

CHAPTER XX

GOTHS IN THE LANDS OF THE BLACKS

A PRELIMINARY SURVEY OF THE KA'TI LIBRARY IN TIMBUKTU

by
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A decade ago, in 1991, I was sitting in a Moorish café in Granada, in southern Spain. The café was styled to recall the atmosphere of the times when Islam reigned in al-Andalus, the name the Arabs gave to the Iberian Peninsula. Muslim rule there lasted almost eight centuries, from 711 to 1492, and during this time al-Andalus was a leading cultural and intellectual center important not only within the Muslim world, but for the development of Christian and Jewish thought in Europe as well. The name 'al-Andalus' still evokes the idea of a cultural apogee, of the refinement of arts at princely courts such as the Alhambra, of enchanting gardens recreating oases in the middle of city walls, of the flourishing of love poetry, of the sophistication of Islamic mystical thought, of religious tolerance and the bringing together of the best minds of mankind, not to speak of such mundane things as the introduction of new agricultural produce, the improvement of cultivation methods, or the sanitation of cities. True, al-Andalus is a 'paradise lost', and the image it conjures may not contain all the elements that made up Muslim Spain. But this is not what matters here. Al-Andalus remains not only a part of Muslims' heritage to be proud of, but also a model to measure oneself against and aspire to.

As I was sitting in this Moorish café in Granada, the last capital of al-Andalus, sipping my tea and trying to decipher the Arabic poetry decorating the walls, I noticed a tall, slim African man with fine features sitting in a corner next to me. We struck up a conversation, and he told me that he came from Timbuktu, in Mali in West Africa, and was studying here in Spain. 'Why Spain?' I wanted to know. 'Well,' he said, 'my ancestors are from here. They were Spanish Muslims forced to leave their home

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country when Christian rulers moved further and further south, ever more squeezing the sovereign Muslim territories until the final fall of Granada in 1492. Like hundreds of thousands of others, my ancestors crossed the Straits of Gibraltar to seek refuge on the other side. Unlike most, however, they did not stay on the Mediterranean's southern shore. They moved on across the Sahara to the Niger Bend, to Timbuktu where they settled and married and had children and became important officials of state and ... well, I am one of their offspring.'

I looked at him in amazement and, I must admit, all but disbelief. Stories of wise strangers coming from faraway lands to settle among the natives, marrying the king's daughter and introducing a new religion and new material or cultural techniques are among the stock repertoire of African (and not only African) historical traditions, and modern historians generally do well not to take them all too literally. And from my studies of Sudanese history I was very familiar with imagined genealogies tailored to establish and maintain social or political claims. Most Northern Sudanese today, Arabs and non-Arabs alike, sport pedigrees that make them descendants of 'Abbās, the uncle of the Prophet. These genealogies can be demonstrated to be products of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when the Islamic identity of the leading classes and then of the majority of the population in the Nilotic Sudan became much more pronounced.¹ Sometimes the newly established family trees were poorly made. Thus, for example, I have analyzed in depth the pedigree of the Sudan's most important Sufi leaders, the Mīrghanī family, who base their claim to prominence largely on their Sharīfī status, that is, their descent from the Prophet. Proof of this, they say, is a written pedigree found in a chest in al-Ṭā'if, the summer resort of Mecca, and copied by the famous eighteenth-century polymath al-Zabīdī. Whatever al-Zabīdī copied, he did not study it too well, for it linked the Mīrghanīs to the Prophet through the twelve Shī'ī *imāms*, the last of whom, as is well known, disappeared at a young

¹ Jay Spaulding, "The utility of traditional Sudanese genealogical literature", in id., *Kings of sun and shadow: a history of the 'Abdallāb provinces of the Northern Sinnār Sultanate, 1500-1800 A. D.*, Ph.D. thesis in Political Science, Columbia University, 1971, pp. 286-97; R.S. O'Fahey & Jay Spaulding, *Kingdoms of the Sudan*, London: Methuen, 1974, p. 20 (= *Studies in African History*; 9). For a nuanced reappraisal of ethnic identities and indigenous historical traditions from a performance point of view, see Abdullahi Ali Ibrahim, "Breaking the pen of Harold MacMichael: the Ja'aliyyīn identity revisited", in: *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 21 (1988), pp. 217-31.

age without leaving any offspring.²

So the ‘historicity’ of such presumed ancestors must often be questioned, and the accounts should rather be analyzed for their ‘ideological’ content. I was therefore inclined to view the story of my Malian friend as an attempt to link himself to the glory of al-Andalus, perhaps somehow mediated through the Moroccan expedition that conquered Timbuktu and the Niger Bend in 1591. But ‘no’, he assured me, ‘we came there long before the Moroccans, and I am preparing to write a history of the Spanish emigrants to Timbuktu.’

I took his card and stuck it away and returned to my Sudanese studies and forgot all about him. Timbuktu has long had its own mystique as a fabled city of riches at the far end of the world, but I had read enough to know that the streets there were not paved with gold as so many an explorer’s imagination would have it.

Then, one day in September 1999, I was on a nostalgia visit to Bergen, Norway, where my own imagination has ample sources to feed upon. The visit was timed to meet up with John Hunwick, the leading specialist of West African Islamic history, who had then just come back from his latest visit to Timbuktu. With him he brought a handful of photographs of Arabic manuscripts from a newly unearthed collection there which he was very excited about. Among these were samples from a beautifully decorated copy of the *Kitāb al-Shifā’ bi-ta’rīf huqūq al-Muṣṭafā*, a much-read work of pious veneration of the Prophet composed by the twelfth-century Moroccan author al-Qāḍī ‘Iyād.³ One of the pages carried the following note:

I bought this illuminated book called *al-Shifā’* by Qāḍī ‘Iyād from its previous owner Muḥammad b. ‘Umar in a [legally] valid sale, for the sum of 45 *mithqāls* of pure gold [= roughly 1.5 oz], paid in its entirety to the one from whom it was purchased, as witnessed by our companions. This took place two months after our arrival in Tuwāt [a group of oases in the present-day Algerian Sahara], coming from our city (*bilād*) of Toledo, capital of the Goths. We are now on our way to the land of the blacks (*bilād al-Sūdān*), asking of God Most High that He should grant us repose there. Written by the servant of his Lord ‘Alī b. Ziyād the Goth (*al-Qūṭī*) in the month of

² Albrecht Hofheinz, “Sons of a Hidden Imām: the genealogy of the Mīrghānī family”, in: *Sudanic Africa*, 3 (1992), pp. 9-27.

³ On the author, ‘Iyād b. Mūsā (476-544/1088-1149), see Tawfiq Fahd, art. “‘Iyād b. Mūsā”, in: *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Edn., Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978.

Muḥarram of the year 873 of the Prophetic *hijra* [July/August 1468].⁴

What a find! A documentary trace of a Spanish Muslim emigrating from his home country to West Africa in 1468, a quarter century before the fall of Granada, and much earlier than the Moroccan expedition to Timbuktu of 1591. And it was not a man who had fled from Christian armies advancing into Muslim territory. It was a man who came from Toledo, capital of the kingdom of Castile in Central Spain since it had fallen to the Christians in the eleventh century. This was a Spanish Muslim from a family that had lived under Christian rule for almost four hundred years. And it was a man who identified himself as a “Goth”, along with the people of his country. These “Goths” (*al-Qūṭ*, in Arabic) are known in English as the ‘Visigoths’ or ‘Western Goths’. They were a section of the Gothic peoples who originated in southern Scandinavia and spread over much of Europe causing the downfall of the Roman Empire, together with other migrant peoples, chiefly of Germanic extraction. The Visigoths even moved into North Africa where they reached as far as modern Tunisia. They were the rulers of Spain before being overthrown by the Muslims in 711. So our friend ‘Alī b. Ziyād the Goth identified himself as someone whose ‘ethnic’ identity, if one wants to use the term, was not Arab or Berber such as those who had crossed over from North Africa to conquer the Iberian Peninsula for Islam, but as someone whose roots on the Peninsula were much deeper, whose people were the ‘original’, so to speak, rulers of Spain. He was clearly a good Muslim who at some point in his life decided that conditions under Christian rule had become so intolerable that he chose to sacrifice his home for his faith.⁵ He also spent

⁴ John Hunwick has meanwhile published this note: “Studies in *Taʿriḫ al-Fattāsh*, III: Kaʿti origins”, in: *Sudanic Africa*, 12 (2001), pp. 111-114 (<http://www.hf.uib.no/institutter/smi/sa/12/12TF3.pdf>). The translation here has been adapted from Hunwick’s published version. For an image of the original page, see <http://www.sum.uio.no/research/mali/timbuktu/kati/manus15b.jpg>. For more background, see also John Hunwick, “The Islamic manuscript heritage of Timbuktu” (<http://www.sum.uio.no/research/mali/timbuktu/manuscript%20heritage%20timbuk.pdf>).

⁵ It remains unclear exactly when ‘Alī b. Ziyād left Toledo. The organizers of an exhibition on the Kati Collection in Seville in May 2003 link his departure to the “civil war” in Toledo in July 1467 (“los Fuegos de la Magdalena”, i.e. the “Fires on the day of Mary Magdalene” [22 July]) (*Fondo Kati: Una Biblioteca Andalusí en Tombuctú*, ed. Miguel Camacho Ramirez, s.l. [Sevilla]: Junta de Andalucía, Consejería de Relaciones Institucionales, s.d. [2003], p. 15). This refers to an armed uprising of former Jews who had

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a good sum of money on a pious book. But he was not an Arab. He was, in modern terms, a Spanish Muslim.

I suddenly remembered the story of my Malian acquaintance from that Moorish café which for a decade I had completely forgotten. Maybe it was indeed not only an imagined ancestry that the man from Timbuktu had been talking about?

