

STUDIES ON OTTOMAN DIPLOMATIC HISTORY

V

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A NEW OTTOMAN OUTLOOK ON AFRICA: NOTE ON TURN OF THE CENTURY LITERATURE

Even the casual reader of African history in the late nineteenth century will find references to the Ottoman government. Most of these references record in passing the attendance of an Ottoman minister at a conference or a word of protest from Istanbul, or else they mention the sultan as the nominal suzerain of Egypt, Tunisia, the Sudan or parts of Ethiopia and the Red Sea coast. Apart from alleged Ottoman-Sanusi cooperation in the Chad Basin¹ and asides on pan-Islamism, however the vast literature on the "Scramble for Africa" fails to recognize the existence of any Ottoman reaction to the rapid European colonization of continental Africa beyond the Mediterranean coastal areas of Algeria, Tunisia, and Egypt, the first two of which had fallen under French, and the third under British, rule.²

This note proposes to review the emerging attitudes of, and information available to, the Ottoman government of Africa in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and first decade of the twentieth century as reflected in the internal bureaucratic documents and manuscripts dealing with the twin provinces of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, or as they were known to the Ottomans, Trablus Garb and Bingazi.

From the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, the Ottoman government had enjoyed a comparative advantage over the European states *vis-à-vis* Africa: for one thing, it represented a power whose religion — Islam — was that of much of North and West Africa; for another, it commanded outposts along the

¹For a review of Ottoman-Sanusi relations, see my "Ottoman Government and the Sanusiyya: a Reappraisal," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 21 (1989): pp. 91-106.

²A first look at this subject was provided by Ettore Rossi in his article, "Per la storia della penetrazione turca nell'interno della Libia e per la questione dei suoi confini," *Oriente Moderno* 9 (1929): pp. 154-67. A modern Turkish account by Abdurrahman Çaycı, *Büyük Sahra'da Türk-Fransız Rekabeti, 1858-1911*, (Erzurum 1970) provides a thorough survey.

Mediterranean coastline from which it might have extended its rule inland. But the Ottoman government did not do so. Almost four centuries of direct or nominal Ottoman suzerainty over the coast from Algiers to Alexandria have left little trace in the literature of any developed or sustained Ottoman political interest in the African heartland.³

Before the "Scramble"

Ottoman attitudes towards Africa on the eve of the European "Scramble for Africa" were shaped by two elements, a political strategy and an economic interest. Both had their origins in a legacy of some three hundred and fifty years.⁴

In the sixteenth century the Ottoman government sought to secure the western Mediterranean as their *mare nostrum* by maintaining a string of naval bases in North Africa. Ottoman "naval imperialism"⁵ envisaged these North African dependencies not only as naval bases, but also as providers of ships and sometimes sailors to patrol the western Mediterranean and harass enemy shipping, notably that of the Habsburg empire and Venice. With the Ottoman abortive siege of Malta (1565) and their defeat at Lepanto (1571), the western Mediterranean, however, succumbed to the power of the Habsburgs and their allies. By the mid-seventeenth century, the Ottoman Imperial Council had little occasion to call upon its North African vassals for reinforcements, and imperial rule in these outposts quickly sank to a nominal status. Local janissary families vied for control and two of them forged dynasties that enjoyed virtual independence for over a century: the Qaramanlis of Tripolitania (r. 1711-1835) and the Husaynids of Tunisia (r. 1705-1957).⁶ Oblivious to their Ottoman *raison d'être*, these tributary rulers continued the *jihad* against Europe as corsairs and mercenaries for economic gain. Their operations were not challenged until, at the Congress of Aix-La-Chapelle (1819), the navies of Europe and the United States joined to suppress piracy in the Mediterranean.⁷

³There were periodic forays into the interior, or contacts with local rulers. But none of these reflected a coherent overall policy. For an attempt to subdue the Fezzan in 1577-78 and submit it to the rule of the Awlad Muhammad, see Rossi, "confini," p. 154. For relations with Bornu in the late sixteenth century, see Cengiz Orhonlu, "Osmanlı-Bornu münasebetine ait belgeler," *Tarih Dergisi* 8 (1969): pp. 11-130; B. G. Martin, "Mai Idris of Bornu and the Ottoman Turks," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 3 (1972): pp. 470-90.

