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# NOT QUITE VENUS FROM THE WAVES: THE ALMORAVID CONQUEST OF GHANA IN THE MODERN HISTORIOGRAPHY OF WESTERN AFRICA<sup>1</sup>

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## I

The Almoravid conquest of ancient Ghana in 1076 AD is certainly among the most dramatic and controversial single events in the historiography of West Africa. It has been regarded as a crucial turning point, as the battle of Hastings was for England, not only for the existence of Ghana, but also for the destiny of the entire area, opening the gates to a triumphant Islam in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>2</sup>

Yet the conquest and destruction of Ghana by Almoravid invaders constitute one of the myths which still populate African historiography, like the wonderful voyage of Hanno to the Bight of Biafra, which was carried over from classical Greco-Roman texts into modern European literature as early as 1533. Since then the story of Hanno has been used for various purposes by western Africanists, for instance, to explain the diffusion of iron technology into sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>3</sup> Just the same, no definite evidence has yet been found for any Carthaginian sailings along the West African coast,<sup>4</sup> except the *Periplus* of Hanno itself, which seems to be a literary composition drawn from earlier classical sources.<sup>5</sup> A reason for the popularity of Hanno, and other such stories in African historiography, has been that many modern writers have been content with using the previous secondary literature, instead of examining carefully all the available primary sources. Consequently, many subjective and hypothetical assumptions created by previous scholars, working on the basis of even less evidence, have been transferred bodily from one corpus of research to the next. Finally, their origin forgotten, stories like the voyage of Hanno have become established historical facts through constant repetition in the authorized literature.<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, there is no direct evidence for any conquest, still less a violent and destructive conquest, of Ghana by the Almoravids.<sup>7</sup> The conquest hypothesis is a European creation. It was not born of a sudden springing, fullblown, from the sea, such as was the birth of Venus in ancient mythology. Nevertheless, when the hypothesis at last assumed its definitive form in 1912, nearly 850 years after the alleged event, there was a certain modest drama involved. The purpose of this paper is to show—by pursuing the textual *History in Africa* 23 (1996), 197-231.

genealogy, the *isnad*, in the European literature on the West African past, as the story passed from scholar to scholar, altering a little each time the baton changed hands—how the hypothesis came to be. In order to understand this process we need to ask who invented the hypothesis, using what evidence, and working in which ideological environment? That is to say, to ask the very basic questions that every historian should apply to his sources. Furthermore, this survey also reveals how important it is to start reconsidering in a wider context the origin of our conceptions concerning early West African history.

## II

The first seeds, within European learning, of the conquest hypothesis were sown by Leo Africanus. A Spanish Muslim who lived for a considerable time in Morocco, Leo ended up at the Papal Court in Rome, where he wrote, in rather corrupt Italian, his *Descrittione dell’Africa*, in 1526.<sup>8</sup> This was first published in Venice, in 1550.<sup>9</sup> Several Italian reprints followed, as well as translations into French, Latin, English, and finally Dutch and German.<sup>10</sup> In the western world, Leo came to be regarded as the highest authority on the geography and history of Africa, and he maintained this position until the early nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup> Even then it was largely his geographical ideas which had to be abandoned, overtaken by new European exploration in Africa. In the historiography of Africa, Leo’s influence lasted much longer.

According to Leo Africanus, the Land of the Blacks, including *Guechet* and *Cano* [Ghana] was first opened up in AH 380/1012 AD, after the arrival in North Africa of a certain Muslim.<sup>12</sup> The Land of the Blacks was then “inhabited by people, who lived liked brutes, without kings, lords, republics, government and any customs, and without knowing husbandry.”<sup>13</sup> Continuing with Leo’s (very North African-centric) account, these blacks were dominated by “King Joseph, the founder of Morocco,” referring here to Yusuf b. Tashfin (ruled 1087-1106), who established Almoravid power in the Maghrib and Andalusia, and by “the five nations of Libya,” meaning the Berber confederacies of the *Zenaga*, *Guenziga*, *Terga*, *Lemta* and *Berdeua*.<sup>14</sup> From their Berber rulers the blacks learned “the Islamic law and divers necessary skills, and many of them became Muslims.”<sup>15</sup>

Leo mentions the name Ghana only here, without elaboration, and he does not specify whether it was among the lands which were subjugated by King Joseph and the Libyan nations. Neither does the name of the alleged conqueror of Ghana, the Almoravid *amir* Abu Bakr b. ‘Umar, whom Yusuf b. Tashfin was to supersede in Morocco in the early 1070s, appear anywhere in Leo’s pages. There is thus nothing to suggest that Leo Africanus was in any sense a direct progenitor of the hypothesis of an Almoravid conquest of Ghana.

However, Leo’s account, consistently placing the blacks under Almoravid rule,<sup>16</sup> was very likely influenced by the far-reaching, and quite unpersuasive, claims of fourteenth-century Moroccan historians, such as that the Almoravids had once conquered the Land of the Blacks as far as the “mountains of gold.”<sup>17</sup>

In this respect, Leo himself is more reliable as an indicator of the common negative attitude of Berbers and Arabs towards black Africans, than as a precise historical chronicler.<sup>18</sup> In any case, it is not so much with regard to an explicit conquest hypothesis that the seeds were being sown, but rather in setting a scene of whites over blacks, northerners over southerners, a scene within which the southward penetration of Islam did take place, and where such events as conquest might well be imagined.

Following close on the heels of Leo Africanus—less than 25 years separate the two first editions—the Spanish scholar Luis del Mármol Carvajal published his *Descripción general de Affrica* (also written very much from a North African point of view) in three parts, two in 1573 and the third in 1599.<sup>19</sup> Mármol relied mostly on Leo, but he also knew various Arabic sources, having spent many years in captivity in North Africa.<sup>20</sup> In the opening passage for the chapter dealing with the Land of the Blacks in the third volume, Mármol reports:

In the description given by el-Mucaudi, Bubquer, Aben Gezar and other African geographers, only Guequin and Cano [Ghana] are mentioned in the Land of Blacks, because they did not have such detailed information about this area as one has today.<sup>21</sup> All regions which border on the Sahara, or which are close to it, are Mohammedan nowadays on account of the fact that the Almoravids, and the Lumtuna people, rule in Africa. About the year 380 AH, which is equal to 982 of Christ Our Saviour, among them came many morabitos and alcoranist preachers belonging to the cursed sect of Mahoma which they taught this barbarous people, and brought them over to their opinion. And after that, making his way through Ethiopia, amidst those black peoples, Hagin son of Abdulmalic, in the year 469 of the Hijra, began to teach them his rites and ceremonies, and another sectarian, called Yahaya son of Ali Benbucar, started converting all those who live on the bank of the River Niger, and close to it, who...<sup>22</sup>

The text continues by repeating Leo Africanus almost *verbatim*, including his remarks about the uncivilized state of blacks, and their domination by King Joseph of Morocco and the five Libyan nations.

However, it is Mármol's own information which is more significant in relation to our topic than what he took from Leo. In the quoted passage, Mármol evidently connected the conversion of the blacks with the emergence of the Almoravids.<sup>23</sup> He said nothing further about either of the two apparently leading figures whom he mentioned here, Hagin son of Abdulmalic and Yahaya son of Ali Benbucar, and it is difficult to identify them now. Furthermore, there is no reference to any military action against the blacks in the context of their conversion. If we take Mármol literally, King Joseph dominated the blacks only *after* they had already become Muslims. Some of this information, including the date for the conversion (469/1076-77) and the presence of Yahaya, comes most likely from the anonymous chronicle *al-Hulal al-mawshiyya*, "The Embroidered Cloaks," completed in Granada in 1381, and perhaps available to Mármol either in North Africa or in Spain.<sup>24</sup>

The same information quoted above is found in the first volume as well, in the chapter where Mármol described the religions of the blacks. Both the date for their conversion to Islam and the context are the same. But in the first volume the agent was called "Yahaya son of Abubequer," his action is directed especially towards the peoples of "Geneúa" (Guinea) and "Neuba" (Nubia), and there is again no mention that Yahaya had used any force against these blacks, though his coreligionists are said to have conquered Spain and attacked Egypt—referring again to the historical Almoravids and their campaigns in the north.<sup>25</sup> Neither is any conquest in the Land of the Blacks mentioned in yet a third possible passage, in the section where Mármol related the history of Almoravids in particular.<sup>26</sup> Nor is the name of *amir* Abu Bakr b. 'Umar mentioned anywhere: according to Mármol, the predecessor of Yusuf b. Tashfin and the founder of the Almoravid movement was a certain "Abu Texifien" who ruled *ca.* 1052-87.<sup>27</sup>

Nevertheless, there is in Mármol's work one reference to southern military campaigning by the Almoravids, where he speaks of "Lumtunas" or the Lamtuna having conquered "Tumbuto" or Timbuktu, and other parts of the western Sudan in a more remote time. This is Mármol's own addition to Leo's description of Timbuktu, which he otherwise repeats as such.<sup>28</sup> The exact source for this rather general campaigning information is difficult to trace; similar commentary was available—as we have already noticed in the context of Leo Africanus—in fourteenth-century Marinid historiography, which was certainly known to Moroccans (and probably to Mármol, too), and of course in the tale of King Joseph and the five Libyan nations.

But it is the context of Mármol's remark, rather than its source,<sup>29</sup> which is of special interest to us—for Mármol was describing here the ambition of "el Xerife Mahamet," or Muhammad al-Mahdi (1544-57), founder of the sharifian Sa'ḍid dynasty of Morocco, to extend his rule further into the Sahara and beyond, "as the Lamtuna had done in the past."<sup>30</sup> Greater control over the Sudanese gold trade would have been important to the new rulers, giving them free access to trade with Europeans other than the Portuguese, and thus enabling them to circumvent the understandable Portuguese reluctance to see gunpowder and firearms passing into the hands of their potential, and often actual, enemies.<sup>31</sup>

Muhammad al-Mahdi eventually abandoned these plans, but the vital point for us is that once again the history of the Almoravids was being used to provide precedents for contemporary politics and philosophy, and being shaped to meet contemporary needs.<sup>32</sup> Just as the internal requirements of the Marinid dynasty in Morocco promoted the fourteenth-century embellishment of the sub-Saharan Almoravid records,<sup>33</sup> or just as the external needs of an expanding Europe contributed to the nineteenth- and twentieth-century evolution of the full-blown conquest hypothesis, so it seems possible, even likely, that the Marinid elaboration was being refurbished in the later sixteenth century to meet the expansionist needs of Sa'ḍid Morocco, which eventually culminated in the Moroccan invasion of Songhay in 1591.

Yet evidence quite contradictory to the Moroccan claims comes from south of the Sahara, from the Muslim scholars of Timbuktu. Muhammad al-Mahdi's attempt to extend his rule into the Sahara and beyond is mentioned also by 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sa'di, the author of *Ta'rikh al-Sudan*, which is an invaluable source for Songhay history, and almost contemporary with Mármol.<sup>34</sup> But al-Sa'di nowhere mentioned that the Moroccan claims over the western Sudan were affirmed by any Almoravid precedent.<sup>35</sup> Perhaps such justification was not used in this particular instance, or perhaps al-Sa'di edited it out—we can never know—but his silence rather suggests that such a precedent did not exist at all.<sup>36</sup>

Moreover, there is another scholar, the celebrated Ahmad Baba, who denied without hesitation that any conquest of the Sudan by Muslims in the more remote past ever took place—in a document written in 1024/1615 entitled *Al-Kashf wa'l-bayan li-asnaf majlub al-sudan*, ("Enslavable categories among the blacks revealed and explained").<sup>37</sup>

The context of this document is that the people in Tuwat, an important commercial terminus in the northern Sahara, evidently anxious about the morality of trading slaves who might have been unlawfully enslaved, wrote to Ahmad Baba for advice. One of the subsidiary questions put to him was whether there had been an early conquest of the blacks, while they were still in a state of unbelief? The implication of this question seems to have been that, if conquest had preceded conversion, it would in effect impose a permanent enslavable status, which could not be overridden by later conversion. But where had the Tuwatis picked up this story? Is it the same claim that Mármol had recorded barely more than a decade earlier—the dates at least do fit very enticingly? Or did the question arise from the actual Moroccan conquest which had just occurred and provided plenty of black slaves who might have been enslaved unlawfully, *unless* they had been conquered in the past, while still pagan, thus legalizing their present enslavement? Again, we do not know exactly.

In his answer to the Tuwatis, Ahmad Baba admitted that there were in his day black peoples who might legitimately be enslaved, because they had never adopted Islam.<sup>38</sup> But *not* because they had formerly been conquered: rather, he insisted that those who became Muslims from among the Sudanese did so voluntarily "without being conquered by anybody."<sup>39</sup> His emphatic rejection of any form of the "conquest hypothesis" carries particular weight since he was writing relatively early, more or less on the spot geographically, and—a little curiously, we confess—he cited precisely the Almoravid/Ghana confrontation passage from Ibn Khaldun to prove his own anti-conquest opinion.<sup>40</sup> More than two centuries later, as we shall soon see, this notorious passage would lead European scholars to draw a quite opposite conclusion concerning the same matter.

The slavery component in the argument cuts both ways. Perhaps Ahmad Baba, nearer the receiving end of the threat of enslavement, and living in close association with black Muslims, was likely to play down any idea of original conquest, and we should accordingly take his denial, however robust, with a

grain of salt. Conversely, since many Saharans and North Africans were closely and profitably involved with the slave trade, and since an Almoravid conquest of Ghana (and other parts of the western Sudan) would have provided a splendidly apt foundation for the subsequent cultivation of this trade, we might wish to discount reports of such a conquest for precisely this reason. The fact that the "conquest hypothesis" never clearly emerged in Africa, despite the attractive justification it could have offered for indulging in the slave trade, does lend support to the contention that the conquest never occurred.

