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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ وَصَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَصَحْبِهِ وَسَلَّمَ تَسْلِيمًا

Chapter Twenty

On the Improvement of the Affairs of the *Shehu* And the Cause of the Envy of the Authorities Towards Him

The *Shehu* continued to disperse the knowledge of the individual obligations to the common people and propagated a diversity of sciences to the spiritually elite. He instructed the disciples (*murideen*) and those on the spiritual journey (*saalikeen*) and guided them in the courtesies of being in the presence of Allah. He persisted in this until the common people became knowledgeable of their individual obligations and were accustomed to acting in accordance with them. The students of his time became rightly guided scholars by means of him and the disciples and those on the spiritual journey attained their spiritual goals. He used to go out every Thursday to give sermons to the people about what we have mentioned. So many people used to attend his lectures that only Allah knew their true number. He would go out in the remaining days of the week after `isha prayer persistently conveying the sciences of the *deen* and extraordinary wisdom. He used to go out after the `asr prayer to give instructions in the sciences of *tafseer* of *Qur'an*, *hadeeth*, jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and spiritual purification (*tasawwuf*).

He produced many excellent works that instructed the people in the above sciences. He used to travel to distant regions and countries in order to bring benefit and preach to the people. He would then return to his country in **Degel**. Newcomers to the religion of Islam converted at his hands from the east and the west. And the scholars of his time presented themselves at his door to take from his *baraka* and to become illuminated from his light. All the people benefited from his blessings in all the lands until his *baraka* spread among them. He clarified the religion with superb clarity and he behaved in accordance with the Lord of Truth.

When he had achieved these accomplishments and his following among the scholars and the common people became considerable and many people commenced to obey him, then Allah sufficed him from His bounty with the scholars of his time and He supported him with cadre of veracious jurist throughout the regions of the *Bilad 's-Sudan* who assisted him in diffusing knowledge and reviving the glorious *sunna*. As a result, worldly people and the rulers of the lands then began to manifest their enmity towards him. This was after they had shown him honor and esteem and had gained *baraka* by means of his supplications. Along with that he used to direct them and show courtesy towards them. The *Shehu* never attempted to come between them and what they craved after, nor did he place any hindrance upon them. They were simply exasperated because of what they had observed from the manifestation of the *deen* and from what had been established by his instructions of the attributes of certainty. They saw the dwindling of the splendor of what they possessed because of their own lapses, falsehood and misjudgments. Along with the fact that their authority had been built on foundations which were contrary to the *shari'a*. Most of their

politics deviated from the true path of politics. Thus when the *Shehu* clarified the path, guided the successful and cleared the road for the travelers, the worldly people from among the evil scholars and rulers blindly continued in their repression. They only feared the demise of their system, the loss of their markets and their deterioration in the eyes of those who were guided. Consequently, these rulers and scholars began to harm the *Shehu's jama`at* by seizing their wealth. The simple-minded among them endangered the lives of the Muslims and began to cut off the way of earning their living. They used to hinder everyone who had some relationship with the *Shehu*, although the followers of the *Shehu* did not raise any objection to them. It never crossed the oppressors' minds that they were doing any wrong to the Muslims because the majority of the followers of the *Shehu* were from among the most powerless of people who had never known true political honor or social respect. Anyone who possessed any authority among the rulers of these lands persistently made effort to put out this light which the *Shehu* had lit. They used to conspire against the *Shehu* and his *jama`at*, plot and scheme for his and their extermination. About this I said in verse:

“I am sure it has reached you from me, even if you are far away
About a government from whom injustice begins and returns?!
If you would desist from your oppression then you would be guided
If you do not cease then between us war will definitely occur!
For if we are mistreated, then we will flee with our religion
To Allah, for verily the affair belongs to Allah all together.”

I said also in verse on that occasion:

“I have observed them at every moment, so I know them
I have observed them in every time of the rising sun.
Even when they come against us in the forenoon with assailants
We will lash at them undismayed until the closing of the market
places!”

