

RELIGIOUS CONFRATERNITIES OF THE SUDAN

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# SUDAN NOTES AND RECORDS

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## RELIGIOUS CONFRATERNITIES OF THE SUDAN.

BY C. ARMINE WILLIS.

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### CHAPTER I.

One of the most familiar sights and sounds of the Sudan is a little knot of men, gathered in a circle, all bending from the waist together and making a guttural exclamation in chorus, for long periods together. The exclamation is the name of God, "Allah", pronounced in unison, and so emphasized that the earlier syllables are lost. The circle is a gathering of the followers of a "*Tariqa*" engaged in prayer.

The object of this note is to indicate the origin of the *Tariqas* and to shew their distribution in the Sudan.

It is a commonplace to speak of the "mysticism" of the East, and Islam was immersed in mysticism from its birth and throughout its early history until the mystical idea was established in it. Not only was the preaching of Mohammed itself based on his mystical knowledge of God, but there was a considerable influence exercised over the early days of Islam both from the monophysite heresy of Christianity, and the teachings of the Neo-Platonists, especially Plotinus. It is not claimed that the influence was a direct one, but these ideas were current at the time and had a great influence on all contemporary thought. Further as a mystical influence the Buddhists were a force both from their proximity and their religious power.

Now the five props of Islam are these: the confession of faith, (there is no god but God and Mohammed is the prophet of God),

the five daily prayers, the payment of the poor tax (*zeka*), the fast in Ramadan and the pilgrimage to Mecca. Except in the first there is little room for mysticism. But in the first lay the key to the mystical idea as it implied the eternal unity of God, and with the philosophical influences referred to above, that led to the idea of the immanence of God in man, and the possibility of his identifying himself with God.

Now there is a very important distinction in the definition of knowledge according to the Moslem writers, which gives the clue to the growth of the mystical idea. Knowledge is divided primarily into religious and intellectual, i.e., the knowledge of God is not necessarily a matter of the reason but is acquired by some other means, and it was the pursuit of these means that led to the formation and spread of the *Tariqas*.

The mystical knowledge of God i.e., the non-intellectual, had been identified with the Sufis. Whether this name was to be attributed to the asceticism that condemned them to wear only wool, or whether it is a corruption of "*sophia*" and is really derived from Greek philosophy has been disputed. Sufism dealt especially with the search after God by mystical methods, and Islam had to adopt it or adapt it to itself. The following saying of the Imam Malik even though it may be spurious indicates well the attitude of Islam "Sufism without Law is heresy, and Law without Sufism is impiety, but he who possesses the two possesses the truth".

Ibn Khaldun in his Preface to his Universal History, which was written in the latter part of the fourteenth century A. D., divides the general position of the Sufis under four heads: 1. The discipline of the soul, the keeping it to strict account for actions, the tastes of bliss and the ecstasies which come to it; its ascent from one spiritual stage to another. 2. The unveiling of the unseen world and perception therein of spiritual things, of the real nature of things and how they proceed thence. 3. Control of material things by the grace of God. 4. Those wild fanciful expressions which many of them utter in ecstasy, the *literal* meaning of which gives no clue to their meaning. (Macdonald, Religious attitude and Life in Islam p. 172). Ibn Khaldun himself deprecates the last but his own

experience of the mystical life makes him a strong advocate of the system.

The idea of the mystical knowledge of God gradually developed in Islam, following the lines of research that the Sufis had laid down, merely adapting them to the Law. Thus there grew up a number of teachers who instructed others in the best means of attaining the mystical truths. The method was a general asceticism; little eating, little speaking, little sleeping, shunning society, the continual repetition of God's name and the contemplation of God's works.

It was necessary however to establish the sanctity of the mystical knowledge so obtained by connecting it with the saints of Islam and the prophet. To this end there was an apostolic succession derived through the head of the fraternity to some previous mystical leader, and so ultimately to the great saints and the prophet himself. The ordinary line of succession was through Abu el Qasim el Goneidi who died at Baghdad in A.H. 267. He was a great mystic, and himself drew his holiness from Ali ibn Abu Talib. The latter was looked on as the spiritual descendant of the prophet, and was also venerated as a great soldier and an exceptional mystic. A specimen of his mysticism is thus: "I am the dot under the letter B. (i.e.; in the expression *bismillah*), I am the side of God, I am the pen, I am the table set apart, I am the throne of God, I am the seventh heaven".

The Apostolic succession went as follows:—

God.  
Gabriel.  
Mohammed.

Abu Bekr Al Sadiq	Ali ibn Abu Talib
Selman al Farisi	Hassan al Busri
Qasim Mohd. Abu Bekr	Habib al Hageimi
Gaafar al Sadiq	Daud ibn Nasir al Tai
Abu Yazid al Bustani	Maruf al Kharkhi
Abu Nasr al Kerkani	Sari Saqati

|  
Abu el Qasim al Goneidi.