Nevertheless, these reservations expressed by the seventeenth-century scholars of Timbuktu remained—understandably—unknown to their European counterparts, among whom Leo Africanus especially continued to exercise profound influence. In fact, until the early nineteenth century, nearly all that was known in Europe of early West African history before the Portuguese discoveries, was based on Leo Africanus, with some supplementary information drawn from Mármol and the "Nubian Geographer," or al-Idrisi, whose *Nuzhat al-mushtaq* had appeared as an abridged Latin translation in 1619.<sup>41</sup>

In 1738, for example, Francis Moore, an English trader in the Gambia, compared the domination of the blacks by the Libyan tribes, as described by Leo, to the Spanish conquest of the New World, a metaphor which could certainly have bred among his readers an image of widescale destruction and violence:

The *Libyan* tribe of *Sanhagia*...coming amongst these harmless and naked People, made as rapid conquests as the *Spaniards* did in *America*, and contemned the Natives as much, looking upon them as Brutes, because they were not *Mahometans*, nor instructed in Avarice, nor ruled by Tyrants; for which the *Moors* upbraided them as wanting the Knowledge of Religion, Property and Government.<sup>42</sup>

Leo's picture was still repeated almost *verbatim* as a historical fact by Mungo Park.<sup>43</sup> Park's narrative of his first expedition to the Niger rapidly became as popular as Leo's description in the previous centuries.<sup>44</sup> In this way Park not only carried over the old idea of Libyan domination of blacks to the nineteenth-century European literature on Western Africa, but he also gave it extra credibility with his own authority and experiences.

### III

The next step in the evolution of the conquest hypothesis in European literature was taken in the availability of new sources: between 1820 and 1831 three hitherto unknown sources, each a vital component for the hypothesis-to-be, came into the public domain of European learning.

The first was a Latin translation of al-Maqrizi's fragment on the races of the Sudan, including this passage:

Etiam Rex al-Ganae Principum (harum regionum) quondam fuerat maximus; deinde, ingruentibus Al Molatstemiis, omnis eorum potestas evanuit; occupavit que familia Sousou, tum gens Mali quae interim invaluerat, hos tractus, ibique regnavit.

The king of the Ghana was the greatest of kings but then the Veiled Men overcame them and their authority dwindled away. The people of Susu [then] conquered them. After this the people of Mali became powerful and ruled over them.<sup>45</sup>

The second was a Portuguese translation of Ibn Abi Zar<sup>c</sup>'s *Rawd al-Qirtas*.<sup>46</sup> Ibn Abi Zar<sup>c</sup> nowhere mentioned Ghana, but he presented a marvelously vivid canvas for the southern Sahara of white triumphalism over blacks and of swashbuckling Islamic adventurers, including the following information about the death of Almoravid *amir* Abu Bakr b. <sup>c</sup>Umar:

Concluida esta exhortação, despediu-se Abu-Bacar, e marchou para Sahara, na qual se conservou fazendo a guerra aos cafres da Ethiopia, aonde foi martyrizado em huma das suas gazuas, traspassado de huma seta hervada, de que morreu no mez de Xaaban do anno 480 (1087), depois de haver subjucato ao seu Imperio o paiz de Sahara até Iabaledahb (monte de ouro), paiz da Ethiopia, cujos estados revertão depois para Iussof, filho de Taxefin.<sup>47</sup>

Then he [Abu Bakr] bade him [Yusuf] farewell and left for the desert. There he remained for some time waging Holy War on the unbelievers from among the Sudan until on one of his expeditions he was struck by a poisoned arrow and met martyrdom. This was in the month of Sha<sup>c</sup>ban 480/November 1087 after all the land of the desert as far as Jabal al-Dhahab (Mountains of Gold) in the land of the Sudan had come under his sway. After his death authority became vested exclusively in Yusuf b. Tashfin.

And finally, in 1831, the following note appeared to Etienne Quatremère's French translation of al-Bakri's *Kitab al-masalik wa'l-mamalik*:

Si l'on en croit un historien de Maroc (manuscrit 825, p.5), "les habitants du pays des Noirs qui ont Gânah pour capitale, professèrent la religion chrétienne jusqu'à l'année 469 de l'hégire. A cette époque, ils embrassèrent l'islamisme."<sup>48</sup>

If we can believe a Moroccan historian (manuscript 825, p.5), "the inhabitants of the Land of the Blacks whose capital is Gânah professed Christianity until the year 469 of the Hijrah. At that time, they embraced Islam."



The document cited is again the fourteenth-century *al-Hulal al-mawshiyya*, which slightly misquotes al-Zuhri, writing in the twelfth century.<sup>49</sup>

But the meaning—real or alleged—of these three sources was not yet understood, for the early history of West Africa was still undiscovered in the late 1830s. This changed significantly in 1841, when William Desborough Cooley, in his pioneering work, *The Negroland of the Arabs examined and explored; or, An Enquiry into the early history and geography of Central Africa*, opened up scientific study of the area, based on Arabic sources, and (as far as our special interest here is concerned, though it is not the main element in his argument) began to piece together, albeit tentatively, the conquest evidence.<sup>50</sup> All three works mentioned above, and many others, were cited by Cooley, although it was profoundly important that he, himself an Arabist, was able to read al-Bakri, Ibn Khaldun, and other yet unpublished sources in Arabic manuscript instead of translations.<sup>51</sup>

But exactly which of these sources, and each in exactly which way, contributed to the development of the conquest hypothesis is sometimes difficult to decipher. Cooley's key summary statement on the "conquest" is:

Ghánah merged in the empire of the Morabites, an event which may be assigned, with much probability, to the year of the Hijra 469, when the Mohammedan faith was forcibly imposed on the pagan nations of Negroland contiguous to the Western Desert.<sup>52</sup>

Three sources were cited—*al-Hulal al-mawshiyya* (this is the note, quoted just above, to Quatremère's al-Bakri); the passage of Mármol we have already quoted above; and the Portuguese translation of Ibn Abi Zar<sup>c</sup> ("Moura, Hist. do Soberanos, &c, p.146"). The date, 469 AH for the conversion was clearly taken from *al-Hulal* and Mármol, as was the link to the Almoravids, whereas the use of force and "conquest" seems to come from Ibn Abi Zar<sup>c</sup> and from Ibn Khaldun, whom Cooley quoted at length as his principal source for the history of Mali.<sup>53</sup> We shall return to Ibn Khaldun in a moment. But first, we must look at a rather strange witness for the "conquest"—al-Bakri, clearly the outstanding early source for Ghana, and very justly the major authority for Cooley.

For our purposes here, however, al-Bakri is a strange witness indeed, for he nowhere mentioned the "conquest" of Ghana by the Almoravids in 469/1076-77, nor could he, since he was writing in about 460/1067-68. Nevertheless, Cooley apparently believed that there was after all an account of the conquest of Ghana in al-Bakri.

The key is Awdaghust. An important trading terminus on the southern side of the Sahara, Awdaghust is elaborately described by al-Bakri. Inhabited by Arabs and Berbers, it was clearly in al-Bakri's time a white town, with some blacks among its slaves.<sup>54</sup> But Awdaghust had recognized the authority of the black ruler of Ghana, and this, according to al-Bakri, was the reason why the Almoravids conquered the town in 446/1054-55, treating its inhabitants with considerable severity.<sup>55</sup>

Awdaghust had for centuries been a Berber city; this is confirmed by reports from the ninth and tenth centuries.<sup>56</sup> Yet al-Bakri said that this town "used to be the residence of the king of the Sudan who was called Ghana before the Arabs entered Ghana."<sup>57</sup> Al-Bakri is our only witness for this royal black residency in Awdaghust. The *Corpus* editors, rightly observing that al-Bakri is here "far from being clear," and presumably calculating how far back one would have to go in order to predate the first mention of Awdaghust as the residence of a Berber ruler (this is al-Ya<sup>c</sup>qubi, in the ninth century),<sup>58</sup> suggest that the first Arab entry into Ghana may have been at the time of the Arab conquest of North Africa, in the eighth and ninth centuries.<sup>59</sup>

Perhaps, that long ago, Awdaghust had indeed been the capital of Ghana. But Cooley, repeatedly and clearly, implies that the Almoravid conquest of Awdaghust was in fact the conquest of the capital of Ghana.<sup>60</sup> This must have been simply carelessness on Cooley's part, for al-Bakri gives us a date for the sack of Awdaghust (1054/55), and he tells us more than once when he himself was writing (1067/68), and both these dates are well before the date traditionally proposed for the fall of Ghana in the "conquest hypothesis," which is the same date (1076/77) that Cooley assigned to that alleged event. Not only are the dates askew, but the entry of the Arabs into Ghana is most unlikely to refer to the Almoravid conquest of Awdaghust, as the Almoravids are nowhere, to the best of our knowledge, referred to as Arabs, in spite of the belief in their Himyaritic origin.<sup>61</sup>

This, the first misunderstanding, is Cooley's own: if his readers followed him in it, they have at least some excuse. The second flaw concerns the interpretation of Ibn Khaldun's notoriously brief and vague mention of these events, written centuries afterwards—and here the blame may rest more with Cooley's readers than with him.

A modern English translation of the relevant passage, for instance, is this:

Later the authority of the people of Ghana waned and their prestige declined as that of the veiled people, their neighbours on the north next to the land of Berbers, grew (as we have related). These extended their domination over the Sudan, and pillaged, imposed tribute (*itawat*) and poll-tax (*jizya*), and converted many of them to Islam. Then the authority of the rulers of Ghana dwindled away and they were overcome by the Susu, a neighbouring people of the Sudan, who subjugated and absorbed them.<sup>62</sup>

Cooley's own rendering of the same passage keeps the attention of the veiled people fixed more specifically on Ghana:

The people of Ghánah declined in course of time, being overwhelmed or absorbed by the Molaththemún (or muffled people—that is, the Morabites), who, adjoining them on the north towards the Berber country, attacked them, and, taking possession of their territory, compelled them to embrace the Mohammedan religion. The people of Ghánah, being invaded at a later period by the Súsú, a

nation of Blacks in their neighbourhood, were exterminated, or mixed with other Black nations.<sup>63</sup>

It is evidently this passage which prompted Cooley to piece together the fragmentary evidence from *al-Hulal*, Mármol and Ibn Abi Zar<sup>c</sup> into a solid conquest hypothesis, since it offered the wider historical context, into which such information as the conversion of Ghanaians to Islam in 469/1076-77 and the large-scale conquests of Abu Bakr b. ʿUmar in the Land of Blacks, “as far as the mountains of gold,” could easily be merged.<sup>64</sup>

Yet the problem here is that the rulers of Ghana seem to be subject to a double whammy: first the Almoravids assail them, yet they seem to survive for a further century and more before finally succumbing to the Susu, customarily dated soon after 1200 AD.<sup>65</sup> Probably influenced by Ibn Khaldun, Cooley frequently applied dramatic terms to the final demise of Ghana: “...what were the revolutions, it may be asked, which caused Ghánah to disappear?” (43); “the extinction of Ghánah” (61), and so on. Such doomladen remarks, however, often refer more to the Susu conquest, than to the Almoravid conquest over a century earlier. Cooley himself clearly distinguished between these two events—the religious conquest by the Almoravids and the more political by the Susu—in his summary table:<sup>66</sup>

#### GHANAH

Compelled by the Morabites to relinquish Idolatry and embrace the Mohammedan faith	469	1076
Ruled by a descendant of Abú Taleb (i.e. one of the Zenágah nation)	548	1153
SUSU. Ghánah conquered by the Súsú. Tombuktú founded by Mansá Suleimán	610	1213
N.B. The title Ghánah superseded by that of Mansá.		

But the distinction is not always quite clear in his pages (see for example, page 138), and it is not surprising if some of his readers have misapplied remarks about the Susu to the earlier Almoravid period.

Two contemporary German texts show how scholars, looking at the available original sources, but uninfluenced by Ibn Khaldun and Cooley’s *Negroland*, could write about events of the eleventh-century Western Africa without mentioning either any Almoravid/Ghana confrontation, or any enforced conversion. In 1842 J. E. Wappäus mentioned the Almoravids and their conquests in the north, but he said nothing of their relationship with Ghana, save the conquest of Awdaghust, which he did not regard as the capital of Ghana.<sup>67</sup> In 1853 Friedrich Kunstmann, citing *al-Hulal* as quoted in Quatremère’s note to al-Bakri, said merely that the conversion of Ghana—from Christianity—occurred in 1075; he made no mention of forced conversion or conquest of Ghana by the Almoravids.<sup>68</sup>

## IV

The next step in the textual genealogy of the conquest hypothesis was important in terms of availability, rather than of the introduction of new source material. Cooley had used Ibn Khaldun in Arabic manuscript.<sup>69</sup> A partial Arabic edition of the *Kitab al-'Ibar*, Ibn Khaldun's universal history, was prepared by Baron William MacGuckin de Slane, a well-known French Arabist, and published in two volumes in Algiers, in 1263-67/1847-51. A complete Arabic edition of the *Kitab al-'Ibar* appeared in 1284/1867 in seven volumes (Bulaq/Cairo), but de Slane had already made all the material relevant for Almoravid/Ghana affairs easily available to western scholars, and in a printed text much more clearly legible, and in many respects more reliable, than the Bulaq edition.

In 1852-56, immediately after the completion of his Arabic volumes, de Slane published a French translation of these, *Histoire des berbères et des dynasties musulmanes de l'Afrique septentrionale* (4 volumes, Paris).<sup>70</sup> De Slane's rendering of the celebrated passage concerning the veiled people and Ghana corresponds in general with Cooley's, with one significant exception: de Slane says that this people "étendit sa domination sur les Noirs, *dévastata* leur territoire et pillá leurs propriétés" ("extended their domination over the blacks, *devastated* their territory and pillaged their property").<sup>71</sup> De Slane's Arabic, however, has the veiled people pillaging the property and the territory of the blacks. We do not know what made de Slane add devastation in his translation, since it does not exist in his Arabic version, or in the Bulaq edition.<sup>72</sup> Nevertheless, given the prestige and popularity of de Slane's French edition, his "devastation" became an important contributory factor to the development of the "conquest hypothesis" in West African historiography.

After Cooley and de Slane, Heinrich Barth continued the task of unveiling early West African history.<sup>73</sup> The famous German explorer's magisterial *Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa...in the years 1849-1855* appeared in three editions between 1857 and 1859.<sup>74</sup> Barth's work deals mainly with his own adventures and observations, but there is also a large chronological table of the history of western Sudan, reaching from 300 AD to Barth's own time. Concerning the history of Ghana Barth wrote:

A.D. 1076. A.H. 469. Ghanáta conquered by the Senhája, and great part of the inhabitants, as well as the neighbouring districts of Negroland, compelled by the Mérabetin to embrace the Mohammedan faith.

