Fame (and debts) beyond the sea

two mentions of imm Amad b. Ibrhm in an Indian Arabic source

Gori, Alessandro

Published in:
Linguistic, Oriental and Ethiopian Studies in Memory of Paolo Marrassini

Publication date:
2014

Citation for published version (APA):
LINGUISTIC, ORIENTAL AND ETHIOPIAN STUDIES
IN MEMORY OF PAOLO MARRASSINI

Edited by

ALESSANDRO BAUSI – ALESSANDRO GORI – GIANFRANCESCO LUSINI

WIESBADEN – HARRASSOWITZ VERLAG 2015
Publication of this work was supported by the European Union Seventh Framework Programme IDEAS (FP7/2007-2013) / ERC grant agreements nos. 322849 (IslHornAfr) and 338756 (TraCES), and by the University of Naples “L’Orientale”.

© Copyright 2015 Harrassowitz Verlag
XXXXX
D-00000 Wiesbaden
www.harrassowitz.de

ISBN XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
Table of Contents

Tabula Gratulatoria ........................................................................................................... vii
Table of Contents ........................................................................................................... ix
Editorial Note .................................................................................................................. xiii

RICCARDO CONTINI
   Un ricordo ............................................................................................................. xv

GIANFRANCESCO LUSINI
   Paolo Marrassini, maestro e innovatore .............................................................. xxi

ALESSANDRO GORI
   A few words for Paolo Marrassini ................................................................. xxv

ALESSANDRO BAUSI
   In memoriam Paolo Marrassini (1942–2013) ................................................... xxix
   Bibliography of Paolo Marrassini ................................................................. xxxiii

Contributions

ALESSIO AGOSTINI
   Peccato e trasgressione nei testi di espiazione sudarabici ............................... 3

AMSALU TEFERA
   Bǝstǝawtǝs: the man and his works ................................................................. 23

SERGIO BALDI
   On some loans in Fulfulde ................................................................................ 37

ALESSANDRO BAUSI
   Filologi o “falsari”? Ancora su un passo del Gadla Libānos ......................... 55

LIDIA BETTINI
   Una citazione evangelica nel Kitāb al-hawāmil wa-al-šawāmil ...................... 71
ROBERT BEYLOT
L’archange ’Afnin dans trois homélies ...................................................... 91

MARCO BONECHI
Due frammenti di liste lessicali sumeriche di animali da Ebla (MEE 15 57 e MEE 15 45) ........................................................................................................ 147

ANTONELLA BRITA
«La gabira 'ab». Breve nota sul lessico filologico in etiopico ............... 169

MARIA BULAKH

FRANCO CARDINI
La crociata e il “Prete Gianni d’Africa” ..................................................... 213

AMALIA CATAGNOTI
Il lessico dei vegetali ad Ebla: terebinto e ginepro ................................. 225

ALESSANDRO CATASTINI
Newly found sixteenth-century Hebrew Books in the Pisa University Library ................................................................. 243

PIETRO CLEMENTE
Rimisurare le distanze Cambiamenti del vicino e del lontano nel mondo globale ......................................................................................... 253

RICCARDO CONTINI
Considerazioni sulla storia degli studi neoaramaici ......................... 273

GIOVANNI DORE
Carlo Conti Rossini in Eritrea tra ricerca scientifica e prassi coloniale (1899–1903) ...................................................................................... 321

GIANFRANCO FIACCADORI
An Eighteenth-Century Gold Processional Cross from Ethiopia ........... 343

MASSIMILIANO FRANCHI
La perdita dei markers delle categorie nominali in egiziano: invito ad una analisi tipologica .............................................................................. 397