The manuscript on which the amazing trace of ‘Alī the Goth traversing

been forced to adopt Christianity (derogatorily referred to as *marranos*); in the course of the events, their houses were burnt down and the fires eventually spread to other parts of the city, destroying no less than 1600 houses. Many *marranos* and Christians died in the fighting and the flames; the leaders of the revolt were captured and hanged (*The Jewish encyclopedia: a descriptive record of the history, religion, literature, and customs of the Jewish people from the earliest times to the present day*, prepared ... under the direction of Cyrus Adler et al.; ed. Isidore Singer et al, 12 vols., New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1900-1916, s.v. ‘Marano’). To link ‘Alī b. Ziyād’s exile to these events – let alone to present him as a participant in the uprising, as the Seville catalog does – remains completely conjectural. The date given in the catalog for ‘Alī’s departure from Toledo (22 May 1468) evidently rests on a misunderstanding of the text of the *Shifā’* purchase note translated above – the book was bought in Muḥarram 873 [between 21 July and 18 Aug. 1468] two months after ‘Alī’s arrival in Tuwāt, not two months after his departure from Toledo.

Any attempt to further trace the origins of ‘Alī b. Ziyād (the Seville catalog links him to several earlier historical figures referred to as “Ibn al-Qūṭiyya”, from Seville, Córdoba, Carmona, and Ronda) must remain futile given the material at hand. What is clear, however, is that the use of the *nisba* “al-Qūṭī” indicates a wish to identify its bearer as belonging to the ‘original’ Spanish nobility. This must be seen in the context of a ruptured religious landscape, mass assimilation, and severe pressure on group identities where ‘Moors’ and ‘Jews’ were increasingly marked off and barred from public rights. In this period of transformation and reorientation, successful claim to Gothic descent was a prominent strategy to assert one’s nobility (*hidalguía*) (cf. David Nirenberg, “Mass conversion and genealogical mentalities: Jews and Christians in fifteenth-century Spain”, in: *Past & Present*, 174 (2002), 1, pp. 3-41). One may speculate that our hero had attempted to assert, in the treacherous religio-ethnic landscape of fifteenth-century Toledo, that although a Muslim, he was as good a Gothic nobleman as his Christian compatriots. Having failed to secure his claims in Castile, he went into exile, stubbornly clinging to his ‘Gothic’ identity as he moved across the Sahara to create himself a new home, as a nobleman, in the Land of the Blacks.

But speculation can only help to illustrate a possible aspect of reality; it should not be taken for more. Under different circumstances, and depending on the goal of the genealogical enterprise, wholly different speculations might arise. I cannot resist here from mentioning the fact – merely for the sake of stimulating the reader’s imagination – that among the distinguished *marrano* families in Toledo there was one that bore the name of ‘Cota’ (see Francisco Cantera Burgos, *La familia judeoconversa de los Cota de Toledo*, Lección inaugural del curso de 1969 leída en día 21 de enero, Madrid: Academia de Doctores de Madrid, 1969).

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the Saharan desert was recorded belonged to a collection of several thousand items rediscovered by Dr. Ismael Diadié Haïdara, a young Malian scholar, in the houses of several branches of his family scattered over different villages around Timbuktu. Ismael, it turned out, was none other than my friend from Granada. He had studied in Spain where he still spends part of the year, and had presented several publications on Spanish-African themes since I had met him.⁶

The collection that Ismael had unearthed turned out to go back to the earliest known historian of the region. It grew from the personal library of Maḥmūd Ka'ti who lived in the sixteenth century and is known as the author – or perhaps rather, the first author – of the famed *Tārīkh al-Fattāsh*, or *The Searcher's Chronicle*, the earliest extant written history of the empires of Mali and Songhay.⁷ These empires dominated the Niger Bend between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries. Following Maḥmūd Ka'ti, his descendants added to the library until the nineteenth century. Ismael found the manuscripts buried in desk drawers, closets, and under beds in the houses of various branches of his extended family. Many were in a fragile condition, and in an effort to salvage them, Ismael began in 1990 to move them to his own house in Timbuktu where he showed a small sample to John Hunwick in August 1999.

This sample was enough to convince Hunwick that the collection “constitutes an historical treasure that may rightly be dubbed the find of the century in terms of African history.”⁸ To all appearance, what had come to light was the oldest preserved Arabic library ever discovered south of the Sahara. Unable at the time to return to Timbuktu, Hunwick

⁶ *El Bajá Yawdar y la conquista saadí del Songhay (1591-1599)*, Almeria: Instituto de Estudios Almerienses, 1993 (French version: *Jawdar Pasha et la conquête saádienne du Songhay, 1591-1599*, Rabat: Institut des Études Africaines, 1996 (Publications de l'Institut des Études Africaines – Rabat. Série: Études; 1)); *L'Espagne musulmane et l'Afrique subsaharienne*, Bamako: Éditions Donniya, 1997; *Les juifs à Tombouctou: recueil des sources écrites relatives au commerce juif à Tombouctou au XIX^e siècle*, Bamako: Éditions Donniya, 1999.

⁷ Publ., ed. and trans., *Tarikh el-Fettach ou Chronique du Chercheur pour servir à l'histoire des villes, des armées et des principaux personnages du Tekrou par Mahmoûd Kâti ben El-Hâdj El-Motaouakkel Kâti et l'un de ses petits-fils*, traduction française...par O. Houdas [et] M. Delafosse, Paris: Publications de l'École des Langues Orientales Vivantes, Ve série, vol. X, 1913-14, repr., Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1964.

⁸ Saharan Studies Association Newsletter, 8/1-2 (Nov. 2000), p. 3 (<http://www.ssa.sri.com/news/newsletters/v8n1-2>).

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asked me if I would go and make a more thorough survey of the collection. Given such a find, how could I resist? I went to Timbuktu in October 2000, and with the help of two young Malian scholars was able to go through a sizeable part of the collection and prepare a provisional hand-list of just over twenty percent of it.⁹

Timbuktu and its environs are not exactly poor in libraries and manuscript collections.¹⁰ It is estimated that in northern Mali there are at least 100,000 (some say, 300,000) manuscripts held in various public and private collections, and maybe considerably more. In Timbuktu alone there are at least 32 private libraries of varying size, the largest of which – the Mamma Haïdara Memorial Library of Abdel Kader Haïdara – contains about 5000 manuscripts.¹¹ The public collection at the Institut Ahmed Baba (IHERI-AB), which was established in the 1970s, meanwhile holds about 18-20,000 manuscripts.¹² This is an extremely rich and important heritage for Africa, for the Muslim world, and I would say for humankind. Let me briefly explain how it came about.

Timbuktu lies at the tip of the so-called ‘Niger Bend’, the Middle Niger region comprising the vast Niger Inland delta and the subsequent

⁹ *Fondo Ka‘ti: a provisional handlist of selected manuscripts*, prepared by Albrecht Hofheinz in collaboration with Abdel Kader Haïdara and Khadija Djiadié, Evanston: Northwestern University, Program of African Studies, Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought in Africa, 2000.

¹⁰ For an overview, see Abdel Kader Haïdara, “Bibliothèques du désert: difficultés et perspectives”, in: *La Nouvelle Revue Anthropologique / Actes du VII^e colloque euroafricain du CIRSS* [Centre International de Recherches Sahariennes et Sahéliennes; Milan, 9 May 1998], Paris: Institut International d’Anthropologie, 1999, pp. 153-66 (also available at <http://membres.lycos.fr/anthropa/AbdelkaderHaïdara.html>).

¹¹ The Bibliothèque Commemorative Mamma Haïdara was opened on 15th January 2000. A catalog of about two-thirds of the collection has been published in three volumes (out of a projected 5-6): *Fihris makhtūṭāt Maktabat Mammā Ḥaydara li’l-makhtūṭāt wa’l-wathā’iq | Catalogue of manuscripts in Mamma Haïdara Library*, compiled by ‘Abd al-Qādir Ḥaydara, ed. Ayman Fu’ād Sayyid, London: Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, 2000 (= Catalogues of Islamic Manuscripts; 34-36).

¹² The Institut de Hautes Etudes et de Recherche Islamique Ahmed Baba was created as the Centre de Documentation et de Recherche Ahmed Baba (CEDRAB) in 1970 and became operative in 1977. In 2000, the Malian government upgraded it to an institute of higher learning and research. A handlist of the first 9000 manuscripts has been published: *Fihris makhtūṭāt Markaz Aḥmad Bābā li’l-Tawthīq wa’l-Buḥūth al-Tārikhīyya bi-Tumbuktū | Handlist of manuscripts in the Centre de Documentation et de Recherches Historiques, Timbuktu*, vol. 1 compiled by Sidī ‘Umar b. ‘Alī, vols. 2-3 by librarians of the CEDRAB, ed. Julian Johansen, London: Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, 1995-99, 5 vols..

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downstream section approximately to the present-day Nigerian border. While agriculture and fishing have been important sources of livelihood along the river throughout history, it was the trade in gold and salt upon which rested the region's greater fortunes and its fame.¹³ Several trade routes gained particular importance in the course of the centuries. To the west, the most prominent one led from Bambouk and Bakoy through Walāta in modern Mauritania to Morocco. In the east, the main route led from Akan through Djenné to Timbuktu, where gold was exchanged for salt from Taghāza and later Taoudénni; camel caravans connected Timbuktu to Morocco. Of the empires formed to control this exchange, the most important ones were Ghana (7th-13th c.), followed by Mali (13th-15th c.), which has been called "the greatest geopolitical formation in the history of West Africa."¹⁴ In part due to political disruptions, the Western routes lost in importance to the Eastern ones around 1200, which brought about a shift of power and prosperity towards the more easterly lands. The town of Djenné at the southern end of the Niger Inland Delta became an important emporium for the gold-salt trade. The trade made cities flourish, and in these cities learned men settled whose expertise was needed for purposes demanding the skill of writing as well as legal skills in drawing up business contracts, providing notary services, writing business and other letters, settling disputes over contracts, property boundaries, or inheritance issues, concluding marriage contracts, etc. These men, however, were also active in other domains, operating as religious teachers and leaders and providing medical services. They were the carriers of written culture in these lands, the intellectuals, so to speak. They were educators of the people in the teachings of Islam and specialists in the sciences transmitted in the medium of the Arabic language, which included not only religious beliefs and practices, Qur'ānic studies, and Prophetic Traditions, but most importantly the Law, and then also other sciences such as grammar, mathematics, medicine, dream interpretation,

¹³ For a succinct overview of Islamic history in West Africa, see Nehemia Levtzion, "Islam in the Bilad al-Sudan to 1800", in: *The History of Islam in Africa*, ed. Nehemia Levtzion & Randall L. Pouwels, Athens: Ohio University Press / Oxford: James Currey / Cape Town: David Philip, 2000, pp. 62-91.

