



## Arabic Documents of Northern Nigeria

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# ARABIC DOCUMENTS OF NORTHERN NIGERIA <sup>1</sup>

By A. D. H. BIVAR

(PLATES I-IV)

## INTRODUCTION

THE present article is based on photographs of nineteenth-century Arabic official letters, made by the author while carrying out conservation work on manuscript material for the Nigerian Department of Antiquities at the Northern Nigerian centres of Sokoto and Bauchi. Thanks to conscientious local custody, and the moisture-free atmosphere which these districts enjoy for most of the year, the greater number of these papers were still in remarkably good condition. At the same time, progressive embrittlement of the fibres was making direct handling of the sheets undesirable, and some protection was felt necessary. The custodians of these collections had therefore been in touch with the Department of Antiquities, and it was decided as a first step to mount the most delicate and valuable specimens between sheets of glass, to be sealed at the edges with passe-partout and enclosed in light wooden frames.<sup>2</sup> Since photography was likely to be more difficult after the completion of this work, the documents selected for treatment were first recorded upon 35 mm. film.

This occasion was not, of course, the first on which the historical importance of Nigeria's Arabic records has been recognized. As long ago as 1927, translations of selected Arabic documents of the Sultanate of Sokoto were published by Mr. H. F. Backwell in his work *The occupation of Hausaland*.<sup>3</sup> The interest here was chiefly centred upon the subject matter, and the book does not contain any discussion of the original Arabic terminology, nor, in the absence of facsimile reproductions—barely possible in the Nigeria of 1927—of the appearance of the documents, the arrangement of the authenticating seals, or the relation of this material to the body of Islamic chancery documents. Moreover, the selection had been made with the special purpose of illustrating the events which led up to the British occupation of the Nigerian Emirates. There is consequently little overlapping with the present study, which concentrates upon the older material illustrative of relations between the Muslim powers of the area.

A photographic reproduction of a single letter of one of the Saharan Emirs had indeed been used by Sir Richmond Palmer in his work *Bornu Sahara and*

<sup>1</sup> The writer owes much to Dr. S. M. Stern for help with points of reading and interpretation, and for verifying transcripts of the Arabic texts. Malam Haliru Binji of Zaria has provided many essential introductions, and contributed several valuable suggestions to the translation. Malam Audu Mahmud Bauchi, of the Nigerian Antiquities Department, and Malam Abubakar Katsina, of Jos, both rendered much patient assistance in the initial examination and selection of documents, and the study of the present texts.

<sup>2</sup> It is hoped eventually to replace the glass by sheets of unplasticized Perspex, when this material can be obtained. This would not only give better protection against accidental breakage, but also reduce any risk of condensation.

<sup>3</sup> Lagos, Government Printer, 1927.

*Sudan*.<sup>1</sup> The first application of this indispensable method to the Sokoto material is, however, due to the Waziri of Sokoto, Malam Junaidu, who reproduces in his book entitled *Tarihin Fulani* ('The history of the Fulanis')<sup>2</sup> several documents which throw light on relations between Sokoto and Bornu in the nineteenth century. The present writer is happy to record his thanks to the Sultan of Sokoto, Sir Abubakar b. 'Uthmān, G.B.E., C.M.G., and to his Waziri for their ready assistance with the arrangements for the work here described, and for advice and encouragement in regard to the many questions of Arabic scholarship and Nigerian history which arose out of it.

Apart from the Nigerian examples here mentioned, few specimens of Arabic chancery correspondence from the Sudanese zone are available in published facsimile. Yet it is clear that at certain periods written Arabic was extensively used in Inner Africa. From the Nile Valley, royal grants of certain later Fung rulers of Sennar were recently published with facsimiles by Mr. Sadik Nur.<sup>3</sup> Unlike the Nigerian material, these documents employ a phraseology strongly suggesting Mamluk influence. They are headed by seals which display *naskhi* calligraphy reminiscent of Persia,<sup>4</sup> and the script of the text is an orthodox Eastern *naskhi*. From further west in the 'Sudan', no facsimile reproductions are known to the writer, but certain documents are available in transcription. These include the text preserved by al-Qalqashandi<sup>5</sup> of a letter from the Sultan of Bornu, Abu 'Amr 'Uthmān bin Idris, received in 794/1391-2 by the Mamluk Sultan Barqūq, and the earliest attested example of Sudanese correspondence; the written order of the Songhai Sultan al-Hājī Muḥammad Askia quoted in the *Tarikh al-fettach*<sup>6</sup>; while nearer in date to the subject matter of the present article is the famous correspondence between Muḥammad al-Amīn of Bornu (A.D. 1812-35) and Muḥammad Bello of Sokoto (A.D. 1817-37), quoted by the latter in his history *Infāq al-maisūr*.<sup>7</sup> The possibility of there existing or

<sup>1</sup> London, 1936; plate VIII, facing p. 62, with a translation at p. 69. It should perhaps be noticed here that none of the 'Bornu Mahrams' edited by Sir Richmond Palmer in the work under reference has the appearance of being an original document, even the interesting 'Mahram "M"': and that in particular none seems to bear an official seal, though several have the appearance of being correct copies of early originals.

<sup>2</sup> In Hausa. Published by the North Regional Literature Agency, Zaria, Northern Nigeria, 1956. The writer greatly regrets that his insufficient acquaintance with the Hausa language has prevented his deriving full benefit from this work.

<sup>3</sup> 'Land tenure during the time of the Fung', *Kush*, iv, 1956, 48 ff.

<sup>4</sup> The Persian aspect of certain Fung calligraphy will be further discussed at a later date; Eastern styles seem to have become fashionable in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Egypt, and may have reached the Nilotic Sudan in this way.

<sup>5</sup> viii, 116: 'And it was on a square sheet of paper, each line being close to the next (*al-satru ilā jānibi 'l-satři*), in Maghribi writing, and there was no margin either at the top, or at the side; the text was concluded on the reverse, starting from the foot of the page'.

<sup>6</sup> Mahmūd Kāti, *Tarikh al-fettach* (ed. Houdas and Delafosse, Paris, 1913), translation, p. 139.

<sup>7</sup> Ed. C. E. J. Whitting, London, 1951, 124-66. This work will henceforth be quoted as 'Whitting'. Also important for the study of this material is E. J. Arnett, *The rise of the Sokoto Fulani*, Kano, 1922, 102-20, which will be quoted as 'Arnett', and which provides a paraphrase of the *Infāq* which is most valuable, especially since Whitting's edition has no systematic division into chapters, and is far from easy to use.

having existed in the Western Sudan earlier Arabic correspondence of the Murabit, Malli, and Songhai dynasties thus provides a fertile topic for investigation, though it must be admitted that the Arabic correspondence of the Muslim dynasties of the Maghrib is far more readily available for study than is that of the Sudan.<sup>1</sup>

The official library at Sokoto contains a total of about 400 nineteenth-century documents in Arabic, and include extensive files of dispatches concerned with the affairs of the Emirates of Kano, Zaria, Misau, Katagum, and Adamawa, together with smaller groups of papers relating to Bauchi, Zamfara, Gobir, Katsina, Kontagora, and elsewhere. There were also letters from certain foreign powers, and semi-official or personal letters addressed to the former Waziri, Muḥammad al-Bukhārī, to whom the preservation of the archives seems in a large measure due.<sup>2</sup> There are also a number of letters from Sultans of Sokoto. Forty-two of these documents have so far been protected by framing in the manner described.

The Bauchi collection of early letters is small by comparison. Here only seven documents were submitted to the writer for photography and conservation, but in addition to these a number were previously microfilmed by the University College Library at Ibadan.<sup>3</sup> Yet this small collection contains one specimen remarkable amongst the documents so far reported equally for its historical content, its early date, and the prestige of its writer, no less a personage than Muḥammad Bello, Sultan of Sokoto (A.D. 1817–37). The writer is greatly obliged to the Emir of Bauchi for having afforded this opportunity to study so exceptional a document, together with the other papers from his collection. There can be no doubt that similar collections of Arabic documents, each with its individual points of interest, exist or have once existed in all the principal Nigerian Emirates, and perhaps also in the establishments of District Heads and private persons in many parts of the country. It is to be hoped that in course of time the documentary record may be carried back by further research, beyond the decade of the 1820s which forms the upper limit of the material under examination here. The present selection will be confined to three main classes of documents :

- (a) correspondence of the Kānemi Shaikhs (Shehus) of Bornu, and tributary states ;
- (b) correspondence of the Fulani Sultanate of Sokoto ;

<sup>1</sup> E. Tisserant and G. Wiet, 'Une lettre de l'Almohade Murtaḍ'ā au pape Innocent IV', *Hesperis*, vi, 1926, 27–53 ; M. A. Alarcon y Santon and R. Garcia de Linares, *Los documentos árabes diplomáticos del Archivo de la Corona de Aragón*, Madrid, 1940 ; E. Lévi-Provençal, 'Un recueil de lettres officielles almohades', *Hesperis*, xxviii, 1941, 1 ; M. Nehlil, *Lettres chérifiennes*, Paris, 1915.

