

SANKORE'



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

CHAPTER IX

A BIOGRAPHY OF THE SCHOLARS, THE RIGHTEOUS AND JUDGES AMONG THE ANCESTORS AND THE SUCCESSORS RESIDING IN THE CITY OF TINBUKTU; THEIR MERITS AND ACHIEVEMENTS, (May Allah be pleased with them and benefit us by their *baraka* in the two worlds.)

Sufficient in this is what had been recounted by the trustworthy *shaykhs* of Tinbuktu on the authority of the eminent scholar, the righteous *waliy*, the possessor of amazing miracles, the jurist and judge - **Modibo Muhammad 'l-Kaburi'**, may Allah ta`ala be merciful to him, who said, "I have been blessed to keep company with the righteous men of the **Sankore' University**, whom none had equaled in righteousness except the Companions of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace and may Allah be pleased with them.

Among them was the jurist **al-Qadi al-Hajj**, the grandfather of the judge Abd 'r-Rahman ibn Abu Bakr ibn 'l-Hajj. He was invested with the function of chief judge of Tinbuktu towards the end of the government of Mali. He was the first to order the people to recite a half of a *hizb*² from the Qur'an for the purpose of education in the mosque of **Sankore'** after the *`asr* and *`isha* prayers. He and his brother, the jurist Sidi Ibrahim came to Tinbuktu from the town of Walata. He later moved from Tinbuktu to Banku where his grave is well known and is a place of visitation. It is said that he was among the seven *abdaal*.³

It has been recounted by our *shaykh*, the celebrated ascetic and jurist, al-Amin ibn Ahmad,⁴ who said, "The *sultan* of Mossi made a military raid against the town of Banku during his time. The populace went out to engage the enemy. At that moment there were certain personages sitting with al-Hajj about to take a meal. He recited certain words over the dish of millet. He then ordered them to eat from the meal. They all ate from it except one person who was one of his in-laws. He was shy from eating with them because of this family affinity. Al-Hajj then said to them, "Go and participate in the fighting, for their arrows and weapons will not harm you." Each of

¹ He was Abu Abdallah Modibo Muhammad 'l-Kaburi [d. early 15th century]. He was one of the greatest scholars of Tinbuktu. He is credited with developing the educational curriculum of the **Sankore'** university/mosque during the earliest period of Malian rule.

² The Qur'an is divided into 30 parts (*juz*) and each *juz* is divided into two *hizb*. Thus, there are 60 *hizb* in the Qur'an. These divisions allow the Qur'an to be recited once or twice a month.

³ Shaykh Muhammad ibn al-'Arabi said, "They are called *abdaal* (substitutes) because each of them when he departs, he leaves behind a living body after his own image as substitute in order to conceal his departure. They are seven in number and are empowered by Allah to preserve the seven regions of the earth.

⁴ He was al-Amin ibn Ahmad ibn Ibrahim ibn Abu Bakr ibn al-Qadi 'l-Hajj, [d. 1631]. He was a noted historian and traditionist of the al-Hajj scholarly clan.

the men remained safe from injury except the one who refused to eat. He died as a result of that war. The *sultan* of Mossi was completely vanquished and driven out along with his entire army. He did not gain anything from the people of Banku as a consequence of the *baraka* of this blessed master. He fathered the *waliy* of Allah, the jurist Ibrahim ibn *Qadi* Umar, the jurist and *waliy* of Allah, who lived in Yandib`u⁵. Both were among the *`ibaad Allah's-saalihuun*⁶.

Askiya al-Hajj Muhammad was the one who appointed Umar as the judge of that region.⁷ *Qadi* Umar had a nephew who used to habitually visit Tinbuktu. The jurist and judge Mahmud complained about this nephew to the *Amir* al-Hajj Muhammad that he was carrying their words to the people of Yandib`u and making slander. When the *Amir* one day camped at the town of Tila, the jurist al-*Qadi* Umar came to convey the greetings to him accompanied by an entourage of the notables from Yandib`u. The *Amir* then asked him about his nephew. They said, "That is him there." He said to him, "You are the one who has been carrying slander between the jurist Mahmud and your uncle!" At this point the judge Umar became very angry and said, "You are the slanderer who appointed the judge of Tinbuktu and the judge of Yandib`u!" At that point he stood up very angrily and set out towards the river port. He said to his companions, "We will set across the river." When he reached the bank of the river he wanted to cross it, but the people said to him, "It is not the time for the boat. So be patient until it comes." He then said, "And if does not come!?" They understood from this that he wanted to cross the river without the boat. They grabbed him and sat him down until the boat arrived. Then they all crossed the river with him, may Allah be merciful to them and benefit us by them, Amen.

