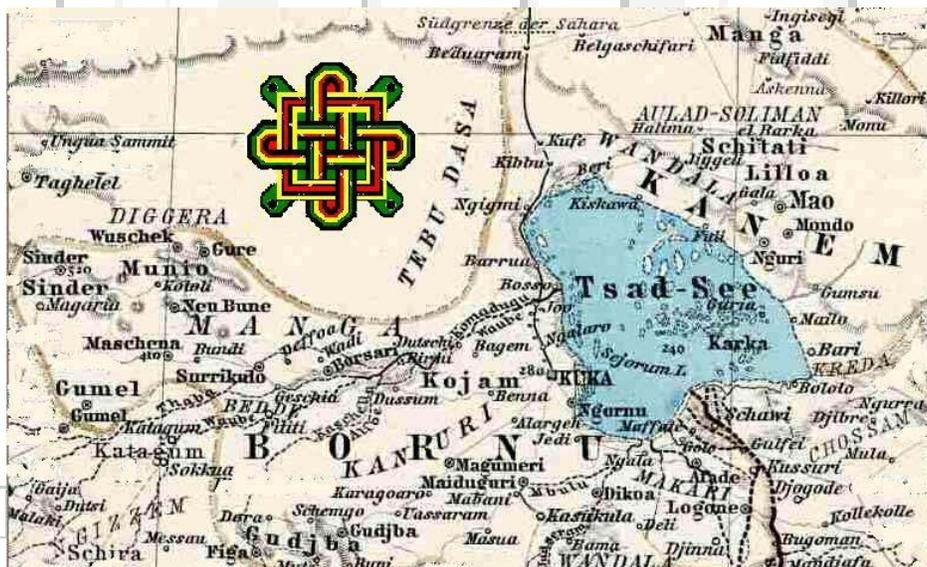


## Chapter Four

### On the Description of Bornu and Those Who Reside There

**B**aghirma is followed by the country of **Bornu** in the direction of the west. It is a land full of rivers, forestry and extensive deserts. It was a highly populated country even before this *jihad* of ours. There was no country in these regions that was as extensive as it, nor possessed the large population that it enjoyed. The people who resided in its vicinity were the Berber, the above-mentioned Arabs, and Fulani and among them were many of the slaves of the Berber.

These Berber were originally the remnant of the Baraabara who lived amongst the Negroes and the Abyssinians. They are the people whom Himyar drove out of the Yemen after being pursued by Ifriqish. The reason for their residing in Yemen, based upon what they claim, is that Ifriqish was beseeched by the people of Syria to pursue the Berbers who had increased corruption in the land. They assisted him against them and he made military raids against them and scattered their communities. He seized their families. When he saw that they remained arrogant he continued to hold their families captives and made them slaves who assisted him in his armies. When he died and a short time passed, they rose up against the next ruler, Himyar. He fought them and drove them out of Yemen. They then settled near the lands of Abyssinia. They then succeeded in reaching the lands of Kanem. There they found the country underdeveloped and were under the control of their kinsmen, the Tuaregs, called Amkeeta. They conquered them in the land and eventually settled in the country establishing government until they controlled the furthest regions in these lands.



Map of Bornu and its region

The people of Wodai and Baghirma were once under the jurisdiction of the ruler of Bornu, and this was the same with the country of the Hausa, from the lands of Bauchi. Then their government became weakened. Many of the rulers of their lands made the pilgrimage to the Two Sacred Places. They were known for diligently manifesting the good, making Islam apparent and establishing the *shari'a* and punitive punishments in the beginning of their affair. And there still remain much of the imprints of Islam amongst them.

Islam spread among them extensively, even among the rulers, his attendants and his common subjects. Rather, you could not find in his country a single common

person except that he was concerned with reading of the Quran, melodiously reciting it, memorizing it and writing it down. The common people of this country continued to be established in that until this *jihad* was established. However, we were informed that their rulers and *amirs* have an area that they ride to and make sacrificial offers there. They then spread the blood over the doors of their villages. They also have large palaces in which are serpents and sacrificial instruments. They also make sacrifices for the river in the same manner as the Coptic did for the Nile River during the days of *jahilliyya*! They also had celebration in which the rulers, the intellectuals as well as the common people gathered together. No one else was allowed to gather there. They claimed that this was a custom of the people of the country. They claimed that this custom was a sought of alms which they instituted to help procure the general welfare of the people and to ward off corruption. They claimed if they did not do this custom their entire way of life would be undermined, their subsistence would be depleted and their authority would be weakened. The notables of this society inherited these blameworthy customs from the notables before them.

It has not reached us that any of their rulers and scholars - regardless of his station - ever refuted these corrupt customs, except from those who refused to associate in their affairs with them from among the Arabs and the Fulani. These scholars continued to reject what they were doing and declared them as disbelievers because of it. There is no doubt concerning their disbelief, even if their scholars claim that they do not intend to associate deities with Allah, nor do they believe that these customs have any positive or negative effect. They are disbelievers, because the idols of trees, water and sacred places which they make sacrifices for are the same idols of their grandfathers who were non-Muslims. Thus, they now follow them in that even if they manifest Islam and do good deeds besides, mainly because *Islam* was brought here by travelers and merchants passing through their land. Thus, those among the people of Bornu took their religion from them.