<sup>2</sup> Some account of the Waziri al-Bukhārī will be found in *The occupation of Hausaland*, preface (see p. 324, n. 3). He is said by Arnett, *Sokoto gazetteer*, p. 9, to be the author of an historical work entitled *Ta'nīs al-ikhwān*.

<sup>3</sup> W. E. N. Kensdale, *A catalogue of the Arabic manuscripts preserved in the University Library, Ibadan, Nigeria*, Ibadan, 1955–8, pp. 19–20, and especially nos. 18, 19, and 20, which may be original copies of the author's time, and possibly autographs.

(c) correspondence of foreign, i.e. non-Nigerian, powers, including that relating to the Sudanese Mahdiya. (It is proposed to discuss the documents relating to the Mahdiya separately at a later date.)

The much more voluminous correspondence of the Fulani Emirates tributary to Sokoto must, for reasons of space, be excluded from the present study.

#### THE FORM OF THE DOCUMENTS

The documents under examination here are written exclusively in Arabic, apart from a very restricted use of vernacular proper names and technical terms. So far there is not one recorded in Hausa or any other vernacular idiom. With the single exception of a lithograph (not discussed here), all are hand-written on paper sheets of moderate size, 9 in. × 6 in. or 13 in. × 8½ in. being the most popular. The paper is a somewhat rough, hand-made paper, commonly watermarked with vertical rulings, or a design in the form of three crescents,<sup>1</sup> or three top hats. None of the documents bears a written signature, a date, or a statement of the place of origin. In the last two respects, therefore, the practice differs from that usual in other parts of the Islamic world. The nearest approach to an explicit date is provided by the dated seals of the Kānemi rulers of Bornu.<sup>2</sup>

The use of seals in Nigeria was originally confined to the rulers of paramount states, or states with a tradition of former paramountcy. Such seals, which are used to apply an ink impression, as in other Muslim countries, are therefore found upon documents issued by the Sultans of Sokoto and Bornu, and the rulers of Katsina, Gobir, and Agades, besides certain claimants to paramount status in other places. There are no seals on the letters of other Emirs tributary to Sokoto (with the possible exception of the Emirs of Gwandu, whose correspondence still awaits investigation); nor on letters issued by the Waziris of Sokoto in their own names, even when sent out through the official chancery. For dispatch, the letters appear to have been merely folded in four, and the address written on the outside, the formula, e.g. [يعقوب بن داد] بيد امير بوش being almost invariable. No envelopes or wax seals were used, and if there was any device to prevent the unauthorized inspection of the letters in transit, I have not been able to discover it.

Each of the letters under examination begins with a religious invocation, usually commencing with the *bismillah*. It will be noticed that in certain cases a particular formula is shared by members of the same dynasty (e.g. the Kānemis), and in others it is varied from reign to reign (as with the Sultans of Sokoto). I am inclined to deduce that these invocations correspond to the well-known 'alāma of the North African chanceries,<sup>3</sup> and served to designate

<sup>1</sup> This watermark is mentioned by M. Hiskett, 'Material relating to the state of learning among the Fulani before their Jihād', *BSOAS*, xix, 3, 1957, 550; cf. E. Heawood, *Watermarks*, I, no. 870 ff. (Venice c. 1725); Labarre, *Dictionary and encyclopaedia of paper and papermaking*, p. 342, figs. 48 and 130.

<sup>2</sup> See below, p. 329.

<sup>3</sup> *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new edition, s.v. 'alāma.

the writer of the letter, the more so since in the case of Sokoto the name of the Sultan is not written in the text, and the impressions of the seals are frequently illegible. In more recent times, these opening invocations have tended to become stereotyped and conventional; this may explain why I have not been able to obtain confirmation of my hypothesis from local scholars of Arabic. These invocations are discussed in detail below.

As far as the script of the letters is concerned, this presents a considerable variety of forms, especially in the Fulani Emirates, and will be discussed further under the several sections below. It must be noted here, however, that the pointing of all letters of Nigerian origin, whether from the Sokoto or Bornu sphere, is uniformly Maghribi, the letter-forms **ف** (*fā*), **ق** (*qāf*), **ل** (joined *alif*), **ا** (initial lengthened *alif*), **د** (*dāl*, with hooked lower portion), **ص** (*ṣād*, without final tooth) being especially noticeable. This Maghribi origin is a feature of some significance if we come to consider the diffusion of the tradition of Arabic scholarship prevailing in Nigeria, and which seems, until recent times, to have had a strong Maghribi orientation.

#### CORRESPONDENCE OF THE KĀNEMI RULERS OF BORNU

It comes as a pleasant surprise to discover that the Sokoto archives contain a fragmentary letter from the chancery of the first of the Kānemi dynasty, the redoubtable Muḥammad al-Amīn (A.D. 1812–35). The most striking feature of this elegant document is the form of script employed, which is one closely related to the ancient Kufic. Subsequent letters of the Kānemis, as we shall see, employ an obviously similar script, which we may regard as the standard official writing of Bornu in the nineteenth century. The letters are fully pointed (in the Maghribi manner) and where necessary vowelled. It is not easy to find close analogies for so archaic a handwriting amongst the better-known schools of Arabic calligraphy. The closest are no doubt to be found amongst the varieties of the Maghribi script examined long ago by O. Houdas, in an article which is still perhaps the most complete treatment of the subject.<sup>1</sup> Of the four varieties which are there defined, the scripts of Kayrawān, Andalusia, Fez, and Timbuktu, it is the first and most archaic, that of Kayrawān, which bears the most obvious resemblance to the Bornu court hand as illustrated here. It is not easy to see through what channels the script of Kayrawān could have been transmitted, after a degree of modernization, to Bornu. The fuller investigation of the script of Timbuktu, especially in its earlier stages, is likely to clarify the problem, and reveal the links, passing back, perhaps, through the Empire of Malli and the Murabit period in the Western Sudan, which connect the 'Kuficizing' and angular writing to Timbuktu with that of Kayrawān, in marked contrast to the more

<sup>1</sup> 'Essai sur l'écriture magrebine', *Publications de l'École des Langues Orientales Vivantes*, Paris, 1886, 85–115.

الحمد لله والصلاة والسلام على رسول الله



مر عبد الله تغلر محمد الامير محمد الكائن  
المرامير فوفيه وما كرا من القاسم مقام الولد البار الطابع والتائب  
مناب العبد المقيده انما وقع الامير محمد امير تقوما صاحب تقبيل السلام  
النام ورحمت الله تغلر وبكاته اما بعد فانك ذكرت لنا انك اخذت  
لنا نصيبا من الغنيمة التي غنمتها من بلاد كاجك : المر غير ذلك  
مما اخذت من لنا ونسيت : له الارها وهو الفادى عليك حاكم كاتنا  
هذه انفسا رايك ابن عمنا  
نصر الوفيو والنص

flowing, slender, and 'modern' scripts of Andalusia and Fez.<sup>1</sup> The systematic examination of the many old copies of the Qur'ān preserved in Nigeria and French West Africa will also be illuminating; for the time being it can only be said that the late survival of 'Kuficizing' script in Bornu is still to be explained.<sup>2</sup>

So far as the seals of the Bornu rulers are concerned, these present no comparably archaic traits. The use of a black ink seal at the head of a royal document would seem to reflect the practice of the Sharifian Sultanates in Morocco.<sup>3</sup> It is a further indication of the Moroccan connexions of the engravers of these seals that their pointing is also of the Maghribi type; even more cogent is the fact that on the seal of Muḥammad al-Amīn the Arabic figure 'eight' has a form similar to that of the European cipher ('eight'), a feature found in no other part of the Arab world except Morocco. The octagonal shape of the seal, however, seems not to be paralleled in the chanceries of the Maghrib, and the only analogy which I can find is the considerably later seal of the Sudanese Mahdi.

## I

*From Muḥammad al-Amīn b. Muḥammad al-Kānemi, Sultan of Bornu (A.D. 1812-35) to Muḥammad b. Tanoma—better known in the Hausa form, Muḥammad Dan Tanoma—Emir of Gumel (A.D. 1825-43): a fragment, probably the half, measuring 9 in. × 6 in.; watermark, vertical rulings at one inch intervals. Sokoto archive. Plate I.*

(a) Text:

الحمد لله والصلاة والسلام على رسول الله

[SEAL]

من عبد الله تعالى محمد الأمين بن محمد الكانمي

(2) إلى أمير قومه ومالك أرضه القائم مقام الولد البار الطابع والنائب (3) مناب العبد المفيد النافع لأمير محمد ابن تنوما صاحب تمبى السلام (4) التام ورحمت الله تعالى وبركاته.

أما بعد فانك ذكرت لنا انك اخرجت (5) لنا نصيبا من الغنيمة التي غنمها من

<sup>1</sup> Since a great number of fine examples of the 'Andalusian' script were in fact written at Fez, confusion of terminology needs to be avoided.

<sup>2</sup> It may be noticed that the angular Nigerian book-hands of the nineteenth-twentieth centuries, to which the name of *Ajami* is applied by Hiskett (*BSOAS*, xix, 3, 1957, 550), seem to derive from the Bornu script.

