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A city before Mecca. Cairo and the hajj of Kanem and Borno pilgrims (12th-17th c.)¹

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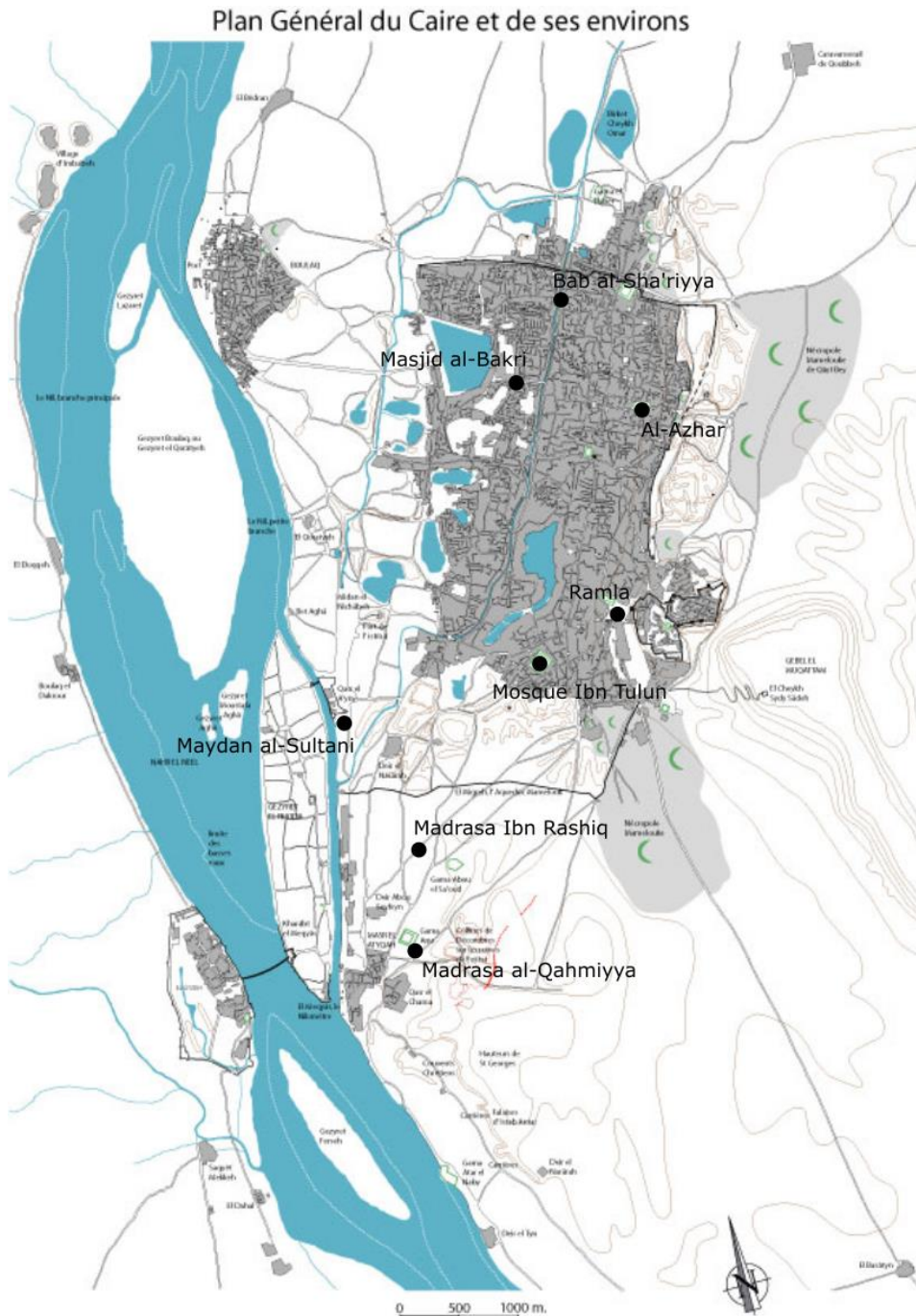


Figure 1 Sources: RAYMOND, André. Le Caire des Mamelouks aux Ottomans : les conséquences urbaines d'un changement de dynastie In : Villes rattachées, villes reconfigurées : xvie-xxe siècles [en ligne]. Tours : Presses

¹ I would like to thank Anaïs Bruzzi, Hadrien Collet, Nadeen Dakkak, Julien Loiseau and Mauro Nobili for their help

The sultan Idrīs b. ‘Alī, king of Borno. [...] He made the pilgrimage in the year 972 [1565] [...] The information of his coming by the great river from the road of Sa‘īd arrived ten days before the end of the month of Ramadan – the venerated for his power – of the year mentioned. When ‘Alī, Pasha of Egypt, was informed of his arrival, he dispatched a company of his personal servants [for his service] and the greatest [of his officers] to meet him in old Cairo. [...] He set him up at the inn (manzil) known as Aqbardī al-Kabīr Kān at the time of Circassian domination, neighboring [the district of] Ramla.²

On May 1565, ‘Alī, pacha of the Ottoman province of Egypt, welcomed in Old Cairo a caravan of pilgrims from Central Sahel. Among those to be received with all the honours were two sultans and their courts: the Bulalah sultan of Kanem, ‘Abdallah b. ‘Abd al-Ġalīl (c. 1550-1570), and the newly installed Sefuwa sultan of Borno, Idrīs b. ‘Alī (1564-1596). The Egyptian scholar ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Ġazīrī (1505–c. 1570) recorded their stay in Cairo, providing information regarding the people the two rulers met and the places they visited in the city. Welcomed in the old city of Cairo, they settled in the district of Ramla, close to the citadel. On their way to the seat of Ottoman’s power, did the two sultans had a thought towards the ruins of the Madrasa Ibn Rašīq, an old school at the northern edge of al-Misr, which had been abandoned by the second half of the 15th century? This madrasa, financed by students coming from Kanem on their way to Mecca and founded in the 13th century, had hosted pilgrims from lake Chad seeking a learning in Maliki jurisprudence for two centuries. This madrasa was the first architectural trace of a multiseccular a practice: the investments of Sahelian students and pilgrims to Cairo in order to train in Islamic sciences, on their way to the Holy Cities.

Three centuries separate the royal pilgrimages of ‘Abdallah b. ‘Abd al-Ġalīl and Idrīs b. ‘Alī from the founding of the Madrasa. However, both remarkably illustrates the special connexion between Cairo and central Sahelian pilgrims en route to Mecca. They are the testimony of the old and durable presence of kanemi and bornoan pilgrims into the Egyptian capital, since the Fatimid period. As for many other Sahelian states, Cairo was a hub for Kanem

² Collet, H. (2019), “Royal Pilgrims from Takrūr According to ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazīrī (12th–16th Century)”, *Islamic Africa*, 10, 192-193. Translated by H. Collet from: al-Jazīrī, al-Durar al-farā’id al-munazzama, t. 2, ed. Ḥasan Ismā‘īl, 359–364.

and Borno pilgrims, and a city of commercial, political and intellectual opportunities for simple pilgrims as well as for traders and rulers³.

Since the adoption of Sunni Islam by the political elites of central Sahel, in the 11th century, relations with North Africa grew exponentially. One dynasty or rulers is particularly important in this trend: the Sefuwa dynasty, whose members ruled over the sultanates of Kanem (11th-14th c.) and Borno (14th-19th c.). Installed in Borno, the Sefuwa were replaced in Kanem by the Bulalah dynasty, with who they alternated phases of peace and conflict from the 14th to the end of the 16th century. Located on the shores of lake Chad, Kanem and Borno rulers were major political, cultural and economic actors in the Sahel and through their relations with the Mediterranean Islamic states. Cairo was then among the privileged destinations for kanemi and bornoan traders, pilgrims, ambassadors and sultans during the whole medieval and early modern periods.

The kanemi and bornoan presence in Cairo has been little studied as a specific and original pattern of religious mobility from sub-saharan Africans to the Middle East⁴. Little is know about kanemi and bornoan stay in Cairo, as well on the integration of Kanem and Borno pilgrims and intellectual into the religious networks in Cairo. However, Idris b. Ali's pilgrimage and the history of the madrasa Ibn Rašīq well sum up the peculiarities of the Kanemi and Bornoan presence in Cairo in the medieval and early modern periods. Cairo was seen as a hub for diplomatic contacts with the Islamic world, as well as a land of economic and intellectual opportunities. The connexion between rulers and students lies in their regular visits to the Egyptian city, and their intertwined investments in places and networks in Cairo. As such, rulers would finance the lodging of their students; they would be in contact with Islamic scholar themselves and Kanemi and Borno students would apply their knowledge back into their ruler's court.

This article explores the position of Cairo as a hub for pilgrims coming from the Lake Chad area, and especially from the sultanates of Kanem and Borno, during the Mamluk and early Ottoman rules over Egypt between the 12th and the 17th centuries. The Kanemi and Bornoan pilgrims staying in Cairo participated to the *ḥaǧǧ*, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, one of the most important rites in Islam. Considering the interwaving of politics, trade and religious practices related to the pilgrimage to Mecca, the *ḥaǧǧ* is a unique form of mobility. It

³ Walz, T. (1972), "Notes on the Organization of the African Trade in Cairo, 1800-1850", *Annales Islamologiques*, 11, 264.