⁴There are a number of general works on Ottoman policy in North Africa. See Andrew Hess, *The Forgotten Frontier* (Chicago, 1978); Samih İler, *Şimali Afrika'da Türkler*, 2 vols (Istanbul, 1934).

⁵Hess, *The Forgotten Frontier*, pp. 80-81.

⁶For a brief overview of the history of both dynasties, see R. Mantran, "Husaynids" and "Karamanlis", *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* 2nd ed.

⁷Çaycı, *Büyük Sahra'da*, p. 9.

The French conquest of Algeria in 1830 prompted a reassessment of Ottoman ties with North Africa. In the wake of French support for Muhammad Ali, the *de facto* independent ruler of Ottoman Egypt (r. 1805-1841), the Sublime Porte could not allow French aggression on the southern shores of the Mediterranean to go unanswered. The Ottoman reconquest of Tripolitania in 1835 was a reply, albeit a feeble one, to the French seizure of Algeria. But while the rationale behind the Ottoman move harkened back to the sixteenth century, the navy needed to revive a North African base was lacking. Instead of ships, the Porte stationed in Tripolitania a tiny garrison of less than 1,000 men and signed with neighboring Tunisia treaties which reaffirmed her historical links with the Sublime Porte.⁸

Ottoman economic interest in the heartland of Africa before the mid-nineteenth century was linked to the trans-Saharan trade through Tripoli, which furnished Istanbul with slaves and other luxury items such as gold dust and ivory. This trade between the kingdoms of the Chad Basin and the northern coastal towns had ancient roots and had been carried on for centuries by local Arab merchants.⁹ And while few Istanbul merchants invested in the caravan trade, they purchased slaves in Tripoli through their agents. For the coffers of the Ottoman state and those of its North African tributary states, the revenues brought by the trade derived from market and port taxes.

Except for interruptions due to raids in the interior, the caravan trade continued unhindered until the 1840s, when British abolitionists launched an attack on the African slave trade to the Ottoman Empire. Their efforts elicited little sympathy or cooperation from the Sublime Porte at first, but through negotiation they effected the virtual suppression of the trade by 1890.¹⁰ In the early stages of the suppressionist efforts, Ottoman statesmen never suspected that the larger political fate of Africa would soon be at stake.

Whereas the Ottomans and the Qaramanlis had never exploited the trade for the political domination of the Sahara and Chad Basin, French officials in Algeria were quick to embark on just such a scheme. Beginning in the 1850s,

⁸For an overview of Ottoman civil and military strength in Tripolitania at the outset of the French invasion of Tunisia, see Başbakanlık Arşivi (BA)/Yıldız Esas Evrakı (YEE)/14/388/126/9, report of Governor Nazif Paşa, 1 Haziran 1297/13 June 1881. For the texts of treaties with Tunisia, *ibid.*, YEE/35/260/95/103, envelope 1. For an overview of the status of Tunisia in the Ottoman Empire, Robert Mantran, "L'Evolution des relations entre la Tunisie et l'Empire Ottoman du XVI^e au XIX^e siècle," *Cahiers de Tunisie* 26-27 (1959): pp. 313-333.

⁹On the ancient origins of the Trans-Saharan trade, see B. G. Martin, "Kanem, Bornu and the Fezzan: Notes on the Political History of a Trade Route," *Journal of African History* 10 (1969): pp. 15-27.

¹⁰For the suppression of the slave trade, see Ehud R. Toledano, *The Ottoman Slave Trade and Its Suppression, 1840-1890* (Princeton 1982).

the French resident general in Algeria launched a plan to subdue the Sahara by first syphoning the bulk of trans-Saharan trade away from Tripoli, its preferred terminus, to Algiers.¹¹ Complaints lodged at the Porte by merchants in the southwest emporia towns of Ghat and Ghudamis evoked little sympathy at a time that France was an Ottoman ally in the Crimean War. In 1862, French officials signed the Treaty of Ghudamis with a chief of the Azger Tuareg, the nomads responsible for escorting the trans-Saharan caravans. In response to requests by merchants and the governor of Tripolitania, the Porte reduced export taxes to a level well below the one in Algiers thereby sustaining the flow of the caravan trade to Tripoli.¹²

In 1875, the Porte finally agreed to the establishment of an Ottoman garrison in the emporium town of Ghat and appointed a Tuareg chief as Ottoman *kaymakam* (district official).¹³ Unwittingly, the Ottomans had gained a political edge in the Sahara. This, however, was not due to any merit of Ottoman policy but rather to the indiscretion of French policy and explorers in the Sahara. Still, more pressing for both Ottoman officials and the advocates of French colonialism was the new protectorate over Tunisia.