There are some of the people of this land who were sincere in their *deen* as is proper, while some of the people intermixed their *deen* with that which made it deficient. The majority of the rulers of this kingdom were from the later group. This is because they hold to Islam, pronounce the word of divine unity, pray and fast; however they refuse to part with the conventions of their ancestors. They fail to avoid anything from these corrupt customs. Thus, everyone who intermixes with them knows from necessity that they embellish themselves with that, which only emerges from a disbeliever. Some of them do this out of blind following to others, while others do this of their own volition.

Shihab 'd-Deen<sup>1</sup> said in his *Siyam 'r-Riyaad* the commentary upon the *as-Shifa'*, "Among the people of the *Sudan* are Muslim people. Among them, however, are disbelievers who worship trees and among them are disbelievers who worship water." Our master al-Mukhtar ibn Ahmad al-Kunti said in his *an-Naseehat 'l-Kaafiyya*, "The *bilad 's-sudan* is a country whose people for the most part are disbelievers. There are some among them who are Muslims under the domination of the disbelievers. Their people have appointed rulers and they behave in the fashion of their rulers in most cases. The most of them have been overcome with the darkness of ignorance, corrupt passions, and disbelief. For this reason it is prohibited to travel to the lands of the enemies and the *bilad 's-sudan*." Later this issue will be discussed in detail.

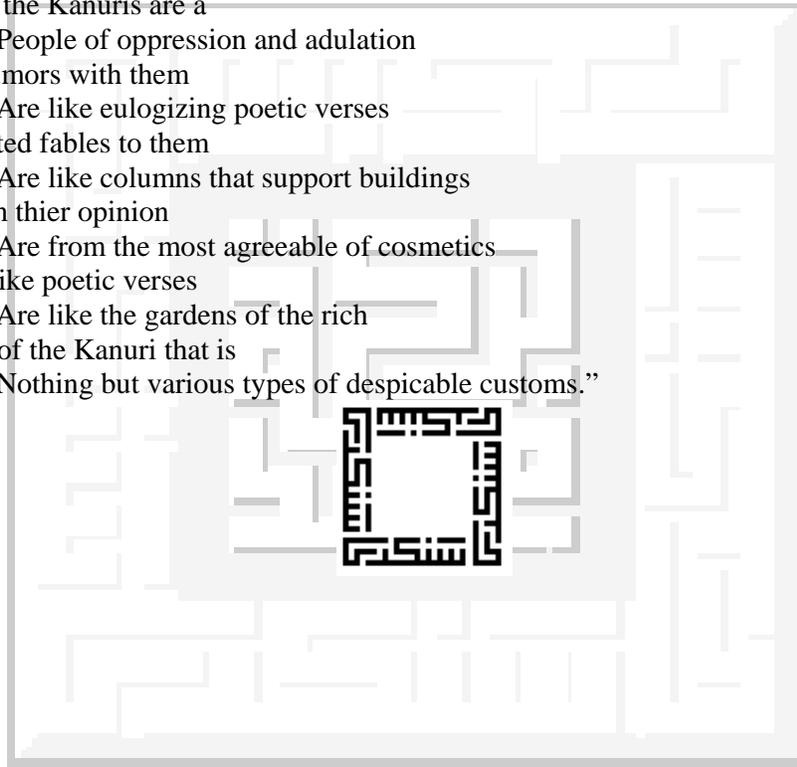
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<sup>1</sup> He was the erudite *Shaykh* Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Maghribi al-Muqri, known as *Shihab 'd-Deen*.

Therefore, if you understand what we have mentioned then you also realize that there can be no additional reason as an excuse for what they manifest. Like for example someone who makes prostration in order to obtain one hundred thousand golden *dirham*. This is regardless if they verbally express the *shahadatayn*, pray, fast, make pilgrimage and do every act of righteousness. This is because consensus upholds that a single trait of disbelief can wipe out a thousand traits of *imaan*.

Among the customs of this country, based upon what has been related to us, is the spreading of corruption among their Quran reciters, intellectuals and their notables, where no one denounces the other. Among their characteristics is the haughtiness and arrogance among the intellectuals as well as the common people. Their rulers in other ways demonstrate the traits of violence, viciousness, humiliating others, lack of tolerance, the shedding of blood, much injustice and corruption. About them the Professor at-Taahir ibn Ibrahim said in verse:

“Verily the Kanuris are a  
People of oppression and adulation  
False rumors with them  
Are like eulogizing poetic verses  
Fabricated fables to them  
Are like columns that support buildings  
Lying in their opinion  
Are from the most agreeable of cosmetics  
Myths like poetic verses  
Are like the gardens of the rich  
O tribe of the Kanuri that is  
Nothing but various types of despicable customs.”



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