 August 1844. See Holt, Mahdist state, p. 37, n.1.

manifestation, namely, the island of Abā, is also regarded by the author as a mark of his mahdiship and as one of the greatest proofs of the perfection of his virtues. His appearance at Abā complies with a Tradition that he would appear suddenly, from an unknown<sup>h</sup> direction and manner. No definite text is extant, which defines the time and location of the Mahdi's manifestation. The unprecedented manner of his manifestation at Abā is therefore the greatest proof that he was the expected Imam, whose appearance had been foretold by the Prophet.

36 Chapter IV: The Mahdi's propaganda / and  
correspondence<sup>1</sup>

1. The Mahdi's propaganda (di'āya)<sup>2</sup>

When God bestowed the mahdiship upon him, the Mahdi secretly commenced to call the people to God, to save Islam and to abandon the innovations, the reprehensible and the worldly characteristics of the people of the age, particularly those who were concerned with religious affairs | al-muntamīn ilā al-diyāna |,<sup>3</sup> such as the love of honour, authority, flattery and the use of the ways which lead to God as nets for catching this world. The Mahdi also urged them to the jihād and to make the hijra to him. He persistently called upon the people, despite the /

1. MS., 35/19 - 46/11.

2. MS., 36/5 - 38/9.

3. The term diyāna perhaps refers, in Ismā'īl's usage, to men of religion other than 'ulamā'' (cf. MS., 148/2) or to the ṭarīqas. It is used once as a synonym of the Khatmiyya (MS., 226/1), once as a synonym of the Mahdia (MS., 329/10), and once in a general sense of piety (MS., 285/10).

37. troubles inflicted by some upon him and his veteran Companions. These he bore with patience and perseverance, since the mahdship involves burdens which only one endowed by God with the Prophetic heritage can bear.

When the Mahdi<sup>was</sup> ordered to manifest his call (da'wa) and announce his mahdship he rose, publicly calling the people to God, to revive the religion, rectify the Custom of the Prophet, support the Truth, resist the innovators and make them repent. This is the pure religion of the Prophet and all his Companions and it is in accordance with the Book and the Custom. The Mahdi proceeded with his call to the people until God guided the Community through him, and his Companions attained closeness to the

38. Companions of the Prophet. / The author remarks that it is impossible to give an exhaustive account of the Mahdi's propaganda.

## 2. The Mahdi's correspondence<sup>1</sup>

Since communication by correspondence was a custom of the Prophet's and as the Mahdi was his khalīfa and followed in his footsteps, he dispatched letters to the people of Islam, in which he called them to God and to revive the Custom of the Prophet. These letters are numerous and some of them will be mentioned in the Sīra as a blessing ('alā wajh

38- al-tabarruk)/ The author transcribes in  
43 full a proclamation,<sup>2</sup> in which the Mahdi describes

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1. MS., 38/9 - 46/11.
  2. See Manshūrāt, i, pp. 11-4; Shuqayr, Ta'rīkh, iii, pp. 121-4 (Aietrich, pp. 219-24). The proclamation was issued, apparently, after the Mahdi's hijra to Qadīr (see MS., 40/4-7). Cf. Holt, Mahdist state, pp. 98-100. The same proclamation is again fully transcribed in MS., 374/15 - 379/18.

the scene of his investiture and states the proofs of his mahdship, requesting the people to accept his call and join him.

- 43 The Mahdi's correspondence can be studied by reference to the collection of proclamations (jāmi' al-manshūrāt),<sup>1</sup> His correspondence to the Community, thereby saving them from grief, derives from the Custom and practice of God with the essence of his creation. Its source is the announcement of good tidings (tabshīr), warning (indhār), and calling to the revival of the principles of the Community which God enacted and to the following of the ways of the pious. This was |the quality of| being shaped by the nature of God (min al-takhalluq bi-akhlāq Allāh) and
- 44 of following the Custom of the Prophet. / All the Mahdi's actions and utterances are sustained by the Book and by the Custom, for he is infallible (dhū al-ʿisma).<sup>2</sup> The author remarks that, wherever appropriate in the course of the Sīra, he will incorporate the Mahdi's correspondence to the kings and commanders. The Mahdi's letters, like the Prophet's, are written in a manner which would enable their recipients to understand
- 45 them, / for the Mahdi is the Successor of the Prophet and follows in his footsteps. An informant told the author that the Mahdi had said: 'Verily, the Prophet... speaks with us now in the speech (kalām) of the people of our time'. This, the author interprets as the language and the terms with which people are
- 46 acquainted at present, / so that they would easily understand the meaning and come to God in the shortest time.

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1. See introduction, p. 28.

2. See introduction, p. 51.

The Mahdi had several seals for his letters. The last of these seals, which was employed till the Mahdi died, had three lines engraved:

Lā ilāh illā Allāh  
Muḥammad rasūl Allāh  
Muhammad al-Mahdī b. 'Abdallāh <sup>1</sup>

Chapter V: The mustering of the tribes and the arrival of successive deputations to the Mahdi<sup>2</sup>

### 1. Deputations to the Mahdi in Abā<sup>3</sup>

When God wished to manifest the Mahdi and to strengthen him, He subjugated the tribes to him in fulfilment of His pledge, given by the Prophet, that the Mahdi would be victorious. Therefore, Arab and other tribes flocked to the Mahdi from everywhere.

(1) The first tribe (qabīla) to send a deputation (wafd) was the tribe of Dighaym.<sup>4</sup> Their deputation to Abā included Muḥammad w. Bilāl,<sup>5</sup> / Mūsā w. Muḥammad Ḥilū<sup>6</sup> and Muhla w. Muḥammad.<sup>7</sup> These three were chiefs of the people (ru'asā' al-qawm). They swore allegiance and the Mahdi greeted them. Deputations also arrived from the following tribes, envoys of

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1. See Shuqayr, Ta'rīkh, iii, page facing 246.
  2. MS., 46/11 - 53/15.
  3. MS., 46/14 - 48/6.
  4. See MacMichael, Arabs in the Sudan, iii. 6, iii.
  5. See Hill, BD, p. 254.
  6. See Hill, BD, p. 284, s.v. Mūsā wad Ḥilū; Reid, 'Mahdi's emirs', p. 312.
  7. He was later dispatched by the Mahdi to his tribe for reinforcement and participated in the battle of Abā. See MS., 64/15 - 16; 65/8.

which swore allegiance and obtained the Mahdi's blessings and greetings. (2) Kināna:<sup>1</sup> al-Bashīr w. 'Ajab al-Fayya,<sup>2</sup> Ibrāhīm b. Abī 'A'īsha and 'Alī w. 'Uwayḍa<sup>3</sup> - chiefs of the people. (3) The Ḥusaynāt:<sup>4</sup> Wad 'Abd al-Qādir w. Mudarra', Aḥmad w. 'Abdallāh w. Ḥallāb, and Muḥammad Nūr w. 'Abdallāh w. Ḥallāb - chiefs of the people. (4) The 'Amārna:<sup>5</sup> Abū Bakr w. 'Amir,<sup>6</sup> al-Nā'ir w. Maḥmūd and Adam w. Kūkū - their chiefs. (5) Duwayḥ:<sup>7</sup> 'Alī, Barakāt<sup>8</sup> and al-'Ubayd, the sons of Muḥammad Sa'īd - chiefs of the people. (6) Fallāta:<sup>9</sup> Adam w. al-U'aysir<sup>10</sup> and al-Sammānī<sup>11</sup> - notables (a'yān) of their people. Others who came to the Mahdi in Abā and swore allegiance were 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Nujūmī,<sup>12</sup> 'Abdallāh al-Tijānī,<sup>13</sup> 'Abdallāh w. Ḥasan, and Aḥmad w. Jubāra.<sup>14</sup> Other / deputations from different districts and tribes and from remote countries successively came to the Mahdi. These will be mentioned in the course of the Sīra.

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1. MS., 1.4, reads كَانَة . See MacMichael, Arabs in the Sudan, iii, 6; i-ii; Tribes of Kordofan, pp. 167-71.
  2. See Hill, BD, p.75, s.v. Bashīr 'Ajab al-Fayya.
  3. See MS., 103/2.
  4. MS., here and 67/9 reads الحنات . MS., 64/18 vocalizes: الحنات . See MacMichael, Arabs in the Sudan, iii.1, vii; iii.5, vii; Tribes of Kordofan, pp.72-3.
  5. See MacMichael, Arabs in the Sudan, iii.2, xiii.
  6. He is mentioned in MS., 320/1; 345/16, as one (of the commanders ?) who later participated in the siege of Khartoum.
  7. See MacMichael, Arabs in the Sudan, iii.2, xxxiii.
  8. 'Alī and Barakāt were later killed in the battle with al-Shallālī (1882), See MS., 130/1.
  9. MS., reads نَدَانَة . See MacMichael, Arabs in the Sudan, by index: Fellāta; Tribes of Kordofan, p. 152, n.1.
  10. Mentioned in MS., 66/8; 69/15 as one of the participants in the battle of Abā.
  11. He was later sent by the Mahdi from Abā for reinforcement . See MS., 65/1.
  12. See Hill, BD, p.17; Reid, 'Mahdi's emirs', pp. 310-11.
  13. Mentioned later (as 'Abdallāh al-Tijānī), MS., 175/14-15, as the Mahdi's Keeper of his...Seal and his Scribe (amīn...alā khātimihi...wa-kātibihi), who was killed in the Friday Battle of El Obeid (September, 1882).
  14. See Hill, BD, p. 34; Holt, Mahdist state, pp. 54, 116.

2. The main characteristics of those who  
joined the Mahdi<sup>1</sup>

The author parallels the mustering of the tribes to the Mahdi's aid with the response of the tribes to the Prophet's call. When the Prophet called upon people to profess the unity of God (tawhīd Allāh) and to enter His religion, those upon whom God wished to bestow bliss hastily complied with his call. The majority of them were tribes who were deemed weak and individuals who were marked / by submissiveness and lack of arrogance ('adam al-jabriyya).<sup>2</sup> They continued to join the Mahdi [sic, for Prophet?] until God made His servant victorious. The Prophet said: 'Verily, God contracted the land for me, its eastern and its western |parts| and the kingdom (mulk) of my Community (umma) will reach that |part of the world| which God had contracted for me'. Now this expected Fāṭimī, the Mahdi, was the Successor of the Prophet and he was promised that his kingdom would reach the whole world. The author interprets the word 'Community' in the above Tradition as perhaps designating the Mahdi, who combined the qualities of perfection to be found in the Community. When the Mahdi arose, God aided him with those tribes who were deemed weak and with individuals who did not have a firm footing in honour and power. This is God's unvarying custom. / The author augments this statement with a citation of a speech by Abū Ṭālib to the notables of Quraysh. / He adds that victory will be attained by those who are deemed weak, for God may manifest his omnipotence through the weakest of his creatures. Also, the author quotes

1. MS., 48/6 - 53/15.

2. Cf., MS., 50/14 - 15, and Mahdi's statement, MS., 114/17 - 19.

a conversation of Heraclius, the king of the Byzantines, with Abū Sufyān, in which Heraclius postulates that apostles should be followed by the weak. As a rule, the followers of the apostles are people of humility and humbleness, not people of haughtiness and arrogance.

God supported His Mahdi with these and other tribes and made him victorious over his enemies. /  
 52 Despite the tribes' violence,<sup>1</sup> scorn, mutual enmity, raids, lack of common language and disregard for punishment, God reconciled their hearts and united them through His Mahdi and they became brethren and ardent supporters of the Mahdi's cause. They performed the hijra and sacrificed their lives and properties in support of the Mahdi, without any material temptation  
 53 on his behalf, / On the contrary, the Mahdi rendered the rich poor, requesting them to spend their money on the jihād. Also, he made the honourable like the common |people|. All these matters had never been combined in one person. The Mahdi's ways and thoughts cannot be doubted by anyone, and this is a godly matter which exceeds the customary. The author praises the Companions who sacrificed themselves for the jihād and for the strengthening of the religion, and he asks that God reward them accordingly.

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1. Reading *أهل* (from *أهل*).

Chapter VI: The Mahdi's first battle with the Turks  
and his victory over them<sup>1</sup> /

- 54 1. The mission of Muḥammad Abū al-Su'ūd<sup>2</sup>  
a. The Turks' refutation of, and enmity to  
the Mahdi<sup>3</sup>

As soon as the Mahdi's general call (da'wa 'amma) became publicly known, crowds of people began to embrace the straight religion (al-dīn al-mustaqīm). The first to meet the Mahdi with enmity were the kings (mulūk) of the Turks<sup>4</sup> and their helpers. Preferring the perpetuation of their kingdom (mulk) and authority, they denied the manifest truth and rejected the Mahdi, whom they were in duty bound to follow, together with the rest of the Community. Their rejection of the Mahdi's message was like rejecting the call of the Prophet. Thus they deserved eternal abhorrence and severe punishment and they committed a gross crime. They were motivated by the love of honour and primacy, which possessed their hearts until it dissuaded them from accepting the Truth.

- 55 It was concealed from them / that it was the Mahdi's practice to honour every man of merit and to nominate him over his own people. This was done after a man had become a sincere, obedient follower of the Mahdi and had been educated and instructed by him. Had they obeyed and sincerely followed the Mahdi, he would have nominated them over their people, as he did with other people of high rank and standing who submitted to, and obeyed him. It is, however, impossible to grasp the infinite wisdom of God.

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1. MS., 53/15 - 84/18.

2. MS., 54/2 - 61/1.

3. MS., 54/2 - 55/10.

4. Cf. MS., 59/15-16, whence it appears that mulūk al-Turk refers to the rulers of Egypt.

b. Abū al-Su'ūd's meeting with the Mahdi<sup>1</sup>

The Turks dispatched to the Mahdi, while he was staying at Abā, one of their notables called |Muḥammad| Abū al-Su'ūd.<sup>2</sup> Playing on the pun in the emissary's name: Abū al-Su'ūd (the father of good fortune), the author interprets his departure as a good omen for the Mahdia and a calamity for the band which strayed from the way (al-ṭarīqa) of Muḥammad. The Mahdi was the heir of the Prophet and the father of good fortune. / As the son cannot be found without a father so it is only by following the Mahdi that one can be fortunate in this and in the other world. By dispatching Abū al-Su'ūd to the Mahdi, the kings of the Turks rejected their good fortune. Therefore they opposed the Mahdi and consequently their kingdom would disappear. Abū

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al-Su'ūd arrived by steamer at Abā on / Sunday, 11 Ramaḍān 1298 |7 August 1881| and obtained permission to enter the Mahdi's khalwa and place of worship. He was permitted by the Mahdi to speak, and in their conversation |narrated in direct speech| Abū al-Su'ūd told the Mahdi that the Pasha<sup>3</sup> had heard of the Mahdia and rejoiced in it. The Pasha therefore summoned the Mahdi to Khartoum in order to support and follow him. As the Pasha was the ruler (walī al-amr), it was a duty to obey him. To this the Mahdi replied that he himself was the ruler, whom the ~~whole~~ 'Muḥammadan Community' was in duty bound to obey. Therefore, he was not to be summoned by Abū al-Su'ūd's superiors. He also produced proof that he ~~was~~ the expected mahdī. The Mahdi softened his voice and spoke kindly, commensurate with Abū

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1. MS., 55/10 - 59/14.
  2. See Hill, BD., pp. 274-5, s.v. Muḥammad Abū Su'ūd Bey al-'Aqqād; Hill, Egypt, p. 136.
  3. I.e., the governor-general Muḥammad Ra'ūf Pasha.

al-Su'ūd's capacity to comprehend. Like the Prophet, the Mahdi used to address people in accordance with their comprehension. As Abū

58

al-Su'ūd realized that the Mahdi was treating him with patience, / he carried on and disclosed what was hidden in his heart. He told the Mahdi that he should abandon his call as he could not fight the government (hukūma) with his meagre number of followers. Pointing at the senior khalīfa 'Abdallāhi and the other khalīfas and veteran Companions who were present in council (majlis), the Mahdi answered, smiling, that he would fight the government, if need be, only with those present. The Mahdi then asked them whether they were content to die for the cause of God (fī sabīl Allāh). The Khalifa promptly declared that they were ready to die for God, His Messenger and His Mahdi, and all the others answered likewise. The author draws a parallel

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between the Turks' mission to the Mahdi / and a mission of inquiry sent by order of Chosroes,<sup>1</sup> the king of the Persians, to the Prophet. Since the Mahdi's arguments did not make an impression on Abū al-Su'ūd, the Mahdi left him in peace because, according to the custom of the Messengers, an emissary should not be harmed.

c. The Mahdi's letter to the governor-general of the Sudan<sup>2</sup>

The author transcribes a letter dated 1298 |1881|<sup>3</sup> which the Mahdi had sent from Abā to the hukumdāriyya<sup>4</sup>

1. Khusraw II Anūsharwān, of the Sassanid dynasty.
2. MS., 59/14 - 61/1.
3. See Manshūrāt, ii, pp. 13-14; Shuqayr, Ta'rīkh, iii pp. 127-8 (Dietrich, p. 229).
4. The official title of the governor-general of the Sudan between 1835-85 was hukumdār, hikimdār (Turkish: hükümdār), lit., "commissioner. Towards the end of the Turco-Egyptian rule they tended to be styled hukumdār 'umūm. See Hill, BD, p. xi; Hill, Egypt, p. 22.

before the arrival of Muḥammad Abū al-Su'ūd. /

60 In this letter he stresses that his practices follow a divine nomination from the Prophet. He then threatens the unbelievers that they will be purified by the sword which was given to him in two colloquies, and that God will punish them.

2. The battle of Abā<sup>1</sup> /

61 a. The preparations for the battle<sup>2</sup>

When the emissary of the Turks despaired and returned, the kings of the Turks began their preparations, including tricks and stratagems, to fight the Mahdi. The Mahdi told the Companions that the Turks would return with reinforcements to fight them, and permitted those who feared for their children and property to leave him temporarily until the outcome of the first battle with the Turks would be known. All of them replied, however, that they were ready to sacrifice everything for the Mahdi, and he greeted them. The author

62 remarks that this is paralleled by the battle of Badr, when the Prophet allowed his / Companions to withdraw from participating in the battle, but they declined his offer. The author was told that the Mahdi had said that one of his Companions went to summon his friends to the jihād and they refrained, saying that they could not fight the regime (dawla). This man then heard a voice urging them to comply with their oath of allegiance,<sup>3</sup> and

63 all of them promptly reported to the Mahdi. / The author adds that the Mahdi's speech to his adherents

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1. MS., 61/1 - 84/18.

2. MS., 61/1 - 65/13.

3. Qur'ān, 9.111.

was one of the proofs that he indeed was the expected mahdī. Since he was nominated by an annunciation, his victory was not dependent on the number of his fighters.

When the Mahdi's Companions realized that the Turks were returning to fight them, as the Mahdi had foretold, some of them suggested to the Mahdi, on Monday eve, 12 Ramaḍān | 8 August 1881 |, that he should leave Abā and make preparations for battle on the west bank | of the Nile |. The Mahdi replied that he would consider the proposal in the morning. Late that night, the Mahdi summoned the Khalifa 'Abdallāhi and 'Alī Muḥammad Ḥilū, Khalīfat  
 64 al-Fārūq,<sup>1</sup> / and the rest of the Companions. The Mahdi told them to remain in Abā, and that he had been informed by the Prophet that the Turks would arrive after three days. Holding a small reed-pen, he said that the Prophet had told him not to fear the Turks for they were as weak as that same straw. Indeed, the Turks arrived after three days, exactly as the Mahdi had foretold. This was one of his miracles which proves that everything he foretold would come true.

Then the Mahdi sent word to the tribes in the vicinity of Abā, on the west bank | of the Nile |, calling them to war. He sent Muhla w. Muḥammad and Muḥammad w. Bilāl, of the Dighaym tribal lords (sādāt), to mobilize their people. Raḥma w. 'Umar  
 65 he sent to the Ḥusaynāt<sup>2</sup> tribe / and 'Ubaydallāh and al-Sammānī | to the Fallāta Tribe ? |<sup>3</sup> to do the same. All of them obeyed the Mahdi's order and reported to him before the battle. He told them that

1. See Hill, BD, p. 47, s.v. 'Alī wad Ḥilū Khalīfat al-Mahdi; Holt, Mahdist state, by index: 'Alī b. Muḥammad Ḥilū.

2. MS. reads الحيات . 3. Cf. MS., 47/15,

the Prophet had announced that all the people of the |Mahdi's| residence (buq'a)<sup>1</sup> in Abā, even the servants came under the Prophet's guarantee (damān). The Mahdi also informed them of a colloquy he had had in Abā, which said: 'Go in humility and do not scorn those who stay behind', and that after the colloquy he knew that the tribes would join him and support the religion.

b. The arrival of the Turks in Abā and the battle<sup>2</sup>

After the evening prayer on Friday eve, 16 Ramaḍān | 12 August 1881| the Mahdi ordered his Companions to return to their homes and to return late that night for the tarāwīḥ prayer.<sup>3</sup> After a short while the Mahdi ordered to call them to this prayer and when it was over he announced that the Turks would arrive that same night by steamer. The author remarks that perhaps the Mahdi obtained this information / from the Prophet. On 66 Friday, before dawn, the Mahdi ordered to prepare the army for the battle and to put a muqaddam<sup>4</sup> in charge of every ten fighting men. He took his sword from the mosque and intended to enter his house, but he came out hurriedly and announced that the Turks had arrived by steamer. one of the author's informants told him that two men,

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1. The term buq'at al-Mahdī or al-buq'a designated the residence of the Mahdi for the time being and thus it eventually became the official name of Omdurman. See Holt, Mahdist state, p. 230.
  2. MS., 65/13 - 68/15.
  3. A prayer which is performed in the nights of Ramaḍān. See A.J. Wensinck, 'Tarāwīḥ', SEI, p. 573<sup>a</sup>.
  4. See Holt, Mahdist state, pp. 105-6. The term muqaddam, which is not used anywhere else in the Sīra, was abolished by the Mahdi's orders in Rajab 1301/May 1884.

Barakāt w. Muḥammad<sup>1</sup> and Ādam w. al-U'aysir had informed the Mahdi of the arrival of the Turks. The author concludes, however, that the Mahdi was told by the Prophet, or by the Angel of Inspiration, of all future events. Sometimes, though, the same information was later furnished by people and, as the Mahdi was listening to them attentively, /  
67 they thought that they were his sole source of information.

When the army left the village (hilla) and was stationed to its east, the Mahdi ordered to straighten the lines and placed the fighters as follows: Dighaym tribe towards the south, i.e., on the right of the army; Muhla w. Muḥammad to their right, towards the south; the Ḥusaynāt<sup>2</sup> tribe close to Dighaym, towards the north; the people of the Mahdi's house and others who were permanently residing with him and formed his retinue (ma'iyya) were placed close to the above groups. When this was carried out, the Mahdi ordered his men to sit down on the ground, not to fear the Turks and not to engage them in fighting unless the Turks started first. In that case, the Mahdists should exclaim three times: 'O God, Thou art our Lord and their Lord, We entrust ourselves and them in Thy hand and it is Thou who will slay them'. Should the Turks shoot, /  
68 the fighters / were to charge them.

The Turks disembarked from the steamer and arranged themselves according to their military rules, forming a square (qal'a)<sup>3</sup> commanded by Satan.

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1. Probably identical with Barakāt w. Muḥammad Sa'īd mentioned in MS., 47/13-14, as one of the Mahdi's emissaries. See also MS., 130/13.
  2. MS.; reads الحنات.
  3. Cf., MS., 240/4-5.

They approached the village from the eastern side, intending to attack those who were there. However, when they saw that the Companions were firm and that they had formed a barrier between them and the village, the Turks moved from north to south, opposite Dighaym tribe. They fired at the Companions who, in turn, charged, having cited the above mentioned call. The Companions won the day and the Turks were routed.

c. Miracles and wonders<sup>1</sup>

The author describes five miracles which occurred during the battle of Abā: (1) God made the battleground muddy and the enemies of God, who became entangled in the mud, were unable to flee. Only those who hurried back to the steamer, / and they were few, survived. Nine of them were taken prisoners. Of those, some returned to the Turks and the others joined the Mahdi. (2) The majority of the Companions did not have any weapons besides sticks and very few spears and swords. Some were unarmed and the Mahdi told them to equip themselves with stones, clay and even wood <sup>and</sup> straw from the khalwa. This proves that victory is in the hands of God and is not dependent on the number of fighters. (3) The Companions had only one horse, Ādam w. al-U'aysir's, which the Mahdi was riding during the battle. His Khalifa | 'Abdallāhi | asked him to dismount while another man suggested that he should remain on horseback because of the muddy ground. The Mahdi took the Khalifa's advice, dismounted, and at that instant / the horse was shot and fell to the ground. All those present were amazed and they knew that God was supporting all the Khalifa's

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1. MS., 68/15 - 73/2.

actions. (4) God made the Mahdi victorious in the battle of Abā although his Companions were neither prepared nor properly equipped. This corroborates the Mahdi's statement that the Prophet had told him not to fear the Turks. (5) During the battle the Mahdi was obeying the Prophet's order to stay  
 71 behind the army. / His Khalifa was shielding him with his own body, protecting him from the bullets. The Mahdi was seriously wounded in his right shoulder  
 72 and his body was covered with blood. / When the Khalifa realized that, he dressed the wound and concealed it, thus preventing havoc and failure.

The author praises the Khalifa for his wise behaviour in the first battle with the Turks, **when** all the fighters were inexperienced. Little wonder that the Khalifa knew what to do, since he was supported by al-Khidr. /

73 d. The counter-attack of the Turks and their defeat<sup>1</sup>

At dawn, the Prayer of Fear (ṣalāt al-khawf)<sup>2</sup> was held in the mosque. It was the only time until the Mahdi's death, that this prayer was performed. It was held because some of the Turks, having been defeated in the battle, joined the others who were in the steamer and commenced firing at the Mahdi's village. The Mahdi thereupon divided his fighters; one group was praying the morning prayer while the other group

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1. MS., 73/2 - 76/11.
  2. This prayer may be held when an Islamic community is threatened by an enemy. See A.J. Wensinck, 'Ṣalāt', SEI, p. 496<sup>b</sup>, who described the main deviation in the Prayer of Fear from the usual practice, as follows: 'the believers are arranged in two rows of which one keeps watch with weapon in hand during the sudjūd of the other; they repeat this in turns...!'

74 was keeping watch. After the prayer the Mahdi and his Companions joined those who were fighting the Turks who were in the steamer. When the firing intensified, the Khalifa pleaded with the Mahdi to take shelter in a nearby booth / and so he did, It was the Mahdi's habit not to contradict his Companions' advice, particularly when this came from his senior khalīfa. The author remarks on the bond between the Mahdi and the Khalifa and compares it to the relationship of the Prophet and Abū Bakr. After the Mahdi entered the booth, the Khalifa shielded and protected him by his own body, as was his habit. / Although the Khalifa knew that God was protecting the Mahdi, his compassion drove him to shield the Mahdi. The battle continued until sunrise, and then the Turks were defeated and, after a group of them had been killed by the Companions' bullets, started to flee on board the steamer. The author remarks that he was not able to ascertain whether the Mahdi did participate in the actual fighting, but an eyewitness had told him that after the battle he saw that the Mahdi's sword and garments were blood-soaked but he had not seen the Mahdi fighting.

75

Twelve of the Mahdi's Companions died as martyrs in the battle of Abā. Nine men of the Dighaym tribe: Muḥammad w. al-Ḍawāhā, 'Alī w. Nāfi', Muḥammad w. 'Alī, 'Alī w. 'Abdallāh, 'Alī w. Shā' al-Dīn, and al-Bashīr w. Muḥammad died on the battlefield. Ibrāhīm w. 'Alī, Balla w. Muḥammad and Adam w. al-Baghdādī / died two days after the battle. Two men of the Mahdi's residence died: al-Ḥājj Jammaṭ and 'Isā w. Bābikr. A man of the 'Amārna tribe, Muḥammad w. Balla, was wounded and died after |several| days.

76

e: Parallels between the battles of Abā, Badr and Uḥud<sup>1</sup>

The battle of Abā, where the Mahdi, with 313 to 350 men, defeated the Turks who outnumbered them and were better prepared, follows the pattern of the Prophet's battles. This parallel is one of the marks of the Mahdi's mahdishop. / (1) God combined in the Mahdi a 'call to Allah...by the sword, and by furnishing proof', permitted him to fight his adversaries and promised him victory over all his enemies. This killing is instead of the punishment which his adversaries deserve, and it has an inherent |divine| wisdom - the attainment of martyrdom by the Mahdi's Companions and the revenge taken on his enemies by the jihād. / The author supports this point with some of the Mahdi's sayings. / Like the Mahdi, the Prophet was also permitted to fight the unbelievers. (2) Another parallel is the date of the battle of Abā - Friday, 16 Ramaḍān, and of Badr - Friday, 17 Ramaḍān.<sup>2</sup> The discrepancy in one day is explained as a secret, but the author does not elaborate. / He adds that, having written the previous passage, he found in Nasīhat al-'Awwām li'l-Khāss wa'l-'Āmm (The advice of al-'Awwām to the Special and the General),<sup>3</sup> that the battle of Abā commenced on 17 Ramaḍān.<sup>4</sup> (3) In the battle of Abā the Mahdi's

1. MS., 76/11 - 84/8.

2. Cf. W. Montgomery Watt, 'Badr', EI<sup>2</sup>, pp. 867<sup>b</sup> - 868a.

3. See introduction, p. 28. Ismā'īl says that al-'Awwām was one of the Turks who came to Khartoum after the 'Urābī revolt. He sympathised with the Mahdi and wrote his book while he was with the Turks in Khartoum. When Gordon learnt about his work he killed al-'Awwām.

4. See Nasīhat al-'Awwām, p. 31, and introduction, above, p. 28.

Companions had only one horse. It is said that in Badr the Companions, too, had only one horse. According to another version, however, they had two horses. This discrepancy is explained as a secret but here, too, the author does not elaborate. (4) The Mahdi's Companions numbered over 300. / The number of the Badr fighters was 313. In variants other numbers are given. (5) 12 people died as martyrs in the battle of Abā, and 14 died in the battle of Badr. There is a |divine| wisdom in this, similar to the previously mentioned ones. Again, the author does not elaborate. (6) The Prophet had announced to the Mahdi that he would guarantee all the residents of Abā who were present. This follows the pattern of what the Prophet had told his own fighters in Badr. (7) The deep mud in Abā was due to heavy rains. / Rain and mud also aided the Companions in Badr. (8) The Mahdi was wounded in Abā. The Prophet - in Uḥud. /

82 The author draws the following conclusions from the battle of Abā and its resemblance to the battles of Badr and Uḥud. (1) The Prophets and God's distinguished servants (khawāṣṣ 'ibādihi) are tested by such hardships because the reward is in accordance with the hardships inflicted on them by their adversaries. Their recompence lies in their guidance to their followers. No one ever received a greater reward, below the stage of prophethood itself, than the Mahdi. (2) God honoured the Mahdi and made him follow in the footsteps of the Prophet. This proves that he would attain the highest possible merits. (3) The similarity between the battles of Abā and Badr should be understood within the preceding conclusions. / (4) God's support to his Mahdi in the battle with the Turks should be considered as a sign

of his mahdship, and more so, because the predictions made by the forefathers (awā'il) say that the Mahdi's first battle would be fought against the Ottoman flag (al-rāya al-'Uthmāniyya).<sup>1</sup> (5) The souls of the dead Turks were snatched by a falcon and carried off, as the Mahdi himself said [later]. /

84 Accordingly, all the Mahdi's predictions would come true. All the Muslims are, therefore, in duty bound to accept the Mahdi.

f. The burial of the martyrs<sup>2</sup>

The Mahdi ordered the martyrs to be buried in the battleground with all their clothes, save their weapons, and they were buried in the Mahdi's mosque. As for the dead of the enemy, they were left in the open, prey for the birds and the wild animals. All their weapons were collected and distributed, by order of the Mahdi, to his Companions.

85 Chapter VII: The Mahdi's hijra / to Qadīr and his jihād, to the fall of El Obeid<sup>3</sup>

1. The Mahdi's hijra to Qadīr<sup>4</sup>

a. The Mahdi's departure from Abā<sup>5</sup>

After the battle of Abā the Mahdi instructed his Companions, by order of the Prophet, to make the hijra to 'Jabal Māsa,<sup>6</sup> near Jabal Qadīr'. He and

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1. For the term rāya see below, p. 136, n.2.  
 2. MS., 84/8 - 18.  
 3. MS., 84/18 - 189/7.  
 4. MS., 85/9 - 99/8.  
 5. MS., 85/9 - 87/16.  
 6. See introduction, p. 53.

the people left the village of Abā on Friday, the day of the battle [16 Ramaḍān 1298/12 August 1881]. They stayed near the river, in a watering-place  
 86 (mashra') called al-Ṭawīla, / on the island. The men ferried the women and the children to the west bank [of the Nile], willingly leaving behind their homes and most of their possessions. The author remarks that God facilitated the Mahdi's hijra and protected him on his way. In the safe arrival of the Mahdi and his men at their destination, he sees  
 87 proof of God's complete support for those who made the hijra. / He interprets the name of Qadīr as a migration to God the Omnipotent [dhū al-qudra], and sees in this a good omen. After the ferrying of the women, the children and the fighters, the Mahdi and his close Companions crossed the river by boat to the west bank, where the Mahdi joined the army, opposite the watering-place of al-Ṭawīla.

b. The Mahdi's itinerary to Qadīr<sup>1</sup>

Thence the Mahdi and all his Companions went through the following places: Ṭulayḥ Nabḥān,<sup>2</sup> Aghsil,  
 88 Maḥlūl, / Jammās, Umm Diqin, al-Maqārayn, Qūr al-Habīl, Umm Lafḥa, Umm Shimāl, Umm Qudūr, Qardūd al-Jalat, Dardmī Buyūt, Abū Ṣubāgha, Umm Maghrī, and Umm Shibīllu, the dwellings (manāzil) of the Aḥāmda,<sup>3</sup> where the Mahdi was welcomed and honoured. Thence he went to al-Fawwāl, Jabal Fayū, and Abū Rijlayn, a watering-place (manhal) in the region

1. MS., 87/16 - 89/8.

2. Or: Banḥān.

3. See MacMichael, Arabs in the Sudan, iii.5, vi; MacMichael, Tribes of Kordofan, p. 205, n.1.

of Umm Ṭalḥa, in the land of Taqalī.<sup>1</sup> There, the Khalifa's brother, Ya'qūb b. Muḥammad,<sup>2</sup> came to the Mahdi as a delegate, together with a party (jamā'a) of his relatives, and they swore allegiance. /

89 While the Mahdi was at Abū Rijlayn, deputations came from that region and swore allegiance.

Thence, the Mahdi went to al-Zamziyya - a well-known river in the land of Taqalī. There the Mahdi heard that Muḥammad Sa'īd |Wahbī|,<sup>3</sup> the Paṣha of El Obeid who was governor (mudīr) of Kordofan, had been ordered by |Muḥammad| ('Abd al-) Ra'ūf,<sup>4</sup> the governor-general of the Sudan, to march to Abā and fight the Mahdi.

c. The march of Muḥammad Sa'īd to the Mahdi<sup>5</sup>

When Muḥammad Sa'īd |Wahbī| and his Turks arrived in Abā and learnt that the Mahdi had left, he devastated the island, looted the Companions' properties and then followed in the Mahdi's tracks. When the matter of Muḥammad Sa'īd was confirmed to the Mahdi, he sent three men from al-Zamziyya to investigate: Jum'a w. Bilāl and Khuwaylid w. al-Faqīh. The author remarks that he was unable to find out the name of the third man. On

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1. For a short description and history of the Taqalī region see R.J. Elles, 'The Kingdom of Tegali', SNR, xviii/1, 1935, pp. 1-35. Supplemented by J.W. Kenrick, 'The Kingdom of Tegali, 1921-1946', SNR, xxix/2, 1948, pp. 143-50.
  2. See Hill, BD, p. 383, s.v. Ya'qūb Muḥammad Tūrshain; Reid, 'Mahdi's emirs', p. 308; Holt, Mahdist state, p. 189. Ya'qūb is not mentioned anywhere else in the MS.
  3. See Hill, BD, p. 271; Holt, Mahdist state, pp. 41, 48, 52-4, 56-7.
  4. See Hill, BD, p. 270; Egypt, pp. 148-51, 164-6; Holt, Mahdist state, pp. 32, 47-9. In the MS., his name is twice given as 'Abd al-Ra'ūf (here and 107/5).
  5. MS., 89/8 - 93/7.