<sup>3</sup> The earliest mark of authentication in the Maghrib appears to have been the calligraphic '*alāma*', and the use of such formulae as *وَكُتِبَ فِي التَّارِيخِ* or *صَحَّ ذَلِكَ*. States of Turkish origin have all used the *tughrā*. The Persian Safavids used an ink seal at the head, but this seal was flame-shaped on formal documents. Other dynasties employing seals generally placed them below the text.



بلد كَاجَكُولِي . . . الى غير ذلك (6) مما اخرجتة لنا ونسيت عده الان وهاهو  
 القادم عليك حامل كتابنا (7) هذا انسان بابك<sup>1</sup> ابني عمر اصلحه الله فادخل  
 بيده نصف ما حصل من (8) ثمن الرقيق . . . والنصف الثاني] ادخله بيد . . .

.....

(b) Seal :

ما شاء الله كفى  
 بالله ثقة لعبده محمد  
 الامين بن  
 محمد الكانمي  
 عام ١٢٣٨

What Allah wills. Allah  
 sufficeth. Confidence in his servant Muḥammad  
 al-Amīn bin  
 Muḥammad al-Kānemi  
 Year 1238

(= A.D. 1822)

(c) Translation :

Praise be to Allah, and prayer and peace for the prophet of Allah.

[SEAL]

From the servant of Allah the Exalted, Muḥammad al-Amīn bin Muḥammad al-Kānemi / to the prince of his nation and the possessor of his land, the governor of a province, the dutiful son, the obedient, the legate / of a territory, the profitable servant, the beneficent, the Emir Muḥammad bin Tanoma, Lord of Tumbi, perfect peace / and the mercy of Allah the Exalted and his blessings.

After this, inasmuch as you have explained to us that you have remitted / to us a portion of the booty which you obtained from the town of Kājakuli ; and apart from that / that you have forgotten the total of what you have remitted to us. Now the man who is coming to you carrying this letter of ours / is a member of your household, my son 'Umar—Allah grant him health. Put into his hand a half of what is realized from / the price of the slaves ; and put the other half into the hand of . . .

(d) Commentary :

The small state of Gumel is situated in the north-east of Kano Province, but throughout the nineteenth century it was tributary to Bornu. Dan Tanoma (to quote his name in its Hausa form) was one of its most distinguished rulers,

<sup>1</sup> I translate as the Arabic بَابِكَ 'your Gate', 'your court', but it is possible that we have here some vernacular word, or literal rendering of a vernacular expression.

and was appointed to the Emirate by Muḥammad al-Amīn after the latter's execution of Dan Hawa, the brother of Dan Tanoma, on suspicion of treachery. The capital of the Emirate was then the town of Tumbi, where Dan Tanoma spent the first nine years of his reign.<sup>1</sup> Since the use of this place-name in the title of the Emirs seems to have persisted through archaism long after the transfer of the headquarters to Gumel, it is dangerous to rely on its occurrence in the present text as evidence that this must necessarily date from the period of Dan Tanoma's residence at Tumbi. Yet the probability does seem to be that this letter falls in the earlier part of the reign of Dan Tanoma, perhaps not long after his installation, and in any event it must be earlier than the death of Muḥammad al-Amīn in A.D. 1835. As might therefore be expected, although Barth<sup>2</sup> describes two visits to the town of Gumel, and has a mention also of Tumbi (which he spells Týmbi), his account does little to elucidate the present text. His earlier visit fell at the very end of the reign of Dan Tanoma, while the document which we are now considering must refer to considerably earlier events. Neither have I been successful in identifying the site of Kājakuli although one may deduce from the context that it lay in the general vicinity of Tumbi.<sup>3</sup>

Since the letter is not, of course, addressed to Sokoto, its survival there is a matter of some curiosity. One can only suppose that it was intercepted by a Fulani supporter in the course of transmission, or after the death of Dan Tanoma at Gumel in 1850, during the subsequent vicissitudes of the town. It is, indeed, not improbable that as examination of the Sokoto archives proceeds a covering letter may come to light from one of the Fulani chieftains of this border area, explaining how the document fell into his hands, and the reason for its transmission to the *Sarkin Musulmi*.<sup>4</sup>

Without doubt, however, the chief interest of this document lies in its remarkable form. The opening invocation, which does not include the *bismillah*, is precisely, and the formula of greeting, substantially, similar to those found in two of the three dispatches of Muḥammad al-Amīn quoted in the *Infāq al-maisūr* of Muḥammad Bello, ed. Whitting, viz. p. 162 (= Arnett, p. 114) and p. 164 (= Arnett, p. 115). The earlier example, Whitting, p. 124 (= Arnett, p. 102), though a more elaborate composition, is markedly analogous. The chancery tradition was no doubt firmly established in Bornu. Not only do these opening formulae substantially reflect the usage of the medieval Islamic chanceries,<sup>5</sup> but the physical appearance of the document attests a

<sup>1</sup> W. F. Gowers, *Gazetteer of Kano Province*, p. 25. The site of Tumbi is now included in the French-administered Territoire du Niger.

<sup>2</sup> II, 165; v, 374; Tumbi, v, 376.

<sup>3</sup> For this reason we can probably exclude any connexion with the town of Kakali or Kakala, mentioned by Barth, III, 193 ff., as a venue of slave-raids. Kakali was situated south of Dikwa, in the territory of the Musgus, and presumably far from Dan Tanoma's sphere.

<sup>4</sup> *Sarkin Musulmi* is the usual Hausa designation of the Sultans of Sokoto, corresponding to the Arabic usage of *amīru 'l-mu'minīn*.

<sup>5</sup> Whitting, p. 157 (= Arnett, p. 112), *وهاهو مرسولى آلتخ*. Presumably these words are quoted from the Kānemi dispatch, though the division of the text is not clear in Whitting's edition.

hitherto unsuspected uniformity of the Bornu scribal tradition over a period of some 60 years. This standard format and script may well have been inherited from the preceding administration of the Mais of Bornu, and extend back to an antiquity which has still to be determined. It is also interesting to notice that the phrase هاهو القادم عليك of line 6 closely echoes another quoted by Muḥammad Bello from a dispatch of Muḥammad al-Amīn in his *Infāq al-maisūr*<sup>1</sup>; it was no doubt typical of Bornu chancery phraseology.

## II

*From 'Umar b. Muḥammad al-Amīn, Sultan of Bornu (A.D. 1835-53, 1854-80) to Mu'āzz b. Muḥammad Bello, Sultan of Sokoto (A.D. 1877-81): a folded sheet, measuring 12½ in. × 8½ in. when opened, and with writing upon only one of the four sides; watermark, vertical rulings at one-inch intervals, together with a design of three top hats. Sokoto archive. Plate IIa.*

(a) Text:

الحمد لله والصلاة والسلام على رسول الله

[SEAL]

من عبد الله تعالى عمر بن محمد الأمين الكانمي

(2) الى حضرة الاجل الافضل... الاغر الاحرم الاكمل... امير (3) قومه... ومالك زمام ارضه... محبنا السلطان معاذ (4) ابن التقى محمد بِلَوِّا المرحوم السلام التام ورحمت (5) الله تعالى وبركاته.

اما بعد، فاذا وصل اليك (6) كتابنا هذا فالذى نعلمك به ان ابننا ابا بكر (7) قد اعلمننا بانقطاع التنازع بينه وبين وزيرك (8) صاحب كَتَاقُمْ في شان الحدود التي بيننا (9) وبينكم فان ثَبَتَ على ما تَوَافَقَا عليه ورضيت (10) به... فقد استقام الامر ورجع السيل الى اصله... (11) ولا يكون من جهتنا ان شاء الله تعالى الا الخير (12) وتاكيد العهد والامانة على الوجه السابق (13) هذا ما اعلمتك به وفقنا الله واياكم على (14) رعاية العهد والميثاق... الى يوم اللقاء والتلاق... (15) بجاه افضل الخلق على الاطلاق... سيدنا محمد (16) عليه صلاة الملك الخلاق... امين... والسلام

(b) Seal:

ما شاء الله كفى

بالله ثقة لعبيده

عمر بن

محمد الأمين الكانمي

عام ١٢٥٣

<sup>1</sup> See n. 5, p. 331.



What Allah wills. Allah  
sufficeth. Confidence in his servant  
‘Umar bin  
Muḥammad al-Amin al-Kānemi  
Year 1253

(= A.D. 1837)

(c) Translation :

Praise be to Allah, and prayer and peace for the prophet of Allah.

[SEAL]

From the servant of Allah the Exalted, ‘Umar bin Muḥammad al-Amin al-Kānemi / to His Most Noble and Gracious Majesty (*hadhrat*); the most powerful, most sacred, most perfect; prince / of his nation; possessor of the authority of his land; our beloved Sultan Mu‘āzz / son of the late Muḥammad Bello the pious, perfect peace, and the mercy / of Allah the Exalted and his blessings.

After this, and if this letter of ours reaches you, / we have to inform you that our son, Abu Bakr, / has notified us of the outbreak of disturbances between him and your Minister, / the Lord of Katāgum, in the matter of the boundaries which exist between / us and you; and if you confirm what the two agreed upon, and if you are satisfied / with it, then the matter is settled, and the torrent has receded to its source. / Now if Allah the Exalted wills, there shall not be from our side anything but good, / and reliance on the treaty, and security upon the former basis. /

This is my message to you, and may Allah assist us, and assist you : /

In observing the treaty and the understanding,

To the Day of Meeting and Encounter, /

By his influence who is unreservedly the best of those created,

Our Master Muḥammad / for whom be the prayer of the Creator Lord.

