

STUDIES IN *TA'RIKH AL-FATTĀSH*, III: KA[°]TI ORIGINS

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The first article in this series investigated the nature of the authorship of the *Ta'rikh al-fattāsh*.¹ Was there more than one Maḥmūd Ka[°]ti who wrote that chronicle? Even if there was, we knew little about the originator of the chronicle, except that he seemed to be in some sense a contemporary of Askiyā *al-ḥājj* Muḥammad.²

Now documentation that has come to light in Timbuktu provides some information on the origins of Maḥmūd Ka[°]ti, and may eventually help us to solve the question of the multiplicity or otherwise of persons of that name.

Ismaël Diadié Haidara, a descendant of the Ka[°]ti clan, kindly invited me in August 1999 to examine some manuscripts belonging to members of the Ka[°]ti clan in Kirchamba (in the Goundam region), which he had brought to Timbuktu in order to better preserve and analyze them in what is now called Fondo Kati.³ Among these manuscripts were some with marginal notes by Alfa[°] Ka[°]ti Maḥmūd b. °Alī b. al-Mutawakkil bi'llāh b. Ziyād al-Qūṭī, or sometimes simply

1 'Studies in the *Ta'rikh al-fattāsh*: (1) its authors and textual history', *Research Bulletin* (Centre of Arabic Documentation), 5, 1969, 57-65.

2 Levtzion argues quite convincingly that he was a contemporary in the sense of having been born during his reign, rather than having accompanied the askiya on pilgrimage, as 'MS C only' asserts; see N. Levtzion, 'A seventeenth-century chronicle by Ibn al-Mukhtār: a critical study of *Ta'rikh al-fattāsh*', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, xxxiv, 1971, 571-93.

3 I give thanks to Ismaël Haidara for granting me permission to publish this purchase document.

Alfa° Ka°ti Maḥmūd b. °Alī. A hint of Maḥmūd Ka°ti's origins, however, was contained in a note of sale on the last folio of the first of two volumes of a copy of the *Shifā'* of Qādī °Iyād. This indicates that °Alī b. Ziyād⁴ al-Qūṭī purchased the volumes in Tuwāt whilst emigrating from Toledo in the central Iberian peninsula to *bilād al-sūdān*, which in this context is to be identified with West Africa.

The question is: is °Alī b. al-Mutawakkil bi'llāh b. Ziyād al-Qūṭī to be identified with °Alī b. Ziyād al-Qūṭī? It is recorded in the *Ta°rīkh al-sūdān* that the father of Maḥmūd Ka°ti was al-Mutawakkil.⁵ It is possible, therefore, that al-Mutawakkil was a by-name of °Alī. If this is so, then Maḥmūd Ka°ti would have been a grandson of °Alī b. Ziyād [al-Qūṭī]. If °Alī b. Ziyād [al-Qūṭī] was in Tuwāt in 1468 on his way to *bilād al-sūdān*, then presumably he would have arrived at a West African destination the same year or at least within a year or two of that date. We may postulate that he married a local woman—a Soninke—since the *nisba* used by Maḥmūd Ka°ti, Wa°kurī, indicates Soninke ethnicity. If these presumptions are correct, then Ka°ti's male ancestry would go back to indigenous Spanish forebears, since the *nisba* 'Qūṭī' means 'Gothic', and the note states that the purchaser has come from Toledo.

Toledo had effectively come under Christian rule as early as 1085, but some Muslims continued to live there, at least until 1502, when a royal decree gave them the option of baptism or exile.⁶ However, one can imagine that by the mid-fifteenth century the pressure was mounting on Muslims, not only in Toledo but throughout Spain. Thus it is no surprise that °Alī b. Ziyād and others—he mentions his 'companions'

4 We read this as 'Ziyād', despite the fact that what appears in the note is 'R-yād'; see below for an explanation.

5 See °Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sa°dī, *Ta°rīkh al-Sūdān*, Arabic text, ed. O Houdas, Paris 1898, 211, trans. in J.O. Hunwick, *Timbuktu and the Songhay Empire*, Leiden: E.J. Brill 1999, 260.

6 See E. Lévi-Provençal & J.P. Molénat, art. 'Ṭulayṭula', *EI* (2), x, 604-7.

(*aṣḥāb*)—should have decided to emigrate, presumably not very long before 1468. Why they should have decided to make for *bilād al-sūdān* is unclear. Indeed, we do not know whether the decision to make this their destination was taken before they left Toledo, or after they arrived in Tuwāt, where they might have learnt something about Timbuktu as a city of commerce and Islamic learning.

*Text*⁷

اشتريت هذا الكتاب المسمى بالشفاء للقاضي عياض /
 المزخرف من صاحبه الاول محمد عمر بشرى صحيح بمبلغ
 قدره خمسة واربعون / مثقالا ذهبنا عينا مدفوعا بكامله
 للمشتري / منه بشهود اصحابنا ووافق هذا شهرين بعد
 وصولنا الى توات من بلادنا طليطلة عاصمة / القوط ونحن
 الآن قي طريقنا الى بلاد السودان طالبين من الله سبحانه
 وتعالى⁸ ان يرزقنا الاستقرار هناك وبه كتبت / عبد ربه علي
 بن ريباد القوطي شهر⁹ المحرم سنة ٨٧٢ الهجرة النبوية

7 To examine the manuscript text, visit the following website:
<http://www.sum.uio.no/research/mali/timbuktu/Kati/manus15b.jpg>.

8 I.e. تعالى .

9 MS. in fact reads: شر .

Translation

I bought this illuminated book called *al-Shifā'* by the *Qādī* °Iyād¹⁰ from its first owner Muḥammad b. °Umar in a [legally] valid sale, for the sum of 45 *mithqāls* of gold cash (*dhahab^{an}* °*ayn^{an}*), paid in its entirety to the one from whom it was purchased with the witness of our companions. This took place two months after our arrival in Tuwāt coming from our land (*bilād*) of Toldeo, capital of the Goths. And we are now on our way to the *bilād al-sūdān*, asking of God Most High that He should grant us repose there.

I, the servant of his Lord °Alī b. Ziyād¹¹ al-Qūtī, wrote [this in] the month of Muḥarram of the year 873 of the Prophetic *hijra*.¹²

10 The full title of the work is *al-Shifā' bi-ta°rīf ḥuqūq al-Muṣṭafā*, and the author's name Abū 'l-Faḍl °Iyād b. Mūsā al-Yaḥṣubī (d. 544/1149). The book is the primary example in Islamic literature of veneration for the Prophet, and is widely read and taught in North and West Africa.

11 In fact, the manuscript reads رِيَاد, but there is no Arabic name corresponding to these letters. The letters *rā'* and *zā'* are only differentiated by a single dot on *zā'* and nothing on *rā'*. Hence we presume that the writer of the note intended to write Ziyād, but either omitted the dot, or wrote it so lightly that over the centuries it disappeared from view.

12 Muḥarram 873 corresponds to 21 July–18 August 1468.