Thus there was a double line to the prophet and so to God.

There is another tradition whereby the succession is derived through al Khidr. He was one of the two mortals who achieved Heaven during life; the other was Enoch, the latter did it by a trick but Khidr by his mystical perfection. He acquired a dual personality, one of which under the name of Elias wanders up and down the world until the last Day, and the other is al Khidr and lives at the bottom of the sea. The two meet twice a year to exchange confidences. Al Khidr is identified by Christians with St. George.

The Apostolic succession led to a further development of a spiritual hierarchy, in which those who acquire grace in this world are included. The Head of it is the Qutb or the Axis, and below him are 7 Abdal, 40 (others say 70) Negaba, and 300 Naqaba. Another form of the tradition is that God has made on earth 300 men in the likeness of Adam, 40 in that of Moses, 7 in that of Abraham, 3 in that of Michael and one in that of Asrafel.

Those who belong to the hierarchy have the gift of "baraka" (which may perhaps be interpreted Grace), and hand on the "baraka" to their spiritual descendants.

The cult which began with isolated teachers of asceticism rapidly grew into schools of mysticism deriving their authority from the recognised sources of Islam, and from them came the *Tariqas*. The head of the *Tariqa* is endowed with the *baraka*, which may be imparted more or less to his followers, who make themselves worthy by practising the special methods of the *Tariqa*. But since it is not for all to live the ascetic life, the *Tariqas* for the most part form congregations of religiously inclined persons combined by a common faith in the efficacy of the teaching of one particular school or teacher, practising a common ritual to their mutual benefit.

The ritual consists in the *Zikr*, or remembering the name of God. As an explanation, the following is a description of the "*zikr*" of the Qadria *Tariqa*,—"It is an effort to conquer space and time and discover the unknown. Whilst the lips repeat the formula revealed to the leader and their fingers turn their rosaries, the followers are calling on God, watching their heart beats as if at any moment thereby they might unveil the Divine Spirit.

Once a week on Friday they meet together and concentrate their minds on one idea, the Majesty of God, under the leadership of

the head of the *Zawia*, (if such there be), and recite several times the litanies and invocation appointed. Then under the direction of their leader they turn their heads to the right and say *Allah*, and then to the left and say *Allahu*, and then lower their heads and say *Allahi*, and continue to do so swiftly until they become quite hysterical. In the collapse that follows they see visions and receive inspirations".

The litany referred to above is of two sorts, *alwird al kabir* or *wird al waqt*, and the simple form, *wird al sughayir*. A specimen of the former is :—

100 times God Pardon  
 100 times God be exalted.  
 100 times God mayest thou spread thy blessing over Our  
     Lord Mohammed and his companions.  
 500 times There is no God but God.

The simple litany consists in saying 165 times after each prayer "there is no god but God".

The "zikr" may be of the voice, of the "heart", or of all the organs combined ; that is to say that there are higher grades in which the mystical idea is more predominant, but for practical purposes the higher grades are only possible in the professional ascetic. The ordinary members of a *Tariqa* are contented to go through the first ritual of the voice. This satisfies an emotional need, and provides a common bond of worship with the fellow members of the *Tariqa*, that takes the place of Church membership in the West.

The *Tariqas* by virtue of their apostolic succession and the length of their tradition have a special status ; but there are similar fraternities which either have not yet acquired the status, or make no pretensions to being more than reforming movements, or again they may depend on a special article of faith not accepted by Islam in general, or indeed they may be frankly heretical but still need to be noted in an examination of these Islamic fraternities.

The *Tariqas* are divided into five main classes, from each of these there have been many offshoots and derivative organisations. The five are the Qadria, the Khalwatia, the Shazlia, the Naqshabandia, the Saharawardia.

## CHAPTER II.

## TARIQAS IN THE SUDAN.

The number of *Tariqas* existing in Islam is considerable. One author alone gives fifty names, but the number of *Tariqas* that have any following in the Sudan is comparatively small.

It is proposed then to adopt the arbitrary classification of the last chapter and trace in each case the *Tariqas* of the Sudan if they exist.

## 1. The Qadria.

This *Tariqa* was founded by Muhi El Din Abu Mohammed Abd El Qader El Jilani Ibn Abu Saleh Musa El Hasani. He lived from A.D. 1079—1186. He was born at Jil or Jilan a province of Persia on the Caspian Sea. He was in charge of the tomb of Abu Hanifa Naaman and was an indefatigable missionary, a savant and an ascetic. His doctrines included self-abnegation to the profit of God, an ascetic mysticism amounting almost to hysteria, a wide and eclectic philanthropy and charity, piety and humility. He derived his mystical descent from Abu El Qasim El Goneidi. The *Tariqa* is to be found in Iraq, Syria and Constantinople. It has a considerable following in Arabia, and is most widely found in Turkestan, India, and the Dutch East Indies. There are also *Zawwas* in North Africa. The present head of the Founder's family is Sayed Abd El Rahman and he is president of the Council of Ministers under the new Arab Government of Iraq.

