

THE MUNE IN PRE-COLONIAL BORNO

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Preface

From a historiographical point of view, I have no wish to regard this paper as much more than a mere footnote to the much more ambitious treatment of the same by the late Professor Abdullahi Smith. The revered Professor who had kindly translated for me from the Arabic, among many other documents I had retrieved from Borno in the course of my fieldwork, the *Qissat Al Mune*, had at the twilight of his active career in 1977 written a paper which in his usual humble characteristic was entitled: *A Note on the Mune of the Sefuwa*.¹ True to character, he had also boldly marked this paper "Draft only - Not for publication". More in supplication to his authority rather than for lack of deference to his wish, and only after taking liberty from the trustees of the Abdullahi Smith Research Centre at Zaria, Nigeria, with which I am closely associated, I am attaching hereunder, as Appendix I, Smith's *A Note on the Mune of the Sefuwa*.² I also intend to dedicate this paper to his blessed memory.

Readers would readily agree with me that Smith's historiographical treatment of the Mune, even though he had regarded it as preliminary and tentative, is at the same time both very profound and extensive. He had not only spoken of the origin of the Mune, but of the Kanuri people and their culture, taking both out beyond the stultifying confines of legends.³ For this "gadfly" effect alone, I feel it is time Smith's consequential views on the Mune and the Kanuri of Borno to be brought to a wider audience.

On my part, I have, however, perhaps a more urgent and pressing purpose for writing this paper. Deference to the well-known commitment of Professor Abdullahi Smith to the highest standards of historiographical accuracy, excellent whenever possible, had however tended to crystallise and harden position in quite a different unwholesome and unintended direction: the Mune, even now that it is discovered in text, seemed to be more destined to remain a fetish, a trivia of decadent court system rather than the living constitution supporting state and society of vigorous people who have established and maintained a state system for nearly a millennium in the Central Sudan.

This, as it may be, I intend to be brief and tentative in this paper, wishing no more than attracting the attention of specialists in various fields to the highly provocative and tantalizing suggestions of Professor Smith both about the origin of the Mune and the people who possess it in its present

form, the Kanuri of pre-colonial Kanem-Borno, after establishing a reasonable and permissible balance between historiography and analysis, even as they relate to the present status of our knowledge about the Mune and the history and culture of the Kanuri people.

Introduction

The Kanuri people of Borno cannot separate their state and society from Islam, because throughout remembered history, the Borno state, society and the religion of Islam are each an aspect of the other. Islam had been a state religion in Borno's precursor state of Kanem as far back as the early thirteenth century A.D., where more than a century earlier, a ruler of Kanem had already converted to Islam, and the religion was penetrating peacefully through foreign traders and itinerant scholars even much earlier.⁴ As state religion, Islam had thus come to not only overwhelm the way of life of the people but, in particular, the structure and functioning of the state, and the conduct of state affairs at all levels. From sources there is indeed evidence that these early rulers have taken the faith seriously. Smith for instance has confirmed that the next ruler since the conversion, Mai (King) Dunama, performed the holy pilgrimage to Mecca twice, with great pomp and was indeed drowned in the Red Sea on his way for the third time. Mai Biri who succeeded this holy pilgrim, is remembered in our sources as a *faqih* (a learned man) and the grandson of this *faqih* is recorded as a great mosquebuilder.⁵ Not only were these early rulers committed torch-bearers of Islam, but they had honoured the burgeoning body of Kanuri *ulama* (Muslim scholars) to whom they gave privileged positions in Court and/or fiefs in the country-side where they had settled with their pupils and dependants (*malumri*). Usually, such settlements and their inhabitants are free from taxation and other State dues (*mahram*). It can no doubt be contended that such a privileged and high profile position bestowed to *ulama* would itself provide for large-scale conversion and proselytization among the people.⁶

It is also necessary to understand precisely what we mean when we say that Borno has become an Islamic State as from the very date its precursor State of Kanem came to be converted to Islam in large scale, and on an on-going and increasing basis, indeed, up to the time of its termination by imperialist forces at the beginning of the twentieth century. First, the Islamic State differs from the secular State of western social science notion from both the point of view of its orientation as well also as the source of its authority and the role of responsibilities of its leaders and its citizens, vis-a-vis the modern secular nation state.⁷ Law in the Islamic State is not the product of human decision and action. Goals are not indeterminate and open-ended. The laws are revealed in the Book of Allah, the Qur'an and the Sunna (the practices and sayings of the

Prophet) and the goals are already pre-determined and set. All Muslims are equal before this law; and the ruler and the ruled are adjudged equally in all respects of their personal life and conduct, before their Creator, on the day of judgement. Thus, while the ruler can be adjudged and punished for lapses in his conduct of his office as well as of his life, private as well as public, the ruled is equally adjudged and punished in respect of his personal conduct, civil or criminal. Indeed, however, Muslim statecraft so much recognized the power of the ruler over the ruled and in determining criminality and infraction that, whatever the fate of polity, it is the ruler and not the ruled that is blamed, as he carries vicarious responsibility. Imam Ahmad ibn Fartua, the chief Imam and chronicler of Mai Idris Alauma of Borno (1570 A.D.-1616 A.D.) meant exactly that, when he said:

... Every age has its great men, and extols each of them according to his faith and works. The crown of leadership is purity in justice ...

... Thus every people relies on imitation of its leaders. The leader goes before and the people follow him ... Most excellent is the fame of just deeds, and justice on the part of a king for one day is equal to service of God for sixty years ...

... A place where there is an evil Sultan is better than a place which has none⁸.

It is within these contexts, and the solidly Islamic nature and characteristics of the Bornoan State and society that we have to see the Mune in form and text, and assess its significance.

The Mune

The Mune in form is very ably introduced by Smith in Appendix I. The Mune as a force⁹ has not been that ably treated. This may not be unconnected with Smith's concern to resolve the historiographical issues first, but I suspect also his desire to establish the basis of the Fulani-led *Jihad* against Borno early in the nineteenth century, a contentious issue which is to date unresolved. The *Jihad* was a very powerful movement, and all powerful movements have this characteristic of being controversial, and we need not to be deterred any further in our assessment of the Mune, especially as we now have the text, for the first time, since it was mentioned in Palmer's Sudanese Memoirs. The Mune in text and content is, as Smith says, a covenant.

As such, it is a very powerful document. It will bear repetition here, even if it is for purposes of emphasis. It enjoins Muslims:

- to worship God only, Him alone, Who has no associate; and to obey Him and not attempt to defy Him;

- to rule with justice as God and His Messenger gave judgement, by the Book and the Sunna;
- not to oppress any of the servants of God, as God averts oppression from the two worlds;
- not to betray God or His Messenger or the faithful;
- not to cheat except in war, for war is deceit;
- to support the religion and the *Jihad* in the way of God, but not from caprice;
- not to desert the line of march in war;
- to hold fast to the rope of God all together, and not to be afraid or disunited;
- to call people to God by means of wisdom and God's advice;
- to do our utmost to be righteous both outwardly and inwardly.

Peace.

Immediately we could recognize that the Mune is a living document. It is not the "dead thing" which historical assessment has condemned it to be; usually said to be:

"... something wrapped up and concealed ..." and "... none of the kings descended from Sayf b. Dhio Yazan would open it."