Pan-Islamism and New Currents in the Bureaucratic Correspondence

In May 1881, the French conquered Tunisia and in September 1882, the British occupied Egypt, two provinces over which the Ottoman sultan claimed suzerainty, albeit a purely theoretical one. These developments gradually elicited a marked change in the attitudes of the Ottoman government towards Tripolitania, Cyrenaica, and the African interior. By comparison with Tunisia and Egypt, it should be remembered that Tripolitania and Cyrenaica were barren, poorly administered, and underpopulated provinces. Their capitals were dusty towns, not cities. The Kuloğlu irregulars, the descendants of janissaries and native women who were the mainstay of the local defense forces, were undisciplined, ill-equipped to defend the provinces, and unwilling to fulfill their

¹¹For a French perspective on the conquest of the Sahara, see Augustin Bernard and Nicolas Lacroix, *La pénétration saharienne, 1830-1906* (Algiers 1906). For the Western African campaigns and their connection with the Sahara see A.S. Kanya-Forstner, *The Conquest of the Western Sudan, A Study in French Military Imperialism* (Cambridge, 1969).

¹²For the Ottoman perspective on these events of the 1850s and 1860s, see my "The End of the Trans-Saharan Slave Trade: A View from Tripoli, 1857-1902," paper presented to the Workshop on the Long Distance Trade in the Slaves Across the Sahara and the Black Sea in the 19th Century, Bellagio, Italy, 10-16 December, 1988. See also, André Martel, "La politique saharienne et ottomane, 1835-1918," in *Le Sahara, rapports et contacts humains, 7ème colloque d'histoire organisé par la Faculté des Lettres d'Aix-en Provence* (Aix-en-Provence, 1967), pp. 91-144.

¹³For the order to establish an Ottoman garrison at Ghat, see BA/Trade/Dahiliye/49188.

functions as tax collectors, regardless of the tax exemptions that they enjoyed.¹⁴ A good part of the credit for fostering government interest in these provinces must go to Ahmed Rasim Paşa, Ottoman governor of Tripolitania from 1881 to 1896. An advocate of Midhat Paşa's constitution of 1876 and a relative and ally of the liberal reformer, he was banished to the governorship of Tripolitania by Sultan Abdülhamid II.¹⁵ There, rather than accepting his banishment as a retirement, he carried out his responsibilities with great determination. During his unprecedented fifteen year tenure, he restructured the finances of the province, radically expanded its defenses, and introduced extensive administrative and educational reforms.¹⁶ In the eyes of more avowedly anti-European officials in Tripolitania, Ahmed Rasim acquiesced too easily to French demands over the Tripolitania-Tunisia border and Ottoman outposts in the Sahara, two of which he dismantled.¹⁷ These quarrels aside, he commanded the respect of a sultan who did not look kindly on his governor's political opinions.

Concurrent with the reforms instituted by Ahmed Rasim was the appearance in Istanbul of a number of works that sought to bestow some importance and value on Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, the last two provinces that remained to the Porte on the southern shores of the Mediterranean. At the same time, the bureaucratic correspondence between Istanbul and its North African provinces reflected the pan-Islamic schemes of Abdülhamid II, which called for the recognition of the sultan's spiritual command over all Muslims by virtue of his also being Caliph, the rightful successor of the Prophet Muhammad.

As a government policy, the aim of pan-Islamism was to harness the sympathy and support of those Muslims who either lived under European control — be it in North Africa, India or Southeast Asia — or were at risk of falling under the yoke of the unbelievers.¹⁸ The policy stirred up a good deal of uneasiness in European chancelleries. Many observers were quick to associate it with anti-European conspiracies whereas in fact there was little or no evidence to

¹⁴BA/YEE/14/388/126/9, Nazif Paşa's report, 1 Haziran 1297/13 June 1881.