Amen ! And greetings.

(d) Commentary :

The date of this communication is fixed within certain limits by the short reign of Sultan Mu‘āzzu, 1877–81. It is interesting to note that the same seal had been in use throughout the long reign of Shehu ‘Umaru. The ruler of Katāgum referred to is Muḥammad al-Hājj bin Muḥammad Dankāwa (1868–96), and the episode with which the letter is concerned is a frontier skirmish such as that briefly mentioned by the *Gazetteer*,<sup>1</sup> if not that actual incident. The Shehu’s<sup>2</sup> letter conveys the impression of being a largely formal recognition

<sup>1</sup> W. F. Gowers, *Gazetteer of Kano Province*, London, 1921, 31. The Sokoto archives contain a number of letters from Muḥammad al-Hājj, and it is not unlikely that these, when studied, may give some further information about the incident in question.

<sup>2</sup> Shehu, the form used in Hausa for the Arabic title *shaikh* (شيخ), was a specific title of the Kānemi rulers in Bornu, and that by which they are most generally known to-day. The same title is applied to the Fulani leader Usman Dan Fodio. It is difficult to be entirely consistent in the present context with the use of Arabic and vernacular forms of proper names, but I have tried to retain Arabic forms in transliteration. The question of transliteration is further complicated by the fact that in Nigerian usage the Arabic inflections are pronounced, though in European practice they are commonly not transcribed.

of arrangements already concluded between the leaders on the spot. The closing phrases of the text are rhymed, but suggest spontaneous rhyming prose, rather than a quotation, particularly since the sentiments expressed are of a somewhat commonplace nature.

### III

*From Hāshim bin 'Umar, Sultan of Bornu (A.D. 1885-93) to Abu Bakr bin Muḥammad Dan Tanoma, Emir of Gumel (A.D. 1872-96) : the sheet measures 9 in. × 6½ in. and is watermarked with horizontal rulings ; the centre of the sheet had been patched with modern paper, which has now been removed so as to bring the two halves into closer register. Sokoto archive. Plate IIb.*

(a) Text :

الحمد لله والصلاة والسلام على رسول الله

[SEAL]

من عبد الله تعالى هاشم بن عمر الكانمي

(2) الى الامثل الوجيه الاحرم النبيه السلطان ابى بكر (3) ابن السلطان محمد دانتنومه صاحب مدينة تمبى (4) السلام التام ورحمت الله تعالى وبركاته.

وبعد (5) فاذا وصل اليك كتابنا هذا، فالذى نعلمك به ان (6) السلطان تنيم<sup>1</sup> قد اعلمنا بانك . . . رددت اليه بقراته (7) كاملا مكملا فان كانت عندك بقية منها فارددها (8) اليه على التمام والاكمال ولا تتعرض الى جهته (9) بسوء بعد ذلك واذا كانت بقرات ارضك تسرح (10) الى جهته فاضمم اليها راعيا فان كانت لهم (11) عادة معلومة جارية على الارض فليفعلها لهم (12) الراعى ولا يمنعها وبذا يصلح الامر ومثل هذا (13) الامر امرناه فى كتابنا المبعوث اليه وفق الله (14) الجميع بما فيه الخير والصلاح ءامين.

والسلام

(b) Seal :

ما شاء الله كفى

بالله تعالى عبده

هاشم بن عمر

الكانمي

عام ١٣٠٣

What Allah wills. Allah  
the Exalted sufficeth. His servant

<sup>1</sup> sic legi.

Hāshim bin 'Umar

al-Kānemi

Year 1303

(= A.D. 1886)

## (c) Translation :

Praise be to Allah, and prayer and peace for the prophet of Allah.

[SEAL]

From the servant of Allah the Exalted, Hāshim bin 'Umar al-Kānemi / to the most exemplary, the most respected, the most sacred, the illustrious Sultan Abu Bakr, / son of the Sultan Muḥammad Dan Tanoma, Lord of the city of Tumbi, / perfect peace, and the mercy of Allah the Exalted and his blessings.

Afterwards, / if this letter of ours reaches you, we have to inform you that / the Sultan Tanim<sup>1</sup> has now notified us that you . . . have returned to him his cattle / whole and entire. If you have any of them left, send them back to him completely and entirely, and do not meddle in his direction with malicious intent. Furthermore, if there are any cattle from your territory which are straying / in his direction, send a herdsman with them; and if his people possess / any currently recognized rights over the land, let the herdsman comply with their requirements, / and let him not deny them, and thus may the matter be settled. We have communicated an order similar to this / in the letter which we have sent to him. May Allah accomplish / all as may be most good and right.

Amen, and greetings.

## (d) Commentary :

As nominal overlord both of Gumel and of Damagaram (Zinder), the Sultan of Bornu was in a position to arbitrate in the disputes between the two states. It is doubtful, however, whether he was able to exercise effective jurisdiction at the date of this letter, since the influence of Bornu, especially over Damagaram, had continued to weaken in the later years of the century. Hāshim, of course, was the antagonist of the terrible Rabeh, who a few years later was to fall upon Bornu, and was to destroy the administration of the ancient kingdom. At the date of this letter, however, the blow had not yet fallen, and the Shehu may still have been able to exercise some restraining influence over his western vassals. None the less we may wonder whether the complacent tone of this letter was entirely justified, for the grazing dispute discussed here between the two states was soon to develop into major hostilities which resulted in severe damage to Gumel.<sup>2</sup> If the earlier disputes were so quickly patched up as the

<sup>1</sup> Owing to the break in the paper which comes across this line, the reading is doubtful in one or two places. It seems obvious that the Sultan mentioned must be Tanimu of Damagaram, of whose name there are variant spellings, as there are for other rulers of Damagaram. I am inclined to think that the form used here may be Tanīmī تنيمى which I have not seen in other documents, but which seems a possible variant. The last letter of the word in question here can scarcely be *mīm*, of which, elsewhere on this page, the final stroke is nearly vertical, though it could conceivably be *nūn*. In any event, no other contemporary name seems to fit the requirements as well.

<sup>2</sup> W. F. Gowers, *Gazetteer of Kano Province*, 32.

Shehu seemed to hope, it is evident that they were not long in breaking out afresh.

It is noteworthy that even in these last years of the Bornu chancery at Kukawa, the form of both letters and seals is scarcely changed from the days of Muḥammad al-Amīn. The outlines of the letters are a trifle more slipshod, and there is a small change in the wording of the seal inscription, yet it is the uniformity of layout that makes the strongest impression, and attests a firmly established protocol, with a standardized course of training for the official scribes.

#### CORRESPONDENCE OF THE FULANI SULTANS OF SOKOTO

As might be expected, correspondence of the Sultans of Sokoto themselves forms only a small proportion of the papers preserved at Sokoto. The search for these documents must be carried further afield, to the archives of the persons to whom they would have been addressed, in the main either the rulers of the other Emirates under the suzerainty of Sokoto, or, we need hardly doubt, those of private persons, whether notables or scholars, whose ancestors were in a position to have received communications from the Sultans of Sokoto.

As a first glance at plate III will show, the official correspondence of the Sokoto Sultanate was strikingly different in appearance from that of the Kānemis of Bornu. Instead of the rectilinear 'Kuficizing' hand, their script is virtually *naskh*, of a straightforward type which but for minor details would not have seemed out of place in the eastern part of the Islamic world and which seems to have made its first appearance in Nigeria in the early nineteenth century. At the same time, the characteristics diagnostic of the Nigerian origin of this script should not be overlooked. The pointing of the letters *fā* (ف) and *qāf* (ق) adheres to the tradition of the Maghrib.<sup>1</sup> The *alif* is formed with a downstroke of the pen, and where attached to the preceding letter, this downstroke is prolonged below the point of attachment (هـ). The letter *ṣād* lacks the familiar 'tooth' (ص). These are features typical of Moroccan scripts, and will indeed also be noticed in the Kānemi material; in the East, however, the *alif* is almost invariably formed by an upstroke, which in the *divānī* and *shikasteh* hands results in its being ligatured at the top to the following letter. Moreover, in the following example the form of *kaf* frequently approximates to the Kufic outline (ك), although the straight form also occurs (ك). The script of document IV is in fact typical of the style of writing characteristic of the leaders of the Fulani *jihād* and their pupils and successors. It is that found in early manuscripts of the works of 'Uṭmān bin Fūdī and his circle, distinct on the one hand from the rounded, somewhat formless script of the Gobir Emirate in the eighteenth century, and from the angular *Ajami* of present-day

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to notice that Abdallahi bin Fūdī, the brother of 'Uṭmān, whose writing is of the type in question, used the Mashriqi pointing of *qāf* (ق), but not of *fā*.