Among them was the jurist **Abu Abdallah And Agh Muhammad** ibn Muhammad ibn Uthman ibn Muhammad ibn Nuuh.⁸ He was a treasure-trove of knowledge, virtue and uprightness. He fathered many *shaykhs* of knowledge and piety. Many of them were descended from him paternally, maternally and some of them descended from him both maternally and paternally. He was an illustrious scholar and the judge of the Muslims. The learned jurist Ahmadu Baba, may Allah be merciful to him, said, "He was the first of his ancestors to give himself in the service of learning and erudition. He was the grandfather of my maternal grandfather, because he was the father of the mother of my grandfather. He was appointed as the judge of Tinbuktu in the middle of the ninth century." He continues, "That was during the rule of the Tuaregs⁹. Then the function of the judiciary was invested to the father of my grandfather, Umar.¹⁰ And-Agh Muhammad was a jurist, scholar and man of piety who had studied with the pious jurist and the judge *Modibo* Muhammad 'l-Kaburi." Here ends an abridgement of what Ahmadu Baba narrated.

⁵ In the Soninke language the town is called Yandibugu.

⁶ The term *`ibaadillahi as-saaliheen* (the righteous servants of Allah) refers in a general sense to every upright Muslim who performs the obligations and avoids the prohibitions. However the term also refers to a special grouping among the *awliyya* of Allah. According to the famous African scholar, Muhammad ibn al-Mukhtar al-Kunti, the number of the *awliyya* in any given time is 124,000 which is equal to the number of the Prophets and Messengers. Their division includes the *qutb* (the pole), the *imamaan* (the two leaders), the *awtaad* (the four supports), the *abdaal* (the seven substitutes), the *nugaba* (the twelve captains), the *nujaba* (the forty nobleman), the *zuhhad* (the ascetics), the *hawaariyyun* (the disciples), the *`ulama* (the knowers), and the *`ibaadillah as-saalihuun* (the upright slaves of Allah). Thus, the *`ibaadillahi as-saalihuun* constitute the base of the hierarchy of the *awliyya*.

⁷ During the early 15th century.

⁸ The word *And-Agh* in the language of Tamasheg means 'the son of'. His family originally came from Tadmekka and were among the earliest of the scholarly families of Tinbuktu.

⁹ This was from 1446 until 1468 C.E..

¹⁰ He was Abu Hafis Umar ibn Mahmud Aqit and was appointed to the judiciary in 992 A.H./ 1583 C.E..

Among them was the son of the above And-Agh Muhammad, **al-Mukhtar 'n-Nahawi** (the grammarian). He was brilliant and acquainted with every branch of knowledge. 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., may Allah be merciful to him.¹¹

Among them was another of the sons of And-Agh Muhammad, **Abd 'r-Rahman**, the learned teacher of the at-Tahdheeb of al-Buradi`i¹². He was fearful of Allah ta`ala and gentle, who left behind only one daughter.

Among them was the grandson of And-Agh Muhammad, **Abu 'l-Abass Ahmad Buryu** ibn Ahmad ibn And-Agh Muhammad. He was a pious scholar, possessing little of this world, and truly humble to Allah ta`ala. Many gatherings among the *shaykhs* of knowledge from the people of the **Sankore'** quarter took knowledge from him. May Allah be merciful to him.

Among them was **Abu Abdallah And Agh Muhammad** the son of the jurist of al-Mukhtar 'n-Nahawi ibn And-Agh Muhammad. He was appointed the *imam* and dean of the university/mosque of **Sankore'** by the *Shaykh 'l-Islam* Abu 'l-Barakat, the jurist *Qadi* Mahmud¹³ when he became very advanced in years, who resigned the post over to Abu Abdallah.¹⁴ He was a pious scholar, modest, humble and firm with Allah. He was renowned for his knowledge of the Arabic language. He was a praise singer of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace¹⁵. He was extremely coherent in the Kitab 's-Shifa of *Qadi 'Iyad*¹⁶, may Allah be merciful to him, giving a detailed commentary upon it every *Ramadhan* in the mosque of **Sankore'**. May Allah be merciful to him.