¹⁵For Ahmed Rasim's political biography, see Mehmed Süreyya Paşa, *Sicill-i Osmani*, 4 vols. (Istanbul 1308-15) 4: pp. 856-57.

¹⁶For an overview of these reforms, see the *salname* of the province of Tripoli for the year 1312 A.H.: *Salname-i vilayet-i Trablus Garb*, 1312 A.H (Tripoli 1312 A.H./1894-5), pp. 168-187.

¹⁷See the remarks of Mahmud Naci, *Tarikh Tarabulus al-Gharb*, translated by Muhammad al-Usta (Beirut, 1970), pp. 188-89. (The Turkish text was not available to me.)

¹⁸For a description of the Pan-Islamic circle in Istanbul and its "cosmopolitan milieu", see Martin Seth Kramer, "The Congress in Modern Islam: On the Origins of an Innovation," Ph.D. thesis, Princeton University, 1982, 1-24. An abbreviated version of this chapter appears in *idem*, *Islam Assembled: the Advent of the Muslim Congresses* (New York, 1986), pp. 1-9.

support such an allegation.¹⁹ Pan-Islamism fostered numerous political contacts and burgeoned the payrolls of the sultan's palace; but it produced few tangible foreign policy successes. It did enjoy another existence, however, as a literary motif in the bureaucratic correspondence and in that between the Palace and its Muslim sympathizers. Here, the paternal — not to say patronizing — attitudes that the rhetoric of Pan-Islamism sometimes engendered resembled the discourse of the "white man's burden"; only the scale of self-delusion was greater, chiefly because the Ottoman government did not wield the political might of its European foes.²⁰

In dispatches between the provinces and Istanbul, the governors of Tripolitania or Cyrenaica might boast of the vast number of Sultan Abdülhamid's loyal subjects in the Sahara, or mention a *hutbe* (sermon delivered at Friday prayer) spoken in the sultan's name in some little-known oasis of the Sahara. Such references echoed the aspirations of the sultan's Pan-Islamic circle in Yıldız Palace. They also endowed the twin provinces of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica with a political significance which might enhance the career of a governor who was languishing on the frontier of the empire. Governor Musa Kazım paşa (r. 1885-1888), for example, draws upon this Pan-Islamic motif in a memorandum on reform.

The political importance [of the province of Benghazi] is obvious. For a long time, it has been under the sway and power of the Exalted Refuge of the Caliphate. And it is on an Islamic continent of nearly ninety million (*sic*) souls who, night and day, are preoccupied with the triumph of his Exalted Highness. There can be renewed and refurbished bonds between Africa and the seat of the Sublime Caliphate built upon existing ties.²¹

The anonymous faithful in Africa cropped up in many guises, but the Tuareg were a favorite. In one case, Ahmed Rasim estimated the number of loyal Tuareg "overcome by consideration and affection (*meyl ve muhabet*, an often repeated phrase) for his Illustrious Highness, Protector of the Exalted state" at

¹⁹This was particularly true of the stories fostered by French observers about the Sanusi brotherhood and the Ottoman government, an issue that I have touched on elsewhere. See my "Ottoman Government and the Sanusiyya."

²⁰See for example the remarks of the sultan's chief secretary in a letter to Muhammad al-Mahdi al-Sanusi where he refers to "the people of the Sudan" as "ignorant and dim-witted" and as coveting "amulets and such things that glitter." The letter of 2 Rebiülahir 1313/22 September 1895 is quoted in part in Fuad Shukri, *al-Sanusiyya, din wa dawla* (Cairo, 1948), 87. A readable facsimile of the letter appears on p. 419.