⁴ AL-NAQAR, *The pilgrimage tradition...*, 1972; BARKINDO, «The Royal Pilgrimage Tradition...», 1992; Dewièrè 2017. BIRKS, *Across the Savannas...*, 1978, p. 8; ROSS, «A Historical Geography...», 2011, p. 20.

respects its own calendar, its dynamics and its stakes⁵. Beyond the religious aspect, it can be studied as a social and political historical phenomenon, but also as a facilitator of material and immaterial circulations⁶. Here, pilgrims play a crucial role in fostering the circulation of ideas and the consolidation of transnational networks.

The interaction between pilgrims and local societies, especially in urban centres such as Cairo, is a central theme in the history of Islamic cities. This chapter inserts itself in the larger field of micro-global history of urban centres. The micro-historical analysis and connected histories of individuals and places in urban centres put an emphasis on the intellectual and material connexion in cross-cultural spaces⁷. This approach connects histories of various spaces, such as Transsaharan Africa, the Ottoman Empire or the Indian Ocean, with a focus on the local interactions related to the pilgrimage to Mecca and their effects on the urban landscapes of cities⁸. In this sense, Cairo is one of the most important cross-cultural place in the Medieval and Early modern Islamic world. If the Mamluks' connexions with the Mediterranean would involve the port of Alexandria⁹, Cairo was as a crossroad for embassies and departure point of the African pilgrims to Mecca¹⁰.

Egypt was an obligatory halt for any pilgrim en route to Mecca, from Maghreb to the shores of Niger¹¹. As a hub for pilgrims from Africa and the Middle East, the Egyptian city was configured by the presence of numerous travellers, pilgrims, students and migrants. Central Sahelian pilgrims, rulers or simple students, were actors of these changes and interaction. Visits to scholars and saints, investments in infrastructures to facilitate these contacts, are documented in both the Mamluk historiography, European testimonies and Sahelian sources. Their study both provide a new look to Cairo's history and its relation with sub-Saharan Africa. In return, Sahelian pilgrims and rulers were impacted by their experience in Cairo, and their Egyptian experience would also have an impact on the local history of Central Sahel and its socio-political mutations over the long run.

⁵ Chiffolleau and Madoeuf, «Introduction», 2005.

⁶ FAROQHI, *Pilgrims and Sultans...*, 1994, p. 3.

⁷ Gottmann, Felicia, « Introduction », 2021, 7.

⁸ Faroqhi, 2004, p. 72. Karateke, 2005, p. 30. Vallet, 2010, p. 456-469; Bertrand 2011, Dewière 2017, Collet 2019a 2019b. Recently, the pilgrimage to Mecca has been studied in two different contexts: the interplay between *ḥaǧǧ* and colonialism and the role of Europeans in organising or using the *ḥaǧǧ* in the imperial enterprise (Chiffolleau; Chantre, *Pèlerinages d'empires*).

⁹ Apellániz, F. (03 Aug. 2020). Breaching the Bronze Wall: Franks at Mamluk and Ottoman Courts and Markets. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004431737>

¹⁰ Nelly Hanna, *Making Big Money in 1600: The Life and Times of Ismail Abu Taqiyya, Egyptian Merchant*. Middle East Studies Beyond Dominant Paradigms, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998 ; Bauden and Dekkiche, 2019.

¹¹ Walz 1976: 1, Wright 1989: 47, Lydon 2008: 100.

After looking at the reasons that made Cairo a hub for Sahelian travellers, I will focus on two categories of pilgrims: rulers and ambassadors; and students who took advantage of the city's position and tradition of learning to acquire knowledge in *fiqh* and other Islamic sciences. As crossroad of embassies and traders, Cairo attracted Sahelian rulers who could reinforce in the Mamluk capital their Islamic legitimacy vis-à-vis other Muslim polities and strengthen their economic ties with North African and Middle Eastern markets. As a pivotal center of Islamic learning, Cairo also attracted Kanem and Borno students who came into the Egyptian city leading to the rise of the Madrasa Ibn Rašīq and the consolidation of al-Azhar as the leading institution for sahelian students at a global level.

I. **Cairo on** Erreur! Signet non défini. **the road to** Erreur! Signet non défini. Erreur! Signet non défini. **ḥağğ: from the seat of the Caliphs to Ottoman African capital**

Several reasons explain the importance of Cairo as a hub for pilgrims in the Medieval and Early Modern period. Its geographic position, as the last African metropolis before the Middle East and the Arabic peninsula, is the first of them. With the development of trans-Saharan trade between North Africa and newly islamized states of Sahel, the roads passing by Cairo were the fastest and safest path to any sahelian pilgrim willing to travel to Mecca. The trans-sahelian road, driving horizontally from Mauritania to the Red Sea, in the south of the Sahara, would only develop later in the 17th century as an alternative, after the islamization of the political authorities all along the road¹².

Cairo was the starting point of the *maḥmal*, the official caravan to Mecca, organised by the Mamluks, and then the Ottoman authorities of Egypt. Dating from the 13th century, the *maḥmal* was the largest and best organized in the Islamic world **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** For the Mamluk and Ottoman authorities, it was the “symbol of their protective rights over the Ka’ba and tomb of Muhammad”.¹³ It usually departed on the 25th šawwāl (10th month of the Hegira year) and took about forty days to reach Mecca¹⁴. Pilgrims of the whole Islamic world, from India to Mali, used the *maḥmal* to safely travel to Mecca. Its starting point, Cairo, became a hub for travelers from Asia and Africa. The *maḥmal* brought together several caravans, including those from the Maghreb and sub-saharan Africa. After the Ottoman conquest of Cairo, in 1517, a new *maḥmal* was organised from Istanbul. The Egyptian authorities only kept

¹² Dewière 2017 : 237-245.

¹³ Robinson, « The Mahmal of the Moslem Pilgrimage », 117.

¹⁴ Al-Naqar, *The pilgrimage Tradition... op. cit.* p. xx.

one of the two caravans that were part of the *maḥmal* from Cairo¹⁵. However, it remained a central institution for African pilgrims. The frequent presence of members of the courts of Morocco, **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** the regencies of **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** Algiers, **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** Tunis **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** and Tripoli, and of the Sahelian courts, was **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** an opportunity for exchanges and enhance the links between the two sides of the Sahara by establish direct contacts in the Egyptian city.

With the *maḥmal*, the city of Cairo was the ideal place to meet with representatives of other political powers and to find out about the political context in different parts of Dār al-Islām **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** It was then a privileged place for diplomacy. Between 1261 and 1517, this centrality was emphasized by the leading role of the mamluk rulers of Egypt. As protectors of the Holy Cities and of the last Abbasid Caliphs, they transformed Cairo into a crossroad for embassies¹⁶. **Erreur ! Signet non défini.**

The presence of a lineage of Abbasid caliphs in Cairo **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** dates back to the decision of Sultan Mamlūk Baybar to welcome in 1261 Abū al-Qāsim Ahmad al-Mustansir, an Abbasid prince fleeing Baghdad **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** following his fall to the Mongols in **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** 1258¹⁷. Between 1261 and 1516, the Mamlūk protected the caliphs, who assumed a purely symbolic role and served to legitimize **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** the sultans **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** mamlūk to other Islamic states¹⁸. Indeed, the Abbasid caliphs are, from a legal point of view, the sole trustees of the legitimacy of power in the Sunni Dār al-Islām. **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** Thus, Cairo became attractive to Islamic rulers seeking of caliphal recognition and confirmation of their legitimacy, both locally and internationally.

Many rulers, such as the Ottoman Sultan Bāyezīd I in 1394 and the Sultan of Delhi Muḥammad b. Tuḡluq (1325-1351), sent their delegations to Cairo for this purpose¹⁹. The rulers of the Sahel are **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** not to be outdone. Several sub-saharan African rulers sent ambassadors or visited themselves Cairo after the installation of the Abbasid caliphs in Cairo, in the occasion of their journey to Mecca²⁰. These visits followed the rhythms of trans-

¹⁵ AL-NAQAR, *The pilgrimage tradition...*, 1972, p. xxi.

¹⁶ Dekkiche and Bauden 2019, X.

¹⁷ LEWIS, *The political Language of Islam*, 1988, p. 48.

¹⁸ YÜKSEL MUSLU, *The Ottomans and the Mamluks...*, 2014, p. 9.

¹⁹ Veinstein, 2006, p. 457 ; BROADRIDGE, Anne F., *Kingship and Ideology in the Islamic and Mongol Worlds*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, 150; Vallet, 2011, p. 269.