Indeed, Mune seems none other than the constitution of a people, a very vigorous people feverishly and continuously engaged in the task of forming states and the business of governing diverse people - people who needed, and must have and must constantly use a Mune; a constitution. If it is concealed and covered - it is always carried in front while the national army is engaging in battles -, it is in fact not because concealment is the essence and the Mune is merely a totem, or indeed, in a more disparaging sense, a trivia of office, a *sacrum*.¹¹ It is a totem only to the extent that the flag, carried in front of battles even by the most modern armies of today, is also a totem.

With slightly more emphasis than Smith has intended to place, we can go along with him to observe that the text of the Mune contains the most detailed list we possess of the „religio-ethical obligations laid on the Sefuwa rulers, the symbolical expression of these being preserved in the Mune.“¹²

Rather than to see it as a *sacrum*, it is however perhaps more to the point to see the Mune as a mnemonic devise constantly carried in view to remind rulers of their obligations - in war as in peace, so that in the splendour of power, they do not transgress their sacredly established bounden limits.

In this connection, and in respect to its living quality, it is necessary to appreciate the realism of the Mune as we read its text. Among its multi-faceted prescriptions the Mune, in relation of concrete issue of war, has said:

"The Messenger of God (on whom be the blessing and peace of God) imposed on us the obligation: ... not to cheat except in war, for war is deceit; ..."

Such a Bismarckian view of war could not have come from a force that would see the conduct of state affairs from only mythical or mystical perspectives.

The force of the Mune

Chroniclers moreover tell us that there are also occasions and circumstances in Borno history when the force of the provisions of the Mune seemed to have come into effect with stirring results. The central theme of the Mune for instance, which are contained in its first three stanzas:

- to worship God only, Him alone, Who has no associate; and to obey Him and not to defy Him;
- to rule with justice as God and his Messenger gave judgement, by the Book and the Sunna;
- not to oppress any of the servants of God, as God averts oppression from the two worlds

seemed to have obtained complete supplication from the rulers of Borno, if the accounts of the *gargam*¹³, the *mahram*¹⁴ and other relevant sources are to be accepted regarding the conduct of office of these rulers and the comportment of their lives generally. Most of the rulers are for instance identified either as great *muallims* (learned scholars) or avid learners. Mai (King) Ali Gaji, the 51st ruler, who was reputed to have founded Birni Gazargamo, the capital of the second Kanuri Empire after they have moved from Kanem, and whom a latter court historian, Imam Ahmed Ibn Fartua, had acclaimed as "Amir ul-muminin" (Sultan of the Muslims)¹⁵, has himself passionately sought to be taught by a greater *muallim* of his day, the famous Umar Ibn Othman Masbarma.

He had intreated this great teacher:

O Umar, son of Othman, son of Ibrahim, teach me all the learning which God has given you, and do not leave me, since the art of government and religion are complementary the one to the other, twin sciences; and he who essays unprofitably either destroys his soul or hurts it. Do not cease from giving me instruction, if you are willing to do so, so that I may appoint you *Qadi*, and that you may judge all my people, or be my helper and *Wazir*. This is my purpose towards you that you may regulate my affairs and command my army and nobles¹⁶.

Subsequent Borno rulers were described even in more laudatory terms. Mai Ali Ibn Hajj Umar (1644-1680/84 A.D.) had not only defended and extended the *dar-al Islam* (the abode of Islam; meaning, the home of the

Muslim community), but he had himself remained the leading symbol of Islam in his time. The *gargam* spoke of him as:

Dala Mai, grandson of Shettima, Ali the smoke of Mada ... The journey to Mecca was to him as a night ride ¹⁷.

It was he who worsted the notorious King of the Kwararafa (a pagan group to the southwest of Borno), who was said to have "worked iniquity in the Sudan in his overweening pride, stalking forward with the pride of a tyrant" ¹⁸. A successful campaign against this menace has invoked the famous Hausa cleric, popularly known as Dan marina to effuse about Mai Ali's success in the following terms:

Our hearts never ceased from the dread of the unbeliever, narrow had become to us the earth pressed by our foe. Till Ali saved our children and their children yet unborn ¹⁹.

During Mai Ali's reign, and even more particularly afterwards the fusion between state, religion and politics obtained even fuller concretization. One written account of Mai Ali's court says:

His Court was in some respects wonderful. The learned men and Imams held disputations before the Amir Ali concerning doubtful points of law and dogma.

Islamic scholarship and indeed the status of the *ulama* (learned scholars) must have attained the highest fluorescence and recognition in Borno by that time. Subsequent Sayfawa Mais indeed even came to be recognized as saints (*al-wali* in Kanuri). Mai Ali ibn Hajj Handun, one of the last Sayfawa rulers before the Fulani Jihad of early nineteenth century, had established his reign on "peace and piety". The Diwan²⁰ presents him thus:

He loved the learned and study, and books and then by the command of God, died at his work, and was buried in his house with prayer and the last farewells, and scent ²¹.

The establishment of security, peace and justice in the Muslim *umma* (community), the defence of the weak and the suppression of the haughty and of the brigand as the deeds of Borno rulers are always brought out to us in our sources in very vivid and colourful ways. The reign of Mai Ibrahim ibn Idris (1618-1625) was for instance conveyed to us by the *gargam* in this colourful way:

... in his time he-goat gives milk, the old woman bears child, one rainy season produces seven harvests ... ²²

The establishment of peace, equity, justice and tranquillity has so much become the norm in Borno of his time that our source recounts an incident when Mai Ibrahim had to acquit himself of the charge of misrule, when an aggrieved old woman was said to have chided the government of his day, because she had lost her livestock to thieves. She was said to have moaned, then: "... sub'hana lil'lahi; this is because of the evil life of the sultan." In response, Mai Idris was said to have remonstrated thus:

I do not confiscate the property of Muslims, neither do I take widow's property nor that of orphans. Why do you say I am evil?

And, indeed, Mai Ibrahim was said to have organized and led a full search of the stolen livestock, which were duly recovered and returned to their rightful owner. Since then it was said that he had himself mended his ways, and his kingdom had come to enjoy unprecedented prosperity.
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These accounts, however allegoric and snap-shot they may be, cannot fail to convey to us a view of a people, and their society and state. It is certainly a view of a people to whom the commands of the Mune seem to be logical and working.

Even times of decline, as the end of the eighteenth century doubtlessly was for the Sayfawa rulers of Borno, (which also seems to have been the time when the text of the Mune was written in the form we have now, as Smith has quite rightly suggested), did not seem to implicate the invalidation of the Mune. Rather, it is a restatement of the force of the Mune in the conduct of public affairs in Borno, both in the long term and on day-to-day basis. Borno's war with Mandara, its own vassal state which by the end of the eighteenth century was almost in rebellion, disastrous though it had been for the Borno monarchy, did not so much impugn on principles, as it had impugned on the personality of Mai Ali ibn Dunama, the then reigning monarch. A chapter and verse account, which I had obtained from the manuscript "The Chronicle of Wandala"²⁴ (also very kindly translated from the Arabic for me by Abdullahi Smith on a very tentative basis) was used in my unpublished PhD Thesis and is hereunder reproduced in substantial part. This is both in order to enable the reader to capture the mood of the moment, motion of events, and at the same time also for himself to see the extent to which Islamic principles of statecraft, of war and peace have worked themselves into the art and practice of government, and of inter-governmental relations, among Borno and its neighbours in pre-colonial times.