PELIO FRONZAROLI
Thus Spake the Man of Mari (ARET XIII 15 v. I 4-8, III 13-17) Scribal Schools and Chancery Language in the Ebla Texts ................................. 417
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GETATCHEW HAILE</td>
<td>One More Archaic Amharic Poem on Christian Virtues and Vices ..........</td>
<td>445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALESSANDRO GORI</td>
<td>Fame (and debts) beyond the sea: two mentions of imām ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-Rasūl al-Salām</td>
<td>477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FELICE ISRAEL</td>
<td>Gli studi etiopici di Štefan Kociančič</td>
<td>491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MICHAEL A. KNIBB</td>
<td>Reflections on an Edition of Ethiopian Ezekiel: Agenda for the Future</td>
<td>503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAOLO LA SPISA</td>
<td>À propos de l’Apocalypse de Pierre arabe ou Livre des Révélation (Kitāb al-Mağāf)</td>
<td>511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIANFRANCESCO LUSINI</td>
<td>Una fonte per la storia etiopica medievale: il Gādāl Ǝndoryas</td>
<td>527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALBERTO NOCENTINI</td>
<td>L’agglutinazione dell’articolo negli arabismi iberromanzi: un caso esemplare di code mixing</td>
<td>537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DENIS NOSNITSIN – MARIA BULAKH</td>
<td>A Fragment of an Ancient Four Gospels Book (Lk 6:35–7:7): A Short Analysis</td>
<td>551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRANCA PECCHIOLI DADDI</td>
<td>The Hittite Model of Governing Territory</td>
<td>583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIERLUIGI PIOVANELLI</td>
<td>The Story of the Passion of Christ A New Ethiopian Apocryphon Attributed to Salome, Elizabeth, and Mary of Magdala</td>
<td>607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLORIA ROSATI</td>
<td>The Stela of the ‘Master-Sculptor’ Shen-Setji: A Review</td>
<td>629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VINCENZO SALADINO</td>
<td>Etiopi in Tracia?</td>
<td>647</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHIFERAW BEKELE</td>
<td>Restructuring “Weld Blundell’s Royal Chronicles”</td>
<td>657</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARIE-CLAUDE SIMEONE-SENELLE</td>
<td>Expression de l’appartenance et de la possession dans le syntagme nominal en sudarabique moderne</td>
<td>661</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table of Contents

TESFAY TEWOLDE YOHANNES
Observations on the Abyssinian Alphabet ........................................ 689

MARIA VITTORIA TONIETTI
The multifaceted importance of prepositions in the study of Archaic
Semitic languages and the particular case of ana in the Early Dynastic
period ....................................................................................................... 699

ALESSANDRO TRIULZI
Dal fronte alla frontiera: appunti di uno storico di confine ................. 723

ANDRZEJ ZABORSKI
The enigmatic origin of the stative conjugation in East Cushitic .......... 735
Editorial Note

We conceived the present volume in the course of 2012 as a Festschrift offered to Paolo Marrassini by colleagues, friends, and pupils. After the dedicatee passed away on 10 January 2013, trusting in the confidence of the numerous ones who had already accepted to contribute, we decided to keep on working on the volume in the only possible form of the Gedenkschrift.¹

A substantial number of authors from various academic environments and different countries accepted our proposal to contribute to the memorial volume: to all of them we are very grateful for their engagement, patience, and understanding. We are convinced that the variety of spectrum and approach of the contributions faithfully reflects the vastity of scholarly interests and human relationships cultivated and entertained by Paolo Marrassini.

We are particularly grateful to Riccardo Contini for having accepted to write his “Ricordo”.

The publication of the volume has been supported by the financial contribution of the gratulantes listed in the Tabula gratulatoria, and by the fi-

¹ We have shared the editorial tasks and the overall responsibility of the preparation of the volume. For technical and organizational reasons, the contributions by Alessio Agostini, Amsalu Tefera, Robert Beylot, Marco Bonechi, Antonella Brita, Maria Bulakh, Franco Cardini, Amalia Catagnoti, Alessandro Catastini, Riccardo Contini, Gianfranco Fiaccadori, Massimiliano Franci, Getatchew Haile, Felice Israel, Michael A. Knibb, Paolo La Spisa, Alberto Nocentini, Denis Nosnitsin & Maria Bulakh, Pierluigi Piovanelli, Gloria Rosati, Andrzej Zaborksi have been edited by Alessandro Bausi. The contributions by Lidia Bettini, Pietro Clemente, Giovanni Dore, Pelio Fronzaroli, Vincenzo Saladino, Marie-Claude Simeone-Senelle and Tesfay Tewolde have been edited by Alessandro Gori. The contributions by Sergio Baldi, Franca Pecchioli, Maria Vittoria Tonietti and Alessandro Triulzi have been edited by Gianfrancesco Lusini.
Fame (and debts) beyond the sea: two mentions of imām Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm in an Indian Arabic source

The episode of the ḡīḥād of imām Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm is deeply engraved in the historical memory of the Ethiopians, both Muslims and Christians. The events of the military campaign led by the Islamic leader play a decisive role in shaping the reciprocal perceptions of the two communities.

I remember that I first learnt of imām Aḥmad during a class of Paolo Marrassini on the history of Ethiopia at the University of Florence. It was one of my first steps in the study of the Islamic culture in Ethiopia. It is thus with a deeply felt gratitude that I dedicate this brief note on two so far unnoticed texts dealing with imām Aḥmad to the loving memory of that great scholar who was my teacher and mentor.