باسم الله الرحمن الرحيم و صلى الله على النبي الكريم  
وعلى آله وصحبه وسلم



الايام بوفش بعقوب برح اذ العتيقة والى سلام وبعد جاعثا  
بالحوالنا وبلغنا هذه المبرور امير الاسلام والى السلام  
التيالية لمصلحة الدول وعزوتنا اذ في مع الجليل وفراحتنا  
والفرح وعلينا على السيف وعتينا الكرم وعشرون من شغل  
والخروج معنا بالروا مع امة الفخر والى السلام  
من كانوا الايام في غزو بلانم والحملنا لاجلنا لاجلنا  
الغزاة الالهة لاجلنا وبعثنا به حتى نخرج اذ الله  
تاذقوا اما الرعاة الالهة البق فلا تظلموا  
بالقزاق الخبز لاجلنا وعلنا لاجلنا لاجلنا  
لان هذا اس يجمع من امير الله وبعثنا به  
بليغنا وعلنا وبعثنا به وبعثنا به وبعثنا به  
ومن لى بليغنا وبعثنا به وبعثنا به وبعثنا به  
وعلنا وبعثنا به وبعثنا به وبعثنا به وبعثنا به  
وفد اميرنا ان يفر من الفخر جلا فيل الى الفخر ليس على  
الفرح ولا على الفخر جلا فيل الى الفخر ليس على  
شميل الله على الفخر جلا فيل الى الفخر ليس على  
تولوا وبعثنا به وبعثنا به وبعثنا به وبعثنا به  
وهو ان يفر من الفخر جلا فيل الى الفخر ليس على  
امكنا وبعثنا به وبعثنا به وبعثنا به وبعثنا به  
ع امة وبعثنا به وبعثنا به وبعثنا به وبعثنا به  
الداور وبعثنا به وبعثنا به وبعثنا به وبعثنا به  
دوانك وبعثنا به وبعثنا به وبعثنا به وبعثنا به

مكتوبه  
وباسم  
ونسبه

copyists. We shall see that there is, indeed, a distinct possibility that document IV is actually an autograph of Muḥammad Bello himself.

The seal-impressions of the Sokoto documents also differ from those of Bornu. Sokoto seals are always circular ; in the nineteenth century the lettering appeared in white upon a background of black ink, and the impression was placed at the head of the letter, beneath the opening invocation, and close to the right-hand margin. The inscription followed the formula *amīru 'l-mu'minīn X bin Y bin Z, naṣarahu Allāh, āmīn* 'Commander of the Faithful X, son of Y, son of Z, may Allah assist him, Amen', and was read from the top downwards. Certain minor variations of this formula seem to have been adopted in order to distinguish between the seals of rulers with similar names, but I have not yet succeeded in analysing the practice in these cases. As in the case of the Bornu documents, each letter began with a form of religious invocation. It will be seen that the exact principles governing the choice of these invocations are not quite clear, but it seems that while successive members of the Kānemi dynasty continued to make use of the same invocation, the Sultans of Sokoto were accustomed to change the invocation in use at the beginning of each reign. Other variations of the invocation used seem also to have been possible under certain circumstances. Since, however, the seal-impressions were not always easily decipherable, and the letters were unsigned, the value of the invocation as a means of designating the sender would no doubt have been considerable.

#### IV

*From Muḥammad Bello, Sultan of Sokoto (A.D. 1817-37) to Ya'qūb bin Dādi, Emir of Bauchi (A.D. 1805-43): 13 in. × 8½ in. Possession of the Emir of Bauchi. Watermarks, if any, not recorded. Plate III.*

(a) Text :

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم وصلى الله على النبي الكريم  
وعلى آله وصحبه الذين انتهجوا نهجه القويم

[SEAL]

الى امير بوش يعقوب بن داد الف تحية والى سلام  
وبعد فباعث [الرسم<sup>1</sup>] اليكم اعلامكم (2) باحوالنا وما نحن بصدده اليوم من اهم  
امور الاسلام والمسلمين وهو انا خرجنا الى الجهة (3) الشمالية لمصلحة الدواب وغزو  
تَادَغُوْ مع الجيلاني وقد اخذنا اهبتنا من بيوت الجلود (4) والقرب وما يصلح للسفر.  
وعيتنا الخروج عشرين من شعبان وامرنا اخواننا الذين يتجاورونا باتباعنا (5)  
والخروج معنا بالدواب مع اهبة الغزو وان لا يتخلف احد من اصحاب الدواب ولا من  
الغزاة كايضا (6) من كانوا إلا من دخل في غزرو بَانَاغَ والجاصل انا حملنا الجماعة  
احد امرين في هذا الاوان اما ان يلحقوا (7) الغزاة الى جهة بَانَاغَ ويحاصروه حتى

<sup>1</sup> Two letters have been lost, but the text is supplied by analogy (see commentary below).

نقدم ان شاء الله واما ان يلحق بنا من يريد الغزو الى (8) تَادَعَوْا واما الرعاة اصحاب البقر فلا يتخلف احد عَنَّا الا ما لا بُدَّ منه.

وامرناهم ايضا (9) بالتزام الحزم ليلا ونهارا فانها سيما المجاهدين وفرق بين رجال الله والبطالين والمنافقين (10) لان هذا امر مُهِمٌّ جامع من امور [سلام] والمسلمين لا يكاد تحصى فوايده فن كان طايعا راغبا (11) فليخلوه . . . <sup>1</sup> وطاعته ورغبة ومن تساهل او تكاسل فليشدوا له حتى ينشط (12) ومن ابى فليهدِّدوه حتى ينزجر وان لم ينزجر <sup>†</sup> فعلموني به وباسمه ومكانه ونسبه <sup>‡</sup> (13) اللهم الا ان ينتدب لمحاصرة بَنَانَاغَ. هذا (14) وقد امرتهم ان يحذروا ممن عذره الشرع فلا سبيل الى التعرض له «ليس على الضعفاء ولا على (15) المرضى ولا على الذين لا يجدون ما ينفقون خرج اذا نصحوا لله ورسوله ما على المحسنين من (16) سبيل والله غفور رحيم ولا على الذين اذا ما اتوك لتحملهم قلت لا اجد ما احملكم عليه (17) تولوا واعينم تنفيض من الدمع حزنا ألا يجدون ما ينفقون انما السبيل على الذين يستاذنونك (18) وهم اغنياء رضوا بان يكونوا مع الخوالف وطيع الله على قلوبهم فهم لا يعلمون» <sup>3</sup> انتهى.

واما (19) المطلوب منكم انتم فلتقتدوا — اذا وصل اليكم — ما نحن عليه بان تشمروا ذبولكم الى جهاد الكفار (20) في اهم جهاتكم «وليجدوا فيكم غلظة» <sup>4</sup> «ولا تهنوا ولا تحزوا وانتم الأعلون» <sup>5</sup> وفي الحرى «لغدوة في (21) سبيل الله او روحة خير من الدنيا وما فيها» <sup>6</sup> ولا تفارقوا الحزم وكونوا رجال الله وعليكم بتمشير (22) دوابكم وانظروا لها من المواضع ما يصلح لها لكونها آلة الجهاد. والسلام

(b) Seal :

This impression is the only example of the seal of Muḥammad Bello so far recorded, and although it is not clear throughout, the reading may be substantially reconstructed as follows :

امير المو	Commander of the Faith-
منين محمد	ful Muḥammad
بن عثمان بن فو	son of 'Uthmān bin Fū-
دى [نصره]	dī, assist him
الله . . . .	Allah . . . .

<sup>1</sup> A word is deleted.

<sup>2</sup> A line of text is deleted, and in the margin is added the word بيان 'explanation', followed by the words inserted between the obeli († . . . †).

<sup>3</sup> Qur'ān, IX, 92-3. For خزنا ما يجدون we might expect خزنا ما يجدوا.

<sup>4</sup> Qur'ān, IX, 124.

<sup>5</sup> Qur'ān, III, 133.

<sup>6</sup> A *hadith* which has been frequently attested with minor variants, cf. Wensinck, *Concordance de la tradition musulman*, s.v. روحة.

It does not appear that Sultan Bello employed his Fulani sobriquet (Bello) upon this seal inscription, although it is used by several of his descendants upon their seals in the genealogical formula. Apart from this, his successors follow the wording of Bello's seal extremely closely.

(c) Translation :

In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate,  
and may Allah bless the noble prophet,  
and his family and his companions, who followed his righteous path.

[SEAL]

To the Emir of Bauchi, Ya'qūb bin Dādi, a thousand valedictions and a thousand greetings.

After which, the reason for [this message] is to inform you of our circumstances, and of what we are engaged in to-day of the important affairs of Islam and of the Muslims. That is, that we have gone out in the direction of the North, because of the affair of the beasts, and the foray against Tādagħaw, with al-Jilānī. We have taken our equipment, consisting of tents of hide, and water-skins, and all that is required for a journey.

We have ordered the expedition for the twentieth of Sha'bān, and we commanded those of the brethren who adjoin us to follow us, and to march out with us bringing their beasts and military equipment. There is not to stay behind a single one of the owners of beasts (*aṣḥābu 'l-dawwābi*), nor of the *ghāzis*, whoever he may be, excepting those who have embarked upon the campaign against Bānāgha. The result is that we have imposed upon the community at the present time one of two alternatives: either they should join the *ghāzis* on the Bānāgha front, and besiege it until we arrive, if Allah so will; or for whoever may prefer the expedition to Tādagħaw to accompany us. As for the cattle-owning herdsmen (*al-ra'ātu aṣḥābu 'l-baqari*), not one of them must fail to join us, unless there is no help for it.