A'bú Bakr ben 'Omar takes up his residence in this part of Negroland.<sup>75</sup>

Barth's interpretation of the Almoravid/Ghana relationship hardly carries the substance of Cooley's original argument much further, but does change the mood. Cooley seemed comfortable enough with a violent Almoravid assault on Ghana when transferring al-Bakri's details about the sack of Awdaghust

over to the capital of Ghana, yet at other times, when discussing specifically the conversion of Ghana in 469/1076-77 to Islam, he seemed to hesitate, perhaps worried (consciously or unconsciously) by the fact that both *al-Hulal* and Mármol, his sole sources for the conversion, do not mention any force at all. In fact, Cooley remarks that “[t]he kingdom of Ghánah remained little changed by the loss of its independence,” and he nowhere claimed that the Almoravids displaced the native rulers of Ghana.<sup>76</sup>

Barth, however, tightened all this up, with a clear affirmation of simultaneous conquest and conversion, though the heightened devastation introduced by de Slane is still missing. This is perhaps because Barth, like Cooley, was able to read Ibn Khaldun’s *Kitab al-ʿIbar* in Arabic.<sup>77</sup> There, as noted, the destructive element is muted, and not precisely targeted on Ghana in particular, even though Barth’s many references to de Slane’s translation indicate that this too was well known to the German traveler.<sup>78</sup>

But how widely noticed was Barth’s comment? On the one hand, it is very short and tucked away among the numerous meteorological and ethnographical appendices which are attached at the end of each of the five volumes. But on the other, the three complete versions published simultaneously in the period 1857-59 in Britain, Germany, and the United States made his material unusually widely available.<sup>79</sup> Moreover, his worldwide reputation meant that he enjoyed considerable authority among later western Africanists.<sup>80</sup>

The next step was taken also in the better availability of sources. Ibn Abi Zarʿ had been one of the first relevant sources (for the conquest hypothesis) to be translated into European languages—first into Portuguese, and later into Latin by C. J. Tornberg, who published his scholarly edition with the Arabic text in 1843-46, just too late for Cooley to use.<sup>81</sup> The crucial turning point for Ibn Abi Zarʿ as a high-profile source among European Africanists, however, came in 1860 with the appearance of the A. Beaumier’s French translation, *Roudh el-kartas: histoire des souverains du Maghreb*. The earlier editions had seemingly been quite inaccessible to most scholars, but Beaumier’s translation soon spread widely, and began to be used as the leading source for Almoravid history alongside de Slane’s French edition of Ibn Khaldun.

Ernest Mercier, for example, faithfully repeated the descriptions of Ibn Abi Zarʿ and Ibn Khaldun, together with additional material derived from al-Bakri and Ibn al-Athir, in his articles on the Almoravids and Almohads, published in *Revue Africaine*, in 1868/69.<sup>82</sup> Or almost faithfully, for Mercier repeated—without reference to Cooley—the implication that Awdaghust on the eve of the Almoravid conquest was still the capital of Ghana.<sup>83</sup> Mercier also intensified the violence: for Cooley and Barth, the Ghanaian converts were not the survivors of a massacre.

Mercier, manifestly building, and embroidering, on al-Bakri—and evidently influenced here by de Slane’s translation of Ibn Khaldun<sup>84</sup>—described how, after the conquest of Sijilmasa,

the Almoravids, who seemed to have interrupted their conquests in the rich areas of the north, returned to the south and went to attack the land of the Negroes, which was called in those times by the name R'ana.<sup>85</sup> They conquered this country easily, and entered victoriously into Aoudar'ast, a flourishing city and capital of the country and a residence of the ruler who was also called R'ana by the inhabitants. The victors destroyed and pillaged the peaceful population, and these acts of violence were legalized, in their eyes, by the idolatry of the vanquished; they massacred the men, violated the women, and took a considerable booty which they carried into their country.<sup>86</sup>

At first Mercier's highlighting of violent destruction was not widely adopted. Most works dealing with Almoravid history merely repeated the superficial descriptions of Ibn Abi Zar' and Ibn Khaldun concerning the withdrawal of *amir* Abu Bakr to the desert after he had surrendered the leadership of the movement in the north to his cousin Yusuf b. Tashfin. Abu Bakr is only said to have conquered large parts of the Land of the Blacks, without any specific mention of Ghana.<sup>87</sup> Even Mercier himself, in his later work, *Histoire de l'Afrique septentrionale*, published in 1888, omitted the name Ghana, referring only to a part of "Nigritie" having Awdaghost as its capital, although there is still a hint of the destruction:

[After the conquest of Sijilmasa] the Almoravids set off to destroy the lands of the extreme south where lived rich and harmless Negro peoples; the religion gave the pretext for their violence. They brought under their rule that part of Nigritie, the capital of which was a great city called Aoudaghost, and settled the Berber race on the upper Senegal.<sup>88</sup>

Also in 1888, René Basset, a well-known French orientalist, published a brief article on the history of the Sudanese empires.<sup>89</sup> This did not actually contain much new information, but Basset was highly influential in the contemporary development of broader contextual ideas, for example, concerning relations between Muslim white pastoralists and animist black sedentaries. Basset, who took the idea of conquest directly from Cooley and from the French translations of Ibn Abi Zar' and Ibn Khaldun, did not actually mention the year 1076, except in a footnote.<sup>90</sup> Just the same, through his authority the concept of forced conversion (and conquest) of Ghana became rooted in the French literature.<sup>91</sup>

The conquest was repeated more clearly, with the year 1076, by Louis Binger in 1892. Binger cited al-Bakri as the principal source for the conquest: "El-Békri added that after this conquest [of Ghana] a great part of the population was forced to embrace Islam by the Merabétin, as well as many of the neighboring areas."<sup>92</sup> In fact Binger's work is full of similarly mysterious claims: he says, for example, that al-Bakri wrote in either 1153 or 1203-04—or even 1607!<sup>93</sup> All this suggests that he had hardly seen all his Arabic sources himself, even as translations, deriving his ideas mostly from previous

writers—chiefly from Basset, but also from Cooley and Barth.<sup>94</sup> Binger, however, had great influence because his book was widely read in France.<sup>95</sup>

Yet a third influential analyst was Alfred Le Chatelier, whose *L'Islam dans l'Afrique occidentale* was published in 1899 as a revised edition of a text written in 1888. Le Chatelier had an unusually broad perspective of the extent of Almoravid conquests: Abu Bakr b. 'Umar, continuing the task undertaken earlier by the Berber race, reconquered the Songhai of Ghana,<sup>96</sup> and at his death in 480/1087 all the countries bordering the Senegal and the Niger to the north were to be found under the yoke of the Lamtuna. In addition to Ghana, they occupied the states of Djenné, Zanfra, Zegzeg, Ouangara, and all of Nigritie as far as Gogo, where the Songhai succeeded in remaining independent.<sup>97</sup> Le Chatelier did not, however, mention the conversion of Ghana in 469/1076-77, neither is his conquest explicitly destructive in the same sense as Mercier, in his 1868-69 articles.

Even in the early twentieth century Mercier's fire and sword had not completely caught on. Flora B. Shaw (Lady Lugard), published her *A Tropical Dependency: an Outline of the Ancient History of the Western Soudan With an Account of the Modern Settlement of Northern Nigeria*, a remarkable achievement at that time, and still readable today though gravely dated. She was certainly an adherent of the conquest hypothesis, but in her view this was evidently not a destructive affair, nor did it seem explicitly linked with the conversion of Ghana. "In 1076," she wrote,

he [Abu Bakr] carried the vengeance of Audoghost to the gates of Ghana, and, overthrowing the reigning black dynasty, placed a Berber on the throne. The life of the country does not seem to have been profoundly affected at the time by this revolution. El Idrisi, writing nearly a hundred years later, still speaks of it as being the greatest kingdom of the blacks. He mentions the fact that it is ruled by a king of Berber descent, who "governs by his own authority, but gives allegiance to the Abbasside Sultan of Egypt," and that the king and people are now Mohammedans; but he does not speak of it as having become in any respect a Berber kingdom.<sup>98</sup>

All these and other sources suggest that the articles of Mercier were not widely noticed, and the idea of the Almoravid conquest of Ghana was still derived from Cooley and Barth, with an additional flavor of violence from de Slane.<sup>99</sup>

The crucial turning point, the full flowering of the conquest hypothesis as a thoroughly destructive event, came finally in 1912, when Maurice Delafosse published his *Haut-Sénégal-Niger*.<sup>100</sup> Delafosse, who was a great compiler rather than an original researcher, finally cemented the history of ancient Ghana: his chronology became (and to a considerable extent still remains) accepted, as well as his idea of the Sudanese empires as nation-states, succeeding each other in hegemony, with fixed capitals and boundaries.<sup>101</sup> And his circumstantial account of the Almoravid conquest acquired almost canonical status. "The conquest," he wrote,

seems to have been complete: not only did the Almoravids take the city, pillage the goods of the inhabitants, massacre a part of the Soninke population, forcing the rest either to flee or to embrace the Muslim religion, but they obliged the emperor to recognise the suzerainty of Abu Bakr and to pay him tribute, and they annexed to their political domain all the dependencies of Ghana, as far as and including the auriferous mountains of Bambuk.<sup>102</sup>

What was Delafosse's evidence for this claim? This passage has no footnote, and thus it is difficult to trace exactly Delafosse's sources, but the frames for this picture were certainly, again, the all too familiar accounts of Ibn Abi Zar<sup>c</sup> and Ibn Khaldun. According to his bibliography, Delafosse also knew all the previous European works where the conquest hypothesis appears: Cooley, Barth, Basset, Mercier of 1888 (and probably his articles of 1868-69 as well), Binger, and Tautain.<sup>103</sup>

The scenario Delafosse described ruled virtually unchallenged in West African historiography for half a century. In 1962, J. S. Trimingham, a prolific and encyclopedic scholar of Islam in black Africa, who did a great deal to lay the foundations of serious western study in this field, offered the following description:

The energies of the Murabit movement were directed primarily towards the north and it was only when Abu Bakr b. <sup>c</sup>Umar returned to the southern desert in 1062 that, in order to absorb the restless tribesmen, he directed their energies against the Negro kingdom. Even so a long struggle ensued before the Soninke capital was finally captured in 469/1076-7. Many of its people were massacred and those who survived were forced to join Islam. We do not know<sup>104</sup> whether the king was left on the throne, but it seems clear that his widespread empire broke up and its constituent chieftaincies gained their independence... The fortunes of the Murabitun quickly declined through tribal rivalries, Abu Bakr was killed in 1087, and the whole organization of the desert tribes collapsed.<sup>105</sup>

Two books published at almost exactly the same time as *Haut-Sénégal-Niger* help to illustrate this historiographical progress. The first appeared in 1911, *Chroniques de la Mauritanie sénégalaise: Nacer Eddine*, by Ismaël Hamet, himself a western Saharan Muslim. His work, devoted to the Islamic history of the area, included considerable historical material in Arabic, and Mauritanian oral tradition concerning Abu Bakr b. <sup>c</sup>Umar.<sup>106</sup> He did not mention, however, any explicit Almoravid conquest of Ghana in 1076: nor, if we are right in arguing that the conquest hypothesis was an European invention, is there any reason why he should have. Hamet merely said that the Almoravid empire reached from the Senegal river to Andalusia,<sup>107</sup> that Abu Bakr fought against the blacks,<sup>108</sup> and that the Almoravids took Awdaghust "and brought the kings of Ghanata under their law. Some years afterwards, following their success, the Lemtouna took by force the country and spread Islam into Nigritie, beyond the great rivers."<sup>109</sup>



In 1913, the second edition of T. W. Arnold's *The Preaching of Islam: a History of the Propagation of the Muslim Faith*, appeared. The first edition, published in 1896, had in this connection briefly drawn on Leo Africanus:

The reign of Yusuf Ibn Tashfin, the founder of Morocco (1062 A.D.) and the second Amir of the Almoravide dynasty, was very fruitful in conversions and many Negroes under his rule came to know of the doctrines of Muhammad. Two Berber tribes, the Lamtuna and the Jodala, whose habitat bordered on and partly extended into the Sudan, especially distinguished themselves by their religious zeal in the work of conversion.<sup>110</sup>

The second edition preserved this sentence, but adds a new one following:

In 1076 the Berbers who had been spreading Islam in the kingdom of Ghana for some time, drove out the reigning dynasty, which was probably Fulbe, and this ancient kingdom became throughout Muhammadan; at the beginning of the thirteenth century it lost its independence and was conquered by Mandingoes.<sup>111</sup>

So much for the precise historiographical genealogy, which may be briefly summarized thus. In 1841 Cooley, piecing together fragmentary evidence, enlivened by the misapplication of al-Bakri's Awdaghust to the Ghanaian capital, presented rather tentatively a conquest hypothesis. With Barth and others, this became more firmly accepted; Mercier, encouraged by the translation of de Slane (and independently repeating Cooley's Awdaghust/Ghana confusion), added a destructive element to the conquest hypothesis. For some years the destructive element fails to catch on, but in 1912 Delafosse won almost universal acceptance for it, and it reigned undisputed for another fifty years. This is our main argument, but there is also another, more contextual and hidden, strand in the development of the conquest hypothesis, and to this we must now turn, though very much more briefly.

## V

Earlier, in the context of Francis Moore and Mungo Park, we suggested that before the history of the Sudanese empires was properly uncovered, there existed among early European Africanists a widespread—although often vague—idea of Muslim conquest in the West African interior, inspired by Leo Africanus. However, this idea received more importance at the end of the nineteenth century, as Europeans' attitudes towards Africa and Africans changed. The age of colonialism introduced many new elements to the historiography of Africa, originating not from the actual sources, but from various presuppositions, some of them racist, which so long distorted many aspects of the European encounter with other cultures.

One of the first signs of these ideological changes—at least in relation to our topic—was the worsening image of the Almoravids in European historiography after the mid-nineteenth century. One reason for this was that

the Almoravids began to be widely identified with Tuaregs.<sup>112</sup> This seemed plausible, inasmuch as in the Arabic sources the Almoravids are often called the "veiled ones," *al-mulaththamun*,<sup>113</sup> and the use of the *tagulmust*-veil is an important part of Tuareg culture.<sup>114</sup> Consequently the Almoravids inherited all the vices of the Saharan nomads, who had an utterly negative image in European eyes.