This *Tariqa*, the first to appear in the Sudan, was introduced by Taj El Din El Bahari in the time of the Fung Dynasty, about the 16th Century A.D. The Arab tradition of the first introduction of the *Tariqa* is as follows: When Sheikh Taj El Din began preaching, there were many appeals for initiation into the new ideas. He agreed to initiate all those who were prepared to have their throats cut immediately after the ceremony. Four individuals were found with sufficient hardihood to face the ceremony, and brought to the tent of the Sheikh. Then the first was led aside and there was the sound of a gasp and a gurgle, and after an interval, another was introduced. Of the remaining three, one lost heart and fled though he was subsequently forgiven and inducted, but the three

who stayed found that the expiring noises were only those of sheep that were sacrificed to celebrate the occasion. The four Khalifas were Mohammed Amin Ibn Abd El Sadiq whose followers, known as the Sadiqab are still to be found at Suki between Medani and Gedaref, Ban El Naqa Abd El Yaqub, founder of the Yaqubab, Agib El Manguluk of the Abdallab and Abdallah El Araki of the Arakiin.

As time went on the purity of the faith declined and required the impulse of a reformer to purify it. Such was found in Sayed Ahmed El Bedawi who died at Tanta in A. D. 1276. He was of a Hedjazi family and born at Fas and had been educated at Baghdad. He began his mission on the Nile and was specially notable for securing the fecundity of women. He earned a great reputation for miraculous power in arms when his followers defeated the soldiers of Louis IX at Faraskur.

The Desuqia or Ibrahimia is an offshoot again of the Bedawia. The *Tariqa* was started by Sayed Ibrahim (born A. D. 1366) at Desuq in Lower Egypt. On his death his disciples gathered around his brother Sheraf El Din Abu El Imran under the title of Ibrahimia.

The Bayumia was founded by Sayed Ali Ibn El Hedjazi Ibn Mohammed. He was born at Bayum in Egypt A. D. 1696 and was originally of the Khalwatia. He set himself to reform the Bedawia and the impulse that he gave the sect started a separate *Tariqa*, but the distinction between Bayumia and Bedawia is now practically lost.

Representatives of these offshoots of the Qadria are to be found in the Sudan but not in influential numbers or personalities.

## 2. The Khalwatia *Tariqa*.

The formation of the Khalwatia or Anchorites was due to a revival some hundred years after the rise of the Qadria. The originator of the movement was Mohammed El Khalwati, but the acknowledged head of the order was his disciple Omar who died at Cæsaria in A. D. 1396. The evolution of the Khalwatia covered two periods. The first lasted some 500 years during which fraternities were established in Asia Minor, Turkey, the Hedjaz and India and with the lapse of time they tended to split off or die away. In the 18th Century the *Tariqa* entered on a new lease of life inspired by Sayed Mustafa Kamel El Din El Bakri El Siddiqi, a learned professor of the Azhar University. Born at Damascus in A. D. 1733 he was

educated in Jerusalem and travelled widely in Islamic countries. At Constantinople he had a vision of the Prophet and thenceforward began his call.

One of the groups which formed at his death and acquired a new name was of considerable importance to the Sudan. This was the Sammania.

This *Tariqa* was started by Sayed Mohammed Abd El Karim but was introduced into the Sudan by El Sayed Ahmed El Tayeb Walad El Bashir who died in A. D. 1823 and was buried at Gebel Gerri. The *Tariqa* had a tremendous reception when it first came and to this day has a very large following. The most important family of its adherents is that of Mohammed Sherif Pasha Nur El Daim who was head of the *Tariqa* under Turkish rule and whose disciple the Mahdi was until the latter broke off and started his *Jehad*.

The family still resides at Eilafun, Blue Nile Province.

The present head of the *Tariqa* is Sayed Mohammed El Samman and is normally resident at Medina but during the war he escaped from Medina and took refuge at Aleppo. After the war he came to the Sudan where he had visited his followers on a previous occasion. He has expressed a determination to remain in the Sudan permanently though he has returned to the Hedjaz for the time being (1921).

A distinguished leader in the Sudan is Sheikh El Hagu Wad El Masia, a Fellati (West African) living near Sennar and possessing very great influence with his compatriots.

El Tignania is kindred to the Khalwatia. The order was founded late in the eighteenth century at Fez on a fanatical and militant basis. In the first half of the nineteenth century its influence was carried over Tunisia, the Sahara and as far as Timbuktu. Its adherents in the Sudan are found chiefly among the Hausa and Fellata, and among the tribes of Darfur and Western Kordofan.

The order was introduced into the Sudan during the last years of the old Egyptian Government by Sayed Mahmud Wad El A'alia who came to Berber with Zein El Abdin El Maghrabi. After the death of the latter and as a result of a dispute with his relations Wad El A'alia left Berber for the Jaalin country where he married and acquired large landed properties.