²¹BA/YBE/2254/126/11, a report on the defense of Benghazi by Musa Kazım Paşa, governor of Cyrenaica, 20 Cemaziyelahir 1302/14 April 1885.

five million.²² A special sultan's envoy to the chief of the Sanusiyya put the Tuareg population at two million.²³

Such statistical and rhetorical flourishes were not always greeted in the Palace with the skepticism that they merited. Collected in the Yıldız Palace archives are a number of testimonials to what Abdülhamid II and some of his advisors construed as the loyalty of African rulers to the Ottoman state. One is a letter dated 1886 from the new sultan of Bornu to Ahmed Rasim Paşa in which he avows his loyalty to the governor (ruler?) of Tripolitania (*mushir Tarabulus*) and asks the governor to accept the gift of a black eunuch.²⁴ A note in another file, confirms that the Ottoman flag was again flying above Ghat after an attack by the "loyal Tuareg" on the Ottoman garrison in the fall of 1886 and that a telegram announcing the good news had been sent to the Imperial Palace.²⁵

Literary Works on Tripolitania, Cyrenaica and Africa

In addition to the daily government dispatches concerning Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, these twin provinces were also dealt with in longer and more specialized writings that appeared in Istanbul between the 1880s and the beginning of World War I. As a category of writings, these works can best be described as handbooks or almanacs, although they are far more detailed than the official government *salnames* or yearbooks. They all offered appraisals of Tripolitania's and Cyrenaica's importance for the African continent and shared the predominant theme of their being "the gateway to Africa." Many of these writings drew upon the itineraries and information from European explorers who had embarked upon their African journeys from Tripoli — notably Lyons, Barth, and Nachtigal.

One example of this genre is a short book of 1889/90 entitled "Tripoli and Benghazi: Center for the Great Sahara and Sudan."²⁶ Dedicated to the sultan by its author Ömer Subhi, a major detached to the Chief of Staff, the book tries

²²BA/İrade/Dahiliye/75700, Ahmed Rasim Paşa to the minister of interior, 29 Ramazan 1302/11 July 1885.

²³Sadık el-Mueyyed Bey, *Afrika Sahra-i kebirinde seyahat* (Istanbul, 1314 AH), p. 87. For further discussion of this work, see below.

²⁴BA/YEE/30/332/51/78, Ahmed Rasim to the sultan's chief secretary, 5 Şaban 1303/9 May 1886; enclosure, letter from Shaykh Hamish of Bornu. For earlier nineteenth century exchanges between the rulers of Bornu and the Ottoman governors of Tripoli, see B. G. Martin, "Five Letters from the Tripoli Archives," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 2 (1962), pp. 350-379.

²⁵BA/YEE/30/2366/55/78, Ahmed Rasim to Mansur Paşa, 19 Cemaziyelahir 1304/24 March 1887.

²⁶Ömer Subhi, *Trablus Garb ve Bingazi ile Sahra-i kebir ve Sudan merkezi* (Istanbul, 1307 AH).

to explain not only the military and political significance of the twin provinces, but also their geographic and physical features. The text is overloaded with French phrases which are intended to bestow an air of authority and relevance on the analysis. Throughout, the work labors to sustain the argument that the Sahara, the Sudan, and Africa are an Eldorado of natural resources and commercial opportunities open to the Ottoman government by dint of its rule over Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, Europe's threshold to Africa or as the author puts it "the Asia Minor of Africa."²⁷ In the process, Ömer Subhi provides a detailed account of the towns and villages of each *sancak*, the different caravans routes followed by the merchants engaged in trans-Saharan trade, and the goods that they carried. Of particular interest is the final section of the book entitled "Sudan".²⁸ Here, the author reviews the geography, natural resources, and regimes of the Saharan states of Bornu, Baguirmi, Sokoto, Zinder, Waday, and Bilma. In the end, however, Ömer Subhi presents little more than a gazetteer of the towns and administrative divisions of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica and the Sahara that lay beyond.

More detailed in its contents is an unpublished work of 1884 entitled "Concerning Tripoli, Benghazi, and the Fezzan: Parts of Ottoman Africa."²⁹ Written by a captain in the office of the Chief of Staff and presented to the sultan, the manuscript deals not only with the geography and population of these regions, but also with what the author understands as their agricultural potential — an idea he derives from North Africa's fame as a granary in Roman times.

