

BURKINA FASO

by

Baba Yunus Muhammad

1993

## INTRODUCTION

This survey of the Republic of Burkina Faso was carried out between 25th December 1992 and 13th January 1993. Nineteen towns were visited, of which only six possessed Islamic MSS: but 14 collections containing 2,342 MSS were discovered.

Most of the collections in Burkina Faso are uncatalogued. The MSS are similar to those found in Nigeria, Mali and Niger, as a result of the close cultural and religious relationship between these countries.

Sadly, most collections are in the hands of uninformed persons, who usually do not realise their value.

The high cost of printed Arabic texts in the country has driven people to rely on manuscripts for Islamic studies, as they are cheaper to purchase. As a result, there are a lot of MSS in private hands which are not organised as collections. People may own two or three MSS bought or copied personally for study. It is not easy to survey such MSS, and it was necessary to combine some collections. Under present conditions these MSS risk being lost or destroyed unless urgent measures are taken.

The numbers which were discovered within a short period prove that Burkina Faso is rich in Islamic MSS. Efforts should be made to organise and control the collection of these valuable documents, as the deaths of many prominent elderly Islamic scholars will otherwise lead to the disappearance of many private collections.

## UNION CATALOGUES & SURVEYS

**1965.** Les manuscrits historiques arabo-africaines. (Bilan provisoire.) By V. MONTEIL. *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Afrique Noire*, Série B, 27, 1965, pp. 531–542.

Haute-Volta, p. 542.

## INDIVIDUAL COLLECTIONS

**BOBO DIOULASSO****Alhaji Muhammad Marhaba**

Muhammad Marhaba's residence

c/o Bobo Central Mosque

*Date of establishment:* 1952

*Status:* Private

*Conditions of access:* By appointment with the late owner's family.

*Total number of Islamic MSS:* 701 (Arabic; Dyula; Fulbe).

*Description of collection:* This is probably the largest and best preserved collection in the country. It is the creation of Alhaji MUHAMMAD MARHABA, sometime Mufti and Imam of Bobo Dioulasso. The collection was bequeathed to his children. No information exists about the source of the MSS, but the late owner once served as a Qāḍī in Ghana and also claimed to have come from Spain. Alh. Marhaba wrote a lot of books and copied others personally.

Most of the MSS are in mixed languages. Of interest is a very old manuscript of *Dalā'il al-khayrāt*, with a note by Alh. Marhaba appended to it saying that he bought it for four slaves.

The dated MSS are from the 18th century, but some very old manuscripts are undated. According to the family of Alh. Marhaba, some MSS were donated to the late Alh. BOUBOU HAMMA, formerly speaker of the National Assembly of Niger Republic in the 1960s (see catalogues).

The MSS are neatly packed in wooden boxes in a family living room. They are well preserved, but the very old MSS have been affected either by damp or by bookworm.

Subjects covered by the collection are: literature (60), *fiqh* (105), history (67), correspondence (115), Qur'āns (6), *tafsīr* (5), *Ḥadīth* (15), *fatwās* (129), Islamic law (33), *ʿaqīda* (48), philosophy (17), Sufism (25), grammar (15), praise of the Prophet (7), *waʿz* (14), sermons (18), poetry (22).

This collection has much historical and artistic significance. Unique MSS include: *Maʿnā nuzūl al-Qurʿān*, anonymous and undated; *Majmūʿat tārikh Zabarmā*, by MUHAMMAD MARHABĀ, undated; *Jawāhir al-ḥisān* by KHALĪL SAGHANŪGHŪ, undated.

*Unpublished catalogues:*

1979. *Liste des manuscrits en langues arabe et ajami*, Institut de Recherche en Sciences Humaines, Niamey.

Mentions about 100 MSS of this collection.

Another list contains about 287 MSS.

**Bobo Naba**

Bobo Naba's palace

*Status:* Private

*Conditions of access:* By special appointment.

*Total number of Islamic MSS:* 299 (Arabic; Dyula; Fulbe).

*Description of collection:* Kept in the room which houses the historical monuments of the royal family of Bobo Dioulasso. It is believed that the MSS are the works of various Malams who once worked as clerks of the court. The majority of them relate to diplomatic correspondence, commerce, records of events, history, and judicial cases.

The dates of the MSS are not very clear, but careful observation of the legible ones suggests that they might have been written in the 17th and 18th centuries and later.

The subjects are: *fiqh* (12), history (54), correspondence (41), chronicles (59), judicial cases (78), Qur'ān (1), *tafsīr* (2), science and the occult (35), Sufism (7), *Ḥadīth* (5), praise of the Prophet (3), grammar (2).