²⁰ In the 11th century, the Baramandana ruler of Mali is said to have made *ḥaġġ*, in the same way as the sultans of Kanem Ḥummay ibn °Abd al-Ġalīl (1077-1086) and Dūnama ibn Ḥummay (1086-1140). The ruler of Kanem Ḥawā ibn Arkū (1067-1071) would have been, according to *dīwān*, «invested by the Caliph» (LANGE, *Le Diwan des Sultans du (Kanem-) Bornu...*, 1977, p. 67). Apart from the absence of cross-examination of the texts attesting to the veracity of these pilgrimages, it can nevertheless be noted that all these pilgrimages took place during the

saharan caravans of pilgrims. The concomitance between the temporality of the *ḥaǧǧ* and the coming of the ambassador is a common pattern. Muhammad Nur Alkali states that the Sudanese caravan of **Erreur ! Signet non défini.***ḥaǧǧ* was composed of three groups, the first of which was composed mainly of diplomats in charge of delivering messages and preparing the arrival of the other groups²¹. The first mention of ambassadors among the sahelian pilgrims comes from al-Qalqašandī. He reported on a diplomatic mission accompanying a *ḥaǧǧ* caravan and sent to the Mamlūk sultan Al-Malik al-Zāhir Sayf al-Dīn Barqūq (1382-1399) by the Borno sultan ‘Uṭmān ibn Idrīs (1389-1421) of the Sefuwa dynasty²². Other embassies and royal visits to Cairo, in 1440, 1565, 1648 and 1667, from Borno, Kanem and Takrūr²³, clearly show it, as the ambassadors or sultan-pilgrims would stay longer in Cairo to wait the cold season before traveling across the Sahara, or arrive in the Cairote city just before the departure of the *maḥmal*.

Unlike other rulers, Islamic rulers from Sahel would undertake the visit themselves. The first of these rulers to be mentioned is the Sultan of Mali **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** Mansa Wālī in the 1260s. The second is Mansā Sākūra **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** (late 13th century) and the third Mansā Mūsā **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** (1324), both also from Mali. Similarly, in this period, the Sefuwa Sultans undertake the pilgrimage to Mecca. Ibrāhīm b. Bīr (1296-1315), Idrīs b. Ibrāhīm (1342-1366), Dāwud b. Ibrāhīm (1366-1376), **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** ‘Alī b. Dūnama (1465-1497) and Idrīs b. ‘Alī (**Erreur ! Signet non défini.** 1497-1519) are all credited by North African and sub-Saharan sources to have undertaken the journey to Mecca²⁴ **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** The presence of caliphs in Cairo probably explains this profusion of royal journeys **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** The caliphal investiture is clearly stated as a motive for the sahelian ruler’s visits in three occurrences. In 1324, Ibn al-Dawādārī reveals that Mansa Musa of Mali obtained the investiture of the Abbasid caliph residing in Cairo²⁵. In 1497, the Askya Muḥammad, ruler of Songhay, **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** presented himself before the Caliph to request the investiture as “Sultan of the land of Saghy²⁶”. Thirteen years before, the Sultan of Borno ‘Alī b. Dūnama also came in Cairo in order to obtain the investiture from the Caliph²⁷.

Fatimid Caliphate, whose seat was in Cairo. No pilgrimage of sultans from sub-Saharan Africa is attested between the period of the Fatimid Caliphs of Cairo (909-1171) and that of the Abbasid Caliphs of Cairo (1261-1517).

²¹ NUR ALKALI, «Some contributions...», 1985, p. 132.

²² See Dewièrè 2019.

²³ BAUDEN, «Les relations diplomatiques...», 2007, p. 24. Dewièrè 2017 : 237 ; 2019, 2020.

²⁴ Dewièrè 2017.

²⁵ Collet 2017 : 228 ; IBN AL-DAWĀDĀRĪ, *Kanz al-durar wa ḡāmi‘ al-ḡurar*, t. 9, (éd. H. R. Roemer), Le Caire, 1960, p. 316-317.

²⁶ AL-SA’ADI, *Tārīḥ al-sūdān in* HUNWICK, *Timbuktu...*, 2003, p. 105; AL-NAQAR, *The pilgrimage tradition.*, 1972, p. 22.

²⁷ CUOQ, *Recueil des sources arabes...*, 1975 (1985), p. 254.

The Mamlūk period has been qualified as the “classical period of Egypto-Tarkūr relations”²⁸. For African rulers, the *ḥaǧǧ* quickly became an essential tool for legitimizing their authority on their way back to their homeland²⁹. The pilgrimage is used to display the prestige of the ruler, by their presence and their expenses in Cairo. There is evidence that the sovereigns of Mali **Erreur ! Signet non défini.**, Songhay **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** and Borno also spent considerable sums of money during their travels in what may amount, at least for some of the sovereigns involved, to a policy of prestige, as well as a commercial operation. The famous pilgrimage to Mecca by the ruler of Mali Mansā Mūsá, in 1324, is a vivid example of these relations³⁰. Mansā Mūsá’s *ḥaǧǧ* was driven by economic, diplomatic, political and religious interests, and had a strong impact on both Mali and Egypt³¹. The sums spent, the welcome given to him and his interview with Sultan Mamlūk clearly show that the Sultan of Mali is putting on a performance, **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** using the pilgrimage to assert his prestige and legitimacy **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** within the ‘*umma* **Erreur ! Signet non défini.**³². The episode of the meeting **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** with the Mamlūk Sultan **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** described by al-’Umarī sheds significant light on the use of **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** *ḥaǧǧ* as a tool of legitimization and royal propaganda³³. At last, the sums borrowed by Mansa Musa to Cairote traders during his journey forced them to come to Mali to recover their debts;

The economic attractiveness of Cairo **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** still motivated the ruler’s pilgrimages after the Ottoman conquest of Cairo, in 1517. this is attested by the sums invested by the Borno rulers in Cairo during their journeys. According to a Venetian consul **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** based in the Egyptian capital, the sultan Idrīs b. ‘Alī **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** (1564-1596), **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** took advantage of his visit to Cairo in 1565 to buy goods worth three hundred thousand ducats³⁴. This value is equivalent to **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** about 220,000 mithkal of gold, or one ton of gold **Erreur ! Signet non défini.**³⁵. By way of **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** comparison, Mansa Musa **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** brought twelve tons of gold **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** for his pilgrimage, and

²⁸ Walz 1983: 312.

²⁹ Chiffolleau, 2015, p. 11.

³⁰ al-’Umarī 1927: 70-92, al-Maqrīzī 1936: II, 255, Ibn Kaṭīr 1932: XIV, 112, Ibn Ḥaǧar al-’Asklānī 1350 A. H.: IV, 383-4, al-Dāwādārī 1960: 316-17.

³¹ Levtzion 1980: 209-214. Birks 1978: 10.

³² LEVTZION, *Ancient Ghana and Mali*, 1973 (1980), p. 213.

³³ AL-’UMARĪ, *Masālik...*, trans. in CUOQ, *Recueil des sources arabes...*, 1975 (1985), p. 276; AL-NAQAR, *The pilgrimage tradition...*, 1972, p. 13.

³⁴ Senato Dispaci Consoli Egitto 1565, 25 sett. 1565, d. 49 f. 122.

³⁵ This calculation is based on a comparison of the weight of the ducat, which weighs about 3.4 g of gold, and the mithkal, which is equivalent to 4.63 g of gold (WALZ, «Gold and silver...», 1983, pp. 305-306, 309).

Askya Muḥammad is **Erreur ! Signet non défini.**said to have spent the equivalent 100,000 mithkal of gold in Cairo**Erreur ! Signet non défini.**³⁶. Another sultan, ‘Alī b. ‘Umar (1639-1677), came several times to Cairo on his way to Mecca. The traveller Ewliyā Çelebi reports to have met the sultan in the city in the company of a thousand camels. He brought with him gold, **Erreur ! Signet non défini.**with which he bought pearls from Venice**Erreur ! Signet non défini.**³⁷. If some of the expenses made in Cairo were directly paid, the sahelian rulers likely indebted themselves during their stay, at extremely high rates. Gomez and Green argues see this indebtedment as dommagable to Mali and Songhay rulers.³⁸ However, this strategy of indebtedment was probably done consciously, as it would force Egyptian traders to come to their homelands to recover their debts. This contributed to the opening of a new trade route between the Niger bend and Egypt, offering an alternative to the trade with Maghreb³⁹.

In the 1640s, the trade between Egypt and Western and Central Sahel was threatened by Tripolitan ambitions to establish a monopole over trans-Saharan trade. Concerned by the tripolitan initiatives to bloc the trade between Cairo and West and Central Sahel, the Borno sultan ‘Alī b. ‘Umar multiplied the pilgrimages to Mecca, with a halt in Cairo⁴⁰. This halt was mostly to trade with Cairot merchants and to challenge the Tripolitan attempts to block trade between Egypt and Sahel. In 1648, his arrival in Cairo, where he seems to have been received “with great magnificence”⁴¹, reached the court of Tripoli. In reaction, the Tripolitan Pacha Muḥammad Saqīzī (1631-1649) unsuccessfully tried to kidnap the sovereign on his return to Borno. The sultan acted not only as a merchant and a pilgrim, but also as a sovereign, taking dangerous initiatives to protect his commercial interests in the Sahara.