The Mandara War - An Affirmation of the Mune

Let us first recall the relevant commands of the Mune, and then go into details of the Chronicle. The Mune has commanded:

- to rule with justice as God and his Messenger gave judgement, by the Book and Sunna,
- not to oppress any of the servants of God, as God averts oppression from the two worlds,
- not to cheat except in war, for war is deceit,

- to support the religion and the *Jihad* in the way of God, but not from caprice,
- not to desert the line of march in war,
- to hold fast to the rope of God all together; and not to be afraid or disunited.

The Chronicler began by giving us an insight into what Mandara conceived as the causes of Mai Ali's war against Mandara - gargantuan self-conceit, aggrandizement and disrespect to peers. He says:

... One day the Mai of Birni Gazargumi (sic) was seated on his throne and chatting with his entourage, examining the possibility of aggrandizing his empire at the expense of his neighbours by undertaking some conquests. He was questioning his dignitaries on the question of which one of his neighbours he would attack first. He finally decided that he would start his attack with Wandala. His plan would be to assassinate the king of that country as well as all his dignitaries, then reduce all the personalities of the kingdom to slavery. For it has become a habit for certain kings to hold their peers in contempt and to think highly of themselves more than they are in reality (emphasis mine).²⁵

The practical reason of the war was of course the hope for a rich booty in the form of "slaves and robust young men", that could be procured. Mai Ali, having made up his mind, caused a letter to be written to Mai Bladi, Mai of Mandara (Wandala) that was even more revealing for its very insolence, flowery language and illusions about the might and grandeur of the Sayfawa ruler. It began:

This letter comes from Mai Ali, Burning Embers, he whose empire will stretch from dusk to dawn. Before me he who thinks is great is small, and he who considers himself as a powerful king or a great general finds himself under me.

It is me, Mai Ali, son of the Sword, who am addressing this letter to the king of Wandala, one Bladi. Greetings. After these greetings I am hereby informing you that on a certain day at a certain hour, I shall be your guest, chief of the Wandala. To that end, I would like to ask you that question: the day the lion decides to set up house with the hare or the cat with the chicken, what do hare and chicken have to do? You certainly know the answer to this question, for it is obvious: that day the hare and the chicken will just have to make room for the lion and the cat without waiting to be told twice.

Mai Ali concluded his missive:

I am telling you all this so that you are informed and can therefore cogitate on the wisest course of action to adopt for yourself and the most appropriate advice you can give your people. This is all.²⁶

Mai Ali's letter set in motion in the Mandara court a process that was invaluable not only for revealing the actual conduct of *real-politik* within

the interstate system of the Central Sudan, but also the relative strength of the Mandara Court vis-a-vis the Court of the Sayfawa and the bases of deference that Borno had always enjoyed within this interstate system.

Upon receiving the letter Mai Bladi of Mandara assembled his dignitaries, composed of "*ulama* and war chiefs", and acquainted them with Borno's intentions. Mai Bladi's councillors seemed to have frankly discussed their predicament, considered and weighed all the possible alternatives: stand firm and face the might of Borno; withdraw into their mountain fastnesses and counter-attack; appease, with sweet words and rich presents in token supplication, for, as one certainly knows, "the aim of any war ... is to destroy the best at the enemy's disposal, starting with the best of his sons. It is for this reason that we are opposed to wars, whatever they are". Mai Bladi took this last counsel as the wisest course of action, and accordingly ordered an extremely placatory letter to be written to Mai Ali, first invoking the protection of Almighty Allah, and then submitting to accept a tributary status, but firmly rejecting to abandon their country:

... for surely you will understand that we cannot give up this country and this land where we were born, for we have no other place, good or bad, where to fall back on and no other refuge, apart from the one given us by All-Mighty Allah.

Mai Bladi offered:

However, we are prepared to give up all the wealth, money and other thing you may desire, should you ask for them. We hereby engage to furnish fully the amount of tribute you will eventually ask us to pay and to obey all the orders you will wish to give us I have finished.²⁶

This offer was accompanied with very rich presents:

One thousand slaves, one hundred horses, three thousand thalers, one thousand grandourahs, and one hundred and eighty bournouses. In addition, one hundred slaves carried a hundred different types of dishes and pastries.²⁷ To symbolize their submission, "these slaves were naked except for a piece of goat-skin tied round their waist". Mai Ali spurned the offer. A Courtier who advised conciliation, arguing:

"When a believer (Muslim) surrenders before another believer, the latter is bound to accept this submission";

was put to death.²⁸

Mai Ali, solemnly swearing that "his horse would urinate in Mai Bladi's palace", sent his adversary the ominous message:

If you have wings, you had better fly away and land on the top of the mountains which you use as a hide out. Or else dig a hole immediately and bury yourself underground... And I solemnly swear that no Wandala army will be in a position to stop the formidable force I will launch against you! Mai Bladi, the way I

will act in your country and the war I will wage will for ever serve as an example and will re-echo throughout history.²⁹

Here is a clear case of failure of leadership. As it turned out, all Mai Ali's talk became mere rhetoric, and it was in fact the resounding defeat which Mai Ali's forces suffered at the hands of the agile Mandara forces that re-echoed throughout history, for it seemed to have decisively rung the death-knell of the ageing Sayfawa Dynasty. From the time of this disastrous miscalculation and its concomitant mishap, the Sayfawa Dynasty did not seem to have been able to halt its own precipitous collapse.

But the final encounter with Mai Bladi's army was not without its interesting details, revealing for instance that even after an ignominious defeat, following a most unwarranted provocation and baseless intransigence, the Mai of Borno was held in the eyes of ordinary folks with awesome respect amounting to worship. This was no doubt the function of the well established cultural hegemony which Borno enjoyed in the Central Sudan, and which the Mai symbolised in a concrete form and which also ultimately translated itself into a form of deference to Borno in the political sphere. In a graphic though indirect way the validity of these observations was demonstrated in the heat of the battle, when the Mandara army had in fact forced the Mai of Borno into flight.

The Chronicler describes:

The battle had lasted from noon to sunset. And on that day we saw with our own eyes the king of Bornu taking flight! Mai Ali galloped at full speed towards his country, caring only for his life. We saw a group of our horsemen pursuing him. And soon, it was no longer possible to distinguish our men's horse with those of the Kanuris. They had caught up with Mai Ali's small escort and were getting ready to encircle it when it suddenly dawned on them they had given chase to none other than the king of Bornu in person. There was a swaying in their ranks, for they were simple soldiers and for them to make an attempt against the sacred person of a king, even an enemy king, was inconceivable.³⁰

Thus psychologically not being able to capture the Bornoan royal personage, the Mandara warriors pursued Mai Ali, sometimes even outdistancing him, surrounding him on both sides, shouting the salutation of royalty, "Gwe! Gwe! Gwe!", but not willing to touch him! The Chronicler credits this to the Mandara soldiers' own simplicity³¹.

Conclusion

The account of Borno's war with Mandara thus recounted above, at least from the point of view of the Mandara Chronicler, and all the other accounts I have given above clearly portray to us the essence of the Mune

in that oppression and/or a war of caprice is not enjoined. And the war against Mandara was clearly a war of caprice, as Mandara had clearly recanted on its recalcitrance, when threatened.