'abd al-qādir b. šayḫ b. 'abdallāh al-'aydarūs and his al-nūr al-sāfir 'ān āḥbār al-qarn al-ajā'ir

'abd al-qādir al-'aydarūs was born in the āl 'aydarūs, a well-known branch of the saqqāf clan of the ba 'alawī group of south Yemeni sayyids (descendants of ḥusayn b. 'Ali b. Abī Ṭālib). The eponymous ancestor of the family is traditionally considered to be 'abdallāh b. Abī Bakr al-sakrīn b. 'abd al-raḥmān al-saqqāf of tařm (d. 1461) who was nicknamed al-'aydarūs by his father.1

1 The proposed explanation of the unclear laqab al-'aydarūs in al-šīlī (ed. 1319 A.H., II: 152; from 'atayrūs interpreted as a name of the lion) must be taken as a kind of folk-etymology. General information on the group can be found in Löfgren Encyclopedia of Islam' s.v. "'aydarūs".
Alessandro Gori

The ḈAydarūs spread in the Arabian Peninsula, in India and Indonesia following the well-known routes of the “Haḍramī Diaspora”.² They are revered everywhere as a house of piety, learning and nobility and provided (and provide) the Muslim communities where they settled with devotedly venerated holy men and highly respected ʿulamāʾ².

The main steps of the life of ʿAbd al-Qādir³ can be easily traced back, as the Indian Muslim learned man inserted a short autobiographical note in his main work.⁴ Moreover, an amount of information on him is collectable in Muhammad b. Abī Bakr al-Šīlī’s Maṣraʿ al-rawī, one of the most important historical sources on the Yemenite sāda.⁵ ʿAbd al-Qādir was born on 20th ḫaḥf 978 A.H. (20 August 1570) in Aḥmadābād in Gujarat where his father had eventually ended after staying in Zabīd, Mecca and Šihr. His mother was an Indian slave. She was donated to his father by a charitable woman member of the royal family of Gujarat. Despite her servile status, she was pious, humble and full of many other good qualities.⁶ ʿAbd al-Qādir went through the full curriculum studiorum of the learned man studying the Qurān, theology, fiqh and mysticism under the guidance of many different scholars. He eventually became a teacher and a sufi master of the Qādirīyya brotherhood and started writing books and having lots of stu-

2 Research of the spread of the Haḍramī-s in the Indian Ocean area is a well-established field in Islamic studies: see, among others, Freitag–Clarence-Smith 1997, Ho 2006 and, specifically on the presence of the Haḍārīma in Eritrea, Miran 2012.
3 The author is mentioned in GAL II, pp. 418–419, S II, p. 617. See also Ayman Fu’ād Sayyid 1974: 228.
4 ḈAydarūs 2001: 444–453. The text has a strong hagiographical tone so that one could perhaps speak of an auto-hagiography better than an autobiography. A partial English translation of this section of the Nūr was published by Michael Cooperson as a contribution to a volume on Arabic autobiography (Reynolds 2001: 208–215).
6 The worthiness of the slave-mother of ḈAbd al-Qādir is proved by the fact that she died on Friday and her last words were the Islamic profession of faith (taḥlīl: “La ilāha illā allāh”). As sign of appreciation of her piousness, her grave was placed next to the shrine of her holy husband. The sometimes irritating hagiographical character of the “autobiography” of ḈAbd al-Qādir apparently was not noticed by the translator who interpreted it only according to some of the most current concepts of modern literary criticism (by the way, this highly disputable approach is followed in the whole volume edited by Reynolds).
Fame (and debts) beyond the sea

In his autobiographical note ʿAbd al-Qādir indulges in enumerating his achievements in all the branches of the Islamic traditional learning and in describing his works. Quite expectedly, this possibly annoying self-praising is done only ad maiorem Dei gloriam in strict accord with the traditional literary and theological paradigm of the “taḥaddūt bi-nīmat Allāh” (speaking of the divine grace: cfr. Quran 93:11).7

Among the peculiarities of ʿAbd al-Qādir’s personality, there is his bibliophilia: he was a passionate book collector who made many efforts to reach and acquire rare books everywhere in the world. Apparently he managed to make up a remarkable library putting together his findings with the volumes he inherited from his father.

ʿAbd al-Qādir died in 1628 in Aḥmadībād where he is buried.8 His literary production is wide and multifaceted.9

In prose, among others, he produced two commentaries on the Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn of al-Gazzālī, a commentary on the Ẓahīḥ al-Buḥārī and three texts on the biography of the Prophet. He wrote also poetry collected in a diwān called al-Rawāḥ al-ārīḍ wa-al-fayāḥ al-mustafīd which is still unpublished.

