

## Chapter Five **On the Scholars of the Land of Bornu**

**A**mong the scholars of this land is the scholarly *imam*, fearfully aware erudite, the learned *shaykh* of the *shaykhs*, the master of comprehension and proficiency **Shaykh al-Bakri**. He took knowledge of Arabic language and the science of eloquence in the country of Jaanduut. As a result he emerged in that land as a learned scholar in many of the sciences. He then journeyed to his own land and met there the noble **Shaykh at-Takadaawi 'l-Ansumuni**. He became one of his disciples until he emerged as a scholar of all-inclusive sciences. He then returned to his country and initiated learning there and resided there until he died.

Among them was the learned scholar, the erudite jurist **Abu Bakr al-Baakumi** who was famous as **Ibn Ajurum** who took knowledge from *Shaykh al-Bakri*. He composed many scholarly works denoting the diversity of his knowledge. Among them is his al-'Aqeeda known as Shurb 'z-Zalaal.

Among them was the erudite scholar, the pure, learned exemplar and realized leader, **Shaykh at-Taahir ibn Ibrahim al-Fulani**, the unparalleled, learned in the traditional sciences as well as the intellectual sciences, the upright, fearfully aware and brilliant. The outcome is that he reached the level of the *rijaal*. He grew up in a place called *Dhat 'l-Baqr* as a brilliant student. He took knowledge from *Shaykh al-Bakri* and he returned to his land and initiated learning. Then the ruler summoned him to the court of Bornu in order for him to live there. The ruler had a home and school built for him and gave him a grant of land.

*Shaykh at-Taahir* composed many poems. Among them was his versification of the work of al-Bakri and its commentary. He composed a versification of the al-Hikaam. He authored his poem called ad-Durrari 'l-Lawaami` Wa Manaar 'l-Jaami` on the science of verbal conjugation and the science of etymology. He, may Allah be merciful to him, had many who envied him among the people of his country. This *shaykh* encountered the antipathy from the people of the country and the aversion from the ruler towards him became an offensive matter. This was due to his determination to give sound unimpeded council to them and because the unjust dislike sound advice.

One day he came to the court of the ruler desiring to enter in order to command the good and forbid indecency. The ruler ordered the gates to be locked against him and he was prevented from entering. The doorkeeper closed the door on him and he turned on his heels reciting the following poetic verse,

“Will I leave the Door which is limitless in distance

And come to the gate which is blocked by the doorkeeper?!

The gate says: ‘Do not enter! and turn away from

The miserly and from everyone who encompasses that gate.”

He also has a poetic hymn giving advice to the ruler after hearing the words of slander and defamation. Some of the verses from this poem have been previously mentioned.



Photo of a page from a handwritten *Qur'an* from Bornu<sup>1</sup>

*Shaykh* at-Taahir, may Allah be merciful to him, was among those who foretold the appearance of this *Imam* and *Khalifa* (*Uthman Dan Fuduye'*), the renewer of the *deen* of this century for humanity. It was related from him from sound sources from his transmission to *Shaykh* Waldeede' that he said, "**I announce to you the time of a wali from among the awliyya of Allah who will appear in these lands. He will renew the deen for humanity, spread knowledge and give victory to the sunna.**" There were scholars other than these whose footprints have been lost due to the deficiency in recording historical narration in these lands as mentioned previously.

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<sup>1</sup> Courtesy of Wautallah of the Washington D.C. chapter of NCOBRA from his digital archive he photographed while in touring Nigeria and Chad.