90 their return, the Mahdi ordered the Companions to prepare for battle with Muḥammad Sa'īd / at al-Zamziyya. One of the Companions proposed a move to a more suitable battlefield, and the Mahdi approved, in accordance with his and the Prophet's habit not to contradict what the Companions deemed proper, particularly in military affairs. The Mahdi and his Companions then moved to Jabal al-Kumur in the land of Taqalī and, at the suggestion of one of the Companions, they encamped there. The Mahdi then sent al-Qurashī w. Aḥmad al-Kinānī, Muḥammad w. Aḥmad, Muḥammad w. 'Alwān, and al-Akram of the Dighaym /

91 to reconnoitre Muḥammad Sa'īd. They rode their horses till they reached al-Dabba, one of the market-places of Umm Ṭalḥa, in the land of Taqalī, where they learnt that Muḥammad Sa'īd was at Abū Shudayra in the land of Taqalī, awaiting an opportunity to attack the Mahdi's army. They returned and informed the Mahdi about it.

He and all his Companions left |Jabal al-Kumur| and marched against Muḥammad Sa'īd. After he reached Abū Watad, the Mahdi was informed that Muḥammad Sa'īd, hearing that the Mahdi was marching against him, had turned away and fled as swift as the wind. When the flight of Muḥammad Sa'īd was confirmed /

92 to the Mahdi, he and the Companions returned to Jabal Kumur. The author remarks that when the Mahdi heard that Muḥammad Sa'īd was marching against him, he said: '...If they |the government troops| reach us, their rifles will become like sticks in their hands, and no fire will ever emerge from them'. The author adds, on the authority of an eyewitness, that when the Companions realized that Muḥammad Sa'īd had fled, some of them wept. This he attributes to their grief for missing the jihād,

which is a means for the attainment of the martyrdom - the ultimate aim of the Companions. The author elaborates / on this point.

d. The continuation of the hijra and the clash with al-Mukhtār w. al-Zubayr, of Jabal al-Jarāda<sup>1</sup>

From Jabal al-Kumur the Mahdi went to Jabal al-Naqāra, where he stayed for ten days. Thence he went to Khūr Bayḍā, Khūr Abjala, and Jabal Kurun, also in the land of Taqālī. In Jabal Kurun he heard that some of the inhabitants of that country were refraining from accepting him. In accordance with his practice, the Mahdi wrote letters to their  
 94 chiefs calling them to God. His emissary / delivered a letter to 'Alī b. Ḥamad al-Kinānī, one of the notables of that region. When the Mahdi's letter reached 'Alī, he accepted the Mahdi. He then forwarded |delivered|<sup>2</sup> the letter which was addressed to al-Mukhtār w. al-Zubayr al-Kinānī, a notable of Jabal al-Jarāda and one of the false 'ulamā' (min muqulladat al-'ulamā'). Having read the Mahdi's letter, al-Mukhtār professed his obedience but there was something in his heart. The Mahdi's emissary then delivered a letter from the Mahdi to Nāṣir, the makk of Jabal Qadīr<sup>3</sup> who also accepted the Mahdi. Having delivered all the Mahdi's letters, the emissary returned. Passing by al-Mukhtār w. al-Zubayr, he found that the latter had lapsed and shown the hypocrisy which he was harbouring. Realizing that, the emissary took back the Mahdi's letter, returned it to the Mahdi, who was sitting in Jabal Kurun, <sup>and</sup> told him what had happened with al-Mukhtār. The Mahdi

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1. MS., 93/7 - 99/8.
  2. Reading ارسل instead of ارسل.
  3. See Hill, Egypt, pp. 89, 110. For the term makk, malik see ibid., p. 9; Holt, Modern history p. 213.

95 then went with the army to Khūr Hashīm and thence  
to / Fūlat Walad al-'Idaq |?|, and Khūr al-Widay.  
There the women and the children were left,  
according to the Mahdi's orders, and he and the  
army marched on Jabal al-Jarāda, the place of  
al-Mukhtār, which is close to Jabal Qadīr.

Approaching Jabal al-Jarāda, the Mahdi summoned  
'Alī b. Ḥamad al-Kinānī and all his people to Jabal  
al-Jarāda. The Mahdi then arrived there and encamped  
near the village of al-Mukhtār, who had gathered his  
hordes with the intention of fighting the Mahdi.  
When al-Mukhtār saw the Mahdi's army he was frightened  
and dispersed his men. The Mahdi then called  
al-Mukhtār to God and warned him of the consequences  
of opposition, to which al-Mukhtār replied in  
a most repugnant manner. The Mahdi persistently  
tried to change al-Mukhtār's mind but to not avail. /  
96 Some of al-Mukhtār's brethren and relatives then  
|deserted and| joined the Mahdi. Dissociating  
themselves from al-Mukhtār, they brought to the  
Mahdi a man called al-Badawī, the son of al-Mukhtār's  
father. The Mahdi administered to him the oath of  
allegiance and nominated him over those of his  
people who were following the Mahdi. Those who  
remained with al-Mukhtār instigated him to fight and  
he promised them victory. Thereupon, the Mahdi  
announced that the baraka of al-Mukhtār had been  
taken away.

Then 'Alī b. Ḥamad al-Kinānī and his men arrived  
in compliance with the Mahdi's orders. Al-Mukhtār  
mistook the Companions' lining-up to welcome 'Alī  
on his arrival, for their heading to fight him.  
Consequently, he instructed his party to prepare  
for war, which they did. Some of the Companions /

97 who were relatives of al-Mukhtār, for they were of his own - Kināna - tribe, set their horses running, once in 'Alī's direction rejoicing |in his arrival| and once towards al-Mukhtār, offering him the amān of the Mahdi. Meanwhile, al-Mukhtār ordered some of his people to fire. When the Companions realized that al-Mukhtār was fighting them, they charged and forced him and his people out of their village, compelled them to climb Jabal al-Jarāda, and followed in their tracks. Al-Mukhtār and thirteen of his people were  
 98 killed, the rest were defeated and requested / the Mahdi's amān, which he granted. They submitted and the Mahdi ordered the return of all |the booty| that had been seized from them. This battle took place on Monday, the end |30| of |Dhū| al-Qa'da 1298 |24 October 1881|. The Mahdi then gave orders to fetch all the households which had been left in Jabal Kurun,<sup>1</sup> They were brought to Jabal al-Jarāda, where the Mahdi stayed for seven days. Thence he set out for Qadīr,

The Mahdi arrived in Jabal Qadīr on Monday, 7 Dhū al-Ḥijja |31 October 1881| and was met there with great rejoicing by Makk Nāṣir, the chief of Jabal Qadīr. By the Mahdi's orders, a mosque and dwellings for his blessed wives were built. The Companions also built their own houses. There they all remained, praising God. Commenting on the name of Nāṣir |i.e., one who grants victory, also, one of God's names|, whom the Mahdi met in Qadīr, /  
 99 the author sees this as a good omen. He compares it with an event which occurred on the Prophet's arrival at al-Madīna.

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 1. Cf. MS., 95/2-3, where the author specifies Khūr al-Widay as the place where the women and children were left,

2. The Mahdi in Qadīr<sup>1</sup>a. The battle with Rāshid Bey Aymān<sup>2</sup>

When Rāshid [Bey Aymān],<sup>3</sup> the governor of Fashoda, heard of the killing of the Turks in Abā, he called up his troops and all the inhabitants of the regions under his authority,<sup>4</sup> and advanced towards the Mahdi at Qadīr. Rāshid's boldness, insolence, love of authority and avidity for promotion made him set out  
 100 to fight the Mahdi / without the permission of his superior. Such a thing was contrary to the Turkish military rules, but Rāshid, was enticed by Satan. On reaching Jabal Funqur, Rāshid warned the inhabitants not to inform the Mahdi of his march, hoping, thereby, to take the Mahdi by surprise. The wicked Rāshid did not know that the Prophet or the Angel of Inspiration (reading: malak al-ilhām) was informing the Mahdi of all the forthcoming events. The author  
 101 adds that / the Mahdi was constantly in the stage of beholding (maqām al-mushāhada) the Prophet without the least of screens (adnā al-hijāb). Rāshid then sent an emissary to Jabal Kāz and Jabal Jāz, which are on the way to Qadīr, to tell their inhabitants that they had his amān, that he was not advancing on them but on the Dervishes,<sup>5</sup> and to warn

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1. MS., 99/8 - 134/16.
  2. MS., 99/8 - 106/19.
  3. See Hill, BD, pp. 314-5.
  4. Referring probably to the Shilluk tribesmen who participated in Rāshid's expedition. See Holt, Mahdist state, p. 48.
  5. This is the only place in the Sīra, where the term darāwīsh (sing. darwīsh) is mentioned. For the Mahdi's abrogation of its use and its substitution by Anṣār, see Holt, Mahdist state, p. 106. In the Sīra, the term Anṣār is used only once (380/8, in a proclamation of the Mahdi).

102 them not to inform the Mahdi / of Rāshid's march. As it happened, a woman of the Kināna tribe, Rābiḥa bint 'Alī w. Mar'ī, was there and heard the news. She hurried to the Mahdi, arriving on the last watch (thulth) of Thursday eve, 15 Muḥarram 1299 | 7 December 1881|,<sup>1</sup> and informed him of Rāshid's march. Some of the people of Qadīr who were present told the Mahdi that the woman was a well-known liar. The Mahdi smiled and said that she was telling the truth. He then said that he had been informed, on that night, that the Turks would arrive on either Friday or Saturday and that the Mahdists would fight and defeat them. The author interprets the arrival of Rābiḥa | connoting ribḥ - gain, profit|, as a good omen and proof that God protected the Mahdi.

103 The Mahdi then sent 'Alī w. / 'Uwayḍa al-Kinānī,<sup>2</sup> 'Alī w. Muḥammad al-Dighaymī and 'Abdallāh al-Rizayqī to reconnoitre Rāshid. On Thursday they set out on horseback. As they tarried, the Mahdi made al-Dāwī<sup>3</sup> follow them, with orders to reconnoitre and return. He left on Friday eve, 16 Muḥarram | 8 December, 1881|. <sup>4</sup> On his way he noticed the Mahdi's three scouts, but he concealed himself and went on till he arrived in Rāshid's camp. Returning to the Mahdi he ran into two scouts of the Turks who had been sent to the Mahdi's place in Qadīr. He shot one of them dead and the other fled. He seized the dead man's rifle, /

104 looted him and threw his corpse on the road, so that the passing Turks would see him and be vexed and annoyed. Before the morning prayer | of Friday| he returned to the Mahdi, set the rifle and the other

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1. 15 Muḥarram 1299 was Wednesday.
  2. Perhaps identical with the member of the Kināna deputation to the Mahdi in Abā. See MS., 47/5.
  3. Died in May 1882, in the battle with al-Shallālī, See MS., 130/15-17.
  4. 16 Muḥarram 1299 was Thursday.

booty before him and informed him of the advancing Turks. As for the other three scouts, having learnt about Rāshid's army, they continued to march near them. Arriving with the Turks in the vicinity of the Mahdi's place, they left them, came to the Mahdi after the morning prayer, and gave him the information.

By the Mahdi's orders, the Companions left the village and he stationed them east of it as follows: Dighaym tribe towards the south; the martyr (al-shahīd) Muḥammad |b. 'Abdallāh|,<sup>1</sup> the Mahdi's brother, and his men, close to Dighaym tribe, towards the north; and Kināna tribe close to Muḥammad, the Mahdi's  
 105 brother, / towards the north. Thus, Muḥammad and his men were in the centre of the army. Having stationed the army, the Mahdi roused his Companions and made them desire what God had prepared for fighters of the jihād.

At sunrise |Friday| the enemy's army rose. The Companions waited patiently till the enemy was closer than bullet-range. By Rāshid's orders, his army fired at the Companions, who charged and annihilated them. Only those who fled - and they were few - survived. Rāshid was killed and 111 men were taken prisoner. About 30 of the Companions died as martyrs, among them Muḥammad w. al-Ḥājj Sharfī and Muḥammad | - al-Bakīl. An eyewitness told the author that he had seen blood on the Mahdi's sword and clothes/  
 106 but that he had not seen the Mahdi actually fighting. He adds that, as in the battle of Abā, in this battle the Khalifa was ~~also~~ close to the Mahdi, protecting

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 1. See Hill, BD, p. 271, s.v. Muḥammad ibn al-Saiyid 'Abd Allāh. In the Sīra he is nicknamed 'the martyr' (al-shahīd). In the account of the Mahdi's march to Kordofan his division (rāya) is mentioned (MS., 135/18 - 136/9).

him from the bullets with his own body. The Mahdi then ordered the martyrs to be buried with all their clothes, save the weapons. As for the prisoners, some of them reverted to the Turks and some accepted the Mahdi.

When the Mahdi heard that the people of Jabal Funqur, which is two days from Qadīr, had aided Rāshid with transport animals, provisions and some fighting men, he set out, with all his Companions, to raid them. After the Mahdi's arrival at Jabal Funqur, its people wanted to fight him, but God cast fear in their hearts and they requested the Mahdi's amān, which he granted them. In accordance with his noble practice he pardoned them and returned without a battle. /

107 b. The battle with Yūsuf b. Ḥasan al-Shallāī<sup>1</sup>

When |Muḥammad| ('Abd al-) Ra'ūf Pasha, the governor-general of the Sudan, heard in Khartoum of the killing of Rāshid |Bey Aymān|, he communicated the news to the ruler of Egypt |the Khedive Tawfīq| who, in turn, ordered him to dispatch those troops which were in the Sudan to fight the Mahdi. The author attributes Tawfīq's not sending an Egyptian army, to the 'Urābī revolt. The failure of 'Urābī is explained by the Wālī's |i.e., the Khedive Tawfīq| action in unison with the English and the bribes they paid to 'Urābī's supporters in the Egyptian army. Furthermore, the author mentions fatwās of the 'ulamā' of Egypt w supporting 'Urābī's  
 108 opposition to the Wālī. / He expresses his astonishment at the approval by the 'ulamā' of the 'Urābī's

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 1. MS., 107/1 - 133/17.

action against the Wālī of Egypt, while, on the other hand, they denied the Mahdi's cause and his activities against the Turks. Elaborating on this point, the author states that although the Mahdi did not need the attestation (shahāda) of the 'ulamā', their own fatwās make fighting against the Turks obligatory on all the Muslims, let alone the Mahdi, whose very mission was to do away with them. / The said governor-general of the Sudan organized<sup>1</sup> a large and well-equipped army, under the command of Yūsuf Pasha Ḥasan al-Shallālī.<sup>2</sup> ~~By~~ the governor-general's orders Muḥammad Sa'īd [Wahbī], the governor of Kordofan, dispatched a large force, under the command of Maḥmūd Efendī 'Abd al-'Asīz. Other participants, noted for their strength and bravery, were: Khalīfa w. Tīma, the Sultan<sup>3</sup> of the Kunjāra<sup>4</sup> in Kordofan; Sa'd Ḥamza, the Sultan of the Musabba'āt<sup>5</sup> in Kordofan; 'Abdallāh Muḥammad Ḍafa'allāh<sup>6</sup> and 'Abd al-Hādī Ṣabr,<sup>7</sup> notables of the people of Kordofan, who were in the service of the Turks; and tribal chiefs. The expeditionary force mustered in Fashoda province, allegedly in al-Jabalayn, under the command of Yūsuf Ḥasan al-Shallālī. / The author emphasizes the strength of the well-equipped army which cannot, he says, be described exhaustively. Relying on their

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1. The expedition of al-Shallālī was organized, in fact, by Giegler Pasha, who was acting governor-general in the interim period between Muḥammad Ra'ūf's recall (March 1882) and the arrival, two months later, of his successor, 'Abd al-Qādir Ḥilmī. See Holt, Mahdist state, p. 49.
  2. See Hill, BD, p. 386.
  3. In the Sudanese usage, Sultān is a traditional and, generally, a hereditary title of rulers of the Fūnj, Fūr and certain lesser chieftains.
  4. See MacMichael, Arabs in the Sudan, i.4,xx.
  5. See MacMichael, Arabs in the Sudan, iii.1, xiii and xxxi; iii.4,x; MacMichael, Tribes of Kordofan, pp. 54-6; 60-4.
  6. See Holt, Mahdist state, pp. 41, 49.
  7. See Hill, BD, p.9; Bolton, 'El Menna Ismail', p. 232.

military strength, the Turks disregarded the Qur'ānic verses which promise victory to the patient and righteous servants of God.

As for the Mahdi, he had been informed by the Prophet that a strong force of Turks would arrive, that they would be killed and that the Companions should prepare themselves. When the arrival of the Turks in Fashoda was confirmed, the Mahdi sent out scouts on reconnaissance and they brought him  
 111 information. / Again he sent scouts who, on their  
 arrival in Jabal Funqur, came across the army of the  
 Turks. Four of the scouts were captured<sup>1</sup> and put to  
 death: Idrīs w. Balla, 'Abdallāh al-Rizayqī and  
 al-Hilālī al-Masallamī. The author says that  
 he was unable to find out the name of the fourth  
 scout. The others returned safely and told  
 the Mahdi what had happened. His scouts continuously  
 watched the Turks, at times killing one of them, till  
 they reached Shaqq al-Ḥajar, about 6 hours from Qadīr.  
 The Turks stayed there 18 days in order to rest and  
 prepare for war.

After the Turks arrived at Jabal Funqur, they  
 111- wrote to the Mahdi. / His reply is fully transcribed  
 119 in the Sīra.<sup>2</sup> In it the Mahdi replies to different  
 accusations apparantly made by Yūsuf al-Shallālī with  
 reference to events in the Mahdia. The Mahdi then  
 embarks on a more general level of discussion, stating  
 principles of conduct and furnishing proof that he  
 is the mahdī. The letter concludes with the challenge:  
 'There is nothing between us and you, save the sword'

1. Cf. MS., 136/3 - 8.

2. Dated 4 Rajab 1299/22 May 1882. See Manshūrāt,  
 ii, pp. 18-25; Shuqayr, Ta'rīkh, iii, pp. 133-7  
 (Dietrich, pp. 231-7); Holt, Mahdist state, p.50, n.1.

and adds that the Mahdi would not reply to any further correspondence.

119           When the Mahdi realized that the Turks had arrived in Shaqq al-Ḥajar, he ordered his Companions to leave the village |of Qadīr|, to stay in front of the place and to prepare for the battle. Following the Custom of the Prophet's Companions, the Mahdi ordered the Companions to hold a parade ('ard).<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, the Mahdi sent some Companions to reconnoitre

120 the enemy. / They returned and informed him that the Turks had left their place |Shaqq al-Ḥajar| and had fled in an unknown direction. The Mahdi smiled, and ordered them to go back and find out about the Turks, for the Prophet had informed him that they would come and that the Mahdists would kill them. As for the Turks, they had risen from Shaqq al-Ḥajar and, deviating from the customary route leading to Qadīr, took the way leading to Jabal al-Jarāda, where they encamped near the fields.           The author remarks that they may have changed the route in order to conceal their movements, to enable them to attack the Companions. He was informed that the Turks had taken the al-Jarāda route with the intention of commanding the whole mountainous region of Taqālī. Thus this region, which they alleged was loyal to them, would be behind them, form a source of supplies and secure them from a Mahdist attack on their rear.           As for Jabal al-Jarāda, the Turks intended to launch

121 incursions on its people and intimidate them / into obedience. Thereby they attempted to isolate the Mahdists in Jabal Qadīr from the inhabited areas of the mountains of Taqālī, to cut off their supplies and, consequently, to facilitate warfare against them.

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1. See Holt, Mahdist state, p. 231; Ohrwalder, Ten years' captivity, pp. 304-8; Slatin, Fire and sword, pp. 529-30.

It was concealed from them that the Mahdi was protected by Divine Providence, and that even the combined forces of men and jinns could not destroy him. Quoting an eyewitness, the author adds that when the scouts reported to the Mahdi that the Turks had withdrawn, some of the Companions wept. / He ascribes this to their grief at losing the opportunity to participate in the jihād and thereby attain martyrdom.

Then the people of al-Jarāda arrived, told the Mahdi of the Turks' encampment in their fields and appealed for his help against them. Also, the Mahdi's scouts returned and informed him of the Turks' encampment in Jabal al-Jarāda. The Turks, having encamped there, had sent a party (shirdhima) to make an incursion on the people of Jabal al-Jarāda. In the fighting which ensued, two of the Turks were killed, and the others fled and joined their |main| army. The Mahdi dispatched 200 horsemen, commanded by one of his relatives, Muḥammad Muzammil, known as Abū Hidāya.<sup>1</sup> His orders were to fall upon the Turks, come between them and the village of al-Jarāda, and thereby prevent them from making incursions on its people and devastating their places. / The horsemen carried out their orders on Sunday, 10 Rajab 1299 |28 May, 1882|.

When the Turks encamped, they built an extremely strong quadrangular fort of thorn-bushes |zarība|. At each corner they placed a gun with a party of

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1. Died in the battle with Yūsuf al-Shallālī. See MS., 130/12.

artillerymen (tūbjiyya), and they prepared for the battle in an unsurpassable manner. The author describes their licentious behaviour and their reliance on military strength, / contrasting this with the pious conduct of the Companions. The Mahdi then ordered the army to stay in front of the village and to prepare for battle. After the sunset prayer on Monday eve, 11 Rajab |1299/29 May 1882|,<sup>1</sup> the Mahdi came out of his house, unsheathing his sword and uttering the takbīr. He said that he had been informed by the Prophet to advance the army against the Turks. He summoned the division-commanders, and the first division (rāya)<sup>2</sup> which approached him was that of the Manāṣīr<sup>3</sup> tribe. This the author interprets as a good omen |Manāṣīr connoting naṣr, i.e., victory|. During the night the divisions came in succession to the Mahdi, and he ordered them to advance towards the enemy. / The main army was joined by the above-mentioned horsemen<sup>4</sup> and by the Mahdi, the Khalifa and the rest of the distinguished Companions. They spent the night near the enemy's place. The author explains the merits of using flags (rāya) in battle, stating that this had also been the practice of the Prophet. The Mahdi appointed his relative, Maḥmūd b. 'Abd al-Qādir,<sup>5</sup> 'āmil<sup>6</sup> of Qadīr |referred to as: Dār hijratihi|. He ordered Maḥmūd and his division, if the Turks failed to arrive |in Qādir| after the morning prayer of Monday |11 Rajab/29 May|,

1. Cf. Holt, Mahdist state, p.50 (dating the battle as 12 Rajab/30 May), and n.2. Shuqayr's dating of the battle as 11 Rajab (Ta'rīkh, iii, p.137) is evidently based on the Sīra.
2. For the term rāya see Holt, Mahdist state, pp.104-5.
3. See MacMichael, Arabs in the Sudan, iii. 1, xix-xx.
4. See MS., 122/13-14.
5. See Hill, BD, p. 226, s.v. Maḥmūd wad Khalīl wad 'Abd al-Wāḥid; Holt, Mahdist state, pp. 125-6.
6. See Holt, Mahdist state, p. 105, n.2.

to promptly join the main body of the [Mahdist] army./  
 126 These orders were issued as a result of a rumour that  
 the Turks intended to send a band to attack the village  
 [of Qadīr] whilst the Mahdi was marching on them.  
 Owing to the Companions' annihilation of the Turks  
 in their own fort, they were unable to implement  
 their plan.

After the morning prayer of Monday, 11 Rajab  
 [29 May], the Mahdi roused the Companions, as was  
 his practice and in accordance with the Custom of the  
 Prophet. He told them that when they saw the enemy  
 they should utter the takbīr three times; then three  
 times: 'O God, Thou art our Lord and their Lord, we  
 entrust ourselves and them in Thy Hand and it is Thou  
 127 who will slay them'. / By the Mahdi's order the  
 Companions charged with resolution and perseverance,  
 uttering the tahlīl and the takbīr and shouting at  
 the enemy. The author remarks on the merits  
 of shouting in battle and that the Companions'  
 shouting was in accordance with the practice of the  
 128 Companions of the Prophet. / After a short while, the  
 Companions penetrated the fort despite its thorns and  
 strength. An eyewitness told the author that when the  
 Companions had drawn near the enemy, a wind blew  
 and seemed to snatch the Companions and thrust them  
 into the fort. They slaughtered the Turks, forced them  
 out of the fort and killed them in pursuit. As the  
 fort was vast and the Companions had not surrounded  
 it during their penetration, they were unable [now]  
 to surround it. It so happened that the majority of  
 the Companions penetrated the fort from that very  
 direction in which Yūsuf al-Shallālī was fighting.  
 He and those who were close to him were killed outside  
 129 the fort whilst fleeing. / A large group of Turks  
 had remained inside the fort after Yūsuf al-Shallālī's  
 flight. The majority of the Companions pursued the

fleeing Turks and only a few, including the Mahdi, his senior khalīfa and the other khalīfas, remained on the battlefield, at very close range to the Turks. The latter, wishing to exploit the opportunity, opened murderous fire on the Mahdi. The Companions who were pursuing the Turks realized that the shooting and fighting was directed against the Mahdi and rushed  
 130 back in compassion for him. / Prior to their return (Muḥammad) |Maḥmūd b. 'Abd al-Qādir|<sup>1</sup> and his men, complying with the Mahdi's orders, arrived, charged the Turks and penetrated the fort. The rest of the Companions now joined in, and together they massacred all the Turks, save a few who had hidden themselves.

About 200 Companions died as martyrs in this battle. Among them were Ḥāmid, the Mahdi's brother, who had been wounded in the battle and died a day later; Muḥammad |Muzammil| Abū Hidāya; Barakāt and 'Alī, the sons of Muḥammad Sa'īd and veteran Companions of the Mahdi; and al-Ḍāwī, whom the Mahdi used to employ as a scout. The dead notables and chiefs of the Turks included Yūsuf al-Shallālī, /  
 131 Maḥmūd Efendī 'Abd al-'Aḥīz, Sulaymān Efendī al-Ṣāgh, Sulaymān Agha al-Artūdhī |al-Arna'ūdī ?|, and Yūsuf Agha al-Sār Sawārī. Also, notables of the Sudanese (ahl al-balad) who were in the service of the Turkish government, like 'Abdallāh Muḥammad Dafa'allāh, 'Abd al-Hādī Ṣabr, and Ṭāhā al-Shāyqī. The number of other Turks exceeded 10,000. A few were taken prisoner. The Mahdi then ordered the martyrs to be buried on the battle-ground, in accordance with the Custom of the Prophet, and they were buried with all their clothes, save their weapons.

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1. Cf. The Mahdi's order to Maḥmūd, MS., 125/15 - 18.

The Mahdi ordered the collection of the booty (ghanā'īm),<sup>1</sup> which was in abundance and most useful to the Companions. The booty was divided among the warriors after the deduction of the Fifth (al-khums).<sup>2</sup>

The author adds that the Mahdi repeatedly warned the Companions, when they were setting out for a campaign, not to be fraudulent in the booty. / He adds that the Mahdi's proclamations contain many warnings concerning the booty. The Khalifa, too, repeatedly warned against being fraudulent in the booty. The author mentions an event in the life of the Prophet, / to the effect that fraudulence in booty leads to one's ruin.

In the battle with al-Shallālī, a fire was seen to emerge from the wounds in the enemies' corpses and to burn them. The author adds that this miracle occurred in all the campaigns of the Mahdi, upto his own time.

c. Deputations offering the oath of allegiance<sup>3</sup>

The author lists several deputations which came to the Mahdi 'in Jabal Māsa, near Jabal Qadīr'. / This is a tribute to their high standing and precedence over those who did not make the hijra to the Mahdi in Qadīr - although all the Mahdi's Companions were worthy ('alā khayr). The following swore allegiance: a group of the Ḥamar<sup>4</sup> tribe and their chiefs, some

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1. For the administration of the booty (ghanā'īm) under the Mahdi see Holt, Mahdist state, pp. 109-10.
  2. According to the Sharī'a, a fifth of the booty belongs to the Imam of the Community and the rest is divided among the warriors.
  3. MS., 133/17 - 134/16.
  4. See MacMichael, Arabs in the Sudan, iii.1, xi-xiv; Machmichael, Tribes of Kordofan, pp. 156-64.

people of the Ghudiyāt<sup>1</sup> tribe and a party of Awlād Abī Ṣafiyya.<sup>2</sup> Aḥmad 'Alī,<sup>3</sup> the Qādī al-Islām at the time of writing, came from Shakkā, where he had served as qādī on behalf of the Turkish government. When he heard of the Mahdi's arrival in Qadīr he relinquished his position, joined the Mahdi and swore allegiance. Others who came to the Mahdi included parties of the Tumām<sup>4</sup> tribe, the Birqid<sup>5</sup> tribe, and the Tumbāb<sup>6</sup> tribe - all of them from Kordofan.

3. The continuation of the jihād, to the fall of El Obeid<sup>7</sup> /

135 a. The Mahdi's march to Kordofan<sup>8</sup>

After the battle with al-Shallālī, the Mahdi stayed in Qadīr |referred to as Dār hijratihi| for the remainder of Rajab and Sha'bān. After 12 nights in Ramaḍān |1299| had elapsed |28 July 1882|, he set out on campaign, and appointed Maḥmūd b. 'Abd al-Qādir 'āmil of Qadīr.

The author remarks that whenever the Mahdi set out on campaign he, in accordance with the Custom of the Prophet, appointed someone to care for those who stayed behind. On this campaign the Mahdi was joined by all the Companions, save the sick and those who had an excuse, who were

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1. See MacMichael, Arabs in the Sudan, iii.1, xi-xiv, MacMichael, Tribes of Kordofan, pp. 65-9.
  2. See Holt, Mahdist state, pp. 41-2.
  3. See Hill, BD, p. 29; Slatin, Fire and sword, pp. 231-2, 286, 505-6; Holt, Mahdist state, pp. 116, 191. For his alleged connection with the banishment of the author of the Sīra, see introduction, pp. 21-2.
  4. See MacMichael; Tribes of Kordofan, pp. 67-8.
  5. See MacMichael; Arabs in the Sudan, i.4, ix.
  6. See MacMichael, Arabs in the Sudan, iii.1, xxii.
  7. MS., 134/16 - 189/7.
  8. MS., 134/16 - 150/15.

left with Maḥmūd. When the army left Qadīr, the men did not know the direction in which the Mahdi wished to go. The martyr Muḥammad, the Mahdi's brother, /  
 136 set out with the people of his division towards Jabal Funqur. He thought that the Mahdi intended to attack its people, since they had aided al-Shallālī when he was on his way to fight the Mahdi. Furthermore, they had taken the Mahdi's scouts by surprise, shackled them and brought them to al-Shallālī, who killed them. Another part of the army set out towards Jabal Taqalī, the place of Makk Ādam |Umm Dabbālū|,<sup>1</sup> the makk of the mountains of Taqalī. They did this because of rumours that Ādam was refraining from submission to the Mahdi. |In fact| he had sent emissaries to the Mahdi in Qadīr to apologize for these rumours and to convey his submission to, and  
 137 acceptance of the Mahdi. / It was only after the Mahdi's arrival in Jabal al-Jarāda that the first group |Muḥammad's| rejoined him. Those who had gone to Taqalī rejoined the Mahdi after he had sent for them and when he was two stages (marhalatayn) away from Qadīr. An informant told the author that he had asked the martyr Muḥammad, the Mahdi's brother, about the Mahdi's destination and Muḥammad had replied: 'By God, I don't know and I am not able to ask'. This, the author says, demonstrates the virtue of Muḥammad who, despite his close relationship to the Mahdi, dared not enquire about his intentions.

Having arrived at Jabal al-Jarāda, the Mahdi informed his men that he was marching on Kordofan to raid the Turks in El Obeid, and he ordered preparations to be made. The author adds  
 138 that / at Jabal al-Jarāda the Mahdi had been ordered

1. See Hill, BD, p. 25, s.v. Ādam Dabbālū; Holt, Mahdist state, p. 109; MS., 357/8-16.

by the Prophet to proceed to Kordofan because the Turks there were molesting and harassing the Muslims. The Mahdi then wrote to his 'āmil, 'Abdallāh w. al-Nūr,<sup>1</sup> whom he had sent to Kordofan, and ordered him to stay on the fringes of Kordofan, close to the region of the nomads (al-a'rāb) in Dār Ḥamar and other |areas|; to administer the oath of allegiance to all those who wished to join the Mahdia; to make use of his followers in order to coerce the adversaries into following the Mahdia; and to launch incursions on the Turks in the fringes of Kordofan, but not on the capital of their government - El Obeid. Also, the Mahdi wrote to 'Abdallāh, informing him  
 139 that he would soon arrive in Kordofan. / The Mahdi then left al-Jarāda and went to al-Lukhkha, where he stayed for 3 days. There he ordered the execution of two men for illicit killing. Thence he went to Jabal Dawqad, Qardūd al-Ḥumayḍ, Umm 'Adāra, and Ḥajar Umm Lawba.

When the Mahdi and his men started their journey they were fasting |the Fast of Ramaḍan|. On their arrival in Ḥajar Umm Lawba the Mahdi broke the fast |aftara| and ordered his men to do likewise.<sup>2</sup> An informant told the author that, in Ḥajar Umm Lawba, he had heard the Mahdi say that the Prophet had announced that God would conquer El Obeid and the whole country for the Mahdi. The author remarks that God did, indeed, conquer for the Mahdi, in his lifetime, the town of El Obeid and<sup>a</sup> large part of the country.  
 140 God would conquer / the remainder through the Mahdi's senior khalīfa and his other khalīfas. He then elaborates on the extension of the Mahdi's just rule

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1. See Hill, BD, p.7, s.v. 'Abd Allāhi Wad al-Nūr.  
 2. Cf. MS., 148/7-9. 'Id al-Fiṭr of that year fell later than the Mahdi's arrival at Ḥajar Umm Lawba.