The essence of the Chronicle itself, however, is that we are here seeing, from accounts of an eye-witness, the portrayal of a polity whose language principles and practice of diplomacy, in war and in peace, are not less developed than any we have seen in the states of Euro-Germanic experience, of comparable times. The basis of this well ordered art is essentially the Mune, even though in its universalist form we may wish to assign it to the Book and the Sunna of Islam.

Why not then, should we not regard the Mune as the constitution of the pre-colonial Borno State?

Munen - ba (not in the Mune), for the Sayfawa ruler is certainly more binding than most modern constitutions had been binding on leaders of present-day African States!

Footnotes

1. The Sayfawa, variously written Sefawa, Saifawa etc. are the descendants of the legendary Sayf b. Dhi Yazan, reputedly a pre-Islamic Yamani hero who came to found a dynasty and an empire, first in Kanem and later in Borno. This dynasty lasted for the better part of a millennium, before the dynasty was formally terminated in 1846, at the behest of a scion of a successor dynasty, Shaykh Umar ibn al-Kanemi, who then came to formally inaugurate the only other dynasty to have ruled Borno, throughout its 1000 year old history as an independent state.
2. Throughout this paper I will use the M.N. Alkali transliteration Sayfawa, as this is the transliteration accepted for his Ph.D. Thesis, the then most comprehensive study of the Sayfawa period by an indigenous scholar.
3. "The legend of the Seifuwa", is the title of a paper which Professor Abdullahi Smith himself had written and popularised. I know at least one Borno nationalist, the late Ibrahim Imam who did not see eye to eye with Professor Smith whom he accused of seeing most critical aspects of Borno history merely as legends!
4. For a careful consideration of the Islamization of the Bornoan State and society, see Abdullahi Smith, "The Early States of the Central Sudan" in J.F. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder eds; *History of West Africa, Volume One*, Longman, London, 1971; pp. 170-172.
5. *ibid.* p. 172
6. *ibid.* p. 172
7. See for instance Majid Khadduri, "The Nature of the Islamic State" in S.N. Eisenstadt, ed. "The Decline of Empires"; Prentice Hall Inc. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1955; pp. 30-35.

8. Imam Ahmad ibn Fartua, "History of the First Twelve Years Reign of Mai Idris Aloomo of Bornu" (1571-1583) trans. from the Arabic by H.R. Palmer; Lagos, Government Printer, 1926; pp.9-10.
9. Abdullahi Smith, "A Note of the Mune", attached hereunder as Appendix I.
10. This notion derives from Imam Ahmed ibn Fartua's rendition of the account of the Mune, which Smith had quoted extensively, vide Appendix I pp 6-7. But Imam Fartua had cautiously prefaced his writing, considering the account "strange and wonderful", and apparently not to be taken too seriously.
11. Smith, Appendix I p. 8.
12. *ibid.*
13. The *gargam*, usually erroneously written as *girgam* is the traditional Kanuri history from which most of the account of Borno history, especially that of the Sayfawa Mais were derived. See Smith in Ajayi and Crowder (1971) p. 167 footnote 22.
14. *Mahram*, can be translated as "safe land" meaning land given to protected citizens from which or from whom the state is collecting no dues. Persons who are thus exempted are also referred to as *mahram*. Usually a letter of exemption is given, detailing the basis of the exemption. These are the *mahram* historical writings are referring because they have come to constitute source of Bornoan history.
15. Imam Ahmed ibn Fartua, "First Twelve Years...passim."
16. H.R. Palmer, "Bornu Sahara and Sudan", London, 1936; p.24 (The Mahram of Sheikh Masbarma).
17. The Gargam; *op. cit.*
18. Dan Marina, in Palmer, *op. cit.* p. 246.
19. *ibid* p. 246
20. The *Diwan*, more like the *gargam* are also sources of Borno traditional history. But they are usually written and are therefore regarded as the version of the *ulama* (the learned scholars).
21. The Diwan in Barth, H. Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa, rep. London, 1965 vols. 1-III; Appendix I.
22. Gargam, Palmer; *op. cit.* p. 244.
23. *ibid.*
24. "The Chronicle of the Wandala".
I first obtained the Arabic version from the Chief Imam of Borno, Imam Ibrahim Ahmad. But the text is generally similar. Even though it is biased against Borno, since it is acceptable to such Borno *ulama* as the Chief Imam, we can rely on its dependability somewhat.
- 25.-31. "From the Chronicle of the Wandala" as rendered in my Thesis, Administrative and Political Development in pre-colonial Borno; Vol.II; unpublished, 1980; pp. 573-578 from which this text is generally lifted.

APPENDIX I

A NOTE ON THE MUNE OF THE SEFUWA

Abdullahi Smith, Kaduna, Nigeria (June 1977)

The translation of the text:

In the name of God the Compassionate the Merciful;
Praise be to God, Lord of the two worlds;
And blessing and peace on our Master Muhammad and
on his people.

The story of the Mune: Mune was an ancient obligation which the Messenger our Master Muhammad (the blessing and peace of God be on him) imposed on the people of Sayf b. Dhi Yazan.

They were ordered to preserve it, to keep the original copy of it inaccessible, to wrap it up and encase it in leather; and never to open it until they should deliver it to the expected Mahdi. And thus it was down to the time of Dunama Dibbalemi, who resolved to open it; though his viziers forbade it. Some Egyptians who came to him advised him that it would be preferable to open it to find out what it contained.

He asked the opinion of his ulema, and they advised him to leave it as it was, because it was no proper for the king to go against the practice of his most noble ancestors. But he rejected their advice, and opened it; whereupon there burst out some flying thing, beating the air violently, like a hurricane, and crying out in a loud voice: "Alas for the sealed covenants! Alas for the well-hidden!" And on the paper containing these covenants were disjointed letters; unpointed.

The Messenger of God (on whom be the blessing and peace of God) imposed on us the obligation:

-to worship God only, Him alone, Who has no associate;
and to obey Him and not attempt to defy Him;

-to rule with justice as God and His Messenger gave judgement,
by the Book and the Sunna;

-not to oppress any of the servants of God, as God averts
oppression from the two worlds;

-not to betray God or His Messenger or the faithful;

-not to cheat except in war, for war is deceit;

-to support the religion and the jihad in the way of God, but not
from caprice;

-not to desert the line of march in war;

- to hold fast to the rope of God all together, and not to be afraid or disunited;
 - to call people to God by means of wisdom and good advice;
 - to do our at most to be righteous both outwardly and inwardly.
- Peace.

Written by Muhammad b. al-Hajj b. °Ali, Emir of Alarge, five days remaining in Rajab of the year of the Hijra 1185 (Nov. 1771).

Provenance of the Text

This MS is from the papers of the well-known historian of the Sefuwa Al-Hajj Abubakr al-Miskin of Maiduguri, kindly lend for photo-copying to M. Kyari Tijani, of the Ahmadu Bello University, Institute of Administration, during 1976. I have not seen the MS itself and cannot therefore give an opinion as to its age, but the poor photo-copies available show it to be written in an angular Kufic-like hand bearing some, though distant resemblance to the official script of 19th Century Borno.

