

## SHORTER NOTICES

## THREE STUDIES ON THE SANŪSIYYA

*An Islamic Alliance. ʿAlī Dīnār and the Sānūsīyya, 1906-1916* by Jay Spaulding and Lidwien Kapteijns. Evanston: Northwestern University Press 1994. ix, 190 pp., \$49.95; *La Légende noire de la Sanūsīyya. Une confrérie musulmane saharienne sous le regard français (1840-1930)* by Jean-Louis Triaud. Paris: Éditions de la maison des sciences de l'homme 1995, 2 vols., xii, 1151 pp., FF 250; *Sufi and Scholar on the Desert Edge: Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Sanūsī and his Brotherhood* by Knut S. Vikør. London: Chr. Hurst and Evanston: Northwestern University Press 1995, x, 310 pp., £37.50.

Three books have appeared recently on various aspects of the Sanūsīyya brotherhood, two of them by editors of *SAJHS*, the third by the editor of our sister journal, *ISSS*. In diachronic order, they cover the founder's life and the early history of the order (Vikør), the confrontation with France and the French conception of it (Triaud), and the relations the order had with the Darfur sultan ʿAlī Dīnār (Kapteijns and Spaulding).

*Sufi and Scholar on the Desert Edge* discusses the history of the Sanūsīyya in the first fifteen years of its existence, until the death of the founder Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Sanūsī in 1859. Focusing on the intellectual history of al-Sanūsī, it presents him in the continuation of an intellectual tradition of Sufism and Islamic science that dominated the centres of his education, Fez and Mecca, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Giving also an 'internal' view of the early structures of the brotherhood in Cyrenaica from Sanūsī sources, the book rejects the idea of al-Sanūsī as a politically motivated reformist, seeing his self-conception as basically scholarly and pious.

*La Légende noire de la Sanūsīyya* follows the same line of reasoning, and addresses the question of why this pious organization

was seen as such a threat and an enemy by the French. It is thus a detailed study of the history of French views on the order, tracing many strands in development of this 'black legend', from Saint-Simonian anticlericalism to the frustrated plots of a local French agent. The work also provides a wealth of detailed biographical data on many of the main French sources for nineteenth-century Islam in the Maghreb and Africa. It includes in an appendix about 90 pages of Sanūsī documents from Chad and Aïr, in Arabic and translation.

*An Islamic Alliance* concentrates on sources, and is a collection of thirty documents (also in Arabic and translation) on the relation between the order and ʿAlī Dīnār between 1906-1916. This is the period when the order was under pressure, first from France in Chad, and later from the Italy in Libya; while ʿAlī Dīnār faced the Anglo-Egyptian forces in the east. On the basis of these documents, the authors trace what they consider to be a 'real, passionately felt alliance' between the two embattled Islamic leaders. This is demonstrated both in the diplomatic and in the trade documents included, which go up to ʿAlī Dīnār's death at the hand of the condominium forces.

\*\*\*\*\*

#### FAMINE AND POWER

*Hunger und Herrschaft. Vorkoloniale und frühe koloniale Hungerkrisen im Nordschad* by Astrid Meier. Stuttgart: Frantz Steiner Verlag 1994. 303 pp, DM 94,-

The topic of this dissertation is the relation between politics and ecology in the development of famine in Chad, and in particular Wadai, around the time of colonization. The author concentrates on the term 'violence', which she finds to be the key element in the development of famine, rather than nature or ecology. She develops this both for the immediate pre-colonial period and for the time of French colonization.

The work is based largely on the observations of pre-colonial

travellers, together with early French colonial reports. Sparse as these may seem, it has given the author the basis for a wide range of quantitative estimates. However, she does warn that 'the exactitude of all numbers [in the book] must be questioned, they must above all serve to clarify trend that may also be led out of non-quantifiable data'. In spite of this, the book does contain a welcome addition of quantitative data for a region where such data is not ubiquitous.

ksv