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بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ وَصَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلٰی سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَىٰ آلِهِ وَصَحْبِهِ وَسَلَّمَ تَسْلِيمًا

تَارِيخُ السُّودَانِ



# Tarikh 's-Sudan

The History of the Land of the Blacks

by

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**Institute of Islamic-African  
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# Tarikh 's-Sudan

## THE HISTORY OF THE LAND OF THE BLACKS<sup>1</sup>

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In the name of Allah the Beneficent the Merciful may peace and blessings be upon His Prophet, our master Muhammad, his family and Companions. All praises are due to Allah, who is absolutely unequalled in His kingdom, who alone is described with the attributes of Eternity, Omnipotence and Glorification. He (Allah) encompasses all things by His knowledge and knows what was, when and how it will be. Not a single atom's weight in the earth nor in the heavens escapes Him. He gives the kingdom to whom He pleases and He alone takes the kingdom from whom He pleases. Glory be to the One to whom belongs the kingdom, omnipotence, might and overpowering by which He engulfs His servants with death and annihilation. He is the First without beginning and the Last without ending.

Peace and blessings be upon the master of the earliest and latter most of humanity, our master and chief Muhammad, the seal of the Prophets and Messengers; and peace and blessings be upon his family and Companions, the most purified and excellent of people of concern and felicity. Blessings and peace of Allah be upon all of them with blessings and peace which has no end nor termination.

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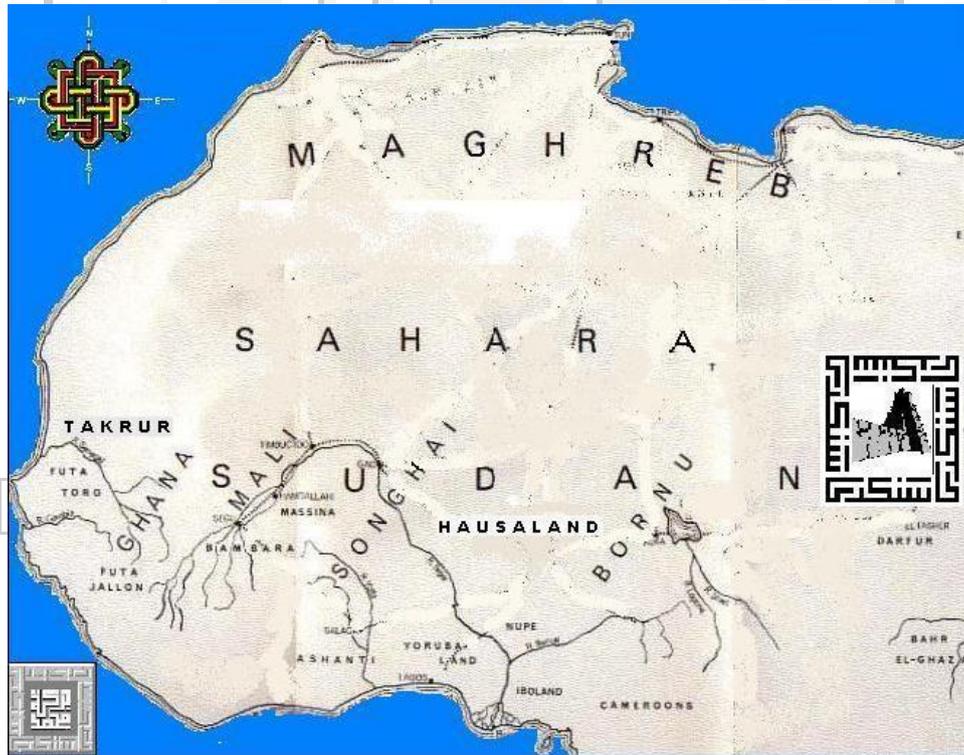
<sup>1</sup> I first began translating the *Tarikh as-Sudan* of *Shaykh* Abd'r-Rahman as-Sa`di in the spring of 1990. It was when I was informed a year later by Dr. Gregory Maddox of the History Department of Texas Southern University, that Dr. John Hunwick was also in the process of translating the text and had the financial backing of the Ford Foundation and other lucrative institutions that I moved on to other more important translations on behalf of the *Jama`at* of *Shehu* Uthman ibn Fuduye` in the U.S.. In fact, I spoke with Dr. Hunwick about the progress of his work at the time, and I was far ahead of him in my translations. However, I decided to forego my work on it and Hunwick promised that he would get me an advance copy of his translations when it was completed. Well some years later his work was completed and published by McBrill and as promised, he sent me a copy to read and critic. I was pleased with his work, however, I was someone taken aback that he did not translate the entire text; particularly those latter chapters that dealt with the mortality of the notables and scholars of the *Bilad as-Sudan*. Dr. Hunwick felt that this information was not pertinent to understanding the history of the region. However, I disagreed then and now; because there was a reason that as-Sa`di singled out chapters specifically for the mention of mortality rates among the scholars and notables of the *Bilad as-Sudan*. The key reason being that social development in the eyes of the author, and indeed in the view of any Muslim is built upon the existence and persistence of the clerical class in Islam. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace once said: "There is a category among men who when they are sound, then the people are sound, and when they have been ruined, then the people will be ruined. They are the scholars and the rulers." Thus, as-Sa`di narrated the mortality rate among this class of people in order to show the causative factor for the social upheavals and moral decline in the civilization of the *Bilad as-Sudan*. The implications of these mortality rates also delineated the extent of the crime against African Muslim civilization which was unleashed by the Moroccan/Portuguese invasion of Songhay and the subsequent intensification of the European Slave Trade, which decimated the population of the region and led to its underdevelopment. The missing chapters in Hunwick's translation speak to the existence of a human and cultural genocide. Its ironic that my friend Dr. Hunwick would later edit works highlighting the 'slave trade' by Arabs among Africans, while deciding to ignore the implications that the latter chapters of the *Tarikh as-Sudan* point to. Another reason I decided to continue with my translation was that I felt that Dr. Hunwick was translating for the academic community rather than to the people for whom *Shaykh* Abd'r-Rahman originally composed the text. This can be seen in his choice of words when translating *sufic* or Islamic legal terminology. In spite of this, I feel that Dr. Hunwick's translation and study is excellent and should be read by academics and laymen alike, in order to understand the legacy of African Islamic civilization. We will post the entire translation on the [www.siiasi.org](http://www.siiasi.org) sectioned by chapter as my translation develops, Allah willing.