For each town, *kaymakamlık*, and *sancak*, Yüzbaşı Ali offers precise population statistics which were compiled in the course of the reorganization of Tripolitania's tax system in 1884.³⁰ In addition, he details the distribution of the 12,000 Ottoman regulars throughout the province, noting what equipment they have and what battalions have cavalry units attached to them.³¹ The chief merit of this work lies in its careful review of the agricultural produce (*hasılat-i arziye*) of the two provinces. In particular, he draws attention to the growing importance of esparto grass (*half otu*) for the economy of Tripolitania, an export that in time was to furnish the provincial treasury with customs revenues of over a million *kuruş* by 1890.³² He also details the wheat and barley production, the yield of the latter being sufficient to provide exports to England for malting.³³

²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 77-88.

²⁹Yüzbaşı Ali, "Afrika-i Osmaniden Trablus Garb ve Bingazi ve Fizan kıtalarına dair". MS Istanbul University, TY 5002.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 34-36.

³¹*Ibid.*, 46-48.

³²*Ibid.*, 53; YEE/14/207/126/7, Ahmed Rasim's report on Tripoli, 7 Şevval 1308/16 May 1891.

³³Yüzbaşı Ali, "Trablus Garb," p. 54.

Fruitful comparisons are to be made between Yüzbaşı Ali's work and Mahmud Naci's book of 1912, "The History of Tripolitania."³⁴ The latter is a valuable storehouse of information on Tripolitania and its African hinterland on the eve of the Italian invasion. What endows the work with special value is the author's native knowledge of the area: Mahmud Naci, a one time representative of Tripolitania to the Ottoman parliament in Istanbul was the descendant of an Albanian family of janissaries that had settled in the provinces generations earlier.

The book begins with a thorough review of the population of Tripolitania based on the first detailed census of that province made in 1911. Naci's figures are not only more reliable than those of Yüzbaşı Ali. They also show very clearly that in the last quarter of the nineteenth century the population of the province was increasingly sedentary and that it was also settling especially in the coastal towns, where it became engaged in menial tasks associated with preparing and shipping exports like esparto grass, skins and sponges.³⁵

Mahmud Naci's discussion of Tripolitania's agriculture and natural resources contains materials similar to those found in Yüzbaşı Ali, but also provides some useful and little-known facts about Tripolitania's trade. For example, it shows that Great Britain (excluding Egypt) dominated Tripolitania's import trade; that the value of the goods Great Britain furnished to that province in the late nineteenth century was more than double that of any other European power including Italy and France;³⁶ and that it absorbed three times as much of Tripolitania's exports that did France, Italy, or the Ottoman Empire.³⁷

The next section of the book deals with the history of Tripolitania. Here, Mahmud Naci provides the most thorough review available in Turkish of that province's history from Roman to Ottoman times.³⁸ He precedes his review of the successive conquests of the Romans, Byzantines, Arabs and Ottomans, with a detailed ethnographic history of the province beginning in Punic times. His discussion touches on the ancient Lydians, the Berbers, the Hawara, and of course the various waves of Arab settlers that followed the conquest of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania in the seventh century.³⁹ He also includes notices on the settlement of the Jews in Cyrenaica after the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD, and on the African slaves who mixed with the local Arab population.⁴⁰

³⁴For full bibliographic information, see note 17.

³⁵Mahmud Naci, *Tarikh*, pp. 14-18.

³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 57.

³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 60.

³⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 121-184.

³⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 112-117.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p.118.

The fourth and final section of the book deals with the question of Tripolitania's borders and hinterland. Here, the author reviews the principles of nineteenth century international law which served to determine the hinterland of a particular colony and the rights that a colonial power enjoyed over this hinterland region. His principal task is to prove that the Anglo-French accords of the 1890s violated Ottoman rights to the vast hinterland of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, which stretched (in present-day terms) from Sudan to Nigeria and from southern Libya to the Central African Republic. To buttress his claim to Ottoman rights over the territory, Mahmud Naci reviews the history of key hinterland oases such as Tamasinin, Barkat, and Janet, which were seized by French military forces in the first decade of the twentieth century.⁴¹ He focuses particularly on the role of these oases in the trans-Saharan trade between Tripolitania and the African heartland, and on the interdependence between the welfare of the Tripolitanian merchants and the local Tuareg tribesmen that escorted the caravans.⁴² Implicitly, he condemns the policies of the Hamidian regime as timid in the face of French imperialism and lauds what he believes to have been the more aggressive but equally unsuccessful policies of the Young Turks.