Among them was **Abu Abdallah Muhammad** the son of the above *imam* And-Agh Muhammad. He also was a praise singer of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. He also lectured on the commentary of the Kitab 's-Shifa of *Qadi 'Iyad* in the mosque of **Sankore'** after the death of his father up until he died, may Allah be merciful to him.

Among them was the jurist **al-Mukhtar ibn Muhammad** the son of the jurist al-Mukhtar 'n-Nahawi ibn And-Agh Muhammad. He was a praise singer of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. He used to expend wealth on the praise singers during the birthday of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and was extremely delighted in that. He spent freely and generously on that until he died, may Allah be merciful to him.

¹¹ He was al-Mukhtar 'n-Nahawi ibn And-Agh Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Uthman. His death occurred in the year 1516 C.E..

¹² He was Abu Sa'id Khalaf ibn Abu 'l-Qasim 'l-Buradi`i, author of Tahdheeb Masaa'il, a complete commentary upon the al-Muddawwana 'l-Kubra of Abd 's-Salaam ibn Sa'id, known as Sahnun.

¹³ He was the famous Abu'l-Barakaat Mahmud ibn Umar Aqit, one of the first to combine the supreme judiciary of the Songhay empire and dean and *imam* of the **Sankore'** mosque/university. During his tenure he welded tremendous power over the executive rulers of the empire. And it was during his time that the judiciary enjoyed semi-autonomy status from the executive government.

¹⁴ al-Qadi Mahmud appointed And Agh Muhammad in the year 1540 C.E.

¹⁵ The title *maadh* was reserved for those poets and linguistic experts who composed poetry in praise of the prophet called *madeeh*. The scholar holding this title held an important position among the scholarly community of Tinbuktu.

¹⁶ He was al-Qadi Abu 'l-Fadl 'Iyad ibn Musa ibn 'Iyad 'l-Yahsubi. [d. 544 A.H.], the judge of Granada and Marrakech during the rule of the *al-Muraabitun*. He authored one of the greatest text concerning biography and prophetic mission of Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, called as-Shifa Bi Ta'reef Huquuq 'l-Mustafa. This text was one of the most important books of study in the educational curriculum throughout Islamic Africa.

Among them was the jurist **Muhammad San**, the son of the jurist al-Mukhtar, the *shaykh* of the praises singers. He established an excellent pattern based upon continual spiritual tranquility and dignity until he died, may Allah ta'ala be merciful to him. He was a man of excellence, eminence, fear of Allah, austerity, piety, manliness and good faith. He committed himself to these benevolent traits from the time he was a young boy until his years came to a close. All praises are due to Allah for that. He was among the descendents of the jurist And-Agh Muhammad 'l-Kabir, paternally and maternally. His mother was the daughter of the *Imam* And Agh Muhammad¹⁷. Likewise there was the jurist and judge Muhammad Qarayanke¹⁸ and his brother, the jurist and judge Sidi Ahmad¹⁹ whose mother was also a daughter of the jurist and *Imam* And-Agh Muhammad²⁰. Their father was the jurist And-Agh Muhammad the son of the jurist Ahmad Buryu ibn Ahmad ibn *al-faqih* And-Agh Muhammad 'l-Kabir²¹.

The blessed *Imam*, And-Agh Muhammad had five blessed daughters. Each one of them gave birth to men of profound *baraka*. Two of the daughters have been discussed earlier.²² As for the third, she was the mother of the *shaykh* of *shaykhs*, the *imam* of the **Sankore'** university/mosque - the jurist **Muhammad ibn Muhammad Kara**.²³ The fourth daughter was the mother of bearer of the Book of Allah ta'ala, **Muhammad ibn Yumdu Ghurben**. The fifth daughter was the mother of **Muhammad Matina ibn Asikala** the brother of Atakurye.

Among them was the jurist **Abu 'l-Abass Ahmad** ibn And Agh Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn *al-faqih* And Agh Muhammad 'l-Kabir. He was a man of virtue, an astute scholar who had mastered many diverse branches of knowledge, like: jurisprudence; grammar; poetry and others. May Allah be merciful to him.

