Chapter LXXIII

RENAISSANCE IN NORTH AFRICA
THE SANŪSĪYYAH MOVEMENT

A

RISE OF THE SANŪSĪYYAH ORDER

The rise of the Sanūsīyyah Order is closely bound up with that of other revivalist movements in Islam during the thirteenth/nineteenth century. For this reason it is not possible nor indeed advisable to discuss the rise and impact of this Order without first touching upon the nature of the events preceding and accompanying it; consideration must also be given to the forces which played a considerable role in preparing the way for shaping and directing the trend of thought and action of the Sanūsīyyah movement.

The second half of the twelfth/eighteenth century was a period of dormancy in the history of modern Islam, and the beginning of the thirteenth/nineteenth century proved to be a grave time for the Muslim peoples. The Ottoman Empire, once an edifice of glory and achievement, began to weaken both politically and spiritually. The world of Islam—to which the Ottomans had for centuries stood as guardians and to which they had claimed the right of primacy—started to disintegrate. Soon, therefore, the call for political and spiritual reforms began to be heard; attempts were now being actively made to resuscitate the Empire and to turn it once more into a vigorous and superior institution along the lines of the advancing European nations.

In the spiritual field the need was particularly felt for a rejuvenation of the Islamic faith, the source of inspiration and the very backbone of the Islamo-Arab Empire from the first/seventh to the seventh/thirteenth century. By the beginning of the twelfth/eighteenth century Islam had been practically forgotten, and a great many alien ideas and practices had crept into it. The original purity of the doctrine of Islam was to be found nowhere; abuse of its rites was increasing day by day. The feeling that reform was necessary was, thus,

a natural phenomenon of the time. And when the Ottoman Sulṭān—who was also the Caliph of Islam and, therefore, the *de facto* ruler of the three holy cities of Islam—could no longer command the confidence and allegiance of the Muslims and demonstrate his willingness and ability to restore to Islam its purity and its vigour, his position as protector and defender of the faith weakened. Opposition to his authority began to rear its head.

Besides this *internal* strain in the Ottoman Empire itself, there was the *external* threat, both political and economic. By the turn of the thirteenth/nineteenth century the leading European powers had started coveting the lucrative territories of the Ottoman Empire both in Asia and in Africa. Accordingly, it was these two motive forces combined—the desire to ameliorate the condition of the Muslims and the determination to resist foreign danger—which led Muslim thinkers and leaders at that time to rise and call for reforms in the Muslim world, and later to make plans for overcoming the obstacles in the way of an Islamic renaissance.

It was against this background that the Sanūsīyyah Order was founded and began to grow. Its rise was indeed a reaction to both the spiritual disintegration of and the external political threat to the very existence of Islam. Its aim was three-fold: *first*, to work for the restoration of the original purity of Islam and the advancement of Islamic society; *secondly*, to bring about the solidarity and unity of the Muslim countries and, thus, revive the "community of Islam"; and, *thirdly*, to combat the growing encroachments of European imperialism upon the Muslim homeland.

The founder of the Sanūsīyyah Order, Sayyid Muḥammad bin 'Ali al-Sanūsi (known as the Grand Sanūsi), was born in 1202/1787[1] in the village of al-Wasita, near Mustaghanem, in Algeria. Politically, socially, and economically, this was a time of great instability and discontent in Algeria. The Ottoman governors—the *beys*, as they were called—had misruled the country and inflicted so many hardships on the people that resentment had reached a high degree, and the very authority of the Sulṭān had become exceedingly unpopular in the country.

By the time Sayyid Muḥammad bin 'Ali reached his twentieth year and was able to think rationally and to analyse the state of affairs into which the Algerians had drifted, he became exceedingly bitter about the disintegration of Algerian society as well as about the oppressive rule of the Ottoman governors. Indeed, in his earlier years, while still receiving instruction at the hands of Muslim Shaikhs in Algeria, he showed a keen interest in the welfare of the Algerian Muslims as well as enthusiasm for the unity of Muslim territories

[1] This is the date given by Sayyid Aḥmad al-Sharīf al-Sanūsi in his book, *al-Anwār al-Qudsīyyah fi Muqaddamāt al-Ṭarīqat al-Sanūsīyyah*, and also by E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica*, Oxford University Press, London, 1946, p. 11, and by M. Fu'ād Shukri, *al-Sanūsīyyah Dīn wa Daulah* (The Sanūsīyyah as a Religion and as a State), Cairo, 1948, p. 11. Other authorities, however, mention other dates: 1206/1791, 1207/1792, 1211/1796, 1218/1803.

all over the world. From the trade caravans that used to pass frequently through Algeria, he used to hear about the backwardness of Muslims in other Muslim lands. Once he told his father, expressing his feelings about the *débâcle* of Muslims at the time, "[the Muslims] are vanquished everywhere; [Muslim] territories and policies are being abandoned by the Muslims constantly and with the speed of lightning, and Islam is, thus, in a state of fearful decline. This is [indeed] what I am thinking of, O father!"[2]

The Grand Sanūsi received his early education from a number of Shaikhs in Algeria—at Mustaghānem and later at Mazun. His instructors included abu Ṭālib al-Mazuni, abu al-Mahl, ibn al-Qanduz al-Mustaghānemi, abu Rās al-Mu'askari, ibn 'Ajībah, and Muḥammad bin 'Abd al-Qādir abu Ruwainah. Under these Shaikhs he studied the Qur'ān, the Ḥadīth, and Muslim jurisprudence in general. Then he moved to Fez, where for eight years he studied in its grand mosque school, generally known as *Jāmi' al-Qurāwiyyīn*, to which innumerable students of Muslim theology used to come from all parts of North Africa. There he studied under a number of learned Shaikhs, including Ḥammūd bin al-Ḥājj, Sidi al-Ṭayyib al-Kirāni, Sidi Muḥammad bin 'Āmir al-Mi'wāni, Sidi abu Bakr al-Idrīsi, and Sidi al-'Arabi bin Aḥmad al-Dirqawi.[3] But he did not seem to have been happy in Fez. This was not only because of the pathetic state of morals and the lack of security and stability in the place, but also on account of the discouraging attitude which seems to have been taken by the authorities towards his teachings.[4] Accordingly, while still in his early thirties, he left Fez for Egypt. There he studied under Shaikhs al-Mili al-Tūnisiyy, Thu'ailib, al-Sawi, al-'Aṭṭār, al-Quwaisini, and al-Najjār. From there he went to the Ḥijāz, where he studied under Shaikhs Sulaimān al-'Ajami, abu Ḥafṣ bin 'Abd al-Karīm al-'Aṭṭār, and Imām abu al-'Abbās Aḥmad bin 'Abd Allah bin Idrīs.

While studying under all these Shaikhs, Sayyid Muḥammad bin 'Ali seems to have fallen under the influence of their Sufi teachings, particularly those of the Tijānīyyah Order in Morocco. Later, however, he became a member of other Sufi Orders, including the Shādhilīyyah, Nāṣirīyyah and Qādirīyyah. But he does not seem to have been wholeheartedly in favour of their teachings.[5] His purpose in joining them appears, as we shall see later, to be to make himself acquainted with their rites and teachings and to choose the best from every order so as to be able later to combine them in a new Order which would, thus, be "the crown of Sufi thought and practice."[6]

In pursuing his studies in Algeria, Morocco, and Egypt, Sayyid Muḥammad

[2] Salīm bin 'Āmir, "*al-Sanūsīyyūn fi Barqa*" (The Sanūsīs in Cyrenaica), *Majallāt 'Umar al-Mukhtār*, Benghazi, Vol. I (September 1943), p. 6. See also Shukri, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

[3] Salīm bin 'Āmir, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 5–6.

