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

CHAPTER XII

MENTIONING THE INFAMOUS TYRANT SONNI ALI

As for the infamous tyrant and notorious profligate *Sonni* Ali, his name is spelled with the inflection of the letter *sin* with *damma* and the inflection of the doubled letter *nun* with *kasra*.¹ This is the way I found it recorded in the Nayl 'l-Ibtihajj of the erudite jurist Ahmad Baba, may Allah be merciful to him. *Sonni* Ali possessed great strength and had a firm and solid body. He was oppressive, corrupt, aggressive, dominating and a shedder of blood. He killed and had killed so many people that only Allah ta`ala knows the true number. He afflicted the scholars and the righteous with slaying, abuse and degradation. The learned *haafidh* al-`Alqama², may Allah be merciful to him said in his commentary upon the al-Jaami's-Saghir of Jalaal's-Suyuti³ when he mentioned the events of ninth century, "We have heard that there was a man who appeared in the lands of *Takruur*.⁴ He was called *Sonni* Ali. He raked destruction upon the servants of Allah and the lands. He came into control of the government in the year 869 A.H."⁵.

It was related by the *waliy* of Allah ta`ala, the jurist *Qadi* Abu 'l-Barakaat Mahmud ibn Umar ibn Muhammad Aqit that he himself was born one year before the government of *Sonni* Ali.⁶ I have seen in the Nayl 'l-Ibtihajj:⁷ "He (*Qadi* Mahmud)

¹ He was *Sonni* Ali Bir ibn *Sonni* Mahmud, the last of the great Soninke' leaders.

² He was Shams 'd-Deen Muhammad 'l-`Alqami.

³ This text is the al-Jaami's-Saghir Min Hadeeth 'l-Bashir 'n-Nadhir of *Imam* Jalaaludeen Abd'r-Rahman 's-Suyuti. He was Abu 'l-Fadl Abd'r-Rahman ibn Abu Bakr ibn Muhammad 's-Suyuti, [849-911 A.H.].

⁴ The term *takruur* refers to the entire region of the western *Bilad's-Sudan*. It originally referred to the first kingdom in the region to accept Islam as the religion of the state. *Sultan* Muhammad Bello said in his Infaq'l-Maysuur regarding the designation of the term *Takruur*: "*Takruur*, is the designation of the western region of the southern *Bilad as-Sudan*, based on what we have been made to understand from the historical narratives. This name has pervaded all the lands of the Two Sacred Places, Egypt, and Abyssinia. The name was so well entrenched in its place that the people of these lands are unawares of its origin. They encountered this name from the pilgrims who were named this in the Two Sacred Places as well as in Egypt. I saw in the al-Qamuus of Maajid'd-Deen al-Fayruzbaadi, "It is a land located in the west. It is the opinion of their people that the term *Takruur* designates the lands of Kano, Katsina and those lands of the *bilad's-Sudan* bordering them. It designates the lands of Tankeet and the lands bordering it in the lands of *Takruur*." And Allah knows best. Ibn Khaldun said in his Tarikh 'l-Kabeer when speaking about the narrations of the kingdoms of the *Sudan* neighboring Morocco, "The people of the *Sudan* are Tarjanat, adjacent to them are Kanem. Adjacent to them on the west are the people of Gao. And after them are the people of *Takruur*."

⁵ In 1464 C.E..

⁶ He was *al-Qadi* Abu'l-Barakaat Mahmud ibn Umar ibn Muhammad Aqit ibn Umar ibn Ali ibn Yahya 's-Sanhaji 't-Timbukti. He was born in the year 868 A.H. (1463 C.E.) He was youngest of the

was born in the year 868 A.H. and died in the year 955 A.H. on a Thursday night, the 16th of *Ramadan*.⁸ *Sonni* Ali abided in his government for either twenty-seven years or twenty-eight years. He was engaged in military campaigns and conquering lands. He seized *Jenne'* and took possession of it for one year and a month⁹. He conquered *Jenje'* and he allowed the *Dirma-Koy*¹⁰ to enter the city mounted after several reprisals.