Among them was **Abu Muhammad Abdallah**²⁴ the son of the jurist Ahmad Buryu ibn Ahmad the son of the jurist And Agh Muhammad 'l-Kabir. He was a maternal and paternal descendent of And Agh Muhammad 'l-Kabir. His mother was the sister of the jurist Abu 'l-Abass Ahmad ibn And Agh Muhammad. He was the *mufti* of his time, a grammarian, philologist and linguist.²⁵ He was a man of great humility who was famous in his time for the sciences of the Qur'an its notarization and editing. May Allah be merciful to him.

Among them were his three offspring (through his daughter), *shaykhs* of Islam and *imams* of the scholars: the jurist **Abdullah**²⁶; the jurist **al-Hajj Ahmad**²⁷ and the

¹⁷ He was And Agh Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn And Agh Muhammad 'l-Kabir.

¹⁸ He was Muhammad Qarayanke ibn And Agh Muhammad ibn Ahmad Buryu ibn Ahmad ibn And Agh Muhammad 'l-Kabir [d. 1611 C.E.].

¹⁹ He was Sidi Ahmad ibn And Agh Muhammad ibn Ahmad Buryu ibn Ahmad ibn And Agh Muhammad 'l-Kabir, [d. 1635 C.E.].

²⁰ He was And Agh Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn And agh Muhammad 'l-Kabir.

²¹ He was And Agh Muhammad ibn Ahmad Buryu ibn Ahmad ibn And Agh Muhammad 'l-Kabir.

²² These were above mentioned mother of Muhammad San and the mother of Muhammad Qarayanka and Sidi Ahmad.

²³ He was al-Qadi Muhammad ibn Muhammad Kara who was appointed over the mosque and the municipal court from 1635 to 1651.

²⁴ He died 1593 C.E. a few years after the sacking of the city of Tinbuktu by the mercenary armies of Marrakech.

²⁵ The term *mufti* means he was the jurisconsult to whom legal questions were brought for resolution. He revived learning in the city just before the invasion of 1591 C.E..

²⁶ This Abdullah was among the famous Aqit family who fled Tinbuktu during the invasion of Sonni Ali in 1468 C.E. and settled in the region of Tazekht of southern Mauritania. He refused to return to the city despite encouragement from his family. He died in 1523 C.E..

jurist **Mahmud**²⁸. All were sons of the jurist Umar ibn Muhammad Aqit. The knower of Allah ta`ala, the *Qutb* Sidi Muhammad al-Bakri said about them, "Ahmad was a *waliy*, Mahmud was a *waliy* and Abdallah was a *waliy*. As for *Shaykh* Abdallah he resided in the village of Tazakht²⁹ until he died. He recommended that no one was to wash his body after his death except his disciple, Ibrahim, the grandfather of Habib ibn Muhammad Baba. When he came to wash his body, he found a kindled lamp next to *Shaykh* Abdallah's body. *Shaykh* Ibrahim then said to the family of *Shaykh* Abdallah, "Where are the *sibha* beads of the *shaykh*?" When they brought it, he ordered them to put out the lamp. He then placed the *sibha* in the place of the lamp and there radiated from it a light which illuminated the entire house until he completed the washing of the body. As for al-Hajj Ahmad, he was among the upright slaves of Allah and the right acting scholars. As for *Shaykh* Mahmud, he possessed many miracles and much *baraka*. How many times have we called into the world of the unseen to Allah for the removal of hardships and affliction, when He would cause *Shaykh* Mahmud to appear and these difficulties would be eradicated because of him. After his older brother, al-Hajj Ahmad was buried, he became very dejected. As a result the people attempted to console him, however he paid no attention to them. When he came near to the house of Uthman Taalib, he took a deep breath of relief and the sadness was removed from him. He then said, "Now the questioning Angels have withdrawn from my brother Ahmad." It was then that the people realized that he was one of those who perceived the Angels and that this was the only cause of his sadness. This was an example of the splendid miracles and spiritual unveiling which he possessed. One of the notables which attended the lectures of *Shaykh* Mahmud, whose name was *al-Faqih* And Agh Muhammad ibn Mulk ibn Ahmad ibn al-Hajj 'd-Daylami of the *Zawaya* clan from the west, and nicknamed al-Musalli due to the many prayers he performed in the mosque. He once said, "I was determined to become engaged to the daughter of *Shaykh* Mahmud. On that account, I wrote a small letter concerning this. I was resolved that when his students had departed and we were alone, I would give the letter to him. When we were alone, he opened the conversation by saying, "Birds which flock together fly together." I realized from this that he had unveiling into what I was determined to do. As a result I abandoned the desire to marry his daughter." Al-Musalli, may Allah be merciful to him, died in the year 995 A.H., two years after the learned jurist and judge **Abu Hafs Umar** had been appointed as judge.³⁰