[6] Evans-Pritchard, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

had ample opportunity to examine the state of affairs into which the Muslims had drifted, particularly the state of decadence prevailing in North Africa at the time. Comparison between the glorious past of the Muslims and their condition in his time seems to have occupied his mind greatly, and the thought that the Muslims were in a state of material and spiritual degeneracy haunted him constantly.[7] In trying to discover the cause of this backwardness and find the remedy for it, he came to the conclusion that only by the restoration of the original purity of Islam and the unity of the Muslims the world over, could the future of Islam be made secure. This he now made the mission of his life and the object of all his efforts and preaching. And, in order to obtain further spiritual strength, he decided to pay a visit to the Ḥijāz, the birth-place of the Prophet Muḥammad and the original spring-board of the Muslims in the establishment of their empire in the first/seventh and second/eighth centuries. The ostensible reason for his journey was to perform the pilgrimage, but his actual motive was much more than that, namely, to invigorate his yearning spirit by the additional spiritual stamina which he wished to obtain during his visit to the holy cities of Islam. Moreover, there seems to have been a political reason for his departure. While teaching at Fez, he appears to have shown a critical attitude towards the Ottoman authorities there, in a manner now mild and admonitory, now severe and remonstrative; he drew their attention to their maladministration and to the sorry conditions then prevailing in Fez. As a consequence, his presence in Morocco was considered dangerous; the authorities considered him a threat to their prestige, fearing that his religious teachings would develop into a political challenge and, thus, lead to the end of the Ottoman rule in Morocco. In order, therefore, to avoid further friction with the authorities, Sayyid Muḥammad decided to leave for Laghouat, in Algeria. This place lay in a highly strategic situation for the purpose of trade caravans to and from the Sudan in addition to holding a key position in the Atlas Sahara.[8]

One of Sayyid Muḥammad's main objectives in his choice of Laghouat was his desire to preach his ideas in that area and to carry on with his preaching for the reform of Islam and the unity of the Muslim world. Soon, however, he realized he could not accomplish this to the full, for he found himself shut away in the Sahara, far from all useful activity. He, therefore, left for Gabis in Tunisia, and then went on to Tripoli, Misurata and Benghazi in Libya, as well as to Egypt and the Ḥijāz. It was indeed at this stage of his life that he began to exercise his influence successfully on the people of North Africa, preparing thereby the way for the founding of the Sanūsīyyah Order.

He had already succeeded in converting to his viewpoint a considerable number of Algerians and other "Brethren" *(Ikhwān)*. These were now his disciples, and a few of them accompanied him on his journey eastward through

[7] Muṣṭafa B'ayyu, *Dirāsah fi al-Tārīkh al-Lubiyy* (Studies in Libyan History), Alexandria, 1953, p. 23.
[8] Salīm bin 'Āmir, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, and the Ḥijāz, and helped him in the dissemination of his teachings.

Sayyid Muḥammad's stay in Tunisia and Libya was relatively short, but even during this short period he remained actively engaged in the preaching of his ideas. Similarly, his stay in Egypt was brief, lasting only for a few weeks. He had originally intended to study at al-Azhar University in Cairo in order to improve his education, but he was soon defeated in his plans. The Shaikhs of al-Azhar decided to combat his influence, perhaps out of jealousy of the success of his movement, or perhaps genuinely thinking that his teachings were not in accordance with the prevailing docile attitude taken by them towards the authoritarian rule of Muḥammad 'Ali, then Governor of Egypt. In addition, seeing that the Sayyid and his followers viewed his autocratic rule with more than suspicion, if not actual hostility, Governor Muḥammad 'Ali decided for his part to stifle the rapid advance of the Sanūsi teachings. He is, in fact, said to have suggested to the Shaikhs of al-Azhar to oppose the very presence in Cairo of the Sayyid and his disciples and even encouraged them to do so. This hostile attitude of the Shaikhs of al-Azhar and the authorities in Egypt, coupled with the persistent desire of the Sayyid to perform the pilgrimage, soon made him leave Egypt for the Ḥijāz.[9] But his studies in Egypt left a deep impression on his mind. There Muḥammad 'Ali had succeeded in shaking the authority of the Ottoman Sulṭān and establishing his own rule instead. Accordingly, Egypt, although nominally a vassal State and subject to Turkish suzerainty, had in fact declared its independence of the Turkish Sulṭān and was beginning to emerge as an autonomous entity among the States of the world. Already the inability of the Ottoman Empire to repulse the French invasion of his own country, Algeria, had pointed to the weakness of that Empire. To the Sayyid all this provided a concrete example of the growing decadence of the Ottoman Empire and of the actual feasibility of a rising in the face of the Sulṭān. It was, indeed, an incentive to him to redouble his efforts in order to end the pathetic state of affairs into which the Muslims had drifted. And yet the Sayyid felt he was hardly ready for such a move. Although he was encouraged by the example of Muḥammad 'Ali, he seems to have felt that the kind of political triumph of the latter over the authority of the Sulṭān was not the real victory he would wish for himself. He wanted political victory to be coupled with a real movement for reform and advancement. He, thus, concluded that his aim might be better served by his own superior education, by his striving to combat the influence of sectarianism and authoritarian regimes, and by the dissemination of knowledge which would include the teaching of technical subjects to all classes of Muslims. Moreover, he advocated the popularization of sports, particularly the use of arms and horsemanship, and resolved, above all, to realize these aims without delay.[10]

[9] B'ayyu, *op. cit.*, p. 24.
[10] Salīm bin 'Āmir, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

It was with this in mind that the Sayyid set out for the Ḥijāz. There he stayed for six years, mostly at Makkah, where he resumed his studies and preaching. He developed close relations with many prominent Shaikhs in the Ḥijāz, but was particularly influenced by Shaikh Aḥmad bin Idrīs al-Fāsi, the fourth head of the Moroccan Order of the Qādirīyyah dervishes and later the founder of the Idrīsīyyah or Qādirīyyah-Idrīsīyyah Order.[11] In addition, through his contacts with the pilgrims, flocking in thousands to Makkah and al-Madīnah every year, he made a deeper study of the condition of Muslims in other Muslim lands.

Having thus fortified his theological and other studies, acquiring in this way a much broader knowledge of the Islamic world, he began to feel he was in a position to start his own Order.

Upon the death of Sayyid Aḥmad bin Idrīs in the Yemen (where he had gone into exile following the hostility of the Māliki Shaikhs at Makkah), Sayyid Muḥammad al-Sanūsi proceeded in 1253/1837 to establish a new Order, which was actually a sub-Order of the Idrīsīyyah, and chose as its seat Mt. Abu Qubais, near Makkah.[12] Here he made great progress, particularly among the Bedouin tribes of the Ḥijāz, chief among which was the Ḥarb tribe between Makkah and al-Madīnah.[13] This success among the Ḥijāzi tribes aroused the jealousy of the various authorities in Makkah, and they proceeded to provoke opposition to his movement, as they had previously opposed that of Muḥammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhāb. In this they found great support in the attitude of the *'ulamā'* and the Sharīfs of Makkah and the Turkish administration.[14] This was apparently because the Order seems to have threatened the prestige and privileges of these authorities. Objection was also made to the manner in which the Order "lowered Sufi standards to accommodate itself to Bedouin laxity in religious matters, and that it verged on heresy."[15]

The Sayyid now decided to leave the Ḥijāz, in the same way as he had previously been compelled to leave Egypt. But he was faced with the difficult task of choosing a new seat for his movement. First, he knew his movement had very little, if any, chance of success in the Arabian Peninsula, particularly in view of the opposition to his movement by the Turkish authorities and the Sharīfs and Shaikhs of Makkah. Secondly, he was bound to encounter the same opposition as he had already experienced in Egypt before his departure for the Ḥijāz. Thirdly, he could not very well make his own country, Algeria, the centre of his movement, since the French had already occupied it in 1246/1830. Fourthly, such a new place had to be centrally situated in the Islamic world, a seat where the movement could flourish without at the same time attracting the attention of the ruling authorities.

[11] Evans-Pritchard, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
[12] *Ibid.*
[13] B'ayyu, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
[14] *Ibid.*
[15] Evans-Pritchard, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

In 1257/1841, he left the Ḥijāz, accompanied by a large number of his disciples and followers, and headed for Algeria. After a few months' stay in Cairo, during which the Shaikhs of al-Azhar renewed their hostility to his person and movement, he continued his journey westward through Libya to Tunisia. Here he learnt of the recent French advances in Algeria, and, being fearful of their designs (he was apprehensive lest the French authorities should be planning to arrest him or in any case to crush his movement), he hurried back to Libya,[16] now the only place to which he could go and where he could settle and extend his movement without arousing the jealousy and open hostility of the authorities. In a way, therefore, his choice of Libya was rather accidental, but in any case that country seemed to meet all the conditions he had conceived of for a new centre for his Order.[17] It was remote from the seat of Government in Istanbul, and was also relatively neglected. The Ottoman officials in it were few in number and were for the most part confined to the coastal towns, while the tribes were left to themselves and rarely disturbed by the authorities so long as they paid the taxes and kept the peace.[18] Even the Turkish troops seldom exceeded a thousand, and the semblance of a police force was not introduced until shortly before the Italian occupation in 1329/1911.[19] Moreover, the Libyan population was on the whole backward and in great need of religious orientation. Libya's human soil was, so to speak, ready for the reception of the Sayyid's teachings, a fact which no doubt made his task all the easier and thus speeded up his progress.