The MSS are not well kept, but they appear to be in good condition, except for a few which have been destroyed. They contain beautiful calligraphy. The most important manuscripts in the collection include: *Akhhār aṣl Fullāta Burnū* by AḤMAD B. AL-ḤĀJJ, "AMĪR MĪSAW" dated 26th July 1927; *Ghazwat Kānim allatī šāra fihā Sulṭānunā al-Ḥājj IDRĪS B. ʿALĪ* by AḤMAD B. FARTUWĀ AL-BARNĀWĪ, undated; and *Tabṣīrat al-nadhr* by IDRĪS (?), undated.

It is not known whether this collection has been catalogued.

**Moli Younous Abd ʿAla**

Moli Younous residence

c/o Bobo Central Mosque

*Date of establishment:* 1970

*Status:* Private

*Total number of Islamic MSS:* 156 (Arabic).

*Description of collection:* Represents 5 collections of one family or community. According to Moli Younous, he and his relations inherited their respective collections from their grandparents. Moli Younous, who owns more than half of the MSS, claims to have copied about 45% of them himself. No information exists as to the source of the MSS. They were amalgamated by request, to facilitate this survey. The collection possesses very old MSS, which date as far back as the 16th century. The rest are dated from the 19th century, and about 20 MSS are undated.

The subjects covered are: Sufism (7), praise of the Prophet (16), *fiqh* (10), *Ḥadīth* (25), Qurʾāns (3), *tafsīr* (1), *adab* (17), philosophy (9), history (14), *Sharīʿa* (8), medicine (4), occult (10), correspondence (18), sermons (10), *waʿz* (4).

Though badly affected by bookworm, they are well preserved, but restoration is required to save them from further destruction.

Five of the MSS are of high artistic quality, especially one Qurʾān. Rarities are: *Miʿrāj al-Suʿūd*, by AHMADU BABA, undated; and *Shahdat al-jānī fi ʾkhtišār aḥkām ṭarīqat al-Tijānī*, by MUHAMMAD B. MUHAMMAD AL-ḤAJŪJĪ, undated.

*Unpublished catalogue:*

An undetailed hand-prepared list contains 72 MSS..

## BOULSA

### Mole Ishaka Nabiga

Nabiga Family Quarters

No. 15

*Date of establishment:* 1950

*Status:* Private

*Conditions of access:* By appointment with the owner.

*Total number of Islamic MSS:* 52 (Arabic).

*Description of collection:* Represents a collection of MSS by seven individuals. Mole Ishaka, a scholar, owns the majority of the MSS (about 38); 14 belong to 4 mallams in Boulsa, who on account of the small size of their collections, and their remotely located residences,

were advised by this researcher to amalgamate their MSS with those of Mole Ishaka for easy compilation.

All the owners claim to have copied the MSS themselves, with the exception of 4 MSS which, according to Mole Ishaka, were donated to him by a friend, SAYINNA BOUKAR DUNAMA, from Borno, Nigeria.

The collection covers the following subjects: theology (8), history (4), *fiqh* (8), *uṣūl* (5), Qurʾāns (2), *Ḥadīth* (9), *Sharīʿa* (5), astronomy (3), Qurʾanic sciences (1), medicine (1), *fatwās* (2), *waʿz* (4).

The dates of most of the MSS are very obscure and impossible to ascertain with accuracy. There are, however, about 12 MSS of the 19th century.

The collection is well preserved, and contains superbly bound MSS. They are kept on a small wooden table in Mole Ishaka's living-room. There are two rarities: *Tadhkira li-l-mutaʾakkkhirīn ʿan mulūk Ghūnjā*, undated and anonymous; and *Riwāya ʿan baʿd al-ʿulamāʾ fi madhhab al-IMĀM MĀLIK ʿan al-Sinīn*, undated and anonymous.

*Unpublished catalogue:*

A handwritten catalogue prepared by SAYINNA BOUKAR DUNAMA for MOLE ISHAKA describes 34 MSS in detail.

## DJIBO

### Alhaji Danbiri Katsina

Danbiri Katsina's residence

*Date of establishment:* 1928

*Status:* Private

*Conditions of access:* By permission of the owner.

*Total number of Islamic MSS:* 100 (Arabic; Fulbe; Hausa).

*Description of collection:* According to Alhaji DANBIRI, his MSS are from various sources: Nigeria, Niger and Dori. He purchased some from friends and copied a number of MSS himself, as he still does, despite his great age. The MSS are in mixed languages.