Among them was **Abu Hafs Umar** ibn al-Hajj Ahmad ibn Umar ibn Muhammad Aqit, the grammarian and praise singer of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant peace. He used to sing songs in praise of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, every morning and evening. He made an analytical commentary and critical explanation of the *Kitab as-Shifa* every day of *Ramadhan* in the **Sankore'** mosque/university. He was a person who kept the ties of

²⁷ He was al-Hajj Ahmad ibn Umar ibn Muhammad Aqit, [d. 1535 C.E.]. He made the pilgrimage to Mecca and resided in Cairo studying with many of the scholars of that region. He is the first scholar to introduce the study of the *al-Muddawwana 'l-Kubra* of Sahnun in Tinbuktu. He also traveled to the cities of Kano and Katsina disseminating learning among the Hausa. When he died he left behind an extensive library.

²⁸ He was *al-Qadi* Mahmud ibn Umar ibn Muhammad Aqit [d. 955 A.H./ 1548 C.E.]. He popularized the *al-Mukhtasar* of Khalil ibn Ishaq 'l-Jundi as a textbook in the mosque of **Sankore'**. He was appointed as judge in 1498 until 1509 C.E. and again in 1519 until his death 1548.

²⁹ Tazakht was about two miles west of Walata. It was an ancient town and major center for learning before it was sacked by the Awlad Yusef Tuaregs.

³⁰ This occurred in 1582 C.E..

kinship, kept his promises with his near relations, and he used to visit them when they were healthy and stayed with them when they were ill. It was his habit to show a joyous face to the elite as well as the common. He died as a martyr in the city of Marrakech, may Allah be merciful and pleased with him and cool his grave for him.³¹

Among them was his brother, **Abu Bakr** known as **Babikar Biru** ibn al-Hajj Ahmad ibn Umar ibn Muhammad Aqit. He was an ascetic scholar who provided subsistence for orphans and students. During the administration which his family had over Tinbuktu, he traveled with his entire household and children to become neighbors of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, out of love for Allah and His Messenger. He resided in the noble city of Medina until he died in their caravan while making the pilgrimage³². His family continued to be neighbors of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, until they all eventually died there. Among his miracles is that his brother the learned jurist Ahmad ibn al-Hajj Ahmad desired from the saint of Allah ta`ala and the *Qutb* Abu'l-Barakat Sidi Muhammad al-Bakri, may Allah be merciful and pleased with them, that he would reveal to him a *waliy* from among the *awliyya* of Allah by which one can take as mediator to Allah, glory be to Him. He agreed to do this when one night after they had prayed the *`isha* prayer in the al-Azhar mosque.³³ *Shaykh* Ahmad wanted to leave when *Shaykh* Abu'l-Barakat took him by the hand and placed his hand upon the head of a man who was sitting in the dark. *Shaykh* Abu'l-Barakat then said; "This is the one you desire." *Shaykh* Ahmad then sat in front of him and gave him the greetings of peace, when he realized that it was his own brother Babikir Biru. He spoke with him a little while and then left. He met the master *Shaykh* Abu'l-Barakat standing at the door of the mosque looking at him. *Shaykh* Ahmad then said; "That is the one whom you have revealed to me?" He answered; "That is him. He prays the *`isha* prayer here every night."

Among them was his brother the learned jurist and *muhadith*³⁴ **Ahmad ibn al-Hajj Ahmad** ibn Umar ibn Muhammad Aqit. He was a majestic scholar, a man of superb eloquence for whom Allah had perfected all the varieties of beauty whether physical, skin color, speech and calligraphy. He was prodigious in his attainment of the literary sciences, jurisprudence, and Prophetic traditions. He was an excellent praise singer of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. He made critical analysis and commentary upon the two *Saheeh* collections in the **Sankore'** university/mosque.³⁵ He was beloved and dear to all the people. Enough as a sign of the love and nobility which he enjoyed from the people was what the master and upright saint, Abu Abdallah Muhammad al-Bakri³⁶ wrote to him in his song which he sent to him at a time when he was away from him. That was his saying, may Allah be pleased with him and benefit us by him:

³¹ He was captured by the Portuguese mercenaries under the employ of the *sultan* of Marrakech in 1594 C.E. and died as a result of the difficult journey in 1597 C.E..