We have also commanded them to adhere to their resolve, day and night; for that is the mark of the warriors (*al-mujāhidīn*), and the distinction between the heroes of Allah (*rijjālu 'llāhi*), and the idlers and hypocrites; for this enterprise is important, embracing all the affairs of Islam and of the Muslims, and its advantages are scarcely to be numbered. So whoever is obedient, and diligent, him they must leave alone in his obedience and his diligence. Whoever idles and is lazy, him they must treat severely until he becomes active; and if he refuses, they must threaten him, until he is chastened; and if he is not chastened, †inform me of it, and of his name, and his situation, and of his origin†—except if he volunteers for the siege of Bānāgha.

Moreover, we have commanded them to have regard for those whom the Law has excused, for there is no way to interfere with them: 'It is not for the weak, nor for the sick, nor for those who cannot find the means to contribute, any sin, provided they be sincere towards Allah and towards his apostle. Nor is there any way against those who do good works, for Allah is forgiving

and merciful. Nor against those to whom, when they came to you for you to mount them, thou didst say "I cannot find resources to mount you"; they turned their backs, and their eyes poured forth tears, for grief that they could not find the means to contribute. There is only a way against those who ask thee leave to stay at home when they are rich, content to be amongst the stay-at-homes. Allah has set a seal upon their hearts, and yet they do not know'. [The quotation] is finished.

As for what is required of you yourself, you must follow our example—when this reaches you—and gird up your skirts for the sacred war (*jihād*) against the infidels upon your most important fronts and 'let them find strength in you', and 'do not give way, and do not be discouraged, for you shall have the upper hand'; or rather 'a morning upon the road of Allah, or a day's march is better than this world, and what is in it'. So do not turn aside from your resolve (*al-hazm*) but be heroes of Allah (*rijāl* *'llāhi*). Incumbent on you too is the multiplication of your beasts, and the seeking out for them of grazing-grounds that are suited to them, since they are the instruments of the sacred war. Greetings.

(d) Commentary :

Through the kindness of Malam Ladan Alu of Wurno, who has most generously made available for my inspection specimen documents from his collection, I have been able to form the opinion that the Bauchi letter here published was not only issued by Muḥammad Bello, but is in fact an autograph written by his own hand. Not only do the rapid and well-formed characters suggest that the writer was a proficient scholar. Their shape, when compared with three of the documents shown by Malam Ladan Alu, strongly suggest that the writer was the same. To these three Wurno letters there adheres a strong tradition that they are in the hand of Sultan Bello, whose long residence at Wurno is of course well-known. This is not the place for a lengthy discussion of the Wurno documents, but they may be briefly specified as follows :

1. *Kitāb al-qawli 'l-man'ūti fi 'l-naḥaqati wa 'l-qasmi fi 'l-mabīt*,<sup>1</sup> in two folios.
2. A copy of a letter to an unknown addressee, who is reproved for undutiful behaviour, in three folios.
3. Hastily written copy of a speech, perhaps a sermon, in five folios.

Only the last of these three documents contains a statement that it was copied by Muḥammad Bello, and the writing in this case differs somewhat from the other two : but not more than might be accounted for by the extreme haste in which it was evidently written. The first two documents strongly resemble that of Bauchi in their letter-forms, and are far from improbably in the same hand, allowing for a possible interval of time of several years.

<sup>1</sup> This title is no. 64 in the list of Bello's works published by W. E. N. Kensdale, 'Arabic literatures of the Western Sudan', *JRAS*, 1958, 56. See also the same author's *Catalogue of the Arabic manuscripts preserved in the University Library, Ibadan, Nigeria*, p. 20, no. 18.

I am therefore inclined to accept the Wurno tradition that all the three documents shown there are written by Muḥammad Bello, and to suggest that the Bauchi letter is by the same hand.

The invocation :

The material at present available is not sufficient to justify any far-reaching analysis of the principles which governed the choice of the opening invocation in Sokoto chancery usage under Muḥammad Bello, or the significance of the several variations. A comparison with the letters from Muḥammad Bello quoted in the *Infāq al-maisūr* shows that in a total of six texts six distinct formulae are used.<sup>1</sup> It is true that the second of the quotations in the *Infāq* begins with a formula بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم الحمد لله وكفى وسلام على عباده  
الذين اصطفى اما بعد فن محمد بل نجل امير المؤمنين عثمان بن فودي الى الحاج  
الامين . . .

which also forms part of the beginning of the work *al-qawli 'l-man'ūti* just mentioned. At the same time, in the *Infāq* a formula very similar to that of our present text is found, a little unexpectedly, in a letter not from Bello but from another source. At this point<sup>2</sup> there appears to be some confusion in the texts of the *Infāq* both as given by Arnett and by Whitting, but although the originator of the letter in question is not quite clear, from the fact that a date, 1225/1810 is quoted, it is likely to have been the Sultan of Morocco, Sulaymān (A.D. 1795-1822). The opening invocation of this Moroccan document is closely similar to that of our Sokoto letter, and is given by Arnett as follows :

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم وصلوات الله على سيدنا محمد المصطفى الكريم وعلى آله واصحابه  
الذين انتهوا بهجة القويم.

There is therefore some possibility that this form of invocation was introduced at Sokoto as a result of correspondence with the Moroccans, and that the date of this innovation could be determined. It should be borne in mind that the varied formulae of the correspondence quoted in the *Infāq* date from before Bello's assumption of full sovereignty, and may not reflect the royal usage ; also, that this correspondence with al-Kānemi was of exceptional importance, and probably less stereotyped than the routine dispatches. Naturally, however, many more official documents of Bello's reign will need to be examined before conclusions can be reached as to the relevance of the formula of invocation to the problems of chronology. The same may be said of the usage of seals, for although a certain number of documents attributable to Bello altogether

<sup>1</sup> The references to the *Infāq* are as follows : (a) Whitting, *Infāq al-maisūr*, p. 128 (= Arnett, *Rise of the Sokoto Fulani*, p. 103) ; (b) Whitting, p. 135 (= Arnett, p. 108) ; (c) Whitting, p. 139 (= Arnett, p. 109) ; (d) Whitting, p. 142 (= Arnett, p. 110) ; (e) Whitting, p. 161 (= Arnett, p. 113). These concordances are given because the contexts are not easy to find, but it should be noted that the texts of the two editions do not entirely correspond.

<sup>2</sup> Whitting, p. 180 (= Arnett, p. 122).

lack a seal-impression, it is not yet possible to determine when the use of the seal was introduced, or whether the presence or absence of impressions would be relevant for the dating of individual documents.

l. 1 الف تحية والف سلام وبعد فباعث [الرس]م اليكم اعلامكم باحوالنا.

This phraseology corresponds with that employed in two letters drafted by Muḥammad Bello, one for Shaykh 'Uṭhmān, to send to Muḥammad al-Amīn of Bornu, and quoted in the *Infāq al-maisūr*.<sup>1</sup> The second of these supplies a word which exactly fits the outline for the lacuna in our text, and makes possible its restoration. The forms of address were no doubt conventional, as in other Islamic chanceries.

l. 2 الاسلام والمسلمين.

The regular formula to describe the Sultanate of Sokoto, just as المسلمين is the usual term for the subjects of the Sultanate.

l. 3 غزو تَادَغَوُ مع الجيلاني

I have not succeeded in locating the town of Tādagḥaw, nor any further reference to the personage named al-Jilānī. He was a namesake of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī, the founder of the *Qādarīyya* movement (to which Shaykh 'Uṭhmān belonged) and in all probability a member of the family of the Shaykh. The practice of assuming the *nisba* of some famous religious figure seems to have been fashionable amongst the learned of Sokoto, to judge by the example of al-Bukhārī: the *ism* of the person in question would no doubt have been 'Abd al-Qādir, just as the *nisba* al-Bukhārī was given as a nickname to persons named Muḥammad.

l. 5 الخروج معنا بالدواب . . . وان لا يتخلف احد من اصحاب الدواب

It does not seem quite clear whether baggage animals, or riding animals, presumably horses, are meant, though this would have been known to the addressee. Below there is reference to herdsmen owning cattle, and these are no doubt the well-known Fulani pastoralists of the savannahs, who live a nomadic life, and range with their herds over enormous distances. They do not nowadays possess horses, and whether they are the same persons as the *ashābu*

<sup>1</sup> Whitting, p. 160 (= Arnett, p. 113) : بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم وصلى الله على سيدنا محمد وآله وصحبه وسلم تسليماً الحمد لله وحده ولا اله غيره والصلاة وسلام على من لا نبي بعده فن امير المؤمنين وسلطان المسلمين سيدنا و وسيلتنا الى ربنا عثمان بن فودي الى العالم العلامة محمد الامين بن محمد الكانمي بالف تحية والف سلام اما بعد فباعث الرسالة اليك اعلمك بما نحن فيه . . . .