141 over the whole world. / To those who may have doubts,  
 arising from the Mahdi's death |before this promise  
 was accomplished|, the author points out the  
 superlativeness of the Mahdi and that all his sayings  
 and actions were supported by the Qur'ān and the  
 142 Custom of the Prophet. / This is augmented by<sup>a</sup> saying  
 of the Khalifa that: 'Whosoever alleged that he  
 |the Mahdi| is not the expected mahdī, since he did  
 not complete the conquests, had missed the way of  
 142- the Truth'. / This statement is supplemented by  
 3 a rather long excerpt from one of the Khalifa's  
 144 proclamations. / In Ḥajar Umm Lawba the  
 Mahdi was told by the Prophet to order all the  
 Companions to penetrate El Obeid from the east, i.e.,  
gibla, side of the town, in an orderly manner, with  
 the division of the Mahdi's brother, Muḥammad, in the  
 lead. In fact, only Muḥammad and his division  
 penetrated the town from the east whilst the other  
 Companions came from the west. Furthermore, owing to  
 the spread of the army and its huge size, they were  
 disorganized. This was, in the author's view, one of  
 145 the causes which prevented a swift victory / in  
 |the so called Friday battle<sup>1</sup> of| El Obeid. The  
 Companions did not carry out the Mahdi's orders to  
 the letter and, consequently they failed, after a  
 fierce battle, to occupy El Obeid. The Mahdi then  
 said that the Prophet had told him: 'If not, and if  
 not, and if not - victory would have been attained'.  
 This, the Mahdi explained as meaning: 'if not for the  
disobedience of your |the Mahdi's| Companions and  
 their not entering |El Obeid| in an orderly manner  
 from the eastern direction as you |the Mahdi| ordered  
 them, and if not for their grabbing the booty whilst  
 entering the trench and their being preoccupied with

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 1. 8 September, 1882. Cf. MS., 171/4 - 174/9.

it, and if not for their being flabbergasted by its abundance - victory would have been attained by them!

From Ḥajar Umm Lawba the Mahdi went to Umm Ḥalūf. On the way from Ḥajar Umm Lawba the Companions  
 146 encountered great difficulties, / heavy rains and severe mud caused the loss of pack- and riding- animals, starvation and sleeplessness. Consequently, they reached Umm Ḥalūf 3 days after they had left Umm Lawba, while the normal time of travel between the two places is about 6 hours. Thence the Mahdi went to Sarafāyat Umm 'Uqūd, Ḥajar Umm Bijj and Jabal al-Kawālīb. There the Mahdi met Quṭita,<sup>1</sup> one of the chiefs of the Ḥawāzma<sup>2</sup> Arabs, who had been sent by the Mahdi's 'āmil, 'Abdallāh w. al-Nūr. He urged the Mahdi to proceed diligently with his march and informed him that as part of the inhabitants of  
 147 Kordofan, in the neighbourhood of El Obeid, / were weary of the atrocities of the Turks and incapable of defending themselves, they had professed their loyalty to |Muḥammad Sa'īd Wahbī| the governor of Kordofan. They did so from fear, but secretly were obeying the Mahdi's 'āmil |'Abdallāh w. al-Nūr| and accepting the Mahdi. The Mahdi wrote to his 'āmil, thanking them |i.e., those inhabitants| for their attitude. From Jabal al-Kawālīb the Mahdi went to Jabal al-Kadar |?| and thence to Ḥajar al-Layyūna. Prior to the Mahdi's arrival in Ḥajar al-Layyūna and not far from that place, he was joined by a party of Awlād Abī Ṣafiyya, by some of the Ghudiyāt tribe and their chiefs, by Ḥasan b. Ḥusayn,<sup>3</sup>

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1. Perhaps identical with 'Góṭía Ḥammád' mentioned in MacMichael, Tribes of Kordofan, p. 153.
  2. See MacMichael, Arabs in the Sudan, iii, 3, ix-x; MacMichael, Tribes of Kordofan, pp. 149-53.
  3. See Holt, Mahdist state, p. 57.

148 a muwallad<sup>1</sup> of Kordofan, and some of the / Tumām tribe. They all swore allegiance. Also, 'Abd al-Bārī b. al-Wālī, one of those concerned with religious affairs (min ahālī al-diyāna),<sup>2</sup> swore allegiance to the Mahdi. His name had been 'Abd al-Nabī but the Mahdi altered it to 'Abd al-Bārī. The alteration of a name was in accordance with the Custom of the Prophet. In Jabal al-Layyūna<sup>3</sup> the Mahdi held the prayer of 'Īd al-Fiṭr |1 Shawwāl 1299/16 August 1882|. Thence, the Mahdi went to the river al-Sunjala<sup>4</sup> and thence to al-'Ifaynāt, which the Mahdi altered to al-'Isaylāt. There, the tribe of the Salamāt<sup>5</sup> Arabs came and swore allegiance. Thence the Mahdi went to Umm Ḥaliq, al-Naq'a al-'Aqir, and al-Birka, in |sic| the village of 'Abd al-Bārī b. al-Wālī. There the Mahdi was joined by the Bidayriyya<sup>6</sup> tribe and some of the chiefs of the Ḥamar tribes, who had fought the Turks in the subsidiary towns (qurā) of / El Obeid, like Abū Ḥarāz and Aṣḥaf.

149

Thence, the Mahdi went to Kāzqīl and to Umm 'Arada. There, a party of the Missīriyya<sup>7</sup> tribe came and swore allegiance. From Umm 'Arada the Mahdi dispatched 200 horsemen to warn the people of El Obeid, offer them the amān if they surrendered, and urge them to do so. The distance between Umm

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1. The muwalladīn (sing. muwallad) or mawālīd (sing. mawlūd - born) were the children born in the Sudan to Muslims or Copts who had emigrated from Egypt and were employed in the Sudan by the Egyptian administration. See Holt, Mahdist state, p. 15.
  2. See above, p. 102, n. 3.
  3. Cf. MS., 147/15, where the place is twice named
  4. MS. reads السُّوَيْدَة حِجْر اللُّبُونَة.
  5. See MacMichael, Arabs in the Sudan, iii.3; xxii.
  6. See MacMichael, Arabs in the Sudan, iii.1, vi-x; MacMichael, Tribes of Kordofan, pp. 68-75.
  7. See MacMichael, Arabs in the Sudan, iii.3; xi-xiii; MacMichael, Tribes of Kordofan, pp. 141-3, 145-8.

'Arada and El Obeid is approximately 6 hours. The horse-  
 150 men |arrived| near El Obeid and rode around the town, within bullet-range of the Turks, / who lined the trench which they had dug around the town. The horse-  
 men shouted to the townsfolk, offering them the Mahdi's amān. Groups of people started to desert the town under the cover of darkness, evading the strict watch of the Turks. From Umm 'Arada the Mahdi went to Kāba, about 3 hours from El Obeid, and there he encamped, on Thursday, 16 Shawwāl 1299 |31 August 1882|<sup>1</sup>

b. The battle of El Obeid<sup>2</sup>

At Kāba, the Mahdi was joined by those tribes and  
 151 Arabs which / had made incursions on the towns in Kordofan where there were Turks: Abū Ḥarāz, Aṣṣḥaf, Bāra and al-Tayyāra |al-Ṭayyāra|. As regards Abū Ḥarāz, the first man who fought its inhabitants was Ḥāmid b. al-Sanjak of the Bidayriyya. From all directions tribes mustered to his call and they surrounded Abū Ḥarāz. After many fights and incursions, they took the place |1 Jumāda 1299/20 April 1882|, captured and slaughtered its people and burnt most of its houses. Only those few Turks and inhabitants who had taken to flight to El Obeid survived the battle, but on their way the majority of them died of thirst. Those few who reached El Obeid later came out to the Mahdi in Kāba, together with the townsfolk of El Obeid, swore allegiance to him and were granted the amān. The author remarks that this  
 152 corroborates the Mahdi's saying that the Prophet / had informed him of distresses that would befall, relief of which could only be attained by joining the

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1. Shuqayr, Ta'rīkh, iii, p. 156, and Holt, Mahdist state, p. 53, date the Mahdi's arrival there as 17 Shawwāl/1 September.
  2. MS., 150/15 - 189/7.

Mahdi. Indeed, the people of this and other places, including El Obeid, attained safety and security only after they had joined the Mahdi and sworn allegiance to him. He adds that this was also the case at the time of writing, and that relief and safety could be attained only by joining the Khalifa and swearing allegiance to him.

As for the town of Aṣḥaf, Makkī b. Ibrāhim b. Ismā'īl Mun'im,<sup>1</sup> Abū al-Qāsim b. Ṣāliḥ and Aḥmad w. Shanbūl mustered tribes to fight its people. /  
 153 They surrounded it, set fire to the houses, took the town and devastated it |7 Rajab/25 May|. Only those who fled to Bāra, about 3 hours from Aṣḥaf, survived. This was a great battle.

As for the people of Bāra, under the direction of Surūr Agha,<sup>2</sup> they fortified themselves by a deep trench. The above-mentioned tribes gathered and surrounded them. The defenders of Bāra charged, repelled the tribesmen and pursued them till they  
 154 disappeared./ After the Mahdi's arrival in al-Janzāra |after the Friday battle, 8 September|, he wrote to the inhabitants of Bāra, and they began to desert to him. Consequently, the Turks tightened their watch and prevented the inhabitants from leaving the trench. Whenever they learnt that someone wanted to join the Mahdi, they beat and imprisoned him. Then God provided

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1. See Holt, Mahdist state, p. 51; Hill; BD, p. 228, s.v. Makkī Mun'im abu'l-Miliḥ; MacMichael, Tribes of Kordofan, p. 157.
  2. According to Slatin, Fire and sword, p. 174, Surur Agha was 'the commandant' of Bāra, 'an Abyssinian by birth, but a particularly religious Muslim'. After the surrender of Bāra he 'was allowed by the Mahdi to have back a portion of his confiscated property'. Shuqayr, Ta'rīkh, iii, p. 153, gives his name as Surūr Bahjat and his rank as Ṣāgh.

an outlet for him and he joined the Mahdi. The Mahdi then ordered some of the Companions to go and invest Bāra. The inhabitants of the town, ~~deserted covertly,~~ /  
 155 employing all the possible tricks, including bribery of the Turkish guards. The siege continued and resulted in a famine. Meanwhile, people were deserting to the Mahdi; some of those, whose tricks [for desertion] were thwarted, incited a man within the entrenchment to set fire to some of the houses, in order to distract the Turks and enable the people to leave. This  
 156 was done / and in the upheaval which ensued, most of the people of Bāra managed to leave and thus to save their women and children. The major part of their properties were burnt and some were seized by the Turks. Also, the fugitives from Aṣḥaf, who had taken refuge in Bāra, deserted. All the Turks, their supporters and those inhabitants who did not manage to desert, remained within the trench. They were so destitute that they ate carrion and the soldiers assaulted people in their homes and looted what they could find. [Only] then did they capitulated to the Mahdi, coming out to the Mahdi's 'āmils who were investing them. The latter brought them to the Mahdi, they swore allegiance and thereby attained security and amān.<sup>1</sup> The author repeats his previous  
 157 remark that / distress could ~~only~~ be relieved <sup>only</sup> by joining the Mahdi.

During the siege of Bāra, a large detachment, commanded by 'Alī Bey [luṭfī], known as Abū Kūkka,<sup>2</sup> came from Khartoum with military equipment and provisions, to reinforce the Turks in Kordofan. The Mahdi was then in al-Janžāra, besieging the Turks

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1. Cf. the account of the surrender of Bāra in Holt, Mahdist state, pp. 55-7.  
 2. See Hill, BD, p. 49.

in El Obeid. Raḥma w, Muḥammad Manūfal al-Jāmi<sup>1</sup> mustered |his people| and fell upon the government force at al-Kaw,<sup>2</sup> at about a day's distance from Bāra. Raḥma defeated and annihilated the government force, including their commander, 'Alī Bey. The survivors fled and joined the Turks in Bāra |October 1882|. On the surrender of the Turks of Bāra, these fugitives also came out to the Mahdi.

As for the town of al-Tayyara, al-Manna b. Ismā'il<sup>3</sup> mustered the tribes and dispatched emissaries to warn  
 158 its people, / but they would not submit. The Turks there were determined to fight al-Manna and they dug a trench. Al-Manna and his fighters charged, penetrated the trench and slaughtered the Turks. Very few people survived the battle |21 Ramaḍān/6 August|. The author adds that before and after the conquest of El Obeid, al-Manna disobeyed the Mahdi, who repeatedly warned and admonished him, but of no avail. The Mahdi then dispatched a letter of warning with Ḥamdān Abū 'Anja,<sup>4</sup> 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Nujūmī, 'Abdallāh w. al-Nūr and a party of Companions. When they arrived at al-Manna's place, Yāsīn, they requested him to come out of his house so that they might read him the  
 159 Mahdi's letter. / Heedless of both their request and the the Mahdi's letter, al-Manna refused to come out. When the Mahdi's emissaries tried to get him out of his house, they met with strenuous opposition from al-Manna's relatives and party. The emissaries of the Mahdi fought back, drove al-Manna's party out of the

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1. See Hill, BD, pp. 313-4; MacMichael, Tribes of Kordofan, pp. 38-9, 83.
  2. Read الكرة ? Cf. Hill; BD, p. 49, s.v. 'Alī Bey Luṭfī. Shuqayr, Ta'rīkh, iii, p. 162, identifies the place as كرو، ود جفون.
  3. See Bolton, 'El Menna Ismail'; Holt, Mahdist state, pp. 42, 51-6.
  4. See Hill, BD, pp. 147-8; Holt, Mahdist state, pp. 127-31, 134-6, 151-4; Reid, 'Mahdi's emirs', pp. 308-9.

village and killed some of his men. They shackled al-Manna, his father Ismā'īl, his son Muḥammad 'Alī and some of his relatives, and they then informed the Mahdi of what had happened. In his reply, the Mahdi ordered them to kill al-Manna and the other prisoners for their disobedience, and they were put to death.

By the Mahdi's encampment at Bāra, the affliction was reduced and the Community was relieved. The inhabitants of Kordofan and the above-mentioned tribal chiefs of the neighbourhood of El Obeid /  
 160 had molested the townspeople, raiding them mornings and evenings and preventing them from leaving the town. Whenever someone came out, they would seize and rob him and possibly kill him. Their horsemen seized even those who stayed on the fringes of the town, and the Turks were unable to prevent all this. When Muḥammad Sa'īd |Wahbī|, the governor of Kordofan, and other leaders of their government, realized their difficult position, they convoked a full council (majlis ḥāfil).<sup>1</sup> In this council they assembled the chiefs and notables of the town and consulted them concerning the best means to protect themselves from the nomads' harassment, since the Turks were unable to defend the town, not even with guns. Muḥammad  
 161 Sa'īd's consultation with the people of El Obeid / was a test of their loyalty. The townsfolk comprehended that should they disobey him, their chiefs might be imprisoned on the charge of sympathizing with, and being inclined to surrender to the Mahdi. They all professed their obedience to Muḥammad Sa'īd, and he ordered them to dig a trench around the town. The enforced digging, under the personal supervision of the governor, caused great hardship to the townsfolk,

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 1. MS., 163/6-7. A special council (majlis khāss) was convoked later. See below, p. 151.     \*\*

all the more so because of the scarcity of means of  
 162 subsistence. / The governor then ordered the troops  
 and the military equipment to be moved inside the  
 entrenchment and firearms to be distributed, through  
 the town's chiefs, to their respective parties. Also,  
 he ordered the townsfolk to leave the houses and to  
 stay within the entrenchment. Close to each group of  
 townsfolk he placed a party of troops. They were not  
 placed separately for lack of trust in the townsfolk,  
 fearing their treachery and desertion to the Mahdi.  
 In spite of that, the townsfolk deserted covertly  
 to the Mahdi and swore allegiance. Some people /  
 163 bribed the guards and deserted.

When the Turks realized that the townsfolk  
 sympathized with the Mahdi and that some had deserted  
 and joined him, they convoked a special council  
 (majlis khāṣṣ) and conspired to dig an exclusive  
 trench (khandaq makḥṣūṣ) around their houses, arsenal,  
 stores and government places. When they sensed  
 treachery on the part of the townsfolk, they would all  
 gather within that entrenchment, order the notables  
 and chiefs of the town to come with them, and whosoever  
 disobeyed would be killed and his property  
 confiscated. The author remarks that  
 |eventually| God saved the townsfolk, caused the  
 Turks to be preoccupied with themselves and astounded  
 164 them with the Mahdi's arrival / in Kāba. Consequently,  
 they were unable to exterminate the townsfolk; nay,  
 the Turks started to treat them with benevolence,  
 promising them gifts. The Turks agreed  
 upon this scheme and dug an exclusive trench but,  
 unlike at the previous trench, now they did not  
 employ the townsfolk but only their own troops.  
 Behind the extremely deep trench, they erected a firm  
zarība, and inside the entrenchment they placed  
 part of their troops with sufficient military

equipment, guns and rifles. The majority of the troops were stationed in the general trench (khandaq 'āmm), with the townsfolk.

At that time the Mahdi was in Kāba. He dispatched two volunteers: Jābir w. Jalī and Muḥammad al-Maghribī, with two letters, one to Muḥammad Sa'īd and one to the people of El Obeid.<sup>1</sup> The author remarks that he was unable to find the two letters. / When they delivered the two letters to Muḥammad Sa'īd, he assembled all the heads of his administration and the notables and chiefs of the town. After the two letters had been read to them, Muḥammad Sa'īd asked for their opinion, ostensibly consulting them as to whether to surrender to the Mahdi. The townsfolk comprehended his intention and kept silent. Then he interrogated the Mahdi's emissaries on the condition of the Mahdi, his army, etc. Their determination and confidence in replying to all his questions, and their disregard for his men, distressed and angered Muḥammad Sa'īd. Eventually, he declared that he would never surrender to the Mahdi. All his men consented, whilst the townsfolk kept silent, fearing his violent reaction on their disagreement. The only exception was Aḥmad Muḥammad Dafa'allāh |al-'Awaḍī|<sup>2</sup> who had been very antagonistic to the Mahdi and agreed with Muḥammad Sa'īd. / By Muḥammad Sa'īd's orders the two emissaries were executed after their request to perform the ablution and a prayer was granted. The author remarks that to the Companions, death was sweeter than honey. He adds that this was the only case in which emissaries of the Mahdi were put to death, and it has a parallel in the Prophet's life, for only once were his emissaries executed.

1. See Holt; Mahdist state, p. 54, n.1.

2. See Hill, BD, p. 31; Holt, Mahdist state, pp. 41, 53-7.

When the Mahdi heard of his emissaries' death, he rejoiced in their attainment of martyrdom. Still, in accordance with his practice, he did not fight promptly, for God might yet guide the Turks to the right way. He stayed in Kāba for the remainder of that day, Thursday |16 Shawwāl 1299/31 August 1882|, to Friday eve. Meanwhile, he ordered the selection of a thousand horsemen, among them his brother Muḥammad and notable Companions, to ride around the town, warn its people, offer them the amān if they came out to swear allegiance, and instruct them to desert / and to renounce ephemeral vanities in order to gain peace in this and the other world. Although they were at close range, the horsemen carried out their orders, despite the Turks' gunfire, which did not affect them.

The author remarks that this |miracle| was repeated constantly by God during the Mahdia. God reduced the damaging effect of the enemy's firearms to such an extent that shells were falling amongst seated people but they did not even disperse or change their places. They were heedless of the shells because they wished to die in the cause of God, as well as their negligible damage. The author opines that the functioning of the firearms without causing any damage is a greater miracle than if they had not functioned at all; for whenever the Mahdi's fighters were injured by the firearms it could lead to their attainment of martyrdom, which is the greatest goal. /

168 When the Turks realized that groups of the townsfolk were deserting to the Mahdi, they feared an outbreak of civil war (fitna) between themselves and the townsfolk, which would cause their own destruction. Also, they learnt that the local notables and chiefs were in favour of following the Mahdi and those who were able to leave joined the Mahdi, while those who were under strict control, such as the

chiefs and the celebrities, had sent their sons and brothers or other trustworthy people to the Mahdi, to swear allegiance on their behalf. The Turks then decided, in council, to evacuate the large entrenchment which surrounded the whole town, to gather within their exclusive entrenchment and to coerce the townsfolk, particularly the notables, to join them. Muḥammad Sa'īd issued orders to gather the notables of the town, conspiring to imprison the leaders so as to enable him to put their families and all the townsfolk within the exclusive entrenchment, but God denied him this. Muḥammad Sa'īd started to flatter the townsfolk, asking them to enter the entrenchment and promising  
 169 them victory. / Having professed obedience whilst harbouring the opposite thoughts, they dispersed from the council, and <sup>no</sup> evil befell them. Muḥammad Sa'īd was unable to convene them for a second time; perplexed by the Mahdi's nearness, he was preoccupied with himself and despaired of the townsfolk. In his heart he thought that, should he be victorious, he would severely punish them.

On Thursday morning, 23 Shawwāl | 1299/7 September 1882 | the large trench was completely evacuated and the troops entered the exclusive trench. That day, the townsfolk suffered terribly from the soldiers. They robbed, killed, destroyed houses and desecrated the sanctuaries, robbing people who had sought  
 170 refuge in mosques and at times / even killing those who contended with them there. All who had escaped them fled to the Mahdi in Kāba, throwing away all their loads, sometimes even part of their clothes, to ease their flight. Thus it went on from Thursday morning to Friday eve, 24 | Shawwāl 1299/8 September 1882 |. The Turks' entry into the exclusive entrenchment enabled the townsfolk to come out to the Mahdi in Kāba, the majority of them leaving

behind their houses and all their belongings. Only Aḥmad Muḥammad Dafa'allāh, with his entourage and party, remained with the Turks and continuously supported them.

When the Mahdi realized that the townsfolk had dissociated themselves from the Turks, that the Turks resolved to fight him and that the warnings and admonitions had had no effect, he ordered the  
 171 dispatch of a large army to fight them. / He summoned the commanders of the divisions and made them desire the abundant reward of God to the participants in the jihād. He ordered them to penetrate the entrenchment in an orderly manner, that is, the first division to penetrate, from the qibla | =east| side, should be the division of Muḥammad, the Mahdi's brother, and the other divisions were to follow in succession. They should spend the night by the town and charge after the morning prayer. The innumerable army left Kāba on Friday eve |24 Shawwāl/8 September|. The author explains that perhaps as a result of the army being scattered and because of its large numbers, not all of them were able to penetrate from the qibla side.

Part of the army, including Muḥammad and his division and some other divisions, followed the Mahdi's orders whilst others intended to penetrate the town from the west side. They surrounded the town and then, after the morning prayer, they attacked the trench from all directions. When they drew near the trench the Turks poured  
 172 murderous fire. / The Companions stormed the trench and massacred all those who were in its eastern side. Then they turned against those Turks who were in the southern side of the trench and forced them out of their positions. Some locked themselves in  
 173 the houses; / others, driven by their fear and bewilderment, ascended the roofs without ladders.

The Companions, who had no ladders, were unable to ascend the elevated roofs. Whilst their lances could not reach the Turks, the latter fired at them from the roofs and killed many Companions, whom God honoured with martyrdom.

The author praises 'Abdallāh w. al-Nūr's bravery in this battle.

Part of the Mahdist army was preoccupied with the booty and, consequently, was dispatched from the most important matter - killing the enemy. Thus, the lines of the Turks were reorganized around that part of the trench. They kept firing at the Companions and, with the support of those Turks who were / shooting from the roofs, killed many, and only few survived. The main body of the Mahdist army fought outside the entrenchment. The battle continued from the morning prayer till noon-time, and the friends of God almost won the day against the enemies of God, but for some Companions who were distracted from the jihād by the booty. This was <sup>one</sup> of the causes for the postponement of the victory. Meanwhile, the Mahdi, his senior khalīfa and some of the Companions came under fire and the Khalifa protected the Mahdi from the bullets with his own body. An eyewitness told the author that when the first group of Companions had stormed the fortified, deep trench with its strong zarība, and penetrated the town, |the Turks| knew for certain that they would perish. / The majority of their leaders then took to their heels from the trench and sought cover in the houses, locking their gates. Muḥammad Sa'īd then ordered the bugle to be sounded, as a signal for those soldiers who had dispersed and hidden inside the houses, to ascend the roofs of the government buildings and fire incessantly at the Companions. Thus they overcame those Companions who were within the entrenchment and only few survived.

In that afternoon the Mahdi withdrew the army to Kāba. A large number of Companions died as martyrs in the battle, among them Muḥammad, the Mahdi's brother; Muḥammad's son, Aḥmad; 'Abdallāh, another brother of the Mahdi's; Aḥmad w. Jubāra; 'Abdallāh al-Tījānī, 'the Mahdi's Keeper of his blessed Seal and his Scribe', and al-Amīn w. 'Abdallāh. The enemy's dead were innumerable. The large numbers of injured Companions were carried to Kāba and many died as

176 martyrs. / The Mahdi then said that the Prophet had told him: 'If not, and if not, and if not'.<sup>1</sup> The Mahdi stayed in Kāba for the rest of Friday, Saturday and Sunday. On the forenoon of Monday |27 Shawwāl/ 11 September 1882|, he said that he had been ordered by the Prophet to lay siege to El Obeid until the town surrendered, and that there were among them |the people of El Obeid| supporters of the religion.

The author remarks that the majority of those who were inside the fort did indeed become, after the conquest, distinguished Companions, who sacrificed themselves in support of the religion.

The Mahdi moved his camp from Kāba and, on Monday afternoon, he encamped at

177 (al-Jinzāra) |al-Janzāra|, / within gun-range of El Obeid.

The author remarks that he had witnessed the fall of shells from El Obeid on al-Janzāra.

The Mahdi ordered that the siege be tightened till the besieged joined the Mahdia.

The author remarks that it was the Mahdi's practice to fight any town of the Turks by encirclement till they either surrendered or perished. This was paralleled by a Custom of the Prophet.

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1. For a comment, see MS., 145/7-14.

After this battle, deputations of the inhabitants of Kordofan came in succession to the Mahdi. Some of the |sedentary| inhabitants and the nomads of Kordofan had withheld their acceptance of the Mahdi till the fate of the Turks in El Obeid was decided. When they  
 178 saw / the Turks' hopeless situation they all flocked to the Mahdi and joined him. As for the Turks, they realized that nothing could save them from annihilation except fortifying themselves within their entrenchment, in the belief that their government (dawla) would send them reinforcements. They looted the town and those whom they found in their houses were ordered to enter the entrenchment. The belongings of those who refused were seized while the persons themselves were injured or even killed. The Turks accumulated a large amount of grain and whatever they could find in the houses, for the majority of those who had deserted to the  
 179 Mahdi / had left full houses behind. Most of what the Turks looted was taken from the houses around the trench. As for the farther houses, these were thoroughly looted by nomads who had only recently joined the Mahdi, particularly the party of al-Manna w. Ismā'īl of the Jawāma'a |tribe| and other tribes which had joined him. When the Mahdi realized this, he proclaimed that those who had taken the belongings of those people of El Obeid who had come out to him in Kāba, should produce them or, otherwise, be severely punished. Many articles were gathered and the Mahdi ordered them to be deposited with a commissioner (amīn). Then he proclaimed that those people of El Obeid who had come out to him in Kāba could  
 180 retrieve their belongings / under oath that they were really their own.

The Mahdi then issued orders to tighten the siege and to harass them day and night. The supply of provisions and all foods was strictly banned, and

the hands of a party | of people who disobeyed the orders | were cut off. The siege continued and the besieged were reduced to such extreme want that a quarter (rub') | of an irdabb |<sup>1</sup> millet (dukhn) fetched 100 Majīdī dollars<sup>2</sup> and an irdabb of millet -- 2,400 Majīdī dollars. The author remarks that such prices were unheard of in those times.

181 The besieged ate donkeys, dogs, cats, carrion, rotting bones, / old skins and even the prices of these despised articles soared. An informant who had been with the Turks within the entrenchment told the author that donkeys fetched 400 Majīdī dollars or more, and long-necked jars (qārūra) filled with donkey-fat, 10 Majīdī dollars.

The author continues with the description of the famine in El Obeid during the siege. He stresses that this was a result of disobeying the Mahdi, and adds that the same, or a worse fate would betide all those who opposed him. In

182 addition to the famine, the Turks were / sniped at by the Companions, who made it dangerous to walk in the streets. Consequently, the majority of the leaders of the Turks clung to their houses and neglected the soldiers. The famished soldiers, who were too weak to carry arms, looted the houses within the entrenchment, even snatching food from children. They ceased to obey their officers who, in turn, ceased to obey their ruler. They were so weak that the Companions were able to enter the entrenchment and loot the guards' tents without hindrance. When the Turks were

183 at a complete loss, / they started to desert to the Mahdi, swore allegiance, stayed with the Companions, and thus they were relieved. The number of deserters

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1. An ardabb (or irdabb) is a dry measure comprising 24 rub'. (Equivalent, in Egypt, to 198 litres and 8.25 litres, respectively).

2. An Ottoman silver coin of 20 piastres.

grew and some men, who had not been for long in the company of the Mahdi, and therefore were not educated by his |way of| life, hid around the trench and seized the deserters' baggage. The Mahdi then sent trustworthy Companions, to patrol around the entrenchment every day, and guard those who came out, and their baggage, till they reached him. This beautiful deed encouraged the besieged to desert.

184 heedless of the guards' shooting / at them.

Muḥammad Sa'īd despaired and was enticed by Satan, who led him to believe that the Mahdi would not accept him if he repented and came out. It was concealed from him that the Mahdi was forgiving and pardoning offenders. Muḥammad Sa'īd then decided to set fire to the gunpowder in the arsenal, so that he and all his men would be burnt. Someone who was with him sensed it and informed the other leaders, who threatened the keeper (muḥāfiz) of the arsenal with death if he allowed Muḥammad Sa'īd to enter it. Also, they increased the number of guards, to prevent

185 Muḥammad Sa'īd from accomplishing his plan. / When the people of Muḥammad Sa'īd's administration realized his vicious intentions, they ceased to obey him and agreed to capitulate to the Mahdi. Muḥammad Sa'īd could do nothing but consent to this. They then wrote an apology to the Mahdi and sought his pardon. In the

185- Mahdi's reply,<sup>1</sup> which the author transcribes in full,

186 he invited them to surrender, / and they rejoiced in its receipt. On Friday (9) |10| Rabī' I (1299) |1300/19 January 1883| El Obeid capitulated, and in the forenoon all its people came out to the Mahdi. He emerged from his mosque, with his senior khalīfa and the other khalīfas and Companions, and met them

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1. See Manshūrāt, ii, pp. 53-4; Shuqayr, Ta'rīkh, iii, p. 166. The letter is dated, in Manshūrāt, 6 Rabī' I 1300/15 January 1883. Cf. Holt, Mahdist state, p. 56 and n.1.

near the big trench. The Mahdi then thanked God,  
 187 Muḥammad Sa'īd advanced, / with ALĪ Bey Sharīf,<sup>1</sup>  
 Iskandar the Qā'imaqām al-'Askar, Aḥmad Muḥammad  
 Dafa'allāh and the other leaders, officers, and  
 soldiers and people of El Obeid. They swore allegiance  
 to the Mahdi, who ordered all of them to stay near  
 his residence, in a place specified for them and their  
 families, at al-Janzāra. The Mahdi then instructed  
 the commissioner (amīn) of the Treasury (bayt māl  
al-muslimīn)<sup>2</sup> to allocate grants to them. The Mahdi  
 entered El Obeid with his senior khalīfa, the other  
khalīfas and the Companions. He sat in the government  
 place, immediately ordering the removal of the carpets,  
 cushions and instruments (ālāt) which were there,  
 and the burning of some of the precious carpets and  
 embroidered rugs. The articles which had no gilded  
 ornamentation, he ordered to be deposited in the  
 Treasury. The author was informed that when  
 the Mahdi entered the entrenchment and saw its mighty  
 188 fortifications, / he smiled and recited: 'And they  
 thought that their fortresses would defend them  
 against God',<sup>3</sup> He then appointed trustworthy people  
 to supervise the booty. They collected the large  
 quantities of booty and the Mahdi, having deducted the  
 Fifth, dealt with the rest in the required manner.  
 Muḥammad Sa'īd, ALĪ Bey Sharīf and Aḥmad Muḥammad  
 Dafa'allāh were involved, after the capitulation of  
 El Obeid, in offences, disobedience and treachery.  
 Therefore, they were put to death by the Mahdi's  
 order after they had been banished.<sup>4</sup> The

1. See Hill, BD, p. 51.

2. Probably Aḥmad Sulaymān. See Holt, Mahdist state,  
 p. 110.

3. Qur'ān, 59.2.

4. Cf. Shuqayr, Ta'rīkh, iii, pp. 168-70.

author adds that after he had written this, he found, in a letter of the Mahdi to Gordon, the Mahdi's explanation for killing Muḥammad Sa'īd.<sup>1</sup> /

189 Chapter VIII: The Mahdi's campaigns, expeditions  
and missions, and the conquest of  
some towns<sup>2</sup>

1. The Mahdi's jihād<sup>3</sup>

God combined (jama'a) in the Mahdi 'a call to Allah Most High |a| by the sword and |b| by furnishing proof', permitted him to fight his adversaries and promised him victory. This slaying |of the Mahdi's enemies| was in place of the punishment - such as sinking and drowning - which all his adversaries deserved. At times, the Mahdi himself was present at the jihād while at others he dispatched some of his Companions to fight the enemy. The Prophet had done  
190 likewise / and the Mahdi followed in his footsteps. Since the age of prophecy war was conducted by campaigns (ghazwa), expeditions (sariyya) and missions (ba'th): an army in which the Prophet was present is a 'campaign'; an operation at which the Prophet was not present but sent one of his Companions, is an 'expedition'; and a 'mission' is an offshoot of an expedition. The Mahdi participated in nine campaigns: Abā, Muḥammad Sa'īd |Wahbī|, al-Mukhtār b. al-Zubayr  
191 al-Kinānī, / Rāshid|Bey Aymān| - the governor of Fashoda, Jabal Funqur, Yūsuf Ḥasan al-Shallālī,

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1. See Mahdi's letter, MS., 220/3-10.  
2. MS., 189/7 - 384/11.  
3. MS., 189/10 - 192/6.

El Obeid, the tyrant (al-Hiksī) Hicks<sup>1</sup> and Khartoum. Fighting took place in all the campaigns, except those of Muḥammad Sa'īd and Jabal Funqur. Despite painstaking inquiries, the author could not establish that the Mahdi himself had actually fought in any of the campaigns. Although the Mahdi was with the Companions during the fighting, it was his habit to pray and to immerse himself in the stage of beholding (maqām al-mushahādāt). No sooner had he done so than God destroyed the enemy. The author remarks that rather than include all the Mahdi's campaigns in one chapter so as to facilitate a study of the Mahdi's sīra, / he preferred their narration in chronological sequence.