¹⁴ Elias N. Saad, *Social history of Timbuktu: the role of Muslim scholars and notables, 1400-1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 24 (= Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization).

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astronomy, history, philosophy and mysticism, not to forget poetry.

Our knowledge of the history of the introduction and the spread of Islam in West Africa is still rather sketchy. But it is reasonably clear that Islam benefited from its association with the skills of writing and the sciences transmitted through writing, which were cultural assets not known in the area before. One of the earliest centers of Islamic learning in West Africa was Walāta, in the old kingdom of Ghana; but following the shift of trade, Djenné in the Niger Inland Delta became an important center after 1200. We know the names of a few scholars from the Djenné area, but because of the humid climate there that makes paper disintegrate quickly, no manuscript text has come down to us from that time in Djenné.

During the fifteenth century, Timbuktu rose to prominence and eclipsed Djenné as the most important center of Islamic learning in the Middle Niger region.¹⁵ Timbuktu is strategically located at the northern end of the Niger Inland Delta where the river turns its course; it lies at the meeting point between the fertile Niger Delta and the Saharan desert, and it was in Timbuktu that the major trade routes joined linking the Niger region not only north to Morocco but also east to Libya and Egypt and on to Mecca and Arabia. The precise reasons why Timbuktu came to eclipse Djenné are not yet completely clear, but in any case Djenné scholars migrated to Timbuktu and trained new students there who came to be the torchbearers of intellectual life in the Middle Niger region until the eighteenth century.

Timbuktu's heyday, however, was in the late fifteenth and in the sixteenth centuries, partly coinciding with the apogee of the Songhay Empire that had replaced Mali as the dominant power in the area following the eastward shift of trade. The position of Timbuktu became so important that the early sixteenth-century Moroccan traveler al-Ḥasan b. al-Wazzān (known as Leo Africanus) believed it to be the seat of king.¹⁶

¹⁵ See John Hunwick, "The Middle Niger to 1800", in id. & al., *The writings of Western Sudanic Africa*, Leiden: Brill, 2003 (=Arabic Literature of Africa; 4), pp. 8-42.

¹⁶ Dietrich Rauchenberger: *Johannes Leo der Afrikaner und seine Beschreibung des Raumes zwischen Nil und Niger nach dem Urtext*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1999 (=Orientalia biblica et christiana; 13), pp. 275-283. For a succinct overview of Songhay's history, see John Hunwick, "Songhay: an interpretative essay", in id., *Timbuktu and the Songhay Empire*, Leiden: Brill, 1999, pp. xxii-lxv.

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This was not quite correct; the political capital was at Gao, some 370 km to the east. The Songhay ruler Soni ‘Alī had conquered Timbuktu in 1468 – the same year our Spanish Muslim friend ‘Alī the Goth bought his copy of the *Shifā*’ up in Tuwāt. Soni ‘Alī violently tried to subjugate the scholars of Timbuktu who previously had enjoyed a large measure of autonomy under the loose rule of the Tuareg. His successor, however, Askiya Muḥammad (r. 1493-1529), restored that autonomy and also granted material favors to the Timbuktu scholarly community. A later ruler, Askiya Dāwūd (r. 1549-82) was also very favorably disposed towards the Timbuktu scholars. There is good reason to argue that it was the combination of ‘public’ support and internal autonomy that allowed Timbuktu to become a ‘university town’, to use modern analogies. Some 150 schools were counted in the town in the sixteenth century. The most famous one was at the Sankoré mosque, led by the Timbuktu judges of the Aqīt family; it is sometimes called the ‘Sankoré university’. These scholarly activities attracted a trade of their own. Leo Africanus noted that in Timbuktu, “many books coming from Barbary [North Africa] are sold, all written by hand; and those who bring books [to market] earn more from them than from all the rest of their merchandize.”¹⁷ Soon, Timbuktu scribes began to copy books brought from Morocco and Egypt, and the scholars started to compose works of their own.

Among the very earliest of the known scholars of the Niger Bend was Maḥmūd Ka’ti – the one whose library was unearthed by Ismael Diadié. This alone would make this find spectacular, all the more so as the life and origin, indeed the very identity of this first historian of the region have so far remained largely obscure. The original text of *The Searcher’s Chronicle* is not yet established; it has only been published in a version pieced together from three different manuscripts that were partly added to in the seventeenth century and the text of one of which was modified in the nineteenth century for political ends. It is not completely clear what role the early sixteenth-century Maḥmūd Ka’ti played in the history of the text; indeed, one researcher – Nehemia Levtzion – suggested thirty years ago that he did not even exist but was invented in the nineteenth century by

¹⁷ “in la dc’a cipta sè spacciano assaj librij in mercantia lj qualj vanno da la Barbaria tutti scripti di mano & quilli chè portano libri quadagnano piu in li libri ch’in lo resto dè tuttè lè mercantiè” (*Cosmographia & Geographia de Affrica*, ms. VE 953, f. 382r, text reproduced in Rauchenberger, *Johannes Leo der Afrikaner* (l.c.), p. 280).

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a Fulānī scholar, Nūḥ b. al-Ṭāhir, who manipulated the original text for political reasons at the behest of the leader of the Islamic state (*dīna*) of Ḥamdallāhi.¹⁸ So the rediscovery of Maḥmūd Ka‘ti’s library holds the promise of providing material to help us sort out this jumble. Based on a preliminary study of the marginal notes appearing in the Ka‘ti collection (for more on these, see below, p. 11), Ismael Diadié has attempted to reconstruct the story of his famous ancestor.¹⁹ In this reading, it appears that the early sixteenth-century Maḥmūd Ka‘ti was not an invention, and that he was a son, or at least a close relative,²⁰ of that Spanish Muslim, ‘Alī the Goth, who after passing through the Algerian oasis of Tuwāt went on

¹⁸ Nehemia Levtzion: “A seventeenth-century chronicle by Ibn al-Mukhtār: a critical study of *Ta’riḫ al-Fattāsh*”, in: *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 34 (1971), 3, pp. 571-93; id., “Maḥmūd Ka‘ti, fut-il l’auteur du *Ta’riḫ al-fattāsh*”, in: *Bulletin de l’Institut Fondamental d’Afrique Noire*, 33 (1974), pp. 665-74. For an overview of the current state of research on the textual history of the *Tārīḫ al-Fattāsh*, see Hunwick, *The writings of Western Sudanic Africa*, l.c., pp. 38-39.

¹⁹ The information in this paragraph is based on personal information from Ismael Diadié that he kindly shared with me during my visit to Timbuktu in October 2000. He also generously allowed me to consult the draft of a book manuscript on the history of the Ka‘ti family, entitled *La Mémoire rompue*. This book is based on Ismael’s understanding of some of the marginal notes appearing in the manuscripts, as translated to him by Abdel Kader Haïdara; on oral traditions that Ismael gathered from members of his family; and on various published historical and philosophical works. A revised version is scheduled for publication in Spanish by RD Editores, Sevilla, November 2003. I wish to express my gratitude to Ismael Diadié for having allowed me to consult the draft of this work from which I have benefited enormously.

²⁰ The name forms appearing in the marginal notes give rise to some confusion, since the *nasab* of Alfa‘ Ka‘ti Maḥmūd reads, in the most elaborate form encountered there, “ibn ‘Alī b. al-Mutawakkil [bi’llāh] b. Ziyād al-Qūṭī [al-Andalusī al-Ṭulayṭulī] [al-Wa‘korī]”, while ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sa‘dī’s *Tārīḫ al-Sūdān* (ed. O. Houdas, Paris, 1898, p. 211, transl. in Hunwick, *Timbuktu*, l.c., p. 260) gives the name of Maḥmūd’s father as al-Mutawakkil. Is ‘Alī b. al-Mutawakkil b. Ziyād identical with ‘Alī b. Ziyād? Could *al-Mutawakkil* be a byname of ‘Alī, as suggested by John Hunwick (“Studies in *Ta’riḫ al-Fattāsh*, III”, l.c., p. 112)? “If this is so”, Hunwick concludes somewhat surprisingly, “then Maḥmūd Ka‘ti would have been a grandson of ‘Alī b. Ziyād”. In his *The writings of Western Sudanic Africa* (l.c., p. 38), Hunwick presents Maḥmūd Ka‘ti as probably a great-grandson of ‘Alī b. Ziyād. Only a closer study of the manuscript notes, including an analysis of their relative age and writing style, will lead to greater certainty in this matter. Such an analysis has to take into account that a *nasab* is often ‘contracted’, omitting names of less illustrious forefathers. Maḥmūd Ka‘ti could thus easily have been a son, a grandson, a great-grandson, a nephew, or a great-nephew of ‘Alī, the Spanish emigrant—to list only the most obvious possibilities. For simplicity’s sake, and out of deference to Ismael Diadié, I shall stick in what follows to his reading, “son”.

to spend a year in another oasis, Sijilmāsa in southeastern Morocco. From there he went on pilgrimage to Mecca, returning to Tuwāt and Sijilmāsa for half a year before moving on southwards and finally establishing himself in Goumbou, where the Sahara gives way to the greener Sahel belt. In Goumbou he married a woman from the Silla, a leading clan of the Soninké people, the rulers of ancient Ghana. Of this woman was born Maḥmūd, later to attain fame as Alfa' Ka'ti Maḥmūd, the historian. Maḥmūd, son of 'Alī the Goth, may thus have been related on his mother's side to the person who was to become ruler of the Songhay Empire, Askiya Muḥammad, who was also a Silla according to common accounts. This may explain in part why the son of a Spanish immigrant seems to have been so close to the Songhay ruler.²¹