However Allah ta`ala ordained that death would come to them, thus they all died within a short time. When those after them conceived that the *Shehu* would not cease his mission, that he increased daily in distinction and discretion and the common people continued to enter the *deen* of Allah in large numbers - the rulers began to fear him regarding their own affairs. This was because their affairs were diametrically opposed to what the *Shehu* was trying to implement in most issues. Indeed their authority was contrary to the rules of the *shari`a*. This is because they only took from their worship what was necessary to clean up their act and conceal their misdeeds. They performed the outer form of the prayer, fasting and *zakat* and even pronounced the words of the *shahadatayn*, but without adhering to the prerequisites of what they had testified to. The system of rule, which they implemented, was a system they had accumulated from their ancestors who openly pronounced Islam but did not act on it themselves. The majority of their governmental authority conflicted with the Book, the *Sunna* and the consensus of the Muslim community as is well known. In addition to this they were deceived by ideas and actions, which only emerged from those who disbelieve. So of course the manifestation of the *deen* and the establishment of the *shari`a* was not in keeping with their aims and objectives. For this reason they mustered their schemes in order to instigate war between them and the *Shehu* and his *jama`at*. They were convinced that the government belonged to them since they saw that the supporters of the *Shehu* were too oppressed to fight them. After deliberation they all agreed to penalize the disciples of the *Shehu* who invited others to Allah by preventing them from giving sermons.

The rulers ordered everyone to return back to the pagan religion of his father and grandfather. Nothing frightened us except the sanctions of the ruler of Gobir, Nafata, which amounted to three: [1] no one was to preach to the people except the *Shehu*; [2] no one was to adhere to the religion of Islam except those who had inherited the religion from their fathers. Those who did inherit Islam were to return to the religion of their fathers and grandfathers. And [3] no one was to wear the turban and women were forbidden from covering their breast with their head wraps. These sanctions were posted in all the markets places. These were apart of the steps which the ruler took in punishing us. However Allah sufficed us against his plots and schemes by bringing about his death soon after that. However, when the authority was given to his son, Yunfa, he rallied all of his forces in order to execute these sanctions. Even to the point of making a military raid upon one of the larger villages of the Muslims at a time when its people were not expecting it. They killed, whom Allah willed from among the Muslim jurists and *Qur'an* reciters during the daylight hours of Ramadan when the people were fasting. They seized their wealth and took their families as slaves. They also took their books and scattered them and the *Qur'ans* and writing boards they burned in a large fire. They made fun of the Muslims and said what the disbelievers in the *Qur'an* said: “Bring what you threatened us with if indeed you are truthful.”

They then turned their attention towards the village of the *Shehu*, even to the point where their ruler sent a raiding party to him in order to kill his wives, brothers and children. His main desire in that was to completely invade the village of the *Shehu*. The *Shehu* responded by taking his community and making the immigration (*hijra*). However, Yunfa regretted his decision and desired the *Shehu* to remain in his land and to avoid leaving. He made this decision without attaching to it, neither any conditions of safety or any expressed evidence of reform. In which case the *Shehu* excused himself and made the *hijra* from underneath Yunfa’s jurisdiction in the year شـريـح in the last ten days remaining of the month of *Dhi’l-Qa`ada*.¹

Then the renown jurist, the pure and pleasing scholar - known as **Aghaal ‘t-Tuareg**, the close friend of the *Shehu*, charged the Tuaregs with assisting the *Shehu* in making the *hijra*. His assistance was motivated by the enmity that he saw being aroused against the *Shehu*. Thus, he and all the Tuaregs who listened and obeyed him assisted the *Shehu* until he and his *Jama`at* arrived at a place called Gudu. The learned jurist Aghaal then returned and made strenuous effort in helping the Muslims to remove themselves from under the jurisdiction of the disbelievers. He and his people helped many Muslims. I was with *Shaykh* Aghaal at the time that the disbelievers raided the people of the above-mentioned Muslim village called **Gimbana**. I saw him deeply saddened over this event and emboldened with Islamic anger. When I decided to take me leave of him, he expressed the desire to send financial assistance to the *Shehu*. We then heard that the ruler of Gobir had dispatched a military regiment against the *Shehu* in order to kill his wives and brothers. He intended to completely destroy the village. It was then that I wrote a letter to the

¹ In the science of *abjadiyya* the ش equals 1000, the ر equals 200, the ڤ equals 10 and the ج equals 3. Thus the *hijra* of the *Shehu* took place in the year 1213 A.H (21 February 1804). The science of *abjadiyya* is a traditional system of calculation based upon the correspondence of each letter of the Arabic alphabet with a number. The term *abjad* takes its name from the original order of the Arabic alphabets and also acts as ordinal numbers. The *abjadiyya* values in West and North Africa are:

1 (أ) 2 (ب) 3 (ج) 4 (د) 5 (هـ) 6 (و) 7 (ز) 8 (ح) 9 (ط) 10 (ي)
 20 (ر) 30 (ل) 40 (م) 50 (ن) 60 (ص) 70 (ع) 80 (ف) 90 (ض) 100 (ق)
 200 (ر) 300 (س) 400 (ت) 500 (ث) 600 (خ) 700 (ذ) 800 (ظ) 900 (غ) 1000 (ش)

Shehu and sent it with my traveling companion as a communiqué with *Shaykh* Aghaal. The summation of what was in it was the following:

“Should I not present to my *shaykhs* an opinion
As a message from me by which expectations are frightened away?
That they should make *hijra* from the country whose actions are repugnant
And that they set out without delay in the transmigration quickly!
For we will soon stage raids and attacks in this land
Whose storm will infiltrate and perturb its murky waters like dust

storm!