2. The Mahdi's campaign against Hicks<sup>2</sup>

a. Events to the battle of Shaykān<sup>3</sup>

When the Mahdi heard that the tyrant Hicks<sup>4</sup> had left Khartoum with a huge, well equipped and unprecedentedly well prepared army, and that he was advancing from the White Nile, he ordered his Companions to leave El Obeid and to stay at the gible |east| side of the town. This was on the morning of Saturday, at the end |27| of |Dhū| al-Qa'da 1300 |29 September 1883|. The Mahdi also ordered them to

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1. See below, n. 4.
  2. MS., 192/6 - 211/17.
  3. MS., 192/6 - 202/13.
  4. For a short biography of William Hicks Pasha see Hill, BD, pp.164-5. For his expedition and the battle of Shaykān see |L.F. Nadler| Ali Gulla, 'The defeat of Hicks Pasha', SNR, viii, 1925, pp.119-21; E.F. Aglen, 'Sheikan battlefield', SNR, xx/1, 1937, pp.138-45; Zakī, 'Yawmiyyāt. 'Abbās Bey', (see also SNR, xxxii/2, 1951, pp.179-96); Theobald, Mahdiyya, pp.48-63; Holt, Mahdist state, pp.61-5. In the Sīra Hicks is invariably referred to as the tyrant (al-tāghiya) al-Hiksī.

pray the midday prayer there. Some Companions who were delayed with him prayed in the town, but he ~~ordered~~ 193 ordered them to repeat / their prayer, for they had disobeyed his order. Then, the Mahdi himself came out and encamped east of the town. He ordered the constant performance of the dhikr, the uttering of the tahlīl and takbīr and that the Companions devote themselves to God. He wrote two proclamations: one instructed the Companions to remove the embellishments from the swords, and the other forbade the unsheathing of swords unnecessarily, lest one of the Muslims be injured. The Mahdi then sent a party to reconnoitre the enemy. They found the enemy near the White Nile and returned to the Mahdi with the information.

The Mahdi then ordered Muḥammad 'Uthmān, known as Abū Qarja,<sup>1</sup> Shaykh Faḍluh Aḥmad,<sup>2</sup> and 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Musā'id<sup>3</sup> to block the way of the [advancing] army and contain it. 194 The author remarks that, by his own definition, this was an 'expedition'. They harassed and contained the Turks, seizing those who had left the main army, including those who went to gather grass and firewood. Thus the marching troops were confined within their own square and all communication with Khartoum was severed. The first skirmish took place at a watering-place called Umm Shalibya, where one of the enemy force was killed and a camel taken as loot.

1. See Hill, BD, p. 279.

2. Shaykh Faḍluh (also spelt in the MS. فضل, فاضل and فضلاء). His name is transliterated accordingly in the summary). Aḥmad is mentioned in the Sīra several times in connexion with battles and once (MS., 313/5) as a commander of a division. He participated in the siege of Khartoum under the command of al-Nujūmī (MS., 319/13-14).

3. See Hill, BD, pp. 9-10, s.v. 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Musā'id wad al-Hāshimī. According to Shuqayr, Ta'rīkh, iii, p. 178, the Mahdist force had a fourth commander: 'Umar, the son of Ilyās Umm Birayr.

Then the Companions engaged in a skirmish with them at al-'Uqayla, where seven Turks were killed, and six camels taken, while the Companions suffered no casualties. / The next skirmish took place at Umm Balchik ( بالحيك ),<sup>1</sup> where the Companions killed 25 men and captured 18 horses. The Turks were continuously followed and harassed by the Companions, under the command of Shaykh Faḍluh Aḥmad. Many fights took place, until they reached a watering-place called al-Rahad |24 October 1883|.

The Mahdi then wrote a letter (kitāb) calling upon the Turks to follow him, and gave instructions to make 1,500 copies and to attach them to the trees near the Turks' fort, so that they would be able to take and read them.<sup>2</sup> In the letter,<sup>3</sup> which the author transcribes in full, the Mahdi argues that protection lies in God only, / not in military strength; that the denial of his mahdīship by the 'ulamā' is not valid; that it is not true that he fought troops without previous warning; and that Hicks's men should capitulate if they did not wish to share a fate similar to those of previous expeditions. When the Mahdi learnt that Hicks's army was / about 3 days from El Obeid, he set out - on Thursday, the end |30| of Dhū al-Ḥijja 1300 |1 November 1883| - with all his Companions, having appointed 'Abdallāh b. Jubāra<sup>4</sup> as

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1. Cf. Zakī, 'Yawmiyyāt 'Abbās Bey', p. 121, where the spelling is بالحيك.
  2. This is corroborated by Zakī, 'Yawmiyyāt 'Abbās Bey'. Another account is given by Shuqayr, Ta'rīkh, iii, p.179.
  3. See Manshūrāt, ii, pp. 74-5 (dated 19 Dhū al-Ḥijja 1300/21 October 1883); Shuqayr, Ta'rīkh, iii, pp.179-80; Zakī, 'Yawmiyyāt 'Abbās Bey', pp. 131-2. Part of the letter is translated in Holt, Mahdist state, p.64.
  4. 'Abdallāh b. Jubāra is mentioned several times in the MS. in connexion with battles. He was sent with reinforcements to the expedition of Ḥamdān Abū 'Anja against Jabal al-Dāyir, and later participated in the siege of Khartoum under the command of al-Nujūmī.

'Āmil of El Obeid. The Mahdi spent the night in the village of Abū Ṣafiyya, near El Obeid. On Friday morning, 1 Muḥarram 1301 | 2 November 1883 |, he moved to Fartanqūl - a watering-place with so little water that it would not normally be enough for twenty travellers, let alone their riding-animals. On his arrival, the baraka descended there and the thirst of the whole army, numbering more than 50,000 people, and their riding-animals, was quenched. The author adds that / the baraka spread from that particular watering-place to the adjacent area. In this he sees a great sign and a miracle.

While the Mahdi was there, he heard that the Turks were rapidly advancing to the watering-place of al-Birka, with the intention of forestalling the Mahdists. Al-Birka was one of the largest watering-places south of El Obeid and a meeting-point for the Arabs and the tribes of that area. At the Mahdi's order, Maḥmūd b. 'Abd al-Qādir and Ḍaw' al-Dīn b. 'Abdallāh<sup>1</sup> and their divisions forestalled the Turks at the watering-place and prevented them from taking it. The Turks were then at al-Na'īqa | ? |<sup>2</sup>, a place with little water; whenever the Turks went they encountered great numbers of Companions who / prevented them from getting water. The author remarks that the Mahdi dispatched Maḥmūd | b. 'Abd al-Qādir | to al-Birka merely in order to soothe the Companions, since he had foretold that the Turks would perish before they reached any watering-place beyond al-Na'īqa | ? |, and that only their remnants would reach water, together with the Companions. / In the fulfilment of what the Mahdi had foretold, the author sees a clear sign of the truthfulness of his mahdship.

1. One of the veteran followers of the Mahdi. He was killed in the battle of Shaykān.

2. Cf. MS., 199/17, where the <sup>same</sup> place is named النقيعة.

On Saturday morning, |2 Muḥarram/3 November|, the Mahdi left Fartanqūl and at midday he reached al-Birka. Ibrāhīm b. al-Ḥājǰ, known as al-Turjumāwī, came to him with a party and told him of a rumour that the Turks had changed their course and were advancing on El Obeid, instead of al-Birka. Therefore the men were anxious to return to El Obeid before the Turks arrived there. When the Mahdi saw the compassion they had for their families, he spoke to them |in two fables|. First , he spat into the palm of his hand and asked them what it was. They answered that it was spittle. He flung it to the ground and it was immediately absorbed. The Mahdi commented: 'We are like the ground and the Turks like the spittle'. Secondly, he asked where a bird in flight would descend. They replied: /

201 'On the ground'. The Mahdi commented: 'The Turks are like the birds and we like the ground'. Also, he assuaged the Companions, telling them that the Turks were powerless in face of God's omnipotence. He then said that on Sunday |3 Muḥarram/4 November| they would set out towards the Turks and that on Monday morning, if, after the Mahdi's order to fight the Turks, anyone was delayed |even| to mend his sandal, he would not reach the Turks whilst they were alive. The

202 author comments on the two fables, / explaining their morals, and stressing that it is impossible to comprehend their full meaning.

b. Shaykān<sup>1</sup>

The Mahdi then dispatched Muḥammad and 'Abd al-Raḥmān, the sons of al-Naṣrī, with all the bearers of firearms<sup>2</sup> and with horsemen, to Shaykān, where the

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1. MS., 202/13 - 209/8.
  2. During the siege of El Obeid and after the Friday Battle, the Mahdi had allowed, and organized, the use of firearms by his fighters. See Holt, Mahdist state, p. 55.

203 Turks had encamped and were killed. / Their instructions were to contain Hicks's <sup>army</sup> in one place until the arrival of the Mahdi. Ibrāhīm b. al-Ḥājj al-Turjumāwī, who had been appointed commander of this force, engaged the Turks in battle at Shaykān, at sunrise, Sunday, 3 Muḥarram [4 November]. The Companions had completely surrounded the Turks, who were now subjected to deadly fire. On that morning, the Mahdi moved from al-Birka and, in the forenoon, he attacked the Turks in Shaykān.

The author remarks that Shaykān is also called the watering-place of Umm Maṣārīn. When the Mahdi reached the place, one of his Companions told him that it was called Umm Maṣārīn. He replied that the intestines (maṣārīn) of the Turks would be  
 204 poured out there / and this came true. After the Mahdi's arrival in Shaykān, he summoned the divisional commanders. They paraded in front of his place, every amīr under his flag (rāya), with his division. The Mahdi reviewed, roused and admonished them. He instructed them not to charge on that day, promising that on the next day, Monday, the Turks would perish.

The fighting, which had flared up with the Mahdi's arrival, continued till midday [Sunday]. 'Abdallāh w. al-Nūr, Ḥamdān Abū 'Anja, Fawzī - one of the Mahdi's scribes, and some Companions then charged the vanguard square in front of the main square [of Hicks's force] and destroyed it. Fawzī died as a martyr. The author remarks that this Fawzī was not identical with Fawzī Maḥmūd, another scribe [of the Mahdi]. Some other Companions also died as martyrs and 'Abdallāh  
 205 w. al-Nūr was seriously wounded. Ḥamdān Abū 'Anja's horse was wounded. He promptly seized a horse from inside the square and killed its rider. This the author exemplifies as great bravery and being heedless of the enemy. As a result of the

successful charge, some Companions managed to seize guns, horses, clothes, provisions and the like, from the Turks. When the Mahdi heard that Fawzī had been killed, he said: 'Fawzī had gained success (fāza Fawzī)'. When the Companions saw the desolation of the Turks, they asked the Mahdi permission for one attack on that same day |Sunday|. He replied that he had been informed by the Prophet that not all the Turks would die on that day, but their annihilation would come on Monday. The exchange of fire continued during the day and the night, till Monday morning. The author prais<sup>es</sup> Ḥamdān Abū 'Anja, / who harassed the Turks on that day and night and killed many of them.

On Monday morning, 4 Muḥarrar<sup>ah</sup> |1301/5 November 1883|, the Mahdi ordered the Companions to attack, having warned and exhorted them to the jihād, as was his practice prior to all the campaigns and expeditions. The Companions attacked the Turks and routed them. Hicks, the governor-general 'Alā' al-Dīn Pasha |Ṣiddīq|,<sup>1</sup> and the other notables and leaders were killed while in flight. Even those who hid / under camels, horses and mules or amongst the corpses of the dead, did not escape fatal wounds. The corpses piled up like a high hill. The author remarks that at the time of writing, bones and skeletons could still be seen on the battlefield. Aḥmad 'Alī, the Qādī al-Islām, informed the author that one of the participants in that battle had told him that he had looked at his watch and the attack, from commencement to completion, had lasted no longer than fifteen minutes. Thus the quick victory which the Mahdi had foretold had come true. / Also, the fire that scorched the corpses of the enemy was seen in this battle.

About 200 Companions died as martyrs, among them Abū Umayya, al-Tāhir and others of the Khalifa's

1. See Hill, BD, pp. 43-4.

relatives, Daw' al-Dīn b. 'Abdallāh - one of the veteran Companions, Aḥmad and 'Abd al-Raḥmān - the sons of al-Thanā', Aḥmad b. Shaykh Muḥammad, Muḥammad and 'Abd al-Raḥmān - the sons of al-Naṣrī, 'Uthmān - the son of the khalīfa Muḥammad Sharīf's<sup>1</sup> paternal uncle, Abū Zamīm al-Kinānī, 'Abdallāh b. Muḥammad Billāl, Muḥammad b. Idrīs, 'Abd al-Raḥīm - one of the Mahdi's panegyrists (mādiḥ), Dafa'allāh b. al-Daw' al-Shuwayḥī, and others. They were brought to the  
 209 Mahdi's place and buried with their clothes. / For the remainder of Monday and on Tuesday the Mahdi stayed in Shaykān. At his order, the divisions gathered the booty and transferred it to al-Birka, to be divided there. On Wednesday the Mahdi returned to El Obeid, passing through the watering-place of al-Birka, where he remained for some ten days. There the booty was distributed after the deduction of the Fifth.

c. The Mahdi's activities after the battle<sup>2</sup>

From al-Birka the Mahdi wrote to the inhabitants  
 209- of Khartoum. / In the letter,<sup>3</sup> which is transcribed in  
 11 full, the Mahdi urges the recipients to besiege  
 Khartoum, harass the Turks and cut their communications.  
 212 After the battle |of Shaykān|, Makk Adam Umm Dabbālū, the makk of the mountains of Taqalī, came with all the notables of Jabal Taqalī in submission and obedience.

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1. See Hill, BD, p. 273; Holt, Mahdist state, by index; and introduction, p. 33.
  2. MS., 209/8 - 222/18.
  3. The letter is not dated, but from MS., 211/10-11 it is quite clear that it was written in 1301, after the annihilation of the Hicks expedition. From its contents it may be surmised that, in fact, the letter was addressed to people of the Gezira, outside Khartoum. Cf. the Mahdi's letters to Shaykh al-'Ubayd w. Badr (Shuqayr, Ta'rīkh, iii, pp. 217-9) and to Dafa'allāh (ibīd., p. 119). On p. 220 of Ta'rīkh, Shuqayr mentions, but does not transcribe, a third letter, addressed to Shaykh al-Muḥawwī 'Abd al-Raḥmān.

Deputations of the people of the Gezira now followed in succession to swear allegiance to the Mahdi in Kordofan. Some of the inhabitants of the Gezira and most of the inhabitants of the Khartoum and Berber areas awaited the outcome of the battle with Hicks before deciding whether to come to the Mahdi in Kordofan. When they had learnt of Hicks's fate, they flocked to the Mahdi.

After the Mahdi's arrival in El Obeid, he wrote to Gordon in Khartoum |in answer to Gordon's appointment of the Mahdi as Sultan of Kordofan|. The author fully  
 212- transcribes the Mahdi's reply, which is in three parts.  
 222 In it the Mahdi rejects Gordon's offer and the attached robe of honour; requests Gordon to follow other prominent governors and commanders who submitted to the Mahdi; and to be converted to Islam and wear the attire of a Mahdist, which was enclosed with the Mahdi's letter.

223 3. The expedition of 'Uthmān Diqna to Suakin / and its neighbourhood<sup>2</sup>

a. 'Uthmān Diqna's arrival in the Red Sea Hills<sup>3</sup>

On 1 Rajab 1300 |8 May 1883| the Mahdi dispatched 'Uthmān b. Abī Bakr Diqna<sup>4</sup> to the island of Suakin -

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- 1.A) MS., 212/17 - 221/15: The letter, in two parts:  
 A1) MS., 212/17 - 221/2: The statement (bayān). See Manshūrāt, ii, pp.109-16 (dated 7 Jumādā I 1301/5 March 1884); Shuqayr, Ta'rīkh, iii, pp. 226-30.  
 A2) MS., 221/2-15: An addition. See Manshūrāt, ii, pp. 116-7; Shuqayr, Ta'rīkh, iii, p. 230.  
 B) MS., 221/16 - 222/9: An appendant letter. See Manshūrāt, ii, pp. 117-8; Shuqayr, Ta'rīkh, iii, p. 230.  
 C) MS., 222/9-18: A note |on the wrapper of the above|. See Manshūrāt, ii, p.118; Shuqayr, Ta'rīkh, iii, pp.230-1.  
 2. MS., 222/19 - 280/13. See introduction, pp. 28-30.  
 3. MS., 223/1 - 225/14.  
 4. See Hill, BD, pp. 367-8; H.C. Jackson, Osman Diqna, London, 1926; Shuqayr, Ta'rīkh, iii, pp. 200-1.

an important harbour and an inlet for war-steamers laden with Turks and English, who were joined |on land| by nomads. The Mahdi commissioned 'Uthmān as commander-general |of Suakin| and its districts (amīr 'alā 'umūm tilka al-jihāt), and provided him with a letter<sup>1</sup> to the inhabitants of the island of Suakin, and with useful counsel. On 'Uthmān's arrival<sup>2</sup> in the land of the Bishārīyin nomads,<sup>3</sup> he administered the oath of allegiance to them. Thence he went to the land of the Mūsiyāb<sup>4</sup> |in a place| called Aryab, and administered the oath of allegiance. This was his practice with all the tribes through which he passed, until he reached Qubāb. There he met al-Ṭāhir |al-Ṭayyib| al-Majdhūb,<sup>5</sup> to whom he delivered the Mahdi's letter. Al-Ṭāhir warmly welcomed him and swore allegiance. Thus the matter concerning the majority of the people of that area was settled, for al-Ṭāhir was a man of standing and authority amongst them. On his way, 'Uthmān called incessantly upon the people to join the Mahdi, until he arrived in Erkowit, the residence of his family, on 27 Ramaḍān 1300 | 1 August 1883|. <sup>6</sup> They accepted him and swore allegiance. Tribes and other inhabitants of the island of Suakin had joined him and swore allegiance.

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1. Full text in Shuqayr, Ta'rīkh, iii, pp. 201-3. See also Holt, Mahdist state, p. 74, n.1.
  2. At this point the account of the Waqā'i' begins.
  3. See Paul, Beja tribes; passim; G.E.R. Sanders, 'The Bisharin', SNR, xvi/2, 1933, pp. 119-49.
  4. See Paul; Beja tribes, p. 137.
  5. See Hill, BD, p. 353, vs.v. al-Ṭāhir al-Ṭayyib Qamar al-Dīn al-Majdhūb. For accounts of the Majdhūbiyya see F.C.S. Lorimer, 'The Megadhib of El Damer', SNR, xxix/2, 1936, pp. 335-41; Trimmingham, Islam, pp. 224-26.
  6. In Waqā'i' the arrival of 'Uthmān near Erkowit is dated 27, and his entry, 28 Ramaḍān.

When the Turks in the town of Suakin learnt of 'Uthmān's arrival in Erkowit, of his activities and of his following among the tribes, they foresaw events which would lead to their destruction and the end of their kingdom (mulk) in the island and / its neighbourhood. They attempted to capture 'Uthmān Digna, and disperse his men. The governor (muhāfiẓ) of Suakin, |Muḥammad| Tawfīq |Bey|,<sup>1</sup> summoned al-Ṭāhir al-Majdhūb and Aḥmad Digna, 'Uthmān's brother,<sup>2</sup> so as to enable him to overcome 'Uthmān. Each of them, on receipt of his letter, tore it up and arrested its bearer. Al-Ṭāhir al-Majdhūb then informed 'Uthmān of what had happened and consulted him as regards what he should do. 'Uthmān replied that al-Ṭāhir should set out for the district-town (ma'mūriyya) of Ūkāk | =Sinkāt|,<sup>3</sup> and arranged a meeting with him at the nearby Ta'way.

b. The battle of Ūkāk<sup>4</sup>

In the morning of 'Īd al-Fiṭr |1 Shawwāl/5 August| they arrived at Ta'way. Thence they marched together and arrived, in the late forenoon, very near Ūkāk, within rifle-shot of the Turks. The inhabitants of that region had sworn allegiance to 'Uthmān and joined the Mahdia except for some, who belonged / to the 'sect' (al-diyāna).<sup>5</sup> They did not swear allegiance but took from 'Uthmān the Mahdi's letters to the district officer (ma'mūr) and the governor, in order to deliver them. After an hour they returned and requested 'Uthmān to grant the Turks a delay of three days, but he declined. The author adds<sup>6</sup> that perhaps

1. See Hill, BD, p. 276; A. Paul, 'Tewfiq Bey', SNR, xxxv/1, 1954, pp. 132-37.

2. According to Jackson; Osman Digna, pp. 23, 71, Aḥmad was 'Uthmān's cousin, and had been engaged in the family business at Suakin. He died in battle near Sinkāt, 5 August, 1883.

3. Cf. Jackson, Osman Digna, p. 34.

4. MS., 225/14 - 230/8.

5. The Waqā'i' explicitly names them 'the khalīfas of the Khatmiyya'. See introduction, p. 29, n. 3.

6. Not in Waqā'i'.

'Uthmān knew that the request for a delay was not sincere, since otherwise he would have granted them even more than three days, perhaps God might yet guide them. His refusal of the delay proves that they wished it only for the completion of their preparations |for battle|. 'Uthmān knew the stratagems of war and how to make use of opportunities. The maximum delay which he did grant them was till noon of that day |1 Shawwāl/5 August|. He told them to inform the Turks that if they entered on deceitful ways, he would fight them without delay. When the |mediating| party wanted to return to the Turks and inform them of 'Uthmān's decision, he called upon them to swear allegiance in confirmation of their own adherence to the Mahdia, for it had become clear to 'Uthmān that they were not to be trusted, / Following consultations amongst themselves, they swore allegiance and then delivered 'Uthmān's message to the Turks. At noon, they returned and requested 'Uthmān to extend the delay until the evening. He gave them only three 'paces' (aqdām), and did not grant them a longer delay since he could see the Turks' preparations for battle. As the |mediating| party knew all that and had not informed 'Uthmān, he realized that they were assisting the Turks. Nevertheless, he did not punish them.

The Turks were busy securing their households and properties within the houses. Then, in preparation for shooting, their leaders climbed the upper parts of the houses, whilst the rest lined up in front of their fort (kāra) and prepared for battle. 'Uthmān, despairing of their surrender, decided to attack. When the |mediating| party saw 'Uthmān's preparations, they stood aside and watched him and his Companions. He ordered his Companions to charge, / and they defeated the Turks and pursued them into their fort. The author describes in detail the

difficulties the Companions encountered while penetrating the fort. During the fighting 229 'Uthmān Diqna was injured inside the fort, / and was taken away. Unable to enter the houses in which the Turks had taken shelter, the Companions left the fort. During this attempt to penetrate the fort, the Turks killed many of them. The brother of 'Uthmān, known as |Aḥmad| Diqna, who had asked 'Uthmān to lead the fight, rushed the gate and the Companions followed him. He fought bravely until he died as a martyr.

230 After the fighting had stopped and 'Uthmān and the Companions had left the fort, they made their way to Erkowit with / the wounded. 'Uthmān was carried on a camel, tied to a bedstead, as he was too weak to prevent himself falling. In the battle, 60 Companions died as martyrs and 57 of the enemies of God perished.<sup>1</sup> The battle of Ūkāk was the first battle with the inhabitants of Suakin and its neighbourhood, and it took place on the day of 'Īd al-Fiṭr, 1 Shawwāl |1300/5 August 1883|.

c. The battle of Qubāb<sup>2</sup>

After the Companions had settled down in Erkowit, |Muḥammad| Tawfīq, the governor of Suakin, requested reinforcements from Suakin and Egypt and prepared to fight 'Uthmān. 'Uthmān, too, prepared by mustering fighters and equipping them for a return to Ūkāk in order to invest the Turks who were there. As soon as the reinforcements reached the governor, he set out to fight 'Uthmān, on 9 Dhū al-Qa'da |1300/11 August 1883|,<sup>3</sup> while 'Uthmān had determined to set out on 12 Dhū al-Qa'da. When 'Uthmān realized that the

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1. Cf. Hōlt, Mahdist state, p. 76, n.1.
  2. MS., 230/8 - 235/1.
  3. In MS., 264/3, the battle is dated 10 Dhū al-Qa'da.

governor was marching on him, he prepared the army  
 231 for the encounter, / under the command of his nephew,  
 Muḥammad Mūsā Diqna. When the Turks reached Qubāb, near  
 the place of the Companions, God cast fear in their  
 hearts and they encamped there, enclosed within  
 a firm zarība. The Companions advanced and spent the  
 night near the Turks, who woke up only to find that  
 the Companions had encircled them. The heat of the  
 day, the lack of shade and the shortage of provisions,  
 frightened the Turks, who grumbled to their leader,  
 an Arab called Maḥmūd 'Alī,<sup>1</sup> the shaykh of the  
 'Ummār'ar tribe<sup>2</sup> of the Suakin area, for his  
 misleading promises of an easy victory. /

232 As the Turks saw that their assessment of the  
 Companions' force was wrong, they wanted to withdraw  
 to their ma'mūriyya,<sup>3</sup> and they fired at the Companions,  
 thus impeding their attack. Only three of the  
 Companions, amongst them Ṭāhā,<sup>4</sup> who had been one of  
 the attendants (mulāzim) of the Mahdi and had set out  
 with 'Uthmān Diqna for the jihād, broke through one  
 of the zarība gates. In this battle, Muḥammad Mūsā  
 |Diqna| was wounded and 27 Companions died as martyrs,  
 besides the wounded. From the enemies, a son of  
 Maḥmūd |'Alī Bey|, one major (ṣāgh) and 6 jihādiyya<sup>5</sup>  
 233 perished. / The remainder of the Turks fought their  
 way through, with much difficulty, and reached their

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1. See Hill, BD, p. 225; Jackson, Osman Diqna, by index: Mahmud Bey Ali.
  2. See Paul, Beja tribes, by index: Amara; G.E.R. Sanders, 'The Amara', SNR, xviii/2, 1935, pp. 195-220.
  3. I.e., Sinkāt.
  4. Waqā'i' mentions Ṭāhā and his brother, the sons of Shahadaa |sic|, who had been dispatched by the Mahdi with 'Uthmān Diqna.
  5. In the Egyptian army in the Sudan, the term jihādiyya designated black slaves who were recruited from among confiscated slaves or by raiding. In the early phase of the Mahdia, those of them who were captured or surrendered were incorporated in the Mahdist army. See Holt, Mahdist state, pp. 11, 15, 55, 57.

ma'mūriyya. After their arrival God cast fear into them and they fortified themselves, digging a trench and a deep ditch (qaqara)<sup>1</sup> which, from fear of shells, they surrounded with rows of sandbags, although the Companions did not then possess any guns. Outside the ditch they built an extremely firm zarība, made of whole acacia trees, with four guns mounted on its four corners.

234 Meanwhile, 'Uthmān Diqna had forwarded the Mahdi's letter which was addressed to the tribe of Kimaylāb which, at that time, was in the vicinity of the provincial capital (mudīriyya) of Kasala. They accepted it with approval and in obedience. At that time there was/with them a sanjak of the Shāy<sup>2</sup>qiyya [irregular troops] called Jubāra, with troops. The Kimaylāb called upon him to submit to the Mahdi, but he refused and fought them, and they killed him and his troops. The commander (amīr) of the Kimaylāb who fought this battle, and the battle of Tūkar, was al-Ḥājǰ b. Ḥasan Abū Zaynab. Meanwhile, 'Uthmān Diqna ordered the nomads to cut the [Suakin-Kasala] telegraph line. This they carried out thoroughly, expelling from the stations the soldiers and the operators (mubāshir), who were either killed or fled to Suakin and Kasala. The author adds<sup>2</sup> that the act of cutting the telegraph is a great stratagem of war./

235 At the end of Dhū al-Qa'da [1300 October 1883], 'Uthmān Diqna appointed al-Khiḍr b. 'Alī<sup>as</sup> commander of the ma'mūriyya of Tūkar, a day's distance south of Suakin. Tūkar was more important to the Turks than Ukāk, since it was the location of their cultivated areas and a major source of their foods. The battle

1. See Hillelson, Sudan Arabic, s.v. ditch.

2. Not in Waqā'i'.

of Qubāb was the second battle with the people of Suakin and its districts.

d. The battle of Abīnt<sup>1</sup>

On 13 Dhū al-Ḥijja |1300/15 October 1883|<sup>2</sup> 'Uthmān Diqna ordered the Companions to advance and to invest Ūkāk. They were under the command of 'Alī Ṭallāb b. Muḥammad, who subsequently was killed in battle with the English. Having set out for the siege, the Companions stayed on the Suakin-Ūkāk road, in a place called Abīnt. During their first day there, a force of about 200 soldiers came from Suakin, on their way to Ūkāk. They came across about 60 Companions, most of whom were boys who had had no experience in fighting /  
236 and some were weak, for after the Companions had left 'Uthmān they had split into two groups, and each stayed on a different road. As soon as the Companions saw the Turks, they attacked and annihilated them, looting their weapons and equipment. 3 Companions died as martyrs in that battle - the third | - in the area of Suakin|.

e. The final battle of Ūkāk<sup>3</sup>

After that battle, 'Uthmān reinforced the besiegers of Ūkāk and their number now reached 750. He put all of them under the command of 'Alī b. Ḥāmid, known as the commander (amīr) of Ūkāk, since he conquered Ūkāk. 'Uthmān ordered the army to stay closer to the town than bullet-range, in order to  
237 tighten the siege. / At that time the ma'mūriyya abounded with inhabitants of Suakin who had gone there for the first battle. When the Companions tightened

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1. MS., 235/8 - 236/8.
  2. Dated in Waqā'i' 23 Dhū al-Ḥijja, but on f.10 there, it is dated 13 Dhū al-Ḥijja.
  3. MS., 236/9 - 240/14.

the siege, some of those who were in the town deserted and joined 'Alī b. Ḥāmid. On their request, he dispatched them to 'Uthmān Diqna, who had set out to besiege Suakin and to cut off supplies from Ūkāk. While on their way they heard false rumours that the reprobate (hālik) 'Alā' al-Dīn Pasha had won a victory over the Mahdi in Kordofan,<sup>1 and</sup> they went to Suakin. When  
 238 the / local people of the ma'mūriyya had left and only the Turks remained there, the Companions sealed off the town. Day and night the Turks poured deadly fire on the Companions, who would rebuke them, shouting: 'Fire your guns again for this shot was ineffectual and useless'. The author adds that the continuous shooting had no effect on the  
 239 Companions and repeats his explanation / of this prodigy.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, the siege continued until the besieged ran out of food. Some of them, including the governor and a sanjaq called Aḥmad b. al-Muzayyin made a sortie, alleging that they could break up the gathering of the Companions. The latter repelled the attack, killed about 20 of them, including the sanjaq, and pursued them back to the ditch. The situation of the besieged deteriorated and, lacking food, they began  
 240 eating / mules, donkeys and dogs. They determined to make a |second| sortie and on Friday, 10 Rabī' II |1301/8 February 1884|, they came out with their women and children. When they drew close to the Companions they formed a square, placed the women and the children in its centre, and began firing at the Companions. Thereupon, the Companions encircled them and, attacking with spears and swords, they

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1. According to Waqā'i' the rumour originated in Suakin.  
 2. See MS., 167/7-19. This passage is not in Waqā'i' which states, however, that it was a secret (sirr).

annihilated them. The governor and 600 men were killed and 75 Companions died as martyrs. After the fourth battle |in the area of Suakin| the Companions joined 'Uthmān Diqna, who was besieging Suakin.

f. The siege of Tūkar and the battles of the Coast |El Teb|<sup>1</sup>

1) The first battle of the Coast

On the arrival |to the Tūkar area| of the said amīr |al-|Khiḍr |b. 'Alī|,<sup>2</sup> he was welcomed by its people, mainly the tribes of Artayqa.<sup>3</sup> Al-Ṭāhīr al-Majdhūb - whose followers they were - had written /  
241 instructions to them to follow and obey al-Khiḍr. This they did, particularly their amīr, Mūsā.<sup>4</sup> The Turks in the ma'mūriyya had deepened their ditch and strengthened their fort when they first heard of 'Uthmān Diqna's arrival. Now, when al-Khiḍr arrived, he called them to accept the Mahdi. This they rejected, for they were hoping that reinforcements would come from Suakin. Unlike the ma'mūriyya of Ūkāk, they were near the coast and troops could reach them by steamer. When al-Khiḍr saw their denial of the Mahdi, he besieged them, dividing his Companions into two parts, he dispatched one part, under the command of 'Abdallāh b. Ḥāmid,<sup>5</sup> to prevent the arrival of reinforcement from the sea, while the other part remained with him and besieged Tūkar. /

1. MS., 240/14 - 248/3.

2. See MS., 235/1 - 6.

3. See Paul, Beja tribes, pp. 140-2.

4. Waqā'i' names him موكي بن الفقه

5. He held the title amīr al-sāhil and led the first two battles of the Coast. In the third battle he was killed (29 February 1884).

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While al-Khiḍr was tightening the siege of Tūkar, troops arrived on board steamers, on 4 Muḥarram |1301/5 November, 1883|, and descended upon the commander of the Coast |‘Abdallāh b. Ḥāmid|. Among them were a pasha of the Turks |Maḥmūd Pasha Ṭāhir|<sup>1</sup> and an English consul |L.N. Moncrieff|. <sup>2</sup> As soon as the Companions saw them they attacked and annihilated all of them,<sup>3</sup> about 400 men. 27 Companions died as martyrs.

Meanwhile, the district officer, who was away at Kasalā, arrived. He came across the amīr of the Kimaylāb, al-Ḥājj b. Ḥasan |Abū Zaynab|, who was on his way to Tūkar to join the amīr al-Khiḍr |b. ‘Alī|. /  
243 Al-Ḥājj b. Ḥasan called upon the district officer to follow the Mahdi and as he declined, al-Ḥājj fought him, on 4 Muḥarram |1301/5 November 1883|, and annihilated him and his soldiers. One of the Companions died as a martyr. During the siege |of Tūkar|, when the condition of the Turks had become serious, they made a sortie, but they were repulsed, suffered losses, and were pursued back to their fort.

2) The second battle of the Coast, the last with the Turks

During the siege |of Tūkar|, steamers arrived with Turkish soldiers who, like their predecessors, landed on the Coast. They numbered 6,000 men, with horses, guns and other military equipment which had not been seen before. On their attempt to march on Tūkar and relieve their besieged companions, they were met by the commander of the Coast, ‘Abdallāh |b. Ḥāmid| and his Companions. When they saw the Companions,

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1. See Hill; BD; pp. 226-7.  
2. See Hill, BD, pp. 240-1.  
3. Cf. Shuqayr, Ta’rīkh, iii, p. 205; Holt, Mahdist state, p. 77.

244. they shelled them. Thereupon, the Companions attacked and, within an hour, defeated them, killing / 4,500 men. The survivors reembarked their steamers and fled to Suakin. 300 Companions died as martyrs, amongst them the amīr Maḥmūd |b. 'Alī|, the brother of the amīr al-Khīḍr. This battle took place on 6 Rabī' II |1301/4 February 1884|. This reprobate army was the last of the Turkish armies. Thereafter the Egyptian administration conceded that they were incapable of fighting and handed over the island of Suakin, to the English. The author adds that Suakin, at <sup>the</sup> time of writing, was under English rule, and he asks God that the town be returned to Islam.