Apart from these hitherto unknown details on the life of the first historian of the Niger Bend, what adds to the significance of the Ka'ti find is that no other library from this age and region has come down to us as a collection, allowing us to study 'first-hand' the sources of intellectual formation that shaped the minds of scholars at the time. Library studies are a fairly recent field of intellectual history, and one that has not been much explored in Islamic studies where research has concentrated on individual authors and their works. The study of libraries as collections, on the other hand, helps us to gain insights into the composition of learning, the spread and 'popularity' of certain texts, which allows us better to understand the intellectual formation of educated people at the time. This makes the Ka'ti library a unique treasure for the intellectual history of the Middle Niger region. It includes a good variety of titles in all important subject matters of Arabic-Islamic learning. Out of a sample of 353 texts, I found 97 on jurisprudence (27%), 65 Qur'āns and Qur'ānic studies (18%), 47 works relating to pious practices (13%), 36 on Arabic grammar and language (10%), 19 on Prophetic Traditions (5%), 17 relating to historical subjects (5%), 16 works of poetry and literature (5%), 10 Sufi titles (3%), 9 on *tawḥīd* (3%), 5 each on preaching, dream interpretation, astronomy, and magic (1%), and 2 each on medicine, mathematics, and

²¹ 'Alī b. Ziyād's Silla wife was Khadija bt. Abū Bakr, elder sister of Askiya Muḥammad, according to marginal notes in ms FK 86 (by Muḥammad b. Abana; fl. ca. 1800?) and in ms FK 845 (probably by 'Alī Gāo b. Maḥmūd Ka'ti III, fl. 18th c.) (Ismael Diadié, personal communication, 26-28 Oct. 2003). This would make Maḥmūd Ka'ti a nephew of Askiya Muḥammad.

logic (1%).²²

The oldest manuscript in the Ka'ti collection appears to be a Qur'an copied on vellum in Ceuta in 595/1198.²³ Others go back to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.²⁴ Most are of West or North African hands,²⁵ and some are exquisite examples of Arabic calligraphy and the arts of book illumination. There are no manuscripts penned in al-Andalus among them,²⁶ only of Andalusian authors.²⁷ Thirty-six manuscripts out of the

²² Figures do not add up to 353 since some manuscripts belong to several different categories.

²³ Images from this manuscript—which I have not been able to see myself—are reproduced in *Fondo Kati: una biblioteca Andalusí*, l.c., p. 46.

²⁴ Dating of the manuscripts is often difficult because many of them are incomplete, lacking both beginning and end and thus the colophon. Of the manuscripts datable so far, five were copied in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries:

- (1) FK [= Fondo Kati number] 35: *al-Shifā' fi ta'rif huqūq al-Muṣṭafā* by al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ, copied in 743/1342-3 (this is the manuscript bought by 'Alī b. Ziyād in Tuwāt in 873/1468; v.s. p. 13);
- (2) FK 36: a *Ṣaḥīḥ* collection by al-Bukhārī, copied in 1419 (according to Ismael Diadié [*Fondo Kati: una biblioteca Andalusí*, p. 48; I myself had noted a copy date of 1494]) and containing 23 marginal notes by Alfa' Ka'ti Maḥmūd;
- (3) FK 34: an Ottoman Qur'an (with a colophon in Turkish), copy completed on 20 Ṣafar Ṣafar 827 / 22 Jan. 1424, with a note stating that it was acquired by 'Alī b. Ziyād (perhaps while on pilgrimage in about 1470?);
- (4) FK 19: al-Jazūlī's *Dalā'il al-khayrāt*, copy completed by Muḥammad b. Yūshat al-Burnūsī on Tuesday, 8 Jumādā I 890 / 24 May 1485 (with 78 marginal notes by Alfa' Ka'ti Maḥmūd, partly photographed and privately translated by John Hunwick in 1999);
- (5) FK 1: another copy of al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ's *Shifā'* that must have been copied before 1496 since it bears 59 notes dating from 902-999/1496-1591 (some of them photographed by John Hunwick in 1999).

Images from the first four of these manuscripts are available at the web site of the Timbuktu Libraries Project, University of Oslo (<http://www.sum.uio.no/research/mali/timbuktu/kati/>).

²⁵ In a random sample of 121 manuscripts, Abdel Kader Haïdara identified 40 Sūqī (33%), 31 Maghribī (26%), 21 Sūdānī (17%), 17 Ṣaḥrāwī (14%), and 12 Eastern (10%) hands. The classification of West African Arabic scripts is a science that has hardly developed since the seminal article by A. D. H. Bivar, "The Arabic calligraphy of West Africa" (in: *African Languages Review*, 7 (1969), pp. 3-15); it remains an urgent research desideratum.

²⁶ With the exception perhaps of FK 36, a *Ṣaḥīḥ* collection by al-Bukhārī, which according to Ismael Diadié was copied in 1419 (*Fondo Kati: una biblioteca Andalusí*, p. 48).

²⁷ Estimates of between 300-700 manuscripts have been given as pertaining to the Andalusian heritage (Mansur Godoy, "Fondo Kati: Biblioteca Andalusí en Tombuctú", in: *Independencia*, 41 (July 2003) (http://members.tripod.com/Andalucia_2/independ41.html#TOMBUCTU); Junta de Andalucía, Consejería de Relaciones Institucionales: "Cooperación exterior"

2821 numbered items in the current collection appear to be from the original sixteenth-century library, including at least two that Alfa' Ka'ti Maḥmūd inherited from 'Alī b. Ziyād, the Goth. Just how long this Maḥmūd Ka'ti "the first" lived is still an open question. Ismael Diadié sees him as having left notes between 902-999/1496-1591, and to have died on Monday, 1 Muḥarram 1002 / 27 September 1593 (a date taken from al-Sa'dī's *Tārīkh al-Sūdān*).²⁸ In my view, a more detailed study of the notes is needed, in terms of content, paper and ink used, etc., to establish whether the first Maḥmūd Ka'ti really lived over a century, or whether the notes must be attributed to two different persons bearing the same name. In any case, however, it is reasonably likely that the thirty-six books in question are from a sixteenth-century library. The remainder was added by the descendants of Maḥmūd over the following centuries. These descendants spread across different places in northern and central Mali.²⁹ From Tindirma, where the Ka'tis served as *qāḍīs* during the sixteenth century, they moved to Kirchamba early in the seventeenth, and the descendants of *qāḍī* Ismā'īl, Maḥmūd's elder son, still live there. The offspring of Ismā'īl's brother 'Alī moved further south. Maḥmūd Ka'ti "the second" b. 'Alī, for example, lived and died (d. 16 Shawwāl 1058 / 2 Nov. 1648) in Bina, on the Bani River near Gomitogo, about 50 km south of Djenné. His descendants established themselves in places such as Thié (near Djenné), Goundam, and even Goumbou (where their ancestor 'Alī the Goth had ended his trans-Saharan journey); some migrated back to the Timbuktu and Lake Débo area.³⁰

The present "Fondo Kati" (the name Ismael Diadié has given to his collection)³¹ brings together manuscripts passed on through the

(http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/cri/cda/views/pages/cri_canal_tipoo_inicio/0,19303,6056021_6063332,00.html).

²⁸ 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sa' dī, *Tārīkh al-Sūdān*, ed. O. Houdas, Paris, 1898, p. 211, transl. in Hunwick, *Timbuktu*, l.c., p. 260.

²⁹ For a tentative genealogical chart, see below, Appendix I (p. 14).

³⁰ Personal information, Ismael Diadié Haïdara, Timbuktu, Oct. 2000.

³¹ The "Fondo Kati" was registered as a public library on 27 September 2000 (address: BP 66, Tombouctou, Mali, tel. +223-921127). Ismael Diadié Haïdara is the legal owner of the collection (although he prefers to be called, "responsable" or "curator"). In 2003, he reconstituted the "Fondo" as a foundation ("Fondation Mahmud Kati") with its seat in Granada (personal information, Ismael Diadié, June/Oct. 2003).

generations in the different branches of the Ka'ti family.³² The precise history of the individual parts remains to be researched. According to Ismael Diadié, the core of the original sixteenth-century library was in the care of Ismael I. Alfa' Ka'ti Maḥmūd in Tindirma and was then passed on during the first part of the seventeenth century to his nephew, Maḥmūd Ka'ti (II) b. 'Alī in Bīna. Other prominent owners evident in the marginal notes were the late eighteenth-century 'Alī Gāo who moved to Goundam, and his son-in-law Muḥammad [b.] Abana of Thié in the Djenné area. In the mid-nineteenth century, during the Fulānī *dīna* of Ḥamdallāhi, the core of the Ka'ti library was brought to Goundam and on to Timbuktu where it was placed under the control of the family of the Fulānī chargé-d'affaires of Timbuktu. It may be in this context and based on material found in the Ka'ti collection that Nūḥ b. al-Ṭāhir composed his now-famous forgery, MS C of the *Tārīkh al-Fattāsh* – but this is a matter that needs further investigation. It is not clear exactly what happened to the manuscripts brought to Timbuktu after the demise of the Ḥamdallāhi state.