He conquered *Walata* and the lands of the *Sanhaja* called *Nunu*.¹¹ Their leader at that time was *Bekuna Kaabi*. He conquered *Tinbuktu* and all of the mountainous areas except the people of *Dum* who revolted against him. He conquered the lands of the *Kunta*¹² and was determined to seize the lands of *Borgu* but was unable.¹³ The last of his military expeditions was against *Gurma*. When the authority was given to him, the *Tinbuktu-Koy*, *Muhammad Naddi* wrote to him. In his letter he expressed his wishes of well being and supplication. He desired from him not to remove his attention from him because the care of *Tinbuktu* was among the circle of his dependents. When *Muhammad Naddi* died and the authority was given over to his son *Umar* who wrote to *Sonni* Ali the reverse of what his father had written. He said to

famous sons of *Shaykh Umar ibn Muhammad Aqit*. He was the chief judge of *Tinbuktu*, the praiseworthy, the splendid, the foremost scholar, the most righteous, the professor, the jurist and *Imam* of *Takruur*. He was appointed over the judiciary in the year 904 A.H. (1498 C.E) during which he examined all affairs in detail and was strict in carrying out his judgments. He specified and strove for the truth and pointed out falsehood and caused it to wither. As a result of this, his justice became well known to the point where he had no equal in his time. He performed the pilgrimage to *Mecca* in the year 915 A.H. (1510 C.E) where he met some of the masters of erudition. Among them were: *Ibrahim ibn Muhammad 'l-Muqaddasi*, a *Shafi`* scholar and *Imam* of the central mosque of *Manjuk*; the two disciples of *Shaykh 'l-Islam* and *Imam Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Hajr*, [909-974 A.H./1504-1567 C.E.] - *Shaykh Shaykh 'l-Islam Zakariya ibn Muhammad ibn Zakariya*, [823-926 A.H./ 1420-1520 C.E.] and; the two *al-Laqaanis*: *Shams 'd-Deen 'l-Laqaani* [935 A.H./1528 C.E.] and *Naasir 'd-Deen Muhammad ibn Hassan 'l-Laqaani*, [873- 958 A.H./ 1466-1551 C.E.] and others who became acquainted with his piety and uprightness. He returned to his country and persisted in benefiting and executing the truth. He taught for some fifty years until he died in the year 955 A.H., on Friday night the 16 of *Ramadhan* (October 19, 1548). He attained the highest degree of eminence and the people extolled him until his reknown spread and reached a degree which no other had attained.

⁷ This is the famous *Nayl 'l-Ibtihaj Bi Tatreez 'd-Dibaaj*, a famous biographical dictionary of *Maliki* jurisprudents and sages by the renown *Abu'l-Abass Ahmadu Baba ibn Ahmad ibn 'l-Hajj Ahmad ibn Umar Aqit ibn Muhammad Aqit*, [d. 1626]. He one of the most famous of the scholars of the *Aqit* family of *Tinbuktu*. It was written during his capture and stay in *Marrakesh*, completed 7 *Jumada 'l-Ula* 1005 A.H./ 27 December 1596 C.E.. He was 40 years old at its completion.

⁸ He was born in 1463 C.E. and died 19 October 1548 C.E..

⁹ In 1473 C.E..

¹⁰ The *Dirma-Koy* is the title for the 'governor of *Dirma* or *Zarma*'. The region of the *Dirma* is on the southern bend of the *Niger* river about 600 kilometers southeast of *Tinbuktu* and 300 kilometers southeast of *Gao*.

¹¹ The *Sanhaja* trace their lineage to the *Himyar* as is mentioned in the *Kitab 'l-Khilil 'l-Mawshiya Fii Dhikr Akhbar 'l-Marakhashiya*. The actual quote is: "These are the *Lamtun* who are attributed to the *Lamtuna* from the descendents of *Lamt*. *Lamt*, *Judaal*, *Lamt* and *Mastuf* trace their lineage to the *Sanhaja*. *Lamt* was the ancestor of the *Lamtuna*. *Judaal* was the ancestor of the *Judaala*. *Lamt* was the ancestor of the *Lamta*. *Mastuf* was the ancestor of the *Massufa*. They continually journey in the desert as superb travelers and never stay in a single local nor have they a city in which to take refuge. Their journeys in the *Sahara* between the lands of *Islam* and the *Bilad 's-Sudan* took two months travel. The *Tuaregs* are on the *deen* of *Islam* and follow the *sunna*. They perform the *jihād* against the *Bilad 's-Sudan*. The *Sanhaja* trace their lineage to the *Himyar*.

¹² The *Kunta* were the most notable people of the *Sanhaja* who originally emerged from the region of *Tuwat*. They were reknown for their learning, piety and justice. They have played a major role in the diffusion of *Islam* and erudition throughout the *Sahel* region.