The most famous work of ʿAbd al-Qādir is without doubt the Nūr al-Sāfīr ʿan āḥbār al-qarn al-ʿašīr.10 The Nūr is basically a historiographical text organized according to a year after year annalistic structure and collecting information on events of the sole 10th century of the hegira. The greatest part of

---

7 Cfr. ʿAydarūs 2001: 453 where ʿAbd al-Qādir openly refers to this model mentioning some other famous authors who before him wrote about themselves. Among these authors, he quotes also the most famous representative of this literary genre Ǧalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī whose autobiography (on which see Sartain 1975 and 1975b) is exactly entitled al-Taḥaddūt bi-nīmat Allāh.

8 According to a gloss contained in the manuscript which was the base for the first printed edition of the work (see ʿAydarūs 2001: 444, note of the editor 1) the exact date of death of the author of the Nūr should be the 10th muḥarram 1037 (21 August 1627). The Nūr also mentions also the birth of the son of the author ʿṢayḥ b. ʿAbd al-Qādir al-ʿAydarūs (year 998 A.H. [1589–90], ʿAydarūs 2001: 592–593).

9 It is beyond the scope of the paper to try to build up a complete list of the works of ʿAbd al-Qādir which is not available so far. A comparison among the titles appearing in the sources, those mentioned by the author himself in his autobiography and those retraceable in the catalogues of manuscripts would surely produce a list of at least thirty different works.

10 A short but acute and insightful analysis of the Nūr al-Sāfīr and its author from a historical perspective can be found in the BA thesis of Carol Ross 2012. Ho 2006 makes wide use of the book from a specific anthropological perspective which is rightly criticized in Ross 2012: 5–6.
the data contained in the *Nūr* regards famous people whose date of death fell in the period between 901 and 1000 of the Islamic calendar (September 21, 1495 – October 7, 1592). According to the colophon of the author, the work was completed on 12th *rabī‘ al-ṣāni‘* 1012 A.H. (19th September 1603 C.E.).

In the first place, the *Nūr* can thus be considered as belonging to the genre of *wafayāt*.11 This is the way his author also sees its work:

“… I mentioned in [my work] the obituaries of the people whose date of death I managed to ascertain among all those who died in this century”. The persons whose biography is described in the *Nūr* are “the learned men, the saints, the judges, the men of culture, the kings and the prominent personalities” of any geographical origin (“Egyptian, Syrian, Hijazene, Yemenite, Anatolian, Indian, from the Mašriq and the Mağrib”).12

However, ʿAbd al-Qādir did not want to limit his work to a collection of obituaries but decided to “include also mention of events, happenings, marvelous stories. For every personage a peculiar event occurred to him will be mentioned together with some poetry he composed”. So in the end the hopes that his book will be “A book of tales, jurisprudence, history and belles lettres”.13

A cursory analysis of the names of the people mentioned in the *Nūr* shows that the author clearly focused his attention on his fellow members of the Bā ʿAlawī group, especially those still living in Yemen. These are the most recurrent persons and their biographies are the longest and most detailed. Besides them, ʿAbd al-Qādir also presents some information on Indian learned men and rulers, on scholars of different origin but living in Mecca or Medina and finally but interestingly on four Ottoman sultans14 and three sultans of Gujarat.15

---

11 Biographical dictionary made up of a collection of obituaries. The most famous representative of this genre is Ibn Hālliqān’s *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*. For a literary appreciation of this genre see e.g. Fahndrich 1973. It is remarkable that an apparently abridged version of the *Nūr* (mentioned in Ayman Fuʿād Sayyid 1974: 228) significantly carries the title *Wafayāt al-aḥbār fl al-qarn al-ṣāni‘* where the word *wafayāt* is mentioned in the very title.


Besides the obituaries, as stated in the introduction, the author notes also some important events in the Nūr: they are basically shocking facts (floods, plagues, tempests, fires, earthquakes, astronomical phenomena and other natural catastrophes or unusual events) which have certainly a historical relevance but are evidently mentioned also to impress the reader and arouse his emotions. Jurisprudence is also present, as the book contains two sections dealing with the problem of the permissibility of coffee 16 and an excursus on the legal status of the holy men and their miracles. 17 In the end, the Nūr can really be considered as a text of adab, a concoction of historiography, geography, entertaining and exciting stories and tales and interesting and educative information.18

The Nūr apparently enjoyed a relatively high reputation in the Arabic-Islamic world. The manuscript tradition of the work is so far very partially known: Brockelmann lists 9 manuscripts of which 7 are kept in India and two in Europe (London and Leipzig [fragment]). Ayman Fu’ad Sayyid mentions two more manuscripts kept respectively in Turkey and Egypt. The 2001 printed edition is based on a manuscript kept in the al-Ahqāf library in ‘Tarīm19 whose text has been collated with the editio princeps published in Bagdad by Muḥammad Rašīd al-Ṣaffār in 1934. Even if these data are too incomplete to draw any conclusion, one could tentatively infer that the main area of circulation of the text was India.