Mungo Park had already reported that the "Moors"—referring here to the Mauritanian nomads in general—were "at once the vainest and proudest, and perhaps the most bigotted, ferocious, and intolerant, of all the nations on earth; combining in their character the blind superstition of the Negro, with the savage cruelty and treachery of the Arab."<sup>115</sup> Furthermore, the murders of European travelers in the Sahara—Daniel Houghton in 1791, Gordon Laing in 1826, Alexine Tinne in 1869, and the massacre of the Flatters expedition in 1881—reinforced the notion that the Saharan nomads considered it to be "as lawful to murder a European as it would be to kill a dog."<sup>116</sup> There were some travelers, like Henri Duveyrier, who tried to dispel the European mistrust of the Tuaregs, but these attempts were fruitless.<sup>117</sup> On the other hand, the Tuaregs were also respected as brave and dangerous warriors, capable of causing considerable losses to the French army in the Sahara.<sup>118</sup>

Transferred into historiography, this concept meant that the Almoravids of the past appeared quite as intolerant and aggressive as the Tuaregs of the present. In the works of Cooley and Barth this idea is not yet so visible, but it was manifested, especially by Reinhard Dozy in his classic work, *Histoire des Musulmans d'Espagne*, published in 1861. According to Dozy, the Almoravid period had meant a severe regression for the prosperous culture of Andalusia, and many scholars followed him in this dismissive judgment.<sup>119</sup> In 1917, for example, the Finnish Orientalist Knut Tallqvist described Almoravid rule in Andalusia thus:

The Berber rule was a serious setback for the Arab culture of Islamic Spain. Compared to the sophisticated Arabs of Spain, the African Berbers were half-barbarians, and though they had adopted Islam, they felt no sympathy towards their Arab coreligionists. It was, therefore, natural that the Arabo-Spanish civilization was not favoured and supported by the Almoravids.<sup>120</sup>

Taking this stance, it was more than reasonable to suppose that the Almoravid influence had been equally disastrous on the southern edge of the desert, too, just as de Slane's translation of *Kitab al-Ibar* had suggested.

On the other hand, the position of Saharan nomads was elevated by the increasingly popular idea of racial hierarchy in European thought. After the elaboration of the Hamitic hypothesis at the turn of the century, the Saharan nomads were counted among those advanced African peoples who had traces of civilizing "white" blood in their veins, being thus superior to the blacks.<sup>121</sup> According to Le Chatelier, for example, the blacks of the Western Sudan owed their progress to contacts with the neighboring Berber race, "more elevated in the normal order of development of humanity."<sup>122</sup> The Almoravid conquest of

Ghana fit well into this picture, according to which all cultural progress in sub-Saharan Africa had taken place after waves of conquest and cultural influence from the north: by Egyptians, Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, Berbers, Arabs, and finally by Europeans.<sup>123</sup> It is hardly sheer coincidence that the more destructive and complete the Almoravid conquest of Ghana became in western literature, the more fantastic the ideas the same writers had on the origins of Ghana. According to Delafosse, for example, Ghana was founded by Jews who had escaped from Roman revenge in Cyrenaica after their unsuccessful revolt in 116 AD.<sup>124</sup>

Another equally widespread assumption (as the brutality and bellicosity of the Almoravids) among the early nineteenth-century writers was that actual power in the Sahel rests primarily with the nomads.<sup>125</sup> As Mungo Park had affirmed in 1799:

The enterprising boldness of the Moors, their knowledge of the country, and, above all, the superior fleetness of their horses, make them such formidable enemies, that the petty Negro states which border upon the Desert are in continual terror while the Moorish tribes are in the vicinity and are too much awed to think of resistance.<sup>126</sup>

René Caillié's description of the situation around Timbuktu some thirty years later was no better:

The Tooriks have terrified the Negroes of their neighbourhood into subjection, and they inflict upon them the most cruel depredations and exactions. Like the Arabs, they have fine horses which facilitate their marauding expeditions. The people exposed to their attacks stand in such awe of them, that the appearance of three or four Tooriks is sufficient to strike terror into five or six villages.<sup>127</sup>

Besides European travel literature,<sup>128</sup> positive evidence for nomadic superiority was gained from the Arabic sources which stressed the warlike nature of the nomadic peoples.<sup>129</sup> Evidence of the opposite imbalance, with nomads dependent on, or subordinate to, their settled neighbours, was not emphasized by early western authors, but it was certainly not absent, surfacing from time to time.<sup>130</sup>

Nevertheless, later writers went even further in stressing this confrontation. René Basset, for example, saw the entire history of Western Sudan as a continuous struggle between Muslim "white" pastoralists and pagan "black" sedentaries.<sup>131</sup> This view was shared by other French writers.<sup>132</sup> Historiographically this idea meant that the Sudanese empires had been equally helpless against the Muslim invaders from the north, as the Almoravid conquest of Ghana in 1076 (in imagination), and the Moroccan attack on Songhay in 1591 (in reality), proved. Furthermore, emphasizing the historical and cultural passivity of the black Africans gave Europeans a moral justification for their own colonial conquests.<sup>133</sup>

The third element coming from outside the sources was the image of Islam in European thought. In this respect, western attitudes were again very ambivalent. On the one hand Islam, and especially what appeared as Islamic fanaticism, was seen as a barbarous and backward force preventing all modern development—often tantamount to Europeanization—in Asia and Africa.<sup>134</sup> Such a view seemed demonstrated by experiences in European colonies, like the so-called Indian mutiny (as the British called it) in 1857-58 which was attributed to Muslim conspiracy, the revolts in Algeria, and the strengthening in the Sahara of the Sanusiyya brotherhood which was believed to be extremely hostile to westerners.<sup>135</sup> In Western Africa Islamic fanaticism was associated with the contemporary *jihad* movements which the French believed were opposed especially to their advance in Senegambia and Upper Niger.<sup>136</sup>

From this point of view the conquest (and destruction) of Ghana by cruel Almoravids could be seen as an historical example of the negative impact of Islamic fanaticism, justifying European "protection" in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>137</sup> The French believed that part of their mission in Western Africa was to save the local black population from Muslim slavery and oppression: for instance, on the Upper Niger they deliberately sought the assistance of the animist Bambara in their fight against Ahmadu of Segou and Samory.<sup>138</sup> We should also notice that historiography had an important role in late nineteenth-century France in raising the national spirit, and the enemies of France, whether they were fanatic *toucouleurs* or bloodthirsty *boches*, could not expect to receive much sympathy from the pens of French writers.<sup>139</sup>

On the other hand Islam was seen also as a positive force in African history. In "darkest" Africa Islam was believed to work as a kind of kindergarten training blacks to receive the blessings of European civilisation.<sup>140</sup> This idea, which strengthened especially in the early twentieth century, after the active colonial conquest was over in Western Africa, was logical, for Islam is, after all, more understandable in European eyes than what passed for African animism.<sup>141</sup> Thus conversion to Islam meant a step up on the ladder of progress: from oracy to literacy, from superstition to monotheism. In this context, the Almoravid conquest of Ghana could be seen as a civilizing act, painful but necessary, giving birth to the sophisticated Islamic civilization in Western Sudan which was admired by men like Delafosse and many other French colonial administrators.<sup>142</sup>

But how do all these diverse and sometimes contradictory points of view contribute towards the development of the conquest hypothesis? In fact they provided the context in which early European Africanists worked. We should remember that all historians—including ourselves—are bound to their own society and its values which guide their work, sometimes consciously and sometimes without their noticing.<sup>143</sup> In order to recognize these values, we need to deconstruct the textual and ideological environment in which the earlier writers worked, regardless of whether they were fourteenth-century or sixteenth-century Muslim writers or nineteenth-century Europeans. One reason for the invention and popularity of the conquest hypothesis is certainly that

the ideological atmosphere in early twentieth-century Europe favored such explanations in African history.

On the other hand, the gradual and hidden infiltration of the various ideological elements—the identification of Almoravids with Tuaregs, the belief in nomadic superiority, racism, and the ambivalent image of Islam—into the body of research was possible because of the methodological decline of African historiography during the colonial period. The widely-accepted concept that Africa had no history of its own did not mean that interest in the African past completely ceased; it meant that African historiography was dominated, not by academic scholars (such as Cooley and Barth), but by ethnographers, self-taught amateurs, and colonial officers who often worked without any training for proper historical research and were thus more open to the ideological tendencies of their own age, and whose purpose was, after all, to serve the interests of colonial rule.<sup>144</sup>

## VI

In the foregoing discussion, we have tried to probe the origins of some of the strands which would be gradually woven into the conquest hypothesis. Some of those origins were tainted by presupposition and prejudice. But that is not at all to imply that those who later accepted, and passed on, the conquest hypothesis were aware of such suspect, half-observed, origins. Far less still that they shared in the ideological orientation of some of those origins. For those who have remained loyal to the hypothesis, even for those who helped in the protracted business of building it up, it was credible, well-recommended historiography, not at all a mythology embodying a subtle and subversive hidden agenda. Only later, and initially hesitantly, did reservations emerge.

The first modern scholar to express any doubt about the historicity of the conquest hypothesis was Paul Semonin.<sup>145</sup> It is again hardly sheer coincidence that criticism of the conquest hypothesis started only in the early 1960s. The primary stimulus for Semonin was indeed the finding of a new source for the Almoravid history, Ibn 'Idhari.<sup>146</sup> As is so often the case, this required scholars to reconsider some of their earlier conceptions, in this case concerning the chronology of Almoravid history, for example the founding of Marrakesh.<sup>147</sup>

But the early 1960s also meant great ideological changes in African historiography in general, as decolonization forced Europeans to change their attitudes towards Africans. The old undervaluation was no longer acceptable, nor was the idea that all progress and change in the African past had been caused by northern invaders.<sup>148</sup> And, finally, we should not forget contemporary methodological development, as African historiography became a respected academic discipline not only in the former metropolitan countries, but also in the former colonies, which were eager to create for themselves an historical identity.

Semonin did not go so far in his criticism as to deny that any conquest of Ghana had occurred, but he did noticeably reduce its importance. Noting that

“there has been a lack of critical attention to the problems presented by the source material,” he concluded:

The Sack of Ghana is so poorly documented that it is questionable what precedents it may have set, or what real impact it may have had, beyond that of a calamitous but momentary disturbance in the Sahil with limited resources for a continuing influence upon the Islamization of the area.<sup>149</sup>

The next doubter was Paulo Fernando de Moraes Farias, who spoke of the “supposed destruction” of the power and capital of Ghana by Abu Bakr b. ‘Umar, adding that “it is well known that the date of the Almoravid ‘victory’ over Ghâna is poorly documented.”<sup>150</sup> Some years later two scholars expressed their doubts. Jean Devisse noted “the futility of pursuing the question of Ghana’s conquest given the doubtful historicity of the evidence.”<sup>151</sup> In turn Harry Norris expressed his misgivings by referring to Abu Bakr’s disappearance from history (apart from his very briefly reported death) after his retirement to the desert.<sup>152</sup>

All these comments on the inadequate documentation of the alleged conquest indicate that European scholars had gradually began to notice the methodological weaknesses of the conquest hypothesis. Yet they did not dare to challenge the entire tradition; monuments like *Haut-Sénégal-Niger* do not lose their authority overnight.

In 1974, in an article far too little known, Mahamadou Coulibaly was perhaps the first scholar to attempt an inclusive study of the conquest hypothesis.<sup>153</sup> He began by emphasizing, quite rightly, that al-Zuhri—the source for the conversion of Ghana in 1076—made no reference to any military victory. There is no evidence for the destruction of Ghana, its dismemberment, or any substantive political or military domination of Ghana by Muslim proselytes.<sup>154</sup> But Coulibaly was no root-and-branch enthusiast in his attack on the conquest thesis. He suggested that confusion may have arisen between Ghana as the name of a country, and Ghana the name of the capital city.<sup>155</sup> He also accepted the existence of an original Almoravid *ribat* as a physical building, while at the same time noticing that some modern scholars doubted this.<sup>156</sup> Like Semonin, Coulibaly attributed his difficulties in trying to define “l’attaque de Ghana” to the insufficiency of the sources, but he was certainly very dubious about the whole thing, and in his conclusion spoke of the myth of Almoravid conquest from Ghana to the gold-bearing areas of Bambuk and of an Almoravid empire stretching from Muslim Spain to the banks of the Senegal river.<sup>157</sup> Coulibaly also introduced a new element into the discussion by using the results of the archeological excavations in Tegdaoust (the putative site of Awdaghust) and Kumbi Saleh (the putative site of Ghana) as arguments against the conquest. He correctly pointed out that no indisputable remains of Almoravid presence have been found at either site.<sup>158</sup>

In the same year Farias returned to the fray in a review article of Nehemia Levtzion’s *Ancient Ghana and Mali*.<sup>159</sup> Farias argued against the hypothesis in both general and specific terms. He pointed out that it is too much of an

oversimplification to think that the relationship between the sedentary Sudanese and the pastoral Berbers would have been constantly violent—as some of the fourteenth-century Arabic and nineteenth-century European sources suggested. Quite the contrary, he stressed the cooperative and symbiotic aspects of their relationship.<sup>160</sup> More specifically, Farias rejected Levtzion's interpretation of the Wagadu legend in oral tradition, with its killing of the sacred snake. This killing might appear to correspond all too well with the idea of a bloody Almoravid conquest of Ghana, the snake myth thus being automatically and rashly treated as actual historical evidence.<sup>161</sup> But, said Farias, "the interpretation of the mythical killing as a dramatic representation of an event is not easy to accept."<sup>162</sup>

In the case of the Almoravids and Ghana, this meant that Farias—like Semonin before him—rejected the idea of the destruction of Ghana by the Almoravids in 1076, as manifested by Delafosse. Instead of conquest, Farias preferred to use the term "influence."<sup>163</sup> John Hunwick pursued this line, arguing that the Almoravids did not actually conquer Ghana, but had great influence on its affairs, helping a Muslim faction of the ruling house rise to power.<sup>164</sup>

This idea had been introduced in 1970 by Jean Devisse, who speculated that the relationship between the new ruler of Ghana and the Muslim population might have changed for the worse after the death in 455/1063 of Basi who had been famous for his friendship with Muslims, eventually causing an Almoravid intervention.<sup>165</sup> Similar thoughts have been expressed also by Daniel F. McCall and Dierk Lange.<sup>166</sup> All this suggests that several scholars were prepared to give up the Delafossean conquest hypothesis, which they realized was indefensible—or at least weak and all but undocumented—and the formulation of the "influence hypothesis" was an attempt to give a more reasonable answer to the question: why did the ruler and people of Ghana adopt Islam in 1076?