For determination is my concern and the abode and its props
And the house and kinsmen are on camels stacked like mountains
By no means I will not be one who is burden with low and vile things
Truly vile things are only the burden of those who travel cumbrous!
For since you have suffered harm from this land and you have invited them
Then I will not be one who resides in a country that is not lawful!
Truly residing and living in a place of humiliation
Is impotence and blameworthy and not among the actions of

perfection!

So I have set out and His promise has been fulfilled
He succeeds triumphantly who is faithful to obedience!
Regardless if war breakouts against the helpers of Gobir
Or they leave us alone now or in the future!”

Shaykh Aghaal then wrote to my father requesting him to dispatch a text that would assist us in the *hijra*.² I then, Allah willing, set out swiftly for the *hijra*. I first traveled to Kebbi where I disseminated the text of the *Shehu* to the people and called them to unite with us. I then traveled until I entered the town of **Degel**. There I found the *Shehu* and the people preparing for the *hijra*. We then made the *hijra* from under the jurisdiction of their lands peacefully. We were assisted at that time by the jurist *Shaykh* Aghaal, **Shaykh Mahmud Gurdimu**, **Ali Jeddo** the general of the armies and others. We dismounted at a place called **Gudu**. People who had been affiliated with the *Shehu* from the furthest regions made the *hijra* to him, sometimes traveling as far as two months journey. Then the people were hindered from making the *hijra* by an order from the ruler. His armies began to cut off the roads from the *muhaajiruun* and to seize their wealth. They were assisted in this by some of their freedmen from among the wild Tuaregs. The situation continued in this manner where sometimes a group would join us accompanied by their families and wealth, sometimes with their families and no wealth and sometimes they would come to us by themselves without family or wealth.

Then when the ruler saw that the people were determined to continue with the *hijra*, he wrote a letter to the *Shehu* ordering him to return to his place in **Degel**. The *Shehu* wrote back to him saying that he will not return there until: [1] the ruler repented; [2] showed sincerity for the religion as is essential for rulers; [3] there was agreement between the Muslims and him concerning uniting behind the religion of Islam; [4] he offered justice and equity in the lands; and [5] he returned all the wealth and freed the captives he had seized from the *jama`at* of the Muslims. Then the

² There is no doubt that the text referred to here is the famous *al-Masaa'il 'l-Muhimma* (Important Questions), in which the *Shehu* discuss fourteen issues, among them being the obligation of Muslims giving the oath of allegiance to an *amir*, and the obligation of Muslims making *hijra* from under the political jurisdiction of the disbelievers. The text was completed at noon time on Tuesday, the 13th of *Dhu'l-Qa`adah* in the year 1217, (February 24, 1803).

people would feel safe and secure from him; then and only then would he return to his place in **Degel**. This letter was sent back to the ruler at the hands of the *wazir* whom the ruler sent to him. When he arrived at Gobir with the letter of the *Shehu*, he read it to the ruler. He had present with him all of his *wazirs* and scholars. He then began to abuse the *Shehu* and the *jama`at* and threaten them. He then sought from them a legal decision concerning the *Shehu* and his *jama`at* from the scholars who were present. They said to him: "You are upon the truth and the *Shehu* and his *jama`at* are in error." These scholars became just like the Jews when the polytheist of Mecca asked them: "Who is most guided in the Way - O assembly of the People of the Book - we or Muhammad?" Then Ibn Suuriyaa said: "Present your religion to us." They said: "We make the sacrifice of the *kumaa`a*. We give water to the pilgrims. We remove the stress from the troubled. We protect the house of our Lord. We worship what our fathers worshipped and maintain the ties of kinship." He then said: "What is the religion of Muhammad?" They said: "He is patient. He also breaks up our families and he is followed by the thieves among the pilgrims, like the Bani Amaar." He said: "Then you all are better than him and the most guided in the way." Then Allah ta`ala revealed: "*Have you not seen those who have been given a portion of the Book, how they believe in idols and false deities, and how they say of those who disbelieve: 'There are more rightly guided than those who believe'? Those are they whom Allah has cursed, and he whom Allah has cursed you will find for him a helper. Or have they even a share in the kingdom? Then in that case they would not give mankind even the speck on a date stone. Or are they jealous of mankind because of that which Allah of His bounty has bestowed upon them? For I bestowed upon the house of Ibrahim the scripture and wisdom, and I have bestowed on them a glorious kingdom.*" Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Ibn Jareer, Ibn al-Mundhir and others related the narration in the above manner.