## INTRODUCTION

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Our foregoing ancestors used to make frequent deliberations in their assemblies recalling the histories of the Companions of Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace and the achievements of the righteous, may Allah be pleased with them. They also recalled the *shaykhs* of our country, their kingdoms, biographies, narratives, developments, histories and what led to thier decline.

This science (histiography) used to be the most gratifying of the reports which they transmitted and the most stimulating of the sciences which they used to discuss. This continued until their era became extinct and their way came to an end, may Allah ta'ala be merciful to them. As for the following era, there were none among them who were engaged in the science of histiography nor did they follow in the path of the foregone ancestors. There were none among them who possessed high resolve in any of the ways of righteousness. There only remained those who possessed trivial resolve who were full of mutual hatred, envy, enmity, preoccupation with what does not concern them from hearsay, plunging into the faults of people and slander. All this was because of the evil ending which had befallen them. We seek refuge with Allah.



Map of the lands of Western and Central *Bilad's-Sudan*

When I perceived that this science (histiography) and its study had become extinct and its wealth and the tremendous advantages it brings from comprehending human nature, their homelands, forefathers, social classes, chronicles and the causes of their decline; had weakened - I sought Allah's assistance, glory be to Him, in writing what I had memorized from: the history of the kingdoms of the land of the Blacks (*Bilad 's-Sudan*); the history, narratives, chronicles, biographies and the military expeditions of the kingdom of Songhay; the history and genesis of the metropolis of Tinbuktu<sup>2</sup> and the rulers who governed it; and the history of the righteous scholars who dwelled in Tinbuktu and other cities up until the history of the Ahmadi Abassi Hashimi government of the Sultan of the Red City of Marrakech. In all of this I recognize that help is solely from Allah and He is enough for me and the Best of Guardians.



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<sup>2</sup> The name Tinbuktu is the proper rendition of the name as opposed to Timbuktu which is in common usage today. The name, as the author will point out in the text is of Berber origin and comes from the word 'tin', which means 'water well' and 'Buktu' was an African woman to whom the well belonged where the Berber and Tuareg would seasonally water their livestock. Thus, the meaning being 'the water well of Buktu', or *TINBUKTU*.