The influence of the *Tariqa* in Darfur and Kordofan was due to certain influential *Khulafa* who had settled there. Omar Ganbo,

a Hausa was a disciple of Mohammed El Sughair Ibn Sayed Ali of Temsen, a disciple of the founder. He travelled widely over the Western Sudan, Egypt and the Hedjaz and lived for a time at El Fasher under the auspices of Ali Dinar, but he came under suspicion of using witchcraft to cause the Sultan's illness and fled from Darfur in 1908. He spent the rest of his life in El Obeid and Omdurman with occasional visits to Mecca where he had a household. He died in 1918 at Mecca.

Another leading personality in Kordofan is El Fiki Dardiri who resides at Khursi near Bara.

### 3. Shadhiliya Tariqa.

The founder of this Tariqa was reputed to be Sho'aib Abu Midian El Andalusi. He was born at Seville A. D. 1126. He was a disciple of Sheikh Abdel Qader El Gilani. His doctrines were spread first by Abd El Salaam Ibn Mashish and later throughout North Africa and the East by Sayed Hassan El Shadhli Abu El Hasan Ali Ibn Abdullahi Abd El Gabbar. This last was born probably at Ceuta A. D. 1196. His doctrines were more mystical than those of his predecessors but his ritual less elaborate; in fact simplicity was the keynote of his teaching. (1) He died in A. D. 1258 somewhere in the Atbai Desert while returning from Mecca. As the exact spot of his death was unknown there was no apostolic succession but a number of descendant communities are derived from the Shazlia as they were founded by learned men who belonged to the *Tariqa*.

One of these is the Magzubia, a *Tariqa* which was at one time of great importance in the Sudan and still has a following. It was started in the Sudan in the early 18th century by Sheikh Mohammed El Magzub "El Kabir" of the Magzub branch of the Jaalin, whose son Hamed El Magzub, is said to have been the founder of Damer, and who enjoyed a great reputation in the Sudan. The *Tariqa* received further impetus from the great grandson of the founder, Mohammed El Magzoub El Sughair. He was born at Metemma A. D. 1796. Descriptions of the conditions of El Damer in the

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(1) Some of the Hadendoa state that his tomb is at Halus a place some thirty miles inland from Halaib on the Red Sea—there is also the burial place of "el Sheikh el Shazli" at Id el Hashab which is halfway between Halaib and Derr, and some e.g. the Eleigat believe this to be the place of his death,

early 19th century shew it as a hierarchy completely under the influence of El Magzub.

During the reprisals on the Jaalin consequent on the murder of Ismail Pasha at Shendi, El Magzub fled to Suakin and went thence to Mecca where he studied for ten years under Sayed Ahmed Idris. On his return to the Sudan about 1830 he preached at Suakin and spread his influence amongst the Eastern tribes.

Among his Khulafa was Sheikh Yasin of Suakin and Sheikh Ali Digna the uncle of the famous Osman Digna. He returned to his village about 1832 and died and was buried there the following year. He had two daughters one of whom married his nephew Mohammed El Taher El Magzub. There was no issue of this marriage and the succession passed through the other daughter who also married her cousin and had several children, one of whom Mohammed El Magzub died in Omdurman as one of the Omana of the Khalifa Abdullahi.

Mohammed El Taher El Magzub had male issue by a Hadendoa woman and his son Mohammed El Magzub the third was the adviser and secretary to Osman Digna. He was present at the battles of Atbara and Omdurman and then surrendered to the British Army. He now lives at Homar Abdeleib and is widely known for his learning, piety and straightforwardness (1921). Two other descendants of Mohammed El Magzub (the first) still survive. Mohammed Abu El Hasan in charge of the old Mosque of El Damer and Abdulla El Nagar in charge of the new mosque in the same place. The followers of the *Tariqa* are distributed amongst the Jaalin, Hadendoa and Suakinese and some Bishariin.

#### Ahmedia or Idrisia.

Sayed Ahmed Ibn Idris known as El Fasi who was the teacher of Mohammed El Magzub as has been described above was important not only as the founder of a Tariqa himself but as the teacher of a number of prominent religious personalities. He was born at Araish in Morocco but was brought up and educated in religion at Fez (El Fas) and adopted the Shadhlia *Tariqa* from Sheikh Abdel Wahab El Tazi. He went to Cairo in 1788 and thence to Mecca in 1797 where he taught for many years. He died at Sabia in the Yemen in 1837.

His *Tariqa* should be distinguished from the Ahmedia of Sheikh El Bedawi of Tanta. The present head of it is Sherif Mohammed Abd El Mutaal the grandson of Sayed Ahmed Idris. He lives at Cairo and Darau. His son Sayed Mirghani at one time lived in the Sudan but has latterly lived almost entirely in Cairo. A younger brother Sayed Idris lives at Argo (Dongola Province) and has recently married there. The tomb of Sayed Abdel Mutaal the father of Sherif Mohammed is at Dongola El Ordi and the annual celebration of his death (Holia) is held there and at Omdurman.