There seems to us little reason to believe that the Almoravids exercised any kind of determining political influence over Ghana, be it by force or by insinuation. The story of a forceful intervention originated (though it was subsequently much embroidered and enlarged) from the unreliable, for Ghanaian affairs, Arabic chronicles of the fourteenth century and their modern interpretation in colonial historiography. Remove the element of force, and we are left with no reliable peaceful alternative: our sources, even after we have excised the use of force, remain as reliable, or unreliable, as they were before. Furthermore, the hypothesis of Almoravid "influence" or Almoravid support for some kind of Ghanaian *coup-d'état* is linked to the existence of a strong Almoravid "southern wing" led by Abu Bakr after the division of the movement in early 1070s. There is, however, little evidence for this: Ibn 'Idhari and other sources mentioned Abu Bakr's return to the desert and his death there, but with very little additional detail indeed.<sup>167</sup> In fact, the idea of "a southern wing" may itself be understood as a by-product of the conquest hypothesis, the historicity of which requires the presence of a considerable Almoravid force in the south.<sup>168</sup>

The reconsideration of the conquest theory received its most radical expression in 1982/83 in a pair of articles by Humphrey J. Fisher and David C. Conrad.<sup>169</sup> They build a rather complex argument on a relatively basic premise: given that Ghana is by far the most often cited name in Arabic writing about western Africa from the beginning to *ca.* 1500; given that the Almoravids were also a popular topic in this writing, and that often both Ghana and the Almoravids are mentioned by the same author; and given that, despite this interest—sustained over centuries—there is nowhere even a single direct reference to any such destructive conquest of Ghana by the Almoravids as described in the western historiography on Africa, then the logical conclusion seems clearly to be that no such cataclysmic event occurred: in short, “there was no Almoravid conquest of ancient Ghana.”<sup>170</sup>

Reaction to this anti-conquest argument has, predictably, been mixed.<sup>171</sup> There was no serious attempt to defend the conquest hypothesis in the 1980s, but the issue resurfaced with Sheryl Burkhalter’s article.<sup>172</sup> Burkhalter strongly criticizes Conrad and Fisher, particularly for ignoring the contexts in which the Almoravids and Ghana are mentioned in the Arabic sources.<sup>173</sup> A little surprisingly, Burkhalter nowhere affirms that the conquest actually took place. On the contrary, her phrasing seems sometimes quite compatible with the anti-conquest case as presented by Conrad and Fisher: for instance, she speaks of “more traditional interpretations of Almoravid history” and of “conventional wisdom concerning an Almoravid ‘victory’ over Ghana.”<sup>174</sup> Her principal objection to Conrad and Fisher seems to be methodological—the problem of individually contextualizing all the dozens of sources which might be expected to mention the conquest, but do not—with some additional condemnation of Conrad and Fisher’s suggestions, very subsidiary in the context of their article, about what might actually have been happening between Ghana and the Almoravids if we eliminate the idea of a conquest. Nevertheless, it seems that in the most recent histories of Africa the sceptical attitude towards the conquest and destruction of Ghana by Almoravids has achieved a permanent foothold.<sup>175</sup>

## VII

One of our principal reasons for surveying in such detail the gradual process of osmosis by which first the conquest hypothesis, and later the criticism of it, have become established in West African historiography was to test the extent to which these changes have been a response to changing ideological conditions in European thought. We have described in this paper important periods of historiographical transformation which were more or less, we have suggested, ideologically inspired. First there was the Moroccan interpretation of Almoravid history, embedded within Arab and Berber attitudes towards the blacks; both this interpretation and the attitudes were carried over to the Renaissance European literature of Africa. Later there were Europeans’ own experiences in early nineteenth-century Africa, which also affected their conceptions of African past. And finally there was the rise of a new science,



and a new philosophy to go with it in Europe itself towards the end of the same century, contributing to the new politics of colonialism in Africa, and stimulating changes to the historical record of Almoravid days in particular, calling up the conquest of Ghana as part of this.

Has the same sort of thing—a radical shift in politics and ideology, and a radical shift in historical understanding to go with it—been happening since the 1960s, with the new demands which decolonization makes on European scholars, forcing them to take up a more conciliatory attitude towards Africans and their past? Is one reason for the increasingly positive reception given to the anti-conquest hypothesis simply that it corresponds better with current ideological tendencies both in European thought and in the historiography of Africa than does the earlier idea of destruction?

It is, we confess, very hard to accept that the changed perception, in the specific cases with which we are concerned (was there an Almoravid conquest of Ghana? and if not, where did the notion come from?), is merely a result of evolving ideology. We believe rather that it is an expression of the methodological progress which has greatly accelerated in the historiography of Africa from the early 1960s, and which is now leading to a new situation in African historical research, with emancipation from the burden of colonial tradition. What is needed is to re-examine early West African history from the very beginning, not by picking out only such evidence as corresponds with the beliefs we have inherited from earlier researchers and which we consider justified as such since it has been repeated for a century, or as corresponds with the attitudes of our time towards the African past; but by using *all* the sources we have available to us *now*, textual and otherwise, and by interpreting them without any fixed presuppositions. In this task, we must, if necessary, dare to challenge all the previous hypotheses, even if they have been sanctified by time and repetition.

In a short story entitled "One Hundred Views of Mount Fuji," the Japanese author Osamu Dazai contemplates his relation to this famous volcano which appears to him hopelessly vulgar. Yet he knows that most people, including westerners, are against his view. To them, Fuji is "wonderful,"

simply because they've heard so much about it and yearned so long to see it; but how much appeal would Fuji hold for one who's never been exposed to such popular propaganda, for one whose heart is simple and pure and free of preconceptions? It would, perhaps, strike that person as almost pathetic, as mountains go.<sup>176</sup>

Are we right in believing that this is what *we* have been, and are, doing in this paper? That we are those pure in heart and free of preconceptions? There seem to be at least three alternative answers. The first is the worst: no, we are not right, for we are as much at the beck and call of the ideological tide surging all around us as Leo Africanus and Maurice Delafosse were representatives of their own ages, and as someone in the future will demonstrate us to have been. The second is less somber, but still very sober: we are partly

right, inasmuch as we have done what we have could, forwarding the discovery of historical truth to the best of our ability, just as did earlier European Africanists of this century and the preceding one, and just as did the Arab Africanists of the fourteenth century, all of us making some progress, but still much more shackled by ideology and misunderstanding than we can possibly realize. The third is, quite likely, far too triumphalist: yes, we are right, and we, unlike our predecessors here or in Africa, have been able to strip away all the ideological veils, and to search for, and partly to see, what actually happened.

### Notes

1. The earliest version of this paper was presented in May 1994 to the African History Seminar at SOAS, and a more elaborated version in March 1995 to the International Conference on Mande Studies in Leiden. We are grateful to the participants in these two events for their comments, especially to Michael Brett, Paulo F. de Moraes Farias, Lansiné Kaba, Pertti Luntinen, Harry Norris, and Ed Van Hoven for their more extensive and very precious help. Surviving errors and eccentricities remain, of course, our own.
2. Daniel F. McCall, "Islamization of the Western and Central Sudan in the Eleventh Century," *Boston University Papers on Africa*, 5 (1971), 7; Carmen Navarro, "Los Almorávidas y la islamización de Bilad al-Sudan," *Studia Africana*, 4 (1993), 139-40. On effects of the alleged event see, for example, Nehemia Levtzion, *Ancient Ghana and Mali* (London, 1973), 45; and Joseph Ki-Zerbo, *Histoire de l'Afrique Noire d'hier à demain* (Paris, 1978), 117-8.
3. See Michael Doran, "The Maritime Provenience of Iron Technology in West Africa," *Terrae Incognitae*, 9 (1977), 89-98.
4. E. Gozalbes Cravioto, "Comercio y exploraciones del Sahara en la Antigüedad Clásica," *Estudios Africanos*, 12/13 (1993), 13-19; for an assertion for the Carthaginian sailings, see Werner Huss, "Die Antike Mittelmeerwelt und Innerafrika bis zum Ende der Herrschaft der Karthager und der Ptolemaier" in H. Durchhardt et al., eds., *Afrika. Entdeckung und Erforschung eines Kontinents* (Köln, 1989), 4.
5. On the origins of the *Periplus* see P. E. H. Hair, "The Periplus of Hanno in the History and Historiography of Black Africa," *HA*, 14 (1987), 43-66, and Gabriel Germain, "Qu'est-ce que le Périphe d'Hannon? Document, amplification littéraire ou faux intégral?" *Hespéris*, 44 (1957), 205-48.
6. See David Henige, "The Race is not Always to the Swift. Thoughts on the Use of Written Sources for the Study of Early African History," *Paideuma*, 33 (1987), 55: "A shockingly high proportion of work done on early African history between, say, 1955 and 1975, can now only be termed quaternary in that it was content to rely on secondary and tertiary accounts, because few [historians of tropical Africa] recognized the need to seek out primary sources at whatever cost and base their work on them."
7. We know only that Islam was spreading in Ghana by the time of Almoravids (1054-1147), which is confirmed by Arabic sources, like al-Bakri (writing ca. 1068), al-Zuhri (ca. 1137), al-Idrisi (1154), al-Sharishi (before 1222), and the anonymous authors of *Kitab al-Istibsar* (1191) and *al-Hulal al-mawshiyya* (1381). See the relevant passages in J. F. P. Hopkins and N. Levtzion, eds., *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources for West African History* (Cambridge, 1981), 79, 98, 109, 146, 153, 310. On the Arabic sources see also Dierk Lange, "The Almoravids and the Islamization of the Great States of West Africa," *Res Orientales*, 6 (1994), 65-67.
8. On Leo's life and travels see, for example, Raymond Mauny, "Note sur les 'grands voyages' de Léon L'Africain," *Hespéris*, 41 (1954), 379-94.
9. "Descrittione dell' Africa, et delle cose notabilis che iui sono, per Giouan Lioni Africano," in Giovanni Battista Ramusio, *Delle Navigationi et Viaggi* (3d ed.: Venice, 1563), I:ff. 1-95.

10. For bibliographical information about these various editions see Oumelbanine Zhiri, *L'Afrique au miroir de l'Europe: Fortunes de Jean Léon l'Africain à la Renaissance* (Geneva, 1991), 227-28.

11. See, for example, P-A. Latreille, *Recherches géographiques sur l'Afrique centrale, d'après les écrits d'Edrisi et de Léon L'Africain comparés avec les relations modernes* (Paris, 1824), 4.

12. Ramusio, *Navigazioni*, 1: f. 77. See also Leo Africanus, *The History and Description of Africa*, trans. J. Pory in 1600, ed. R. Brown (3 vols.: London, 1896), 3:819; Jean-Léon L'Africain, *Description de l'Afrique*, trans. A. Épaulard, ed. A. Épaulard, Th. Monod, H. Lhote, and R. Mauny (2 vols.: Paris, 1956), 2:461. Leo called Ghana "Cano," the name which he gives elsewhere to the city and kingdom of Kano in Hausaland (Ramusio, *Navigazioni*, 1: f. 79; Leo Africanus, *History*, 3:829-30; *Description*, 2:476). The respective contexts, the first with references to "il Bichri" [al-Bakri] and "el Meshudi" [al-Mas'udi] and the second to Casena [Katsina] and other landmarks in Hausaland, make clear that these two places are entirely different, though confusion between Ghana and Kano was widespread in western geographical literature well into the nineteenth century. See for example Latreille, *Recherches*, 4, 24; and Friedrich Stüwe, *Die Handelszüge der Araber unter den Abbassiden durch Afrika, Asien und Osteuropa* (Berlin, 1836), 101-02.

13. In Ramusio, *Navigazioni*, 1: f. 77: "Tutti adunque questi paesi sono habitati da huomini, che viuono à guisa di bestie, senza Re, senza Signore, senza republiche, & senza gouerno & costume alcuno, & appena sanno seminare il grano." For translations, see *History*, 3:819; *Description*, 2:461.

14. Ramusio, *Navigazioni*, 1: f. 5; *History*, 1:7; *Description*, 1:8. These names resemble the list of the principal Sanhaja tribes given by Ibn Khaldun: Gudala, Lamtuna, Masufa, Watzila, Targa, Zaghawa and Lamta: Hopkins/Levtzion, *Corpus*, 321, 327.

15. In Ramusio, *Navigazioni*, 1: f. 77: "Giuseppe Re & edificator di Marocco del popolo di Luntuna, & i cinque popoli di Libia dominarono questi Negri, & alloro insegnarono la legge di Macometto, & l'arte necessarie al viuere: et molti di loro si tecero Mahumettani." See also *History*, 3:820 ("These Negros were first subiect vnto king Ioseph... and afterward vnto the five nations of Libya..."); *Description*, 2:462 ("Joseph...et les cinq peuples de Libye dominèrent ces Noirs...").

16. Leo also, it seems, associates the conversion of Mali with the Almoravids (*Navigazioni*, 1: f. 78; *History*, 3:823; *Description*, 2:466). Much of this is highly implausible; al-Bakri, for instance, whom Leo himself cites, gives a circumstantial account of the first conversion of Mali by a Muslim trader, free from any Almoravid involvement. Or perhaps Leo confused Mali, which was widely called Takrur by the fourteenth-century North African writers, with that Takrur described by al-Bakri, which was a close ally of the Almoravids, though here too al-Bakri does not mention the Almoravids in connection with the initial conversion of Takrur (see Hopkins/Levtzion, *Corpus*, 73, 77, and Ibn Abi Zar<sup>c</sup> in *ibid.*, 239).

17. See Ibn Abi Zar<sup>c</sup>, Ibn Khaldun, and al-Maqrizi, in *ibid.*, 248, 331, 355.

18. On this attitude see Bernard Lewis, *Race and Color in Islam* (New York, 1971), 37-38.

19. The first and second volumes were printed in Granada in 1573; the third, which contains Mármol's principal description of sub-Saharan Africa, in Málaga in 1599. A French translation, *L'Afrique de Marmol*, by Nicholas Perrot d'Ablancourt, appeared in Paris, also in three volumes, in 1667. A modern Spanish reprint was published in Madrid in 1953.

20. Mármol mentioned several times, for instance, such Arabic writers as "el Moçaudi/Mucaudi" (al-Mas'udi), "el Behquer/Bubquer" (al-Bakri), "Ibni Alraqiq" ("an ancient African writer," Ibn al-Raqiq), "Abdul Malic" ("a Moroccan historian," Ibn 'Abd al-Malik al-Marrakushi?), and "Aben Gezar" ("an African geographer," Ibn Jubayr?). On the other hand, he mentioned Leo Africanus by name only once (see *Descripción*, 1: f.17; *Afrique*, 1:36). On Mármol's life see James T. Monroe, *Islam and the Arabs in Spanish Scholarship* (Leiden, 1970), 16-17.