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم وصلى الله على سيدنا محمد وآله وصحبه وسلم تسليماً فن محمد بل نجبل الشيخ عثمان الى الحاج الامين بالف تحية والف سلام اما بعد فباعث الرسم اليك اعلامك بانى . . . .

It is possible that in both texts we should emend الف تحية into تحية with the present document, but a change is not strictly necessary.

'*l-dawwābi*, and to be thought of as having in Bello's time been also in possession of horses is a matter for investigation.

l. 6

فِي غَزْوِ بَانَآغَ

The town of Bānāgha, if we follow strictly the spelling used by Muḥammad Bello, or, as it appears on the modern map, Banaga, is situated some 35 miles south of the district headquarters of Anka, on the southern boundary of Sokoto Province.<sup>1</sup> It should not, of course, be confused with Banga (spent by Bello بَنَغ), which is also in Sokoto Province not far from Gusau. I have found no specific reference to the operations against Banaga here mentioned in the historical literature available to me, though clearly such a reference would enable us to date the document under discussion very closely. There is, apparently, a mention of Banaga in the *Infāq al-maisūr*, but this appears in a verse context and is not closely datable<sup>2</sup>:

فَنِي بَاكِي أَرْبَعٍ وَخَسِينٍ قَتَلُوا      وَفِي شَانُوا أَرْبَعٍ وَعَشْرُونَ يَذْكُرُ  
ثَلَاثُونَ عِدَّةَ أَهْلِ بَانَآغِ أَمَّةٍ      عَلَى شَرْكَ أَرْدِينَاهُمْ فَتَعْفَرُ

It may be conjectured that the campaign against Banaga did not occur during the lifetime of Shaykh 'Uṭhmān, but only after the death of the latter, and the accession of Muḥammad Bello to the full sovereignty. There is confirmation of this belief in the fact that our seal gives to Bello the full title of *amīru 'l-mu'minīn*, which would scarcely have been possible while Shaykh 'Uṭhmān was alive. In this case the events could not have been narrated in the *Infāq al-maisūr*, which covers the earlier period of the *jihād*, only down to about A.D. 1810. The most likely possibility is that the campaign against Banaga formed part of the operations against the Dakarkeri people in the southern part of Sokoto Province undertaken by Bello in A.D. 1820.<sup>3</sup>

It is of interest that the title of Sarkin Banaga 'King of Banaga' is held by the District Head of Maru, in Sokoto Province.<sup>4</sup> In accordance with the normal practice by which titles were allotted in the Fulani Empire, it is probable that the ancestor of the present District Head received this unusual title as a result of having earned distinction in the campaign against Banaga. We may therefore hope to find further details of this campaign preserved amongst the family traditions of the District Heads of Maru, yet it seems likely that for the time being at least the document published here is the only source of information about the campaigns of Tādagḥaw and of Banaga.

<sup>1</sup> *Gazetteer of place-names on the map of Nigeria*, Zaria, 1949, p. 18, s.v. Banaga.

<sup>2</sup> Whitting, p. 98, who, however, reads يَانَآغ (Yānāgha). We should probably prefer to follow Arnett, p. 80, in reading 'Banaga', though it must be noted that there are other discrepancies between the two editions at this point.

<sup>3</sup> E. J. Arnett, *Gazetteer of Sokoto Province*, London, 1920, p. 31: 'In 1820, Gunki, Sarkin Gobir, was killed in battle at Kadaye. Bello unsuccessfully attacked Bakura, and the Dakakerri Country'.

<sup>4</sup> *idem*, p. 8. I first learnt of this interesting circumstance in conversation with Mr. Adrian Webb and Malam 'Umaru Jabka at Maru Teacher Training Centre.



## V

*Transcript of a letter from Yūsuf Pāshā Karamānli, Pasha of Tripoli (A.D. 1795/6–1832) to Muḥammad Bello, Sultan of Sokoto (A.D. 1817–37); 2 fols. measuring  $8\frac{1}{2}$  in.  $\times$   $6\frac{1}{2}$  in. approx. Sultan's Library, Sokoto. Plate IVa, b.*

I am indebted to the Chief Alkali of Sokoto for selecting this document from the Library of the Sultan with the gracious consent of the Sultan, and making it available for me to examine and record. The folios on which the copy is written seem to be old, and the script is an elegant and unusual Maghribi hand, for which I know no close analogy in the Sokoto archives, and which may therefore be foreign. At the same time, the appearance of the folios is not such as one would expect for the original dispatch of an Ottoman Governor. Thus it will be noted that there is no mark of authentication, such as a *tughrā*, seal impression, *‘alāma*, or signature. We should not anticipate that an official communication would be written on separate sheets of paper, in the manner of a book, since this arrangement provides no safeguard against fraudulent alteration; it should rather be upon a single sheet, or a continuous roll. Nor is this script the formal *dīvānī* or *ruq‘a* of the Ottoman chanceries. Yet since the opening phrases of the letter are couched in conventional rhyming prose, and are elegantly conceived, it seems highly probable that we have here none the less an authentic text, and the possibility emerges that the document is some sort of transcript, or office copy. This hypothesis is confirmed by certain other features of the document, which are best discussed at this point.

First, the opening words of the text *وصلی الله علی سیدنا و مولانا محمد وعلی* are in every way exceptional, since it appears that the *bismillah* which should precede this formula is wanting. An explanation might be sought by supposing that the *bismillah* had been written by itself on a previous page, no longer to hand. Yet such a method of writing the *bismillah* is unheard of in chancery practice. A far more plausible explanation seems to be the following: in the case of chancery documents and *firmāns* written upon rolls, it has always been the practice to roll them up, without the use of any wooden or cardboard core, beginning from the head. Inevitably the head of the document has to suffer more wear and tear than the remainder, and so it is found that a surprising number of early *firmāns* have the first few inches torn or mutilated.<sup>1</sup> The opening formulae, and even the *tughrās* which follow them are not infrequently lost. It is therefore entirely likely that the document with which we are here concerned was also originally in roll form, and as a result of this process of attrition had already lost the portion containing the *bismillah*. The deteriorating condition of the document may well have attracted the attention of its custodians, and

<sup>1</sup> e.g. Bibliothèque Nationale No. 2334, a Persian *firmān* of Ahmad Jalair dated Tabriz, 773/1372, of which the entire heading is lost, and which commences only with the matter, as is clear from photographs in my possession; cf. H. Massé, 'Ordonnance rendu par le Prince Ilkhanien Ahmad Jalair', *JA*, ccxxx, 1938, 465. Also BM Or. 4934 (iii).



necessitated the preparation of a transcript to preserve the text. On this theory, our transcript will be anyway some decades later than the original, and we must suppose that the copyist began with the first words extant upon his archetype.

Forewarned by these observations, we shall not be unduly surprised to discover after examining the text, that at one or two points in the transcript the reading is unsatisfactory, and that it is sometimes necessary to emend. Such a procedure would be rash in the case of an official original, but those who have experience in transcribing the difficult cursive hands of the Ottoman chanceries will readily appreciate that an unpractised copyist can be forgiven for going astray. The manifest errors are shown in the footnotes to the text, and they help to confirm the other evidence that we have to do with a transcript of a more formal document, and not with the original itself.

(a) Text :

وصلى الله على سيدنا ومولانا محمد وعلى آله وصحبه وسلم  
المقام الاسماء، والملاذ الاحمى، مقام الخليفة الارشد، والهيام (2) الاسعد، ذى  
المشائر الباهرة، والخلال الظاهرة، ينبوع الفضل الذى (3) لا تنضب موارده، وكوثر  
العدل الذى لا يظمى وارده، الامام الذى (4) انتشر فضله وعدله فى جميع الاقطار،  
حتى صار واضحاً كوضوح (5) الشمس فى رابعة النهار، الحائز رتبتي السيف والقم  
وتضلع (6) العلوم المعقولة والمنقولة فكان فيها مفرد علم الذى فاق (7) فى الرياسة  
والبلاغة على جميع الاقران، محبنا على السماع (8) السلطان بيلو<sup>1</sup> صاحب ولاية  
السودان، ادام الله دولته ووجوده، (9) واخفق فى رايات العز جنوده،<sup>2</sup> بمنه وكرمه  
ءامين.

اما بعد سلام (10) يسابق النسيم ويجارى برقة انفاسه التسليم، يهدى اليكم (11)  
مع الرحمة والبركة، فى حالتى السكون والحركة، ما تعاقب الملوان، (12) وتكرر  
الجديدان، لاسيما اننا من اهل حبكم، وطالبي قربكم، بحيثنا<sup>3</sup> (13) انه فى قلبنا لكم  
من الوداد ما لا يكدر صفاه البعاد، والله سبحانه (page 2) وتعالى يقضى باجتماع  
الارواح وان تباعدت الاجساد.

هذا وانه (15) اتصل بنا الاعز جوابكم، والعذب اللذيذ خطابكم، المنبئى (16) عن  
صفاء حبكم وبواعث قربكم، فتلقيناه بالقبول واقام عندنا (17) قيام الرؤية النظرية،  
لذاتكم البشرية، واعظم ما استفدنا (18) منه بقاء ذاتكم الكريمة النجار<sup>4</sup>، العزيزة

<sup>1</sup> The Pasha does not adopt the Nigerian spelling بل.