### 3) The conquest of Tūkar

245 The Companions then seized the weapons of the Turks, including guns, the like of which had not previously been seen in the fighting of Suakin. They set out for Tūkar, tightened its siege, and shelled the Turks with those very heavy guns. The Turks had sufficient food for two or three years. But when their situation / deteriorated, and they heard that the Companions had annihilated the troops who had come to reinforce them, and that they could no longer expect any others, they surrendered, on 26 Rabī' II |1301/24 February 1884|.

### 4) The third<sup>1</sup> battle of the Coast, the first battle with the English.

While the Companions were busy taking possession of the stores of the ma'mūriyya |Tūkar| and within three days |from its conquest|, the Coast was filled with steamers laden with the English. A rumour spread that the Egyptian administration was incapable of

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1. MS. reads: second.

fighting and had handed the matter over to the English. 'Uthmān Diqna then dispatched his nephew, Madanī b. 'Alī, with reinforcements, to the Companions at the Coast, and he joined the amīr 'Abdallāh |b. Ḥāmid|. 24,000 English soldiers landed on the Coast, to  
 246 recapture Tūkar. / The Companions waited patiently until the landing was completed, in order to destroy all of them and thereby eliminate the substance of unbelief, (māddat al-kufr) from the island of Suakin and its environs. When the gathering of the English was completed, the Companions made an incursion, in the morning of 1 Jumādā I |1301/28 February 1884|. <sup>1</sup> The battle continued until nightfall, and then the parties disengaged. Many Companions were killed and wounded. The English advanced to Tūkar and spent the night there. When the news reached 'Uthmān Diqna he dispatched almost all the Companions who were with him to Tūkar, to attack the enemies of God. He appointed /  
 247 his nephew, Ḥāmid b. Aḥmad Diqna, and Idrīs<sup>2</sup> Shukr in command. 'Uthmān dispatched them consecutively, on two days, with orders to attack the enemies of God as soon as they had reached them. God had cast fear into the English and prevented them from staying in Tūkar for longer than that night. In the morning, they returned to the sea and departed with their steamers. When the Companions reached Tūkar, they could not find any of the English and returned to 'Uthmān Diqna. 1,500 Companions died as martyrs in this battle, including the amīr 'Abdallāh |b. Ḥāmid| - the commander of the Coast, the amīr Madanī |b. 'Alī|, the amīr al-Ṭāhir b. 'Umar Qamar al-Dīn al-Majdhūb, /  
 248 and the amīr Mūsa Qīlāy.<sup>3</sup> The number of the wounded Companions equalled that of their dead. More than 3,000 of the enemies of God perished.

1. MS., 265/3 - dates the battle 2 Jumādā I.

2. MS., reads ادريب . Waqa'i' reads ادريس .

3. MS., reads قيلاب

g. The battle of Kasala<sup>1</sup>

At the end of Muḥarram |1301/November-December 1883|, and when 'Uthmān Diqna began the siege of Suakin, he appointed Muṣṭafā 'Alī Hadal amīr of Kasala, and dispatched him to its people, to call them to join the Mahdi. On his arrival in the province (mudīriyya) of Kasala, the inhabitants of that region, to whom 'Uthmān Diqna had previously sent the Mahdi's letters, welcomed him. When Muṣṭafā approached the provincial capital (mudīriyya), and wanted to encamp there and warn its people, they forestalled him with war. On 13 Rabī' II |1301/11 February 1884|, about 1,500 Turks came out and, after a short battle, they were defeated and their dead numbered 1,100. The remainder returned to their fort and the amīr invested them. /

249 h. The battle of Atbara<sup>2</sup>

In Muḥarram |1301/November 1883| 'Uthmān Diqna ordered Aḥmad |b. 'Ādam| al-Qulhuyābī<sup>3</sup> and the amīr of the Bishārīyīn, al-Ṭāhir Qilāy, to advance with their Companions to Atbara, and attack a sanjak who was there with some Turks, in the event they did not adhere to the Mahdia. When the sanjak heard of their gathering, in a place called al-Bāk, he proceeded towards them. Near Atbara, they called upon him |to join the Mahdia|, he declined and they fought him. 114 Turks were killed and the rest fled to the provincial capital (mudīriyya) of Berber. About 80 Companions died as martyrs.

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1. MS., 248/3 - 249/2.  
 2. MS., 249/2 - 14.  
 3. See MS., 258/1 - 12.

i. The battle with the Turks at al-Tamaynayb<sup>1</sup>

When 'Uthmān Diqna began the siege of Suakin, 1,100 soldiers, under the command of Kāzim,<sup>2</sup> made a sortie, on 1 Ṣafar |1301/2 December 1883|. He had pledged / to bring back 'Uthmān Diqna and al-Ṭāhir al-Majdhūb alive, unless the soldiers killed them - for they were jihādiyya and of no great discernment.

The author adds<sup>3</sup> that this proves his arrogance and that he was blinded by the strength of his army. In order to conceal his movements and take 'Uthmān Diqna by surprise, he set out from Suakin during the night. In the morning of 1 Ṣafar |1301/2 December 1883|, as soon as they had arrived at the Companions' location, they began firing on them. The leader of the Turks mocked the Companions, thinking that he had already attained his wish. Thereupon, the Companions fell upon the Turks, surrounded and annihilated them. Kāzim was killed, and about 80 Companions died as martyrs. Then, on 21 Rabī' I |1301/20 January 1884|, 1,000 cavalymen made a sortie against the Companions, who faced them like lions, defeated and pursued them, forcing them back into Suakin. Only / 7 of them were killed, because they were riding horses. They galloped and eluded the Companions but on their arrival in Suakin their horses collapsed as a result of the fierce pace. At the end of Rabī' II |1301/February 1884| the besieging Companions came upon Maḥmūd 'Alī, who was assisting the enemies of God in that area. He had hordes while the Companions numbered 100. He made an incursion on the Companions, of whom 22 died as martyrs. One of the enemy perished.

1. MS., 249/14 - 251/9.

2. See Jackson, Osman Digna, p. 41; MS., 250/14.

3. Not in Waqā'i'.

j. The battle with the English at al-Tamaynayb<sup>1</sup> 186

On 14 Jumāda I |1301/12 March 1884| an English force of about 20,000 men and about 6,000 horses came to fight 'Uthmān Diqna. Having built a firm zarība they spent the night near his place. During the night, the Companions encircled, harassed, fired on, and killed a party of them. In the morning, the Companions attacked / and the fighting continued until nightfall. In it, 8,000 of the English perished. About 2,000 of the Companions died as martyrs, and an equal number were wounded. The remainder |of the English| returned to the governorate (muhāfaza) of Suakin. At the end of Jumādā I |1301/March 1884| the English came out again and they now numbered 13,000. Before they reached the Companions, God cast fear into them and they withdrew, but only about 6,000 reached Suakin. The rest perished in an unknown manner, as if the earth had swallowed them. The author adds that he was informed that people in the Suakin area believed that the English indeed were swallowed by the earth. / Those who finally arrived at Suakin had about 28 steamers waiting for them. They embarked on 5 and the others remained empty. All of them departed for their country, but one of the steamers sank afterwards. Prior to that, two Egyptian steamers had sunk together with innumerable soldiers, horses, mules and stores.

k. The battle of Bīr Hashīm<sup>2</sup>

In mid |16|<sup>3</sup> Rajab |1301/12 May 1884| Maḥmūd 'Alī mustered nomads who were opposed to the Mahdi, at a well (bi'r) called Hāshīm. During the night he sent

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1. MS., 251/10 - 253/7.  
2. MS., 253/7 - 254/17.  
3. Cf. Waqā'i', f.11.

a force of cavalrymen equipped with rifles to attack 'Uthmān and his men. That night, they reached the Companions, fired upon them two or three times and withdrew. Maḥmūd 'Alī captured 7 Companions and brought them to the English in Suakin. They, like the Turks before them, supplied him with all that he requested: weapons, horses, money and the like. 'Uthmān Diqna then dispatched some Companions against them / under the command of 'Alī |b. Ḥāmid|, the amīr of Ūkāk. On his arrival he called upon them to submit and obey. Their chief, Maḥmūd 'Alī, was then in Suakin. They informed him of the arrival of the Companions and he mustered hordes of nomads and others. Accompanied by the women, he conceitedly proceeded to fight the army of God. After a short fight they were routed by the Companions, who pursued them, killed 16 and wounded many others. The rest entered Suakin. Maḥmūd 'Alī himself was saved, for during the battle he was riding a camel in the rear of the people and when he saw that they were being defeated, he hurried back to Suakin. The Companions captured 9 |men| and 40 women, camels and the like, and returned without casualties.

1. The battle of Bīr Handūb<sup>1</sup>

'Uthmān Diqna then ordered the Companions to return / to another well, called Handūb, near the previous well, two or three leagues north of Suakin and the nearest source of water to Suakin, in order to tighten the siege of the town. When the Companions had settled down, in Bīr Handūb, in mid-Sha'bān |1301/June 1884|, the 'Ummār'ar tribes of the vicinity of Suakin, amongst them the notorious tribe of the Shatrāb - the party of Muḥammad |Ādam| 'Alī Rikāb, and the party of the Faḍlāb - the party of Maḥmūd 'Alī, and their followers, began preparing to fight the Companions. Their objective was to prevent the

1. MS., 254/18 - 261/4.

Companions from commanding that well so that their own communication with Suakin would not be cut off. Besides their infidelity and their rejection of the Mahdia, they benefited from the use of this route for trade with Suakin. They sent about 30 riders to reconnoitre the Companions who themselves sent  
 256 5 scouts - 2 in one direction and 3 / in another. The 3 scouts clashed with the 30 scouts of the enemy; one of the enemies of God perished and 2 of the Companions died as martyrs. The third returned unhurt. When he told his Companions of what had happened, they proceeded towards the gathering of those nomads, in a place called Dim, two days' distance north of Suakin. The Companions attacked and defeated them, killing 22 men and, looting a great deal of livestock and more than forty women, they returned without casualties. This battle took place on 1 Ramaḍān [1301/25 June 1884].

After these Companions had returned to Bār Handūb and cut off the supply route between the 'Ummār'ar and Suakin, the people of Suakin began to send boats to anchorages (marsā) which were far from the Companions, to obtain supplies from those 'Ummār'ar.  
 257 The Companions had / anticipated this and sent men to invest the anchorages. In an anchorage called Durūr | ? |<sup>1</sup> the Companions seized livestock and killed 5 and captured 70 of their owners. Then they returned without any casualties and with a great deal of livestock which they had looted from the 'Ummār'ar, in mid-Ramaḍān [July 1884]. After the Companions had returned to their place, the 'Ummār'ar - the enemies of the Mahdia - mustered for a second battle with the Companions, regretting that they had fled

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1. Waqā'i' reads برغوث .

from the first battle at Dim. Thereupon,<sup>1</sup> the Companions proceeded against them. They drew near, <sup>with</sup> the intention of attacking in the morning, <sup>but</sup> God cast fear into the enemies. They offered to surrender, join Aḥmad al-Qulhuyābī and then proceed with him to

258 'Uthmān Diqna. / Aḥmad b. Ādam al-Qulhuyābī was an amīr of a part of the 'Ummār'ar that had submitted to the Mahdi and joined 'Uthmān Diqna from the beginning. Aḥmad had been continuously calling them |the 'Ummār'ar| to join the Mahdia but they were heedless. It was the gravity of their situation that now induced them to surrender. At their request, the Companions fell back and they |the 'Ummār'ar| joined Aḥmad al-Qulhuyābī, who brought them, with their chiefs: Muḥammad |Ādam| 'Alī Rikāb and the sons of Maḥmūd Alī, to 'Uthmān Diqna, to whom they swore allegiance.

After a few days the remainder of the 'Ummār'ar tribes, who were astray in their error, gathered

259 together. / Among them were the notorious tribes of the Ḥāmdāb - the party of Karab Ḥāmid, the 'Āliyyāb - the party of Ḥashīr Artūl, the Raḥmāyāb - the party of 'Alī Hūjar, and their followers. While some Companions were away, they looted some of their livestock. 'Uthmān Diqna, on hearing the news, dispatched Aḥmad |al-Qulhuyābī| and Ibrāhim Ḥamad Ḍaw,<sup>2</sup> the amīr of the Ḥāmdāb tribes, and their followers from among the Hadanduwa.<sup>3</sup> 'Uthmān's orders were to call upon them to join the Mahdia. If they obeyed and surrendered, the Companions should retrieve the livestock which had been taken and bring in the tribes. Otherwise, they should fight them until God decided

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1. Here the account of Waḡā'i' terminates (owing to a number of missing folios). See introduction, p. 29, n.2.
  2. MS. reads . Cf. MS., 260/16.
  3. See Paul, Beja tribes, p. 137; T.R.H. Owen, 'The Hadendowa', SNR, xx/2, 1937, pp. 183-208.

the matter. This took place in the first ten days of Shawwāl |1301/July 1884|. When the nomads heard that, they requested help from Maḥmūd 'Alī in Suakin, tempting him with their booty. He requested that the English give him firearms and ammunition. / They were overjoyed in the activities of his party and gave him 200 rifles, 20 boxes of ammunition, 50 irdabbs of millet (dhurra) and 50 irdabbs of rusks (buqsumāt). These firearms were in addition to those which Maḥmūd 'Alī had previously received for his war against 'Uthmān Diqna. He and his men left by a steamer which the English had assigned to him. From amongst the English and the people of Suakin he was joined only by the commissioner of the gendarmerie (ma'mūr al-dābiṭiyya), who did not disembark, but returned with his steamer. Maḥmūd 'Alī and his men landed in an anchorage called Barghūthā, two days' distance from Suakin. Thence, they climbed the mountains and joined their companions |aḡhāb|. Some of the commanders of the Companions whom 'Uthmān Diqna had dispatched, namely, Aḡmad al-Qulhuyābī and Ibrāhīm Ḥamad Ḍaw, reached them and called upon them to submit, / obey and follow the Maḥdi. At that time they, including even Maḥmūd 'Alī, were closer to obedience than to insubordination. The author remarks that this terminates the account of the 'Ummār'ar and the northern region.

m. The inhabitants of the southern region - the Banū 'Āmir, Ḥabāb and Zabīdiyya tribes<sup>1</sup>

At the end of Ramadān |1301/July 1884|, 'Uthmān Diqna appointed al-Ḥājj<sup>2</sup> Ḥasan Abū Zaynab, the amīr of the Kimaylāb,<sup>as</sup> amīr of the ma'mūriyya of 'Aqīq

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 1. MS.; 261/4 - 263/12.  
 2. MS.; reads 242 (Oḡājj), the Bija form of al-Ḥājj. Cf. MS., 234/5; 242/13.

and dispatched him and his men. In 'Aqīq - an island located on the coast, about 5 or 6 days' distance south of Suakin - there were soldiers and a district officer. Thence came all the provisions of Suakin, since the inhabitants of that region: the tribes of Banū 'Āmir,<sup>1</sup> the Ḥabāb and the Zabīdiyya,<sup>2</sup> were opposed to the Mahdi. The Zabīdiyya tribe were originally Arabs of the Ḥijāz and they had been dwelling in the area of 'Aqīq for about twenty years. Al-Ḥājj b. Ḥasan had set out for the ma'mūriyya of 'Aqīq, / and after reaching Tūkar, on his way to 'Aqīq, he dispatched besiegers to the region of Banū 'Āmir. After al-Ḥājj b. Ḥasan and those of the Kimaylāb tribe who were with him had gone to the ma'mūriyya of 'Aqīq, they all stayed at its source of water, which was two hours' distance from the island |of 'Aqīq| by sea. Thence, the Companions forwarded 'Uthmān's letters to the people of 'Aqīq and called upon them to follow the Mahdi, but they refused. Earlier, 'Uthmān Diqna had sent them the Mahdi's letter but they did not yield, thinking that they were protected by the sea and that in case of distress they could easily flee to Suakin by boats. They cut off the hand of one of the emissaries /

263 while the second one escaped. They then informed the governorate of Suakin of what had happened. From Suakin a steam-pump (wābūr) was sent to pump salt water from the sea, together with orders not to surrender. The Companions then invested the nomads of the mainland near the ma'mūriyya |'Aqīq|, namely, the tribes of Banū 'Āmir, the Ḥabāb and the Zabīdiyya, whence the supplies of that ma'mūriyya came. They struck at a

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1. See Paul, Beja tribes, p. 138; S.F. Nadel, 'Notes on Beni Amer society', SNR, xxvi/1, 1945, pp. 51-94; A. Paul, 'Notes on the Beni Amer', SNR, xxxi, 1950, pp. 223-45.
  2. See MacMichael, Arabs in the Sudan, iii.13, i-iii.

section (ḥayy) of the Banū 'Āmir, killed two and wounded a party of them. The remainder fled and the Companions seized their livestock and returned without casualties.

n. A list of battles<sup>1</sup>

264- The author gives a detailed list of the battles  
6 of 'Uthmān Diqna and his commanders, including their dates, and number of participants and casualties on  
266 both sides. He adds that all these battles constitute part of the expedition of 'Uthmān Diqna, and remarks that the account of the |campaign in| the province (mudīriyya) of Kasala follows the account of 'Uthmān Diqna's expedition, since the siege and harassment of Kasala were carried out by Muṣṭafā 'Alī Hadal, who had been dispatched by 'Uthmān Diqna. Consequently, it is considered to be a 'mission'.

o. The siege of Suakin<sup>2</sup>

267 The siege of Suakin reveals 'Uthmān Diqna's bravery and knowledge of stratagems of / war. From the beginning, 'Uthmān and his Companions kept Suakin continuously cut off from all its supplies, save those which came by sea on steamers. The Companions harassed them day and night and managed to enter the fort and seize livestock and even slaves. Always skirmishing with firearms, the Companions killed and were killed; but more of the enemy were killed than of the Companions, despite the fact that the enemy was within the fort whilst the Companions were in the open. The author describes the use, by the unbelievers of Suakin, of  
268 a searchlight (idā'a) / and wooden dummies of men.

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1. MS., 263/12 - 266/16. This list is also given in Waqā'i'.
2. MS., 266/16 - 270/14.

The Companions were astonished at these vile tricks, and were aware that their use stemmed from the enemy's fear, and this / increased the Companions' daring. From the start of the siege, the people of the town were incessantly strengthening their fort and gun emplacements (tābiya pl. tawābī). Around the town they had erected 5 citadels (gal'a), 2 of which were on the mainland, and they linked the houses with clay and made one single gate. Every day they fortified the town further, to the extent that, eventually, the number of gun emplacements reached 24 - in excess of the requirements of a town of such small size.

269 The author describes the gun emplacements, / and adds that all the provisions were kept inside the gun emplacements. They | the soldiers | drank sea water which was pumped, whilst the townspeople drank water from the wells. As a result of the severe heat and lack of food, many of the townspeople died, particularly the children. The English soldiers likewise perished from the severe heat, to which they were not accustomed in their own country, and from smallpox.

p. The mission of Muṣṭafā 'Alī Hadal to Kasala<sup>1</sup>

'Uthmān Diqna had sent Muṣṭafā 'Alī Hadal to the people of the mudīriyya of Kasala, to call upon them to join the Mahdia, and he was welcomed by the inhabitants of those regions. / When he neared the provincial capital, about 1,500 soldiers came out, fought him and were defeated. Thereafter, he besieged them and wrote to 'Uthmān Diqna about the fighting. When the siege was tightened, the Turks made a second sortie, with the hope of repulsing the Companions, but after a short while they were defeated. The Companions pursued and killed 280 of them. 29 Companions

1. MS., 270/15 - 280/13.

272 died as martyrs. The Turks then made a third sortie, in which 9 were killed and the rest fled. / After a long time and several fights, their situation became hopeless and they wrote to the Mahdi, who was then in Omdurman after the conquest of Khartoum. They asked him to send a party of Companions who were resident with him, to accept their surrender. They were wary of the tribes who participated in the siege, and reluctant to submit to Muṣṭafā 'Alī Hadal, for many fights had taken place and a lot of blood had been shed on both sides, though mainly that of the enemy. The Mahdi, therefore, sent Ḥusayn Ibrāhīm, known as al-Zahrā'<sup>1</sup> and Ibrāhīm Aḥmad 'Ālīm, with a party of Companions and a letter to the people of Kasala. /

273 The author transcribes in full the Mahdi's letter,<sup>2</sup> addressed to Aḥmad 'Iffat - the governor of Tākā,<sup>3</sup> Faraj 'Azāzī - the Ra'īs al-'Asākir,<sup>4</sup> Ḥasan Labīb, 'Abd al-Qādir Hudayb, Ḥasan Sulaymān, Bashīr Kanbāl,<sup>5</sup> Na'īm al-Fikī, Ibrāhīm Badawī, Ḥasan Mūsā, Khūrshīd,<sup>6</sup> Aḥmad al-Mansī, Ḥasan Badawī, Khalaf Khalfallāh, Aḥmad Ḥamdī and all the worshippers of God besieged in Kasala. In the letter, the Mahdi praises the wish  
273- of the people of Kasala to capitulate; stresses the  
278 value of the other world in relation to the ephemeral world; and informs the people of Kasala of the procedure for capitulation to his commissioners al-Ḥusayn Ibrāhīm w. al-Zahrā' and Ibrāhīm 'Ālīm.

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1. See Hill; BD, pp. 168-9; Holt, Mahdist state, pp. 191, n.2; 192, n.3.
  2. See Shuqayr, Ta'rīkh, iii, pp. 341-3.
  3. See Hill; BD, pp. 33-4; Jackson, Osman Digna, pp. 113-4; Holt, Mahdist state, p. 150.
  4. See Hill; BD, p. 124, s.v. Faraj Bey Azāzī.
  5. See Hill, BD, p. 75, and p. 196, s.v. Kanbal, called al-Malik Kanbal.
  6. MS. reads جورشنید.

278           When the Mahdi's Companions arrived near Kasala,  
 they wrote to the Turks there and called upon them to  
 279           surrender, promising to treat them leniently, in  
 accordance with the Mahdi's letter. / The Turks  
 declined and again engaged the Companions in battle,  
 killing some who were with Ḥusayn |Ibrāhīm w. |  
 al-Zahrā'. Eventually, they decided to cease fighting  
 and capitulated. The provincial capital Kasala was  
 conquered |on 16 Shawwāl 1302/29 July 1885| about one  
 and a half months after the Mahdi's death. The town of  
 280           Sennar was also taken / about two months after the  
 Mahdi's death, at the start of the Khalifa's reign.

281   4.    The expedition of Muḥammad Khālīd Zuqal to  
           Darfur<sup>1</sup>

a.    Muḥammad Khālīd's arrival in Darfur<sup>2</sup>

          After the battle with Hicks, the Mahdi dispatched  
 Muḥammad b. Khālīd |Zuqal|, on 12 Muḥarram 1301 |13  
 November 1883|, with a party of Companions, to the  
 Turks in Darfur and to all those who were nearby, to  
 call upon them to join the Mahdi. The Mahdi himself,  
 with his senior khalīfa and the other khalīfas and  
 Companions, escorted Muḥammad b. Khālīd as far as the  
 outskirts of the town |El Obeid|. The Mahdi then  
 exhorted Muḥammad b. Khālīd and warned the army  
 against being fraudulent in the booty.                   The

          The author remarks that this had also been the practice  
 of the Prophet, and quotes an exhortation of Abū Bakr  
 to one of the Companions, on dispatching him to a  
 282   campaign. /                   Muḥammad b. Khālīd reached  
 Umm Shanqa, the first of the posts (a'māl) of the  
 government of the Turks in Darfur. He found the Turks

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 1.   MS.; 281/1 - 289/1.  
 2.   MS.; 281/1 - 283/11.

and inhabitants enfeebled by fights and incursions, which had been conducted by the Mahdi's agents, such as Ibrāhim b. al-Milīḥ,<sup>1</sup> who had invested and harassed the place. / When their situation had worsened, they realized that they could not be relieved save by surrender. They were reluctant to surrender to Ibrāhim b. al-Milīḥ, in wariness of the tribes, since there had been much bloodshed on both sides during the siege. They wrote to the Mahdi and asked him to send one of his Companions to accept their surrender. He commissioned Muḥammad b. Khālīd and ordered him to treat them leniently. After his arrival, they came out in obedience. He administered the oath of allegiance to them and sent them, with the booty, to the Mahdi in Kordofan.

b. Dāra<sup>2</sup>

Thence, Muḥammad b. Khālīd went to the mudīriyya of Dāra. At that time, the general-governor (mudīr 'umūm) of that country, Slatin - whose name the Mahdi altered to 'Abd al-Qādir - was staying there. Muḥammad b. Khālīd's decision to march on Dāra before capturing El Fasher - the seat of the government of the Turks in Darfur and the capital of their rule there, where a large army was stationed - was due to the fact that Muḥammad b. Khālīd had lived in Dāra; when the Mahdi came to Kordofan, he wrote to Muḥammad b. Khālīd, summoning him, for the Mahdi was affectionate towards his relatives and Muḥammad b. Khālīd was of his kin. Muḥammad b. Khālīd and Slatin had been / friends, and Muḥammad b. Khālīd told him of the Mahdi's letter and called upon him to accept the Mahdia. Slatin, who was a dhimmi and had inclinations towards Islam, showed willingness to obey and became

1. See Hill, BD, pp. 174-5.  
2. MS., 283/11 - 285/12.

converted to Islam. At first he kept his conversion secret, and then he made it public. He agreed with Muḥammad b. Khālid to join the Mahdiā on the latter's return from the Mahdi in Kordofan. Muḥammad b. Khālid came to the Mahdi and swore allegiance. Meanwhile, letters arrived from the wālī |khedive| of Egypt to the Turks in Darfur, informing them of Hicks Pasha's large army, promising them victory and ordering them to defend their positions. Slatin was deluded by that, and lapsed in his adherence to the Mahdiā. He imprisoned Muḥammad b. Khālid's relatives in Dāra, seized his houses and confiscated his property. Consequently, Muḥammad b. Khālid advanced |first| to Dāra, to rescue his relatives.

285 When Slatin realized that Hicks had perished, he regretted what he had done to Muḥammad b. Khālid's relatives. He then set them free and restored what he had seized from them. Hearing of Muḥammad b. Khālid's arrival near Dāra, he came out of his fort with a group of the notables of his administration and / the townsfolk, and surrendered to Muḥammad b. Khālid at al-Sha'īriyya, about a day's distance from Dāra. They swore allegiance and then marched with him towards Dāra. At about four hours' distance, Muḥammad b. Khālid and the army encamped and Slatin entered the town. He then ordered all the officers, soldiers and townsfolk to leave the weapons and come out. They came out and swore allegiance to Muḥammad b. Khālid. He appointed trustworthy Companions to receive all the weapons, military equipment, provisions and stores. He then appointed pious and trustworthy Companions to supervise the treasuries (buyūt al-amwāl), seize all the booty, take stock of it and guard it. This was done and the booty was abundant.

c. El Fasher<sup>1</sup>

When al-Sayyid Jum'a,<sup>2</sup> the governor (mudīr) of El Fasher, realized that Slatin had surrendered, he professed obedience and locked all the government places containing the weapons, equipment and provisions and, as a token of his submission, sent the keys to Muḥammad b. Khālid in Dāra. Thereafter al-Sayyid Jum'a heard false rumours that reinforcements would arrive from Egypt to Darfur, via Asyūt.<sup>3</sup> He was deluded by these rumours, made public his disobedience and killed some Companions who were passing by, near the trench. When Muḥammad b. Khālid was certain of al-Sayyid Jum'a's rebellion, he appointed 'Abd al-Ṣamad w. Ḥājj Sharfī, a relative of the Mahdi, as deputy (istakhlafa) for  
 286 Dāra, /and left some Companions with him. With a large army, he advanced on al-Sayyid Jum'a in El Fasher. The Turks had erected an extremely strong fort, with a very deep trench behind it and a very firm zarība behind the trench. Inside this fort, they put all their children, women, property, and sufficient provisions for a siege of years. All their wells were outside their fort, but very close to it - about 90 paces.

Muḥammad b. Khālid then gave orders to tighten the siege and to harass them. The situation of the besieged deteriorated and they had to obtain water from the wells furtively. At Muḥammad b. Khālid's orders, a party of brave Companions proceeded to the  
 287 wells, under heavy fire from the fort, and / began filling them up. The author describes the operation and the failure of the Turks to reach the sources of water or find water inside their fort. When all the

1. MS., 285/12 - 289/1 :

2. See Hill, BD, p. 325, s.v. Sa'īd Bey Juma'; Slatin, Fire and sword, by index: Guma, Said Bey.

3. MS., reads سبوت.

288 Turks' tricks had been thwarted and they could no longer bear the thirst, / some children, women and sick died. It was only after about three days and nights - when the women, children and the men had emerged from the fort and fallen on the wells like thirsty camels - that al-Sayyid Jum'a decided to surrender. He sent some officers to Muḥammad b. Khālīd to request an amān, which he granted. They all came out, abandoning their weapons in the fort, and swore allegiance. Muḥammad b. Khālīd then entered El Fasher in Rabī' II |1301/February 1884|<sup>1</sup>, appointed trustworthy Companions to seize all the government places and guard all the weapons, equipment and provisions. Also, he commissioned trustworthy Companions to seize, take stock and guard the booty, which was in abundance.

After the capture of El Fasher, all the tribes of Darfur came to him in submission. After he had dealt with Darfur, Muḥammad b. Khālīd dispatched a party of Companions to Sultan Yūsuf, the sultan of Burqū, with a letter calling upon him to follow the Mahdi. Yūsuf replied and accepted the Mahdia. Thus the matter of the West was concluded. /

289 5. The expedition of Muḥammad al-Khayr b. 'Abdallāh to Berber<sup>2</sup>

In the year 1301 |3 Jumādā II/31 March 1884|<sup>3</sup>, the Mahdi dispatched Muḥammad al-Khayr b. 'Abdallāh<sup>4</sup> to the people of the mudīriyya of Berber, to call upon them to join the Mahdia. The Mahdi saw him off and gave him useful counsel. Muḥammad al-Khayr reached the first of the outermost points (atrāf) of that mudīriyya, and called upon its people to obey and

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1. Cf. Holt, Mahdist state, p. 68.  
 2. MS., 289/1 - 293/19.  
 3. See Holt, Mahdist state, p. 90, n.3.  
 4. See Hill, BD, pp. 260-1.

submit. They were quick to join him, and the tribes kept mustering and his army continuously swelled until he reached al-Matamma. There, more people and deputations came to him and swore allegiance. On his way, he ordered the telegraph line to be cut.

The author explains the military importance of this action.

290 Muḥammad al-Khayr marched on and was / joined continuously by more people, until he reached El Damer.

Thence, he wrote to all the Turks and others in the provincial capital (markaz) of Berber, and warned them not to oppose him. All those whose bliss God wished, came out of the town and joined him, and only the Turks and their associates remained there. After repeatedly warning them and promising to treat them leniently, Muḥammad al-Khayr despaired and dispatched companies (arsāl) of fighters from El Damer with orders to lay a tight siege to the town, and to treat leniently those who came out. He placed Sa'd w. Sālīm of the Sa'adāb<sup>1</sup> south of the town, within rifle-shot, at Qūz al-Fūnj; 'Alī w. Sa'd and 'Abd al-Mājid abū'l-Kaylak<sup>2</sup> north of the town, at the village of al-Dakka; some of the Ja'aliyīn and many of the inhabitants of the west of Berber were placed near the

291 town. / Then Muḥammad al-Khayr himself moved and encamped on the Nile bank, very close to the town. Having arrived there, he wrote to the Turks, asking them to capitulate. They declined and in the meantime they prepared for battle by deepening the trench and raising the gun emplacements. Meanwhile the Companions, aware of the Turks' preparations for war, requested permission to attack them. However, Muḥammad al-Khayr,

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1. See MacMichael, Arabs in the Sudan, iii.1, iv - v, xxx, xxxviii;
  2. See Hill, BD, p.11, s.v. 'Abd al-Mājid Naṣr al-Dīn abū' l-Kailak. According to Hill, he joined the Mahdia after the capitulation of Berber.

hoping that God might yet guide them to follow the truth, would not grant permission. On Friday morning, 19 Rajab 1301 |15 May 1884|<sup>1</sup> the Turks opened fire. Only then did Muḥammad al-Khayr order the Companions to make an incursion. They fired incessantly and the Turks returned the fire from steamers and boats, and those Companions whom God honoured with martyrdom /  
 292 died. The Companions had erected gun emplacements and they constantly harassed the Turks. On Saturday |20 Rajab/16 May|<sup>2</sup> Muḥammad al-Khayr assembled his Companions, preached to them and gave orders to prepare for the penetration of the enemy's trench on Monday morning. When the situation of the Turks worsened they requested Muḥammad al-Khayr to raise the siege and, in return, they would surrender. He declined, knowing that this was merely a military stratagem, the objective of which was to allow them to complete their preparation. On Monday morning, 22 Rajab |18 May|,<sup>3</sup> Muḥammad al-Khayr led the morning prayer and then ordered an attack to be launched. The Companions assaulted the  
 293 trench, penetrated it, / and a fierce battle ensued. After the town had been surrounded, some of the leaders, the governor, Ḥusayn Khalīfa,<sup>4</sup> jihādiyya and those of the townsfolk who had survived the killing, entered their houses, locked the gates and then requested an amān, which was granted by Muḥammad al-Khayr.

Only a small number of Companions died as martyrs in that battle, while the number of Turks and their associates who perished was very large.

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1. 19 Rajab 1301 was Thursday.
  2. 20 Rajab 1301 was Friday.
  3. 22 Rajab 1301 was Sunday.
  4. See Hill, BD, p. 169.

6. The expedition of 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Nujūmī and Ḥamdān Abū 'Anja to Jabal al-Dāyir<sup>1</sup>

a. The arrival of al-Nujūmī and Abū 'Anja at Jabal al-Dāyir<sup>2</sup>

294 In Rabī' / II 1301 [February 1884], the expedition of Jabal al-Dāyir took place. The author describes the high [Nūba] mountains and the rugged country. He adds that no king of the Turks or the Sudanese had climbed that mountain.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, God caused the Mahdists to conquer it. The people of that mountain did not obey any authority so that even the Turks fawned upon them with trickery, in order to contain their evil and highway robbery within their immediate neighbourhood. After the Mahdi's arrival in Qadīr some Turks came to the people of this mountain, wishing to obtain from them some property by flattery and cunning, but they killed the Turks and  
295 seized their weapons. The people / of the mountain then sent some of their leaders to the Mahdi, at Qadīr. They professed their submission and told him what they had done with the Turks. Then they returned to their mountain. When the Mahdi came to Kordofan on his campaign against the Turks and conquered El Obeid, he heard that the people of that mountain had made an incursion on the townsfolk [of El Obeid ?], plundering, killing and taking captives.