My comrade and brother, the fearful aware learned servant - **Abu'l-Hassan ibn Ahmad** informed me that he was present when this event occurred in the courts of Gobir. Among the things which he informed me was that the one who read the letter of the *Shehu* to the ruler, read it falsely and twisted it however he liked. He also mentioned things which had nothing to do with the affair. It was this which induced the ruler to make military raids against the *Shehu* and his *jama`at*. Thus, he agreed with the deceptions, falsities and deceptions which came from the evil scholars who were present.

My brother, the fearfully aware and righteous comrade - known as **Hidaahu**, was present there as well. He was among those whom the ruler used to seek council and advice. He remained silent at that time not saying anything. He said then the ruler said to the courier of the *Shehu*: 'Leave! For I can find no guide for you. When Allah causes you to reach the *Shehu*, inform him that I am preparing and equipping for the journey. So be ready for the encounter!'

The courier then left confused not knowing which direction to take, nor could find anyone who would help him. Along with this the *Sudanese* Hausa were slaughtering anyone they saw from among the Fulani. When he left the ruler, he went in the direction of the north until he reached the drummer of **Aghanbal** who gave him a guide who took him to the land of **Azar**. When he reached there, the guide was kind enough to go on with him until he reached the *Shehu*. There he informed the *Shehu* of all that had occurred and all of his council were present.

Then we realized that for a certain the cord of hope and trust between us and them had been completely broken. Further all those who resembled them from the remainder of the *Sudanese* and the Tuaregs had joined them in enmity towards us. We

realized then that there was refuge nor recourse in the kingdoms of these countries due to their alliance in fighting us, their pertinence in that and the efforts they made in trying to reach us. We then gathered together and made consultation in our affair. We said it is not permissible for a people to be left to themselves without a governor (*waali*). We then gave the oath of allegiance (*ba`aya*) to the *Shehu*, to hear and obey, in ease and hardship. He accepted the oath of allegiance that he would follow the Book and *Sunna* on Thursday night.³

The first of those to give the oath of allegiance to him was his brother and chief advisor (*wazeer*), **Abdullahi**, then I, in turn, gave the oath of allegiance. Then, I was followed by his close friend and advisor **Umar al-Kamuni**. Then the rest of the people gave the oath of allegiance to him. The next morning after he organized and structured us, he established a flag for us. We then set out immediately to dig a trench, following the example of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, singing:

“By Allah! If it were not for Allah we would not have been guided
We would not have given in alms nor would we have prayed.
For tranquility has descended upon us
And our feet have been established in order not to be disunited
For at first they unleashed oppression upon us
If they want tribulation, then we will deny it!”

Eventually, we dug as much of the trench as we were able. Then prior to the *Shehu* sending the letter to Alkalawa with the *wazer* of the ruler, many of the *Sudanese* harassed the roads against those who were making the *hijra*.⁴ On Thursday the *jama`at* inflamed a group of *Sudanese* in that region. They retaliated by killing, seizing and plundering the Muslims. Then the following Friday, the *Shehu* gave the sermon to the people, commanding them to go and release those who were captured and to return the wealth which was plundered. Then a detachment of the *jama`at* went out and forcefully released them and had their wealth returned to them.