<sup>2</sup> It is assumed here that a word has fallen out of the text before جنوده.

<sup>3</sup> Read بحيثنا.

الجار<sup>1</sup>، والعبدان الميغناوان (19) اللذان ارسلتم لنا صحة الاجل المحترم صهركم القايد مادي بلغونا (20) كما ذكرتم كثر الله خيركم وشكر سعيكم والواصل البنا مع (21) المذكور بندقه ذات جعبتين وزرج<sup>2</sup> غدارى كل واحده (22) فيها جعبتين يبلغوكم على وجه البركة وانتم على اسر حال، واتم (23) منوال، ونحن وانتم على المحبة الكاملة، والمودة الشاملة، لا نحولوا<sup>3</sup> (24) عن ذلك المحال، ما دامت الايام واليالى، والله مطلع على ما (25) في السراير، وما تخفيه الضماير.

وما تعرض لكم من حاجة في هذا (26) الجنب عرفنا بها نقضوها بحول الله و قوته ودمتم و دامت (27) لكم الخيرات، والسعادة<sup>4</sup> الاوقات، بحرمة صاحب المعجزات، صلى الله (28) عليه وسلم وعلى ءاله واصحابه الكمات، عدد ما مضى وما هوأت. والسلام (29) وكُتب عن اذن امير اللواء صاحب ولاية طرابلس الغرب عبده يُوسُفُ بِاشَا قرمانلى.

(b) Translation :

And may Allah bless our Lord and Master Muhammad, and his family and his companions, and welcome them.

The elevated presence (*al-muqām*) and inviolable sanctuary, abode of the most orthodox Caliph and most fortunate hero : he of dazzling achievements and manifest virtues : fountain of grace whose conduits never fail : *Kauthar* of justice whose frequenter never thirsts : *Imām* whose grace and righteousness are diffused in every quarter, until they are displayed like the splendour of the noonday sun : master of the two degrees of the sword and of the pen : doctor of the sciences, intellectual and traditional—and unique amongst them is that distinction<sup>5</sup> which has surpassed all contemporaries in authority and eloquence—our well-beloved through repute, Sultan Bello, Ruler of the province of the Sudan (may Allah prolong his reign and his survival, and may He cause [the standards of] his armies to wave amongst the standards of victory, by His grace and generosity, Amen !).

Now after salutations which outrun the zephyr, and excel with their gentle fragrance the nectar ; it is communicated to you, in addition to [our prayer for] mercy and blessing [upon you], in both states of rest and of movement, as long as night and day succeed one another, and light and darkness alternate, especially that we are amongst the adherents to your friendship, and amongst those seeking close relations with you. So that there is towards you in our heart

<sup>1</sup> The text suggests a corruption at this point. The expression *عريرة الجار* is not strictly parallel with *كريمة النجار* and this unnaturalness suggests that there may be need for an emendation.

<sup>2</sup> Read *جوز*.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Stern tells me that this unclassical form is a typical Maghribi colloquial usage for *نحول*.

<sup>4</sup> The copyist has deleted the definite article of *السعادة* as the grammar requires.

<sup>5</sup> The translator has some doubt whether the syntax is correctly followed at this point.

that affection which distance cannot cloud. Allah (may He be glorified and exalted) ordains the union of the spirits, even of those who in the flesh are separated.

Moreover, there has been transmitted to us your most respected letter, and the delicious draught of your discourse ; indicating the purity of your affection for us, and the reasons for your community of interest with us. We have received it with approval, and it has provided us with the equivalent of a visual glimpse of your actual person. From it our greatest benefit has been [to learn of] the survival of your noble self, our cherished neighbour. The two slaves (*myghnāwān*),<sup>1</sup> whom you sent to us with the respected nobleman, your son-in-law,<sup>2</sup> the Commander (*al-qā'id*) Mādī, reached us as you explained. May Allah increase your riches and fructify your endeavours<sup>3</sup> ! There reached us at the same time as the above<sup>4</sup> a shotgun with two barrels, and a pair of pistols, each of which has two barrels. May they find you in a state of abundance, enjoying the happiest circumstances, and the most perfect conditions, with us and you remaining on terms of complete friendship and constant affection. May we never vary this relationship, as long as days and nights continue ! As Allah surveys what is in our secret thoughts, and all that is hidden in our consciences.

Whatever requirement may occur to you from this Governorate, inform us of it, and we shall supply it, by God's might and power. So may you endure, and may there endure for you all that is best, and fortunate times, through the sanctity of the Lord of Miracles, whom Allah bless and welcome, with his family and his brave companions, as often as days have passed, and are to come !

So greetings. This was written at the instruction of the *amīr al-liwā'*,<sup>5</sup> Ruler of the Province of Tripoli, North Africa, His slave,<sup>6</sup> Yūsuf Pāshā Karamānli.

(c) Commentary :

The content of this official letter is of a somewhat formal nature, and its interest centres largely in its establishing the fact of correspondence between

<sup>1</sup> The unfamiliar word *ميغناوان* is not Arabic. Its meaning is not clear, but a suggestion (originating with Malam Audu Mahmud) is that it may be a Kanuri phrase, *mai gana* 'small king', Arabized as a single word. Alternatively, Mr. D. Cowan has suggested a connexion with the Moroccan Arabic word *qināwī* 'Guinean'.

<sup>2</sup> 'Brother-in-law' is also an admissible translation. The relationship of this personage to Sultan Bello will no doubt be precisely established as more documents become available.

<sup>3</sup> i.e. 'Thank you for the gift'.

<sup>4</sup> Strictly, the text would signify that the firearms had arrived, presumably from Sokoto, in the same convoy as the slaves and the emissary Mādī. Yet the sense seems to require reference rather to a return present from the Pasha to Sultan Bello, since there is an implication that the firearms are to reach Bello. It is intrinsically improbable that Bello would send a present of firearms to Tripoli, where such products were more easily obtainable, and less valued. I therefore understand the text as translated above.

<sup>5</sup> The Ottoman title of rank, 'Commander of a Standard' 'Sanjakbay'.

<sup>6</sup> i.e. of God.

Sultan Bello, and the Pashas of Tripoli. There seems some possibility of determining to within a few years the date and circumstances under which this correspondence began. The district of the Fezzan had intermittently formed a part of the Governorate of Tripoli under the predecessors of Yūsuf Pāshā, but Karamānli control having lapsed, the Pasha found it necessary in 1813 to dispatch his commander Muḥammad al-Mukni to re-occupy the oases. This operation was so successfully carried out that in 1817 al-Mukni was able to mount a raid against the frontiers of Bornu, and to bring back a substantial booty of slaves.<sup>1</sup> Apparently as a consequence of this feat, he earned the persistent enmity of the Bornu Sultan (at this time Muḥammad al-Amīn), and when after prolonged dissensions the Fezzan tribes under ‘Abd al-Jalīl were in 1826 once more able to throw off the suzerainty of Tripoli, the Bornu element of the population is said to have played a leading part in the revolt.<sup>2</sup> Since after 1817 both Sokoto and Tripoli were on terms of hostility with Bornu, it is easy to understand that knowledge of their common interest could have led to the establishment of relations between them. It is conceivable that this correspondence of the Pasha with Sokoto, to be dated, perhaps towards A.D. 1820, gave rise to the trans-Saharan contacts which enabled Warrington, British Consul at Tripoli, to secure the safe conducts for his emissaries, the explorers Barth and Clapperton, to make their visits to Sokoto.

Apart from this, the present document contains a number of points of minor interest. The emissary Mādī, a kinsman of Sultan Bello, seems not to be mentioned in the previously published sources. The sophisticated rhyming prose in which the document is largely couched illustrates the relationship between the chancery at Tripoli and those of the more celebrated courts of the Mediterranean Arab world. At the same time, despite a considerable virtuosity in the use of this epistolary medium, it will be noted that the scribe is guilty of a number of colloquialisms, and inconsequentialities in the use of stereotyped formulae, which suggest that his training was not quite equal to his pretensions. Finally, there remains the question of whether or not the document presented here is itself an original, or merely, as has been suggested above, some species of transcript. A conclusive verdict on this point will probably have to await the publication of a more extensive range of chancery documents from the Tripolitan archives, together with facsimiles with which the form of the present specimen could be compared.

#### CONCLUSION

The preceding selection of Arabic official documents from Northern Nigeria is offered to call attention to the range and variety of the material reported up to the present time. These documents, and notably No. IV, provide information on certain points of detail in the history of Nigeria during the nineteenth

<sup>1</sup> E. Rossi, 'Per la storia della penetrazione turca nell' interno della Libia', *Oriente Moderno*, IX, 1929, 154.

<sup>2</sup> *Encyc. of Islam*, s.v. Karamanli.

century. Special emphasis is here laid on the importance of distinguishing between original official documents, and transcripts more or less accurately made from these for a variety of purposes, of which considerable numbers are thought to be in circulation. Of the techniques for establishing this distinction, the most immediately rewarding is, of course, the reproduction and comparison of facsimiles, and it is hoped that as the resources of scholarship in West Africa increase, this practice may be adopted on a substantially wider scale.