It is alleged that Sherif Mohammed Abdel Mutaal had an ambition to combine the Mirghania and Sennoussia under the Ahmedia on the grounds that the originators were pupils of his ancestor, but the claim is only a formal one and has no existence in fact.

Sayed Mohammed Idrisi the well known religious and fighting leader in Asir is another descendant of Sayed Ahmed Idris (Mohammed is the son of Ali, the son of Mohammed the son of Ahmed Idris). His brother Sayed Mustafa was educated by Sherif Mohammed Abdel Mutaal at the Azhar University. He has a house and wife at Artigashi (Dongola Province) but has been in Asir for some years.

The reputation of Sayed Ahmed Idris for learning and piety was very great and he numbered amongst his pupils, Sayed Mohammed El Sennoussi, Sheikh Mohammed El Magzub, Sheikh Ibrahim El-Rashid and Sayed Mohammed Osman El Kabir, all of whom made their mark in the world of Islam in later life.

### The Mirghania or Khatmia.

This is the best known and most widely distributed *Tariqa* in the Sudan at the present day.

The founder was Sayed Mohammed Osman known as El Kabir to distinguish him from his grandson. He was born at Salama near Taif in the Hedjaz 1787. He traces his descent to El Hussein son of Ali Ibn Abu Talib.

The name of the *Tariqa* is derived from Sayed Ali Mirghani, the seventh great grandfather of Mohammed Osman. "Mirghani is derived sometimes from Emir Ghani", the wealthy Emir, but this may be but another instance of the Arabic habit of "canting" etymology. There is a tradition that the family was domiciled at one period in Khorasan.

Sayed Mohammed Osman began his studies in Mecca and finally adopted the principles of four *Tariqas* and combined them into one with his own modifications. The initials of these four *Tariqas* and his own made the expression Naqashgam which became the symbol of the *Tariqa*, Naqshabandia, Qadria, Shadhlia, Goneidia, Mirghania,

He then began his travels. He went through Upper Egypt from Assiut to Assuan and then proceeded to Dongola and there gained many adherents. Thence he went to Kordofan, where he married a native of Bara and two of his children Ibrahim Taj El Khatim and Ahmed died and were buried at El Obeid. Sayed Mohammed El Hasan the third son of this wife became later one of the leaders of the *Tariqa*. He then passed through Sennar which was under the rule of King Badei and later turned to the North. After passing through Shendi and Metemmeh he turned Eastwards to Goz Regeb and Kassala and in this last place he founded the village of El Khatmia which afterwards became the headquarters of the family.

He continued his travels to Sabderat and Massawah and returned to the Hedjaz via Suakin and Jeddah. He died in Mecca in 1851.

He had issue, according to the records no less than 70 persons. Upon his death his eldest son Mohammed Sirr El Khatim tried to carry on his work but was hampered by the jealousies of his brothers. He sent his sons forth to preach the good word. The eldest Mohammed Sirr El Khatim went to Egypt and died there in 1917 and is succeeded by his son Mohammed Abu Bekr. The second son went to Khartoum North and died there. The third son who is buried at Suakin was the husband of Sitt Miriam, the daughter of Sayed El Hashim, a younger son of Sayed Mohammed Osman El Kabir.

Sayed Mohammed El Hasan, referred to above, who was born at Bara settled in the Eastern Sudan and continued the work begun by his father at El Khatmia. His son Sayed Mohammed Osman, known as El Sughair to distinguish him from his grand-father was very active in forwarding the interests of the *Tariqa* and being a man of intelligence and ability won a prominent place for himself in the history of his period. His two sons Sayed Ali and Sayed Ahmed are the present leaders of the *Tariqa*. The former, born of an Arab mother, has the greater prestige. He was educated in Egypt. He lives chiefly in Omdurman and Khartoum and he has agricultural land at Bauga. He was honoured in 1900 with the

C. M. G. and later in 1916 with the K. C. M. G. and was the head of the Sudan Delegation to H. M. King George V in 1919 where he received the K. C. V. O. He married Fatima the daughter of Abdallah El Mahjub. (*see ante*).

Sayed Ahmed lives at Kassala. His mother was an Abyssinian concubine, He married Ayesha the daughter of El Bakri, a grandson of Mohammed Osman El Kebir. He received the order of M. B. E. in 1918. Sayed Gaafar, brother of Ayesha is the representative of the *Tariqa* in Eritrea and lives chiefly at Keren.

Under Turkish rule the *Tariqa* acquired considerable official support and its demands on the contributions of the faithful were thought vexatious. Naum Shoucair in his History of the Sudan makes this fact a contributory cause to the success of the Mahdi's movement. Sayed Mohammed Osman denounced the Mahdi as an impostor but as the revolt spread found it necessary to withdraw to Egypt whither he took his son A'i. Sayed Ahmed remained in the Sudan in charge of Sayed El Mekki. (*see below*).