Until 2003, the Fondo Kati manuscripts were stored at Ismael Diadié's private home in Timbuktu. Three large trunks contained most of the 'bound' books, while a large number of unbound manuscripts (fragments of books, epistles, letters, *ijāzāt*, documents etc.), generally kept in paper folders, were placed on eight 1-meter-long shelves. On 27 September 2003, a new, dedicated library was inaugurated for the Fondo Kati near Ismael Diadié's home, financed by the Regional Government of Andalucía.³³ On

³² For a summary breakdown of the content of the Fondo Kati, see below, Appendix II (p. 15). According to Ismael Diadié, manuscript FK 1909 (*a Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ* by al-Bukhārī) is particularly rich in notes concerning the variegated fate of the library, including notes by Ibrahim b. 'Alī Gāo b. Maḥmūd Ka'ti III (mid-19th c.) on the dispersion of the library in the wake of the Fulbe arrival to power; and on the efforts by his father 'Alī Gāo to reunite it, bringing together manuscripts from Gumbu, Bina, Djenné, Tindirma, Kirshamba, etc. (*Fondo Kati: una biblioteca Andalusí*, l.c., pp. 44-45).

³³ Following an appeal in February 2000 by a number of Spanish and French intellectuals (i.a., José Ángel Valente, José Saramago, Juan Goytisolo, Muñoz Molina, and Bernard Vincent), the regional government of Andalucía (*Junta de Andalucía*) decided in May 2002 to support the rehabilitation of the Fondo Kati. On 30 June 2002, the Andalusian Government's Department of Institutional Relations (*Consejería de Relaciones Institucionales*) approved in writing to contribute the major part of financing needed for the construction of a library building to house the Fondo Kati manuscripts (apparently, the cost was first estimated at 100 million Franc CFA [150,253 EUR], of which 80% were to be covered by the *Consejería*, the rest by the Kati family. In the end, the total cost came

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800 square meters, the library compound contains, around a central courtyard, the main reading room with most of the manuscripts, several safe boxes for the 200 most valuable manuscripts (which will be available for consultation only in microfilm form), and a number of guest rooms for researchers. The installation of video cameras is envisaged to allow 'virtual' visits to the library via the Internet.

An estimated 400 manuscripts from the Ka'ti collection are still in the possession of a branch of the family near Kirchamba—perhaps the descendants of Ismā'īl I, the eldest son of Maḥmūd Ka'ti I. Ismael Diadié has approached their owners to incorporate them into the Fondo Kati. Among these manuscripts could be a work by Maḥmūd Ka'ti I entitled *Tadhkirat al-ikhwān*, which allegedly describes the history of Visigothic Spain and of his family in Toledo. This work is so far known only through a summary written in 1519 on the margins of an (as yet unidentified) *tafsīr*³⁴ and a referral in a marginal note probably written by Ibrāhīm b. 'Alī

close to 180,000 EUR). An Andalusian delegation visited Timbuktu in October 2002 to lay the foundation stone for the building. Among the subsequent steps envisaged by the Andalusian side are the restoration and microfilming of the manuscripts. A microfilm copy of those manuscripts that are of interest to the Andalusian side is to be deposited in the Centro de Estudios Andaluces in Almería; meanwhile, UNESCO has also shown interest to obtain a copy. Eventually, the Centro de Estudio de la Imagen of the University of Granada is supposed to digitize the whole collection. Financing for restoration, microfilming and digitization is to be sought from the Spanish Ministry of Culture, private enterprises, and other interested parties (*Fondo Kati: una biblioteca Andalusí*, pp. 36-37; Myriam Casín, "La Junta inaugura este mes la Biblioteca Andalusí en Tombuctú", in: *Diario de Sevilla*, 17 Sep. 2003 <<http://www.diariodesevilla.com/pg030917/cultura/cultura276814.htm>>; "Una biblioteca en Tombuctú: el día 15 comienzan las obras para albergar la histórica colección de manuscritos", 2 Oct. 2002, in: *NIDO Noticias* (Sistemas Documentales, Valencia), 7-13 Oct. 2002 <<http://www.sisdoc.es/servicios/nido/Semanas37.htm>>. Ismael Diadié has developed the idea of 'manuscript adoption' whereby anyone interested can 'adopt' a manuscript by donating 15 EUR that will be used for microfilming and digitizing it ("Salvemos la Biblioteca Mahmud Kati" [<http://www.sahel-aventuras.com/libros.htm>]). Beginning in April/May 2003, an exhibition on the Fondo Kati has been touring several Andalusian cities. A 132,000 EUR documentary film on the Kati family saga and their library has also been produced between Oct. 2002 and March 2003 (entitled, *Fondo Kati. La historia de un exilio Ibero en Tombuctú*). Directed by Juan Carlos Estrada, it was shot on location in Mali, Mauretania, Toledo, Sevilla, Córdoba, Almería, the mountains of Ronda, and the area of Málaga (Ayuntamiento de Vélez-Málaga: "La curva del Níger clausura los cursos de la UNIAJ [Universidad de la Axarquía]", 31 July 2003, <http://www.ayto-velezmalaga.es/portal/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=188>).

³⁴ FK 2.

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b. Maḥmūd Ka'ti in the nineteenth century.³⁵

Since 1999, the Timbuktu scholar Abdel Kader Haïdara, one of the area's leading specialists on Arabic manuscripts, has gone through much of the collection systematically together with Ismael Diadié. They sorted the manuscripts into those containing references to the Ka'ti family (in marginal notes etc.), and those with no such references. The 'Ka'ti' manuscripts were roughly arranged by provenance or name of the family member they are associated with. All but a dozen have been numbered; the total thus reached was 2821 (the figure is not 100% precise since there were occasional gaps in the sequence, and I encountered at least one double number). Abdel Kader Haïdara has begun to prepare brief descriptions on sheets of paper inserted into the manuscripts or wrapped around them. The manuscripts range from 1 to ca. 600 folios. Their physical condition varies from acceptable to extremely fragile; quite a few are incomplete fragments of books. In addition to books, the Ka'ti collection contains perhaps 500 original documents of trade, slavery issues, reports of scholarly links, etc.³⁶

Most notably, however, many of the book manuscripts are liberally strewn with marginal notes of a documentary character; some manuscripts have long notes on almost every page. In 2000, Ismael Diadié estimated their total number at least at 1500. Many of them have no direct bearing on the main text of the manuscript. They are records of events that in one way or another concerned the owner of the manuscript, and he simply put them there because paper was scarce and whoever wrote the note wanted it to last and so put it in one the books in his collection. The Ka'ti library is unique in this regard as well. While I have seen a few Arabic manuscripts before containing similar notes, I have never come across such a large collection where note-taking appears to have been the order of the day. The Ka'ti notes bear on a great variety of subjects. The shortest ones are 'reading notes' (*qirā'āt* or *muqābalāt*), where the person

³⁵ Notes the dispersion of the Abana family, on the margin of Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Muḥammad *Ibn 'Āṣim* al-Gharnāṭī al-Mālikī (760-829/1358-1426): *Tuḥfat al-ḥukkām fī nakth al-'uqūd wa'l-aḥkām* (FK 708).

³⁶ By October 2003, Ismael Diadié gave the total number of manuscripts in the collection as 7026, explaining that the difference to the original count was due to *ijāzāt*, letters and other documents not directly related to the Ka'ti family (personal communication, 28 Oct. 2003).

studying the book at hand reaches a certain passage and writes next to it, “I reached this far in my reading”, often giving his name and a date.³⁷ A few pages on, one finds another note stating, “I reached this far”, giving another date. The progress indicated is sometimes not more than two or three pages a day, and so ‘reading’ here probably means ‘studying’ the text, discussing it with a teacher and perhaps even memorizing it, although the precise meaning remains to be established. These reading notes are quite unique and it would be interesting to find out if there are similar ones from other parts of the Muslim world.

There are many other kinds of notes as well: records of names of teachers, notes on contemporary events or on historical subjects, geographical, astronomical, and meteorological observations, judicial cases, inheritance problems, land ownership disputes, family matters, books bought, lent out, or returned, even contracts of sale of other merchandise. One example has been quoted above: the earliest note in the collection, on the purchase of the *Shifāʾ* in Tuwāt in 1468, giving interesting incidental information along the way. This is a good but only a minor example compared to others of what these notes contain. In other notes, we find detailed information, mostly so far unknown, on the reign of the Songhay ruler Askiya Muḥammad; the way he came to power in 1492; the role played by Maḥmūd Kaʿti at his court; Askiya Muḥammad’s pilgrimage in 1496 and the people that joined him; a leather carpet bought by Maḥmūd Kaʿti in Cairo on his way back from Mecca for 15 dinar; a season of abundant rains and a good harvest in 1504; a remarkable display of shooting stars in December 1505; a Moroccan delegation to the Askiya’s court in 1506 (in which took part young al-Ḥasan al-Wazzān, later to attain fame as Leo Africanus); the arrival that same year of Mūsā, son of Maḥmūd Kaʿti’s father by his first, Spanish wife, from Spain via Tuwāt together with other Spanish refugees; the organization of the Public Treasury by Maḥmūd Kaʿti in 1514 and travels he undertook around the Empire in the service of the state, controlling expenses, for example, for the restoration of the mosque at Djenné or the royal palace at Gao; a ‘population census’ in 1516. The death of a leading Timbuktu scholar (Aḥmad b. ʿUmar Aqīt) in 1535 is recorded, the activities of an itinerant judge, medical and

³⁷ Manuscript FK 46 (a commentary on Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ, *al-Shifāʾ bi-taʿrīf ḥuqūq al-Muṣṭafāʾ*) is merely one example of many that contain such reading notes; in this case they are by Alfa ʿ Maḥmūd Kaʿti II (b. ʿAlī [b. Maḥmūd (I)]) (d. 2 Nov. 1648).

ophthalmologic problems, the visit of a ‘white’ (probably Portuguese) delegation coming from the southern coast in 1568, and then, in 1591, the arrival of “our brethren from al-Andalus, from the land of the forefathers” – this is how the notes describe the Moroccan expedition corps that put an end to the Songhay Empire and established a new rule in Timbuktu. It was composed primarily of Spanish converts to Islam, some of whom married into the family of Maḥmūd Ka’ti, as the notes report. Later generations of the Ka’ti family recorded their distaste for the rule of the Arma, the descendants of this expedition corps.³⁸