There are hints to the presence of the Nūr in Yemen, in Egypt and Syria. The work was supplemented by the above mentioned Yemeni learned man al-Šīlī who wrote a takmīla under the title al-Sanā‘ al-bāḥir bi-takmīl al-nūr al-sāfir.20 The Egyptian Zayn al-Dīn Muḥammad Madyan b. ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Ṭabrī [al-Qūshūnī] (d. after 1634) produced an excerpt of the Nūr containing only the information about the Egyptian personages mentioned by ‘Abd al-Qādir.21 Finally, the Nūr became one of the main sources of the famous

---

18 This highly mixed character of the work makes it difficult to use the Nūr as a reliable historical source (see on this point the remarks by Serjeant 1963: 39).
21 The work is contained the manuscript Leiden, University Library 1042 (GAL S II, p. 617; cfr. Voorhoeve 1957: 257). The same Muḥammad Madyan also wrote a collection of waṣfayat of famous people who died in the 10th century of the hiǧra (Voorhoeve 1957: 320–321).
Šağarât al-ḍahab fī ʿaḥbār man ʿaḥhab the huge biographical dictionary of the Syrian Ibn ʿImād al-ḥanbali (d. 1679).

Further research is however needed to assess the real success of the text in the Islamic world.

IMĀM AHMAD IN THE NŪR AL-SAʿĪR: THE TEXTS

For the scholars of Ethiopian Studies, the Nūr al-saʿīr has one very specific reason of interest. The text mentions twice the famous imām Ahmad b. Ibrāhīm, leader of the expansionist movement that the Muslims of the Horn carried out at the mid of the 16th century.22

There can be no doubt that the events of the ḡīhād of imām Ahmad found an immediate echo in India (particularly in Gujarat) and the fame of the leader of the Muslims of the Horn became established in the Subcontinent. Information about the momentous facts in Ethiopia did not remain only an oral tradition moving across the Indian Ocean but also entered the Islamic Arabic historiography of India. The imām and his military found thus their way into the Žafar al-wālīh bi-muzaffar wa-ʾālih a chronicle written by ʿAbdallāh Muhammad b. ʿUmar al-Makkī al-ʿAṣafī al-ʿUlağhānī (nicknamed al-Ḥāġgī Dabīr; d. after 1611) and devoted the history of the sultans of Gujarat and of the Muslim rulers in Northern India.23

In his work al-Ulāğhānī refers how he was impressed by the massive presence of brave soldiers of Ethiopian origin (the so-called Rūmīhānī) in the Gujarati army. He then acquired a copy of the Tuḥfat al-zamān taʾrīḥ man manna bihi al-karīm al-mannān24 and apparently was driven to the conclusion that the Ethiopian troops in India were made up of the descendants of the Christian Ethiopians defeated and enslaved in “al-Dayr”, where the troops of

22 The ḡīhād of imām Ahmad is probably the most important event in the history of pre-modern Ethiopia. Among the very wide bibliography, for a first orientation one may consult the general article F.-Chr. Muth, “Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Gūzī”, EAE 1 (2003), pp. 155–158.

23 For some general information on al-Ulāğhānī see GAL II, pp. 599–600. The work of ʿUlağhānī al-Gūzī was published by Denison Ross, 1910, 1921 and 1928 translated into English by Lokhandwala 1970 and 1974 (the translation is sometimes far from being accurate and many times definitively incorrect).

the imām overwhelmed the forces of the Negus. To reinforce his hypothesis and to prove to the readers the admirable courage of the Ethiopians, al-Ulūghānī decides to include an excerpt from the Futūḥ al-Ḥabaṣa in his text.

The long quotation of the Tuhfat al-zamān – Futūḥ al-Ḥabaṣa in al-Ulūghānī’s Ṣafar al-wāliḥ is well-known to the researchers on Islam in Ethiopia who do not fail to mention it when necessary, even if a detailed and careful textual analysis of the excerpt of the Futūḥ al-Ḥabaṣa contained in the Ṣafar al-wāliḥ is a task still to be accomplished.