If Cairo remained central in many aspects of the African pilgrimage, the Ottoman occupation of Cairo**Erreur ! Signet non défini.** changed the geopolitic of the *ḥaḡḡ*. Following the fall of Cairo, the Ottomans conquest of Mecca**Erreur ! Signet non défini.** gave them the role of protector of Islam’s **Erreur ! Signet non défini.****Erreur ! Signet non défini.** holy places, as well as the duty to protect muslim pilgrims**Erreur ! Signet non défini.**. The diplomatic discussions regarding the pilgrims to Mecca shifted towards Istanbul. The Eastern *maḥmal*, starting from Istanbul and Damascus, increased in volume and importance and became a

³⁶ WALZ, «Gold and silver...», 1983, p. 309, 314.

³⁷ CIECIERSKA-CHLAPOWA, «Extracts from fragments...», 1964, p. 242.

³⁸ Gomez 2018 : 119-121 ; Green 2019 : 62.

³⁹ Collet, 2017, p. 238.

⁴⁰ Dewière 2017 : 37-38.

⁴¹ BnF, MF 12220, f. 321v.

diplomatic matter for Middle Eastern and Asian Muslim powers⁴². In the **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** years following the capture of Astrakhan by Tsar Ivan IV in 1554-6, the ruler of the Khanate of Khiva **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** addressed the Ottoman Sultan **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** Selim II directly to complain about the restrictions of passage that the Russians were causing for their pilgrims⁴³. In 1577-9, the Borno sultan sent two embassies in Istanbul, with special requests concerning these matter. In response, two orders from Istanbul were sent to Cairo to ensure a closer control from Egyptian authorities on the pilgrim's safety⁴⁴.

However, the Ottoman conquest did not entirely change the role that Cairo had during the Mamluk rule, especially for African pilgrims. The organisation of the pilgrimage to Mecca remained a highly political affair⁴⁵. Until the 19th century, Cairo remained an economic, cultural and political center, whose visit was mandatory for the African rulers undertaking the pilgrimage to Mecca. Sultans of Songhay, References to the sultans' pilgrimage to Mecca multiply from the 16th century onwards. From 1465 to 1744, the Sultan of Songhay Askya Muḥammad, the Sultan of Kanem 'Abd al-Ġalīl and between seven and nine Sultans of Borno made or attempted *ḥaġġ*. In this context, mixing the pilgrimage and the diplomatic visit of Cairo became the norm, for both logistical and political reasons. Through the personal practice of pilgrimage, Borno sultans maintained a privileged and unique relation with Early Modern Cairo. This is peculiarly true, when we look at the religious and political connexions Borno and Kanem pilgrims built in Cairo. Idrīs b. 'Alī's pilgrimage, as well as the Madrasa Ibn Rashīq, are particularly significant in this sense.

II. The ruler-pilgrims and the consequences of their stay in Cairo **Erreur ! Signet non défini.**

In comparaison with the extraordinary journeys of Mali and Songhay sultans in Cairo, the Kanemi and Borno royal presence has been characterised by a greater continuity in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period. Because of the dangers associated with the travel to Arabia, the practice of pilgrimage by Muslim rulers is not common in *dār al-islām*⁴⁶ **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** However, the Sefuwa are an exception **Erreur ! Signet non défini.**: from

⁴² Naim R. Farooqi (1988) Moguls, Ottomans, and Pilgrims: Protecting the Routes to Mecca in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, *The International History Review*, 10:2, 198-220, DOI: 10.1080/07075332.1988.9640474
⁴³ FAROQHI, *Pilgrims and Sultans...*, 1994, p. 141. Faroqhi, S., *The Ottoman Empire and the World Around it*, London, Tauris, 2004.

⁴⁴ *MD XL*, s. 87, hüküm 197; ORHONLU, «Osmanli-Bornu...», 1969, pp. 127-128. The question of the security and taxation of African pilgrims was a recurring source of conflict between pilgrims and their hosts (WALZ, «Trade between...», 1976, p. 27).

⁴⁵ Faroqhi 1990: 127-145.

⁴⁶ Dewière 2017: 220-222.

1000 to 1750, between thirteen and fifteen sultans made or attempted the **Erreur ! Signet non défini**.*ḥaġġ*⁴⁷. According to local sources, the journeys to Mecca by Sefuwa rulers date back to the rule of the first ruler of the dynasty, Hummay b. ‘Abd al-Ġalīl (1077-1086)⁴⁸. If this journey is most probably legendary, many rulers of this dynasty are reported by North African and Sahelian sources as pilgrims to Mecca⁴⁹. Like the Malian and Songhay rulers, their stay in Cairo was motivated by political, religious and economic objectives.

Two narratives provide us new insights on the political and religious stakes behind the pilgrimages of Sefuwa rulers and their stay in Cairo. The first one, related by the Egyptian sufi shaykh and polymath Ġalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī (d. 1505), is about the pilgrimage of the Borno sultan ‘Alī b. Dūnama (1464-1497). The second one is related by Egyptian scholar ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Ġazīrī, and regards the pilgrimage of the Borno sultan Idrīs b. ‘Alī. Both testimonies reveals the broader religious and political changes in Sixteenth century North and sub-Saharan Africa⁵⁰. It tells us about the contacts the sultans had with Egyptian religious and political authorities, and how these contacts are motivated by external and internal policy of Borno rulers.

In 1484, al-Suyūfī reports his own meeting with a Sahelian ruler, identified as the Borno ruler ‘Alī b. Dūnama (1465-1497)⁵¹. In 1484, the sultan ‘Alī b. Dūnama was already ruling Borno since twenty years. Founder of a new capital, Birni Ngazargamu, he is acknowledged for his role in ending the interdynastic wars in Borno and in providing the basis of its future hegemony in Central Sahel. His visit in Cairo, motivated by the will to obtain a caliphal investiture by the Abbassid caliph al-Mutawakkil ‘alā ‘llāh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Ya‘qūb, brings him to al-Suyūfī, who was living in the island of Rawda.

Al-Suyūfī was a sufi belonging to the shadhiliyya brotherhood. He enjoyed a great reputation in Egypt and abroad, as he was considered to be “almost like the Imam Malik”⁵². His fame as a sufi shadhili shaykh and a scholar contributed to this reputation in Sahel⁵³. When ‘Alī b. Dūnama visited him, Al-Suyūfī already had claimed to be a *mujtahid mutlaq* and the renewer (*mujaddid*) of the ninth century⁵⁴. The Songhay sultan Askiya Muḥammad also visited him in

⁴⁷ AL-NAQAR, *The pilgrimage tradition...*, 1972, p. 38. BARKINDO, «The Royal Pilgrimage Tradition...», 1992, p. 4; Dewièrè 2017: 427-431.

⁴⁸ LANGE, *Le Diwan des Sultans du (Kanem-) Bornu...*, 1977, p. 68.

⁴⁹ Dewièrè 2017 : 222-226.

⁵⁰ On this source, see Collet 2019.

⁵¹ CUOQ, *Recueil des sources arabes...*, 1975 (1985), p. 254; BARKINDO, «The Royal Pilgrimage Tradition...», 1992, p. 11; LAVERS, «Adventures in the chronology...», 1993, p. 257; LEVTZION and HOPKINS, *Corpus...*, 2000, p. 81.

⁵² Shadhili, *Babjat al-'abidin ft tatjamat Jalal ad-Din*, fos. 31, in Sartain 1971: 197.

⁵³ Hamès shadhiliyya en Afrique de l'Ouest, 14.

⁵⁴ Sabra 2010: 110.

1497⁵⁵, while he held a correspondance with some of the rulers from Agadès and Katsina⁵⁶. Like their rulers, many sahelian pilgrims visited him, taking his books back home. He was considered as one of the greatest scholars and sufi shaykh of his times, and it is likely that his charismatic influence crossed the Sahara through the shadhiliyya learnings and scholarly networks, as some clues from the following century suggests⁵⁷. During his visit, the Borno sultan asked to al-Suyūṭī to serve as an intermediate with the Caliph. According to the scholar, he wrote himself the diploma of investiture in the name of the Caliph, taking further up his political role to the Borno sultan⁵⁸. However, more than an political matter, the meeting with al-Suyūṭī had eventually a significant influence in the introduction of shadhili ideas in 15th century Bornoan court. Eighty years later, Idrīs b. ‘Alī’s pilgrimage, in company with the sultan of Kanem, confirms the links between Cairo Shadhili shaykh and Borno rulers.

Idris b. ‘Alī’s visit to Cairo in 1565 was previously known thanks to Andrea Emo, then consul of **Erreur ! Signet non défini. Venice** **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** in the Egyptian city, who reported it to the Venician authorities. In this short notice, he reported that a son of the king of the Blacks was staying in the city, on his way back from Mecca, spending 300.000 ducats in the city **Erreur ! Signet non défini.**⁵⁹. The recent discovery of al-Ġazīrī’s testimony by Hadrien Collet gave the confirmation that it was the Borno sultan, as one of his sons “stayed at the Ṭulūnī mosque district with one of his eunuchs (akḥṣā’) during the pilgrimage, which the boy did not make”⁶⁰.