The Author and the Historical Background

The Alargema Muhammad b. al-Hajj b. °Ali is not yet known (to me at least) from other sources. But he appears to be the official in charge of a large province immediately south and south-west of the later site of Kukawa,¹ during the reign of the Mai °Ali b. al-Hajj Dunama Gana, which we should for the present date at c. 1748-93.²

It is perhaps incorrect to refer to this person as the "author" of the *gissat Mune*. Rather he is merely recording a tradition very ancient in the history of the Sefuwa; and it is of interest to speculate on why a senior official of the Bornuan government should have chosen to record it at that time. We do not know the precise reason of course, but it is possible in the light of what we otherwise know of the conditions of the time to make a number of suggestions which may be tested by further investigation.

Presumably the Alargema wrote down this tradition (which must have been well known to him) in 1771 because he wished either to remind of the obligations which lay on him as an office-holder, or (more likely) because he wished to remind others of the duties of the Sefuwa as rulers of Borno. It is further possible to suggest that he was moved to do this because at that time the government of Bornu was not coming up to expectations in this respect.

This last suggestion is prompted by the form which this record of the tradition takes. The MS contains the most detailed list we possess of the religio-ethical obligations laid on the Sefuwa as rulers, the symbolical expression of these being preserved in the Mune. But it is prefaced by a statement of the way in which the great Mai Dunami Dibbalemi disregarded the commandment of the Prophet concerning the sanctity of the Mune. And it says nothing of any attempt by subsequent rulers to repair this sacrilege. One might well be tempted to see in this statement a silent commentary on the moral decay of government in the time of ^cAli Lafiya, who by 1771 had been in office for over 20 years.

In recent times it is now accepted that the Fallata and Shuwa risings which toppled the government of the Sefuwa in the early years of the 19th century were merely the final episode in a long history of decline which goes back for a further hundred years,³ the official corruption described in the writing of Muhammad b. ^cAbd al-Rahman al-Barnawi at the beginning of the 18th century;⁴ the record of recurrent famine in the reigns of the immediate predecessors of Mai ^cAli;⁵ the treachery of Mai ^cAli and his estrangement from his non-Kanuri subjects recounted in the poems of Muhammad al-Tahir b. Ibrahim;⁶ the decline of Bornuan influence in the Hausa States;⁷ the wanton and unsuccessful aggression of the Sefuwa against Mandara;⁸ and the remarkable description of the regime at the beginning of the 19th century attributed to the Yarima Muhammad Yanbu^c, son of the Mai ^cAli.⁹ All this seems to point in the same direction: to an ancient regime in decay.

... the ideological aspect of which shows itself in the continuing abandonment of the principles of government for which the Sefuwa originally stood. It is into this story that the declaration of the Emir of Alarge may possibly be fitted. If this is the case then it would indicate that dissatisfaction with the government of the Sefuwa was then being felt not only among the non-Kanuri citizenry, and in the dependant states, but in the provincial administration also.

The Ancient Institution of the Mune

Besides reminding us of the decayed condition of the Sefuwa in the 18th century, this MS also draws attention to some very ancient traditions in the very cultural heritage of the dynasty. The antiquity of the Mune is strikingly indicated in this MS not so much by the claim that it was something imposed on the people of Sayf by the prophet Muhammad (which requires substantiation),^{9a} but by the statement that "on the paper containing these covenants were disjointed letters, unpointed". It is well known that this is just what the earliest *masahif* looked like.¹⁰ We have here therefore an indication that the Mune contained a pre-5th century AH (11th century AD) MS of the Qur'an.

The idea that the contents of the Mune are connected with the revelation to the prophet Muhammad is also confirmed by the meaning of the term itself. I am indebted to my colleague Professor O.S.A. Ismail for the valuable suggestion that the word *mune* is the Arabic *munan* pronounced with *imala* (as is common in Qur'anic recitation), which is written mim-nun-ya exactly as *mune* is written in our texts. Now, the root *mim-nun-ya* (*mana*) and its derivations give a number of interesting meanings in this connection.¹¹ Basically *mana* means *qadar*: what God had ordained, destiny. *Munan* (plural of *munya*) means desires, aspirations, objectives. In our context it could easily have the connotation of ideals. *Amtana* means to recite the Qur'an.¹²

But there are other indications which suggest an even earlier origin of this institution. The earliest dated reference which we yet have to the Mune and its destruction by Dunama Dibbalemi is in Ahmad b. Fartuwa's account of the Kanem wars of Mai Idris Aloma, written at the 10th century AH (16th century AD).¹³ His description of it and its importance is worth quoting:¹⁴

"One of the strange and wonderful things we have heard, among the delightful stories of our elders, is that the tribe of the Bani Sayf possessed something, wrapped up and concealed, with which was connected their victory in wars, and which was known as *mune*. None of the kings descended from Sayf b. Dhi Yazan would open it; and it remained in their possession unopened until the time of the Sultan Dunama b. Dabale. Then this Sultan Dunama determined to break it open. But those of his people who were with him told him not to do this; for his ancestors had depended on it for victory; and no unbeliever or any other had been able to oppose them while they had this thing wrapped up and concealed in their possession, right down to the time when God appointed him (through His munificence and favour) to rule over the Muslims. Yet he rejected their advice, and broke with this ancient tradition. It is said that, when he opened it the thing that was inside it flew out, calling to summon all those powerful people who coveted or aspired to kingly rank.

There is a story of war in the time of Sultan Dunana b. Dabale between him and the tribe of Tubu which lasted seven years, seven months and seven days. So we have heard from *ahl al-akhbar*, but God is most knowing.

After that much conflict and strife with the people of Fitri arose in the time of Sultan Dawud b. Nikale. We have mentioned this previously in our work on Kanem. Yet but for the opening of this thing called *mune* in the time of the Sultan Dunana b. Dabale, no unbeliever would have opposed the Bani Sayf until the end of time. But it befell thus by the decree of God, may He be exalted, who wrote it on the guarded tablet.

Similar to this that was in the possession of the Bani Sayf down to Dunama b. Dibale (from which, when it was opened, a

winged griffin flew out and vanished from the sight of the onlookers) was the ark which God, may He be exalted, sent down to the Bani Isra'īl, containing the sign of their victory in the time of king Saul, as He, may He be exalted, said in the holy Qur'an.^{14a}

From all this it may be suggested that the traditions of the Mune were something that long pre-dated the revelation of the Qur'an, going back indeed into the ancient Judaic past. The traditions of the Mune in fact are quite remarkably similar to those associated with the Ark of the Covenant in the Torah.¹⁵ Qur'an II.248¹⁶ is of course a direct reference to the events recounted there in the first Book of Samuel. But when these traditions are more carefully studied it will in addition be seen that important elements in them appear to have no connection with the revealed Qur'an at all, but do have a clear similarity to the ancient Judaic traditions.