The two mentions of the imām in the Nūr al-sāfīr (practically contemporary to the Ṣafar al-wāliḥ) have passed so far completely unnoticed. Here are the texts.

'Abd al-Qādir first refers to Aḥmad b. Ḳurayḥ, in his entry for the year [9]34 (1527-28):29

وفي سنة اربع وثلاثين اخذ الامام الجراد أحمد مدينة هر من بلاد الخبيشة وضعف عن مقاومته سلطافا وكان من ولد سعد الدين ولم يزل امر الامام بعد يعظم حتى صار الى ما صار اليه واستفتح كثيرا من بلاد الخبيشة وفهر

---

25 The reference is to the battle of Aldr, read al-Dayr by Denison Ross 1921: 578 and Eddir in the French translation of Basset 1897: 17–18, Basset 1897b: 39–40; the connection of this toponym with the Arabic word Dayr “monastery” is rejected by Basset 1897b: 147 note 1; however the same author lists the toponym under *DYR in the Arabic index (Basset 1897: 356), thus considering al as the definite article. It was the first big clash between the imām’s forces and the Christian army. According to the Futūḥ al-Ḥabaṣa some of the prisoners caught there were actually sent by Aḥmad b. Ḳurayḥ to the emir Sulaymān of Zabīd who enslaved them (Basset 1897: 19, Basset 1897b: 43–44). It is theoretically possible that some of these slaves were further sold on the Indian market and subsequently freed to become part of several different local armies (on the Habšīs – the Ethiopians of India most of which were employed as soldiers – see R. Pankhurst, “India, relations with”, EAE 3 [2007], pp. 142–145, esp. p. 143).


28 One more text about Ethiopia which was known in India is the Sīrat al-Ḥabaṣa of al-Haymī (d. 1660). Two manuscripts of this work have been detected so far in the Subcontinent, one in Bankipore and another in Rampur (van Donzel 1986: 77).

In the year 34 the imām, the garād Ahmad, conquered the city of Harar in the land of al-Habaša. The sultan of the city was too weak to resist to him, even if he was one of the descendants of Sa’d al-Dīn. The power of the imām steadily kept increasing and became as strong as it eventually was. He conquered a big part of the land of al-Habaša and crushed the unbelievers. He kept persistently carrying out the ghād and making military expeditions for the cause of God. From him about his military activity stories are transmitted which dazzle so much the mind that I heard someone saying: “No conquests are equal to his but those of the Companions of the Prophet”. How excellent is the one who reaches that level! Uncommon tales are narrated about his bravery. It is said that all his behaviours were based on the laws of the noble šarī’a to such a point that he was setting apart a fifth of the loot to give it to the relatives of the Prophet.

A pious person saw the Prophet with Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, ʿUtbān and ʿAffī and the imām was with them. The one who had the vision narrates: “I said: ‘O messenger of God, who is this man?’ The Prophet responded: ‘This man will grow up and thanks to him the country of Abyssinia will be restored’. This vision happened before the

---

30 I prefer the variant ţarād (i.e. garād, a title carried by local rulers in the Horn of Africa; on it see A. Gori, “Gāraḏ”, EAT 2 [2005], 696–697) attested in the manuscript of al-Aḥṣaf instead of ḡawād which appears in the printed editions (ʿAydarūs 2001: 265 note 1). The modern editors evidently corrected a word which was unknown to them. It is remarkable that the imām Ahmad is given the title of garād only in a couple of Christian sources (“Letter of 1550 from the King of Abyssinia to the King of Portugal” in Whiteway 1902: 116–117 and “Letter from the King of Abyssinia to the Governor of India which was despatched [sic!] in 1551” in Whiteway 1902: 120) but no Islamic text except the one I am here discussing calls him so.
imām had reached his high rank”. Someone saw al-‘Aydarūs saying: ‘Do not call him sultan nor emir! Call him imām of the Muslims’.

To sum up this man was a sign of God the Highest (may God the Highest have mercy of him!).

The second passage of the Nūr about Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm can be found under the heading “year [9]39 (1532-33)”.\(^1\)

In the year 39, my grandfather šayḫ sayyid ‘Abdallāh al-‘Ayyūs came back from the haǧǧ to ‘Aden in a caravan. He ordered to his son, my father, to go to the imām Aḥmad al-ḡārād\(^2\) in Abyssinia because of a debt which had incurred to him. He did that and reached the goal in the best and easiest way. He came back to his father in Aden in a very short time. God settled the debt that he [the imām] had made with him [ṣayḥ ‘Abdallāh] during his journey to the haǧǧ. I saw a document written by the hand of my father that the reward of al-Ḡarād\(^3\) for them was 1500 golden pieces.\(^4\)

These two passages of the Nūr al-sāfīr are interesting at least from two points of view: they provide us with some previously unknown details about the biography of imām Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm and they give us further insight into the circulation of information and texts among Ethiopia, Yemen and Gujarat in the 16th century.