Idrīs b. ‘Alī came with one of his sons, but also in company with the ruler of Kanem, his second cousin by his mother⁶¹. Coming by boat from the Cairo’s southern region of Sa’id, the pilgrims installed their camp in Maydan al-Sultani, close to the Nile’s shore, between the Rawda island and the Khalij al-Masri’s entrance⁶². Sultan Idris b. Ali’s pilgrimage had an official reception from the ottoman authorities of Cairo. The Borno sultan was hosted in the very heart of old Mamluk power, in the aristocratic district of the citadel, Rumayla, in the inn of Aqbardī al-Kabīr Kān, who was the dawādar, or assistant of the amīr al rakb, who led the

⁵⁵ Sartain « Jamal ad-Din al-Suyuti... » 1971: 193; Nobili, Mauro, “New Reinventions of the Sahel: Reflections on the Ta’rīḥ Genre in the Timbuktu Historiographical Production, Seventeenth to Twentieth Centuries” 2018: 212.

⁵⁶ Sartain 1971: 197.

⁵⁷ Dewièrè 2013.

⁵⁸ Sartain 1971: 195.

⁵⁹ State Archives of Venice, Venise, *Senate Dispatches Consuls Egypt 1565, 25 Sept. 1565*, d. 49 f. 122 ; voir LAVERS, «Adventures in the chronology...», 1993, p. 258.

⁶⁰ Collet 2019 : 194.

⁶¹ Collet 2019: 194; Dewièrè 2017: 31, 379.

⁶² Collet, H. (2019), “Royal Pilgrims from Takrūr According to ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazīrī (12th–16th Century)”, *Islamic Africa*, 10, 192-193.

mahmal to Mecca⁶³. After some time, he might have changed, to a larger place, named al-Watwat's house by al-Gaziri⁶⁴. The sultan of Kanem was also hosted in the Ramayla, close the the Madrasa-Mosque of the sultan Hasan. One of Idris b. Ali's son stayed, during the five months of his journey to Mecca, at the Tuluni mosque, most probably in order to study. On his way back from Mecca, Idris b. Ali stayed in the house of an official at the edge of the pond of the Elephant (Birkat al-Fil). Before setting back to Borno in september 1565, he received a last gift from the Ottoman pacha himself. If al-Ğazīrī's testimony reveals the political dimension of this pilgrimage, and the ceremonies around such journey, it also provides an insightful information, that has deep consequences in our understanding of politico-religious networks in Islamic Africa in the second part of the 16th century.

Talking about Idrīs b. 'Alī's "way of life", al-Ğazīrī reports a visit (*ziyāra*) to the saint and scholar Muḥammad al-Bakrī al-Şadīqī al-Shāfi'ī (1524-1586), founder of the tariqa Bakriyya, to take his *baraka*⁶⁵. The Borno sultan probably went to the mosque of al-Bakri⁶⁶, close to Bāb al-Sha'rīya, a neighborhood inhabited by many religious scholars associated with al-Azhar and where the Bakrīs resided⁶⁷. The sultan's words to the shaykh, as reported by al-Jaziri, are eloquent of the nature of this visit: "O my master, you are of the people (*'āl*) of God, we visit your person (*maḥallikum*) and the baraka comes up to us, for you are a place (*maḥall*) of that." Following 'Alī b. Dūnama's visit to Al-Suyūfī, this visit has huge implications in our understanding of the role of sufism in Central Sahel politics and on the politico-religious networks between Egypt, Morocco and Borno.

Muḥammad al-Bakrī was the member of a famous Cairo family of '*ulama*', well known in West Africa⁶⁸. In fact, according to Norris, the nisba al-Bakrī is quite common in the genealogies of scholars from Kel Es-Souk and among the members of the Qādiriyya brotherhood⁶⁹. The Bakriyya had, in the following centuries, an increasing role in the Egyptian

⁶³ Collet 2019: 192-3.

⁶⁴ This passage is uncomplete, and is not clear.

⁶⁵ Collet 2019: 197.

⁶⁶ See map. « Masjid al-Bakri », *archnet*, online, https://archnet.org/sites/4217/media_contents/34204.

⁶⁷ Sabra, Adam, "Building a Family Shrine in Ottoman Cairo. Five Waqf Endowments by Fādila daughter of Shaykh Muḥammad al-Bakrī, 1619-1629", DYNTRAN Working Papers, n° 11, online edition, April 2016, available at: <https://dyntran.hypotheses.org/1065>.

⁶⁸ Collet 2019: 197 ; Abdul-Karim Rafeq, "Ibn Abi 'l-Surūr and His Works", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 1975, Vol. 38, No. 1 (1975), 26.

⁶⁹ Jean-Louis Triaud. L'EVEIL DE L'ECRITURE Un nouveau Moyen âge sahélien A propos de l'ouvrage de Paulo Fernando de Moraes Farias, Arabic Medieval Inscriptions from the Republic of Mal. Epigra-phy, Chronicles and Songhay-Tuareg History Review article de l'ouvrage de P.F. de Moraes Farias..Afrique & Histoire, Verdier, 2005. **HAL ARCHIVE OUVERTE**.

religious life, especially with the institutionalisation of the sufi brotherhoods.⁷⁰ As al-Suyuti before him, Muhammad's father, Abu al-Hassan, was "widely known in various regions of the world such as Syria, Rûm, Yemen, Takrûr, and the Maghrib"⁷¹. Both father and son claimed universal religious authority as axial saints and unrestricted legal scholars"⁷², in the continuity of al-Suyuti's claims. As al-Suyuti with the Abbassid caliphs, Muḥammad al-Bakrī was also known for his closeness to Ottoman authorities in Cairo.

As for al-Suyuti, the Bakri are closely related with the shadhiliyya, whose influence in Borno between the 16th c. and the 18th c. is well attested⁷³. The nisba al-Bakri is frequently cited in the margin of a Borno Qur'an MS.2ShK from the 17th century, that already had numerous references taken from shadhili authors⁷⁴. Idris b. Ali's ziyara to Muhammad al-Bakri reinforce this link, and would explain the early signs of shadhili influence and sufi practices in our most important local source on Idris b. 'Ali's reign: the chronicles of Ahmad b. Furtu, chief imam of the Borno sultanate (1576 and 1578). These chronicles relate the fourteen first years of Idrīs b. 'Alī's rule, and contain several references to the Shadhili author Šarāf al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Sa'īd al-Būšīrī al-Sanḥāgi, known as al-Būšīrī (d. 696/1295)⁷⁵. In this chronicle, Ahmad b. Furtu, following his sultan in a military campaign in Kanem in order to support Abd al-Ġālī's son, in 1570, the imam "went off before the Sultan left, to the west of the stockade of Aghafi accompanied by the Imam al-Saghir Muḥammad ibn Ayesha and their people wishing to make a local pilgrimage (*ziyāra*) to the muṣjid (mosque) of Armi. They reached the mosque and looked at it, and meditated on it knowing it to be indeed the mosque of Armi"⁷⁶. This episode, that kept its part of mystery, has a strong echo with Idris' visit in Cairo, and tends to confirm the socio-political importance of Sufism in the second part of the 16th century central Sahel⁷⁷.

The visit to Muhammad al-Bakri has an echo with another politico diplomatic episode that occurred in the first years of the 1580s: the diplomatic exchanges between Idris b. Ali and the Morocco sultan Ahmad al-Mansur (1578-1603)⁷⁸. In order to counter the Ottoman interventionism in the Sahara, the Moroccan and Bornoan sultans built a diplomatic relation that could be seen as an African reaction to Ottoman imperialism. This diplomatic exchange is

⁷⁰ Pierre-Jean Luizard, « Le soufisme égyptien contemporain », *Égypte/Monde arabe*, Première série, 2 | 1990, Online since 08 July 2008, connection on 17 February 2021. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/ema/218>.

⁷¹ Sabra 2010 : 110. Al-Sha'rānī, *Al-Tabaqāt al-sughrd*, p. 69.

⁷² Sabra 2010 : 110.

⁷³ Bobboyi 1992 ; Dewièrè 2013.

⁷⁴ Bondarev Tafsir sources in Four annotated Qur'ani, 45.

⁷⁵ Dewièrè 2013 : 62.

⁷⁶ Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs*, p. 29; *Royal Asiatic Society*, Arabic MS 29, f. 63v.

⁷⁷ Dewièrè 2019.