Another turn of the century category of literature that touched on Tripolitania and Cyrenaica was very much in the old Islamic tradition of travel literature (*rihlet*) although it, too, found its counterpart in Europe in the works of Nachtigal and Barth. Foremost among these is Sadik el-Mueyyed Azamzade's "A Voyage in the Great Sahara", published in 1896/7.⁴³ The author, an aide-de-camp of Sultan Abdülhamid II, chronicles his second journey to Kufra, the headquarters of the Sanusi brotherhood in southern Cyrenaica, in 1895. While the book contains virtually nothing about the political exchanges between Sadik el-Mueyyid and Muhammad al-Mahdi al-Sanusi, it provides a detailed account of life along the desolate caravan trail from Benghazi to Kufra. Written in the form of a diary, the work describes the tribes, animals, vegetation, food, and climate of the region that the author and his caravan crossed. Here and there, incidental details about the history of Sanusiyya can be gleaned. In particular, one gains a sense of the immense influence that this brotherhood exercised over the daily lives of the Cyrenaican bedouins. The book also includes half a dozen photographs taken by the author who was himself an accomplished amateur photographer. Photographs of these regions of the Sahara were rare in the nineteenth century, as most European travel books were illustrated by engravings, rather than photographs.

The real interest of the work lies in its final section. There, the author interrupts the format of the earlier parts of the book and launches into a review of

⁴¹*Ibid.*, pp. 191-192.

⁴²*Ibid.*, pp. 193-203.

⁴³For full bibliographic information, see note 23.

the different tribes and parties which he portrays as the natural allies of the Porte against the European imperialists. He provides a brief account of the Tuareg and the Tibu⁴⁴ and then follows it with a region by region description. He lays special emphasis on the oasis of Bilma because of its salt flats and the role that it played in intra-Saharan trade.⁴⁵ Furthermore, he considers Waday as a potential ally and an important economic power in the Sahara after the collapse in 1890 of Bornu, a state that had intermittent exchanges with the Porte from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century.⁴⁶

Quite unlike the handbooks discussed above, the underlying tone of this work is clearly pan-Islamic. Although the book never clearly states what policy to pursue, it is clear that Sadik el-Mueyyid is intent upon supporting and nourishing the rhetoric and political ambitions of his patron Sultan Abdülhamid in Africa.

Advocacy politics is also the underlying purpose of another travel work by Abdülkadir Cami Bey, the representative of Fezzan to the Ottoman parliament. His book, entitled "From Tripoli to the Great Sahara", recounts a voyage that he made to the town of Ghat in 1906 in the company of the explorer Hanns Vischer.⁴⁷ Again, it provides descriptions of the caravan trails and oases of the Tripolitanian hinterland. And while the material included in the book is more accurate than that provided by Sadik el-Mueyyed, in particular in terms of the population of these hinterland regions, the intent of the book is equally political: to win support and funding in the Ottoman parliament for further military maneuvers in the Sahara against French forces that had temporarily occupied Janet and Bilma in 1905. As a former *kaymakam* of Ghat, Abdülkadir was trying to draw a more positive picture of Ottoman strength and influence in the Sahara than circumstances warranted. Where this work differs from that of Sadik el-Mueyyed is in the terms in which it views Ottoman interests in the Sahara. For the aide-de-camp of the sultan, the issue is the recognition of the sultan as caliph among a distant Muslim population. For Cami Bey, what was at stake was the very territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire and the dangers implicit in yielding to European imperialism.

⁴⁴Sadik el-Mueyyed, *Seyahat*, pp. 79-81.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 101-103.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 104-109.

⁴⁷Abdülkadir Cami Bey, *Trablus Garbden Sahra-i kebire doğru*, (Istanbul, 1326 AH).

In conclusion, it should be noted that it is difficult to draw any clear link between the concerns and aspirations reflected in the writings surveyed above and actual Ottoman policies in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. The tasks expected of the governors of these twin provinces and their subordinates were more mundane: tax reform and military reorganization. Nevertheless, one can safely surmise that these writings not only reflected a new Ottoman interest in Africa, but also sparked such interest in the upper ranks of the Ottoman government. One indication for this likelihood is their presence in the personal library of the sultan.