IMĀM ĀḤMAD IN THE NŪR AL-SĀFĪR: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE TEXTS

Differently from Ulūḡhānī, ‘Abd al-Qādir ‘Ayyūs neither quote nor refers in any way to the Futūḥ al-Ḥabaṣa in the Nūr. Hints to a possible

---

\(^1\) ‘Ayyūs 2001: 273.

\(^2\) As in the previous passage, I choose the variant al-ḡārād attested in the manuscript of al-Aḥqāf instead of the reading al-ḡawād introduced by the editors of the printed edition.

\(^3\) The printed text reads al-ḡawād but I correct in garād according to the two other similar occurrences.

\(^4\) The episode is mentioned also by Ross 2012: 39–40.
knowledge of Šihāb al-Dīn’s work by al-Ą-Aydarūs could be however be detected in his text.

The story of the holy man (ba’d al-ahyār) who had a vision of the Prophet and the four ḥalīfa-s foretelling the exceptional fate of the īmām is narrated also in the Futūh al-Ḥabaša where the dreamer otherwise unknown Sa’d b. Yūnus al-Ą-Argī and in his dream the third ḥalīfa ʿUṭmān is absent.\(^{36}\)

The brief mention of Abū Bakr b. ʿAbdallāh al-Ą-Aydarūs (d. 1508 the “patron saint” of Aden)\(^{37}\) appearing to some unidentified person to order him to call Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm “imām” and not “emir nor sultan” corresponds exactly to a famous passage of the Futūh al-Ḥabaša.\(^{38}\) The granting of the title of īmām to Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm was a relevant moment in the career of the personage and played a crucial role in the creation of his public (religious-political) image marking his irreconcilable rupture with the rulers of the Walasma’ dynasty and his stepping up to the leadership of the ǧihād movement.\(^{39}\)

In direct connection with this hagiographic episode, the Nūr al-sāfīr highlights the victory of īmām Aḥmad on the ruler of Harar and the beginning of his government in the city. So far no exact date for this real turning point in the history of the whole area has been fixed and any time between 1525 and

---

\(^{35}\) Basset 1897: 13; Basset 1897b: 29–30; for the passage in Uluğbānī see Denison Ross 1921: 579.

\(^{36}\) On this episode see Cerulli 1971: 118, note 22 who refuses to consider the absence of ʿUṭmān as due to Shiīte influence. It is remarkable that the text of Uluğbānī has the odd reading “sānaša” which corresponds to “naša’a fa-ṣalāha” of the Nūr and “yuṣliḥu allāhu ta’ālā bih” (Basset 1897: 13) of the Futūh.

\(^{37}\) The text of the Nūr has only “Aydarūs” which is evidently used as an antonomastic for the renowned holy man.

\(^{38}\) Basset 1897: 13; 1897b: 27–29. In the Futūh the vision has one more protagonist: together with Abū Bakr b. ʿAbdallāh al-Ą-Aydarūs an elsewhere unknown Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Wāḥid al-Quraṣī al-Tūnisī appears in dream to ṣāḥa Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Dāhmānī al-Magribī. This last ṣāḥa is actually the son of the previous one. His genealogy mentioned in Basset 1897: 4 runs: Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Wāḥid b. Yūsuṭ b. Yaʿqūb al-Quraṣī al-Tūnisī al-Dāhmānī al-Magribī. The name is not retraceable in the most common repertoires. However, his nasab makes him a descendant of the famous Tunisian saint of Qurayshite origin Abū Yusuf Yaʿqūb al-Dāhmānī al-Tūnisī (d. 1224, buried in al-Qayrāwān; the town of al-Dāhmānī in Northern Tunisia derives its name from this holy man). The mention of this personage (and other individuals) of Magribī origin in the Futūh is remarkable and would deserve more in-depth investigation.

\(^{39}\) On the usage of the title īmām by Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm see Wagner 1975 and Cerulli 1971.
1527 has been indicated as a possible chronological location.\textsuperscript{40} In his \textit{Nûr} ‘Abd al-Qâdir dates the episode to 1527-28 thus making the later dating of the event more reliable.

