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

CHAPTER I

A LIST OF THE RULERS OF SONGHAY

The Za Dynasty¹

The first of the rulers to govern Songhay was Za-Alayaman. He was succeeded by the following successive rulers: Za-Zaki; Za-Takay; Za-Akay; Za-Koy; Za-Ali Fay; Za-Biyai Kumay; Za-Biyai; Za-Karay; Za-Yama Karaywa; Za-Yama; Yama-Danka Kiba`u; Za-Kukuray and Za-Kinkin. These fourteen rulers all died in a state of *jahiliyya*² and not one of them believed in Allah and His Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.

Among the first of the rulers of Songhay to accept *Islam* was **Za-Kusay**, may Allah be merciful to him. In his own language he was called *Muslim-dam* - which means 'he accepted *Islam* of his own free will without coercion'. That was in the year 400 from the year of the *hijra*³ of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. He was succeeded consecutively by the following rulers: Za-Kusay Darbiya; Za-Hin Kuzwankay Dam; Za-Biyai Koy Kim; Za-Nintasanay; Za-Biyai Kayna Kimba; Za-Kayna Shanyubu; Za-Tibu; Za-Yama Dadu; Za-Fadazu; Za-Ali Kura; Za-Biru Falak (may Allah be merciful to him); Za-Yasibay; Za-Duru; Za-Zanka Bari; Za-Bisa Bari and Za-Bada.

The Sonni Dynasty

After the Za dynasty came the first of the *sonnis*, **Ali Kolon**, who, with the help of Allah, broke the chains of the sovereignty of the people of Mali from the necks of the people of Songhay.⁴ After him the rule was given to his brother Silman Nar. Both Silman Nar and Ali Kolon were the sons of Za-Yasibay. The rulers after them in consecutive order were: *Sonni* Ibrahim Kabay; *Sonni* Uthman Kanafa; *Sonni* Bar-Kayna Ankabi; *Sonni* Musa; *Sonni* Bokar Zanka; *Sonni* Bokar Dala-Buyunbu; *Sonni* Maru-Kuray; *Sonni* Muhammad Da`u; *Sonni* Muhammad Kukiya; *Sonni*

¹The Za dynasty emerged in the town of Kukiya on the eastern wing of the Niger river, 200 kilometers south of the city of Gao. Around the year 400 *hijra* or 1009 C.E., the dynasty moved from Kukiya to the town of Gao, the same year that the dynasty adopted Islam as the religion of the state. The Za dynasty is also referred to by the historians as *Dia*.

² The concept *jaahiliyya* is a collective noun from the word *jaahil* - ignorant or pagan. It refers to the period before the Islamization of a people. It translates as 'the time of ignorance'.

³The year of *hijra* -'emigration' is the year which Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace emigrated from Mecca to Madina on Monday, the 8th of Rabi` 'l-Awwal (20th Sept.) in the year 622 C.E..According to al-Biruni it was Umar ibn 'l-Khataab who, after consulting with Ali ibn Abi Taalib and other Companions, decided to establish the *hijra* as the beginning point of dating for all Muslims. Thus, the date of the *islamization* of the Songhay kingdom was 1009 C.E..

⁴ This occurred around the last quarter of the thirteenth century between 1260 and 1300.

Muhammad Far; *Sonni* Karbifo; *Sonni* Maru-Fay Kuli-Jimu; *Sonni* Maru Arkana; *Sonni* Arandan; *Sonni* Sulayman Daama; ***Sonni* Ali**; *Sonni* Baru whose name was Bokar Da`u; and after him was **Askiya al-Hajj Muhammad**.