¹³ The people of *Bargu* are *Mande* speaking people who developed the centralized sates of *Wawa*, *Nikki*, *Busa* and *Illo* about 600 kilometers south of *Tinbuktu* and 375 kilometers southwest of *Gao*.

him in his letter that his father only took with him to the next life the two cloths which covered his body. And all of the power and strength which his father possessed is now abundant with him. Whoever opposes him will see what is with him of power and strength. Sonni Ali said to his attendants, "What a difference between the thinking of this young man and the mind of his father! The clear difference between their words is an indication of the difference in their thinking."

In the year 873 A.H. Sonni Ali entered into Tinbuktu during *Rajab* 4th or 5th, and this was four to five years after he was given the authority¹⁴. When he entered the metropolis he carried out appalling barbarisms and outrageous immoralities. He burned parts of the city and demolished parts of it. He also killed untold amounts of people. When Akillu heard of the coming of Sonni Ali, he brought a thousand camels to carry the jurists of the **Sankore'** quarter and went with them to Walata. He said that they concerned him more than anything else. Among them were the jurist Umar ibn Muhammad Aqit and his three blessed sons: the jurist Abdallah;¹⁵ the jurist Ahmad the oldest of them¹⁶ and the jurist Mahmud the youngest of them in years, being then only five years of age. At that time the young Mahmud was unable to ride or to walk on his feet. He was only able to ride on the neck of their servant the grandfather of Makanki, who carried him until they arrived at Walata. Their maternal uncle, al-Mukhtar 'n-Nahawi ibn *al-Faqih* And Agh Muhammad also traveled with them.¹⁷ When they reached Walata they found the *Imam az-Zamuuri*, may Allah be merciful to him from whom they received *ijaaza* for the Kitab's-Shifa of *Qadi`Iyad*, may Allah be merciful to him.

On the day of the departure for Walata you could see grown men with beards who when it was time to mount the camels they would tremble out of fear. When they mounted the camels they would fall when the camels stood. The reason for this was that the righteous ancestors used to restrain their children in their homes until they grew older knowing nothing of the matters of this world. It was this journey which made them regret that. As a result when they did return to Tinbuktu they let the children have their own way in playing and released them from the previous restraints.

The corrupt tyrant was engaged in slaughtering those who remained from the people of the **Sankore'** quarter in Tinbuktu and in humiliating them. He claimed that

¹⁴ This took place on 29 or 30 January 1468 C.E..

¹⁵ He was *Shaykh Abdallah ibn Umar* ibn Muhammad Aqit ibn Umar ibn Ali ibn Yahya 's-Sanhaji 'l-Massufi. He was a jurist who had memorized the *Qur'an*. He was ascetic, pious and an upright *waliy* who had attained the highest degree of piety and fearful awareness. He was endowed with a prodigious memory. He taught in the region of Walata where he died in the year 929 A.H.(1523 C.E). He was born in the year 866 A.H (1462 C.E) and possessed many miracles.

¹⁶ He was **Ahmad ibn Umar** ibn Muhammad Aqit ibn Umar ibn Ali ibn Yahya ibn Kuqala 's-Sanhaja 't-Timbukti. He is alleged to have left behind a library which contained 700 volumes. Al-Hajj Ahmad took knowledge from his maternal grandfather the jurist And Agh Muhammad, from his maternal uncle, Mukhtar 'n-Nahawi and others. He traveled to the East in the year 890 A.H. (1485 C.E.) and performed the pilgrimage. During his journey, he met Abu 'l-Fadl Abd'r-Rahman ibn Abu Bakr ibn Muhammad 's-Suyuti, [849-911 A.H.] and *Shaykh* Khalid 'l-Waqad 'l-Azhari,[d.1499C.E] the *Imam* of the grammarians and others. He returned from the East during the tribulations brought on by the heretic Sonni Ali, between the years 1468 and 1493 C.E. He died on Friday night, in the month of *Rabi'a 't-Thani*, 943 A.H. [October of 1536 C.E.] at the age of 80. He was sought out for the function of *Imam* (over the **Sankore'** university/mosque), but he refused preferring it for others.