³² This occurred around 956 A.H. / 1549 C.E.]

³³ This mosque/university is the oldest university in the world. This event took place during the journey which the Aqit family made to Mecca and Madina.

³⁴ A *muhadith* is a scholar learned in all the roots and branches prophetic traditions.

³⁵ These two collections are the *al-Jami` 's-Saheeh* of *Imam* Muhammad ibn Isma'il al-Bukhari [d 256 A.H./ 870 C.E.] and the *as-Saheeh* of Abu'l-Husayn Muslim ibn 'l-Hajjaj [d. 261 A.H./ 875 C.E.]. These two collections are considered by the consensus of the scholars to be the most authentic of the six well established collections. For this reason they are referred together as the *as-Saheehaan*, 'or the two sound collections'.

³⁶ He was an Egyptian scholar and *Sufi* who is credited with first spreading the *Qadiriya* Sufic brotherhood in the regions of West Africa.

"Our loved ones! By Allah I am still holding to my promise.
 My love for you remains true love and my affection for you
 is true fondness.
 I have not forgotten the days of our closeness and the good
 things about it,
 Nor the moments when we were between joviality and
 seriousness.
 Verily I call you to mind and make my address of you
 To Allah concerning what you hope for from entreated
 prayers.
 And I ask Him in every blessed moment
 For the realization of what you desire from prodigious
 subsistence
 For long life, religion then children and what
 You wish from the bounties which overflow without limit."

Among them was the sons of the *Shaykh 'l-Islam*, the *waliy* of Allah ta`ala, the jurist and judge Abu'l-Barakat Mahmud ibn Umar ibn Muhammad Aqit: [1] the judge Muhammad; [2] the judge al-`Aqib; [3] the judge Umar; [4] the jurist Abdallah; and [5] the ascetic *waliy* and jurist Abd'r Rahman. The blessing of Islam the jurist Umar And Agh Muhammad and the eminent *Shaykh* and jurist Masiru Biru both said; "Mahmud ibn Umar did not supersede us except by his righteous sons."

As for the judge **Muhammad**³⁷, he was an illustrious scholar with piercing intelligence. He was unique and unparalleled in his time regarding comprehension, cleverness, and intelligence. The people of this world were constantly at his assistance. On the day he was born the night did not descend except that one-thousand *mithqals* of gold was in his possession from the accommodation of the men who were overjoyed with his birth. This was because he was the first son to be born to the jurist Abu'l-Barakat Mahmud.

As for the judge **al-`Aqib**³⁸, he was an eminent scholar with penetrating intellect, dynamic heart, and firm with the truth. He did not fear in Allah the criticism of the criticizer. He possessed clear perspicacity. When he spoke about anything, he did not make any errors in his speech as though he were looking into the worlds of the unseen. He filled the land with justice, since there was no equal to him in that in all the regions.

As for the judge **Abu Hafs Umar**³⁹, he excelled in the science of Prophetic traditions, biographies, the science of historiography, and the annals of people. As for the science of jurisprudence, he attained the highest degree of learning until some of the shaykhs contemporary with him said; "If he was present in the time of Ibn Abd's-Salaam in Tunis,⁴⁰ he would have been a *mufti* there."

³⁷ He was Muhammad ibn al-Qadi Mahmud ibn Umar Aqit ibn Muhammad Aqit [d. 1565 C.E.] and held the position of judge in Tinbuktu from 1548 C.E. until his death.

³⁸ He was al-Aqib ibn *al-Qadi* Mahmud ibn Umar Aqit ibn Muhammad Aqit [d. 1583 C.E.]. He was appointed to the position of judge during the rule of Askiya Dawud in 1565 C.E.. It was during his tenure as judge that all of the mosques throughout the Songhay empire were refurbished and renovated. He also was responsible for financing many Qur'an schools and centers of learning throughout the empire.

³⁹ He was Abu Hafs Umar ibn *al-Qadi* Mahmud ibn Umar Aqit ibn Muhammad Aqit, [d. 1597 C.E.]. He held the position of judge from 1583 C.E. until the Portuguese led Moroccan invasion in 1591. See footnote.

⁴⁰ He was *al-Qadi* Izza 'd-Deen ibn Abd 's-Salaam, [577-660], a Tunisian judge and jurists of the Shafi` jurisprudence, although he was a *Sufi*, he was known for his sober and conservative views.