21. This sentence is taken directly from Leo Africanus (see Ramusio, *Navigazioni*, 1:77; *History*, 3:819; *Description*, 2:461). "Cano" is clearly Ghana, whereas "Guequin" is

unrecognizable; yet it must be the same as Leo's "Guechet," which Épaulard et al. suggested refers to Awdaghust (*Description*, 2:461n1).

22. Mármol, *Descripción*, f. 21; *Afrique*, 3:57: "En la descripción que hazen el Mucaudi, y Bubquer, y Aben Gezar, y otros Geografos Africanos, solamente hazen mencion en la tierra de los negros de Guequín, y Cano, porque no deuieron tener tan particular noticia della, como se tiene agora. Todas las provincias que confinan con la Zaara, o cerca della son el día de oy Mahometanos, por que reynando los Almorauidas en Africa, y el pueblo de Lumtuna. Cerca de los trezientos y ochenta años de la Hixara, que fueron noucientos y ochenta y dos de Christo redemtor nuestro, vuo entre ellos muchos morabitos, y alcoranistas predicadores de la maldita seta de Mahoma, que la enseñaron a quella gente barbara, y los traxeron a su opinion. Y despues metiendose por la Etiopia entre aquellos pueblos negros Hagin hijo de Abdulmalic, en el año de quatrocientos y sessenta y nueue de la Hixara, les començo a enseñar sus ritos y ceremonias, y otro setaria, llamado Yahaya hijo de Ali Benbucar, acabo de conuertir todos los que caen en la riberá del río Niger, y cerca del, que..."

23. Mármol called Almoravids with their Spanish denomination "Almorauidas," whereas the "morabitos" were properly a sect established by "Mahamat Mohaydin," the last descendant of "Ali Hussein," son of Caliph 'Ali. Adherents of this sect resemble the Turkish "dermisios," or dervishes. According to Mármol, the Almoravids received their name because their founder and other leaders were morabitos (*Description*, 1: f. 59ff., 149; *Afrique*, I: 125ff., 282).

24. See Hopkins/Levtzion, *Corpus*, 310; *al-Hulal* is here quoting, not entirely accurately, from the *Kitab al-Jughrafiya* of al-Zuhri (see *ibid.*, 98).

25. Mármol, *Descripción*, 1: f. 45; *Afrique*, 1:96.

26. See *Description*, 1:149ff; *Afrique*, 1:283ff.

27. *Description*, 1:152; *Afrique*, 1:286. Mármol's source for this information was Abdul Malic, "choronista de Marruecos." Mármol's ignorance concerning early Almoravid history before the reign of Yusuf suggests that he did not actually know the text of al-Bakri well. Abu Texifien seems to be a fictitious character, which embraces all the Almoravid leaders who lived before Yusuf. In reality Abu Bakr b. 'Umar was not the father, but a cousin of Yusuf b. Tashfin.

28. *Description*, 3: f. 23; *Afrique*, 3: 62. The association of Almoravids with the Lamtuna is strong in Mármol: he called Yusuf b. Tashfin "el Rey Iuzef Lumtuna."

29. We should also notice that this information was published eight years after the actual Moroccan invasion of Timbuktu took place, yet we may only guess whether this event affected Mármol. There are no references to al-Mansur's campaign to the Western Sudan in Mármol, but it is not impossible that he had heard of it. There were Spaniards in Marrakesh when news of the victory arrived in June 1591, and they presumably passed the news to Spain. See H. de Castries, "La conquete du Soudan par El-Mansour (1591)," *Hespéris*, 3 (1923), 433-34.

30. *Description*, 3: f. 23; *Afrique*, 3:62: "Quando el Xerife Mahamet estaua en su prosperidad, comoidado de las ofertas de los pueblos de Libya, quiso yr a conquistar estos pueblos de negros, como lo auian hecho antiguamente los Lumtunas."

31. Nehemia Levtzion, "The Western Maghrib and Sudan" in *Cambridge History of Africa*, 3 (Cambridge, 1977), 400-01, 410-11.

32. According to Mármol, "el Xerife Mahamet" did send his troops to the south, but having encountered the "King of the Blacks," referring here to *Askiya* Ishaq I of Songhay, with his army of 300,000 warriors, the Moroccans decided to retreat without fighting (*Description*, 3: f 23; *Afrique*, 3:62).

33. On fourteenth-century Marinid historiography see Maya Shatzmiller, *L'Historiographie mérinide: Ibn Khaldun et ses contemporains* (Leiden, 1982).

34. See Abderrahman es-Sa'di, *Tarikh es-Soudan*, tr. O. Houdas (Paris 1898-1900; reprinted 1964 under UNESCO auspices), French tr., 163-64; Arabic text, 99-100. Yet the Moroccan ruler here referred to is "Mawlay Ahmad the Great," most likely meaning Ahmad al-Araj, whom his brother Muhammad al-Mahdi succeeded in 1544. Ahmad's counterpart was *Askiya* Ishaq I (1539-49), and their dispute was about the possession of Taghaza, an important salt mine in the western Sahara, then under Songhay control.

35. The Moroccans kept on demanding Taghaza after the unsuccessful attempt of Muhammad al-Mahdi. According to al-Sa'di, Sultan Mawlay Ahmad al-Mansur (1578-1603)

sent his troops to the south in 1584 to capture "all the cities which they meet on the banks of the River [Senegal] and elsewhere, and then continue their way into Timbuktu." But "it was God's will" that the Moroccan army perished in the desert. Later another expedition was sent, which eventually occupied Taghaza, but they had to return to Marrakesh in autumn 1585, since the oasis was abandoned. But here too, al-Sa'di mentioned no Almoravid pretext to justify this sneak raid. Neither did he mention such when he described the content of the documents which were sent to Askīya Ishaq II by Ahmad al-Mansur in late 1589, and in which the latter repeated his demand for the possession of Taghaza, "because he protects Songhay from Christian attacks" (although Ahmad al-Mansur's real aim was the subjugation of the entire Songhay empire). It is particularly interesting that al-Sa'di specifically emphasized that he had seen the originals of these documents himself. Had they contained any references to a previous Almoravid conquest to justify Ahmad al-Mansur's claims, it is quite reasonable to suppose that al-Sa'di would have mentioned it (see *ibid.*, French tr. 215-16; Arabic text, 137; also Levtzion, *Ancient Ghana*, 413).

36. Al-Sa'di knew *al-Hulal al-mawshīyya*, which he cited as a source for the history of the Sanhaja. Al-Sa'di said that they made holy war against the blacks, and he also mentioned *amir* Abu Bakr b. 'Umar by name, but he nowhere noted that the Almoravids had conquered the blacks, or even converted them to Islam in the year 469/1076-77 (French tr. 42-44; Arabic text 25-26); cf. *al-Hulal* in the Hopkins/Levtzion, *Corpus*, 310-11, 313-14.

37. For the date of composition see J. O. Hunwick, "A New Source for the Biography of Ahmad Baba al-Timbukti," *BSOAS*, 27 (1964), 592. For an English translation, with the Arabic text, of *al-Kashf*, see Bernard Barbour and Michelle Jacobs, "The Mi'raj: a Legal Treatise on Slavery by Ahmad Baba" in J. R. Willis, ed., *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa* (London, 1985), 1:125-59.

38. *Al-Kashf*, in *ibid.*, 137, 158.

39. *Ibid.*, 128, 142. Cited also in 'Uthman ibn Fudi, *Bayan wujub al-hijra 'ala'l-'ibad* (The exposition of the obligation of emigration upon the servants of God), ed. and tr. F. H. El Masri, (Khartoum, 1978), 51.

40. *Al-Kashf*, 129, 143-44.

41. *Geographia Nubiensis, id est accuratissima totius orbis in septem climata divisio descriptio, continens praesertim exactam universae Asiae, & Africae...*tr. Joannes Hesronita and Gabriel Simonita. This translation was based on an abridged Arabic edition published in Rome in 1592 (*De Geographia Universali*). See Vincent Monteil, "L'oeuvre d'Idrisi," *BIFAN*, 1 (1939), 837-57.

42. *Travels in the Inland Parts of Africa* (London, 1738), page v in "Letter to the Editor." The Spanish atrocities during the conquest of their American colonies were widely known in Europe: the original source, Bartolomé de las Casas, *Brevissima Relación de la Destrucción de las Indias* (Seville, 1552) was rapidly translated into Dutch, French, English, German, Italian, and Latin. For the bibliographical information about these editions and their availability see Juha Pekka Helminen, "Bartolomé de las Casas in History, or an Example of How Historical Persons can be Used for Different Purposes," in Antero Tammisto et al., eds., *Miscellanea*, [*Studia Historica*, 33] (Helsinki, 1989), 84-85.

43. *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa* (London, 1799), 112.

44. Mary Louise Pratt, *Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London, 1992), 74. French and German translations were both published in 1799, but Park's *Travels* soon became available in minor European languages as well. A Swedish translation, for example, was published in 1800.

45. For more on Park's influence see below.

46. The Latin text is found in H. A. Hamaker, *Specimen catalogi codicum mss. orientaliū bibliothecae academiae Lugduno-Batavae* (Leiden, 1820), 207-09. The English, including brackets, is from Hopkins/Levtzion, *Corpus*, 355. On the origins of al-Maqrizi's fragment see Dierk Lange, "Un text de Maqrizi sur 'Les races des Sudan'," *Annales Islamologiques*, 15 (1979), 187-90.

47. *Historia dos Soberanos Mahometanos das primeiras quatro dynastias, e de parte da quinta, que reinarao na Mauritania, escripta em arabe por Abu-Mohammed Assaleh, filho de Abdel-halim, natural de Granada*, tr. Jozé de Santo Antonio Moura (Lisbon, 1828). Extracts had

appeared earlier in José Antonio Conde's *Historia de la dominacion de los árabes en España*, 2 (Madrid, 1820).

48. *Historia dos Soberanos*, 147. The English, excluding brackets, is from Hopkins/Levtzion, *Corpus*, 248.

49. "Notice d'un manuscrit arabe contenant la description de l'Afrique [man. de la Bibliothèque du Roi, no.580]," *Notices et Extraits des Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque du Roi*, 12, 642n1. This note is attached to the passage describing the ruler of Ghana and his court (see al-Bakri, in Hopkins/Levtzion, *Corpus*, 79-80).

50. *Ibid.*, 98, 310.

51. (London, 1841)

52. Both al-Bakri and Ibn Khaldun were available to him in the British Museum (*ibid.*, 4n5, 61n104), while copies of al-Zuhri, "An anonymous Arab geographer," and other Arabic mss. were lent to him by his close friend Pascual de Gayangos, the famous Spanish Arabist (*ibid.*, 19n33, 127n210).

53. *Ibid.*, 66.

54. Cooley's reference to Moura points actually to the passage where Abu Bakr handed his authority as the true leader of Almoravids to Yusuf, but he was clearly thinking about the following page and the passage which we have quoted.

55. Hopkins/Levtzion, *Corpus*, 68, 73-74.

56. *Ibid.*, 73-74.

57. *Ibid.*, 22, 45-49, 62, 69.

58. *Ibid.*, 73; the editors insert "[the city of]" before the last word.

59. *Ibid.*, 22.

60. *Ibid.*, 385n25, referring also to Ibn Khaldun on page 332.

61. Cooley, *Negroland*, 6, 27, 29.

62. See, for example, Ibn al-Athir in Hopkins/Levtzion, *Corpus*, 158.

63. This translation, including brackets, is from *ibid.*, 333. Both the Arabic sources cited by the *Corpus* include "their property and their country" after "pillaged".

64. Cooley, *Negroland*, 62.

65. It is a bit strange that Cooley made no reference to al-Maqrizi in this context. He knew Hamaker's *Specimen catalogi* (see *ibid.*, 29n51) and his *Negroland* in fact contains an English translation of al-Maqrizi's fragment, omitting for some reason, however, the last passage concerning Ghana and the Almoravids (see *ibid.*, 119-20). Perhaps there was no need for al-Maqrizi, since Ibn Khaldun was the more authoritative witness.

66. On the Susu conquest see Stephan Bühnen, "In Quest of Susu," *HA*, 21 (1994), 4-7.

67. Cooley, *Negroland*, 69.

68. J.E. Wappäus, *Untersuchungen über die Negerländer der Araber und über den Seehandel der Italiener, Spanier und Portugiesen im Mittelalter* (Göttingen, 1842), 74. Wappäus knew Cooley's *Negroland* for he mentioned it in his preface (p. v), but he had apparently received the book too late to use it, because he nowhere cited it. The principal sources of Wappäus for Ghana were Leo Africanus, Quatremère's translation of al-Bakri, and an English translation of al-Idrisi published in *Annals of Oriental Literature*, 1 (London, 1820).

69. Friedrich Kunstmann, *Afrika vor den Entdeckungen der Portugiesen*, 28. This was the publication of a Fest-Rede which Kunstmann had held in Munich, at the Königlichen bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, on 29 March 1853. "Al-Hulal" does specify conversion from Christianity, but this is apparently a misreading of al-Zuhri's text, which specifies "kufir," "unbelief" (see Hopkins/Levtzion, *Corpus*, 98, 310, 389n16). Kunstmann knew Wappäus's work (*Afrika*, 37n1), but nowhere mentioned Cooley's *Negroland*, although he was probably aware of it.

70. Cooley, *Negroland*, 61n104, called this ms. "Prolegomena," or the *Muqaddima*; yet all the quotations were clearly taken from *Kitab al-'Ibar*.

71. Re-edited by Paul Casanova and reprinted in 3 volumes (Paris, 1925-34). De Slane published also French translations of al-Bakri (*Journal Asiatique*, 5/12-14 [1858-59]) and Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddima* (*Notices et Extraits des Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Imperiale*, vols. 19-21 [Paris, 1862-68]).

72. Ibn-Khaldoun, *Histoire des berbères* (3 vols.: Paris 1852-56), 2:110, our emphasis.

73. Ibn-Khaldoun, *Histoire des berbères et des dynasties musulmanes de l'Afrique septentrionale* (Alger, 1847-51), Arabic text prepared by M. de Slane, I:263, *ib.* 16-17.