¹⁷ He was *Shaykh Mukhtar 'n-Nahawi* (the grammarian) ibn *al-Faqih* And Agh Muhammad. He was a brilliant scholar acquainted with every branch of knowledge and learning. He and his father were contemporaries of the erudite jurist, the *Qutb* and *waliy* of Allah, Sidi Yahya 't-Tadalisi, may Allah ta'ala be merciful to him and be pleased with all of them. Al-Mukhtar died in the last part of the year 922 A.H. [1516 C.E.] may Allah merciful to him.

they were the close and select friends of the Tuaregs and it was on this account that he hated them. He had the mother of the jurist Mahmud, Sita bint And Agh Muhammad imprisoned. He also killed the two brothers: the jurist Mahmud and the jurist Ahmad, the two sons of And Agh Muhammad. He pursued them with miseries after miseries and humiliation after humiliation. We seek refuge with Allah. One day he ordered that thirty of their virgin daughters be brought and seized as concubines. This order was made while he was in the port town of Kabara.¹⁸ He ordered that they be brought on foot and they were women who had never come out of the women's quarters. The servant of Sonni Ali was with them driving them on until they arrived at a place where they were unable to go on. The servant dispatched this news to Sonni Ali who ordered that they be put to death. So he killed every one of them. We seek refuge with Allah. The place where this occurred is near the town of Amdagha in the direction of the west. To this day it is called: 'The destructive destiny of the virgins'.

After the jurists of Tinbuktu made their journey to Walata, Sonni Ali appointed *Qadi* Habib, the grandson of Sidi Abd 'r-Rahman 't-Tamimi, to the post of judge.¹⁹ He also went to great limits in venerating the cousin of *Qadi* Habib, al-Ma'mun, the father of Amaarad al-Ma'mun to the point where he only referred to him as 'my father'. After the death of Sonni Ali when people began to speak ill of him, al-Ma'mun said, "I cannot speak ill of Sonni Ali because he always behaved well towards me and he never harmed me the way he did the other people." Consequently, he never said good or evil about him. It was due to the justice and fairness of al-Ma'mun that his standing in the eyes of the jurist Abu'l-Barakaat Mahmud was raised.

Sonni Ali continued to humiliate and kill many of the notables and scholars until the year 875 A.H., causing the remainder of the people of the **Sankore'** district to also withdraw fleeing to Walata.²⁰ He sent the Tinbuktu-Koy, al-Mukhtar ibn Muhammad Naddi in their tracks. When he reached them in a place called Ti`jiti, they engaged him and his forces in battle which caused the death of the best and most noble of their people. The battle which occurred there is known to this day as the battle of Ti`jiti.

He then turned his face towards the children of *Qadi* al-Hayy who were with Alfa` Tunku and abused and humiliated them. Many of them fled heading in the direction of Tekeda. It was mentioned that they did not head in that direction except to seek the aid of the Tuareg and to come with them in order to inact revenge upon *Sonni* Ali. *Sonni* Ali applied the sword to all those who remained in there. He slaughtered many and had many imprisoned from among men and women. We seek refuge with Allah! It was said that because of this ghastly slaughter beneficial rains has not fallen in that place to this day. Thirty men from among the notables were able to escape the above slaughter and directed themselves towards the west. They fled for an entire day until they reached the village of Shibi, where they dismounted and halted underneath a tree. They were all fasting at that time and needed to take a siesta or small sleep. After a while one of them awoke and said, "I saw in this sleep of mine that we all were breaking fast tonight in Paradise." He had not even completed his words when

¹⁸ This is the important city which lie about 200 miles south of Tinbuktu and a famous port town, to which the goods and commodities of Black Africa were brought from the south eastern and south western regions; and where the goods and commodities from North Africa and Europe were brought through the long distance trade of the Sahara. It was a mysterious city which was the home of many Wangara/Mande sages and scholars, such as the renown *qutb*, *Shaykh* Modibo Muhammad al-Kaburi and his forty learned companions.

¹⁹ He was al-Qadi Habib ibn Muhammad 's-Saalih ibn Abd 'r-Rahman 't-Tamimi, [d. 1498 C.E.].

²⁰ This took place in the year 1471 C.E..

the dispatch of horsemen of the corrupt tyrant Sonni Ali descended upon them and killed every one of them. We seek refuge with Allah! May Allah be merciful and be pleased with all of them. *Sonni* Ali humiliated and punished the jurist Ibrahim, (the companion of *Alfa` Kunki* ibn Abu Bakr ibn *Qadi 'l-Hajj*), by forcing him to stand a whole day under the scorching sun. During that time *Sonni* Ali saw the father of Abu Bakr in a dream striking him painfully with a stick and saying, "May Allah scatter your children the way you scattered my children!" Allah answered that supplication of Abu Bakr concerning Sonni Ali and his children. As for those who fled with *Alfa` Kunki* to Takeda, they remained there as residence and natives of that town.