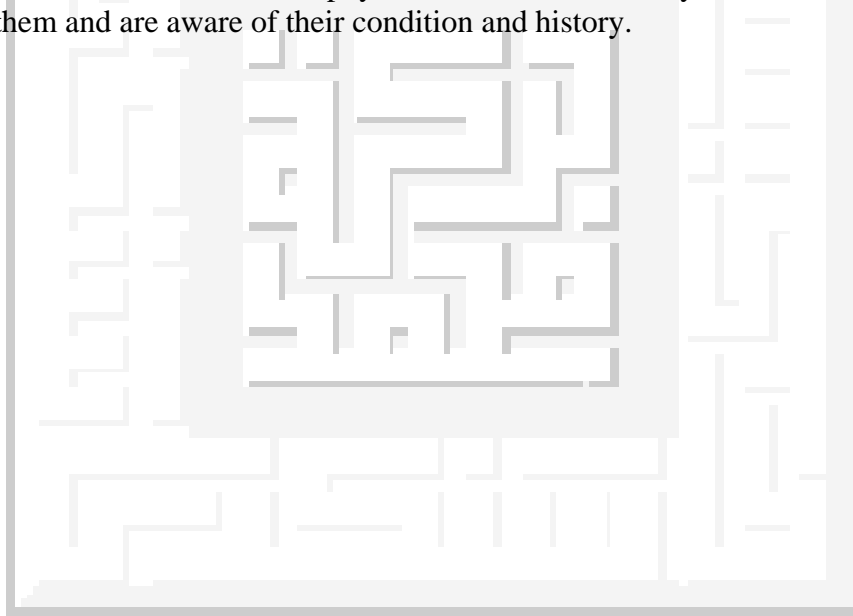
The Origin of the Kingdom of Songhay

As for the first ruler of Songhay, Za-Alayaman, his name takes its origin from the Arabic phrase: '*ja'a min 'l-Yemen*' ('he came from Yemen'). It has been related that he left Yemen, along with his brother, traveling in the earth of Allah ta`ala until they reached the boundaries of the land of Kukiya (Gao), a very ancient site on the coast of the Niger river in the country of Songhay. This occurred during the time of Pharaoh. It is even said that he was among the sorcerers who had contended with Musa, the One who spoke directly with Allah, upon him be peace.⁵

When (Za-Alayaman and his brother) reached the land of Kukiya they were found in a very bad condition to the point where their human characteristics had almost disappeared from them. This was due to dehydration, filth and near nakedness from the torn animal skins they wore. When they had settled among the people of that land they were asked about the land of their origin. The eldest of the two brothers said, "*Ja'a min 'l-Yemen*", (We came from Yemen). Thus the people continued to call him *Za-Alayaman* and altered the expression from its original due to the difficulty they had at expressing because of the burden of their language. Za-Alayaman and his brother resided with them in Kukiya and found that the populace was idolaters who only worshipped idols.

⁵ In the Qur'an Allah ta`ala relates the conversion of these magicians to the religion of Musa, upon him be peace, "*The magicians fell down in prostration and said, 'We believe in the Lord of Harun and Musa.'*" [20:70] Cheikh Anta Diop proved conclusively throughout his many works on Black Africa, the Nilotic origin of many if not all of the divergent ethnic groups of West Africa. See his Precolonial Black Africa, Civilization or Barbarism, and African Origins of Western Civilization. The above statement also gives evidence of the existence of communities allied with or who were direct descendents of the *Bani Isra'il* in the western *Bilad as-Sudan*. See our Lost and Found Children of Abraham; www.siiasi.org .

A demon (*jinn*) used to manifest himself to them in the form of a large fish which had a ring in its nose. It would appear on the water of the river at certain times. The populace would gather around it at those times and worship it. The (*Jinn*) would order them to do things and forbid them other things. This resulted in the people becoming disunited where some obeyed its commands and prohibitions. One day while they were doing this, Za-Alayaman being present realized that they were in manifest error and that he should destroy the fish. Consequently he became determined to follow through with it with the help of Allah. On the day that the people had gathered at the river's shore, Za-Alayaman threw an iron spear at the fish and killed it. The people then pledged their oath of allegiance to him and made him their king. It was said that he was Muslim based upon what he had done, but people had become apostate immediately after his death. We are not aware of who originated the idolatry among them or of the exact time when he departed from Yemen and arrived in Kukiya nor are we aware of his actual name. The expression Za (Dia) remained as a distinguishing colophon for them and emerged as a nickname for everyone who was given the authority over the kingdom after him. Their dynasty multiplied and expanded until no one actually knows their actual number except Allah, glory be to Him. They are people of great physical strength, courage, bravery, endowed with enormous and tall physics, as is well known by those who have resided among them and are aware of their condition and history.



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