74. If Cooley had "discovered" Ghana and Mali, Barth did the same for Songhay, for he was able to find in Gando a copy of al-Sa'di's *Tarikh al-Sudan*. An abridged German translation, based on Barth's own notes, was published in 1854 (C. Ralfs, "Beiträge zur Geschichte und Geographie des Sudan, eingesandt von Dr. Barth," *ZDMG*, vol. 6). A complete version of *Tarikh al-Sudan* was found by a French traveler, Félix Dubois, in Jenné in 1896 (*Tombouctou la mystérieuse* [Paris, 1897], 356).

75. Barth's *Travels and Discoveries* was published simultaneously in five volumes in English (London, 1857-58), and German, *Reisen und Entdeckungen in Nord- und Central-Africa* (Gotha, 1857-58). The English version was very soon afterwards republished in three volumes in New York in 1857-59. The modern reprint, "Centenary edition," published in London in 1965 by Frank Cass, is based on the American edition, with additional maps from the English edition. For reasons of availability our references are to this reprint.

76. Barth, *Travels*, 3:660. In the original English and German editions this table is included in the fourth volume.

77. Cooley, *Negroland*, 66.

78. Barth, *Travels*, 1:365, 2:22.

79. *Ibid.*, 3:658-61.

80. Dutch, Danish, and French translations appeared, but all are incomplete, missing the appendices in which Barth introduced his ideas on West African history (see A. H. M. Kirk-Greene's "A Bibliographical Note," in Barth, *Travels*, I:xvi).

81. Barth's triumphant homecoming from Tripoli to London and Berlin in autumn 1855 was keenly observed even in Finnish newspapers, which did not then contain much foreign news (and hardly any from Africa). See for example *Åbo Unterrättelser*, 21 September 1855, 30 October 1855, and 27 November 1855.

82. C.J. Tomberg, *Annales Regum Mauritanie* (Uppsala, 1843-46).

83. "Notice sur les Almoravides et les Almohades d'après les historiens arabes," nos. 69, 71, 76, 77 (in vols. 12 and 13 of the Kraus reprint of 1968).

84. *Ibid.*, 69, 222. Mercier nowhere referred to Cooley's *Negroland*, and the fact that he dated the Almoravid conquest of Ghana to shortly before the death of *amir* Yahya b. 'Umar in 448/1056-57 (see al-Bakri, in Hopkins/Levtzion, *Corpus*, 73), and not in 469/1076-77, proves clearly that he had not been influenced in this by Cooley. Furthermore, Mercier said nothing of Abu Bakr b. 'Umar's campaigns in the south, except to repeat (224) Ibn Abi Zar's superficial account of his death.

85. Mercier, "Notice," 69, 217n1.

86. Mercier's spelling reflects the old-fashioned, but nonetheless identifiable, rendering of the Arabic consonant *ghayn*—nowadays represented with "gh"—by "r'."

87. *Ibid.*, 222.

88. See for example the article "Almoravides" by O. Houdas in *La Grande Encyclopédie* (Tours, 1886), 2:486, and A. Müller, *Der Islam im Morgen und Abendland* (Berlin, 1887), 116.

89. Mercier, *Histoire de l'Afrique septentrionale* (2 vols.: Paris, 1888), 2:25.

90. "Mélanges d'histoire et de littérature orientales II," *Le Muséon*, 7 (1888), 49-60, 137-51. Also sometimes cited under the title "Essai sur l'histoire et de la langue de Tombouctou et des royaumes de Songhaï et Melli," which is the opening sentence of the article.

91. *Ibid.*, 51n4, 56n1, 57n1.

92. *Ibid.*, 51. In the main text Basset wrote that Islam was adopted in Ghana in the year 1000 AD, referring to Faïdherbe, "Tombouctou et les grandes voies commerciales du nord-ouest de l'Afrique," *Revue Scientifique* (15 November 1884), 609-13, adding (Basset, "Mélanges," 114n4) that Cooley's date of 1076 was more "exact."

93. *Du Niger au Golfe du Guinée*, (2 vols.: Paris, 1892), 2:383. This sounds like a distant echo of Mercier.

94. *Ibid.*, 2:369, 391. The date 1607 appears on page 383, and may be a misprint, especially since on the opposite page Binger said that al-Bakri was writing in 1067-68. However, the mention of Ouqaimagha—the Wakajamaga in Ralfs' edition of *Tarikh al-Sudan*

(1854, 526)—on the same page suggests that Binger may have here confused al-Bakri with al-Sa<sup>o</sup>di; elsewhere (*ibid.*, 369) he apparently confused him with al-Idrisi.

95. *Ibid.*, 1:386, 2:379, 381.

96. Another early French propagator of the conquest hypothesis was Louis Tautain, who was also the first writer to identify the Wagadu of oral tradition with the Ghana of Arabic sources in his "Légende et traditions des soninké relatives à l'empire de Ghanata," *Bulletin de géographie historique et descriptive*, 2 (1895), 472-80. The first version of the Wagadu legend had been published in 1879: L.B.J. Béranger-Féraud, *Les peuplades de la Sénégambie* (Paris, 1879), 169-72.

97. Barth, *Travels*, 3:657, 703, had supposed that Ghana had been founded by the Fulani, though its population were the Aswanék, or the Soninke. In the 1890s some French scholars, however, began to claim that Ghana had been the first of the Songhay empires; the second was the empire of the *askiyas*: see Le Chatelier, *Islam* (Paris, 1899), 79; O. Reclus, "Songhai," *La Grande Encyclopédie* (Tours, 1901), 30: 271.

98. Le Chatelier, *Islam*, 45. Le Chatelier (*ibid.*, 46) extended the rule of the Lamtuna over Ghana until the Susu conquest.

99. Lugard, *Tropical Dependency* (London, 1905), 110. This sounds like Cooley, certainly known to Shaw, although she seldom used footnotes and included no bibliography. According to her biography, Shaw wrote her book in England using "Spanish archives and translations of Arab works dealing with the occupation of Negroland. E. Moberly Bell, *Flora Shaw* (London, 1947), 253.

100. See, for example, Paul Meyer, "Erforschungsgeschichte und Staatenbildungen des Westsudan," *Petermanns Mitteilungen, Ergänzungsheft* no. 121 (Gotha, 1897), 61: "The fanatic Merâbetin from Morocco, the Almoravids of the Spaniards, pillaged Audaghost in 1052...in 1076 [they] conquered Ghanata, which became now completely islamized and a subject of contention between the Berbers of the north and the Negroes of the south and east." Within this passage, Meyer referred to Barth.

101. (3 vols.: Paris), reprinted, with a preface by Robert Cornevin, in 1972.

102. Delafosse was chosen to write *Haut-Sénégal-Niger* because he had already gained fame with his various linguistic works. *Haut-Sénégal-Niger* was immediately popular, and its author was decorated with three gold medals. Very soon Delafosse was regarded as the highest authority in early West African history not only in France but also in the Anglophone world, although *Haut-Sénégal-Niger* was never translated into English: see Ed Van Hoven, "Representing Social Hierarchy. Administrators-Ethnographers in the French Sudan: Delafosse, Monteil, and Labouret," *Cahiers d'Études africaines*, no. 118 (1990), 181, 185. See also Delafosse's biography, written by his daughter Louise Delafosse, *Maurice Delafosse: le Berrichon conquis par l'Afrique* (Paris, 1976).

103. Delafosse, *Haut-Sénégal-Niger*, 2: 54.

104. It may be too cynical a thought, but it is at least possible that there was an inclination (presumably subconscious), by admitting that we do not know this particular detail, to divert attention from the fact that we do not necessarily know *any* of the described details.

105. *A history of Islam in West Africa* (London, 1962), 55; see also 25, 29-30, 33.

106. Ismaël Hamet, *Chroniques de la Mauretanie sénégalaise: Nacer Eddine* (Paris, 1911), 25. Hamet's principal source for Almoravid history was de Slane's translation of *Kitab al-'Ibar*.

107. *Ibid.*, 1-2. These limits for the Almoravid empire were rooted in western literature much earlier: see, for example, Léon Godard, *Description et histoire du Maroc* (2 vols.: Paris 1860), 1:314.

108. Hamet, *Chroniques*, 24.

109. *Ibid.*, 6. Hamet gave no dates for these events, except 1052 for the beginning of the Almoravid movement. Yet it sounds as though he was repeating Mercier's (and Cooley's) confusion of Awdaghust as the capital of Ghana.

110. (Westminster), 262. Arnold's references for this passage are "Leo Africanus (Ramusio. Tom. 1. pp. 7, 77)"—see note 15 above—and "Chronik der Sultane von Bornu, bearbeitet von Otto Blau, p. 332 (Z.D.M.G. vol. vi. 1852)."

111. *Ibid.*, 317-18. Arnold cited Meyer's paper of 1897 for this addition.



112. See Cooley, *Negroland*, 29; Godard, *Description*, 1:307; Henri Duveyrier, *Les Touaregs du nord* (Paris, 1864), 324-25.

113. See, for example, al-Bakri and *Mafakhir al-Barbar*, in Hopkins/Levtzion, *Corpus*, 75-76, 233.

114. George F. Lyon, *A Narrative of Travels in Northern Africa in the years 1818, 19, and 20* (London, 1821), 109; Henri Duveyrier, "Note sur les touareg et leur pays," *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie de Paris* (February, 1863), 15-16.

115. "An Abstract of Mr. Park's Account of his Travels and Discoveries, abridged from his own Minutes by Bryan Edwards, Esq. 1798," *Proceedings of the African Association* (London, 1810), 1:349.

116. *Ibid.*; see also G. Mollien, *Travels in the interior of Africa to the sources of the Senegal and Niger*, ed. T. E. Bowdich (London, 1820), 8; F. De Lanoye, *Le Niger et les explorations de l'Afrique Centrale depuis Mungo-Park jusqu'au Docteur Barth* (Paris, 1858), 15; Josef Chavanne, *Die Sahara oder von Oase zu Oase* (Vienna, 1879), 28; Basset, *Mélanges*, 56. Further support for the negative image was gained from Arabic literature, where the Tuaregs were treated in no better. For a critical Arab view of the Tuareg see Muhammad bin 'Uthman al-Hashashi, *Voyage au pays des Senoussia à travers la Tripolitaine et les pays Touaregs*, trans. Serrier and Lasram (Paris 1912), 177-84.

117. For example Hanns Vischer, who had crossed the Sahara in 1906, complained that Duveyrier's high opinion of the Tuaregs "has been the cause of many disasters to Europeans, who did not know that under his outward dignity the Tuarek hid the most treacherous character" (Vischer, *Across the Sahara* [London 1910], 164-65).

118. For a record of Tuareg conflict with French colonialists in the southern Sahara see, for example, A. Hacquart, *Monographie de Tombouctou* (Paris, 1900).

119. Reinhold Dozy, *Histoire des Musulmans d'Espagne* (4 vols.: Leiden, 1861), 4:252, 266; Neville Barbour, *Morocco* (London, 1965), 58-59.

120. "Arabialaiset ja islamin aikaisemmat vaiheet," in J. W. Ruuth et al., eds., *Maailman historia* (6 vols.: Porvoo, 1914-20), 2:583; see also G. Faure-Biguët, *Histoire de l'Afrique septentrionale sous la domination musulmane* (Paris, 1905), 126.

121. On the use of Hamitic hypothesis in European literature, see Edith Sanders, "The Hamitic Hypothesis: Its Origin and Functions in Time Perspective," *JAH*, 10 (1969), 521-32.

122. La Chatelier, *Islam*, 35.

123. Philip de Barros, "Changing Paradigms, Goals and Methods in the Archaeology of Francophone West Africa" in Peter Robertshaw, ed., *A History of African Archaeology* (London, 1990), 160; Seppo Rytönen, "Katsaus nykyiseen Afrikan historiantutkimukseen," *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja*, 87 (1989), 6; Pekka Masonen, "Länsi-Afrikka ja Välimeren maailma ennen löytöretkiä" in Tuomo Melasuo, ed., *Vieras Välimeri. Kulttuurien ja politiikan kohtauspaikka* (Tampere, 1994), 37-38.

124. Delafosse, *Haut-Sénégal-Niger*, 2:22. Other favored candidates were the Carthaginians, Garamantes, Egyptians, and Persians. Common to all writers, however, was a steadfast faith in white founders of Ghana. Evidence for this belief was gained both from Sudanese oral tradition, which attributes white ancestry to many islamized dynasties, including the Sise of Ghana (see, for instance, Fatimata Mounkaïla, "Ancestors from the East in Sahelo-Sudanese Myth: Dinga Soninké, Zabarkâne Zarma, and Others," *Research in African Literatures*, 24 [1993], 13-21), and from al-Sa'di who claimed that the 44 rulers of Kayamagha, customarily identified with Ghana, were whites, though their origin was unknown to him (*Tarikh es-Soudan*, French tr. 18; Arabic text, 9). Besides the whites, there was one African candidate, the Fulani, who were themselves believed to have a Semitic ancestry, and thus they were not pure blacks but a more advanced Hamitic people. For European opinions of the Fulani see, for example, Mollien, *Travels*, 157, 164; Oskar Lenz, *Timbuktu. Reise durch Marokko, die Sahara und den Sudan* (2 vols.: Leipzig, 1884), 2:258-59, 266; Le Chatelier, *Islam*, 107-10, 123.

125. See, for example, Wappäus, *Untersuchungen*, 45; De Lanoye, *Niger*, 118, 122.

126. Park, *Travels*, 159. Furthermore Park, *ibid.*, 112-13, claimed that the Moors ruled all the areas reaching from the Senegal to the borders of Abyssinia.

127. *Travels through Central Africa to Timbuctoo; and across the Great Desert to Morocco, performed in the years 1824-1828* (2 vols.: London, 1830), 2: 65. The French original

(*Journal d'un voyage à Tombouctou et à Jenne dans l'Afrique centrale*) was published in Paris in the same year.

128. See also Mollien, *Travels*, 2-4; Lyon, *Narrative*, 112.

129. Eduard Conte, "Herders, Hunters and Smiths: Mobile Populations in the History of Kanem" in J.G. Galaty and P. Bonte, eds., *Herders, Warriors and Traders. Pastoralism in Africa* (Boulder, 1991), 221-22, and Lange "Almoravids," 64; for Arabic sources see, for example, Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, tr. Franz Rosenthal (3 vols.: New York, 1958), 1:252-61, and Ibn Abi Zar<sup>c</sup> in Hopkins/Levtzion, *Corpus*, 236-37.