The reference to the defeated emir of Harar as a descendant of Sa’d al-Dîn proves that the ‘Abd al-Qâdir was acquainted with the history of the Muslims of Ethiopia and with sulṭân Sa’d al-Dîn who had acquired great fame as a martyr of the Islamic cause.\textsuperscript{41}

Beside these few specific data and elements, the passage of the \textit{Nûr} contains only a general praise of the \textit{imâm} and of his political and military activity in an almost panegyric tone which resembles many sections of the \textit{Futûh al-Ḥabasha} without literally reproducing any of them.

The basic reason for ‘Abd al-Qâdir to extoll Ahmad b. Ibrâhîm is that he was a righteous and pious ruler who implemented the Islamic law in every aspect of the social life.\textsuperscript{42} The conquest of Ethiopia and his victory on the Christians also deserve to be admired: the \textit{imâm} was a courageous fighter and his bravery and military skills are comparable only to those of the companions of the Prophet.\textsuperscript{43}

It is evident that at the moment when he wrote his \textit{Nûr} ‘Abd al-Qâdir was perfectly aware of the death of the \textit{imâm}.\textsuperscript{44} Most probably the author also knew of the disastrous outcomes of the \textit{imâm}’s attempt to conquer Ethiopia.\textsuperscript{45} However, the final defeat of Ahmad b. Ibrâhîm does not apparently diminish the value of his \textit{gihâd} which remains worthy to be heartedly admired.

The second short passage that ‘Abd al-Qâdir al-Aydarus devotes to \textit{imâm} Ahmad in his \textit{Nûr} reveals a so far totally unknown detail of the biography of the “conqueror of Abyssinia”.


\textsuperscript{42} Particularly relevant is the mention of the correct sharing of the booty a fifth of which was granted by the \textit{imâm} to the descendants of the Prophet (to whom also ‘Abd al-Qâdir belonged) present in his army.

\textsuperscript{43} The reference to the Companions of the Prophet could not be casual: one could perceive in it a underlying reference to the “first hîgra” to Ethiopia and to the presence of the \textit{ṣâḥâba} at the court of the \textit{nâqâsî}.

\textsuperscript{44} ‘Abd al-Qâdir uses the eulogy for a deceased person (rahimahu allâh ta’âlî) mentioning the name of the \textit{imâm} for the last time at the end of the section.

\textsuperscript{45} It is noteworthy that the text has the verb \textit{istuṭfaḥa} instead of \textit{fataḥa}.
According to the text, the grandfather of ٍAbd al-Qâdir, ٍAbdallâh came back to Aden in 1532-33 from his pilgrimage to Mecca and sent his son (the father of the author), Šayb b. ٍAbdallâh to Ethiopia to meet personally īmâm Aḥmad. The aim of the mission was to obtain the settlement of a debt of 1,500 pieces of gold that the leader of the Ethiopian ġihâd had incurred in while ٍAbdallâh was travelling to the ḥaǧǧ. No further detail is given and the background and circumstances of the event remain completely obscure.

The passage of the Nūr confirms that the īmâm Aḥmad b. Ibrâhîm had direct and tight relationships not only with local rulers, military commanders and the Ottoman authorities in Yemen but also with the most outstanding representatives of the Yemenite intellectual and political elite (as the ٍAydarûs branch of the Bâ ٍAlawi can be considered).

Besides, this section of the Nūr gives a clear hint as to how ٍAbd al-Qâdir came to know about the events in Ethiopia.

It is well known that members of the Bâ ٍAlawi were surely present in the rows of the army of the īmâm and their direct participation to the events quite naturally fostered the diffusion of information about the war within the different branches of the group in the Horn of Africa, in Yemen and in India.

In the case of ٍAbd al-Qâdir al-Aydarûs, however, it was not the general network of the ḥadârîma expatriates but a specific, private family connection the way by which the news about the ġihâd in Ethiopia and its leader reached India and were included in the Nūr.

Finally, the texts I have analysed do not provide a clear prove that ٍAbd al-Qâdir directly knew or read the Futûh al-Habaša. However, his family background and his bibliophilia make reasonable to hypothesize that he was acquainted with the text of Šihâb al-Dîn’s chronicle.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES


46 On the presence of Yemenite sayyîd-s in the army of the īmâm Aḥmad see Martin 1975 and Gori 1995.


Ross, C. 2012, Unveiling Identity. Discovering ‘Abd al-Qādir b. Shayh b. ‘Abdallāh al-‘Aydarūs in al-Nūr al-sāfīr ‘an aḥbār al-qarn al-‘aṣīr, a thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Bachelor of Arts with Honors, Department of Middle Eastern and South Asian Studies, Atlanta: Emory University.


Alessandro Gori
University of Copenhagen
frd322@hum.ku.dk