⁷⁸ On this episode, see Dewièrè 2014.

unique in the long history of Morocco and Borno, and one question still unanswered is the reason why, in 1580, the Borno sultan decided to send an embassy to Morocco. Before this episode, both sultans are actually connected to the figure of Muhammad al-Bakri. In fact, the future Moroccan sultan obtained an *iğaza* from the Egyptian scholar, thanks to a long correspondence, and became himself a shaykh of the Bakriyya⁷⁹. This spiritual connexion might have had a role in the strengthening of the Borno-Moroccan relations. If we know rather well the way in which Ahmad al-Mansur used the sufi brotherhoods (and especially the shadhili branch of the jazuliyya) to consolidate his power in Morocco⁸⁰, little is known about such policy in the south of the Sahara before the 17th century. However, Idris b. ‘Ali’s visit to the shaykh al-Bakri during his stay in Cairo enhances our knowledge of transsaharan sufi networks in the Early Modern period and its possible political implications, and on the central position Cairo could have in these connexions.

III. Student/pilgrims: the narratives of Kanem and Borno presence in Cairo

Cairo was not only central for rulers, but also to every pilgrim in sake of knowledge. In the old quarter of Fustat, the ruins of the *madrasa* Ibn Rashiq testifies that Cairo was already a node in transnational religious networks in the 13th century, and that it kept this role until the 19th century, with the institution of al-Azhar. The Borno and kanem scholars and students quickly regarded Cairo as a place of instruction in Islamic sciences, and particularly in Maliki *fiqh*.

The presence of sub-saharan students in Cairo is well attested over a long period of history. As Sartain states, “it was quite common for scholars from Takrur to travel to Cairo, no doubt usually with the pilgrim caravan, to study under the famous professors there⁸¹. For exemple, al-Suyūfī reports that many students and a qadi accompanied the Sultan of Borno on his visit to Cairo⁸². The continuous presence of Kanem and Borno students in the Egyptian city is still to be asserted, as it is likely that they were assimilated to the larger nisba of Takruri. As a consequence, the Kanemi and Borno residents of Cairo are hardly dissociated from Takruri populations⁸³. However, Kanemi and Borno pilgrims, from the sultans to the students, took all the opportunities of a city that quickly became the centre of religious learning and effervescence in the fields of maliki law and sufi learnings, as an alternative from the Maghreb.

⁷⁹ Mouline, *le califat imaginaire*, XXX ; Shaw, « al-Bakrī », *EI*², 2, 965.

⁸⁰ **Mouline and Mercedes Arenal.**

⁸¹ Sartain 1971: 198.

⁸² CUOQ, *Recueil des sources arabes...*, 1975 (1985), p. 482.

⁸³ See Collet, in this volume.

Rulers favoured this policy in investing infrastructures in the Egyptian capital that would host their subjects, and granting privileges to the *ḥāḡḡ*⁸⁴. The investment of the Borno rulers in the logistics of the pilgrimage to Mecca appears in several documents in the Medieval and Early Modern period, in a trend **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** that has already been widely observed in the Islamic world **Erreur ! Signet non défini.**⁸⁵. The presence of facilities for housing pilgrims **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** in Cairo **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** and Mecca, **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** financed by the Sefuwa Sultans are reported in 1248, 1576 and in the 17th century⁸⁶. A sultan of Borno, probably Alī b. ‘Umar (1639-1677), is said to have bought houses in Cairo **Erreur ! Signet non défini.**, Medina **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** and Mecca to **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** host pilgrims **Erreur ! Signet non défini.**; stores were also acquired to cover the cost of the houses⁸⁷. A *Girgam*, or royal kinglist, from the colonial period, still sung the sultan Ali b. Umar as the one “who sent to repair the mosque at Mecca”⁸⁸.

Before al-Azhar, the first institution directly related to Sahelian students is the Madrasa Ibn Rašīq, in the north of old Cairo.⁸⁹ In the 14th century, two Egyptian authors, Ibn Duqmaq and al-Maqrīzi, describe the founding of a madrasa by an Andalusian qadi in the 1240s. The first author is Šārim al-Dīn Ibrāhīm Ibn Duqmāq (745/1349-809/1407)⁹⁰. In his *Kitāb al-intiṣār li-wāsiyat ‘iqd al-amṣār*, he writes:

Madrasa Banī Rašīq – This madrasa is for the Malikites and it has a great reputation in the *bilād al-Takrūr*. Every year they send money to Ibn Rašīq as a subvention and its endowments are weak. The Sheikh and Imam Alam Al-Din Ibn Rašīq taught there until he died as a teacher and Imam, then his son settled there after him, the judge of judges Zein Al-Din. When people from Takrur travelled from their lands to reach the Hijaz before it was built, they

⁸⁴ Ulrich Jasper Seetzen, « Nouvelles recherches sur l’intérieur de l’Afrique », *Annales des voyages, de la géographie et de l’histoire ou Collection des voyages nouveaux les plus estimés*, 19, 1812, p. 179.

⁸⁵ FAROQHI, *Pilgrims and Sultans...*, 1994, pp. 7-8; VALLET, *L’Arabie marchande...*, 2010, p. 458.

⁸⁶ AL-MAQRĪZĪ, *Al-ḥiṭaṭ*, trans. in CUOQ, *Recueil des sources arabes...*, 1975 (1985), p. 389; RAS, K/B, f. 5v; LANGE, *kitāb al-ḡazawāt...*, 1987, p. 6; BARKINDO, «The Royal Pilgrimage Tradition...», 1992, p. 15. This assertion is based on a phenomenon widely described throughout the Islamic world. Thus, Suraiya Faroqhi writes «But for many other scholars and literati, the pilgrimage was the beginning of a more conventional career [...] scholars often visited Mecca before embarking on careers as teachers and judges» (FAROQHI, *Pilgrims and Sultans...*, 1994, p. 15).

⁸⁷ WALZ, «Trade between...», 1976, p. 26.

⁸⁸ Palmer, “A Bornu Girgam”, 1912, p. 81.

⁸⁹ There is a reference to a Kanem mosque in 11th century Misr in a late document, but it is not reported in contemporaneous documents (BARKINDO, «The Royal Pilgrimage Tradition...», 1992, p. 18 n. 22).

⁹⁰ Ibn Duqmāq was the grandson of ‘Izz al-Dīn Aydamur, an amir of al-Malik al-Nāṣir. Member of the *awlād al-nās*, he turned to intellectual life and in particular to history. His historical writings have served as the basis for the chronicles of many contemporary and later historians, including Badr al-Dīn al-‘Aynī (d. 855/1451), al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442), Ibn Ḥaḡar (d. 852/1449) and Ibn Taghrībirdī (d. 874/1470). He himself relied to first-hand materials, on Badr al-Dīn Ibn Ḥabīb al-Ḥalabī (d. 779/1377) and his son Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir (d. 808/1406), as well as on al-Nuwayrī al-Iskandarī (d. after 775/1372). See Collet 2017 : 256 ; EI².

used to stay at the house of the judge Alam Al-Din ibn Rašīq, which was near Al-Rish baths, so they paid him money to build this school and he taught in it.⁹¹

If Ibn Duqmāq only assigns the madrasa's foundation to pilgrims from Takrur, al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442), in the *Kitāb al-Sulūk li-ma'rifat duwal al-mulūk*, precises that these pilgrims were from Kanem, a "tribe of Takrur":

This madrasa belongs to the Malikites and is situated in the Ḥammām al Rīsh quarter in Old Cairo. It belongs to the Kanem, tribe of Takrur. When they came to Cairo around the years 640/1242 for the pilgrimage, they gave a sum of money to the *cadi* 'Ilm al-Din b. Rashik. He built the madrasa and taught there; it has been known by his name ever since. This madrasa was very well known in the Takrur. Money was sent there almost every year⁹².

According to al-Maqrīzī, the madrasa Ibn Rašīq was built in the last decades of the Ayyoubid rule of Egypt, on the western fringes of al-Fustat, an area already in state of decay after the development of al-Qahira⁹³. At that time, al-Fustat became the centre of Maliki learning in Cairo. The first madrasa for the Malikites in Cairo, the madrasa Qahmiyya, was built by Saladin next to the 'Amr Mosque. It was founded by the North African 'Abd Allah b. Ibrahim b. Sa'īd b. al-Qa'id (1156/7-1247)⁹⁴. The madrasa Ibn Rašīq is close to this madrasa, and it is not a coincidence.

Financed by pilgrims from Kanem, the madrasa was built by a *cadi* named 'Ilm al-Din b. Rašīq. Already before the madrasa's foundation, Ibn Duqmāq relates that Takruri pilgrims, probably from Kanem, lodged in Ibn Rašīq's house on their way to Mecca. This scholar is then a key character in the establishment of a maliki *fiqh* school in Cairo, dedicated to kanemi students. So far, little is known about Ibn Rašīq's life and his family and social background.

The name Ibn Rašīq is reported in several late sources from al-Andalus and from Cairo. According to Badr al-Dīn al-'Aynī (1351-1453), 'Ilm al-Dīn b. Rašīq's full name was Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn b. 'Atīq b. Ḥusayn b. Rašīq⁹⁵. Ibn Rašīq is not very well-known, though he has been quite influential in the Ayyoubid court as a Maliki jurist. Several Mamluk authors cite his name, such as Šams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Saḥāwī (831-902/1427-1497), informing us

⁹¹ Al-Duqmāq 1309/1891 : v. 2, 96.