This type of material is of great interest to the historian, providing texture and depth and social detail to a history so far chiefly known through chronicles and king lists and scholarly biographies. The Ka’ti library is an extraordinary treasure house full of such information, which will take many years and the combined efforts of many scholars to exhaust. Abdel Kader Haïdara has transcribed a fair amount of the marginal notes on historical subjects left by Maḥmūd Ka’ti I, as well as some of Ismā’īl Ka’ti’s notes on family issues, and Ismael Diadié seeks international cooperation to prepare a critical edition of them for publication.³⁹

In conclusion, the “Fondo Kati” is unique among the many libraries of the Niger Bend and of Sub-Saharan Africa. Going back to the late fifteenth century, it is the oldest extant collection of books that we know of in the area which was assembled by a single scholarly family - that of Maḥmūd Ka’ti, author of the first known written history of West Africa. With close to 3000 items, it is also one of the largest private collections among Timbuktu’s many private libraries. The significance of this collection is manifold. No other library from this age and region has come down to us as a collection, allowing us to study ‘first-hand’ the sources of intellectual formation of scholars at the time. Beyond that, the Fondo Kati is a treasure

³⁸ The content of these notes is mainly reported here (1) on the authority of Ismael Diadié’s draft book *La Mémoire rompue*, which he kindly allowed me to consult during my visit to Timbuktu in October 2000; (2) on the catalog to the May 2003 exhibition in Seville (*Fondo Kati: una biblioteca Andalusí*, l.c.); and (3) on several notes John Hunwick photographed during his visit to Timbuktu in 1999.

³⁹ The other notes have not been tackled yet, as both Abdel Kader Haïdara and Ismael Diadié were “exhausted”, as they said, by their sheer number.

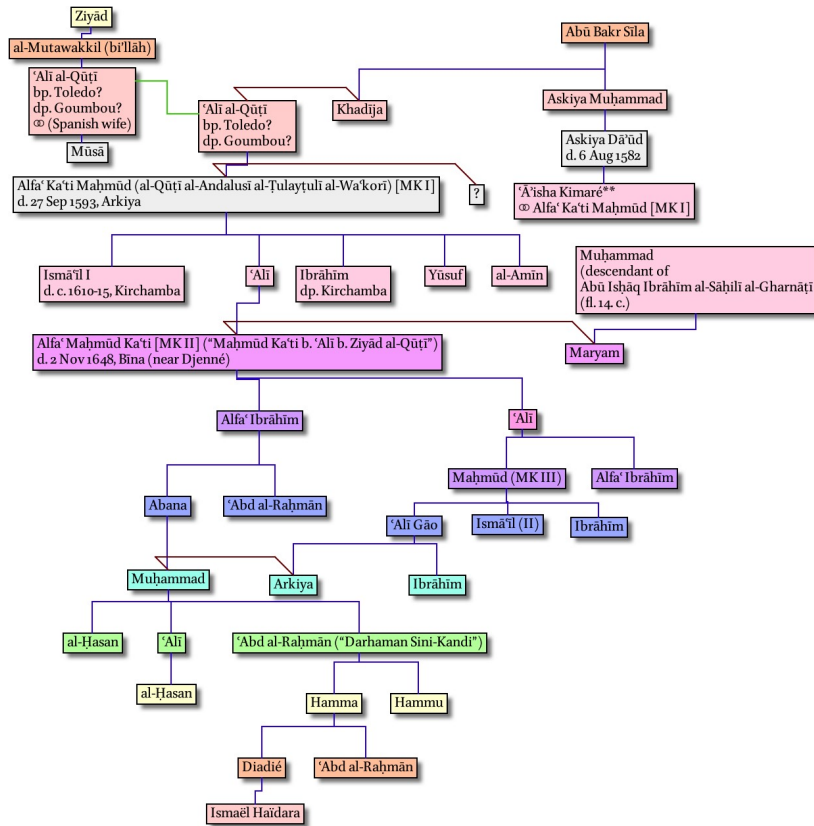
house of primary sources. It contains about 500 original documents of trade, slavery issues, records of scholarly links, etc. Further, the manuscripts contain an estimated 1500 marginal notes on contemporary events or historical subjects, geographical, astronomical, and meteorological observations, judicial cases, inheritance and land disputes, family matters, books bought, lent out, or returned, contracts of sale, records of teachers, and study notes. They provide a wealth of detail the close study of which will considerably enrich and deepen our understanding of the political, social, and intellectual history of the Middle Niger region. For centuries, Timbuktu has been the paramount symbol for the riches to be found at the far end of the world. There is so much still out there to be discovered.

APPENDIX I: A TENTATIVE GENEALOGY

Based on information appearing in the marginal notes and on oral tradition gathered from his own family, Ismael Diadié has reconstructed a tentative genealogy of the Ka'ti family, reproduced here with the kind permission of the Fondation Mahmud Kati.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Abbreviations: bp. = place of birth; dp. = place of death; & = married to.

Slightly amended prepublication version. For citations and correct page references, see [The Transmission of Learning in Islamic Africa](#), ed. Scott Reese. Leiden: Brill, 2004, pp. 154-183 (=Islam in Africa; 2).



APPENDIX II: CONTENT OF THE FONDO KATI

With the generous help of Abdel Kader Haïdara and of Khadija Diadié, a young, Arabic-speaking Malian, I have been able to establish a provisional handlist⁴¹ of 569 out of the 2821 manuscript items ((338 books and fragments of books, plus 231 other types of documents) that the Fondo Kati held in October 2000, i.e. of 20.2% of the collection. Following is a breakdown of these items. The numbering, indicated by '#', is that of the Fondo Kati.

⁴¹ *Fondo Ka'ti: a provisional handlist* (l.c., above, n. 9).

Slightly amended prepublication version. For citations and correct page references, see [The Transmission of Learning in Islamic Africa](#), ed. Scott Reese. Leiden: Brill, 2004, pp. 154-183 (=Islam in Africa; 2).

A) CA. 150 BOUND BOOKS, INCL. THE OLDEST ONES IN THE FONDO
(12TH/14TH-19TH C. CE)

AA) 36 books from Maḥmūd Ka'ti I (incl. 2 from 'Alī b. Ziyād al-Qūṭī) (14th-16th c.)

- #1-33: 33 books from the possession of Alfa' Ka'ti Maḥmūd I
Alfa' Ka'ti Maḥmūd b. 'Alī [b. al-Mutawakkil] b. Ziyād, al-Qūṭī al-Andalusī al-Ṭulayṭulī, d. 27 Sep 1593. Partly catalogued (through #19).
- #34: Ottoman Qur'ān copied 20 S 827: 1424, acquired by ("šāra li-") 'Alī b. Ziyād al-Qūṭī (perhaps during his pilgrimage ca. 1470?)
- #35: *Shifā'*, bought by 'Alī b. Ziyād al-Qūṭī 2 months after his arrival in Tuwāt, Muḥarram 873: July/Aug. 1468.
- #36: *Ṣaḥīḥ* al-Bukhārī, vol. 8, copied 1494, with 23 notes by Maḥmūd Ka'ti I, partly on Soni 'Alī.

AB) ca. 40 books from Maḥmūd Ka'ti II and some of his descendants through his son 'Alī (17th-18th c.)

- #37- ca. 40s: books from the possession of Maḥmūd Ka'ti II & III
Maḥmūd Ka'ti II b. 'Alī [b. Maḥmūd b. 'Alī] b. Ziyād, d. 16 Shawwāl 1058 / 2 Nov 1648. Lived and died in Bīna (on the Bani river near Gomitogo, ca. 50 km south of Djenné).
With dated notes (until ca. 1030 / 1620). Maḥmūd Ka'ti III b. 'Alī b. Maḥmūd Ka'ti II (fl. ca. mid-18th c.).
- ca. 50s: books from possession of various members of the Ka'ti family, without apparent ownership information.
- ca. 60s - ca. 75: books from 'Alī Gāo.
'Alī Gāo b. Maḥmūd Ka'ti III b. 'Alī b. Maḥmūd Ka'ti II b. 'Alī b. Maḥmūd b. 'Alī b. Ziyād, who settled in Goundam, left very many notes, incl. many reading notes (*muqābalāt*), notes on lands, book movements, etc., up to ca. 1799.

AC) *ca. 75 books from the Abana branch (late 18th-late 19th c.)*

- ca. 75 - ca. 100: books from the possession of Muḥammad [b.] Abana b. Ibrāhīm b. Maḥmūd b. ‘Alī b. Maḥmūd al-Wa‘korī (fl. 1800; seems to have left the Djenné area for Jimballa, between Timbuktu and Lake Debo; then his traces disappear)
- ca. 101 - ca. 110: books from the possession of ‘Alī b. Muḥammad [b.] Abana b. Ibrāhīm b. Maḥmūd b. ‘Alī b. Maḥmūd al-Wa‘korī (ca. mid-19th c.)
- ca. 111 - ca. 129: books from the possession of al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī b. Muḥammad [b.] Abana b. Ibrāhīm b. Maḥmūd b. ‘Alī b. Maḥmūd al-Wa‘korī, who lived in the village of Thié (near Djenné) (fl. ca. late 19th c.)
- ca. 130s: books from the possession of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad [b.] Abana b. Ibrāhīm b. Maḥmūd b. ‘Alī b. Maḥmūd al-Wa‘korī (“Darhaman Sini-Kandi”, great-grandfather of Ismael Diadié, who returned to Goundam where he worked as a dyer; was alive in 1862)
- ca. 140s - ca. 150s: books from the possession of various members of the Abana branch, *i.a.* ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ibrāhīm b. Maḥmūd Ka‘ti II (may be either a mid-18th c. or a mid-19th c. person) and Muḥammad b. Abana (fl. 1800).

B) CA. 1327 UNBOUND FRAGMENTS ETC. (16TH-19TH C.)