As for the judge **Abdallah**, he was a scholar, jurist and teacher. He possessed little of this world although Allah ta`ala bestowed upon him enough wealth and provision which no one knew the limit of it.⁴¹

As for the righteous *Shaykh*, the saintly advisor, the knower of Allah ta`ala, the recluse slave, the pious ascetic and preacher, **Abu Zayd Abd'r-Rahman**⁴², he was a jurist and scholar who turned away from this world with his entire being to the point where he would not accept it even for one moment. He was the possessor of miraculous unveiling. The students of his lectures used to relate many stories about this quality in him. Among these was what had been successively narrated; "When the encampment of Pasha Judar⁴³ came out of Marrakech heading for the people of Tinbuktu, on Wednesday, 2 *Muharram*, the beginning of 1000 A.H.⁴⁴; that same time *Shaykh* Abd'r-Rahman prayed the *dhuhr* prayer with the people and sat for his lecture, he then said; "By Allah! By Allah! by Allah! You will hear in this year that which you have never heard before. And you will see something the like of which you have never seen before." In the month of *Jumad'l-Ulaa*, they reached the Sudan and they did what they did. We seek refuge with Allah from the like of that. It was the likeness of this which *Shaykh* Abd'r-Rahman used to do.

Among them was the jurist, the lordly scholar, the righteous *waliy* **Abu'l-Abass Ahmad** the son of the jurist Muhammad as-Sa`id, the grandson of the jurist Mahmud. He was famous for knowledge in his time and large groups among the *shaykhs* of knowledge attended his lectures to take from him. Among them were the judge Umar ibn *al-faqih* Mahmud; the jurist Muhammad Baghyuyu al-Wangari; his brother the jurist Ahmad Baghyuyu; the jurist Mahmud Ka`ti; the jurist Muhammad Kebbi ibn Jaabir Kebbi; and others. They all testified to his erudition and learning, mastership, piety and righteousness, may Allah ta`ala be merciful to him and make his *baraka* remain among us and the Muslims.

Among them was his grandson the learned jurist **Abu Bakr ibn Ahmad Biru** the son of the jurist Mahmud⁴⁵. He was a person of great eminence, god-fearing and uprightness. This was testified to by those who grew up with him and witnessed this from him from among his righteous uncles. The scholars agreed to allow him to precede all others in praying before the people when the *Imam* and judge al-`Aqib died, may Allah be merciful to him.⁴⁶

Among them was the jurist, the learned scholar, the unique of his age, the matchless one of his time, proficient in every variety sciences **Abu'l-Abass Ahmad Baba**⁴⁷ the son of the jurist Ahmad ibn al-Hajj Ahmad ibn Umar ibn Muhammad Aqit. He was earnest and strenuous from the beginning of his affair in the service of knowledge until he outstripped all of his contemporaries and surpassed them exceedingly. No one vied with him in knowledge except his *shaykhs*, who testified to

⁴¹ He was a judge of appeals in the city of Tinbuktu. Although he was extremely wealthy he never utilized his wealth for personal reasons.

⁴² He was Abu Zayd Abd'r-Rahman ibn al-Qadi Mahmud ibn Umar Aqit ibn Muhammad Aqit, [d. 1597 C.E.]. He acted as an appeals judge up until the time of the Moroccan invasion of 1591.

⁴³ He was Pasha Judar al-Asbaani whose origin was from Portugal. He along with seven military officers were known to be mercenaries of Portuguese origin.

⁴⁴ This was November 10, 1589.

⁴⁵ He was Abu Bakr ibn Ahmad Biru ibn Muhammad 'l-Mukhtar ibn Ahmad, a descendent of an ancient family in Tinbuktu whose father was killed during the uprising of 1591 against the Moroccan invaders.

⁴⁶ This occurred in 1583 C.E..

⁴⁷ He was 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. See footnote.

his eminence in the sciences. His affair became renowned in the West and his reputation spread throughout the regions. The scholars of diverse quarters surrendered to him regarding legal decisions. He stood firm in the support of the truth even on behalf of the lowly of people and he never glossed over the truth even in the face of the *amirs* and the *sultans*. The name *Muhammad* was written upon the right side of his back innately in white characters.