In 1259/1843, with the help of the 'Awāqir and Bara'sa tribes, Sayyid Muḥammad al-Sanūsi founded his first lodge *(zāwiyah)* near Sidi Rafī' on the central Cyrenaican plateau *(al-Jabal al-Akhḍar)*.[20] This first lodge came to be known as the White Lodge *(al-Zāwiyah al-Baiḍā')*, and it was from here that the Sayyid began to direct his teaching and propagandistic activities for the first few years after the establishment of his new seat. In 1263/1846, however, he returned to Makkah, where he stayed for seven years, while his disciples carried on his teaching and preaching in his absence. In 1270/1853, he returned to Cyrenaica, and three years later he moved his seat to Jaghbūb, about one hundred and fifty kilometres south-east of Sidi Rafī', and made it now the centre of his Order. His purpose in this was to direct his activities southward, particularly in the pagan and semi-pagan countries of the Sahara and Equatorial Africa and beyond. He was now out of reach of the Turkish, French, and Egyptian Governments, as well as on the main pilgrimage route from North-

[16] Salīm bin 'Āmir, *op. cit.*, p. 3.
[17] B'ayyu, *op. cit.*, pp. 28–35.
[18] Evans-Pritchard, *op. cit.*, pp. 93–98.
[19] D. C. Cumming, *Handbook of Cyrenaica*, Part V, p. 12. See also A. J. Cachia, *Libya under the Second Ottoman Occupation (1835–1911)*, Government Press, Tripoli, 1945, pp. 29–42.
[20] Salīm bin 'Āmir, *op. cit.*, p. 3. See also Evans-Pritchard, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

West Africa through Egypt to Makkah; at Jaghbūb itself, this route bisected one of the trade-routes from the coast to the Sahara and the Sudan. Jaghbūb was also centrally located for the purpose of his movement, lying as it was at fairly equal distances from his lodges in Cyrenaica, Tripolitania, the Western Desert of Egypt, and the Sudan.[21]

Actually, Sayyid Muḥammad al-Sanūsī's transfer of the seat of his Order to Jaghbūb heralded a new stage in the history of the development of the Order. Whereas previously the Order had confined itself to being mainly an *internal* movement aiming at the rejuvenation and reform of Islam as a faith, it now began to disseminate Islamic teachings and to extend the influence of Islam.[22] Sayyid Muḥammad must have been alarmed by the Christian missionary work in the Sudan, and he seems to have wanted to combat their activities. In this he was encouraged by the success which his movement had already scored in the coastal regions and the successful establishment of so many Sanūsi lodges in North Africa.[23]

Jaghbūb soon became not only a centre for the Sanūsi movement, but also a seat for an Islamic university which brought under its fold a total of some three hundred learned teachers and students in a community of some one thousand Sanūsīs and "Brethren."[24] This community included the Algerians, Tunisians, Moroccans, Libyans, and others.

As time went on, the University of Jaghbūb, with its team of scholars, poets, theologians, and others played an important role in the revivalist movement of Islam and its expansion in Africa during the thirteenth/nineteenth century. It was at this university that the future leaders of the Sanūsi Order were trained, and it was from here that Sayyid Muḥammad bin 'Ali, his followers, and successors directed their missionary activities in Libya, the Sahara, and the Sudan.[25]

When the Sayyid died in 1276/1859, he had already founded twenty-one lodges in Cyrenaica alone.[26] In addition, his Order had spread so widely in Cyrenaica and Tripolitania—and elsewhere—that the Ottoman Government was compelled to take his influence and prestige seriously into account; it, thus, wanted to win his friendship and support in order to use his prestige for improving the then deteriorating Turco-Arab relations and to quell the risings which were taking place in Tripolitania. It is even reported that one of the Turkish governors in Tripolitania at the time *(Āshqār Pāsha)* became a member of the Sanūsi Order.[27] In accordance with this courteous attitude of the Ottoman Government towards the Sanūsīyyah Order, Sulṭān 'Abd al-

[21] Evans-Pritchard, *op. cit.*, pp. 14–16.
[22] B'ayyu, *op. cit.*, p. 45.
[23] *Ibid.*, p. 53.
[24] Evans-Pritchard, *op. cit.*, p. 17.
[25] *Ibid.*, pp. 17–18.
[26] *Ibid.*, p. 70.
[27] Shukri, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

Majīd I issued in 1273/1856 a *firman* exempting Sanūsi properties from taxation and permitting the Order to collect a religious tithe from its followers.[28]

The Grand Sanūsi was succeeded in 1276/1859 by his elder son, Sayyid Muḥammad al-Mahdi, as head of the Order,[29] following a short period of regency. During Sayyid al-Mahdī's tenure the Order expanded considerably with twenty-two new lodges founded in Cyrenaica, apart from those in Tripolitania and Central Africa. In fact, so influential did the Order become that not only the Turkish Government but also the leading European Powers of the time sought its friendship and support. Sulṭān 'Abd al-'Azīz (1278/1861–1293/1876) issued a *firman* confirming the privileges granted by the earlier *firmān* of Sulṭān 'Abd al-Majīd (1273/1856) and further recognized the right of sanctuary within the confines of the Sanūsi lodges.[30] Yet, in spite of these flattering advances made by the Ottoman Government towards them the Sanūsīyyah leaders refused to take any part in Turkish political entaglements abroad. In 1294/1877, thus, they refused to accede to the Sulṭān's request that they should send troops to fight for him in the Russo-Turkish war. Moreover, in 1301/1883 they denounced the rising of the Mahdi in the Sudan and refused to give him help in his movement against the British. The head of the Sanūsi Order seems to have taken this attitude as a matter of principle, particularly in view of what he considered to be the "false pretensions" of the Sudanese Mahdi.[31] In 1304/1886 the Ottoman Sulṭān sent General Ṣādiq Pāsha to Jaghbūb with presents for Sayyid al-Mahdi (al-Sanūsi). Ten years later, Rashīd Pāsha, Governor of Cyrenaica, dressed in civilian clothes and unarmed, visited the Sayyid and paid him homage.[32]

Sanūsi relations with the European Powers were on the whole conducted with great caution and circumspection. In 1289/1872, Germany unsuccessfully tried to enlist the support of Sayyid al-Mahdi and to rouse him to rebel against the French in both North Africa and French West Africa. In 1299/1881, the Sanūsīs remained unresponsive to Italian presents and flattery. One year later they refused to give support to 'Arabi Pāshā's rising in Egypt, although at the time there were some who thought that 'Arabi was a mere tool in the hands of the Sanūsīs and that he had risen in revolt under their influence.[33]

In 1313/1895 Sayyid al-Mahdi moved the seat of the Order to Kūfra, a hitherto insignificant oasis, about one hundred and fifty kilometres south

[28] Evans-Pritchard, *op. cit.*, p. 91.
[29] Shukri, *op. cit.*, p. 55.
[30] A summary of this *firman* is given by Salīm bin 'Āmir, *op. cit.*, Vol. II (May 1944), pp. 5–6. The issue of this *firman* seems to have been necessary because the Turkish administration appears to have considered the earlier *firman* to be covering only the Sanūsi lodges in Cyrenaica; a new *firman* was to cover the Tripolitanian lodges as well as those to be established in future by Sayyid al-Mahdi. See M. Ṭayyib al-Ashhab, *al-Mahdi al-Sanūsi*, Tripoli, 1952, pp. 149, 157.
[31] Shukri, *op. cit.*, pp. 70–73.
[32] Cumming, *op. cit.*, p. 22.
[33] *Ibid.* See also Shukri, *op. cit.*, pp. 69–70.

of Jaghbūb. This may have been done to be out of the reach of the Turkish authorities.[34] It may also have been instigated a reaction to the attitude of Sulṭān 'Abd al-Ḥamīd II who, it is alleged, arranged with the *'ulamā'* of al-Azhar University in Cairo to issue a *fatwa* discrediting the Order by condemning Sanūsi practices which they considered to be innovations in the rules of prayer.[35]

Following this transfer of the seat of the Order to Kūfra, the affairs of the Order continued to prosper. Economically, the Order profited greatly from customs dues as well as from directly engaging in trade. Kūfra now became a relatively important commercial centre through which caravans were constantly passing.[36] In the political and religious fields the Order extended its influence to the then independent Sulṭanates in the Sahara: Kawar, Tibesti, Borku, Ennedi, Darfur, Wadai, Kanem, Chad, the Azgar, the Air, and Baghirmi. It also reached the Sudan.[37] In fact, contact with some of these Sulṭanates had already been made by the Grand Sanūsi shortly after his move to Jaghbūb in 1273/1856. But it was not until Sayyid al-Mahdī's tenure that the Order began to infiltrate into the Sahara and the Sudan. This not only brought the various Sulṭanates in the area under Sanūsi influence and led to the foundation of new lodges in their territories, but also swelled the revenues of the Order as a result of improvement in the security of the desert-routes and the consequent prosperity of trade activities in the region.[38]