BA) *Ca. 250 mss from several 16th-18th members of the Ka‘ti family*

- #163-199: 37 mss from Ismā‘īl Ka‘ti. Probably contains mss both from Ismā‘īl Ka‘ti I b. Alfa‘ Ka‘ti Maḥmūd I (*qāḍī* in Tindirma, d. ca. 1610-15), and from Ismā‘īl Ka‘ti II b. Maḥmūd Ka‘ti III.
- #200-299: 100 sheets from books out of the possession of Ka‘ti family. Of various provenance: from Maḥmūd Ka‘ti I, ‘Alī b. Alfa‘ Ka‘ti Maḥmūd I b. ‘Alī b. al-Mutawakkil, Maḥmūd Ka‘ti II, Ismā‘īl, etc. Partly catalogued.

- #300-399: 90 mss (*sic*; numbering jumps from 323 to 334) from Maḥmūd Ka'ti II b. 'Alī b. Alfa' Ka'ti Maḥmūd ("Maḥmūd Ka'ti b. 'Alī b. Ziyād al-Qūṭī") of Bīna (south of Djenné; d. 16 Shawwāl 1058 / 2 Nov. 1648) and from his grandson Maḥmūd Ka'ti III b. 'Alī b. Maḥmūd Ka'ti II (fl. ca. mid-18th c.). Maḥmūd Ka'ti II took over the family library after the death of Ismā'il Ka'ti I (ca. 1610-15) and kept it in Bīna, acc. to Ismael Diadié. Some mss were allegedly copied by the hand of Maḥmūd Ka'ti II. #369 belonged to Alfa' Ibrāhīm b. 'Alī b. Alfa' Maḥmūd Ka'ti II; #379 and 392 contain Ibrāhīm's name. #387 acquired by Alfa' Tunka Maḥmūd Ka'ti. Fully catalogued.
- BB*) 700 mss from 'Alī Gāo and his family in Goundam (18th-19th c.)
- #400-499: 100 mss from Ibrāhīm b. 'Alī b. Maḥmūd Ka'ti (probably a son of 'Alī Gāo, for a person with the same name left a note regarding the grandchildren of 'Alī Gāo; he lived in the mid-19th c.; see also below, #708)
- #500-599: 100 mss from Ibrāhīm b. 'Alī b. Maḥmūd Ka'ti
- #600-699: 100 mss from Ibrāhīm b. 'Alī b. Maḥmūd Ka'ti
- #700-799: 100 mss from 'Alī Gāo b. Maḥmūd Ka'ti III b. 'Alī b. Maḥmūd Ka'ti II (of Goundam, late 18th c.). #708 [*Tuḥfat al-ḥukkām* by Ibn 'Āṣim (760-829 / 1358-1426; GAL II 264, S II 375)] contains marginal notes by Ibrāhīm b. 'Alī b. Maḥmūd Ka'ti on the dispersion of the Ka'ti family, esp. the Abana branch.
- #800-899: 100 mss from 'Alī Gāo b. Maḥmūd Ka'ti III b. 'Alī b. Maḥmūd Ka'ti II. #845 is a *dīwān* by Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm al-Sāḥilī al-Gharnāṭī, Andalusian man of letters who is credited with having built, in around 1325, the Grand Mosque (*Jingere Bēr*) of Timbuktu.⁴²
- #900-999: 100 mss of mixed provenance: from Ibrāhīm b.

⁴² Ismael Diadié intends to publish this (hitherto unknown?) *dīwān* on CD-ROM (personal communication, 27 Oct. 2003).

- Maḥmūd Ka'ti II, Ibrāhīm b. 'Alī b. Maḥmūd Ka'ti (III?), Muḥammad [b.] Abana b. Ibrāhīm b. Maḥmūd Ka'ti II (fl. 1800, from Thié, married Arkiya bt. 'Alī Gāo)
- #1000-1099: 100 mss from Ibrāhīm b. 'Alī b. Maḥmūd Ka'ti (III?)
- BC) *Ca. 387 mss from several Ka'ti owners (late 17th-late 18th c.)*
- #1100-1199: 100 mss from 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Alfa' Ibrāhīm b. Maḥmūd Ka'ti II (ca. mid-18th c.)
- #1200-1299: 100 mss from 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Alfa' Ibrāhīm b. Maḥmūd Ka'ti II. Also contains at least 1 ms from Ismā'īl b. Maḥmūd Ka'ti (#1205) and at least 1 ms from the possession of Alfa' Maḥmūd Ka'ti II b. 'Alī b. al-Mutawakkil Ziyād (#1249).
- #1300-1399: 100 mss, esp. from Ismā'īl II b. Maḥmūd Ka'ti III b. 'Alī b. Maḥmūd Ka'ti II, and also from his brother 'Alī Gāo b. Maḥmūd Ka'ti III b. 'Alī b. Maḥmūd Ka'ti II [late 18th c.]
- #1400-1482: 83 mss from Alfa' Ibrāhīm b. Maḥmūd Ka'ti II [late 17th c.]
- #1483: ms on the 'sources of the [Sufi] path' (*uṣūl al-tarīqa*), from the possession of Alfa' Ibrāhīm [late 17th c.], and given to Muḥammad b. 'Umar b. Alfa' Tulle
- #1484-5: 2 mss with notes by Ismā'īl b. Maḥmūd Ka'ti on the dispersion of the Ka'ti family.
- 1486-87: ? (not seen)
- C) CA. 1334 DOCUMENTS (INCL. A NUMBER OF BOOKS AND BOOK FRAGMENTS) (CA. 1500 – 20TH C.)
- #1488-1585: 101 (*sic*; there are several documents under the same number) documents regarding the renegades (*'ulūj*) in Timbuktu. Fully catalogued.
- #1586-1657: 72 documents (*wathā'iq*). Partly catalogued.
- #1658-1899: mss between 1658 and 1699, and in the 1700s and 1800s, containing both books and smaller items of various origin; not kept in folders sequentially

- numbered. Partly catalogued.
- ca. 1900s: books of various origin, *i.a.* from the possession of Alfa' Ka'ti Maḥmūd and *al-ḥājj* Askia Muḥammad, Alfa' Ismā'īl (II?) Qūṭī, 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Alfa' Ibrāhīm, Muḥammad [b.] Abana b. Ibrāhīm b. Maḥmūd Ka'ti II b. 'Alī b. Maḥmūd, al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad [b.] Abana b. Ibrāhīm b. Maḥmūd Ka'ti II (16th-19th c.). Partly catalogued.
- ca. 2000s: various mss from the possession of members of the Ka'ti family (*i.a.*: al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad [b.] Abana b. Ibrāhīm, Muḥammad [b.] Abana b. Alfa' Ibrāhīm b. Maḥmūd II b. 'Alī, 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Alfa' Ibrāhīm b. Maḥmūd Ka'ti II) (18th-19th c.)
- #2221-2319: 99 documents (*wathā'iq*)
- #2320-2419: 100 documents (*wathā'iq*)
- #2420-2492: 73 documents (*wathā'iq*)
- 2493-97: ? (not seen)
- #2498-2581: 84 *ijāzāt*, many for Mauritanian shaykhs, others associated with the Kunta or al-Ḥājj 'Umar; some non-*ijāza* documents towards the end. Partly catalogued.
- #2582-2597: 16 documents concerning the rulers of the Niger bend: 7 ms fragments of works by al-Maghīlī. + copies of documents and letters concerning Askīya Muḥammad and Askīya Ismā'īl, + 2 fragments of al-Sa'dī's *Ta'rikh al-Sūdān*, + 1 unidentified *majmū'* incl. a *fatwā* (#2587), + a *qaṣīda* in praise of a king (of Ségou?) by Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā b. Ṭāhir b. 'Alī (#2584). Fully catalogued.
- #2598-2657: 60 loose pages on astronomy, astrology, meteorology (*'ilm al-falak*, *al-ḥisāb*, *'ilm al-nujūm*, *'ilm al-burūj*, *aḥwāl al-jaww wa'l-ṭaqs*), plus a few on other subjects (biographies [*ṭabaqāt*], praise of Moroccan kings, etc.).
- #2658-2821: 164 documents (*wathā'iq*), plus various other loose pages.

MARGINAL NOTES BY MEMBERS OF THE KA'TI FAMILY

An estimated 1500 marginal notes are liberally spread over very many of the manuscripts. Together with Abdel Kader Haïdara, Ismael Diadié has made a preliminary classification of them, according to which they stem principally from the following members of the Ka'ti family:

1) 'Alī [b. *al-Mutawakkil?*] b. Ziyād

2 notes, 1 dated (Tuwāt, 1468)

2) *Alfa' Ka'ti Maḥmūd I b. 'Alī* [b. *al-Mutawakkil (bi'llāh)*] b. Ziyād, *al-Qūṭī al-Andalusī al-Wa'korī* (b. 1468; d. Monday, 1 Muḥ 1002 / 27 Sep 1593)⁴³

Ca. 450 notes (counting all study notes [*muqābala*], names of *shaykhs* etc.); including:

many (ca. 190) notes on historical and geographical subjects: mainly concerning either Askiya Muḥammad (Maḥmūd Ka'ti's maternal uncle, acc. to Ismael Diadié) or the Andalusians in the Niger valley. *I.a.*: 59 notes dated between 902 [Askiya Muḥammad's pilgrimage] and 999/1496-1591 (#1, *Shifā'* copied in 1342); 58 notes concerning his family and the 'Goths' in al-Andalus, Askiya Muḥammad and various events during his lifetime (#2, *Tafsīr*); 23 notes partly concerning Soni 'Alī (#36, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* copied in 1494). Some of the 73 notes on a *majmū'a* (the first text in which is a *Dalā'il al-Khayrāt* copied in 890/1485) concern historical events. – Particular notes regarding: 2 delegations [perhaps in 1493?] from {"Askiya *al-ḥājj*"} Muḥammad to Soni Bāro in which Maḥmūd Ka'ti I participated, 52 days before Soni Bāro was defeated in battle. 911/spring 1506 delegation from the Moroccan Sulṭān Muḥammad al-Burtughālī (r. 1502 or 1505-1526) to Askiya Muḥammad. 911: Mūsā b. 'Alī b. Ziyād, Spanish brother of Maḥmūd Ka'ti, arrives in Goumbou via Tuwāt (#1). 911: meteorological and astronomical observations. 22 Muḥarram 912 / 16 June 1506 trip by Maḥmūd Ka'ti and Muḥammad Tullé from Timbuktu to W.r.n.koi, which was in upheaval, and back to Timbuktu (#19). 912/1506-7 Muḥammad Ka'ti in Kāra with Askiya Muḥammad. 915/1509-10 in Djenné and Dia; also ref. dated 20 Mar 1510 to construction of Kulu-soko

⁴³ "1468" is given as the date of birth of Maḥmūd Ka'ti by Houdas/Delafosse in the preface to their edition of the *Tarikh el-Fettach*, l.c., p. xvii.. Since it is unlikely that a person lived for 125 years, a close study of the notes needs to be undertaken to establish their authorship. The classification here merely reflects the one given to me by Ismael Diadié.