Notwithstanding all the evils and miseries which *Sonni* Ali inflicted upon the scholars, he did acknowledge their eminence and used to say, "Without the scholars the world would be no good". He did favors for other scholars and respected them. When he had completed his incursion against the Fulani of the Sanqara clan, he then dispatched many of their women as gifts to the notables of Tinbuktu, some of the scholars and the righteous men. He ordered them to take these women as concubines.²¹ Those who had no real concern for their religion took these women in their homes as concubines. However, those who had care for their religion married these women. Among them who did this was the grandfather of my grandmother²², the mother of my father, the excellent *sayyid*, the ascetic *imam* Abdullah 'l-Balbali. He married the woman that was dispatched to him and her name was A`isha 'l-Fulani. From her *Nana* Biru Ture was born and she was the mother of my father. I had the chance to meet this great grandfather of mine when he was very old and had gone blind.²³

Apart of the character of this corrupt tyrant, *Sonni* Ali, is that he used to play and toy with his religion by leaving the five prayers until night fall or until the next day. He would then sometimes stand repeatedly mentioning the name of the prayers and then make a single *salaam* for all of them. He would then say, "You all know each other, so distribute the time among yourselves!" Apart of his character is that he would order a person to be killed without reason and nothing necessitating that, although that person might have been the most respected of his people. Later he would regret what he had done to some of them. For this reason when his servants, who were aware of his vacillating character, were ordered to kill someone who they felt he would later regret, they would hide him away and protect him. Whenever *Sonni* Ali would show remorse they would say to him, "We have preserved him for you. He was not killed." *Sonni* Ali would become extremely happy as a result. This is what was done to his military slave, *Askiya* Muhammad on many occasions.²⁴ How many times was he ordered to be killed or ordered to be imprisoned because he would

²¹ The Sanqara Fulbe` clan were a branch of the famous *Turudi* Fulani who settled in the areas of Massina who traced their lineage back to `Uqba ibn Naafi`, then to Christians and then to the Bani Isra`il. They were the most learned and pious of the ethnicities of the *Bilad's-Sudan* and were the key disseminators of Islamic learning, heritage and civilization in the entire *Bilad's-Sudan* from 8th century of the *hijra* to the 13th century (12th – 19th centuries C.E.)

²² His grandmother was *Nana* Biru Ture who married `Amir 's-Sa`di.

²³ Here the author *Shaykh* Abd'r-Rahman as-Sa`di recognizes that his maternal lineage goes back to the famous *Turudi* Fulbe` ethnicity.

²⁴ He was *Amir'l-Mu`mineen* *Askiyya* Muhammad ibn Abu Bakr 't-Tuure' 's-Salenke' was among the prominent commanding officers of the military of Sonni Ali, who eventually overthrew the Sonni Dynasty and established the Songhay Kingdom. The two surnames *at-Tuure'* and *as-Salenke'* indicates that part of his ancestry originally came from Futa Turo perhaps from the Fulani *Turudi* clan, while part came from the clan of the Soninke called Sylla.

oppose *Sonni* Ali in many of his policies. This was due to the vigor of his heart and the power of his courageousness which Allah ta`ala had placed in him by nature.