130. See Ibn Khaldun, in *ibid.*, 331; Richard Jobson, *The Golden Trade* (London, 1623), 48; for an historical perspective of the nomad-sedentary relationship in Western Sudan, see Nehemia Levtzion, "Berber Nomads and Sudanese States: the Historiography of the Desert-Sahel Interface" in *Islam in West Africa: Religion, Society, and Politics to 1800* (Aldershot, 1994).

131. Basset, "Mélanges," 49-50.

132. See, for example, Jean Bayol, *Voyage en Sénégambie* (Paris, 1888), 80, 90-91; Le Chatelier, *Islam*, 34-35; Jules Brévié, *Islamisme contre "naturisme" au Soudan Français* (Paris, 1923), 229-30.

133. Y.U. Zotova, "Dva podhoda k izucheniyu istorii Afriki," *Narodi Azii i Afriki*, 29 (1987), 103.

134. The Austrian explorer Oskar Lenz, for example, described the condition of Morocco in 1879 thus: "The Moroccan people live in a semi-cultured condition, which approximately corresponds with our Middle Ages...Regarding the present situation, Islam is identical with regression and barbarism, while the Christian powers represent civilized life and progress." (1884, I, 430).

135. Eric Stokes, *The Peasant Armed: the Indian Rebellion of 1857* (Oxford, 1986), 7-9. A. S. Kanya-Forstner, *The Conquest of the Western Sudan* (Cambridge, 1969), 66-67. Knut S. Vikør, "Mystics in the Desert: the Sanusiya and the Sahara" in H. Palva and K. S. Vikør, eds., *The Middle East: Unity and Disunity. Papers from the Second Nordic Conference on Middle Eastern Studies, Copenhagen 22-25. October 1992* (Bergen, 1993), 144-45.

136. Kanya-Forstner, *Conquest*, 20; Christopher Harrison, *France and Islam in West Africa, 1860-1960* (Cambridge, 1988), 12-14; see also Brévié, *Islamisme*, 164-66.

137. *Ibid.*, 147-48.

138. Kanya-Forstner, *Conquest*, 149, 195-98; Harrison, *France and Islam*, 50-51; Van Hoven, "Representing," 186-87; see Basset, "Mélanges," 49-50; Binger, *Du Niger*, 2:345; Brévié, *Islamisme*, 234.

139. Jean Suret-Canale, *Essays on African History from the Slave Trade to Neocolonialism* (London, 1988), 179.

140. C-A. Walckenaer, *Recherches géographiques sur l'intérieur de l'Afrique septentrionale* (Paris, 1821), 11-12; Lenz, *Timbuktu*, 2:266; Brévié, *Islamisme*, 117, 297. Richard Burton, though he wrote often as much to shock as to inform, put this point of view persuasively: "I would record my sincere conviction that El-Islam has wrought immense good in Africa; that it has taught the African to make that first step in moral progress, which costs so much to barbarous nature; and it thus prepares him for a steady onward career, as far as his faculties can endure improvement. What other nation, what other faith, can boast that it has worked even the smallest portion of the enduring good done, and still doing, to Africa by El Islam? Granting that ill temper, polygamy, domestic slavery, and the degradation of women are evils; yet what are they to be compared with the horrors of cannibalism and fetishism, the witch tortures, the poison ordeals, and legal incest, the 'customs', and the murders of albinos, of twins, of children who cut their upper teeth first, and of men splashed by crocodiles? Surely the force of prejudice cannot go beyond this!" Burton, *Wanderings in West Africa from Liverpool to Fernando Po* (London 1863), 180-81.

141. Brévié, *Islamisme*, 231-34; Kanya-Forstner, *Conquest*, 137; Harrison, *France and Islam*, 103; see Maurice Delafosse, "L'état actuel de l'islam dans l'Afrique Occidentale Française," *Revue du monde musulman*, 9 (1910), 32-53.

142. de Bartos, "Changing Paradigms," 162.

143. See the preface in John W. Blake, *West Africa. Quest for God and Gold* (London, 1977), as well as Ernst Opgenoorh, "Historians and Written Sources: General Problems."

*Paideuma*, 33 (1987), 107-14, and Finn Fuglestad, "The Trevor-Roper Trap, or the Imperialism of History," *HA*, 19 (1992), 309-26.

144. Lansiné Kaba, "Histoire africaine et idéologie," *Afrika Zamani*, 2 (1974), 9-10; see also A. E. Afigbo, "Colonial Historiography" in Toyin Falola, ed., *African Historiography. Essays in Honour of Jacob Ade Ajayi* (Harlow, 1993), 39-51.

145. Paul Semonin, "The Almoravid Movement in the Western Sudan. A Review of the Evidence," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, 7 (1964), 42-59. Vincent Monteil, *L'Islam noir* (Paris, 1964), 58-62, pleaded for the emancipation of the history of Ghana, insofar as it is discernible at all, from the unsubstantiated hypotheses of Delafosse, but Monteil gave little attention to the specific conquest question, despite being cautious about it. In his second edition (Paris, 1980), 81-86, he changed nothing from 1964, save to add a carbon-14 date.

146. A previously unknown part of a manuscript concerning the Almoravids, written by Ibn 'Idhari in the early fourteenth century, became familiar to western scholars in the mid-1950s, although the Arabic text was not published until 1961 by Ambrosio Huici Miranda, "Un fragmento inédito de Ibn 'Idhari sobre los Almorávides," *Hespéris-Tamuda*, 2 (1961), 43-111. The author's full name is Abu'l-<sup>c</sup>Abbas Ahmad b. Muhammad Ibn 'Idhari, and the full title of his work *Al-Bayan al-mughrib fi akhbar al-andalus wa'l-maghrib* (The Amazing Exposition on the History of al-Andalus and the Maghrib). A French translation had been published by E. Fagnan, *Histoire de l'Afrique et de l'Espagne intitulée al-Bayano'l-Mogrib* (2 vols.: Algiers, 1901-04), but it lacked the important account of the Almoravids.

147. Relying on the authority of Ibn Abi Zar<sup>c</sup> and Ibn Khaldun, western scholars had believed that Marrakesh was established by the Almoravids in 454/1062—although this went unnoticed by al-Bakri, writing some six years later! According to Ibn 'Idhari, it took place on 23 Rajab 462/8 May 1070. See E. Levi-Provençal, "La fondation de Marrakesh (462-1072)" in *Mélanges d'histoire et d'archéologie de l'occident musulman. Hommage à Georges Marçais* (2 vols.: Algiers, 1957), 2:117-20.

148. Caroline Neale, *Writing "independent" History. African Historiography, 1960-1980* (Westport, 1985), 3-4.

149. Semonin, "Almoravid Movement," 42, 59. Semonin (*ibid.*, 42n2) derived this idea from Huici Miranda, who had expressed his doubts on Ibn Abi Zar<sup>c</sup>'s reliability in this matter in his "El Rawd al-Qirtas y los Almorávides," *Hespéris-Tamuda*, 1 (1961), 523-24. See also Monteil, *Islam noir*, 62: "Some years later the Almoravids islamized the land of Ghana, in 1076 (469 AH), a date given by one author only, az-Zuhri."

150. Farias, "The Almoravids: Some Questions Concerning the Character of the Movement During Its Periods of Closest Contact with the Western Sudan," *BIFAN*, 29B (1967), 848-49.

151. Jean Devisse, "Routes de commerce et échanges en Afrique occidentale en relation avec la Méditerranée: un essai sur le commerce africain médiéval du XI<sup>e</sup> au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle," *Revue d'histoire économique et sociale*, 50 (1972), 57. See also Devisse, "La question d'Audagust" in D. Robert, S. Robert, and J. Devisse, eds., *Tegdaoust I. Recherches sur Aoudaghost* (Paris 1970), 153.

152. Norris, *Saharan myth and saga* (Oxford), 108, 108n2.

153. Coulibaly, "L'attaque de Ghana (XI<sup>e</sup> siècle)," *Afrika Zamani*, 2 (1974), 55-77.

154. *Ibid.*, 57-58. Coulibaly used fragments of al-Zuhri (Arabic text with French translation) published in Youssouf Kamal's *Monumenta Cartographica Africae et Aegypti*, vol. III, fasc. 3 (Cairo, 1933), 801-03, although a more complete version had been published by Mahammad Hadj-Sadok in *Bulletin d'études orientales* 21 (1968). Yet in Hadj-Sadok's edition the date for the conversion is 496, instead of 469.

155. Coulibaly, "Attaque," 60-61.

156. *Ibid.*, 67-69. The idea of an Almoravid *ribaz* as an island fortress originates from Ibn Abi Zar<sup>c</sup> and Ibn Khaldun (see Hopkins/Levtzion, *Corpus*, 239, 329). It was incorporated within Almoravid historiography at a very early phase (see for example Godard, *Description*, 1:308; Farias, "Almoravids," 821-34; also Humphrey J. Fisher, "What's in a name? The Almoravids of the Eleventh Century in the Western Sahara," *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 22 (1992), 290-317.

157. Coulibaly, "Attaque," 73.

158. *Ibid.*, 60-61, 73. Actually some traces of destruction have been found in Kumbi Saleh which are dated in the eleventh century, but conclusive proof is still lacking. We do not even know whether the ruins of Kumbi Saleh are really the city of Ghana described by al-Bakri. See I. Hrbek and J. Devisse, "The Almoravids" in *Unesco General History of Africa*, III (London, 1988), 359.

159. Farias, "Great States Revisited," *JAH*, 15 (1971), 482n22, 484-85.

160. *Ibid.*, 480-81. Farias' criticism in this respect certainly corresponds with the contemporary shift in the research into nomad-sedentary relations in the Sahel. Farias cited Claude Meillassoux, *The Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa* (London 1971), but similar thoughts were expressed by P.E. Lovejoy and Stephen Baier, "The Desert-side Economy of the Central Sudan," *IJAHS*, 9 (1975), 551-81, and Charles Frantz, "Shifts in Power from Nomads to Sedentaries in the Central Sudanic Zone" in Yusuf Fadl Hasan and P. Doornbos, eds., *The Central Bilad al-Sudan. Tradition and Adaptation* (Khartoum 1979), 171-91. On the other hand, we cannot deny that there have been conflicts between the Saharan nomads and Sahelian agriculturalists, although it is not plausible to suppose that the nomads had always been the stronger side. These conflicts have, however, a political and economic focus, rather than religious motives. See Nigel Cross and Rhiannon Barker, eds., *At the Desert's Edge. Oral Histories from the Sahel* (London, [1991?]), 56, 63, 68, 144, 152, and James L. A. Webb Jr., *Desert Frontier. Ecological and Economic Change along the Western Sahel 1600-1850* (Madison 1995), 22-26.

161. Levtzion, *Ancient Ghana*, 47.

162. Farias, "Great States," 484.

163. *Ibid.*, 480-81.

164. Hunwick, "Gao and the Almoravids: a Hypothesis" in B. Swartz and R. Dumett, eds., *West African Cultural Dynamics* (Hague, 1980), 420.

165. Devisse, "La question d'Audagust," 153. On the other hand, al-Bakri reported that Basi's successor Tunka Manin had many Muslim councilors: Hopkins/Levtzion, *Corpus*, 79-80.

166. McCall, "Islamization," 14; Norris, *The Berbers in Arabic Literature* (London, 1982), 133-34; Dierk Lange, "Les rois de Gao-Sané et les Almoravides," *JAH*, 32 (1991), 275.

167. See Hopkins/Levtzion, *Corpus*, 231, and Hanna E. Kassis, "Observations on the First Three Decades of the Almoravid Dynasty (A.H.450-480=A.D. 1058-1088): A Numismatic Study," *Der Islam*, 62 (1985), 318.

168. Lange, "Almoravids," 66.

169. First in Humphrey J. Fisher's review article, "Early Arabic Sources and the Almoravid conquest of Ghana," *JAH*, 23 (1982), 549-60, and then in David C. Conrad and Fisher, "The Conquest That Never Was: Ghana and the Almoravids, 1076, I: 'The External Arabic Sources,' II: 'The Local Oral Sources,'" *HA*, 9 (1982), 19-59, 10 (1983), 53-78.

170. Conrad/Fisher, "Conquest," 45.

171. Supporters of the new view include Ann McDougall, "The Sahara Reconsidered: Pastoralism, Politics and Salt from the Ninth Through the Twelfth Centuries," *African Economic History*, 12 (1983), 273-74; Michael Brett, "Islam and Trade in the *bilad al-Sudan*, Tenth-Eleventh Century A.D.," *JAH*, 24 (1983), 439; and David Henige, "Race," 65-69. Those who still hesitate include Peter B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam* (London, 1982), 17-22; and Mervyn Hiskett, *The Development of Islam in West Africa* (London, 1984), 23, 25-26, 302-03. Among the apparently unpersuaded are John O. Hunwick, *Shari'a in Songhay: the Replies of al-Maghili to the Questions of Askiya al-Hajj Muhammad* (Oxford, 1985), 15n4; Nehemia Levtzion, "The Early States of the Western Sudan to 1500" in J.F.A. Ajayi and M. Crowder, eds., *History of West Africa I* (3rd. ed.: London, 1985), 136-39; Vincent Lagardè, *Les Almoravides* (Paris, 1989), 89-90, (which repeats Delafosse almost *verbatim*); and Roland Olivier, *The African Experience: Major Themes in African History From the Earliest Times to the Present* (New York, 1991), 87-88. The ambivalent situation is well visible in *UNESCO General History of Africa*, III, esp. 359-60, 460.

172. Burkhalter, "Listening for Silences in Almoravid History: Another Reading of 'The Conquest That Never Was,'" *HA*, 19 (1992), 103-31.

173. *Ibid.*, 105, 120.

174. *Ibid.*, 103, 104.

175. See, for example, Philip Curtin, Steven Feierman, Leonard Thompson, and Jan Vansina, *African History From Earliest Times to Independence* (2d. ed.: London, 1995), 94; John D. Fage, *A History of Africa* (3d ed.: London, 1995), 71; John Iliffe, *Africans: The History of a Continent* (Cambridge, 1995), 53; Kevin Shillington, *History of Africa* (rev. ed.: London, 1995), 86-87.

176. *Self Portraits*, tr. Ralph F. McCarthy (Tokyo, 1992), 71.