This advance of the Sanūsīyyah into the Sahara and the Central Sudan brought the Order face to face with the French, and Franco-Sanūsi relations henceforward became greatly strained. In 1317/1899, therefore, Sayyid al-Mahdi moved the seat of the Order from Kūfra to Qiru, in Kanem, in order to organize resistance to the French, to administer the vast regions recently won by the Order, and to direct the propaganda activities of the Order in a more effective manner in the region.[39]

Between 1317/1899 (the date of the Anglo-French Declaration concerning disputed frontiers in the area) and 1320/1902, a number of armed clashes took place between the French garrisons and the Sanūsi forces in the area, with results alternating between Sanūsi victory and French ascendancy.[40] With the death of Sayyid al-Mahdi at Qiru in the summer of 1320/1902, however, the Order suffered a great blow and its resistance against the French began to crumble. Sayyid Aḥmad al-Sharīf—the successor of Sayyid al-Mahdi—apprehensive of French advance and of the designs on Africa harboured by the other leading European Powers, was careful to avoid any friction with

[34] See Evans-Pritchard, *op. cit.*, p. 21.
[35] Cumming, *op. cit.*, p. 22.
[36] Evans-Pritchard, *op. cit.*, p. 21.
[37] *Ibid.*, pp. 21–22.
[38] Cumming, *op. cit.*, pp. 23–25.
[39] Evans-Pritchard, *op. cit.*, p. 22.
[40] Cumming, *op. cit.*, p. 24. See also Shukri, *op. cit.*, pp. 63–66.

any of these powers.[41] Being a well-read Shaikh and scholar, he preferred the mosque and religious instruction to the sword and the field. He, thus, moved the seat of the Order back to Kūfra. It was in fact because of this that the fortunes of the Order began to suffer. The political, religious, and economic progress achieved by the Order during Sayyid al-Mahdī's tenure began now to diminish. In addition, personal rivalries among members of the Sanūsi family, after Sayyid al-Mahdī's death, helped to further weaken the solidarity and strength of the Order and to halt the extension of its influence.[42] By the time the Italian invasion of Libya began in 1329/1911, the Order was already on the decline.

B

TEACHINGS AND PHILOSOPHY OF THE SANŪSĪYYAH ORDER

It has already been stated that the main objective of the Sanūsīyyah movement, when it first began to take shape, was to purify the religion of Islam from the heresies and alien beliefs and practices which had in the course of centuries crept into it. It was, thus, a puritan and reformist movement, the chief purpose of which was to restore the original purity of Islam and to guide the Muslims to a better understanding of their religion. It continued to be an *internal* reformist movement until its founder, the Grand Sanūsi, moved the seat of the Order in 1273/1856 to Jaghbūb. It was at this stage of the development of the Order that it embarked on a new course, i.e., that of preaching and extending the teachings and influence of Islam to wider regions. But even in this it did not confine itself to being a religious and missionary movement. It soon began to be a political movement, concerning itself essentially with political matters. Its development from the purely spiritual level to the political one as well, together with the ground it covered and the problems it encountered in these two fields, must, therefore, be discussed at some length.

In its nature the Sanūsīyyah Order was a strictly Sufi Order calling for puritanism and a return to the true tenets and rites of Islam. This it strove to reach through what it considered the achievement of the purity of the soul which would ultimately lead to communion with God. The process of accomplishing this "salvation" is described by the Grand Sanūsi himself in three of his nine books: *al-Salsabīl al-Ma'īn fi al-Ṭarā'iq al-Arba'īn* (The Sweet Spring of the Forty Orders), wherein he describes seven stages through which the soul has to pass in order to become purified and united with God; *Kitāb al-Masā'il al-'Ashr, al-Musamma Bughyat al-Maqāṣid fi Khulāṣat al-Marāṣid* (The Book of the Ten Problems, Called the Purpose of Desires and the Summary of Intentions), in which he discusses ten of the problems which

[41] Evans-Pritchard, *op. cit.*, p. 23.
[42] *Ibid.*, p. 26.

the Muslims encounter in their daily prayers), and *Īqāḍ al-Waṣnān fi al-'Amal bi al-Ḥadīth w-al-Qur'ān* (Awakening the Slumberer through Observance of the Ḥadīth and the Qur'ān), in which, in an effort to extol the virtue of following the Prophet's sayings and practices, he deals with the various ways and means followed by the Muslim *'ulamā'* for understanding the Ḥadīth.[43]

But the Sanūsīyyah Order differed in many respects from other Sufi Orders. These other Sufi Orders believed in and encouraged meditation, liturgical recitations, and the practice of the familiar bodily exertions (particularly, the rhythmic movements of the body together with music playing, singing, dancing, drumbeating, and taking out of processions) which were supposed to enable the Sufi to rid himself of his physical self and attain spiritual union with God. In opposition to this, the Sanūsīyyah leaders declared themselves in favour of the rational approach to religion and the reform and guidance of Muslims.[44] This was not only the attitude of the founder of the Sanūsīyyah Order and his immediate successors, but is also that of the present leader of the Order (Sayyid Idrīs) who, shortly after his proclamation as the first king of independent Libya, issued orders to his followers not to resort to what he called antiquated physical practices.[45]

A basic feature of Sanūsi philosophy is its attempt to combine and reconcile the two methods familiar to Islamic religious thought: that of the *'ulamā'* who adhere to the *Sharī'ah* and that of the Sufis. In this he tried to follow the example of al-Ghazāli. But the Grand Sanūsi, in trying to follow the path of the *'ulamā'*, admired and was greatly influenced by ibn Taimīyyah, though he differed with him in his attitude towards Sufism, for ibn Taimīyyah had evinced open hostility to all Sufi teachings and methods, while the Grand Sanūsi (and his successors) showed tolerance towards these Orders.

It has already been stated that the Grand Sanūsi carefully studied the teachings of a number of Sufi Orders (all of which were Sunni Orders) before he decided to establish his own, and that he made it a point to choose from each of these Orders those principles which he considered most suited for incorporation into a new Order. His book *al-Salsabīl al-Ma'īn* contains an account of the chief Orders which he had studied including the Muḥammadīyyah, the Ṣiddīqīyyah, the Uwaisīyyah, the Qādirīyyah, the Rifā'īyyah, the Suhrawardīyyah, the Aḥmadīyyah, and the Shādhilīyyah.[46] But although he studied all these Orders and was influenced by them, his own Order was not, as has been sometimes claimed, a mere conglomeration of them. On the contrary, it was a "consistent and carefully thought out way of life."[47] Nor

[43] For a brief summary of the contents of these books, consult Shukri, *op. cit.*, pp. 41–44.

[44] See M. M. Merone, *Brevi Nozioni d'Islam*, 1927, p. 58.

[45] See *Barqa al-Jadīdah*, Benghazi, June 28, 1953.

[46] Shukri, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

[47] Carlo Giglio, *La Confraternia Senussita dalle sue Origine ad Oggi*, Padova, 1932, p. 17, cited by Evans-Pritchard, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

is his Order a mere offshoot of the Shādhilīyyah Order.[48] What he in fact seems to have intended was to bring together and unite the various Islamic Orders and so, eventually, to unite all Muslims.[49]

In its teachings the Sanūsīyyah Order did not make an *intrinsically* new contribution to Islam; it did not introduce any essentially original principles or ideas. It was only a modern revivalist movement derived from the Sunni sect, and is in fact considered to be one of the most orthodox Orders.[50] It followed the Māliki school of Muslim thought which was and still is prevalent in North Africa. The Grand Sanūsi placed great emphasis on the Sunnah which, together with the Qur'ān, he regarded as the basic source of Islamic Law. Though he also attached a certain degree of importance to *qiyās* (analogy) and *ijmā'* (consensus of opinion) as the sources of law in Islam he considered these to be of secondary importance.[51]

But the most courageous stand which the Grand Sanūsi took in this connection was his recognition of *ijtihād* (independent reasoning) as a method for understanding and developing Islam. It was in fact this doctrine which evoked the hostility of the *'ulamā'* of the time in Egypt and the Ḥijāz and made him stand at variance with them; for many centuries before, it was considered that the door of *ijtihād* had been closed, and the *'ulamā'*, therefore, held that the advocacy of this method was likely to lead to innovations in Islam.[52]

C

ACHIEVEMENTS: AN EVALUATION

The success of the Sanūsīyyah Order was spectacular in more ways than one. The rapid progress which it scored among the tribes of Cyrenaica, Tripolitania, and the Fezzan, together with the extension of its influence to other countries, particularly Tunisia, Egypt, the Ḥijāz, and Central Africa, has been especially conspicuous in three main fields.