The Mahdi then appointed 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Nujūmī and Ḥamdān Abū 'Anja, with a group of fighters, and ordered them to call upon the people of that mountain to obey, desist from wickedness, restore the stolen property of the Muslims to their owners, release the prisoners, and then move with their women and families

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1. MS., 293/19 - 311/4.  
2. MS., 293/19 - 296/7.  
3. Cf. Hill, Egypt, pp. 89, 110.

to the Mahdi's residence in El Obeid, for religious instruction. Otherwise, the Companions were to fight them. The Companions marched and reached the village of Kithra, at the foot of the mountain. That mountain was surrounded by about ten villages whose inhabitants, whenever they sensed that an enemy was approaching, would put their children, women and property on the summit of that mountain, the vegetation of which was so thick that only God knew it. / Nevertheless, He granted the Companions victory over the inhabitants of that mountain. After the Companions had encamped in Kithra, its chief, Tarkūsh, and their supreme authority, Makk Kanbū, met the Companions in obedience and provided them with grain and livestock.

b. The first battle of the mountain<sup>1</sup>

Three days later, the Companions moved from Kithra to Sidra, one of the most fortified villages of the mountain. That village was the seat of Makk Alḍū, who was the supreme authority of the mountain. Each of these villages had its chief (ra'īs), who was in charge of the people of his village, and all the chiefs, particularly in an emergency, came under the authority of Makk Alḍū. After the Companions had arrived in Kithra, they summoned Makk Alḍū but he did not come. They marched to his village and remained there for 7 days, calling upon him to obey. Meanwhile, Makk Alḍū sought refuge for the women, children, as well as the weak and disabled of his village, with all the property, at the summit of the mountain and prepared for war. / After the seventh day he came to the Companions, professed his obedience and said that he would return to his people and bring them in obedience. He then returned to his people and ordered them to prepare for war. His malignant intentions and his

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1. MS., 296/7 - 298/17.

determination to fight now became evident to the Companions. However, in accordance with the practice of the Mahdi to warn first and to attack only when certain of the treachery of the enemy, the Companions did not hasten to fight him. They prepared for war, arranged the army, marched on Alḡū and his people and launched an attack. The enemy withdrew to the mountain, seeking shelter at its summit and hiding places. Many of them were killed and captured, and only few found refuge on the summit of the mountain. These had been joined by the people of Kundukra, who were also on that summit. The battle continued and the Companions killed and captured. Those who survived hid in the mountain. Their chief, Alḡū, was killed. His head was cut off and displayed in the Companions' camp as a lesson to those of his ilk. The fighting ceased only  
 298 after / sunset, and the Companions returned with about 1,000 prisoners and innumerable livestock and grain. Sidra was the first of the battles of the mountain.

A day after the battle, the commander of the expedition sent al-Faḡl b. 'Abdallāh to the Mahdi and his Khalifa, with the good tidings of the victory. The prisoners and the booty were then dispatched to the Mahdi's residence in El Obeid and he ordered that they be handed to the commissioner of the Treasury. The Mahdi then pardoned the prisoners, administered the oath of allegiance to them and ordered them to return to Jabal al-Dāyir and to stay with their families near the Companions' place, so that they would be educated in the ways of the Muslims. They left El Obeid, returned to Jabal al-Dāyir and told their people of what the Mahdi had said. Many joined them and they all moved close to the Companions and stayed there with their families. They even built

a large mosque, thinking that the Mahdi would perhaps pass through the mountain and pray there. There they remained and mixed with the Companions.

c. The second battle of the mountain<sup>1</sup>

On the Mahdi's way from El Obeid to Khartoum he stayed at al-Rahad and a party of the chiefs of the mountain came to him and swore allegiance. He ordered them to move with all their families and join him at al-Rahad. They obeyed but, on returning to Jabal al-Dāyir, they deceitfully and treacherously sent their families, with their property, up the mountain, during the night. / They burnt the mosque, climbed the mountain and fought the Companions. After this battle, the Mahdi sent 'Abdallāh w. al-Nūr, 'Abdallāh w. Jubāra and Ḥamad al-Nīl Ḥāmid as reinforcements. After this battle a man called 'Abd al-Bāqī, of that mountain, together with a party of his people, gave themselves up to Ḥamdān Abū 'Anja and 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Nujūmī and disclosed to them the hiding place of the people who had survived the battle of Sidra and those who had joined them from Kundukra. Leaving guards behind, al-Nujūmī and Abū 'Anja set out with fighters and with that man, who was to guide them to the place of the wicked people. Abū 'Anja, with the guide in front of him, marched in front of the army, while al-Nujūmī was in the rear. The author describes the difficult climb. / Ḥamdān Abū 'Anja was the first to reach the top and he began slaughtering the enemy. They had firearms <sup>which</sup> they had acquired in some of the Mahdi's battles, such as the battle with Hicks, and in the time of the Turks. During the fight, a band of the army of the wicked and accursed waited in ambush for al-Nujūmī. He was on guard, and a fight

1. MS., 298/17 - 301/4.

broke out between them. Thus, two separate fights between Abū 'Anja and al-Nujūmī and the enemy continued until the night. The author praises Abū 'Anja for the way he fought the devils (shayātīn) of the mountains. About 11 Companions died as martyrs and innumerable enemies perished. After sunset, the Companions descended. This was the  
 301 second battle of al-Dāyir. After / this battle, the people of Kundukra descended in obedience with their women and families. Al-Nujūmī ordered them to stay near the Companions, which they did.

d. The third battle of the mountain<sup>1</sup>

The Mahdi then summoned Ḥamdān Abū 'Anja to al-Rahad, for the Mahdi had left El Obeid on his campaign against Khartoum and was staying at al-Rahad, awaiting the outcome of the expedition. On his way, Abū 'Anja came across 20 people of Kithra. To his enquiry about their destination they replied that they wished to reach the Companions at Sidra. Abū 'Anja, who had a very keen eye, particularly in matters of war, realized their treachery, had them imprisoned and dispatched them in chains to al-Nujūmī. He continued on to al-Rahad, met the Mahdi and returned. When the people of Kithra heard what had happened to their 20 companions (aṣḥāb), they rebelled and cut the route between the Companions' camp at Sidra and al-Rahad, where the Mahdi was staying. They killed a number of people and seized some property. The people of Kithra, al-Kūr, Īqara and al-Dār al-Kabīra - all villages of that mountain - agreed on war. The reason was that the Mahdi had received the chiefs of the mountain at al-Rahad and had ordered them to make the hijra to him with their families. They pretended to obey, and the

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 1. MS., 301/4 - 306/19.

302 Mahdi wrote to Abū 'Anja, ordering him to / instruct all the people of the mountain to make the hijra to al-Rahad. Accordingly, Abū 'Anja sent a party to all the villages and they all professed their contentment and obedience to his emissaries. However, when the latter had left, they agreed on war, finding refuge for the women, children, the disabled and property, in the hiding places of the mountain, in a place called Jughbat<sup>1</sup> 'Ayn al-Bi'r - the largest watering-place there. They prepared for battle and agreed either to win or die.

Meanwhile, Abū 'Anja and al-Nujūmī and the brave fighters set out to fight them. They left behind, at Sidra, 'Abdallāh w. al-Nūr, 'Abdallāh w. Jubāra and Ḥamad al-Nīl Ḥāmid, to guard the place, since by that time all the inhabitants of the mountain were in a state of insurrection and could not be trusted. After the midday prayer the Companions left and spent the night at Kithra. Thence, they proceeded with local guides and, by <sup>the</sup> morning prayer, reached Īqara, only to find that its inhabitants had left, together with the inhabitants of the rest of the villages, for Jughba. The Companions prayed the morning prayer there, and set out for Jughba. / In this battle, al-Nujūmī was at the front, and Abū 'Anja at the rear of the army. When the Companions drew near Jughba, they were met by a large number of the people of the mountain, who had divided their army into two groups, deploying one east, the other west of Jughba, and surrounding their women, children and property. The path was very narrow and they were densely positioned east and west of it. In addition, the entangled vegetation,

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 1. There seems to be a confusion in the MS. reading of this name. The form <sup>جغبة</sup> has been chosen in accordance with MS., 305/7, 306/5: <sup>جغبة</sup> (= <sup>جغبة</sup>).

the rocks and their better knowledge of the area would have put them at an advantage had it not been for the kindness of God to the Mahdi's Companions and His promise of victory. The Companions' main objective was either to reach the Jughba or die, for this was the only refuge available to the people of the mountain. When the two parties encountered each other, they exchanged fire. The Companions poured deadly fire /  
 304 and made their way to Jughba in a fierce battle. Then the fight grew fiercer, since the people of the mountain were prepared to die in order to prevent their women and children from falling into captivity. The Companions fought until they annihilated the people of the mountain, and the slaughter spread to include the women, children and property, and even wild animals. The Companions kept the women, children and property, and drove the men of the mountain to its remote parts.

305         Abū 'Anja and al-Nujūmī then handed over the women, children and property to Shaykh Bakhīt of the Jihādiyya, and ordered him to descend the mountain with them. A group of people who were bearing firearms was attached to him as guards. Abū 'Anja and al-Nujūmī remained with the army in Jughba. When Shaykh Bakhīt set out with the booty, the people of the mountain, who had been hiding, fell upon him in an attempt to save their women and children. Descending step by step, he fought them back. When the main force heard of Shaykh Bakhīt's difficulties, al-Nujūmī hurried, with a detachment of Companions, and found Shaykh Bakhīt engaged in fierce fighting. Meanwhile, Abū 'Anja arrived with the remainder of the army and scattered  
 306 the people of the mountain. / The way was now clear for Shaykh Bakhīt to descend with all the women, children and property, and the rest of the army followed, with Abū 'Anja and al-Nujūmī in the rear. In this battle of Jughbat 'Ayn al-Bi'r, some 800 or more Companions died as martyrs. As for the people

of the mountain, a great many of them perished, <sup>including</sup> women, children and even wild animals. This was the third battle of the mountain. After the battle, the Companions encamped in the village of al-Kūr, near the mountain and opposite the village of Kithra. Also, a party of the chiefs of the mountain, namely, Kūkū al-Kīr and Ḥamād Ramkīn |?| came in obedience, for the fight had exhausted them and annihilated their men. Abū 'Anja and al-Nujūmī ordered them to move with all their people to al-Rahad and to stay there with the Mahdi, to be educated in the ways of Islam. They all proceeded to al-Rahad and stayed there.

e. The fourth battle of the mountain<sup>1</sup>

307 After this battle the Companions heard that the people of the villages of Mundur and al-'Ayn had gathered together / to make war. Al-Nujūmī and Abū 'Anja then moved towards the two villages. Abū 'Anja encamped opposite al-'Ayn and al-Nujūmī opposite Mundur within view |of each other| and without a gap between their respective detachments. They called upon the people of the two villages to obey. The chief of the village of Mundur, Ḥawlī, then came and professed his obedience. Previously he had sent the women, children and property to the summit of the mountain and he |now| came alone to look into the matter. When the Companions realized his treachery they arrested him. The people of al-'Ayn and the people of Kimla also ascended the mountain with their families and properties. Abū 'Anja, with a group of fighters, started climbing the mountain by way of Kimla, having instructed al-Nujūmī to take the rest of the army and ascend by way of Mundur. They arranged to meet at the summit of the mountain. Al-Nujūmī had

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1. MS., 306/19 - 309/1.

taken Ḥawlī to guide him and when the latter refused, he was beheaded at al-Nujūmī's order. He then climbed the mountain and fought the people of Mundur. Abū 'Anja ascended through Kimla and fought its people. /  
 308 Thus, each was engaged in fighting within his own area. In the heat of the battle, owing to the noise, the large number of rocks and trees and the vastness of the mountain, each of the parties thought that the shots they heard came from the enemy and some Companions shot and killed each other. Eventually, Abū 'Anja discovered that the shots were those of the Companions and ordered the bugle to be sounded. Upon hearing it al-Nujūmī's Companions held their fire. Then the two parts of the army met and together they fought the enemy, killing and capturing many of them. The remaining people of the mountain succumbed and dispersed. Some of them fled to the remote parts of the southern mountains and others hid themselves. After this battle - the fourth battle of the mountain -  
 309 the Jabal al-Dāyir affair came to an end. / The Companions then descended and stayed at Mundur.

f. The Companions' departure<sup>1</sup>

The Mahdi then sent Mūsā Muḥammad Ḥilū,<sup>2</sup> the brother of Khalīfat al-Fārūq | 'Alī b. Muḥammad Ḥilū|, with a large army to reinforce the Companions. After the battle, Abū 'Anja took part of the army and encamped at Kimla, at the watering-place, in anticipation of the people of the mountain who were in hiding. None of them, however, came to the water. Al-Nujūmī then took a group and marched, with Mūsā w, Muḥammad Ḥilū, to the village of Fūla whose chief was Ḥadīd, and called upon its people to obey. Al-Nujūmī had

1. MS., 309/2 - 311/4.

2. See Hill, BD, p. 284, s.v. Mūsā wad Ḥilū.

dispatched al-Şiddīq w. al-Kinānī to call upon them to obey but they deceived him for 7 days. In the meantime, 'Abdallāh w. al-Nūr and 'Abdallāh w. Jubāra arrived there with a large army. When the chief of the village realized the strength of the Companions, he descended with his people in submission and al-Nujūmī dispatched them to the Mahdi's residence, accompanied by 'Abdallāh w. al-Nūr. The affair of the mountain came to an end, and al-Nujūmī and 'Abū  
 310 'Anja wrote a detailed report to the Mahdi. / The author transcribes the Mahdi's reply, dated 18 Sha'bān 1301 |13 June 1884|, summoning the Companions. On the arrival of this letter they ordered the scattered military groups to burn their camps (duyūm) and meet  
 311 them at al-Barūkī. The orders were carried out / and they all marched to al-Rahad.

7. The expedition of Muḥammad 'Uthmān Abū Qarja to Şāliḥ w. al-Makk al-Shāyqī and thence to Khartoum<sup>1</sup>

a. Abū Qarja and Şāliḥ w. al-Makk<sup>2</sup>

This expedition took place in Jumādā I 1301 |March 1884|. Şāliḥ w. al-Makk al-Shāyqī<sup>3</sup> had spent most of his life in the administration of the Turks. As it happened, he had been fighting, in the service of the Turks, <sup>against</sup> the people of Fayzūghlī and its neighbourhood. Reaching the area of Wad Madani, on his return, his route was blocked by Muḥammad b. al-Ṭayyib al-Başīr<sup>4</sup> and people of the Gezira, who fought him. He encamped and dug a trench at Fadāsī, on the bank of the Nile, near al-Masallamiyya. There

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 1. MS.; 311/4 - 317/6.  
 2. MS.; 311/4 - 312/12.  
 3. See Hill; BD; pp. 328-9.  
 4. See Hill, BD, p. 275.

he fought the Companions day and night. When Providence reached him |and made him| join the Companions, he wrote to the Mahdi, who was then in Kordofan, expressing his regret at what he had done and requesting him to send a party of Companions to accept his submission. /

312 He feared the party of Muḥammad al-Ṭayyib al-Baṣīr for there had been bloodshed between them. The Mahdi dispatched Muḥammad 'Uthmān Abū Qarja to call upon Ṣāliḥ to submit and join the Mahdia. Thence, Abū Qarja was to proceed to Khartoum, to call upon its people to follow the Mahdi and, if they refused, to fight them. Abū Qarja set out with his division and encamped at Fadāsī, near Ṣāliḥ's trench. Ṣāliḥ then came out, surrendered and, with his men, joined the Mahdia.

b. Abū Qarja's siege of Khartoum<sup>1</sup>

Thereafter, Abū Qarja announced a general mobilization of the people of the Gezira. He encamped at al-Jirayf, on the Nile bank, near Khartoum. After his arrival he wrote to Gordon and those who were with him, calling upon them to follow the Truth but they were heedless. He then dispatched Ṣāliḥ w. al-Makk al-Shāyqī to the Mahdi at al-Rahad, and there Ṣāliḥ swore allegiance and accompanied the Mahdi.

313 When it became evident to Abū Qarja that the people of Khartoum were determined to / fight, he resolved to besiege and fight them. He placed the prudent Companions at Burrī, very close to Khartoum. Also, he gave orders for a gun emplacement to be built, mounted a gun on it and had it guarded day and night. He stationed Shaykh Faḍlū<sup>2</sup> Aḥmad and his division on the White Nile, opposite Khartoum, towards Shajarat

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1. MS.; 312/12 - 317/6.  
2. MS. reads *جبل*.

Māḥū Bey. They, too, erected a gun emplacement, tightened the siege and harassed the Turks, killing and being killed - but the number of the Turks' dead was greater. The fighting continued for a long period. At times, the Turks would come on board armoured steamers on the Niles |the White and the Blue| and sometimes they would emerge in squares on land. When the siege was tightened and the Companions prevented them from coming out, they made up their minds to break the siege or die. When Abū Qarja had encamped at al-Jirayf he ordered the armies who were with him - most of them people of the Gezira - to lay the siege according to their divisions, that is, each amīr should stay with his people in a certain area, but the whole army was to be linked together, without any

314 gaps. / Muḥammad b. al-Ṭayyib al-Baṣīr encamped south of al-Jirayf. North of it, towards Khartoum, al-Ṭāhir w. al-'Ubayd w. Badr was deployed. As for Abū Qarja and the Companions whom he had brought from the Mahdi's residence in Kordofan, they encamped at the farthest part of al-Jirayf, very near Khartoum.

When the Turks had resolved to break the siege or die, they prepared themselves extremely well. They then dispatched all the armoured steamers, laden with fighters and firearms, and opposite the steamers, on the land, they stationed squares composed of their bravest men. They left Khartoum in the morning, the steamers on river and a square marching on land concurrently. Each steamer was assigned one of the Companions' positions, so as to prevent them from supporting each other and thus enable the square to attain its objective. When Abū Qarja learnt that the Turks had come out in that manner, he summoned Shaykh Faḍlū as reinforcement, ordering him to come promptly with his Companions. As it happened, the Turks had sent a square to fight Shaykh Faḍlū and encompass him,

and thus prevent him from assisting Abū Qarja.  
 Nevertheless, Shaykh Faḍlū set out with his horsemen  
 315 towards Abū Qarja, / leaving part of his Companions to  
 fight against the square. On his way, Shaykh Faḍlū  
 met those people who had withdrawn from Abū Qarja's  
 camp.

The Turks | on board the steamers | had shelled  
 | Abū Qarja's | Companions, whose positions had been  
 too busy to support each other. Thus, the square on  
 land was able to fight. As the Turks were pouring  
 deadly fire, a party of brave Companions, including  
 Naṣr b. 'Uthmān, the brother of Ḥājj Muḥammad 'Uthmān  
 | Abū Qarja |, and Ḥājj Muḥammad w. al-Zubayr, charged  
 the square, penetrated it, and killed many of the  
 Turks. Naṣr, Ḥājj Muḥammad w. al-Zubayr and others  
 died as martyrs. Abū Qarja's horse was injured and  
 perished. Consequently, a rumour spread that Abū Qarja  
 had been killed and part of the Companions withdrew  
 from their position. The Turks surrounded this position  
 and took all the grain, livestock and the like, which  
 was stored there.

On their way to Abū Qarja, Shaykh Faḍlū and his  
 316 horsemen / met the retreating Companions, who informed  
 them that the Turks had taken Abū Qarja's camp. Shaykh  
 Faḍlū's eyes filled with tears in sorrow for the fate  
 of the Companions on that day. He wanted to risk his  
 life and slaughter the enemy, but his Companions  
 prevented him, lest the whole army disintegrate were  
 he to be killed, and this would enable the Turks to  
 spread throughout the country. Afterwards, they  
 realized that Abū Qarja had not been killed and  
 Shaykh Faḍlū joined him. They encamped at Wad  
 Shukrallāh, about a day from Khartoum, and the  
 Companions joined them there. Abū Qarja wrote to  
 al-Nujūmī - who was on his way to Khartoum - of  
 what had happened. The letter reached al-Nujūmī

at Shabasha, near the White Nile. He forwarded it to the Mahdi at al-Rahad, the Mahdi's headquarters at that time, whence armies were successively dispatched to Khartoum. Al-Nujūmī crossed the river, encamped on the east bank and wrote to Abū Qarja that he would soon join him with the army. He ordered Abū Qarja to gather <sup>camels</sup> and to dispatch them promptly to him. / This Abū Qarja did, and the Companions reached him at Wad Shukrallāh. Then they all rose and encamped near Khartoum and besieged the town.

8. The expedition of 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Nujūmī to Khartoum.<sup>1</sup>

a. Al-Nujūmī's arrival and his siege of Khartoum.<sup>2</sup>

After 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Nujūmī and Ḥamdān Abū 'Anja had completed the fighting at Jabal al-Dāyir and returned to the Mahdi at al-Rahad, he dispatched al-Nujūmī with a detachment to Khartoum, to call upon its people to accept the Mahdia, and warn them of the consequences of their opposition. On 1 Ramaḍān 1301 |25 June 1884|, al-Nujūmī left al-Rahad. He marched until he reached Shabasha, on the west bank of the White Nile, where he met Muḥammad 'Uthmān Abū Qarja's emissary, who informed him of what had happened to the Companions at al-Jirayf. Al-Nujūmī then crossed the river and met Abū Qarja at Wad Shukrallāh. /

318 They encamped, in Dhū al-Qa'da |1301/August-September 1884|, at al-Gharqān, almost within range of the guns of Khartoum. There, they dug wells despite the proximity of their own position to the White Nile. This they did in order to prevent the Turks from harming the women, children and the disabled, for

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 1. MS., 317/6 - 325/14.  
 2. MS., 317/6 - 320/4.

the Turks' steamers were then sailing on the river and harming those who came to it. After the families, the weak and the disabled had settled down there, al-Nujūmī came with a group of Companions and encamped at the village al-Qūz, opposite al-Kalākala, within rifle-shot south of Khartoum. Al-Nujūmī's objective in staying there was to lay siege to that area, in which the Turks had a very firm gun emplacement with many soldiers and expert artillerymen.

Al-Nujūmī then placed 'Abd al-Qādir w. Mudarra<sup>1</sup> and his fighters opposite Bāb al-Masallamiyya - one of the gates of the south side of the fort of Khartoum. 319 'Abdallāh w. al-Nūr was stationed / at al-Burrī, on the bank of the Nile in front |east| of Khartoum, This was one of the nearest siege positions to Khartoum, where the steamers were passing, and from which its people could be seen entering and leaving their houses. Hence, the name the Companions gave it: al-Dār al-Ākhira, since those who stayed there for the siege were like the people of Paradise. Muḥammad 'Uṭhmān Abū Qarja was placed at al-Gharqān, in the south, near the White Nile. The Mahdi had written to al-Nujūmī, ordering him to dispatch 'Abdallāh w. Jubāra and Shaykh Faḍlū w. Aḥmad to the east of Khartoum, to join al-'Ubayd w. Badr, who had been laying siege there before the arrival of al-Nujūmī. Shaykh Faḍlū was delayed by illness, but 'Abdallāh w. Jubāra, who had crossed the Nile with his division, proceeded eastwards and joined al-'Ubayd w. Badr in the siege. Al-Nujūmī then received a letter 320 from the Mahdi, / ordering him to send Abū Bakr w. 'Āmīr, who had delivered the letter, to the east, in order to join 'Abdallāh w. Jubāra. in the siege. This was carried out.

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1. See MS., 325/1.

b. The sorties from Khartoum<sup>1</sup>

After the army had been arranged in the manner described, the Companions tightened the siege, prevented the people of Khartoum from leaving the town, and harassed them. The Companions did not heed the Turks and even attacked the trench which they had dug, seizing the timbers which formed part of the fence that had been erected around the trench. In addition to the trench and the fence, the Turks had erected a firm wall with embrasures, and within the  
 321 trench they had planted bayonets. / Nevertheless, these did not save them from the power and armies of God, and the Companions eventually penetrated the trench. When the siege tightened, the townsfolk began deserting during the night, employing all manner of cunning, including bribery of the guards. Those whom the Turks noticed deserting were fired upon.

When the situation of the people worsened, Gordon ordered them to make a sortie, in the hope of breaking the siege and seizing the stores in the Companions' camp, where their families and the weak were staying. Gordon sent out a square consisting of the greatest of the jihādiyya and the leaders of the  
 322 Shāyqiyya |irregulars|, among them/Muḥammad w. al-Makk, the brother of Ṣāliḥ w. al-Makk al-Shāyqī. They divided the square into two groups: one went on land towards 'Abdallāḥ w. al-Nūr at Burrī, which was very near Khartoum, and where grain was stored; the other went by steamer, with a flag-of-truce, to deceive the Companions and take them by surprise. The steamer was able to pass the Companions' place by deceit, since they thought that the Turks were requesting an amān. The Companions then noticed the group which was stealthily approaching them on land. When those Turks

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1. MS., 320/4 - 325/14.

realized that the Companions had discovered them, they opened fire and the steamer joined in. Thereupon, 'Abdallāh w. al-Nūr and his men charged like lions. The Turks who were on land were defeated and pursued  
 323 into their trench. / When the Turks on board the steamer saw what had happened to the others they, too, fled. In this battle, a party of well-known enemies were killed, amongst them Muḥammad w. al-Makk.

A day later, a man from the jihādiyya of Khartoum came to al-Nujūmī and informed him that, on the following morning, the Turks would come out in three squares: one towards 'Abdallāh w. al-Nūr, one towards al-Nujūmī, and one towards 'Abd al-Qādir w. Mudarra' in Bāb al-Masallamiyya. Al-Nujūmī promptly ordered 'Abdallāh w. al-Nūr and 'Abd al-Qādir w. Mudarra' to prepare for battle. He also ordered all the Companions not to spend that night at the camp but to remain in their siege positions, that is, the gun emplacements. In the morning, two squares emerged from Khartoum, one proceeded towards 'Abdallāh w. al-Nūr and the other towards al-Jirayf, with the object of seizing the grain stored there for the Companions. A group from this square went in al-Nujūmī's direction. /  
 324 He chose a group of brave horsemen and dispatched them, with some infantry, against the square which was proceeding towards al-Jirayf. Al-Nujūmī himself remained in his siege position, in anticipation of the enemy. The horsemen, who had been joined by 'Abd al-Qādir w. Mudarra' and 'Umar w. al-Khalīfa and others, hurried and caught up with the square before it arrived at al-Jirayf. They all charged the square and after a short while defeated the Turks, forcing them back into the fort |of Khartoum|. The author was informed by an eyewitness that the Companions pursued them to the fort but the perplexed Turks did not even shoot them, despite the lack of cover near the fort. /

325 In this battle, a party of Companions died as martyrs, including 'Abd al-Qādir w. Mudarra' and 'Umar w. al-Khalīfa. As for the square which had marched on 'Abdallāh al-Nūr - when the other square withdrew, they signalled by bugle and this square also withdrew. 'Abdallāh w. al-Nūr pursued them and, before they reentered the fort, he caught up with them, killing many. A party of Companions died as martyrs in this battle, including 'Abdallāh w. al-Nūr, who had been one of the veterans in the Mahdi's company. After this battle, Khartoum was severely weakened. The siege continued until the town was conquered by the Mahdi.

9. The expedition of Muḥammad w. Arbāb to al-Qallābāt<sup>1</sup>

When the Mahdi encamped in al-Rahad, on his way to Khartoum, he dispatched Muḥammad w. Arbāb<sup>2</sup> to the people of al-Qallābāt and its neighbourhood, to call upon them to join the Mahdi. At al-Qallābāt there had been a man called Ṣāliḥ Shanqa,<sup>3</sup> who was the ruler (hākim) on the part of the Turks. When God manifested 326 the Mahdi / and their administration faded away as a result of his manifestation, Ṣāliḥ Shanqa realized that the administration of the Turks no longer needed him, took refuge with the king of the Abyssinians, and told him that he was one of his subjects. Muḥammad w. Arbāb, who arrived to call the people of al-Qallābāt to God and to the Mahdi, was encountered by Ṣāliḥ Shanqa, who was accompanied by Abyssinians and others. They did not obey Muḥammad w. Arbāb's call to follow the Mahdi and a fierce battle ensued. Ṣāliḥ Shanqa was defeated and fled from al-Qallābāt

1. MS., 325/14 - 328/4.

2. See Hill; BD, p. 252.

3. See Holt, Mahdist state, pp. 148-51, 155.

to the land of <sup>the</sup> Abyssinians. Muḥammad Arbāb took al-Qallābāt and its environs, which came under the banner of the Mahdia.

327 Muḥammad w. Arbāb then wrote to the king of the Abyssinians, known as the Negus Yūḥannā, and called him to God and to follow the Mahdi. The latter killed the emissaries and wrote to Muḥammad w. Arbāb, promising to rout him and his men. He dispatched a large Abyssinian army under the command of one of their great men, called Dahnashūma. In the battle, which took place at al-Qallābāt, the Abyssinians were annihilated within a short time and only those who had fled survived. When the news of the defeat reached their king, he almost died of distress. He then dispatched another large army and again the fight took place at al-Qallābāt. An enormous Abyssinian army surrounded the town and set fire to it from all directions, but Muḥammad w. Arbāb, despite the small number of <sup>his</sup> Companions, / risked his life in slaughtering the enemies. He killed many, and he and his Companions died as martyrs. The Abyssinians, having looted and burnt, killed and captivated, returned to their country. This battle took place after the Mahdi's death, in the reign of the Khalifa [January 1887].

328 The Khalifa had dispatched Ḥamdān Abū 'Anja to fight the Abyssinians. He sacked several Abyssinian towns and hoisted the flag of Islam over them. At the time of writing, he was still fighting the Abyssinians, capturing one town after the other, and they were fleeing from him to the seat of their king, the Negus. The author says that, to the best of his knowledge, this had never happened since the beginning of Islam, / and was attained by the Khalifa.

10. The expedition of Maḥmūd w. al-Ḥājj to Dongola<sup>1</sup>

When the Mahdi encamped at al-Rahad, on his way to Khartoum, he dispatched his relative, Maḥmūd w. al-Ḥājj,<sup>2</sup> to the inhabitants of Dongola, to call them to God and to join the Mahdia. The Mahdi wrote to Aḥmad al-Hiday,<sup>3</sup> a Shāyqī who had joined the Mahdi, and ordered him to join Maḥmūd. He also wrote to Muḥammad al-Khayr 'Abdallāh, who at that time was in Berber, ordering him to send an army to augment Maḥmūd's expedition to Dongola.

Maḥmūd and his division left al-Rahad and went to Umm Balīla, in the vicinity of Dongola. Thence, he wrote to Muṣṭafā Yāwar,<sup>4</sup> the governor (mudīr) of Dongola, and summoned him to Abū Quss, about two days' distance from al-Urdī |sic|,<sup>5</sup> the capital of Dongola province. Further, he informed Muṣṭafā that after his meeting with Maḥmūd at Abū Quss, he should proceed to the Mahdi's camp, to swear allegiance and to be educated in the ways of the Mahdia. / When Maḥmūd's letter reached Muṣṭafā, he was utterly confused, for as he was a man of integrity and his inclinations towards the Mahdia and his pious conduct had been reported to the Mahdi by his relatives in Dongola, the Mahdi had commissioned him amīr of Dongola. Muṣṭafā now misconstrued Maḥmūd's letter as a dismissal, such as he was accustomed to in the administration of the Turks. He did not grasp that meeting the Mahdi was more than this world, and that the Mahdi would reinstate him as an amīr. / Therefore, he resolved to fight Maḥmūd, but the Mahdi's relatives

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1. MS., 328/4 - 331/18.
  2. See Hill; BD; p. 226, s.v. Maḥmūd Muḥammad.
  3. See Hill; BD, p. 33, s.v. Aḥmad al-Hūdai.
  4. See Hill; BD, pp. 287-8.
  5. See Holt, Mahdist state, p. 5.

secretly informed Maḥmūd of this. Thereupon, Maḥmūd declared Muṣṭafā a rebel, advanced to Kūrtī, in the land of the Shāyqiyya, and there he met |Aḥmad| al-Hiday. As for Muṣṭafā Yawar, he mustered his hordes and dispatched part of them on land and part on boats by river, towards Maḥmūd at Kūrtī. Maḥmūd and his division, which had come with him from al-Rahad, Aḥmad al-Hiday, and local people who had accepted the Mahdi, made preparations. Muṣṭafā Yawar disembarked, arranged his square and advanced on Maḥmūd, who had left Kūrtī and was advancing towards Muṣṭafā. The fight took place near Kūrtī. Maḥmūd w. al-Ḥājj and Aḥmad al-Hiday, with brave men of the Companions, penetrated the square, mixed with the Turks and killed 331 many of them. / Maḥmūd w. al-Ḥājj, al-Hiday and some Companions died as martyrs. Muṣṭafā returned to Dongola and after a short period fled to Egypt. The author remarks that if Muṣṭafā had come even then to the Mahdi, in sincere repentance, the latter would have pardoned him. He adds that inevitably Muṣṭafā would be caught. Dongola remained without a ruler of the Turks. The English, after their defeat at Abū Ṭulayḥ, passed through Dongola, took all the stores and military equipment, and threw into the river what they could not carry away.<sup>1</sup> Those Turks who were staying there, and some servants and merchants whom God had caused to go astray, left with them. Then the Mahdi's agents arrived and entered Dongola without hindrance.

#### 11. The Mahdi's march to Kahrtoum<sup>2</sup>

332 After the Mahdi had dealt / with the whole of Kordofan and Darfur and all the inhabitants had joined him, he resolved on conducting a campaign

1. See MS., 348/13 - 350/7.

2. MS., 331/18 - 336/13.

against Khartoum, calling its people to God and to the straight path. Leaving for the campaign, the Mahdi took with him all the Companions, except those who had had excuses and those who had belonged to the division of Maḥmūd b. 'Abd al-Qādir, whom the Mahdi had commissioned 'āmil of Kordofan. In Jumādā II 1301 [March-April 1884], the Mahdi left El Obeid and went to al-'Ayn, near Jabal Kordofan. Thence he went to al-Suwānī and then to al-Rahad. On the way to al-Rahad, the Mahdi walked, in deference to the condition of the weak Companions who, owing to lack of riding-animals, were walking. At times he would even stop on the way, for the young camels to be breast-fed. The Mahdi would descend the she-camel for her to breast-feed a young camel and he would walk till his legs / swelled. At al-Rahad the Mahdi spent the remainder of Jumādā II and the months of Rajab, Sha'bān and Ramaḍān [April-July]. During this period Jabal al-Dāyir came under control. From al-Rahad, the Mahdi also dispatched expeditions to Khartoum, Dongola and al-Qallābāt. While he was at al-Rahad, the following people came to the Mahdi: Slatin, the general-governor of Darfur; al-Sayyid<sup>1</sup> Jum'a, the governor of El Fasher; Ḥusayn Khalīfa, the general-governor of Berber and Dongola; Ṣāliḥ w. al-Makk al-Shāyqī; and a man from Damascus (al-Shām), known as al-Kaḥḥāl, to whom the Mahdi administered the oath of allegiance. This man told the Mahdi about a pious man in Jerusalem (Bayt al-Maqdis), of whom there was reason to believe that he would arise and call to God. The Mahdi wrote to that man, and called him to join al-Kaḥḥāl and, together with him, call the people to God.

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1. MS. reads *he*.