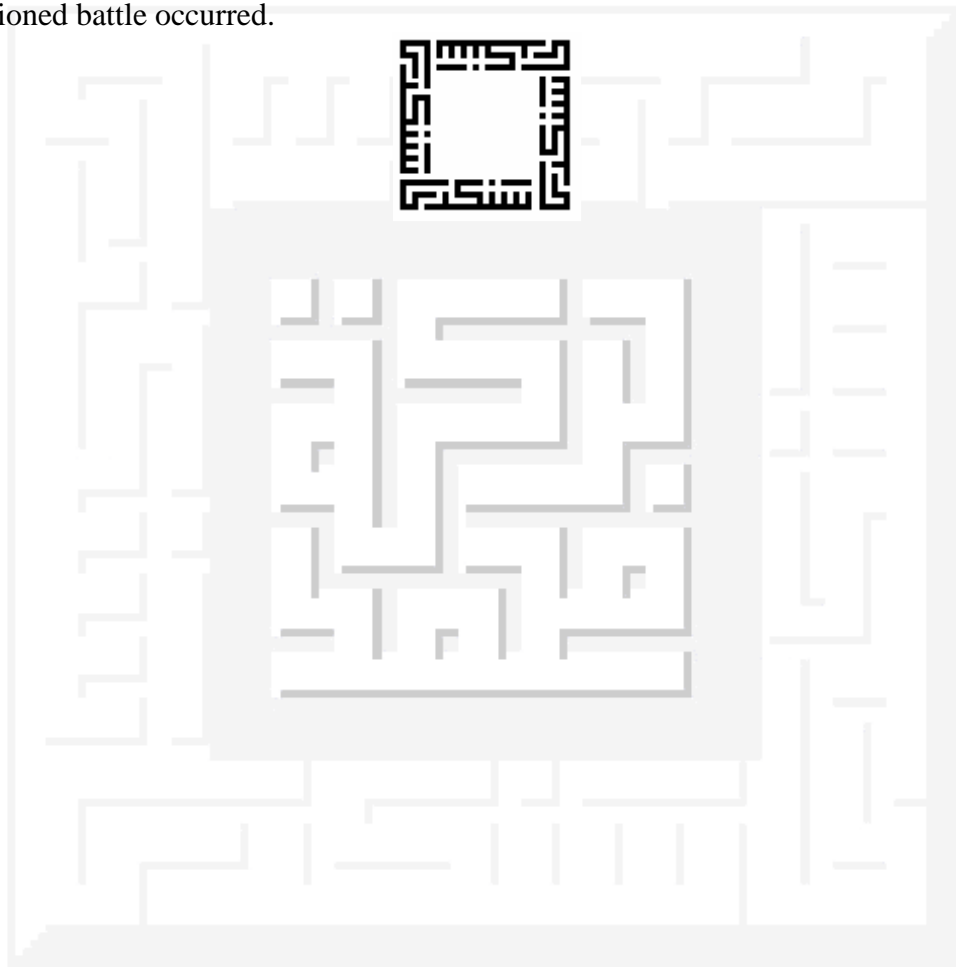
Prior to the *Shehu* sending his messenger to the ruler of Gobir, some of the officials of the ruler used to make military raids making plunder and taking captives from the *jama`at*. However *Shehu* continued to ignore these atrocities, until these officials killed many people and seized much property. It was then that the messenger of the *Shehu* arrived in the court of the ruler of Gobir. Then when the messenger returned and informed us what had taken place there, our *Amir*, the *Shehu*, ordered us to dig a trench around the town. We then immediately set out with an army towards the borders of the lands of the rulers, in a place called **Ginigu**, where we encountered a well-outfitted army. We fought them and took captives of those whom Allah had willed. Then we prepared another army on the second day of the month of *ar-Rabi`u al-Awwal*. We went out bearing the flags to the warriors until, **Abdullahi**, the *Amir* of the army presented a banner to each of the generals. We left the town in silence heading for the one who was shouting, until we reached him and found horses tied but abandoned. We then followed their tracks until the forenoon. We eventually caught up with them after the *`Asr* prayer (late-afternoon) in a place called **Tharju**. At that time we were only five men, however we did not encounter any ploys from them. We then returned to our place after the *maghrib* prayer. During this reconnaissance we became extremely thirsty, as well as our mounts. We then sacrificed some of the cows, which

³ Thursday night means here Wednesday night. This is because the night precedes the day in the civilized Islamic world.

⁴ Alkalawa was the capital of the ruler of Gobir. The *Shehu* attacked the city in three different military campaigns, but did not succeed in defeating them until the third encounter in the year 1808.

the disbelievers abandoned and drank the milk of some of the younger calves. As we were returning to our place, we encountered the enemy's army, we engaged them energetically, fighting until the early morning of that same night.

I was informed by a reliable source present at that battle that when the disbelievers heard their horses, they equipped themselves and made ready for the encounter. However, the Muslims routed them until they reached their land. The Muslims then took captives, after which they traveled a great distance. They then went in search of water and then dismounted and drank and watered their horses and rides, until they eventually rested and unwound. In this military expedition the *mu`adhin*, **Shaykh Ahmad as-Sudani** and the righteous sage, **Bara Kindi**, both became martyrs. In short, there continued to occur battles between them and us from the time the messages were sent and before its arrival. The disbelievers continued to dispatch against us subdivisions of military detachments, like what happened at **Kurfiya**. We also sent out against them military detachments until the above-mentioned battle occurred.



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