In the religious field, the movement found ready acceptance wherever it went. By 1335/1916, when Sayyid Aḥmad al-Sharīf relinquished the head-

[48] Shukri, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

[49] M. al-Ṭayyib al-Ashhab, *Barqa al-'Arabīyyah Ams w-al-Yaum* (Arab Cyrenaica Yesterday and Today), Cairo, 1945, p. 187.

[50] Evans-Pritchard, *The Place of the Sanūsiya Order in the History of Islam*, p. 13.

[51] Nicola A. Ziadeh makes the sweeping statement that the Grand Sanūsi "rejected both *ijmā'* (agreement or consensus of opinion) and *qiyās* (analogy)." See his book, *Sanūsiyah: A Study of a Revivalist Movement in Islam*, Leiden, 1958, p. 87. However, this book—which actually no more than a restatement, in somewhat varied phraseology, of what other writers have written before—should be read with more than the usual caution, particularly in view of the many sweeping generalizations and the factual errors found in it. But consult Evans-Pritchard, *The Place of the Sanūsiya Order in the History of Islam*, and also B'ayyu, *op. cit.*, pp. 38–39.

[52] See in this connection B'ayyu, *op. cit.*, pp. 38–39.

ship of the Order in favour of Sayyid Idrīs, one hundred and forty-six lodges had been founded in Cyrenaica, Tripolitania, the Fezzan, Egypt, Arabia, Central Africa, and the Sudan.[53] The success of the movement was, at least partly, due as much to the devotion of its leaders as to the simplicity and originality of its teachings. Its original purpose, as we have noted earlier in this chapter, was to reform Islam by combating alien beliefs and practices which had been creeping into Islam throughout the centuries. This purpose, which is actually the avowed purpose of all modern Islamic revivalist movements, was all the easier to realize since it came at a time when Muslims all over the world began to feel the need for the rejuvenation and reinvigoration of their faith. What served to help the Order in this respect was the fact that when it emerged the Muslims in the countries to which it addressed its call were in a state of abject poverty and backwardness; they were, indeed, ignorant of their religion and in dire need for some spiritual orientation, particularly when Sanūsi teachings took as their basis the true and original tenets and rites of Islam. This, no doubt, made the Sanūsīyyah teachings readily acceptable to these people, since it not only gave them the spiritual stamina they had needed, but also *reassurance and confidence in their own values by acknowledging and in fact reinforcing the true principles and rites of their own religion.*

On the other hand, the poverty, backwardness, and ignorance of the Muslim peoples at the time must not be carried too far as an explanation for the rapid progress which the Sanūsīyyah Order achieved. For, then, the success of the Order would (unjustifiably) be attributed rather to the naïveté of these people than to the rational appreciation on their part of the intrinsic values of its teachings.

Nor should the Sanūsīyyah Order be misunderstood, as it has been by several writers and thinkers, to be a purely reactionary and fanatical movement, seeking self-gratification through a negative attitude not only towards other religions but also towards life in general. The Sanūsīyyah Order is indeed a constructive movement which aims primarily at introducing a positive element into the *Ummat al-Islām* (the Islamic community) which it tried to recreate and transform into a healthy and progressive society. The methods which it employed to realize this end were peaceful; it did not advocate violence or aggression and would not agree to incite rebellion even in territories falling under colonial regimes, unless provoked to do so by the attitude of these regimes; it professedly and openly declared that its foremost weapons were "guidance and persuasion."[54]

Considered in this light, the Sanūsīyyah Order is far from deserving the accusations of extreme puritanism and fanaticism which H. Duveyrier[55]

[53] Evans-Pritchard, *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica*, pp. 24–25.

[54] Shukri, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

[55] H. Duveyrier, *La Confrerie Musulmane de Sidi Mohammed ben Ali es Senousi et son Domaine geographique en l'Annee 1300 de l'Hegrie—1883 de notre ere*, Paris, 1884.

levelled against it. He asserted that the Sanūsīyyah prohibition of drinking and smoking is a reflection of this fanaticism. He even went to the extreme of saying that assassinations of Europeans in North and Central Africa at that time could have been committed by none other than the Sanūsi agents, and even considered that the Sanūsīyyah propaganda was in fact at the root of every misfortune which befell the French interests.[56] Similarly, Professor Arnold J. Toynbee[57] has accused the Sanūsīyyah of "Zealotism," that is, "archaism evoked by foreign pressure" seeking, in self-defence when encountering Western civilization, to take refuge from the unknown into the familiar. In his opinion when it joins battle with a stranger who practises superior tactics and employs formidable new-fangled weapons, it finds itself getting the worst of the encounter, and, therefore, responds by practising its own traditional art of war with abnormally scrupulous exactitude.

These and many other similar accusations are as unfounded as they are misleading; they lack evidence to substantiate their assertions.

This constructive aspect of the Sanūsīyyah Order has been manifested by Sanūsi leaders and their teachings in several ways. It will suffice to mention in this connection that the Order showed a most tolerant attitude towards other reformist movements as well as towards the cult of saints which was so common and widespread throughout North Africa.[58] This tolerance may be attributed to the broadmindedness and complacent disposition of the Sanūsi leaders themselves, and the high degree of learning and accomplishment they had attained. It may also be because the Sanūsīyyah Order itself partook of and was influenced by many Sufi Orders which had been in existence before it came to flourish. We have already noted that the founder of the Order himself had deliberately studied the tenets and rites of these various Orders and had chosen the best of each for incorporation into the Order which he was going to establish in his own name. In any case, as the Sanūsīyyah Order was, *par excellence*, a movement calling for a return to true Islam and the actual implementation of its principles, it was inevitably natural and logical that it should show tolerance, which is one of the chief characteristics of Islam itself, not only towards other Sufi orders and cults, but also towards other religions and indeed towards humanity as a whole. Admittedly, the Sanūsīyyah Order was a conservative movement, but the claim that it was reactionary and fanatical is a completely different thing.

In the political field too the Sanūsīyyah Order scored considerable success. Although starting originally as a purely "religious" movement, the Order soon found itself entangled in political matters, both internal and external.

[56] See the defence of the Sanūsīyyah Order on this point by Evans-Pritchard, *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica*, pp. 6–7. Also in this connection, see Louis Rinn, *Marabout et Khouan*, Alger, 1884, *passim*.

[57] Arnold J. Toynbee, *Civilization on Trial*, Oxford University Press, London, 1949, pp. 188–89.

[58] Evans-Pritchard, *op. cit.*, pp. 8–9.

This was inevitable in view of the Grand Sanūsī's keen interest in the welfare of the Muslims in general and his early anxiety about the fate of the Ottoman Empire as the protector and defender of the faith. The "political" conditions of the Muslims and their endangered situation, particularly in the face of the growing threat of European imperialism in Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Morocco, made a deep impression on the Sanūsi leaders, and they, therefore, strove for the political advancement and liberation of Muslim lands. In addition, Islam being by its very nature both a code of ethics and a way of life, not recognizing any real distinction between what are commonly known as "political" matters and purely "religious" matters, it was inevitable and indeed natural that any approach by the Sanūsīyyah Order to the religious affairs of Muslims should have also touched upon their political affairs.

The attitude of the Sanūsīyyah Order towards the position of the Ottoman Sulṭān as the Caliph of all Muslims is of great interest here and should, therefore, be noted. It has already been mentioned that the Grand Sanūsi and his successors wanted to maintain cordial relations with the Ottoman Sulṭān, that the Ottoman Government for its part tried to cultivate friendship with them, and that it was on that basis that the Ottoman Government accorded its recognition to the Sanūsīyyah Order. What actually happened in this respect is that the Sanūsi leaders were ever ready to support the Ottoman Sulṭān as the Caliph of all Muslims, provided that his Government did not in any way encroach upon their much cherished autonomy. It was in fact on that basis that they also accepted the secular authority of the Sulṭān as the political head of the Ottoman Empire. But it is doubtful whether they were profoundly and wholeheartedly in favour of the Turks as such. However, when the Sanūsīs saw that they, equally with the Turks, were being threatened by common foreign enemies, particularly France and Italy, they hastened to rally around the Sulṭān. This, as we shall see later in this chapter, became all the more evident when Italy proceeded to occupy Libya, thereby provoking the Sanūsi leaders, together with other prominent figures in Libya, to rise on the side of the Turks and declare a war of *jihād* against the Italians.