⁹² AL-MAQRĪZĪ, *Al-ḥiṭaṭ*, vol. 4, 203; AL-MAQRĪZĪ, *Al-ḥiṭaṭ*, trans. in CUOQ, *Recueil des sources arabes...*, 1975 (1985), p. 389.

⁹³ Loiseau, 2010 : vol. 1, 67.

⁹⁴ Leiser 1999 : 147.

⁹⁵ Badr al-Dīn al-'Aynī gives the name Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn b. 'Atīq b. 'Abd Allah b. Rašīq (Badr al-Dīn al-'Aynī, *ʿIqd al-gumār fi tarikh ahl al-zaman* vol. 2, p. 291).

he was buried in Qarāfa⁹⁶. His closeness to high spheres of power is expressed in one episode of Cairo's history: the arrival of Abū al-Qāsim Aḥmad al-Mustanṣir, the last member of the abbassid dynasty, who became a nominal Caliph under the newly established Mamluk rule, in 1260. Al-Ayni reports that 'Alam al-Din Ibn Rašīq was among the testimonies who officially recognized the abbassid at a ceremony in the Citadel of Cairo⁹⁷. 'Ilm al-Dīn b. Rašīq died in 680H/1280-1⁹⁸, and Ibn Rašīq's son continued to teach Maliki fiqh. According to Ibn Duqmaq, Muhammad b. Muhammad, known as Zin al-Din, taught in the madrasa Ibn Rašīq after his father's death⁹⁹. Another author, al-Safadi, tells us that he was qadi in Alexandria, probably later in his career¹⁰⁰.

Ibn Rašīq's nasab connects with another scholar, from Andalusia, Ḥusayn b. 'Atīq b. Ḥusayn b. Rašīq al-Taglibī¹⁰¹. In fact, the Andalusian poet, also known as Abū 'Alī al-Ḥusayn Ibn Rašīq is likely to be Ibn Rašīq's father, as their genealogical lines bear the same names. According to the granadian polygraph Lisān al-Dīn b. al-Ġaṭīb (1313-1374), Abū 'Alī is a descendant of the famous governor of Castille Ibn Rašīq, who ruled after the Almoravid conquest on Spain (1078)¹⁰². Ḥusayn's father was 'Atīq b. Ḥusayn b. Abī 'Abdallah Rašīq al-Taglibī, a native of Baeza, where he was born in 1185. He came to live in Murcia and died here on October 6th, 1263¹⁰³. Abū 'Alī al-Ḥusayn Ibn Rašīq was particularly known for a controversy with the Christian scholars in Murcia, just after its conquest by Christian rulers in 1243¹⁰⁴. He became then secretary in the court of Abū al-Qāsim al-'Azafī (1256/7-1279), in Sabta (Ceuta), and then for the merinid sultan Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb b. 'Abd al-Ḥaqq (r. 1258-1286), after having migrated to Morocco¹⁰⁵, where he died, in 1294/5¹⁰⁶.

⁹⁶ Al-Safadi ; al-Asqalani 1998: 206 ; al-Saḥāwī, *Tuhfat al-aḥbāb* 1937 : 359.

⁹⁷ 'Iqd al-ḡumān fī tāriḥ ahl al-zamān : ḥawādiṭ wa-tarāḡum. 1, 'aṣr salāṭīn al-Mamālik 648-664 H., 1250-1265 M. / Badr al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-'Aynī, 1987, p. 295.

⁹⁸ Al-Safadi, *Kitab al-Wafī bi'l-Wafayat*, vol. 3, p. 16.

⁹⁹ Al-Duqmāq 1309/1891 : v. 2, 96.

¹⁰⁰ Al-Safadi 2000: vol. 1: 183; Vol. 14, 86.

¹⁰¹ Basanta, "Abu 'Alī al-Husayn Ibn Rasiq al-Mursi, un poeta murciano del siglo XIII en la « Ihata » de Ben al-Jatib", in Juan Abellan Perez (dir.), *Homenaje al profesor Juan Torres Fontes, Vol. 2*, Murcia, Universidad de Murcia y la Academia Alfonso X el Sabio, 1987, pp. 1741.

¹⁰² Basanta, "Abu 'Alī al-Husayn Ibn Rasiq al-Mursi, un poeta murciano del siglo XIII en la « Ihata » de Ben al-Jatib", in Juan Abellan Perez (dir.), *Homenaje al profesor Juan Torres Fontes, Vol. 2*, Murcia, Universidad de Murcia y la Academia Alfonso X el Sabio, 1987, pp. 1744.

¹⁰³ Carmona Gonzales, Alfonso, « Textos arabes acerca del reino de murcia entre 1243 y 1275. Aspectos juridicos y politicos », *Glossae. Revista de historia del derecho europeo*, 5-6. 1993-94, 249 n. 16.

¹⁰⁴ F. DE LA GRANJA, «Una polémica religiosa en Murcia en tiempos de Alfonso el Sabio», en *Al-Andalus*, XXXI (1966), 47-72.

¹⁰⁵ Basanta 1987: 1744; Romero Funes, Carmen, *Emigrados andalusies al Norte de Africa y Oriente Medio (Siglos VIII-XV)*, Tesis Doctoral, Granada, 1989, f. 235. On Abū al-Qāsim al-'Azafī, see "'Azafī, Banu'l-", *ET*, supp., 111.

¹⁰⁶ Basanta, 1987: 1748.

In this case, the chronologies must be questioned, in particular the date given by al-Maqrīzī for the creation of the madrasa in Cairo. In fact, if the genealogical connection between ‘Ilm al-Dīn b. Rašīq of Cairo and Abū ‘Alī al-Ḥusayn Ibn Rašīq would tend to confirm that ‘Ilm al-Dīn b. Rašīq was indeed of Andalusian origin and the son of Abū ‘Alī al-Ḥusayn Ibn Rašīq, the latter was young in 1243, and it is unlikely that ‘Ilm al-Dīn b. Rašīq was already a well established scholar in Cairo. One hypothesis would be that al-Maqrīzī, who wrote two centuries later, was wrong with the date he gave, and that the madrasa was founded later. A further enquiry should be undertaken on ‘Ilm al-Dīn b. Rašīq’s life. If the Andalusian origin of ‘Ilm al-Dīn was attested, he would be then a member of a well-known family of scholars, who migrated to Morocco in reaction to the Christian conquests in Spain. His migration to Cairo would follow the arrival of several maliki jurists from Andalusia in Egypt, and the establishment of a strong tradition of learning this *fiqh* in Egypt.

Ibn Rašīq was a malikite, a jurist and probably coming from a famous family of jurist of al-Andalus. Surely, Ibn Rašīq’s fame as a Maliki jurist is the main factor explaining why students and pilgrims from Kanem went to his house on a first place, and then asked him to lead a madrasa for them¹⁰⁷. In fact, the role of Andalusians in creating madrasa in Egypt, from the very end of the 11th century, is undoubtedly essential to understand why Takruri pilgrims from Kanem asked Ibn Rašīq to create one for them¹⁰⁸. Already in the 12th century, the first Maliki madrasa of Egypt, founded by Abu Bakr al-Turtūshi in Alexandria, provided lodging for students from al-Andalus on their way to Mecca or beyond¹⁰⁹. Thanks to the role of Andalusian shaikh in the rise and spread of madrasa in Egypt, the country became “a thriving centre of Maliki law” in the Islamic World, as well as an alternative to Maghreb for sahelian students who desired to study maliki *fiqh*. Compared to North Africa, Cairo had the immense advantage of being on the road to Mecca; the close relation between study and ḥaḡḡ, underlined into al-Duqmaq and al-Maqrizi’s testimonies, confirms it.

The role of this madrasa as a learning centre and a place of lodging for pilgrims and students on their way to Mecca is not known. For sure, an institution owned by kanemi funds but led by a prestigious religious scholar would provide many advantages. One of them, though not ascertained, would be the use of this institution as a place of deposit for the funds brought by sahelian pilgrims and traders in Cairo. In an expensive and risky journey, money was a

¹⁰⁷ Casanova 1919 : 272. Shawkat A. Muhammad, *al-hiyat al-fakira fi misr khilal al-'asr al-'ayyubi*, 2007, 347.

¹⁰⁸ Leiser 1999 : 143.

¹⁰⁹ Leiser 1999 : 144.

common issue, as it is attested in several sources from the Egyptian courts at a later period.¹¹⁰ Religious authorities could act as warrents for privates depositing money¹¹¹. The madrasa Ibn Rashīq may not have been only a place of learning, but a haven for students and their funds, before undertaking the travel to Mecca.

Situated in the northwest edge of al-Fustat in the 14th and 15th centuries, the neighbourhood of the madrasa is abandoned when the Ottomans occupy Egypt, in 1517. It is likely it disappeared during the final decay of Fustat, between 1350 and 1420¹¹². This period is also a period of crisis in central Sahel, as the Sefuwa dynasty fled Kanem to install themselves in Borno, in the middle of the 14th century. A desinvestment of the madrasa might have occurred, leading to its abandon. In the same time, the rise of other learning institutions in Cairo, such as al-Azhar, substitute the former institution as a place of learning for sub-saharan africans.