Thus the Idara of Muhammad Yanbu^c stated that "the Mune is always carried in front of the army accompanying the king"¹⁷. Similarly, in the Torah: "And they departed from the mount of the Lord three days' journey, and the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them ... And it came to pass when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered".¹⁸ Traditions of this sort do not originate in the revealed Qur'an, to which the whole idea of sacrum to be carried into battle is quite foreign.¹⁹

Again there is the element of mystery and concealment in the traditions of the Mune which certainly does not derive from the revealed Qur'an. The only Sacrum in Islam is the Ka'ba, and there is nothing concealed in that. But an essential feature of the Mune was that there was something concealed in it, something which must not be taken out and looked at. This is also a feature of the ark of the covenant which was especially constructed to conceal what was in it (or rather, on it).²⁰ Again, dire consequences followed in both cases from any attempt to look into the Sacrum and see what is contained. The Torah says how God "smote the men of Beth-shemesh because they had looked into the ark of the Lord".²¹

Thirdly, there are what we may perhaps call the "totemistic" features of these traditions which are again un-Islamic, but they may be associated with very ancient pre- or proto-Judaic thought. Ibn Fartuwa quotes Ibn Faris, "Kitab al-Afrad",²² to say (with reference to the *sakina* in the ark of Qur'an II, 248) that wherever *sakina* occurs in the Qur'an, it means "tranquillity", but that in the story of Saul it is something like the head of a cat with wings. And he continues this by saying "we have also seen in the Quamus of ... al-Firozabadi ... where he says, after mentioning the other explanation, that it is a thing with a head like the head of a cat made of chrysolite and sapphires, and having two wings."²³ Here is something which would also appear to derive from the Isra'īlyyat.

Specialists have long believed that the story of the making of the ark of the covenant in the book of Exodus has an association with the story of the making of the "serpent of brass", referred to in number XXI, 8-9.²⁴ The idea that the symbol of God for which the ark was originally made was a serpent is to some extent confirmed by the apparent development in meaning of the Hebrew word *seraf* (plural: *serafim*) which originally meant a bronze serpent, then a mythical winged creature, then a guardian angel (such as screened the ark with their wings).²⁵ A "mythical winged creature" is exactly what the Mune contained.

But above all, the ancient Judaic origin of the Mune is attested by the fact that, like the ark of the Torah, it contained *‘ahd* or covenant. The word *‘ahd* occurs frequently in the Qur'an, but significantly, not in connection with the *tabut* of II, 248.

On the other hand the ark of the covenant (*‘aron berit Yhwh* or *‘aron habberit*) is several times mentioned in the Torah,²⁶ and, according to Deuteronomy X, 1-8 this same ark of the covenant contained the tables of the ten commandments. I have translated *‘ahd* as "obligation" in our MS as giving a smoother rendering, but the basic meaning is "covenant". What we have in the Mune would appear to be an Islamised form of this ancient Judaic tradition. And it is perhaps useful to note in this context that the obligations imposed on the people of the Yeman (the people of Sayf b. Dhi Yazan) by the prophet through his emissary *‘Amr b. Hazm* are in fact set out in great detail in the *Sira* of Ibn Ishaq,²⁷ a work well known to the Bornuan *‘ulama*.

Ancient Judaic Influence in the Central Sudan?

If there is anything in the suggestions put forward here concerning the origin of the traditions of the Mune, then it is difficult to disregard the possibility that the pre-Islamic (i.e. pre-11th century A.D.) Sefuwa were heirs of ancient Judaic culture in some sense. To judge from the historical persistence of such traditions in the folklore of Borno long after the Islamisation of the Sefuwa, it could also be suggested that, in its day, this ancient Judaic influence was substantial.

The possibility of substantial Judaic influence in the Central Sudan in pre-Islamic times has been raised recently by H.Z. Hirschberg²⁸ on the authority of a neglected passage in Al-Idrisi, referring to a country, in the first section of the second climate, called Qamnuriya. This Qamnuriya is said to have contained flourishing cities of the Sudan in ancient times. But as a result of invasion by the Lamtuna and the Zaghawa (who lived on either side of this country) and of internal dissension, its inhabitants were dispersed, taking refuge in the mountains and the desert; until eventually only a few of the Bani Qamnuriya were left, scattered in the

desert or near the *sahil*. According to traders these Banu Qamnuriya claimed to be Jews ²⁹.

Dare we suggest that the name Qamnuri (one of their cities) is an ancient form (or corruption) of the present-day Kanuri? Do we have here further confirmation of the Himyarite origin of the Sefuwa who claim descent from the Judaized dynasty of the Tubba^c monarchs of the *yeman*? The pre-Islamic history of the Central Sudan continues to be very largely a closed book to us, but in the fragments briefly gathered here there may be a starting point for useful enquiry into the intellectual history of the peoples of that region in the second half of the first millennium A.D.

The Curse of Noah

The value of attempting to enquire into the ancient intellectual history of Kanem will be questioned by modernisers, and it is not proposed to argue the case for it here. But in concluding this essay attention could perhaps briefly be drawn to one aspect of the importance of studying early Judaic influence in the Central Sudan. Important in the folklore still associated with the Sefuwa in Muslim Bornu at the present time, is the well known story of the curse of Noah,³¹ particularly in that version which identifies the cursed sons of Ham with the black peoples of the world.³² Recent Nigerian Christian belief moreover often takes the view that Islam, because it is the religion of the sons of Shem or the Arabs (as they see it) is essentially anti-negro on racial grounds even when practiced by black people. Yet of course there is nothing in the Qur'an or the authenticated Traditions which enjoins discrimination against people on account of their colour. Nor yet, indeed, do we find this in the Torah.

On the other hand I am told that the identification of the black peoples with the cursed sons of Ham is to be found in the Babylonian Talmud of the Jews, the commentaries on the Torah written in the 3rd-5th centuries A.D.³³

If there was Talmudic influence in Kanem in the second half of the first millennium A.D., it might well have introduced this version of the story of the curse of Noah into the cultural heritage of the Sefuwa. An appreciation of this sort of possibility might well lead to better understanding of Islam by non-Muslims in present-day Nigeria; and at the same time better understanding of both the close relations between Zionism and apartheid, and in the necessary orientation of Nigerian foreign policy in the question of Palestine at the present day.