On 29 Shawwā1 | 22 August | the Mahdi went from al-Rahad to al-'Ifaynāt | 'afina: to rot, decay|. The author remarks that, / following the Prophet's example, the Mahdi altered this name to al-Ḥilaywāt | ? | | ḥaluwa or ḥaliya: to be sweet, pleasant|. Thence the Mahdi went to Rahad al-Hāyil and then to Amānallāh. The author was told by an informant, who had been with the Mahdi's army at that time, that on his way to the Mahdi's camp, he had met a man who was looking for a stray riding-animal. Asking this man where the Mahdi had pitched his camp, he replied: 'At Amānallāh ' | in the amān of God|. This the author regards as a good omen. Thence, the Mahdi went to al-Quḍayḍaym, Umm Balinjik, al-Aghbash, and al-'Ifayna, whose name the Mahdi altered to al-'Isayla | honey-like|. There the Mahdi stayed for five days to give the army, which was marching with him, a chance to gather together. Thence the Mahdi went to al-Nūrābī, Umm Tāba, whose name the Mahdi altered to Umm Tawba | repentance|, / al-Saraḥna, Umm Tubayq, Umm Hutaf, Umm Zarzūr, Qūz al-Sayāl, and Shāt, where the Mahdi stayed for about a month, to allow the army repose and for the innumerable armies to catch up with him. Nevertheless, until the capture of Khartoum, part of the army was still en route. From Shāt, the Mahdi went to al-Duwaym, Shabasha Ḥillat Birayr, and al-Tur'a al-Khaḍrā', where the Mahdi led the prayer of 'Īd al-Aḍḥā | 10 Dhū al-Ḥijja/10 October|. Thence, he went to al-Rahwāt, a place near Wad Sha1'ay, al-Dahsīra, a place near al-Ṣiddīq, Īd al-Dukhn, a place near al-'Alqa, and Qīzān al-Markh, where he stayed for several days. There a steamer laden with Turks, which had been sent on reconnaissance, arrived, shelled the Mahdi's camp at a distance and promptly returned. Thence, the Mahdi went to al-Qī'a and stayed there for several days, receiving deputations / from the

areas of the Gezira and Suakin, with letters of submission from the local notables. They came to ask for the Mahdi's forgiveness for their delay in joining him. Thence, the Mahdi went to Abū Sa'd,<sup>1</sup> at about one hour's distance from Omdurman, the Mahdi's town. Thence, he dispatched armies to besiege the trench of Omdurman, and reinforced 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Nujūmī for the tightening of the siege of Khartoum. Subsequent to the conquest of the trench of Omdurman and Khartoum, the Mahdi rose from Abū Sa'd and encamped at Omdurman. There he established his city (madīna), there he died and there his tomb is situated.

## 12. The conquest of the trench of Omdurman<sup>2</sup>

When the Turks in Khartoum realized that the Mahdia was spreading all over the Sudan, they began digging trenches and surrounding their towns with walls. Anticipating that the Companions would encamp on the west bank of the White Nile, especially opposite the confluence of the two rivers, called al-Muqran - which was one of the largest anchorages and watering-places in that area - they erected /  
 337 a large, strong wall with embrasures and gun emplacements there, and in front of it they dug a very deep trench. Within the wall they dug a well, lest the Companions came between them and the river. They filled the wall with troops, military equipment, provisions etc. When the Mahdi encamped at Abū Sa'd, he ordered some of the Companions to lay siege to that trench until its people joined him. Heedless of the deadly fire which the Turks were pouring from that trench, the Companions proceeded and came between the trench and the White Nile. There they erected gun emplacements, mounted them with guns and started to

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1. MS. vocalizes ~~سعد~~ .  
 2. MS., 336/13 - 343/11.

fight the enemies of God. The fighting continued without interruption for about a month, the Companions killing and being killed, but the number of the enemy's dead was greater. One of the more astonishing events during this siege was as follows: after the /Companions had positioned themselves near the river, the two sides exchanged fire. The Turks had made a line (khatt) at al-Muqran and from there also fired upon the Companions. Armoured steamers, with barges and boats attached to them, would come and join in the fight. Thus the Companions were attacked simultaneously from the land and from the river. Although they were in the open, they fought the Turks until they hit one of the steamers with a gun, and it sank. When the Turks on board saw that their steamer had broken down, they tried to save themselves. Some jumped into the river and swam towards Khartoum, under the Companions' fire; some clung to the nearby steamer; and some hid themselves in the sunken steamer, part of which remained above the water, / till they were saved at night by another steamer. The astounding thing was that a party of the Companions tried to reach the steamer in order to drag it to the river bank, heedless of the fire which was pouring like rain. Some of those who were in the water were killed by bullets, and those who were not good swimmers died. This the author gives as an example of great bravery.

The leader of the fighting at the ditch of Omdurman was Ḥamdān Abū 'Anja, whose ability the author praises. Every day he reported to the Khalifa on the situation of the fighters and on those who had died as martyrs and <sup>on</sup> the wounded, for it was the Khalifa's constant practice to be concerned with / the matters of the Mahdia, particularly military affairs. The author elaborates on the Khalifa's interest in,

and activities concerning these affairs, from the time in which the Mahdi was still alive to the time of writing.

The Mahdi had written a letter of warning to the Turks in the ditch of Omdurman. The letter,<sup>1</sup> dated the end of Muḥarram 1302 [November 1884], which the author transcribes in full, is addressed to the chief of the troops |kabīr al-ʿaskar| Farajallāh |Rāghib|<sup>2</sup> and ʿAbd al-Nabī and their  
 341- followers. / In this letter, which the Mahdi wrote in  
 2 his own hand, he proposes to treat them leniently if they surrender, and points out his past victories as proof that they have no chance of holding out.

Despite this warning the fighting continued. The Turks had arranged flag-signalling with Khartoum, which they used in order to request reinforcements by steamer. Steamers laden with Turks, with barges attached to them, then arrived, and they fought the Companions. Meanwhile, the people of the ditch |of Omdurman| emerged in three squares, trying to  
 343 make their way to the steamers, and / a group of Companions engaged them in battle. The Turks were defeated and made a rush for the ditch, but only a few reached it and survived, and the steamers returned to Khartoum. When those Turks who had remained in the ditch saw what had happened to their friends, they capitulated, requesting the Mahdi's amān, which he granted them. They came out and he pardoned them and administered <sup>to</sup> them the oath of allegiance.

### 13. The conquest of Khartoum<sup>3</sup>

When the Mahdi encamped at Abū Saʿd, he reinforced ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Nujūmī and ordered him to tighten the siege of Gordon and the people of his administration

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 1. See Manshūrāt, ii, pp. 199-200.  
 2. See Hill, BD, p. 124.  
 3. MS., 343/11 - 347/22. See F.R. Wingate, 'The siege and the fall of Khartoum', SNR, xiii, 1930, pp.1-82.

in Khartoum. The Companions carried out the order and the situation of Khartoum became very serious. The Mahdi had written to Gordon, calling him to God, to be converted to Islam, and to follow the Mahdi. Also, he had written to all the notables of Khartoum, 344 but to no avail. The siege / caused a famine in Khartoum. Gordon, realizing his weakness and the failure of his tricks, ordered the removal of the poor, the disabled, the women, the weak and the slaves from the town, in order to alleviate the shortage of the army. They left by boats, in a most horrible condition, as if they had come out of graves, and fell on the Mahdi's camp at Abū Sa'd, asking people for the necessary sustenance. The Mahdi ordered the commissioner of the Treasury to look after them, and they recuperated. When the people of Khartoum repeatedly came out, the Mahdi wrote a proclamation to the Companions, instructing them to be courteous to those who were coming out to him.

As for Gordon, he remained with the people of his administration and most of the notables of the town and those who had some food, hoping to attain their objective. Gordon, who was now reassured of his relief by the English, made promises to those who were 345 with him in Khartoum. / The English were |later| encountered at Abū Ṭulayḥ by the Companions and defeated. Their survivors reached al-Matamma and, having learnt that Gordon had perished, fled to their country. The Mahdi then summoned 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Nujūmī and the commanders who were besieging Khartoum, to Abū Sa'd. There he briefed them about the manner of the breaking into Khartoum, and ordered them to return to their siege positions. On Sunday |8 Rabī' II 1302/25 January 1885| the Mahdi preached to the people and roused them to the jihād.

On Monday eve, 9 Rabī' II 1302 | 26 January 1885 |, the Mahdi, his senior khalīfa, the other khalīfas and the Companions who were with them, crossed the river by boats and encamped at a place close to the location of the siege, near Shajarat Māḥū<sup>1</sup> Bey. The Mahdi summoned all the Companions, and they gathered together in front of him. Al-Nujūmī had previously summoned 'Abdallāh w. Jubārā, Abū Bakr w. 'Āmir and the other Companions who were besieging Khartoum from the east, at the Qaşr Rāsikh Bey area. They all came by boat on the Nile. All the Companions gathered together in al-Nujūmī's area, for only from that area was it possible to penetrate Khartoum on foot by way of the trench. The other sides of the town were defended by the |Blue and White| Niles and could be

346 reached only by steamer or boat. / When all the divisions were in the Mahdi's presence, he ordered them to assault the Turks, heedless of the trench, since God was supporting His mahdī. Having exhorted and warned the Companions, the Mahdi, with his senior khalīfa and some of the Companions, returned by boat, on that night |8-9 Rabī' II/25-26 January|, to Abū Sa'd. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Nujūmī and the fighters passed the night in uttering the tahlīl and takbīr and in prayer. Before the crack of dawn the Companions attacked the trench. Despite the darkness the Turks noticed them, because they were shouting the tahlīl and takbīr, and poured deadly fire. Heedless, the Companions attacked the trench, penetrated the town

347 and began slaughtering the Turks. / The slaughter continued from dawn until about forenoon, when the ground became red with the blood of people and the streets were filled with corpses. Only God knows how many died of the Turks and of those who joined them. Gordon was killed in his palace, his head was cut off and hung in the market as a punishment for him

1. MS., reads سبى.

and a lesson to others. A party of pashas, governors, consuls, 'umdas, merchants and notables of the town also perished. No more than 10 Companions died as martyrs. From among the people of Khartoum, only those who were behind locked gates or hid in the gardens near the town survived. They came out and swore allegiance. On the day of the conquest, the Mahdi issued a proclamation, warning the Companions about the booty. He entered the town on Friday |13 Rabī' II/30 January|, and there<sup>he</sup> prayed the Friday prayer. He then returned to Abū Sa'd and, in Jumādā I |February-March|, he moved to Omdurman. /

- 348 14. The expedition of Mūsā w. Muḥammad Hilū to the English in Abū Ṭulayḥ<sup>1</sup>

When Gordon's situation became most serious, he requested his government (dawla) to dispatch a large army. When this army reached Dongola, it was divided into three detachments,<sup>2</sup> each of them equipped with military instruments, munitions and firearms which were unprecedented in the battles of the Mahdia; like the Martini<sup>3</sup> rifles, which were faster and of longer range than the Remington,<sup>4</sup> and the weapons Sabre bayonet |?|<sup>5</sup> etc. |one of the detachments went by the east bank of the Nile, near Wad Qamar|. <sup>6</sup> One of the detachments also came by the Nile bank, near Wad Qamar, but on the west bank. The two detachments |the 'River Column'|

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1. MS., 347/22 - 356/5. MS. reads <sup>طليح</sup>. In British sources this place is known as Abu Klea.
2. Cf. Preston (ed.), Wolseley's journal, pp. xxxv - vi.
3. MS. reads <sup>البنادق المارتيني</sup>.
4. MS. reads <sup>الريمونج</sup>. Remington rifles (cal. .43) were adopted by the Egyptian army in 1870. The Martini-Henry (cal. .45) was officially adopted by the British Army and the Royal Navy in 1871. See H.L. Peterson, The book of the gun, London, 1963, pp. 182, 185.
5. MS. reads <sup>السلاح السريند</sup>.
6. This line must have been left out from the MS. Cf. MS., 353/10-16.

agreed to meet at Berber and thence to proceed to Khartoum. The third detachment |the 'Desert Column'| took the route which crossed the land of the Shāyqiyya, in a place called Ṣanab in the Marawī route, and this is the detachment which came via Abū Ṭulayḥ.

When Muḥammad al-Khayr 'Abdallāh learnt of the arrival of the English, he informed the Mahdi at Abū Sa'd. Muḥammad al-Khayr then announced a general mobilization for the jihād. All the Ja'alīyīn and the other inhabitants of that region complied and an army, whose size only God knows, mustered. He despatched them to Abū Ṭulayḥ to annihilate the English detachment that was crossing the land of the Shāyqiyya towards al-Matamma, before they arrived at the Nile. Muḥammad al-Khayr commissioned 'Abd al-Mājid Muḥammad with the command of this mission. He reached Abū Ṭulayḥ, encamped at the watering-place and sent out scouts who brought back information that the English had reached Jaqdūl, on their way to Abū Ṭulayḥ. The

349 Companions then prepared / for war. In the night, the English reached Abū Ṭulayḥ and encamped within gun-shot of the Companions. The Mahdi had dispatched Mūsā w. Ḥilū with a large army to fight them. He arrived at Abū Ṭulayḥ on the morrow of the night the English had come. Mūsā w. Ḥilū then roused the Companions and briefed them to concentrate the firearms in one block, the horsemen and infantry in others. But when the Companions saw the enemies of God, the English, they lost control of themselves, and all of them charged in disorder. The infidels poured deadly fire, and the Martini rifles had a great effect. The Companions reached the unbelievers only after many of them had died as martyrs. Nevertheless, they fought a fierce battle with the unbelievers, the Companions in support of the Religion while the unbelievers were fighting to save their own lives. In the chaotic battle /

350 the Companions were winning, having routed two out of three squares in which the unbelievers had arranged themselves. The Companions had begun to rout the third square, had it not been for the preoccupation of some of them with the booty, which enabled the unbelievers to overcome the Companions and kill them. The English saved themselves and reached the river near al-Matamma. In this battle, a party of the Companions died as martyrs, including Mūsā w. Hilū, Muḥammad w. Bilāl and others.

While the English were on their way, the Companions repeatedly engaged them in battle, but the unbelievers managed to reach al-Matamma. The Companions also encamped there. Meanwhile, most of the people of al-Matamma transferred their children and women to the east |bank| of the Nile, opposite al-Matamma, to save them from the English. Gordon, having learnt that the English had moved from Dongola towards Khartoum, had sent five armoured steamers, laden with Turks and some Shāyqiyya like Khashm al-Mūs,<sup>1</sup> to await the English who were due at al-Matamma, and to spur them to relieve his plight, but God caused Gordon to perish three days before their arrival. After the arrival of the English at the river, near al-Matamma, the steamers reached them, and the Turks on board joined them. They formed a large square and marched on the Companions at al-Matamma, since there was about an hour's distance between the English camp and the town. The Companions inside al-Matamma prepared for battle  
 351 and fortified the town walls, making embrasures and gun emplacements. As soon as the English came within range, the Companions shot at, and shelled them. In the first salvo the leader of the infidels, called

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1. See Hill, BD, p. 262. See also C.M. Watson, 'The campaign of Gordon's steamers', SNR, xii/2, 1929, pp. 119-41.

Sir H. Stewart |?|<sup>1</sup> was wounded and perished. The unbelievers then withdrew to the village of al-Qal'a, very near al-Matamma, where they erected gun emplacements. They began shelling al-Matamma and destroyed several of the Companions' gun emplacements. As they were unable to destroy the town, they withdrew to Wādī Abī Ramād.

After the battle of Abū Ṭulayḥ, the Mahdi ordered the conquest of Khartoum. As the English were confused about Gordon and suspected the fall of Khartoum, they loaded two of the steamers with brave men and large quantities of provisions so that Gordon, were he still alive, could make use of them till, as they alleged, they would reach him. The wicked were not aware that by that time Gordon was in Hell. When the two steamers came near the ditch of Omdurman, Ḥamdān Abū 'Anja, who at that time was on the White Nile bank, near Omdurman, was assigned to prevent them from reaching Khartoum. His men fired on them, and they stopped in the middle of the river, not knowing  
352 how to save themselves. Meanwhile, / they were shelled from the fort of al-Muqran and they realized that Khartoum had fallen and that Gordon had perished. Only after great difficulties, caused by Ḥamdān Abū 'Anja, did they flee and return to their people.

When the English withdrew with the steamers, the Mahdi sent 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Nujūmī with a large group of fighters to join the Companions at al-Matamma in fighting the English. When al-Nujūmī reached Kararī the Mahdi himself met them, and briefed and roused them for the jihād. The English, hearing of the Mahdi's arrival at Kararī, thought that he was

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1. Cf. Preston (ed. ), Wolseley's journal, pp. xxxvii, 127. MS. reads وشين تار |?|.

advancing to fight them. They were frightened and started to flee. Covertly, they gradually transferred all their provisions, during the night, to Abū Ṭulayḥ. They threw into the river all the provisions which were too heavy to carry, including guns, and destroyed parts of the steamers. Also, they left behind some of the tents, with lights in them, to deceive the Companions and lead them to believe that they were still there. During the night they fled towards Dongola. When those Companions who were in al-Matamma realized that the unbelievers had fled, they pursued and caught up with them at Abū Ṭulayḥ. There 353 they engaged them / in battle. Meanwhile, they heard of the arrival of 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Nujūmī's reinforcement in the area of al-Matamma. When he arrived at al-Matamma he could not dispatch the army to meet the English because of the dearth of grain in the town. Therefore, he dispatched part of the army to meet the Companions at Abū Ṭulayḥ. When the English heard of that gathering, they fled during the night to Dongola. Only a day later did the Companions realize that the English had fled and they returned to al-Matamma. This is the account of the detachment which came to Abū Ṭulayḥ |the 'Desert Column'| and this battle is known as the battle of Abū Ṭulayḥ.

As for the detachment |the 'River Column'| which came by the east bank, near Wad Qamar, they were <sup>met</sup> by Mūsā Abū Ḥijil, who had been sent by Muḥammad al-Khayr. He fought a fierce battle, during which the leader of that detachment of unbelievers was killed, Mūsā himself died as a martyr. After the death of its leader, the detachment withdrew in defeat towards Dongola. When the detachment that was advancing on the west bank of Wādī Qamar heard of the fate of the other two detachments, they also withdrew in defeat. They met in Dongola,

After their arrival in Dongola, the English were driven by their wrath to cause harm to the Mahdi's relatives there. They imprisoned a party of them including: Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qādir, Sharīf Sātī 'Alī, Muḥammad 'Ibrāhīm, Aḥmad al-Najīb, Ḥājj Sharīfī<sup>1</sup> Muḥammad Nūr, Ḥājj Sharīf Maḥmūd, and 'Abd al-Qādir 'Abd al-Karīm. Their imprisonment took place after their relationship to the Mahdi had been established in court. / The author remarks that the proceedings were fallacious, and that the reason for them was the false allegation of the unbelievers that they punished only those who were related to the Mahdi. He curses a Dongolawi who assisted the unbelievers in this matter. The English then told the Mahdi's relatives to write to the Mahdi that they would be released only if the Mahdi released his prisoners and after the latter reached the English.<sup>2</sup> The Mahdi's relatives complied and the English then transported them from Dongola towards their country. When they reached 'Anqash, about half a day's distance from Wādī Ḥalfā, the Mahdi's reply reached the English. In excerpts from the letter, which are given by the author,<sup>3</sup> the Mahdi states his refusal to accept the proposal, since the people in question had embraced Islam and preferred to stay with him. / This letter was accompanied by a letter to the Mahdi's relatives, in which the Mahdi rebuked them.<sup>4</sup> When the English read the Mahdi's letter, they despaired of obtaining their people. They released the Mahdi's relatives, honoured them, provided riding-animals and provisions and sent them back. The Mahdi's relatives returned to Dongola and the English then returned to their country.

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1. Shuqayr, Ta'rīkh, iii, p.317; gives his name as Sharīf; Manshūrāt, ii, p.303, however, mentions a Ḥājj Sharfī Muḥammad Nūr.
  2. Cf. Preston (ed.), Wolseley's journal, pp. 60, 62.
  3. For the full text see Shuqayr, Ta'rīkh, iii, pp.318-9.
  4. See Manshūrāt, ii, pp. 302-5.

After the battle of Abū Ṭulayḥ and the conquest of Khartoum, the Mahdi wrote to Muḥammad al-Khayr 'Abdallāh and ordered him to go to Dondola and call upon its people to follow the Mahdi and fight the English and the Turks there. Muḥammad al-Khayr commenced preparations and dispatched successive expeditions to Dongola, following them himself. Meanwhile, he was informed of the flight of the English, the Turks and those townsfolk who had joined them, and that Dongola was empty of them. He wrote to the  
 356 Mahdi about it and began marching to / Dongola. He reached the place with his army, and called upon its people to join the Mahdi. They did so without fighting.

16. The expedition of Ḥamdān Abū 'Anja to the mountains of Taqalī<sup>1</sup>

a. Abū 'Anja in the mountains of Taqalī<sup>2</sup>

When the Mahdi heard, after the conquest of Khartoum, that some of the inhabitants of the mountains of Taqalī and people of southern Kordofan 'turned away from the path of the hijra to their places' and were agreed on wickedness, highway robbery and looting, he dispatched Ḥamdān Abū 'Anja to call them to obey the Mahdi and cease their wicked activities. He ordered Abū 'Anja not to commence hostilities until he had warned them and only if they disobeyed. Abū 'Anja left Omdurman in Jumādā I 1302 [February-March 1885], a month after Khartoum had been conquered, and marched to Taqalī. He encamped near Jabal Wad al-Dawrī, the place of the tribe of Tumām - whose numbers only God knows - and called them to God, to obey the Mahdi and to desist from their wicked activities. They declined,

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 1. MS., 356/4 - 362/6.  
 2. MS., 356/4 - 360/1.

and he fought and routed them. He expelled them from /  
 357 Jabal al-Dawrī and they scattered in the mountains.  
 He captured about 335 children and women and about  
 415 cattle, in addition to grain and sheep.

The survivors of the killing joined the people  
 of Jabal Kakada. When they realized that Abū 'Anja  
 would not leave them unless they became obedient or  
 perished, all of them rose from Jabal Kakada, moved  
 to Jabal Karāya and joined the descendants of the  
 ancient kings of Taqalī. That mountain had been the  
 seat of the kingdom of Taqalī in the days of Makk  
 Ādam, known as Umm Dabbālū - one of the greatest kings  
 of Taqalī, who had joined the Mahdi in El Obeid about  
 five months after Hicks perished, and |later| died  
 while accompanying the Mahdi on his way from Kordofan  
 to Khartoum. When Abū 'Anja learnt of the gathering  
 of the wicked at Jabal Karāya, he called upon the  
 children of the kings to obey and follow the Mahdi /  
 358 and warned them. The chiefs obediently came to him in  
 Jabal Wad al-Dawrī, he pardoned them and they joined  
 him.

Abū 'Anja and the children of the kings advanced  
 to Jabal Tukum, where there was a heavy gathering of  
 the wicked, and called upon them to submit and follow  
 the Mahdi, but they declined. After a fierce battle,  
 which went on for days - the mountains were extremely  
 high and difficult - Abū 'Anja routed them, looted  
 much property, captured their women and children and  
 expelled them from the mountain. Their makk was also  
 captured and died a prisoner.

Abū 'Anja then advanced to Jabal al-Kajāja. This  
 was a fortified, impregnable mountain, extremely high  
 and with many hiding-places. Owing to its vast size  
 it contained 7 makks, each having a large group of  
 followers. Abū 'Anja repeatedly warned the people of

359 this mountain, but they resolved to fight. He then arranged the army, / climbed the mountain and fought them until he routed them. He looted much property and captured their women and children. Those kings who survived the killing became obedient. Abū 'Anja then established a camp, at Jabal al-Kajāja, for the families of the fighters and for the weak. In accordance with what is incumbent, he dispatched the booty to the Mahdi's residence to be added to the Treasury.

Abū 'Anja had sent a party of Companions to the area of Qadīr to collect the booty, but the inhabitants treacherously killed all of them. When the news reached Abū 'Anja, he advanced on the rebels who renounced the Religion. After his arrival, he called them to God and to follow the Mahdi, warning them repeatedly. They declined and in the long fight which ensued, the Companions killed all of them save those who had hidden themselves. Abū 'Anja then returned to the camp in Jabal al-Kajāja. Incessantly he tracked down the people of those mountains, calling them to obey and follow the Mahdi. He pardoned those who listened and obeyed and granted them the amān. Those who declined he fought, killing or capturing them. /

360 b. Abū 'Anja and the revolt of the jihādiyya<sup>1</sup>

When Abū 'Anja heard that the Sudanese jihādiyya, who were with Maḥmūd b. 'Abd al-Qādir in El Obeid, had revolt and attacked the Companions there and had gone to the mountains of southern Kordofan, he advanced towards them and fought them. When the Mahdi left for Khartoum, he had commissioned Maḥmūd b. 'Abd al-Qādir as 'āmil of Kordofan. With him there had been a group of Sudanese jihādiyya. After the Mahdi's death, Maḥmūd b. 'Abd al-Qādir went to Omdurman to swear allegiance to the Khalifa. In his absence, the

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1. MS., 360/1 - 362/6.

jihādiyya, who were joined by the majority of the slaves of the Companions in El Obeid, suddenly rebelled. During the fighting they killed some Companions who, in turn, killed many of them. Then they openly left the town, with boxes of munition carried on the heads of the slave-girls, and made their way to the mountains in southern Kordofan. They killed or robbed anyone who opposed them on their way, until they reached the mountains, where they were joined by the wicked from among the local people. When Maḥmūd heard what had happened he returned from Omdurman, at the Khalifa's order. On his arrival in El Obeid he immediately set out towards the jihādiyya and caught up with them in /  
 361 the mountains. He called upon them to obey, but they declined. In the fierce battle which ensued he died as a martyr. The rest of the army returned to El Obeid.

When Ḥamdān Abū 'Anja heard of this, he personally advanced on the jihādiyya and promised to pardon them if they obeyed. He repeatedly warned them, but to no avail. They tried to trick him, promising to surrender but planning to flee. Indeed, one night they all fled to the remote parts of the southern mountains. A party of them came, however, to Abū 'Anja and informed him of the flight of the others. He wanted to track them down himself, but the leaders of the Companions and the brave people pleaded with him to wait and go with the rest of the army. Then they proceeded and caught up with the jihādiyya, on the summit of a mountain. At dawn the fighting commenced and the jihādiyya were annihilated, except a few who survived and joined the |Mahdist| army. Abū 'Anja sent the heads of some of the leaders of the slaves to the Mahdi's residence and they were displayed in the market, and then buried. Thus, peace was achieved in

362 southern Kordofan, / The Khalifa then summoned Abū  
 'Anja and his army and they returned. The  
 author adds that at the time of writing, Ḥamdān Abū  
 'Anja had gone to meet the army |at al-Qallābāt|. <sup>1</sup>

16. The expedition of Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Karīm  
 to Sennar and its dependencies <sup>2</sup>

a. The siege of Sennar <sup>3</sup>

Sennar, the mother of the Sudanese towns (umm  
 al-qurā al-Sūdāniyya), was the last to capitulate  
 and follow the Mahdi. The author remarks that  
 there is wisdom in this, which the very learned expert  
 will understand. <sup>4</sup> For about three years, the  
 town fought the Companions and was besieged by  
 successive parties of them, like those of 'Amir w.  
 'Umar al-Mikāshif, <sup>5</sup> and his brother Aḥmad 'Umar  
 al-Mikāshif, 'Abd al-Qādir b. al-Ḥasana and others.  
 Before the conquest of Khartoum, much blood had been  
 shed |at Sennar| and many famous battles had been  
 fought. The Mahdi now dispatched his relative, Muḥammad  
 b. 'Abd al-Karīm, <sup>6</sup> to call the Turks of Sennar and  
 all the inhabitants of those areas to God and to obey  
 the Mahdi. The Mahdi ordered him to treat them well  
 and to pardon them if they repented and obeyed.  
 Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Karīm left for Sennar with an army,  
 which included amīra of the Ḥamar tribes who had  
 joined him by the Mahdi's order. He left at the end  
 363 of Jumādā I/1302 |March 1885|, dispatching his armies

1. See Holt, Mahdist state, p. 154.

2. MS., 362/6 - 373/16.

3. MS., 362/7 - 372/1.

4. Hinting, probably, to the late stage in Muḥammad's  
 career when Mecca (traditionally called Umm al-qurā)  
 was taken.

5. See Hill, BD, p. 364, s.v. 'Umar al-Makāshfī; Holt,  
Mahdist state, p. 58.

6. See Hill, BD, p. 244.

by land and river, and reached Sennar on 3 Rajab  
 |18 April|. He settled near the town, almost within  
 gun-shot of the Turks. He then wrote warnings to the  
 Turks and other inhabitants of Sennar, promising to  
 pardon them if they came out in obedience. When they  
 had read his letters, they pretended to regret the  
 past and that they had started discussions among  
 themselves concerning submission. While the emissaries  
 were going back and forth, the Turks prepared for  
 battle and improved their fortifications. Their leaders  
 at that time were al-Nūr Bey Muḥammad<sup>1</sup> and Ḥasan Bey  
 'Uthmān.<sup>2</sup> When Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Karīm realized that  
 the Turks had resolved to fight, he gathered the  
 Companions, and informed them of what had happened.  
 He then ordered them to prepare for battle and to  
 invest Sennar. He placed Muṣṭafā w. Jubāra on the east  
 |bank| of the Nile, opposite Sennar, where there was  
 364 a good view of the town. / Part of the amīrs he placed  
 in the gardens of the town. The other Companions  
 erected gun emplacements, mounted them with guns and  
 began besieging the town. The author describes the  
 siege.

Muḥammad w. 'Abd al-Karīm then essembled all the  
amīrs and people of counsel and opinion (ahl  
al-mashwara wa'l-ra'y), consulted them concerning  
 365 Sennar and they all agreed on attacking / Sennar. Its  
 inhabitants had surrounded the town with a large wall  
 with embrasures for rifles. Around the wall they had  
 dug a fortified trench and behind the trench they  
 had built a firm zarība. Also, they had cut all the  
 trees around the town. When the Companions agreed  
 to take the town by force ('anwatan), Muḥammad w.  
 'Abd al-Karīm ordered Muṣṭafā w. Jubāra to summon all

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1. See Hill, BD, p. 297.

2. See Hill, BD, p. 160; MS., 371/13-19.

the divisions<sup>which</sup> were besieging the town from the east. During the night, they crossed the river by boat and the whole army gathered<sup>together</sup> on the west bank. Muḥammad w. 'Abd al-Karīm briefed and roused them. The whole army then advanced<sup>towards</sup> the trench. While the Companions were advancing, the Turks heard them and prepared themselves by concentrating firearms in the direction of the trench, near the river bank. At dawn, the Companions charged and the Turks poured deadly

366 fire. / Heedless, the Companions broke through the trench and penetrated the town. They killed the artilleryman |sic|, took the gun and threw it into the trench. Turning on the Turks who were in the front line, they routed them, pursued them into the town, and killed whomsoever they encountered. The Companions had almost taken possession of the town had it not been for the previous decree of God to postpone it to that day which He wished. When some of the Companions came near the trench, they encountered heavy fire. The reason for this was as follows: when they saw that the Companions had penetrated the town and killed the artilleryman |sic|, some of the Turks fled to al-Nūr Bey |Muḥammad|, the ra'īs al-'asākir, and informed him of what had happened. He hurried from his position to the area which the Companions had penetrated. The Companions had chosen that area for the breakthrough because it was the nearest to the river and closer to the besiegers than the area of the gardens |where al-Nūr Bey was positioned|. When

367 he arrived with brave and expert / fighters, al-Nūr Bey ordered the bugle to be sounded as a signal of his arrival to the Turks. They quickly gathered together arranged their lines and fired on the Companions. Thus<sup>they</sup> prevented them from joining those Companions who had already penetrated the town. He then ordered the Turks to annihilate those Companions who were

inside the town, and God honoured the majority of them with martyrdom. Had it not been for that, the Companions would have taken the town then, 'but this was written in the book'. The Companions then returned to the siege position. In the battle, a party of Companions died as martyrs and many of the Turks perished.

The Companions then tightened the siege and the situation of the Turks and of those who were with  
 368 them became serious. / The author describes the  
 desertion of the townsfolk. The condition of the  
 townsfolk was such that it appeared as if they had  
 369 risen from the / grave. The situation of the Turks  
 was aggravated; they despaired of any help from Egypt,  
 all their secret post was intercepted by the Companions  
 and they suffered from a severe famine. Thus, they  
 decided to make a sortie in order to capture the  
 Companions' camp, seize the grain which was  
 stored there, or die. They prepared themselves  
 extremely well, came out of the town and advanced /  
 370 towards the camp. A fierce battle took place near  
 the camp, at a place called Umm Şiwīniyya. The Turks  
 were defeated and retreated without attaining their  
 objective. A party of the Companions died as martyrs  
 and many of the Turks perished. After that battle,  
 many of the inhabitants of Sennar, especially the  
 weak and the slaves (mamālīk) deserted to the  
 Companions.

The Turks realized that if they remained in this condition, they would either perish by famine or be taken by the Companions without a fight, since they were weakened by their despicable food. About ten days after their sortie, they decided to capture the camp, or die. Again they came out, extremely well prepared, to the area where they had previously

gone. In the fight, Muḥammad w. 'Abd al-Karīm was  
 371 wounded,<sup>and</sup> this enabled the Turks / to reach the edges  
 of the camp. In the mêlée, the people of the camp  
 carried Muḥammad w. 'Abd al-Karīm to the boats and  
 the army withdrew to the areas around Sennar, such  
 as the Barriyāb<sup>1</sup> etc. Part of the army crossed the  
 river by boats, arrived at the eastern siege position  
 and assembled there. The Turks captured the camp,  
 seized all that they could find there, such as grain,  
 and then burnt the place. Still, the grain that they  
 had captured was not sufficient and they returned to  
 their previous predicament of distress and famine.  
 The Turks then dispatched a group to the east bank,  
 to try and obtain grain. Ḥasan Bey 'Uthmān, with  
 soldiers and townsfolk, crossed the river by boats and  
 arrived at the east bank. The Companions, namely,  
 the division of Muṣṭafā w. Jubāra and other divisions,  
 prepared for the encounter, charged the Turks and  
 annihilated them. Ḥasan Bey | 'Uthmān | was killed /  
 372 and only the fugitives survived.

b. The surrender of Sennar<sup>2</sup>

As a result of his wound, Muḥammad b. 'Abd  
 al-Karīm was bed ridden. He ordered Muḥammad Aḥmad  
 w. Shaykh Idrīs, a relative of the Mahdi and one of  
 the division commanders, to gather the whole army,  
 advance on Sennar and break into the fort. When the  
 Turks heard that their party which had gone to the  
 east bank had been annihilated, and that those who  
 had survived and tried to return to Sennar by boat  
 were dealt with by the steamer which had come with  
 Muḥammad Aḥmad Shaykh Idrīs, they were afraid that  
 soon they would also be annihilated. They asked

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1. See MacMichael, Arabs in the Sudan, iv. A2, xxxix.  
 2. MS., 372/1 - 373/16.