(Kuluṣokho) in Timbuktu.⁴⁴ 920/1514 Mar-Jun Maḥmūd Ka'ti in Gao, organizing the Public Treasury during the absence of Askiya Muḥammad who was on a campaign against the Mossi. 1514 June ff.: travels to Timbuktu and on to Djenné where he checked on expenses for the restoration of the mosque, then returned to Gao where he checked expenses for the restoration of the royal palace. Other similar financial control jobs in Tindirma, Gao, Djenné until 935/1528-9 (the year Askiya Muḥammad was deposed). In Ismael Diadié's view, Maḥmūd Ka'ti then retreated (with other opponents of Askiya Mūsā) to Tindirma where he became *qāḍī*. – The next dated note is a reference to the death of Aḥmad b. 'Umar b. Muḥammad Aqīt, Fri 10 Rabī' II 942 / 8 Oct 1535 (#19); then there is a note from 943/1536-7, when Maḥmūd Ka'ti was in Timbuktu with Muḥammad Tullé (the same who had been on pilgrimage with Askiya Muḥammad in 902? but the same name is also mentioned in 999, *v.l.*). – The next note after this is from 960/1553, when Maḥmūd Ka'ti was in Tindirma, settling some debts (?) before going to the island of Toya [south west of Kabara] where he fell ill. On 14 Jum I 960 / 27 Apr 1553, he went to Kalambōti and on to Djenné, which he left again on Sun 12 Jum II 960 / ca. 28 May 1553 for Kutan, Bandugu, Tawtalla and finally Kay-Kay where he settled a dispute between 'zunūj'. On 15 Ḥijja 971/24 July 1564 Maḥmūd Ka'ti left Tindirma for Jimballa (between Timbuktu and Lake Debo) to settle a conflict between its inhabitants and *zunūj*. In Lesuji, Tindirma, and Tatarā he settled inheritance disputes the same year. On 10 Muḥ 973 / 6 Aug 1565 he travelled to Gao and reviewed the library of a deceased man. In 976/1568-9 he was in Kāra [south of Gao?] where he received "white" visitors (acc. to Ismael, there was a Portuguese mission to the Songhay ruler at the time, from the south). – In 990/1582, Maḥmūd Ka'ti visited Kāra to pay his condolences to a family, then (with his newly-wed wife, 'Ā'isha Kiyamāri, perhaps a daughter of Askiya Dāwūd) went to Timbuktu/Arkiya (in the Jimballa) where he became representative (*wakīl*) of the Andalusian emigrants settled there.⁴⁵ – In 999/1591, Maḥmūd Ka'ti noted that "our brethren from al-Andalus arrived from the land of the forefathers"; he mentioned *qā'id* Aḥmad

⁴⁴ Cf. *Tārīkh al-Fattāsh*, ed. O. Houdas, p. 18/29.

⁴⁵ In 1588, Maḥmūd Ka'ti is mentioned as a jurist in Tindirma (al-Sa' dī, *Tārīkh al-Sūdān*, ed. O. Houdas p. 131, transl. in Hunwick, *Timbuktu*, l.c., p. 179).

al-Marwī [? = al-Ḥarūsī?] al-Andalusī, *qā'id* Aḥmad al-'Iljī, *qā'id* Aḥmad b. Yūsuf al-'Iljī, [Bā-]Ḥasan Firīr [= Ferrero] al-'Iljī, Raḍwī al-Andalusī. Aḥmad b. Yūsuf, Raḍwī al-Andalusī, Aḥmad al-Ḥarūsī al-Andalusī, 'Ammār al-'Iljī and Ḥasan Ferrēro visited Maḥmūd Ka'ti in Arkiya when he was there with *al-shaykh al-qāḍī* Maḥmūd b. Daydabagha and Muḥammad Tullé. Maḥmūd Ka'ti concluded the marriages of 'Ammār al-'Iljī with Nānā Hamma al-'Ulūjiyya (dowry: 40 *mithqāl* of gold, 3 *subā'iyāt* (?), 1 *sudā'iyā* (?), 10 camels, golden ear rings) and of Bā-Ḥasan Ferrēro with Nānā Ka'ti [bt. Maḥmūd Ka'ti?] (dowry: 25 *mithqāl* of gold, 3 *sudsiyyāt*, 1 *subā'iyā*).

5 copies of letters from Askiya Muḥammad

Notes on the nomination of Songhay ministers

Ca. 50 edited pages worth of *fatāwā* and *nawāzil* (records of lawsuits)

Ca. 15 notes on medical issues (incl. ophthalmologic notes among the

73 notes on the *majmū'a/Dalā'il*, v.s.)

Many (uncounted) notes on astronomy/astrology. Including 9 on a *majmū'a* of texts on grammar; plus part of the 73 notes on the *majmū'a/Dalā'il*, v.s. These include notes containing the names of the months in old Castilian Spanish.

3) *Ismā'il Ka'ti I b. Maḥmūd Ka'ti I*

Slightly less than 100 notes, often dated, until ca. 1612/13. Ismā'il, eldest son of Maḥmūd Ka'ti I, is an ancestor of the mother of Ismael Diadié Haïdara.

The notes are mostly on:

Juridical issues (Ismā'il was *qāḍī* in Tindirma)

Family issues (on the family dispersion from Tindirma to Kirshamba, Djenné, Goumbou, Jimalla, Goundam, and even to Bambara country)

Books lent and bought, in connection with his brother Ibrāhīm of Kirshamba (following other members of his family—his brother Ibrāhīm and Nānā Ka'ti, widow of Bā-Ḥasan Ferrēro who had died on the way back to Morocco in 1594—Ismā'il reluctantly moved to Kirshamba towards the end of his life and became *imām* there. But he died in Tindirma, according to Ismael Diadié)

There may be a note from 1582 concerning the accidental killing of *Sharīf* Muḥammad b. Muzāwir, linking Ismā'il to the court of Askiya Dāwūd (who died in 1582).

4) *‘Alī b. Maḥmūd Ka‘ti I*

‘Alī lived in Goundam & Goumbou; he is a paternal ancestor of Ismael Diadié. He left only a few notes, mostly study notes (*muqābala*).

5) *Maḥmūd Ka‘ti II b. ‘Alī b. Maḥmūd Ka‘ti I* (“*Maḥmūd Ka‘ti b. ‘Alī b. Ziyād al-Qūṭī*”)

Over 200 notes, often dated, until ca. 1030/1620 (see #337: 1011/1602-3; #343: possibly 1020/1611-2; #399, dated 1029/619-20; #340, dated 1041/1631-2; #317 & #319, dated 1050/1641). Maḥmūd Ka‘ti II lived in Bīna (on the Bani river near Gomitogo, about 50 km south of Djenné). He died on 16 Shawwāl 1058 / 2 Nov 1648.⁴⁶ The notes he left are mostly on:

Inheritance problems

Maghribī merchants in the Niger bend (and no longer so much on Andalusians as in the notes of Maḥmūd Ka‘ti I)

6) *Maḥmūd Ka‘ti III b. ‘Alī b. Maḥmūd Ka‘ti II*

Ca. 200 notes, mostly undated, but concerning datable historical events. Maḥmūd Ka‘ti III seems to have lived mostly in Kirshamba, in about the late seventeenth or early to mid-eighteenth centuries. Cf. #308, dated 1084/1673-4; #311 & 332 & 376, dated 1091/1680-1; #338, dated 1095/1684-3; #336, dated 1099/1688-7. Most of his notes concern the Arma *pashalik* (he calls them hypocrites, criminals, etc.)

7) *‘Alī Gāo b. Maḥmūd Ka‘ti III*

Over 500 notes, many dated, up to ca. 1799. ‘Alī Gāo left Kirshamba to settle in Goundam, where his descendants live. His notes mostly regard:

Books entering and leaving his library (he was a great collector)

Land ownership issues

Study notes (*muqābala*)

8) *Muḥammad [b.] Abana b. Ibrāhīm b. Maḥmūd Ka‘ti II*

Muḥammad Abana first lived in Goumbou and Thié near Djenné, but later settled in Jimballa (between Timbuktu and Lake Debo). He left at least one note, dated 1802.

⁴⁶ NB: Maḥmūd Ka‘ti II (and/or Maḥmūd Ka‘ti III) also referred to himself as “Alfa‘ Ka‘ti Maḥmūd b. ‘Alī” in the notes (e.g. #303). The use of the form “Alfa‘ Ka‘ti Maḥmūd” (as opposed to “Alfa‘ Maḥmūd Ka‘ti”) cannot therefore be taken as an indication of the authorship of Maḥmūd Ka‘ti I – one of the criteria used by Ismael Diadié in his classification.

9) *al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad [b.] Abana*

Perhaps of Thié. Left notes indicating book ownership.

10) *ʿAlī b. Muḥammad [b.] Abana*

Perhaps of Thié. Left notes indicating book ownership.