The *Tariqa* is very widely spread throughout the Eastern and Northern Sudan. It is known alternatively as the Mirghania or the Khatmia.

An offshoot of the Mirghania is the Ismailia. The founder of this sect was Sayed El Mekki, a religious leader who played a prominent part during Mahdism and was greatly trusted by the Khalifa Abdullahi. It had its headquarters at El Obeid and spread over the Western Sudan into Darfur. Sayed El Mekki died in 1906, leaving a number of sons and a grandson Sayed Mirghani who was the head of the family by seniority of descent. Disputes arose between uncles and nephew as to the leadership of the *Tariqa*, owing to his youth, and there were occasional affrays between the adherents of different members of the family. Sayed Mirghani lives chiefly at Omdurman and visits El Obeid annually.

### El Rashidia.

The founder of this *Tariqa* was Sheikh Ibrahim El Rashid. He was of the Dueih, a section of the Shaigia from Dongola. As previously stated he was a student of Sayed Ahmed Idris and he adopted the doctrines of the Ahmedia. His followers are to be found in Dongola, Omdurman, Tuti Island and in the White Nile

Province chiefly at Kawa. There are also followers in Somaliland and Syria.

The founder is buried at Mecca. Sheikh Mohammed Saleh his nephew died in 1919 also in Mecca and the present Khalifa is his son El Rashid.

The chief followers in the Sudan are:— Sid Ahmed Ibn Haj Abdallah El Dufari, leader of the Zawia at Kawa : Sheikh Mohammed el Tagalawi in Omdurman has a mosque and *Zawia* : in Shendi District at Salama there is a well known leader Said Ibn Sheikh El Amin.

Another confraternity which claims kinship with the Shadhlia is called the sect of Abu Jarid, but owing to its reputedly heretical views is better known as the sect of Zabalaa or "the deceived ones". The founder was Sheikh Bekr and he and his chief disciple Abu Jarid began their mission early in the 17th century. Their *Zikr* is kept secret and they are accused of indulging during it in promiscuous intercourse, but this may not improbably be the common attribution of evil to any secret society. The present Khalifa Sherif El Imam Ibn Busati lives near Singa and claims to be a descendant of Abu Jarid. (*See Sudan Notes and Records Vol. I, page 176*).

#### 4. El Naqshabandia.

This *Tariqa* was founded by Abd El Din Ibn Mohammed Beha El Din El Bokhari El Naqshabandi. He was born at Ksar Arifan or at Hendawan near Bokhara circa A. D. 1316. He was originally a member of the Awissia sect and started his *Tariqa* with the object of reforming Islam.

The *Tariqa* in its original form is not extant in the Sudan but is one of the bases of the Khatmia *Tariqa*. (*see ante*).

#### 5. El Saharawardia.

This *Tariqa* was founded by Sheikh Shehab El Din Abu Hafa Omar Ibn Mohammed Ibn Abdullah. He was born in A. D. 1144 and died at Shaharaward near Zendjan in Iraq. Its main characteristic is extreme mysticism. It does not occur in the Sudan.

### CHAPTER III. Some Parallel Organisations.

There are certain sects or confraternities which are not, or were not in their beginning, *Tariqas* but have acquired very similar characteristics and are of influence in the Sudan as such.

Undoubtedly the most important of these in the Sudan is the great movement started by Mohammed Ahmed generally known as El Mahdi. Mohammed Ahmed was born at Geziret Darur 1848 and early made his mark as a religious enthusiast. He attached himself to the Sammania *Tariqa* and was the pupil of Mohammed Sherif Nur El Daim. As one of the *Ashraf* of Dongola he started with an hereditary reputation which was rapidly enhanced by his piety and asceticism, and he began to prove a serious rival to his teacher's ascendancy. It is said moreover that the private life of Mohammed Sherif Nur El Daim was not above criticism and his pupil did not hesitate to inveigh against his worldliness and loose morality. Whether the causes were personal jealousy, pique or disapprobation of his pupil's designs, Mohammed Sherif Nur El Daim put a calculated and public affront upon Mohammed Ahmed and the latter left him and devoted himself to a period of asceticism, after which he began his mission. His first step was to get in touch with Sheikh El Ghurashi another leader of the Sammania, but his designs soon transcended a mere supremacy of *Tariqa* and, when he came to power, he repressed the *Tariqas*, and his successor the Khalifa Abdullahi definitely oppressed them.

The mission of Mohammed Ahmed El Mahdi was a dual one. The Sudan consisted of tribes ravaged by internecine warfare and worn out by extortion and oppression from their overlords. What was needed was some common bond which could combine the different tribes under one flag to cast out the oppressor and keep the people from destroying one another. That was found in the call of the Mahdi to reform the faith and enter on the preparation for the Millennium.