All that we mentioned after citing the blessed *shaykh* the jurist And Agh Muhammad al-Kabir until the above are all from his blessed descendents and righteous offspring, may Allah ta`ala be merciful and pleased with them and benefit us with their *baraka* in the two worlds.⁴⁸ As for the grandfather of the jurist **Muhammad Aqit**, he was from among the people of Massina⁴⁹. I heard the learned jurist Ahmad Baba, may Allah be merciful to him say; "He did not leave Massina for Walata, except from aversion of the Fulani⁵⁰, who were his neighbors there." He said further; "He was certainly not going to marry from them, however he feared that his sons might intermarry with the Fulani." After that it crossed his mind of residing in Tinbuktu. At that time its *sultan* was Akillu. He moved from Walata and established himself between Walata and Ras'l-Maa. He then talked with the grandfather of Masiru and Umar and informed him about his desire. He said; "What prevents you from doing that?" *Shaykh* Muhammad Aqit said; "Akillu, for there has emerged between me and him deep enmity." Then he said; If Allah ta`ala wills, I will be the causative factor in removing this enmity between you and you will reside in Tinbuktu as you like." He then went to Akillu in his encampment; dismounted and continued talking with him until he informed him that Muhammad Aqit desires only to reside in Tinbuktu." Akillu said; "I can never consent to that." He said; why not? Akillu entered into his tent and brought out a leather shield which had been ripped up by being transfixated with a spear and being struck with a sword. He then said; "See what Muhammad Aqit has done to me. How can a person live in a land with an enemy who is capable of doing this sort of action?" He then said; "On the contrary, the man that you used to know has changed. These days he had become a humble family man and only wishes for well being" He continued to talk to him with kindness and excellent lenient words until the enmity which he had abated. He then gave permission for him to come and settle in Tinbuktu. He then returned to Muhammad Aqit and informed him of his decision. He then traveled with his entire family to Tinbuktu and settled there.

Among the blessed *shaykhs* of the people of **Sankore'** was the jurist **Ahmad** the son of the jurist Ibrahim ibn Abu Bakr the son of al-Qadi al-Hajj, the grandfather of Mama Siri. It has been narrated on the authority of our *shaykh*, the ascetic jurist Al-Amin ibn Ahmad⁵¹, the half-brother of the jurist Abd'r-Rahman⁵², that he said; "Nothing came between this *Shaykh* Ahmad and studying the Book of Allah except researching knowledge. For he was always occupied with one of these righteous actions during his times, may Allah be merciful to him and benefit us by his *baraka*."

⁴⁸ This means that the Aqit family and the And Agh Muhammad family were related through marriage. Umar Aqit ibn Muhammad Aqit married a daughter of And Agh Muhammad 'l-Kabir, thus securing wealth and nobility for his sons and daughters. This wife of Umar was later imprisoned by Sonni Ali during his rule over Tinbuktu.

⁴⁹ Massina was located on the west bank of the Niger floodplain and was the locus of many of the Sanhaja scholarly families who migrated to the region from Tishit.

⁵⁰ The Fulani are the Fulbe speaking peoples who have come to be known by various names throughout its long history. Among them, Peul, Tukulor, Toronkawa, Takrur and other names.

⁵¹ See footnote above.

⁵² He was Abd 'r-Rahman ibn Ahmad 'l-Mujtahid, [d. 1610].

Among them was the jurist **Saalih ibn Muhammad** And Umar, who was known as **Saalih Takuna**⁵³. He was a *shaykh* who enjoyed the visitations and honor of the rulers and he would intercede with them on behalf of the destitute. They never refused his intercession regardless of the circumstance. He composed a commentary upon the Mukhtasar of *Shaykh* Khalil,⁵⁴ may Allah be merciful to him.

Among them was **Sidi Abu'l-Abass Ahmad** ibn Muhammad ibn Uthman ibn Abdallah ibn Abu Ya`qub. He was a scholar, a jurist, a grammarian, and linguist. He was well versed in the literary sciences, Qur'anic commentary, and poetry. Many groups among the *shaykhs* testified to his outstanding degree of learning, may Allah be merciful to him, Amen.

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⁵³ He was of Soninke origin and was essential in the appointment of Abu Hafs Umar as judge of Tinbuktu. He was the nephew of Misir And Umar whose grandfather interceded with Akillu on behalf of Muhammad Aqit. His family were some of the earliest scholarly families of Tinbuktu.

⁵⁴ See footnote above.