Footnotes to the text

1. See the map in end papers of NACHTIGAL, "Sahara und Sudan", Vol. II (Berlin, 1879).
2. Acceptings the dates given in *Tarikh al-Khulafa'* (PALMER, ed., "Tarikh Mai Idris", Kano, 1932, intro., two unnumbered plates).
3. This for example is the suggestion in URVOY, Y., "Histoire de l'empire du Bornou" (Paris 1949).
4. "Shurb al-Zulal (ed. & trans., A.D.H. BIVAR and M. HISKETT. BSOAS. XXV, 1, 1962, pp.118-135). This writer is believed to have died in Safar 1169/1755, 16 years before the declaration of the Alargema.
5. "Diwans Salatin Bornu" (ed. PALMER, op. cit., p. 132): "In the time of Sultan Dunama b. ^cAli there occurred a great famine lasting seven years ... In the time of sultan Muhammad b. Hajj there occurred the famine of "Ali Shuwa" lasting two years ... And in the time of Sultan Dunama Gana there occurred a severe famine". There is similar information in the "Tawarikh Salatin Bornu" (Halle MS).
6. See Muhammad Bello "Infaq al-Maisur" (WHITTING ed., pp. 11-13) discussed in BIVAR and HISKETT, op. cit., pp. 137-139.
7. ^cAbd al-Qadir b. al-Mustafa, *Rawdat al-afkar*, states: "It was Sultan Gobir Bawa who first refused to pay the Kharaj which they used to pay to the Emir of Bornu". We may provisionally date the reign of Bawa Jan Gwarzo to c. 1185 - c. 1202/1772-1787 (from the evidence in some versions of *ibid.*).
8. A long account of this war entitled, "*Dhikr waq'a alladhi waqa'a (sic) bayna amir ^cAli b. Amir Dunama Sabib Birni Gasargamu wa amir Biladi sabib Mandara*", and written c. 1850, has recently been published by E. Mohammadou, together with a French translation by L.M. Hachimi, in "*Le Royaume du Wandala ou Mandara* (Institut des Sciences Humaines, Bamenda, 1975, pp. 43-66, 264-282). In this account the war is said to have taken place in 1196/1781.
9. "*Al-Idara fi nizam al-mamlaka wa-l-imara* (incomplete copy in the Arewa House Library, K. TIJANI collection). This work is discussed by K. TIJANI in "2nd Interim Report of the Nigeria Administration Research Project (Zaria 1976, pp. 76-96).
- 9a. But see footnote 27 below.
10. See e.g. M. LINGS, "*The Qur'anic Art of Calligraphy & Illumination* (London, 1976), esp. plates 1-8.
11. I am grateful to my colleague Dr. I. Musa of Ahmadu Bello University for drawing my attention to the relevant entries in "*Taj al-^cArus*". Similar information is in "*Lisan al-^cArab*", vol. XX, pp. 161-167 of the recent photographic reprint of the Bulaq edition.
12. The name of the ^c-*alim* who is said to have converted the Sefuwa to Islam, Muhammad al-Mani, clearly derives from the same root. In some texts it is actually written *mim-nun-ya*.
13. Ed. PALMER, "op. cit." Trans. PALMER in "*Sudanese Memoirs*", II (Lagos, 1928).

14. I offer my own translation of the text published by PALMER as the latter's translation does not appear to be entirely satisfactory.
- 14a. *ibid.*, pp. 69-70.
15. J.S. TRIMINGHAM has drawn attention to this ("History of Islam in West Africa", London 1962, p. 118), but without following up the lines of enquiry pursued here.
16. Interpreted here to mean: "And their prophet (Samuel) said to the (the Israelites): 'The sign of His authority is that there shall come to you the ark in which there is tranquillity from your Lord, and the relics left by Musa's people and Harun's people, carried by angels'. Varily in this there is a sign for you, if you have faith".
17. K. TIJANI'S text, p. 10.
18. Numbers X, 33-35 (all references to the Torah here are to the king James' Version) - cf. 1stSamuel IV, 1-3: "Now Israel went out against the Philistines to battle ... and when they joined battle Israel was smitten before the Philistines ... and the elders of Israel said ... that when it cometh among us, it may save us from the hands of our enemies." But on this occasion, of course, the ark was captured by the Philistines.
19. The tradition of "mashaf ^cUthman", the carrying of the Qur'an into battle, has quite a different origin in Islamic thought, being a symbolic reference to the arbitrament of the word of god in accordance with Qur'an III, 153. But this is not mentioned in connection with MUNE in the Bornu sources.
20. Exodus XXV, 10-21: "and they shall make an ark of Shittim wood and thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold ... and thou shalt make two cherubin of Gold ... in the two ends of the mercy seat ... and the cherubin shall stretch forth their wings on high, 'covering the mercy seat' ... and thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark".
21. 1st Samuel VI, 19.
22. Ibn Faris al-Qazwini, Persian lexicographer of the 3rd century AH? GAL gives no work entitled *Kitab -al-Afrad* for this author (I, 130; Suppl. I, 197). But "afrad" means rare words.
23. "A-Qamus al-Muhayt" (Cairo ed., 1952), vol. IV, p. 237.
24. "And the Lord said unto Moses, make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole; and it shall come to pass, that every-one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole; and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived". See R.H. KENNETH. „Ark" in "Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics".
25. In Isaiah VI, 1-2, the seraphim have six wings and stand above the Lord's throne. See W.L. HOLLADAY, "A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament" (Leiden, 1971), p. 355. See also G.A. BARTON, "Demons and Spirits (Hebrew)"; and S.A. MCCULLOCH, "Serpent Worship" (Introductory)", in "Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics".
26. e.g. Numbers X, 33; Joshua III, 3; 1stSamuel IV, 3; Jeremiah III, 16.
27. Guillaume's trans. pp. 646-648.
28. JAH IV, 3 1963, pp. 314-315.

29. "Description de l'Afrique et de l'Espagne par Edrisi" & trans. R. DOZY and M.J. DE GOEJE (Leiden reprint. 1968; text, pp. 29-30, trans. pp. 35-37). Al-Idrisi was writing in 1154 A.D.
30. I have made a preliminary consideration of the question of the Himyarite origin of the Sefuwa in an unpublished paper entitled "The Legend of the Sefuwa", presented to the Bornu Seminar of the Departments of History of Ahmadu Bello University in 1972.
31. Given in Genesis IX.
32. The version severely criticised by Ibn Khaldun in his castigation of the excesses of the ^ʿulama al-ansab (Muqaddima, Rosenthal trans., vol.I, pp. 172-73). cf. the 'Christian doctrine of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa.
33. See E.R. SANDERS, "The Hamitic Hypothesis; its Origin and Functions in Time Perspective" (JAH, X, 4, 1969, pp. 521-532).

APPENDIX II

K. Tijani

Account of a conflict which arose between Ali b. Amir
Dunama, Lord of Birni Gasargomu and the Emir of the country
of Mandara

The narration tells us that one day one of the Emirs of Birni Gasargomu was sitting on his throne thinking about the affairs of his realm and his subjects and about the improvement of his affairs, and was considering where he should send his men to raid. Then he had the idea that he would raid the land of Mandara and kill its emirs and humble its might, as was the custom of kings and men. The reason for this was that one of the nomad Arabs living in that country for several years came and approached the Emir and informed him about that country, and its topography, its prosperity, slaves, the degree of subjection of its people to their Emir. In addition he told of the poverty of its armies. Then the Emir Ali sent the messenger to the *gadi* and, when he came, told him to write such and such to the Mandarama. So he brought his ink and paper and wrote (after the *bismillah* etc.):

"From the Emir(?) of Bornu(?) before whose might the people of the west and the people of the east tremble with fear and the powerful are humbled, the Sultan Ali, son of the emir, of the Beni Sayf:

To the Mandarama, Bladi

Peace be upon you.

On a certain day at a certain hour I shall be your guest. O Mandarama. Now, if the lion is a guest in the house of the rabbit or a cub in the chicken-house, what will happen that day? They will just have to make room for and accommodate each other. But I have told you that so that you may decide how to protect yourself and your people. This is all. Peace."

Then he folded the letter and sealed it and gave it to the Grema(?) Katuri b. Bukar who went off and continued journeying until he reached the country of Mandara. He approached the Emir when the sun was high, he being at Burseme as though he was a lion in their presence. He gave him the letter and they joked together at this time. He read what was in it, but did not explain it to anyone, then he stood up and went into his house disturbed and frightened by what the Emir had said in the letter.