It is possible that many of those who joined the Mahdi were doubtful of the authenticity of his sacred mission but he represented the only hope of freedom and they accepted the call "for the chance

of escape from thraldom. His old teacher Mohammed Sherif Nur El Daim excommunicated him and was rewarded with the rank of Pasha. The Mirghania *Tariqa* that had the support of the Turks did the same, but it was soon clear that they could not withstand the rising tide of national success. Starting from incredibly small beginnings and inspired by a series of successes that it would not be unreasonable to call miraculous Mohammed Ahmed found himself in a few years master of the Sudan.

He did not however live long to establish the new regime. His rule inevitably took the form of the pure Mohammedan law and great stress was laid upon the execution of the religious duties of daily prayer. On the model of the Prophet Mohammed he selected four Khalifas, Abdullahi El Taishi to represent Abu Bekr, Ali El Helu to represent Omar, Mohammed Sherif to represent Ali, whilst the fourth chair was offered to the Sennoussi. The last refused the offer and did indeed offer to oppose any encroachment of the Mahdist ideas by force. But there is a tradition that the chair was left vacant and one day the Sennoussi will take it and lead Islam to victory.

On the death of Mohammed Ahmed El Mahdi in 1885 the Khalifa Abdullahi assumed the reins of power and what had been a religious reformation inspired by hatred of oppression of the Turks very rapidly deteriorated into the despotism of a particular section of the population supported by a fanatical exploitation of the religious law. The Baggara and more especially the Taisha robbed and blackmailed at will, but there was no one strong enough to combine the people and break the Khalifa's power. The Dongola and Nile expeditions however culminated in the smashing of the Khalifa's army at Omdurman 1898 and he himself was killed shortly afterwards at Um Debrikat.

During the rule of the Khalifa, the rules of asceticism and piety laid down by the Mahdi became distorted into instruments of oppression. No man could own anything, it was taken from him and put in the "*Beit El Mal*". The presence of a halfburned cigarette was evidence enough to induce a flogging that almost certainly caused death and even absence from the daily prayers was likely to cause a "delation" by some enemy with imprisonment or worse to follow. But this was not the spirit of the original

teaching of the Mahdi which, fanatical as it may have been, was genuinely religious and indeed contained within it unexpectedly progressive elements. His *Ratib* or prayer book remains and is widely used by his followers throughout the Sudan. A learned Mohammedan lawyer writes thus upon it :— It is all invocations to God to lift darkness from the heart and to throw light upon it. I was greatly astonished to find that it was void in every respect of any call to Mahdism and I began to think his object was to call the people to follow him as Sheikh of a *Tariqa* and not as the Mahdi.

The Mahdist sect is distributed chiefly over the White and Blue Nile and Fung Provinces. It has too, many followers amongst the Baggara from the Nuba Mountains through Kordofan into Darfur. The followers include many people of a fanatical type and not the least among them are the Fellata who are scattered throughout the Sudan.

The present leader of the sect is Sayed Abd El Rahman El Mahdi the eldest surviving son of the Mahdi. He is a posthumous child. His mother was a native of Darfur and he is said to bear considerable facial resemblance to the Mahdi. He was brought up under the tutelage of the Mufti Sheikh El Tayeb Hashim and his brother Sheikh Abu El Gasim, President of the Board of Ulema. Upon the outbreak of war with Turkey in 1914 he hastened to express his loyalty to the British and declared that now the only difference between the British and the Mahdists had been removed. The Mahdi had ejected the Turk from the Sudan and the British had restored order by force of arms; but by their declaration of war against the Turks they now dissociated themselves from the old enemy. Sayed Abd El Rahman was a member of the Sudan Delegation to England in 1919 and was honoured with the order of C. V. O. He presented to H. M. King George V the sword of his father and His Majesty returned it to him to hold and use in the defence of himself and his Empire.

### The Sennoussia.

Another great reforming movement of Islam was that of the Sennoussi. Mohammed Ali El Sennoussi was born at Mostaghanem in Algeria in 1791. Owing to the differences with the Turkish