The madrasa Ibn Raṣīq is an exception in the history of West African presence in Cairo. There are no other mentions of legal schools especially financed by central sahelian pilgrims in the following centuries. However, this does not mean that it was the only structure built or financed by or for students in Cairo. The rise of al-Azhar, in the fifteenth century, as a central learning instution in Cairo, attracted students from all Africa¹¹³. In the Ottoman period, several communities of African students, gathered according to their geographical origin, are reported in the institution.

In al-Azhar, students were housed and accomodated by nationality, in “riwaqs”, or “student lodges”, at the mosque. Before the eigtheenth century, two riwaqs were for sub-saharan africans: one for students from Ethiopia and one from students from Takrur¹¹⁴. It is not before the second part of the 18th century that we have evidences of a proper Borno riwaq in al-Azhar, separated from the Takruri riwaq¹¹⁵. The later centuries are better known, thanks to the work of Terrence Walz. The *riwak al-Barnawiyya*, still existing in the beginning of the 20th century, gathered all West African students hailing West of Wadai (Chad).¹¹⁶ At that time, some 200 Nigerians were living in Egypt.

¹¹⁰ Walz, Trade Between Egypt and Bilad al-Takrur, 1976, 26.

¹¹¹ Javier Apellániz Ruiz De Galarreta (Francisco), « Banquiers, diplomates et pouvoir sultanien. Une affaire d'épices sous les Mamelouks circassiens », *AnIsl* 38 (2004), 299.

¹¹² Loiseau, Julien, **XXXXXX**.

¹¹³ Loiseau, Julien, *Abyssinia at al-Azhar: Muslim Students from the Horn of Africa in Late Medieval Cairo*. Northeast African Studies, Michigan State University Press, 2019, pp.61-84.

¹¹⁴ Walz, Trans-Saharan Migrations and the Colonial Gaze, *alif*, 2006, 99.

¹¹⁵ Gubara, Dahlia El-Tayeb M., *Al-Azhar and the Orders of Knowledge*, PhD thesis, Columbia University, 2014, f. 229.

¹¹⁶ Walz, Trans-Saharan Migrations and the Colonial Gaze, *alif*, 2006, 97.

In the early modern period, the investments in Cairo were then no longer dedicated to finance learning infrastructures, but were related to lodging facilities for these students. These investments were undertaken by the Borno rulers, who invested heavily in favour of the facilities in the city to lodge the pilgrims and students coming from the Lake Chad region **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** These infrastructure enabled the Sultans to benefit from local relays for themselves and their intellectual elites, facilitating the logistics of the pilgrimage **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** Moreover, the maintenance of such a network **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** was surely an asset of the Sefuwa Sultans at the regional level **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** It is very likely that they benefited all the Muslims of the Lake Chad basin, whether pilgrims or students, allowing the Sefuwa Sultans to enjoy a certain prestige beyond the borders of their State **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** The journey of a scholar named ‘Umar b. ‘Uṭmān¹¹⁷, living in the 17th century, would have been facilitated by such a network. According to a Bornouan manuscript dated 1658, translated by H. R. Palmer under the title **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** ‘An account of N’Gazargamu’, ‘Umar b. ‘Uṭmān lived several years in Cairo, teaching in al-Azhar:

Umar b. Uthman was a Fellata by race and a native of the town of Garambal [...] Umar b. Uthman lived in the land of Bornu for about 15 years. He travelled east and went to the mosque of al-Azhar and stayed there to teach and instruct the people¹¹⁸.

In the same way, these same networks **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** enabled **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** *faqīh* Muḥammad al-Wālī al-Fulānī al-Baghirmāwī al-Barnāwī, who lived in Baguirmi during **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** the same period, to actively participate to the legal debates concerning the legality of tobacco with other scholars from al-Azhar **Erreur ! Signet non défini.**¹¹⁹. This special link with al-Azhar was even used in the sultanian propaganda, as it is reported in later local sources. In an account of the seventeenth century collected by the colonial officer H. R. Palmer, the Borno Sultan ‘Alī b. ‘Umar (1639-1677) could have a direct access to the al-Azhar library from his throne, as an act of sanctity:

One of the scholars says, “I remember there was a book containing a judgment about this problem in al-Azhar Mosque”. The Amir had more or less listened to what was said during the council and he asked where the book was and what its name was. One of the scholars repeated the name of the book to the Amir,

¹¹⁷ This is most probably not Masbarma 'Umar ibn' Uṭmān, which has already been mentioned several times and which would have lived at the beginning of the 15th century.

¹¹⁸ PALMER, *The Bornu Sahara and Sudan*, 1936, p. 33.

¹¹⁹ VAN DALEN, «This filthy plant... ««, 2012.

to which the Amir replied, “Very well”. And he was seen extending his hand in the direction of al-Azhar Mosque, taking the book in his hand and placing it in front of the assembly of scholars. The Amir then said to the scholar who had spoken, “Look here is the book”. All the scholars said, “Truly we have a wise and learned Amir. How learned, noble and discerning he is”¹²⁰.

On the following century, some evidences suggest that princes of the royal family would go in al-Azhar to study: the sultan al-Ḥāḡḡ Hamdun (1729-1744) reportedly studied at Azhar, Egypt, even before his ascendancy to the Sefuwa throne¹²¹. Once again, the relation between studying in Cairo and the pilgrimage to Mecca is highlighted.

CONCLUSION

With its numerous madrasa, zawiya and tombs of holy saints, Cairo attracted pilgrims from all over Africa, who sought to obtain local knowledge and the Baraka among their corelatives and prestigious Islamic scholars and saints. As one of the numerous halt to Mecca, Cairo is surely the most important for every African pilgrim until the 17th century. Its political and religious importance overshadowed the final step of the religious journey, Mecca. Cairo was not only a halt for chadic pilgrims, it was a city of opportunities, whether pilgrims were simple students seeking for knowledge in islamic and legal sciences, or sultans, looking for political legitimacy or economic affairs.

Since the establishment of the Kanem sultanate in Central Sahel, in the 11th century, Cairo attracted pilgrims from all social categories. However, they were associated to the nisba al-Takruri, and they remained largely invisible in the mamluk sources. There is one exception, though: the sultans of Kanem and Borno, who were often noticed by the chroniclers. In fact, The Sefuwa dynasty, who ruled Kanem and then Borno in the Early Modern period, often undertook the journey to the Sacred Cities of Islam. Some of these pilgrimages, such as the pilgrimages of the Borno sultans of ‘Alī b. Dūnama (1465-1497) and Idrīs b. ‘Alī (1564-1596), were associated to desire to undertake difficult political and religious reforms within the state¹²². The examples of royal sojour in Cairo, in the framework of pilgrimage to Mecca, from the Borno sultans, does tell us more about this aspect of the pilgrimage policy by subsaharan rulers. By going to Cairo, the Sultans of Borno also used pilgrimage as a tool for asserting prestige. The sums spent by the sultans on their pilgrimages, as in 1565 **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** and

¹²⁰ PALMER, *The Bornu Sahara and Sudan*, 1936, p. 35.

¹²¹ Bobboyi 1993, f. 29.

¹²² Barkindo, 1992, p. 10.

1677, show that the rulers of Borno spend at least as much as the rulers of Mali and Songhay¹²³.

The fall of the mamluk sultanate, in the beginning of the 16th century, did not change this trend. Surely attracted by the presence of the Abbassid Caliphs, the Kanem and Borno sultans did continue to halt in Cairo during the Ottoman occupation of the city. Idris b. ‘Ali’s pilgrimage, in 1565, is a good example of how the Borno rulers would take the opportunity of their visit in the Egyptian capital to trade, acquire knowledge in the mosques and the madrasa, or visit local scholars and saints: the visit to the shaykh Muhammad al-Bakri, is another piece of a larger puzzle involving Morocco, the shadhiliyya sufi brotherhood and the Borno sultanate, in a subtle mix of religion, diplomacy and politics around the hagg.

In fact, because of its nodal position to all African pilgrims, Cairo was the perfect place to establish networks between Central Sahel and Maghreb. With the rise of Maliki schools in Cairo, Kanem and Borno pilgrims most likely travelled to the East to acquire legal knowledge, instead of Maghreb. Cairo would be then a place of connexion, where it was possible to strengthen networks with Maghrebi pilgrims and political actors. Thanks to al-Duqmaq and al-Marqizi, we now know that the madrasa Ibn Rašīq was representative of such networks. Founded by ‘Ilm al-Din al-Rašīq, who was probably the son of a famous scholar from Murcia, the madrasa was built with the money of Kanemi pilgrims in Fustat, when Cairo became a central place for maliki learning. If this madrasa disappeared in the 15th century, the university al-Azhar took over as a central institution of learning for scholars, up to the 20th century, where Borno students were still frequenting the religious institution.

¹²³ Dewière 2017 **REFERENCE**.