What is of particular interest at this juncture is to note how the Sanūsīyyah Order developed from being a purely spiritual movement into one also political.

One important factor which helped the Sanūsi leaders to score political influence in Libya was that the Order did not confine itself to purely preaching activities, but soon grew into a coherent movement with a common direction and developed into an organization of its own, identifying itself with the tribal system of the Bedouins of Libya. The Grand Sanūsi and his successors came, thus, to be regarded not only as holy men who had come to preach, in the way it had been done by others before them, but also as national leaders who exercised great political and religious influence and commanded not only the respect and affection of the tribes but also their allegiance.[59]

[59] *Ibid.*, pp. 10–11, 84–89.

It was actually in the economic and social fields that the Sanūsīyyah Order made its greatest contribution to Libyan life, and it was this role which helped to make its impact on Libyan life durable and more conspicuous. Although the Order rallied around it the tribal people of Cyrenaica, Tripolitania, and the Fezzan, as well as a limited number of the townsmen of these territories, and although it educated these people in the matter of their religious duties, its effect on their life proved to be much more lasting and conspicuous than any other reformist movement which had influenced the Bedouins of Libya. As noted earlier in this chapter, the Sanūsīyyah Order won much more than a personal and local following among the Libyan populace; its founder and his successors were able to establish themselves as leaders of a national movement which has continued to affect and indeed direct the destinies of the country up to the present day. The secret of this lies, not only in the capable, devoted, and commanding personality of the Sanūsi leaders themselves, not only in the social, economic, and political conditions under which the Libyans had been living before the advent of the Sanūsīyyah movement and which made the teachings of the movement more readily acceptable, but also in the type of organization which the Sanūsi leaders were able to give the country and which aimed at creating people who were "healthy in body and mind."[60]

It has been already noted that it was the avowed purpose of the Sanūsi leaders to associate their movement with the tribes themselves. This is why the vast majority of the Sanūsi lodges were founded in tribal centres and not in towns, and the distribution of the lodges also followed tribal divisions.[61]

The distribution of the lodges was carefully planned by the Sanūsi leaders. They were designed to comprehend the principal tribal groupings, the more important lodges being built at the centres of tribal life, while most of the other lodges were placed on important caravan-routes. Professor E. E. Evans-Pritchard, while commenting on the wisdom of the Sanūsi leaders for constructing their lodges on Graeco-Roman foundations in conformity with a "politico-economic plan," remarks that "where the Greek and Romans and Turks found it convenient or essential to build villages and posts was where the Sanusiyyah established its lodges."[62]

In fact, it was the tribes themselves that established the lodges which came, thus, to be regarded as tribal institutions. This was usually done following the grant of permission by the head of the Sanūsīyyah Order each time a lodge was to be established. The head of the Order would, thus, send the tribe concerned a Shaikh from among his followers at the seat of the Order. This Shaikh was called the *muqaddam* and acted as a custodian of the

[60] Knud Holmboe, *Desert Encounter*, London, 1936, p. 275, citing Sayyid Muḥammad Idrīs al-Sanūsi (present King of Libya). See also Evans-Pritchard, *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica*, pp. 10–11.

[61] Evans-Pritchard, *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica*, pp. 71–73.

[62] *Ibid.*, p. 78.

lodge; he was helped in the performance of his duties by another Shaikh called the *wakīl* who was primarily responsible for the financial and economic affairs of the lodge.[63]

The lodges were, thus, administered by the principal Shaikhs, each of whom represented the head of the Order in his particular lodge. The functions of each of these Shaikhs covered the settlement of disputes between members of the tribe; leading the tribesmen in *jihād* (the holy war); looking after security matters in the area covered by the lodge; acting as intermediary between the tribe and the Turkish administration; receiving foreigners and offering them hospitality; supervising the collection of tithe; directing the cultivation of grain and care of stock; dispatching surplus revenues to the seat of the Order; acting as *Imām* on Fridays; and assisting in preaching and teaching.[64]

Every lodge, small or large, usually contained a mosque, school-rooms, guest-rooms, living quarters for teachers and pupils, and houses for the *Ikhwān* (Brethren—those Shaikhs who accompanied the principal Shaikh of the lodge to help him run it), clients and servants and their families. Some of the lodges had small gardens, and the local cemetery was usually close to the lodge.[65]

The various tribal sections would donate to the lodge the lands adjoining it. Often other donations were also made, such as wells, springs, date-palms, flocks, crops, and camels. The total lands of the Order amounted to 200,000 hectares in Cyrenaica alone, while the endowments of the Order totalled some 50,000 hectares.[66] Most of the work needed at the lodge was usually carried out by the lodge community itself, though often the tribesmen helped the Shaikh of the lodge in the cultivation of the lands.

The lands attached to the lodges belonged to the various lodges to which they were given and not to the Shaikhs of the lodges or even to the Sanūsi leaders themselves. They were considered *waqf* properties, and the Shaikhs of the lodges were only the legal representatives of the properties of these lodges. In this way, the revenues of one lodge could not be used for the maintenance of another lodge. Even the head of the Order possessed no authority to interfere directly in the administration of the estates of the lodges. Members of the Sanūsi family and the teachers and administrative officials of the Order usually lived at Jaghbūb and Kūfra, and the lodges used to supply them regularly with gifts of various products, local or imported, such as skin, wool, grain, butter, honey, meat, rice, tea, sugar, and cloth.[67] In fact, the relations between the seat of the Order and the various lodges became very strong and regular, particularly during the tenure of Sayyid al-Mahdi. For this purpose, a postal system was established, and horses were

[63] Shukri, *op. cit.*, p. 49.
[64] Evans-Pritchard, *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica*, p. 80. See also Shukri, *op. cit.*, pp. [48–49.
[65] Evans-Pritchard, *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica*, pp. 73–74.
[66] *Ibid.*, pp. 77–78.
[67] *Ibid.*, pp. 76–77.

for the most part used to carry correspondence from the seat of the Order to the various lodges and *vice versa*. In this way, Jaghbūb was closely connected with Egypt, Tripolitania, the Fezzan, Wadai, and the rest of Cyrenaica.[68]

Later, however, during the life-time of Sayyid Aḥmad al-Sharīf, abuse of the affairs of the lodges became common; it became now the practice to earmark the surplus revenues of particular lodges for particular members of the Sanūsi family, and these members came to be regarded as patrons of the lodges which supplied them their needs and were under their supervision.[69]

In addition, although, as stated above, the estates of the lodges did not belong to the head of the Order or to the Shaikhs of the lodges, the hereditary system of Shaikhdom soon became an established practice in many of the lodges. In the early days of the Order, it was the practice that once the head of the Order sent a Shaikh to found a new lodge and once that lodge was established, that particular Shaikh was transferred to another lodge. Later on it became the practice to leave a Shaikh in charge of a lodge till his death and then nominate his successor from among his nearest relatives, with the consent of the tribe and on the advice of the Shaikhs of the neighbouring lodges. In most cases this happened following a request by the members of the tribe concerned for the appointment of the son or brother of the deceased Shaikh as director of their lodge, upon which the head of the Order sanctioned their nomination. In course of time the families of these Shaikhs came to regard themselves as having a hereditary title to their lodges and also a pre-emptive claim to their administration and to the enjoyment of their revenues.[70]

The importance of the Sanūsi lodges in the history of Libya and, indeed, of every other country to which the Sanūsīyyah order extended its influence, does not lie in the religious and missionary field only. It lies also, and in a particularly conspicuous manner, in the economic and social progress attained by the Order in these countries. The lodges were, of course, places of worship and centres for teaching the principles and rites of Islam. They also served to extend the influence of Islam into hitherto pagan or semi-pagan lands. But the lodges were not convents paying no attention to the course of worldly events and developments, nor were they places for mystical meditation and exercises. On the contrary, they were (in addition to being centres for religious instruction and missionary propaganda) community centres bustling with great educational, economic, and agricultural activities. The Sanūsi lodges provided the countries in which they were founded with a unique educational machinery which served to instruct both tribesmen and townsmen (but more the former) in their language, history, and religion, as well as to teach them purely secular subjects, including mathematics, chemistry, agriculture, and the use of weapons.[71] The Sanūsi leaders are, in fact, known for insisting that

[68] Shukri, *op. cit.*, p. 61.
[69] Evans-Pritchard, *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica*, p. 77.
[70] *Ibid.*, p. 80–88.
[71] Shukri, *op. cit.*, pp. 58–61.

their followers should work hard and avoid accustoming themselves to a lazy and leisurely life. Agriculture and commerce, thus, progressed, and Libya in particular experienced a degree of material progress which it had not known for centuries. Sanūsi influence in Libya, as indeed in the other countries to which the Sanūsīyyah Order addressed itself, was, thus, two-fold: *spiritual* which consisted of the religious instruction and the missionary work carried on in the various territories falling within the orbit of the Order's activities; and *material* consisting of the social and economic progress attained by the Sanūsi lodges in these territories.