authorities he fled to Fez and there became the pupil of Sayed Ahmed Idris and adopted the Shadhlia *Tariqa*. From Morocco he returned to Algeria in 1822 and thence went to Egypt but finding his teaching unacceptable there he went on to Mecca. When Sheikh Abd El Mutualib of Mecca began his revolt there, El Sennoussi was implicated and he returned to Egypt in 1843 and Abbas Pasha offered him a home in Cairo. He refused this however and made his way to Lybia settling at Jaghbub some 400 miles west of Cairo and he died there in 1859. He was succeeded by the elder of his two sons Mohammed El Mahdi. He, alarmed by the interest the Sultan of Turkey began to take in his affairs, retired in 1895 to Kufra; his brother Mohammed Sherif died the following year at Jaghbub. In 1899 Mohammed El Mahdi left Kufra and moved to Geru probably again to avoid outside interference. Here however he found himself confronted by the expansion of French colonisation in the French Sudan and his followers came into conflict with the French both in Wadai and North of Sokoto. Several battles were fought in 1901 and 1902 to the disadvantage of the Sennoussists and then he died in 1902. He left two sons Mohammed Idris and Mohammed Rida the eldest of whom was only thirteen, so the control of the sect was taken over by Sayed Ahmed El Sherif El Hassanieh Khatabi El Idrisi, their uncle and the nephew of the great Sennoussi. He retired in 1903 to Kufra taking with him the body of Mohammed El Mahdi and there established himself. In 1908 a Turkish mission found its way to Kufra with presents and the offer of a flag and though the latter was refused it was the beginning of a closer rapprochement between Turkey and the Sennoussists. In the Italo-Turkish war Sayed Ahmed El Sherif was much influenced by Enver Pasha and when peace was made between the belligerents he maintained hostilities against the Italians with some measure of success. After the outbreak of the Great War under Turco-German pressure Sayed Ahmed accepted help from the Turks and prepared to fight both the Italians and Egypt. His nephew Mohammed Idris however disagreed with his policy and wished to secure the leadership of the sect to which his birth entitled him.

Sayed Ahmed's disastrous expedition against Egypt which ended in his complete discomforture at the end of 1916 seriously impaired his influence. Mohammed Idris made an agreement with the Italian

and British Governments and insisted that Sayed Ahmed El Sherif should either submit or retire to Kufra. The latter did retire to Syrt, but subsequently contrived to get away to Constantinople. Later he joined the Kemalists and is now supposed to be at Mosul as a possible candidate for the throne of Mesopotamia (1921).

Mohammed Idris has visited Rome and is now actively interested in the formation of a Tripolitain Parliament.

The Sennoussist movement began as a reforming one and as is nearly always the case in Islam it was a retrogressive move, i.e. an attempt to reproduce the conditions of the past with a strict adherence to the letter of Islamic law. The followers were very suspicious of strangers and completely intolerant of non-Mohammedans. A curious feature was the growth of a custom of drinking tea (coffee they did not permit) which amounts almost to a ceremonial. It is drunk very strong and very sweet and special brands are imported. Situated where it was, the sect was able to reproduce the conditions of early Mohammedanism but as has been seen above the pressure of the outside world has been too insistent and the movement has latterly sacrificed its religious to its political side. Nevertheless the religious element is a very strong one and still remains a serious element in the Sahara among the nomad tribes.

The connection of the Sennoussia with the Sudan is but slight. After the Sennoussi rejected the Khalifaship offered him by the Mahdi, their relations were naturally strained and it was not till after the battle of Omdurman that the Sennoussi influence began to appear and then only in Darfur. Sultan Ali Dinar was too clever to make an enemy of so powerful a neighbour and at the same time did not wish to involve himself in complications or to endanger his own peace. He permitted the establishment of two *Zawias* in Darfur, but the movement never had any hold on the natives and was confined to immigrants from Wadai or the Western Desert.

### Azmia.

This sect was started by a certain Mohammed El Madi Abu El Azaim. He was born about 1852 at Desuq. He went thence to Mataharieh (Minieh Province) and this is now the seat of the sect. He entered the Egyptian Education Department in 1893 and served in Edfu, Aswan and Suakin, and was transferred to the Sudan

Education Department in 1902. He was stationed at Halfa and later at Omdurman and Khartoum and he started a centre of his mission at Burri. His brother Ahmed was an educated man and was stated to have been manager of the Moayad newspaper until it got into the hands of Sheikh Ali Yusef. He died about 1911 and some of his works were published posthumously, amongst which was a book called *Wasail Izhar El Haq* issued in 1914 and containing a violent attack on Christianity.

To Sheikh Mohammed El Madi are attributed two books : "The First Principles of following the Prophet" and "The Azmia *Tariqa* and Heavenly inspirations".

Strictly speaking he is a reformer and not a leader of a *Tariqa*. His teaching is that sanctity is not a matter of heredity and he adopted strict rules of life similar to those of the Wahabi sect ; so much so that the Sect has been called (though erroneously) Wahabite. Ostensibly he desired to destroy the influence of the hereditary religious leaders and put the authority into the hands of those whose piety and asceticism deserved it. He opposed the *Tariqas* as such, but has only succeeded in forming another.

The Education Department dispensed with his services at the end of 1915 and he went back to Egypt and lived at Minieh.

In October 1915 there was a slight disturbance over a certain Abd El Rahim, who was a pupil of Mohammed El Madi, at Sinkat. The trouble arose over interference with a funeral. Mourning for the dead, and the building of tombs or any veneration for the dead is contrary to the tenets of the sect.

In April 1921 the Sect was reported to have held a meeting at the Mosque of Sayed Abd El Rahman Abu Hummus, at Alexandria, under the Presidency of Sheikh Amin El Azmi El Azhari.