Once when *Askiya* Muhammad was being afflicted with severity from the tyrant, his mother Kaasa went to her close friend, *Nana* Tinti the daughter of *Qadi* 'l-Hajj in Tinbuktu. She sought for her son a supplication from *Nana* Tinti that Allah ta`ala would help him against *Sonni* Ali. She said, "If Allah would accept this supplication, my son would bring gladness to the hearts of your children and your nearest kin, if Allah wills." When *Askiya* Muhammad took control of the government, he kept his promise to their family. As for his brother Umar Kumzaaghu, he was intelligent and reasonable enough to feign obedience and compliance to *Sonni* Ali. Thus, the tyrant never confronted him with harm or evil. But this was not the case with his *kaatib* Ibrahim 'l-Khidr who was originally from Fez. He came to Tinbuktu and resided there in the quarter of the central mosque southwest of it. *Sonni* Ali appointed him as *kaatib* in a salaried position.²⁵ One day he ordered him to be killed and to seize all of his wealth. His aides executed his command however they kept *Kaatib* Ibrahim hidden until one day an official letter was sent to *Sonni* Ali. There was no one among his aides who could read the letter. He then said, "If only Ibrahim with the big stomach were alive we would not be in a quagmire regarding this letter." His aides said to him, "He is alive. We kept him concealed." He ordered them to bring him to his presence in order to read the letter. As a result he was returned to his district and was given a small fragment of what he had lost from his wealth. Thereafter *Kaatib* Ibrahim and his clan never enjoyed security and well being until the rule of *Askiya* Muhammad, who had him confirmed in his position as *kaatib* with honor and dignity until he died. He was succeeded in the position of *kaatib* by his son, Hawia. However, he was returned to Tinbuktu as a *kaatib* who served as inspector for *Askiya* Muhammad in a position which had an immense salary and powerful leverage.

Returning back to the narrative of *Sonni* Ali. He entered Kabara in the year 882 A.H.²⁶ This was the same year that the ruler of Mossi²⁷ entered into Saama. In 884 A.H. *Sonni* Ali had taken the town of Tosoko.²⁸ In that same year Ayda Haamid the son of the sister of Alfa` Mahmud was born. The same year Alfa` Mahmud²⁹ left Walata in the month of *Sha`ban* and returned to Tinbuktu.³⁰ He, may Allah be merciful to him, mentioned then that he studied the ar-Risaalat of Ibn Abi Zayd with Ayda Haamid until he reached the section on the two *raka`at* before the *fajr* prayer.³¹ Then the armies of Mossi made their incursions in the land while he studied the same text with Ahmad ibn Uthman. He forgot with whom he finished the ar-Risaalat. He

²⁵ The position of *kaatib* (secretary/scribe)

²⁶ This occurred in 1477 C.E..

²⁷ The *Mossi* people included the kingdoms of Gonja which was north of the Black Volta and Wagadugu in the north; Mamprusi in the center and Dagomba in the south. For most of the 14th and 15th centuries the *Mossi* remained staunch enemies to Islam. In the 16th century the *Mossi* people in the southern regions began to enter into the religion of Islam at the hands of Malinke traders.

²⁸ This occurred in the year 1479 C.E..

²⁹ The author refers to *Qadi* Mahmud as Alfa` because at that time he had not yet been appointed to the post of the judiciary. The title *alfa`* has both Soninke' and Fulfulbe roots. In both languages it is a corruption of the Arabic title *al-faqih*, however the person carrying such title also was a master of the tailor guilds in addition to being a scholar of repute.

³⁰ This happened between 8 October and 7 November 1480 C.E..

³¹ The two *rak`ats* before *subh* prayer finds its foundation in the *sunna* as related in the al-Muwatta, "Yahya related to me from Malik from Nafi from Abdullah ibn Umar that Hafsa, the wife of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, told him that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used to pray two quick *rak`ats* when the *muadhdhin* had finished the *adhan* for the *subh* prayer, before the *iqama* was said for the prayer."

then began studying the *at-Tahdheeb* with his brother.³² It was during this time that his maternal uncle, the jurist al-Mukhtar 'n-Nahawi also returned to Tinbuktu. As for his father, the jurist Umar ibn Muhammad Aqit, he died there in Walata. When *Alfa` Mahmud* had settled in Tinbuktu after the decline of oppressive government of *Sonni Ali*, he wrote to his brother the jurist Abdallah, who was in Tazekht, a village near Walata. He ordered him to return to Tinbuktu. Abdallah wrote back to *Alfa` Mahmud* saying that he would not return to Tinbuktu and that the people of **Sankore'** district have become people who break the ties of kinship and the women employed to wet nurse their children are allowed to cause division among the women who employ them by means of slander and back biting. In addition to that he said he would not live in any place where the descendents of *Sonni Ali* lived. He said if by chance he were to journey to Tinbuktu that he would only live in the quarter of the central mosque as a neighbor to the *Sultan 'l-Waajili*, the father of Umar Biru because of his excellent character. May Allah be pleased with the jurist Abdullah. He continued to reside in the region of Tazekht until he died, may Allah be merciful to him and reward us with his *baraka*.³³ When the jurist Abu'l-Barakaat Mahmud decided to reside in Tinbuktu he accompanied the *Qadi* Habib in taking knowledge from him until he died. He was his *shaykh* and it was he who commissioned him to be the *qadi* after him. He also charged him that as judge he should not visit the homes of the people of worldly means. He only ordered him to refrain from doing this because as judge he would be responsible for removing harm from the oppressed and the destitute. *Alfa` Mahmud* followed his advice and council throughout his tenure as judge. May Allah ta`ala be merciful to both of them and benefit us by them in the two worlds.