D

DECLINE AND RECOVERY

By the turn of the fourteenth/twentieth century the "Sick Man of Europe" had become, as one might say, so sick that there was very little prospect of his recovery or improvement. By this time, too, the importance of the Mediterranean, for a long time the centre of political and economic interests of Europe, had doubly increased, particularly in view of the opening of the Suez Canal. The Mediterranean now became the scene of conflict and a bone of contention among the leading Powers of Europe. Great Britain, France, Germany, Spain, and Italy were keenly interested, for various motives, in the welfare of that sea. The race for the acquisition of oversea territories was now in great progress. As it happened, Italy was left more or less free to annex Libya.[72]

By this time the Sanūsīs had succeeded in establishing in Libya a position almost independent of the Turkish administration, recognizing only the *de facto* authority of the Turkish Sulṭān, which in practice amounted to no more than a nominal acknowledgment of his already enfeebled representation in the territory. At the same time, however, Italy was busy securing the diplomatic support of the leading powers of Europe for the occupation of Libya. Pending the arrival of the right opportunity for her to launch her offensive against Libya, she had proceeded to penetrate that country peacefully, particularly in the economic and commercial fields.

By 1326/1908, when the Young Turks came to power, Turco-Italian relations had reached a critical stage. Italian public opinion was greatly alarmed at the mistrust in Italian projects shown by the Turkish administration in Libya. The mood of the Italian official and semi-official circles was hostile, and it was becoming clearer every day that Italy was busy trying to provoke

[72] For a detailed account of Europe's, particularly Italy's, designs over Libya, see W. C. Askew, *Europe and Italy's Acquisition of Libya*, Duke University Press, 1942. See also Roberto Cantalugo, *L'Italia Musulmana*, Rome, 1929.

Turkey into war over the mastery of Libya.[73] Eventually, on September 29, 1911, the Italian Government proceeded to declare war on Turkey.

The Italians had estimated that the Arab inhabitants of Libya would take the only course open to them, namely, complete surrender and the acceptance of the Italian rule. However, as events proved, the Italians had miscalculated the feelings of the Arabs about the Italian adventure, for as soon as hostilities began, the Libyans, Cyrenaicans, Tripolitanians, and Fezzanese hastened to join the Turkish force, rising as one man in an effort to repulse and drive out the invading gentiles.

In Cyrenaica, the resistance movement was led by Sayyid Aḥmad al-Sharīf, leader of the Sanūsi Order, who was then at Kūfra. Immediately on learning of the Italian invasion, Sayyid Aḥmad issued a call to *jihād*. A large number of tribal chiefs and tribesmen, roused by the call, hastened to rally around the Sanūsi flag. In the Fezzan, the call to *jihād* sent out by Sayyid Aḥmad met a similarly favourable response. And in Tripolitania, steps were taken for the co-ordination of Arab resistance throughout the whole of Libya.

For some time Arab resistance against Italy's invasion continued to be tough. But Turco-Arab forces were soon compelled to retreat to the interior. Eventually, the Turks, harassed by a number of complications at home and abroad and losing hope of any victory over the Italians in Libya, agreed in October 1912 to sign a peace treaty (Treaty of Ouchy) with Italy, by which Italy acquired *de facto* control, though not sovereignty, over Libya, while the Ottoman Sulṭān reserved for himself a number of rights which he insisted on exercising in Libya. But shortly before signing the Treaty, the Sulṭān issued a *firman* granting the Libyans self-government, thereby making Libya a semi-independent State.

But the Libyan leaders, including Sayyid Aḥmad al-Sharīf al-Sanūsi, disclaimed the Treaty of Ouchy and decided to continue the war against Italy.[74]

Actually, the Turks wanted to encourage Libyan resistance against the Italians, and they soon nominated Sayyid Aḥmad as the leader of the new Libyan State.[75]

The designation of Sayyid Aḥmad al-Sharīf as the leader of the future Libyan State meant that the unchallenged Sanūsi rule in the country now received final and definite recognition on the part of the Turkish Government.

Turco-Sanūsi relations remained cordial all the time. And Libyan resistance continued until 1335/1916, when a serious difference of opinion arose between Sayyid Aḥmad and his cousin, Sayyid Idrīs al-Sanūsi, over the alignments of the Sanūsīyyah in the War. Sayyid Aḥmad wanted to join Turkey and Germany against Italy, while Sayyid Idrīs, who was known for his affection

[73] See on this point L. Villari, *Expansion of Italy*, London, 1930, pp. 71–72. See also A. Ravizza, *La Libia nel suo Ordinamento Giuridico*, Padova, 1931, p. 7. See further Askew, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

[74] See Shukri, *op. cit.*, pp. 146–48.

[75] *Ibid.*, p. 146.

for the British and who seems to have been impressed by the understanding reached at the time between the Arabs and the British Government,[76] preferred to join Britain against Turkey and, thus, reach an understanding with the Italians.[77]

By March 1916 the Turks and Libyans were in retreat. By this time, too, the differences of opinion between Sayyid Aḥmad and Sayyid Idrīs had become too great to be in any way bridged.[78] This was all the more evident since these differences were of a basic nature and reflected the difference in outlook and in the basic philosophy with which each of the two Sayyids looked upon the task of continuing the war against Turkey. In view of the openly professed colonial and religious considerations underlying and motivating Italy's invasion of Libya, Sayyid Aḥmad considered the continuation of Libyan resistance to be both a religious duty and a matter of necessity. On the other hand, Sayyid Idrīs seems to have looked upon the Italian occupation of Libya as an inevitable evil, and thought it was no use continuing the struggle against such a formidable enemy.

It was, thus, natural that some decisive measure should have been taken to call a halt to the duel that was going on between the two Sanūsi Sayyids. In this it was Sayyid Idrīs who took the initiative. He now wanted to take over the leadership of the Sanūsi Order himself. He considered that leadership of the Order had devolved upon Sayyid Aḥmad following the death of Sayyid al-Mahdi (1320/1902) only because he, Sayyid Idrīs, as the elder son of Sayyid al-Mahdi, was then too young to succeed his father. Now, however, he argued, matters had changed, and he had become old enough (twenty-seven) to take over the command. Eventually, Sayyid Aḥmad, looking with grief at this attitude of his cousin and in view of the failure of his own plans to continue the resistance movement against Italy, decided to hand over political and military authority to Sayyid Idrīs. According to this arrangement, a number of leading Sanūsīs were to share with the new head the management of Sanūsi affairs in Cyrenaica and the Fezzan. At the same time, Sayyid Aḥmad was to remain the religious head of the Sanūsi Order, while Sayyid Idrīs himself agreed to designate Sayyid al-'Arabi (Sayyid Aḥmad's eldest son) as his successor as the head of that Order.[79]

Following this, Sayyid Aḥmad retired to Jaghbūb, but was soon forced to leave it under British threat to destroy that place and demolish the tomb

[76] Reference is made here to the Ḥusain-McMahon negotiations for Arab participation in the First World War against Turkey and on the side of the Allies, in return for British recognition of Arab unity and independence at the end of the War. Consult on this point George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, London, 1946, *passim*.

[77] See Shukri, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

[78] *Ibid.*, pp. 165–82.