He sat down quite alone in his house and pondered on his reply to the letter. On the second day he assembled his Kokuna, Chiefs and *ulema*

and took out and read to them the letter from the Emir of Bornu, Ali. They heard the contents including the threats, and he asked their advice in the matter. Some said, "we will fight them and repel their wickedness, and drive them off from our free people and children." Some said, "we will flee from them, for we have refuge in our hills. On the hills there are springs with clean(?) water which do not dry up. If we take to the hills, no one will reach us. If anyone climbs up, we will push him down and throw stones on him". Some said, "we are stronger, even if less in number. We shall not bow down to them, though we die to the last man". These were the words of his people. The more enlightened of them said, "How excellent are these words. If kings enter a town they do mischief there and make the stronger weak. Thus it is that they do. But even as we will give them presents and load them with wealth and slaves and say sweet words". Then he paid attention to this opinion and told his *faqih* to write a reply to the letter with five words. He brought paper and ink and wrote after *bismillah*:

"From the servant of God, may He be exalted, Sultan Bladi (may God help him and protect him from evil of all who attack him wherever he may be) b. Sultan Muhammad deceased, may God illumine his grave. Amen.

To the Emir Ali b. Dunama, sincerest greetings, more pleasing than the most fragrant perfume.

Indeed your lucid missive has reached us and we have understood what you wrote in it including your request. But we are not leaving this abode and land. We have no place of retreat or refuge and no help except from God, may He be exalted. If you want wealth from us we will furnish you with all that you wish. Then we will obey you and follow your commands in all that you order us to do. This is all. Peace".

Then he folded the letter and sealed it and gave it to his *ghulam* Kula Yabatalla. He collected 1000 slaves, 100 horses, 3000 riyals of silver, 1000 shirts and 180 burnouses. This was the present for him. And it is said that the Sultan Bladi had different kinds of food-stuffs of roasted meat and(..?..) like made and carried on donkeys and brought to the Emir Ali, on the heads of 100 pagans dressed only in skins (lead by their chief Kachalla Aga Makulaje(?) before delivering the letter and the present. They journeyed until they reached Birni Gasargamu and approached the Emir Ali. After three days they delivered the letter and present from Sultan Bladi.

With them was the messenger he had sent with his letter who entered the presence of the Emir and informed him about the Sultan's portion and what had transpired in the meeting he had called to advice him. Among the things he did was to call for the camel and then struck it with the whip. When the camel felt the pain of the whip it snatched away with all its strength and rose up on its front legs but the rest sank to the ground by the weight of the stone. And it pulled the front legs out of them. Then

while continuing to stand on them, it died in the position we have described to you. All the people saw it. I saw it with my own eyes. They were astonished and we were astonished with them. Then they brought the Sultan's messenger to him and he gave him the letter. They also brought in the presents. He opened the letter and saw the contents.

But he did not accept the proposal and paid no attention to the present, and did not reply to the letter. But after a day or two he spoke of what al-Bladi had written to him in full. And a man of his people replied,

"O lion, son of a lion. If a Muslim obeys you and follows you, accept him and forgive him, if he obeys others in anticipation of what you may forbid, then open the way for him and do not oppose him with evil".

When this man spoke thus in the midst of the meeting, the Emir Ali did not hesitate but ordered them to seize him and put him in a certain place. So they took him and put him in the prison, and when night came they broke his neck without his people knowing who later came and buried him. He imprisoned the messenger of the Emir Bladi, and swore by God that his horse would urinate in the courtyard of the Madarama. He also sent a letter by some unimportant people saying:

"From the servant of God, may He be exalted, the raging lion, Sayf son of Sayf, the (..?..) son of the Emir Dunama Al-Hajj.

To him who says that he will not leave his home for anyone and will not flee from any man, Mandarama Bladi. Peace.

If you have wings then fly upon to your hills that you talk about. Or cling to the earth like a worm hiding from the birds. (then he said) I swear by God that I will bring soldiers to take them. My men will bring him as a prisoner and slave that we may make an example of him to those in need of mourning. So that this may be something for us to resemble and that he may be food for thought(?) for those who reflect. And if their hills that they talk of are too high for my horses to climb I will give them wings like those of a bird for us to fly with them".

Then he quoted the poem:

*"Man lahu al hadid wa'l 'abid
yar 'al fi al-ard ma yurid*

This is all. Peace".

Then he folded the letter and sealed and gave his messenger, Bukar Yaganami who took it to Sultan Mandara. After that he ordered the drums to be beaten and the trumpets to be blown, all of them. He mastered his men and the chiefs (Kawakin) and the *ajawid* and the Salatin and *al a'wan* who were subject to him; and the *junud* and *khujul* and *turus*, without number. Then when his determination grew strong he went outside the city to see the enormous use of his army and he urged them to strengthen their zeal. He did not return to his house and did not

let any of his people return to their country ... but ... passed the night with his men near the city preparing their weapons and inspecting the troops. This was the state of affairs with the Emir Ali. As for the state of affairs with the Sultan Bladi, he had a scout with the people who came to him with intelligence about them. And when he saw what the Emir Ali was doing and how he was going out with his *rijal* and *fursan* and *junud* without number, he hastened and went before the Emir and told him all that he had seen. There was no escape from this *junud* and *fursan* and *rijal* were coming whom they had no power of overcoming(?) on their own but with the might and help of God, may He be exalted. From then on he did not care to send him letters and presents with thousands of *rijal* and slaves and servants. And he did not halt in any place in the course of his advance on them, receiving hospitality and offerings of many kinds of food as was customary with them carried by pagan and slaves and servants. And he did not hesitate to send letters to him in which he declares his innocence by God Almighty, by the Sunna and by his noble prophet: to the number of 32. In each letter he repeated the name of God and said:

"We obey God and His messenger. Go back to your homes. We are doing what you wish, not what you dislike".

But the Emir did not pay attention to him or to what he said. He did not accept the warning. And the great number of letters and messengers pouring between them was of no consequence, nor the thousands of gifts, nor the slaves, nor the wealth. And when the Sultan saw that he had no way out and that they did not abandon their advance on him he assembled the chiefs of his people and informed them of the delaying tactics he had employed and how this had not deterred them etc. Each one of them gave his advice. There was one Alim of the time called Yusuf who came to the Sultan and related to him how he had seen in a dream that they were sitting in their homes when there came a group of wild animals including lions and tigers etc. They feared greatly but saw no escape and the lions and tigers wished to snatch them. Then he saw that they appeared to run away. Among them was a big lion and they followed him close to his trail and they moved away in flight.

„Our leader signalled with his sword to them and I heard someone say: Trust in God ... who gives ... Then we followed them and they went off in all directions. Then I woke up from sleep happy that God had delivered me from the wild animals".

Then the Sultan Bladi called together the *ulema* and chiefs under his authority and told them of the desire of the enemy against them and of the story of that *faqih*. Then he said to the clerk, "Write me a letter again to the lord of the armies". Then he wrote after *bismillah*:

"From the servant of God, may He be exalted, the Sultan Bladi may God help him and protect him from evil wherever he may be, son of the Sultan Muhammad to the Emir ʿAli, master of Borno, greeting. Verily all human beings are sons of Adam or

daughters of Hawa and are believers and unbelievers. The earth is a carpet which God has spread for them and then rendered spacious for His servants. He who acts uprightly is free but the unbeliever, his unbelief weights on him. Since we are servants ..."

Note:

- Words in brackets are words that are not clear in Professor Smith's own handwriting and I have provided substitutes that make sense.
- The Chronicle continued to describe the ensuing war which Borno lost with ignominy, as had been indicated in the Alim's dream. (Kyari Tijani)