Then *Sonni Ali* commenced to have a canal dug from the lake of Ras 'l-Ma'a as to far as the town of Walata in order to maintain control over it. He was preoccupied with this undertaking with earnestness and effort utilizing the greatest of his forces. Then the news reached him that the Mossi-Koy and his army were determined to make war against him. This news reached him when he was in a place called Shan-Fanas, where he had reached in digging the canal. In this way Allah ta`ala protected the people of Walata from the evils of *Sonni Ali*. *Sonni Ali* then returned in order to encounter the Mossi-Koy. He engaged his armies in a place called Junki-Tu`i, a village near the lands of Kebbi beyond the river.³⁴ It was there that their armies fought where *Sonni Ali* destroyed the armies of the Mossi-Koy causing him to flee. *Sonni Ali* chased his armies until he penetrated the boundaries of the lands of the Mossi. This was in the year 888 A.H. He then returned and encamped at Diru after which he commenced trying to conquer the mountainous regions as mentioned previously. He then made military raid upon Gurma and conquered them and sacked their town. This was the last of his military expeditions. When he departed from Batira he went on to restore the wall of Tila in the region of Kabara in the year 890 A.H.

In that same year al-Hajj Ahmad ibn Umar ibn Muhammad Aqit traveled to the east for the pilgrimage and returned during the tribulations of the heretic *Sonni Ali*, based upon what the learned Ahmad Baba mentions in his *Nayl 'l-Ibtihajj*. In the year 891 A.H. *Sonni Ali* had the Tinbuktu-Koy, al-Mukhtar ibn Muhammad Naddi, seized and imprisoned. In the year 892 A.H. *Sonni Ali*'s name was mentioned at `Arafa and the pilgrims supplicated Allah ta`ala against him. The jurist Abd 'l-Jabaar Kuku

³² He was al-Hajj Ahmad ibn Umar ibn Muhammad Aqit.

³³ He died in the year 1522 C.E..

³⁴ Kebbi is located about 175 kilometers southeast of Gao, in the lands of Hausa and was a place where many of the *Turudi* Fulbe` clans had settled, along with the Zaberma, Gurmi and Hausa ethnicities..

was present in Mecca when this was done. Thereafter disintegration gradually penetrated his government until it collapsed completely. The affair of Tosoko occurred in the year 893 A.H. and that same year the people of Tinbuktu entered Hawke and resided there for five years. Among them was the *waliy* of Allah ta`ala Sidi Abu'l-Qasim't-Tuwaati,³⁵ the jurist Abu 'l-Barakaat Mahmud, his brother Ahmad and others, may Allah ta`ala be merciful to them. Modibo Zankasi died in the year 894 A.H.

In the year 898 A.H. *Sonni* Ali ibn *Sonni* Mahmud Daa`u died returning from the military expedition against Gurma after having made war against the Zaghriani and the Fulani, whom he liquidated. When he reached the land of Gurma on his return a torrential stream rushed upon him there on the road of Konni. Thus, he was destroyed by the decree of the Powerful the Overpowering on the 15th of the sacred month of *Muharram* in the beginning of the year 898 A.H. His sons tore open his stomach and took out his intestines and filled his stomach with honey in order that his body would not have a stench. They claimed that Allah permitted them to do this do to the oppression he had done to people throughout his life. His armies then dismounted in a village called Ba` anayiya.

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³⁵ He was the bountiful *shaykh*, the excellent righteous man, the ascetic servant, the knower of Allah ta`ala, the *waliy* **Sidi Abu 'l-Qasim 't-Tuwaati**. He was of North African origin from the town of Tuwat who came and settled in the Tinbuktu. He resided in the neighborhood of the central mosque in the direction of the *qibla*. There was nothing between his home and the mosque except a narrow street. This was after he had built a small lecture hall in front of the mosque connected to it in which children studied. He held the post of *Imam* of the central *masjid al-Jenkiberri* until his death in 1516 C.E..