[79] Consult in this connection the "Memoirs" of Sayyid (King) Idrīs, published in Arabic in *al-Zamān*, Benghazi, January 26, 1955. See also Evans-Pritchard, *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica*, p. 128, and Shukri, *op. cit.*, pp. 186–87.

of Grand Sanūsi. From there he went to the Oases of Aujla and Marada and then to Jufra, with the intention of proceeding from there to the Fezzan and, if need be, to the Sudan. Upon the insistence of Nūri Bey, however, he had to go to 'Aqaila, some 250 kilometres south-west of Benghazi, in order to continue the struggle against Italy. There he remained until August 1918, when he left for Istanbul at the invitation of the Turkish Government. He was received as a great hero and came to be treated with the utmost courtesy. In 1337/1918, when Waḥīd al-Dīn came to the throne of the Ottoman Empire, the ceremony of "coronation," which had hitherto been performed by the head of the Maulawi Dervishes, was carried out by Sayyid Aḥmad al-Sharīf. "It was," remarks Sir Harry Luke, "probably in order to stimulate sympathy for the Sultan in Islamic circles that [Sayyid Aḥmad] was invited to officiate."[80] In April 1921, the Turkish Parliament nominated him as King of Iraq. He proved to be a staunch supporter of Muṣṭafa Kemāl Atāturk and later tried to work for the restoration of the *Khilāfat* to Istanbul. He went afterwards to Damascus in order to bring about a reconciliation between Syria and Turkey, but was forced by the French authorities to leave Syria in 1343/1924. From there he went to the Ḥijāz, where he was well received by King ibn Sa'ūd, and remained there until his death at Madīnah in 1352/1933.[81]

Sayyid Idrīs took over control of Sanūsi affairs at a very critical time. The Sanūsīs under the leadership of his predecessor had suffered a catastrophic defeat at the hands of the British forces in Egypt. Moreover, a devastating drought had overcome the country in 1333/1915. It was followed the next year by large swarms of locusts, and the year after by a general famine and epidemic throughout the country. Sayyid Idrīs, therefore, decided (with the approval of Sayyid Aḥmad who was still in Cyrenaica) to enter into negotiations with the British and Italian authorities with a view to reaching a *modus vivendi* with the latter. This was indeed Sayyid Idrīs's long-awaited opportunity for establishing himself not only as the political leader of the Sanūsi movement, but also as its spiritual head. However, although an agreement ('Akrama Agreement of April 1917) was reached between Sayyid Idrīs and the Italians (with the help of the British) whereby a truce was established, the Italians soon violated the agreement by insisting on the acquisition of sovereign rights over Libya, a course to which Sayyid Idrīs could not agree without meeting the opposition of the Sanūsi leaders.[82] Eventually, in 1339/1920, another agreement (Agreement of al-Rajma) was concluded between Sayyid Idrīs and the Italians. According to the terms of this agreement, the Italian Government agreed to grant the Sanūsi Order a limited degree of self-government within specified areas. Sayyid Idrīs was designated as the hereditary chief of this "Sanūsi Government" with the title of Amīr. The Sanūsi lodges were exempt from taxation, and a parliament was to be

[80] Sir Harry Luke, *The Old Turkey and the New*, London, 1955, p. 163.

[81] Evans-Pritchard, *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica*, pp. 132–33.

[82] See *ibid.*, pp. 135–46. See also Shukri, *op. cit.*, pp. 194–201.

set up on the basis of proportional representation from the oases under the Amīr's jurisdiction. The Italian Government, moreover, promised to respect Arab lands and properties including those of the Sanūsi lodges. Among other things, the Amīr promised to put an end, within eight months of the signing of the agreement, to all the Sanūsi military camps and other military formations within his area.[83]

In the meantime, the Tripolitanian leaders who had been anxious from the start of the resistance to co-ordinate their policies with those of the Sanūsi leaders in Cyrenaica and the Fezzan, eventually met at Ghāryān in Tripolitania, proclaimed a "Tripolitanian Republic" in 1340/1921, and decided to invite Sayyid Idrīs to be its head.[84] Following this, in 1341/1922, a Tripolitanian delegation left for Ajadabiyah—seat of the Sanūsīyyah Government since 1339/1920—in order to lay before and explain to the members of that Government the resolutions adopted at the Congress of Ghāryān. On November 22, 1922, Amīr Idrīs formally accepted the Tripolitanian offer.

The Tripolitanian *bai'ah* to Amīr Idrīs stands as a landmark in the history of Libya for being particularly one of the most important formal bases on which Libyan unity has come to be erected in recent times. It is all the more remarkable since, in spite of the differences which had earlier existed between the Sanūsi leaders and the Tripolitanians, it made it possible for the latter to accept Sanūsi hegemony.

This *bai'ah*, in fact, proved to be a deadly blow to Italy's prestige and chances in Libya. It was now obvious that Italy's position in Tripolitania had become greatly jeopardized.[85] Even Amīr Idrīs, under pressure from the Cyrenaican tribes, could not suppress the military camps and other formations within eight months in accordance with the Agreement of al-Rajma. This in fact proved to be of great annoyance and displeasure to the Italian authorities who were ever-apprehensive of the establishment of a unified and strong Libya. They always felt that they had come to terms with the Libyans as a result of the pressure of their own political and military circumstances.

With the rise of the Fascists and their assumption of power in Italy in October 1922 matters came to a head. Determined to uphold Italy's name and prestige in Libya and to reassert the acquisition of Italian sovereignty over that country, the Fascist regime proceeded to launch a new offensive on Libya. On April 21, 1923, the Italian forces occupied Ajadabiyah, the seat of the Sanūsi Government, and three days later the Italian Governor declared the unilateral abrogation of all the agreements concluded between the Sanūsīyyah Order and the Italian Government.[86]

Libyan resistance was once again weakening. By the end of 1342/1923 resistance in Tripolitania had collapsed, and the Italians had established

[83] Evans-Pritchard, *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica*, pp. 148–49.
[84] Shukri, *op. cit.*, p. 254.
[85] See Ravizza, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
[86] Shukri, *op. cit.*, p. 273.

themselves firmly in that territory. In December 1922, Amīr Idrīs fled secretly to Egypt. Before leaving the country, however, he appointed his younger brother, Sayyid al-Riḍā', as spiritual head of the Sanūsīyyah Order in Cyrenaica and 'Umar al-Mukhtār as political and military leader of the territory. Cyrenaican resistance continued until the end of 1350/1931, when 'Umar al-Mukhtār, at the time eighty years of age, was caught and executed by the Italians. With this the resistance movement in Cyrenaica completely collapsed. A new phase in Italy's occupation of the country thus started. It now became possible for the Italians to carry out their plans for the colonization of the country and the settlement therein of Italian farmers and other colonists.

Italy's occupation of Libya lasted until 1362/1943 and formally ended with the conclusion of the Italian peace treaty in February 1947. During the thirty years of Italian rule in Libya, Sanūsi fortunes suffered terribly; almost all the Sanūsi leaders were forced to leave the country and live in the neighbouring Arab lands, particularly in Egypt. On December 22, 1930, a Royal Decree was issued, whereby the various pacts between the Italians and the Sanūsīs were formally revoked and the lodges were closed. The sequestration of the estates and goods of these lodges was ordered. By this Decree all movable and immovable property of the lodges was confiscated and transferred to the patrimony of the "Colony" (i.e., Libya). The Decree even expressly forbade any recourse to the courts against seizures thus made by the Italian administration. The Sanūsīyyah Order itself was considered by the Italians to be an illegal association.[87] By the outbreak of the Second World War the Order had been finally crippled both as a spiritual and as a political force. It was not until August 1939 that the Sanūsi leaders again began to recover their lost position as liberators and leaders of Libya. And it was not until December 1951, following many internal and external developments, that Libya emerged as an independent and sovereign State under the political and, to a much lesser extent, spiritual leadership of the Sanūsīyyah Order.

[87] For a brief but able exposition of the legal aspects of Italy's treatment of the Sanūsīyyah Order, including the sequestration of its estates, see Evans-Pritchard, "Italy and the Sanūsīyyah Order in Cyrenaica," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, University of London, Vol. XI, Part 4, pp. 843–53.

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Chapter LXXIV

JAMĀL AL-DĪN AL-AFGHĀNI

A

INTRODUCTION

While Europe was disengaging herself from the spiritual hold of Rome and embarking upon the hazardous yet challenging road of freedom, the Arab world was being isolated from and insulated against almost all outside influences and changes. This process of isolation and insulation continued unabated till it came to an abrupt end at the time of the Napoleonic expedition against Egypt in 1213/1798. This was indeed the first serious external stimulus that the Arab and the Muslim world had received since the Ottoman conquest in 922/1516. The episode of French occupation of Egypt was quite significant as it ushered a new era for the Muslim world—an era in which the Western nations began to penetrate into the lands of the Muslims at a breakneck speed. The story of this penetration is very painful to narrate but it proved to be a blessing in disguise since it awakened the Muslims from their slumber. The Muslim society, which was a medieval and ossified society, when it faced a relentless and superior power which subjected its people and exploited its wealth, fully realized the enormity of the danger. The method by which the policy of the Western imperialists was executed and the resistance crushed, and the way in which the culture of the conquerors was imposed, did not foster either understanding or friendship, but rather created doubts and promoted fears with regard to the intentions of the rulers. The Muslims were alarmed at the situation that not only their political freedom was in peril, but their institutions, culture, and even their faith—the bedrock of their life—were also being threatened.

The advent of the modern Christian missionary movement at about the same time confirmed this belief. Islam as a result became a rallying call for existence and an instrument of protest against foreigners. The foreigners in turn arrived at the conclusion that unless this potent instrument was dubbed,