373 Muḥammad Aḥmad Shaykh Idrīs to grant them an amān, which he did. They all came out, the Turks and the others, and he pardoned them and administered the oath of allegiance. When the Khalifa / heard of what had happened to the Companions in Sennar, he dispatched 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Nujūmī and Muḥammad 'Uthmān Abū Qarja and other commanders with armies - whose numbers only God knows - by river and by land, with orders to conquer Sennar as soon as they arrived there. As it happened, Sennar had capitulated two days before their arrival. After the capitulation of the town, Muḥammad Aḥmad w. Shaykh Idrīs and the Companions entered it. After a few days, Muḥammad w. 'Abd al-Karīm came by steamer from al-Barriyāb and entered the town. Thus Sennar was incorporated within the realm of the Mahdiā. The conquest took place after the Mahdi's death, in the days of the Khalifa, in Dhū al-Qa'da |1302/August-September 1885|.

#### 17. Proclamations of the Mahdi<sup>1</sup>

374 The author remarks that it is beyond |human| ability to investigate the / whole sīra of the Mahdi. Therefore, he has limited it to a small part of the Mahdi's sīra, which he derived from the Companions. He then mentions his promise to transcribe a small number of the Mahdi's proclamations, and stresses that it is impossible to transcribe all the proclamations, which should be consulted in the Jāmi' al-manshūrāt.<sup>2</sup>

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1. MS., 373/16 - 384/11.

2. See introduction, p. 28.

There follows a transcription of three proclamations whose titles the author gives as:

- 374- (1) A proclamation proving that he |Muḥammad Aḥmad|  
 9 is the expected mahdī, as the prophet had announced;<sup>1</sup>/  
 379- (2) A proclamation proving that the Khalifa 'Abdallāhi  
 384 'is of the Mahdi and that the Mahdi is of him' and  
 that all his actions are by Prophetic order;<sup>2</sup> /  
 384 (3) A proclamation warning against hiding any booty.<sup>3</sup>

Epilogue: The Mahdi's death and the accession of  
 the Khalifa<sup>4</sup>

1. The Mahdi's death<sup>5</sup>

The author opens the epilogue with an expression of the great grief caused by the death of the Mahdi. He then draws a parallel between the appearance of the Prophet and that of the Mahdi, stating that with /  
 385 the Mahdi's manifestation the Resurrection (qiyāma) was seen by everyone. When the Mahdi's period came to its end, God transferred him to Him. There follows a transcription of the Mahdi's 'last proclamation' in which, the author says, his death is foretold. The  
 385-7 proclamation,<sup>6</sup> dated the end of Sha'bān 1302 | June 1885 |, stresses the pious state of mind and practices to be pursued by the Mahdi's followers during the month of Ramaḍān, and requests them not to trouble the Mahdi during that month with cases and demands, so as

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1. See MS., 38/15 - 43/7, where the same proclamation is transcribed in full.  
 2. See Manshūrāt; i, pp. 30-2.  
 3. See Manshūrāt, i, p. 51.  
 4. MS., 385/11 - 405/16.  
 5. MS., 384/17 - 388/9.  
 6. See Manshūrāt, ii, pp. 315-6.

to enable him to devote himself to religious practices. All the cases which cannot be delayed should be referred to the khalīfas, the commissioners (umanā') and the judge. /

387           The Mahdi's illness - a 'severe fever'<sup>1</sup> - began on Wednesday, 3 Ramaḍān 1302 |16 June 1885|. On Friday, 5 Ramaḍān |18 June|, the Mahdi instructed the Khalifa to lead the prayer and preach. The Mahdi's fever continued, and in the forenoon of Monday, 8 Ramaḍān |21 June|,<sup>2</sup> the Mahdi died. Thereupon, the people were perplexed and their minds were confused. The most resolute and patient in accepting with contentment this greatest of calamities was the Khalifa. He  
388           assuaged the people/and ordered the Mahdi's relatives to prepare the |body of the|Mahdi and bury him. They dug his grave, in his house, in the place where his bed had been. The Khalifa then led the prayer, and the Mahdi was buried at noontime that day.

## 2. The accession of the Khalifa<sup>3</sup>

The people swore allegiance to the Khalifa, and he wrote proclamations to all the governors in the districts, informing them of the Mahdi's death and exhorting them. Thus the country was safe and the worshippers reassured. The Khalifa undertook the matter of the succession (qāma bi-amr al-khilāfa) and called the people to God and to rally to the Religion. He fought his adversaries, and deputations came unto him from far away to swear allegiance. Briefly characterizing the Khalifa's reign, the author stresses his support of Islam, his jihād, the performance of  
389           public prayer / and the spread of justice.

1. See Shuqayr, Ta'rīkh, iii, pp. 358-9.

2. See Holt, Mahdist state, pp. vi, 96. 3 Ramaḍān was Tuesday, 5 Ramaḍān - Thursday, and 8 Ramaḍān - Sunday.

3. MS, 388/9 - 396/5.

The author then enumerates miracles (karāmāt) and traits (ma'ālīm) of the Khalifa: (1) The public prayer, held in the great mosque in Omdurman. The author stresses that so much continuous pious practice had never been witnessed in any other place. /

390 (2) Some details of the great mosque in Omdurman and  
 391 its measurements follow.<sup>1</sup> / The building of the mosque commenced on Wednesday, 4 Rabī' I 1305 | 20 November 1887|<sup>2</sup>, and was completed on 17 Jumādā I | 31 January 1888|, that is, in 73 days. The author regards the short period in which such a vast building was completed as one of the great miracles of the Khalifa and as proof of God's support of him. The Khalifa himself participated in the building and he laid the foundation stone. This the author supports by information supplied by Aḥmad 'Alī, the Qādī al-Islām,  
 392 about the beginning of the / building. The measurements of the foundations of the mosque follow. The author again stresses the worship and the religious practices, which were continuously conducted in the mosque, at the time of writing. (3) A trait of the Khalifa is his continuous preoccupation with the welfare of the worshippers. (4) Finally, the author elaborates  
 393 on the Khalifa's obedience to God / and his pious and ascetic conduct, particularly since he had become a companion of the Mahdi. While in Abā, the Khalifa led a life of abstinence. He personally served the brethren  
 394 (ikhwān) in Abā, during the hijra to Qadīr, / and in other places and times. This point, especially the Khalifa's kind treatment of the sick, is elaborated  
 395 upon. / The description of the Khalifa's merits are beyond human ability. The author supports this by the Mahdi's own references to the Khalifa's merits, in his proclamations.

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1. See Ohrwalder, Ten years' captivity, pp. 279, and map facing p. 460.  
 2. 4 Rabī' I was Sunday.

396- 3. Eulogies of the Mahdi<sup>1</sup>  
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The author quotes in full<sup>a</sup> eulogy composed by  
398 Ibrāhīm b. Sharīf al-Kurdūfānī.<sup>2</sup> / He adds that there  
are many eulogies of the Mahdi and that they were  
gathered in collections of poetry, like the  
'Commendation (amdāh) of the Mahdi'.<sup>3</sup>

4. The completion of the Sīra and the dome of the  
Mahdi's tomb<sup>4</sup>

399 The Sīra was completed on Wednesday, 2 Rabī' I  
1306 |6 November 1888|. <sup>5</sup> On that very day the building  
of the dome on the Mahdi's tomb was begun by the  
Khalifa's order. The Khalifa - in accordance with his  
practice, based on the Custom - consulted the  
Companions on this matter. He then ordered building  
to commence, and participated in the service |of the  
building|. The digging of the foundation of the  
dome started on Wednesday, 2 Rabī' I 1306, with the  
400 Khalifa being the first to dig, / followed by other  
khalīfas and men. The rush to participate in the  
digging was so great, that some people were injured  
by the digging-tools. The foundations were completed  
on Wednesday, 9 Rabī' I 1306 |13 November 1888|<sup>6</sup>  
and then the building started. Again, it was the

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1. MS., 396/6 - 398/14.
  2. Shuqayr, Ta'rīkh, iii, pp. 359-60, transcribes the qaṣīda in full and gives its author's name as: Ibrāhīm Sharīf al-Dūlābī al-Kurdūfānī.
  3. See introduction, p. 28.
  4. MS., 398/14 - 405/16.
  5. See introduction, p. 25, and n.6.
  6. 9 Rabī' I was Tuesday.

Khalifa who laid the foundation stone, the khalīfas followed and then the rest of the people. There was great overcrowding, and some Companions had to return to their houses without being able to participate,

401- The author adds / the measurements of the dome and  
 2 the grave,<sup>1</sup> and stresses the beauty of the dome. /

403- The Sīra concludes with a qaṣīda by the author,  
 5 Its last hemistich gives, in the numerical value of its letters, the year of the completion of the Sīra and the beginning of the building of the dome, i.e., 1306 |1888|.

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1. See Ohrwalder, Ten years' captivity, pp. 275-9.

## APPENDIX A1

|R.C. von| Slatin Pascha, 'Meine Erlebnisse im Soudan',  
Mittheilungen der k.k. Geographischen Gesellschaft  
in Wien, xxxix, 1896, p. 52.

Ismail woled 'Abd el Kadr, einer seiner Kadis, hatte es verstanden, sich durch Schmeichelei und Lobhudelei seine Gunst zu erringen. Im Laufe eines Gespräches mit Bekannten zog dieser Kadi Ismain einmal eine Parallele zwischen dem jetzigen Regime im Soudan und den früheren Verhältnissen unter Egypten, wobei er den Chalifen mit dem Khedive Ismail Pascha, sich selbst aber mit dem Ismail Pascha el Mufetisch, der des Khedives Liebling und Rathgeber war, verglich. Dieser unter den herrschenden Verhältnissen unüberlegte Ausspruch wurde dem Chalifen überbracht, der im höchsten Zorne sogleich befahl, eine Untersuchung einzuleiten und ihn zu verurtheilen. Da er thatsächlich die Worte gesprochen, wurde er in Eisen gelegt und in die Verbannung nach Regjaf geschickt. Wie konnte er sich erlauben, unsere Verhältnisse mit denjenigen Egyptens zu vergleichen, wiederholte der Chalife öfter, empört. Wenn er sich mit einem Pascha vergleichen will, mag er es thun, ich werde es aber niemals gestatten, mich, den Abkömmling des Propheten, mit dem Khedive, einem Türken, in eine Linie zu stellen. Durch derartige Aussprüche glaubt er der Masse zu imponiren. Sein Selbstbewusstsein ist bis zum Eigendüdel ausgebildet. Er behauptet, alles zu wissen, alles zu verstehen.

## APPENDIX A2

R.C. (von) Slatin, Fire and sword in the Sudan,  
London, 1896, pp. 515-16.

The following episode will give the reader a fair idea of his |the Khalifa's| arbitrary nature:-

A certain Kadi named Ismail Wad Abdel Kader, who had been well educated in Cairo, had gained great favour with the Mahdi by having written a laudatory account of his early victories. This had so fully gratified the great religious reformer that he instructed Abdel Kader to continue to chronicle the various important events as they happened, and further instructed his principal Emirs to forward to him detailed histories of all that occurred within their respective commands. In time, these chronicles grew into an elaborate historical and inflated statement of Mahdist rule in the Sudan; and, after the Mahdi's death, the Khalifa, who had installed Abdel Kader as state chronicler, ordered the continuance of the work. One day, however, during a pleasure-party, the historian had been overheard to say that present affairs in the Sudan, as compared with those in Egypt, might be described by the following simile: The Khalifa might be considered as the Khedive Ismail Pasha, whilst, in the same proportion, he, Abdel Kader, might be likened to Ismail Pasha el Mofettish, who had been the Viceroy's principal adviser and friend. This thoughtless statement was immediately reported to Abdullahi, who, furious at such a comparison, at once ordered the judges to assemble and make a full inquiry into the matter; and if Abdel Kader had actually made such a statement, he should be at once condemned. /

|516|

To the Kadis, he argued thus: "The Maḥdi is the representative of the Prophet Mohammed, and I am his successor. Who, therefore, in the whole world holds so high a position as I? Who can be nobler than the direct descendant of the Prophet?" The inquiry proved the guilt of Abdel Kader, who, at the Khalifa's command, was thrown into chains and transported to Reggaf. "What business has he to compare affairs here with those of Egypt?" said the pompous Khalifa, "If he wishes to compare himself to a Pasha, then I, the descendant of the Prophet, will never demean myself to be put on a par with the Khedive, - a mere Turk." I suppose by these assertions he thought to impress the populace. The stupid man too, in his offended dignity, did not stop here. He at once ordered all the chronicles (of which several copies had been made) to be instantly burnt; but I heard privately that his secretary, who was being frequently referred to by the Khalifa on the subject of the early events of his reign, secreted one copy for private reference; and if these strange chronicles could only be procured and translated into European languages, they would expose to the civilised world the methods of Maḥdism in all its barefaced mendacity.

Na'ūm Shuqayr, Memorandum to Director of Military Intelligence on Ismā'īl 'Abd al-Qādir and his biography of the Mahdī, SAD, Box 260/2.

1 D.M.I.

Sir

I learnt, 3 years ago, that the Khalifa Abdulla ordered one of his great olamas to write him a book on the life of the Mahdi and the conquests of the Mahdists in the Sudan, and that an excellent and accurate book was written on the subject.

Knowing that such a book would be most useful for our office and would help considerably in making up a right account of the Sudan recent events, I endeavoured for a long time with the Sudan merchants to get a copy of it but without avail <sup>until</sup> last year, when Es Sheikh Ahmed Kawai, relative of Abdulla Wad Sad, present Emir of Metemma, came here and promised to bring me a copy of this book on his return journey. In April last Sheikh Ahmed, true to his promise, returned from the Sudan with a copy of the book in question.

I perused this book and found it to be an excellent account of the life of the Mahdi & of the recent events in the Sudan, written in a very high arabic style which would place it in the same rank as Ibn El Athir, Ibn Khaldun, Abu El Fida and El Makrizi.

The book is written by the most learned man in the Sudan Sheikh Ismail Abd El Kader.

He is a muelled in Kordofan from a Moghraby origin./

2

He is the nephew of the well known Sheikh Ahmed El Weli El Kordofani, He came to Cairo with his uncle, Sheikh Ahmed, when he was still young and was educated in El Azhar Mosque under his uncle's care for over 16 years. He was noted for his ingenious and acquired a high education in the Arabic literature. He is well known here in Cairo and the Olama of El Azhar Mosque hold a high opinion of him. After completing his education, Sheikh Ismail returned with his uncle to El Obeid where he acquired a high fame for his high knowledge and ingenious. He was employed by El Obeid government as Mufti and remained in this capacity until the Mahdi rose up in the Sudan and marched to the invasion of El Obeid, when Sheikh Ismail together with Elias Pasha and all natives of the town deserted to him at Kaba. He made the Attack on El Obeid with the Mahdi from Kaba, besieged the town with him, was present in the battle of Shekan and accompanied the Mahdi to Khartum and attended the siege and fall of Khartum - After which he settled at Omdurman.

In the Mahdi's time Sheikh Ismail is not known to have done anything to distinguish him, but After the death of the Mahdi he, in order to distinguish himself and rise up from the needy and obscure state which he was reduced to by the past events, began writing a book on the life of the Mahdi and the Khalifa's conquests in the Sudan. Knowing well the vain nature of his master he introduced him in nearly every page of the book and represented him as a most pious and holy man full of mercy and zeal for the Faith and the Mahdi's Creed - He also exalted

3 the Mahdi and raised him high but indeed he raised the Mahdi in order to make higher the / position of Khalifa Abdullah as his 1st Khalifate.

When this book was completed to a certain extent, Sheikh Ismail read it to the Khalifa who was very pleased with it and he ordered the emirs in different parts in the Sudan to supply him with reports on their conquests to complete the book. The Emirs complied and Sheikh Ismail made the book in the form which is now in our hands.

In fact Sheikh Ismail wrote two books, the first book he calls:

Saadet El Mostahdi Bi Siret El Imam El Mahdi (The happiness of one who asks for guidance from the life of El Imam El Mahdi) which treats on the life, virtues and conquests of the Mahdi. He completed this book on 7th November 1888. (It is 405 pages)

The second book he calls:

"El Teraz El Mankush Bi Bushra Kal Yuhanna Melek El Hebush.

(The painted embroidery on the good news of the destruction of King John, King of Abyssinia)

It treats on the conquests and events which took place after the Mahdi's death from the time Khalifa Abdulla took the Office of the Khalifate up to the invasion of Egypt by Wad En Nejumi, explaining more fully the fights against Abyssinia and the death of King John. This book was completed on 5 June 1889. It is 183 pages. The Khalifa was so pleased with the manner and the style in which these two books were written that he ordered many copies to be made from them on the topography and to be distributed among

his ansar and gave Sheikh Ismail a good office among the Kadis of his Court.

4 Thus Sheikh Ismail got in high / favour with the Khalifa and for some time he had an influence over him so that he is known to have said "I and Khalifa Abdulla in the Sudan are now in the same position as the Ismail Pasha late Khedive of Egypt and Ismail Al Mufattesh were in Egypt some years ago"

But Sheikh Ismail could not stay long in favour with the Khalifa - He is an enlightened and clever man and his master is an ignorant and most vain Baggari who wished his will to be done whether it stood to reason, & law or not. So hatred and despise against [?] the Khalifa Crept in to Sheikh Ismail's heart; and one day in 1893, in a fit of anger, he said "It is a great shame to the Sudan to be governed by such an ignorant and base Baggari as Abdulla El Taaishi"

This saying reached the ears of the Khalifa who was so engered at this report that he at once banished Sheikh Ismail to Bahr Er Raggaf, where he still lives, and gave order that all copies made of his book to be collected and burnt in fire and whosoever is seen in possession of one of his books, to be thrown into prison and his property to be confiscated.

This order was strictly carried out and there was no copy left in the Sudan except this copy which is now in our hand and which was kept in great secrecy with Mohammed Ahmed Hashem, Khalifa's Katib, who kept it with great care for reference in case his master asks him on the detetail or date of some past event or conquest.

The difficulty which Sheikh Kawai had in getting this book can thus be readily seen - But Sheikh Ahmed was promised a good reward on his return with this book, besides the £20 he / received from you at Suakin. On the other hand he is a great friend to the owner of the book and he promised to give it back to him after copying it.

Soon as I received the book I took a copy of it. I also made an index to it (as it was not indexed) and put the necessary marks on the margin.

Then I had a translation made of it and of the Index.

This book, as I have already stated treats on the events in the Sudan from the rise of the Mahdi up to the invasion of Egypt By Wad En Nejumi. (1881:1889)

It treats on all events and conquests which took place in all parts of the Sudan; some events are fully explained, others are only mentioned without much explanation; The conquest of Bahr El Ghazal is only mentioned once in an indirect way; it occurs in the Mahdi's letter to Gordon.

All that is said in the book on the events of the Eastern Sudan and Osman Digna is taken from Osman Digna's manuscripts book which we found in the Beit El Mal of Tokar after the conquest of that country and which you inserted in your book of Mahdism,

The Mahdi's letter to the Senussi is not mentioned.

Nor any mention is made of any failure or disappointment on the part of the dervishes: or if

the author was obliged to mention an event of that sort he would try to prove that it is not a failure or that it was the Will of God that it should be so far some reason.

6 There is no mention made of Khalifa Sherif and a very little mention is made of Khalifa / Wad Helu, but neither of them is mentioned with praise - The Mahdi, the Khalifa and the Emirs who are loyal to, and favoured by, the Khalifa are the only persons mentioned with honor and praise.

In fact the whole book is made to suit the Vanity of Khalifa Abdulla who is represented in it as the most holy, pious, generous and just man.

The events are elequently and accuratly described, it is true, and the author seems to have taken much pains to arrive at the real truth of the events but he (the author) in many instances sacrifices the truth in order to please the vanity of his master who is represented as a real Khalifa of a real Mahdi - and the book, from this point of view is indeed quite misleading to a common reader,

Therefore, by his banishment to Bahr El Jebel, Sheikh Ismail has received but a just and right punishment; and by the burning of Sheikh Ismail's book, the Khalifa had done, though unpurposely, the 1st right and just act - One copy of this book in our hand is enough to make the necessary and right use of Sheikh Ismail's three years work.

The translation of the book (2 Vol.) and of the Index which I made to it, is enclosed herewith with the Original.

I have the honor to remain  
Sir,  
your most obedient servant  
| signed | N | ? | Shoucair  
Sudan Section

20,0.  
29.6.95.

Na'um Shuqayr, Ta'rīkh al-Sūdān al-qadīm wa'l-ḥadīth wa-juḡhrafīyyatuhu, Cairo, |1903|, pp. 559-60.

- ٥٥٩ -

لكم بهية حيوة وجاهدوا في سبيل الحرية والاستقلال فحيوة الخيوان ارقى من حياة  
تقضى بالذل والهوان. وقولوا للمفعل الجبان علي ود حلوا انه لن يرى الخلاقة في  
عينه لان التعايشي يرشح ابنه للملك بعده واخبروه اني لم اقتل مراعاة لتقامه  
أو اكراما لشانه بل قتلت لاني بطل كزار وفارس مغوار ولات التعايشي يرهب  
نمائي ويخاف على نفسه مني ومن امثالي ه ثم لما أدنوه من المشقة عظم عليه القتل  
شقا فالتفت الى القارة وقال أمن المروءة ايها اللثام ان تقتلوا فارس السودان قتل  
من جبان أليس ينكم فارس ينازلي في هذا الميدان فاشني غلبي بقتله لو اموت  
مئة الفرسان ه ثم اصعد على كرسي المشقة فاتوه بالماء ليشرب فرفض الماء باحتقار وقال  
انما يشرب في هذا الموقف الجبان ه ثم التفت الى الناس وقال : من لم ير شجاعا  
يقتل فيلنظر الي وياليتني اقتل وانا على ظهر جوادي اجاهد القارة الاندالي في  
الدفاع عن الحرية والاستقلال ه ثم تنفس الصعداء وقال : افارق الحيوة بهذه النقصه  
فاعتبروا بصيري وخذوا ان كتتم رجالا بثاري ه ثم رفس الكرسي برجله فتعلق  
جسمه في الهواء واسلم الروح ه وكان ذلك ضحوة الثلاثاء في ١٠ صفر سنة ١٣٠٩ ه

عن نبي اسماعيل عبد القادر الى الرجا في سنة ١٨٩٣ م

تقدم لنا ذكر اسماعيل عبد القادر مرارا بلا تعريف فهو ابن اخت السيد احمد  
الولي الكردوفاني المشهور وقد قضى في الازهر مع خاله ٨ سنين فاشتهر بالعبادة والذكاء  
ثم عاد الى الايض فخدم فيها مفتيا للمديرية الى ان كانت المهديه وتقى المهدي الى  
كابا مهاجما الايض فخرج اليه مسلما في من خرج من اهلها كما مر فصحب المهدي  
ان توفي فصحب خليفته التعايشي الذي عهد اليه تأليف سيرة المهدي وما  
كان في المهديه من الوقائع والفتوحات لتكون شاهدة بفضل المهديه ومؤيدة للملك  
خليفته في السودان فشر عن مساعد الجد وكتب الى جميع العمال في الجهات فارسلوا  
اليه التقارير الوافية عما جرى على يدهم من الوقائع والفتوحات وجمع اليه من كان في  
ام درمان من القواد والمخارين فالف سيرة نفيسة ضمها وقائع المهديه منذ قيام  
المهدي الى ما قبل واقعة طوشكي أي منذ رمضان سنة ١٢٩٨ الى ٣ ربيع الاول سنة

- ٥٦٠ -

١٣٠٦ هـ وقد قضى في تأليفها بضعة عشر شهراً وتحرمى فيها الحقيقة ما أمكن ولكنه  
 طلاها بطلاء كثيف من الاطراء والتلق للهدى وخليفته واضطر الى ذكر كثير من  
 الكرامات والخوارق المنسوبة اليهما مما لم يكن في اعتقاده فسر بها الخليفة سروراً  
 عظيماً وأمر النسخ فسخوا منها عدة نسخ وزعها على الامراء وعلت منزلة اسماعيل  
 عبدالقادر ونفذت كلمته فخذت القاضى احمد وسلط عليه بعض اخصائه فسعوا به  
 عند الخليفة فشهد بعضهم انه سمعه يقول : كيف يطاق ان تسلم امور الرعية كلها الى  
 رجل جاهل غشوم مثل عبد الله التعايشي ، وشهد آخر عليه انه قال : اني والخليفة  
 كاسماعيل باشا المقتس مع اسماعيل باشا الخديوي وقال آخر انه ملا السيرة مقامز  
 تحط من شأن المهدي وتدل على انكاره اياها ففعلت هذه الوشايات في رأس الخليفة  
 فمل النار بالهشيم فنتى اسماعيل عبدالقادر الى الرجاف وارسله مع زقل في وابور واحد  
 سنة ١٨٩٣ وامر ان تحرق سيرته اينما وجدت فأحرقت كلها الا نسخة منها خباها احد  
 كتاب الخليفة حرصاً على حقايقها . وقد بلغني خبرها وانا في قلم المخابرات في مصر  
 اتحرى وقائع الثورة من الضباط والمساكر الذي نجوا من الاسر فبحثت عنها مستعيناً  
 بالتجار الذين يترددون الى السودان حتى ظفرت بها فاذا هي مع كثرة ما فيها من الاطراء  
 والتلق للهدى وخليفته قد ضمننت الحقيقة احسن تضمين وانطبقت حقايقها على ما تحررت  
 جمعه في مصر فزدت به ثقة واستشهدت بالسيرة في . واضع كثيرة من التاريخ . اما المؤلف  
 فانه بقي في الرجاف في اشد العناء والضيق حتى مات اوائل سنة ١٨٩٧ . وقيل ان  
 مرعياً اختطفه وهو ملقى على سريره لا يستطيع حراكاً من شدة الجوع رحمة الله عليه

رحم الله علي قاضي الاسلام وموته في السجن في يونيو سنة ١٨٩٤

اول من سمي قاضي الاسلام في المهدي احمد ود جبارة قتل في واقعة الايض  
 كما مر وتولى القضاء بعده ود حلاب احد فقهاء النيل الايض فمات في حصار الايض  
 فخلفه القاضي احمد علي من فقهاء بني هلبة فلم يكن له في زمن المهدي شأن يذكر  
 لان المهدي اقام النواب للفصل في القضايا الشرعية ثم اقام الامناء للنظر في القضايا  
 السياسية كما رأيت فلما مات المهدي واستبد التعايشي عزل الامناء ثم النواب وجعل

## Sample of handwriting A

ضربكم كل واحد منكم علي حسب طاقه وراحه  
 التي تلزمه وترشيدكم وتذكيركم بالله  
 وبأمر الله وبإيمانه من يريد الهجرة منكم  
 التنا يوطئه الاذن بذلك فان امركم  
 علي حسب ما حكمتم بجزايتكم وترغيبون  
 الاشداء في سلك انصار دين الله  
 والانا بوجه الله والافداء عما  
 مضى فيما بيننا وبينكم الا المحب  
 الخالصه لوجهه تعالى ولكن اول وصول  
 هذا الخطاب اليكم سارعوا الي الخروج  
 لمقايده الجماعة المندوبين من طرفنا  
 واطلبوا اماننا منهم وسلموهم كما ورد  
 الاستفان المبرور ولا يصير منكم  
 اذني تاخير هذا وليكن في علمكم  
 ان هولاء الجماعة المعينين

## Sample of handwriting B

هناك سر اعطيا احكاما بآراءه واتقوا صنته وجعلوا فيه  
 تقويا جندار وصنع اقواه البنادق عليه بالضرب وبنوا فيه طراي  
 للمدافع وحفر واحول مخدقا عينا الي القاية وحفر واحول بمرآة  
 للشرب منها حذر من حملوا الاصاب بينهم وبين البحر اذا نزلوا  
 بساحتهم وقد وقع ذلك كما تذكره ترويات شاء الله وشهدني السيد  
 المذكور بالعساكي والآلات الحربية والحاكومات وغير ذلك فلم يبق  
 نزل المهدي عليه السلام بالحمل المدعوي بسعد المذكور امر به من  
 الاحباب اهل الحرم والاقدام محاسن اهل الخندق المذكور الى ان  
 ينظروا في سلك اصحاب المهدي عليه السلام او يعنى الله فيهم امر  
 فاستعد الاحباب الذين امرهم المهدي عليه السلام بذلك وقصدوا  
 اهل الخندق المذكورين وحاربوا من الخندق المذكور اطلق الترك  
 عليهم المدافع واعطوا عليهم من الرصاص ما يكاد يسير السحس  
 وهم ساثرون يدون جبالا والرصاص يقدر فيهم الا فاعمال  
 العجيبة التي ان خلفوا الخندق المذكور وباه ظهورهم ونزلوا بشباب  
 البحر الابيض وحاربوا اهل الخندق المذكور وبين البحر الابيض  
 فاقاموا هناك وعلو بهم طراي وجعلوا عليها المدافع ونزلوا  
 في محاربة اعداء الله ودار الحرب بينهم ايا ما حشوا به تترى بان  
 شرو وشده واعلهم الي القاية وفي جميع تلك الحروب يقتلون و  
 يقتلون ولكن القتل في الاعداء اكثر من اعيان باسطوا قرب  
 كارب ما حصل في حصار الخندق ام درجان المذكور وذلك لان

## APPENDIX C

List of proclamations and letters transcribed in the  
Sīra

- (a) The Mahdi's vision of investiture, proof of his mahdship, and a call for the hijra (MS., 38/15-43/5. Transcribed again in MS., 374/15-379/19).
- (b) The Mahdi's letter to the hukumdāriyya, dated 1298/1881 (MS., 59/17-60/19).
- (c) The Mahdi's letter to Yūsuf Ḥasan al-Shallālī, dated 4 Rajab 1299/22 May 1882 (MS., 111/17-119/11).
- (d) The Mahdi's reply to the offer of capitulation by Muḥammad Sa'īd Wahbī's men, dated 6 Rabī' I 1300/15 January 1883 (MS., 185/8-186/5).
- (e) The Mahdi's proclamation to Hicks's expeditionary force, dated 19 Dhū al-Ḥijja 1300/21 October 1883 (MS., 195/13-196/18).
- (f) The Mahdi's letter to the people of |the Gezira, near| Khartoum, from al-Birka, after Hicks's defeat |November 1883 ?| (MS., 209/11-211/17).
- (g) The Mahdi's letter to Gordon, from El Obeid, dated 7 Jumādā I 1301/5 March 1884 (MS., 212/17-222/18).
- (h) The Mahdi's letter to the people of Kasala, dated 3 Sha'bān 1302/18 May 1885 (MS., 273/1-278/8).
- (i) The Mahdi's reply to al-Nujūmī and Abū 'Anja's letter about Jabal al-Dāyir, dated 18 Sha'bān 1301/13 June 1884 (MS., 310/2-16).

- (j) The Mahdi's proclamation to the soldiers in Omdurman, during the siege, dated Muḥarram 1302/November 1884  
(MS., 340/16-342/6).
- (k) The Mahdi's proclamation about obeying the Khalifa  
(MS., 380/3-384/2).
- (l) The Mahdi's proclamation about the booty (ghanā'im)  
(MS., 384/3-385/8).
- (m) The Mahdi's 'last proclamation', before Ramaḍān, dated end of Sha'bān 1302/June 1885  
(MS., 385/12-387/2).
- (n) A long excerpt from a proclamation by the Khalifa on the Mahdi's mahdship and conquests  
(MS., 142/11-144/2).

Note:For details and variants see Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Abū Salīm, al-Murshīd ilā wathā'iq al-Mahdī, Dār al-Wathā'iq al-Markaziyya, |Khartoum|, 1969. (As this work became available after the thesis had been typed, I have not been able to utilize it for the summary ). It should be noted that M.I Abū Salīm does not mention the Sīra in his list of sources.

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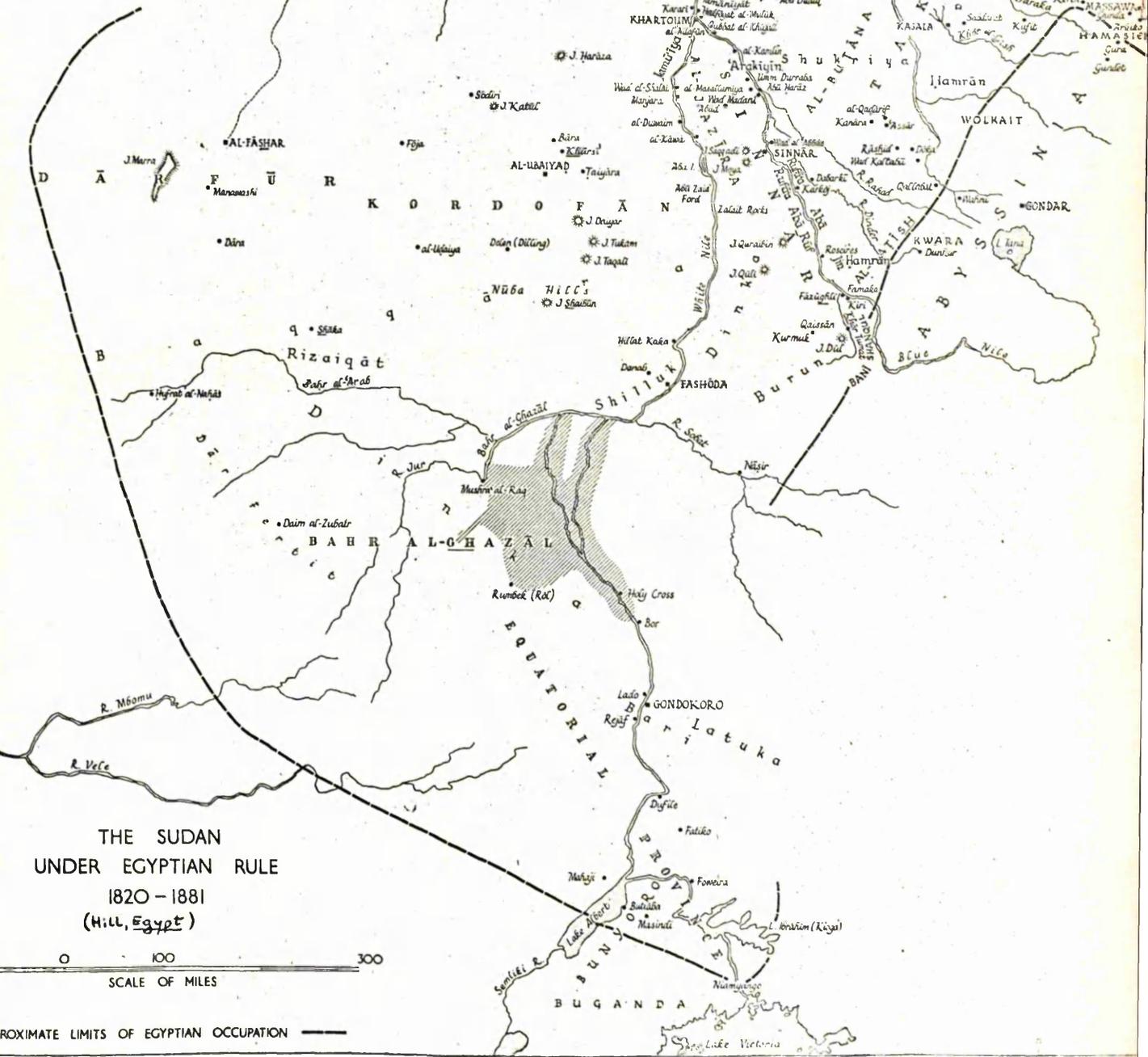
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