Most of the manuscripts are the works of Shehu USMANU DAN FODIO, ABDULLAHI BIN FODIO and MUHAMMAD BELLO. Some very old manuscripts authored by prominent West African scholars such as AHMADU BABA of Timbuktu are also present. The MSS are well

preserved, though most of them require restoration because of book-worm and damp.

The MSS cover the following subjects: *jihād* (3), *fiqh* (20), praise of the Prophet (8), *Ḥadīth* (3), *tafsīr* (1), Qurʾān (1), philosophy (4), *tawḥīd* (12), *uṣūl* (14), history (5), grammar (9), occult (7), medicine (1), poetry (12).

Rarities are: *Tuḥfat al-zurafā* by JALĀL AL-DĪN AL-SUYŪṬĪ, undated; *Muqaddimat al-ʿAshmāwī* by MUḤAMMAD AL-ʿASHMĀWĪ AL-RIFĀʿĪ, undated; and *Infāq al-maysūr fī tārikh bilād al-Takrūr*, by MUḤAMMADU BELLO BIN UTHMAN, dated 1227.

*Unpublished catalogue:*

A handwritten, undetailed, catalogue on two sheets lists the MSS.

### Alhaji Sahabi Aliyu

Sahabi Aliyu Quarters

*Status:* Private

*Total number of Islamic MSS:* 13.

*Description of collection:* Eleven MSS in this collection were purchased by Alh. SAHABI ALIYU from sources within Burkina Faso for his own study. Two were given to him by an itinerant scholar, who spent some time in Djibo about 8 years ago. Only 6 of the MSS date from the 19th century. The rest are undated. Four are anonymous.

Subjects covered by the MSS are: *fiqh* (3), *uṣūl* (1), Qurʾān (1), *tawḥīd* (5), praise of the Prophet (1), grammar (2).

The MSS are in perfect condition.

This collection is uncatalogued.

## DORI

### Alhaji Imam Ghali

Dori Masjid Jumʿa

*Date of establishment:* 1941

*Status:* Private

*Conditions of access:* By permission of the owner.

*Total number of Islamic MSS:* 139.

*Description of collection:* The majority of this collection comprises the

works of the Sokoto *jihād* leaders. The owner, Alh. Ghali, the Imam of Dori, brought most of this collection, which he had inherited from his father, from his home in Sokoto. He had copied some MSS from printed Arabic texts over the years.

The MSS are bound in volumes and kept on a table in the owner's bedroom. They are in good condition, as only a few have been infected. They date from the 18th to the 20th centuries, and some are in mixed languages.

Subjects covered by the collection are: *fiqh* (21), *Ḥadīth* (17), history (19), *jihād* (16), science and the occult (11), astronomy (3), astrology (8), grammar (3), praise of the Prophet (2), genealogy (4), *ʿaqīda* (18), Sufism (7), politics (10).

Some MSS are of artistic significance. Rarities are: *Taqyīd wīrd al-Shaykh al-Tijānī* by ʿABD AL-KARĪM BINNĪSĀ AL-FĀSĪ, dated 1904; *Ḍiyāʾ al-ḥukkām* by ʿABD ALLĀH IBN FŪDĪ, undated; *Tazyīn al-waraqāt* by ʿABD ALLĀH IBN FŪDĪ, undated.

It is not known whether this collection has been catalogued.

### Alhaji Hama Kadiri

Hama Kadiri's quarters

*Date of establishment:* 1940

*Status:* Private

*Conditions of access:* By permission of the late owner's family.

*Total number of Islamic MSS:* 77 (Arabic; Fulbe).

*Description of collection:* This collection belonged to a pious Sufi Fulani Shaykh who was the Grand Qāḍī of Dori some decades ago. His true origin is unknown. This scholar is said to have written a number of Islamic books and had copied many works by prominent Islamic scholars in the Maghrib. It is not known whether he purchased some MSS from other sources. His collection was bequeathed to his children.

There may be more MSS in this collection than were disclosed, given that the family of the late owner initially denied being in possession of any manuscripts. According to an informant, the late owner once gave some MSS to a Western researcher. It is not clear whether these were the ones mentioned by Mr ROBERT PAGEARD as having been given to him by a Fulani scholar in Dori in the early 1960s.

Subjects covered by the collection are: Sufism (6), history (8),

*Hadīth* (5), science & occultism (17), Qurʾāns (2), *tafsīr* (1), *ʿaqīda* (4), *fiqh* (11), poetry (5), correspondence (16), praise of the Prophet (2).

Twenty-five of the MSS are dated between the 18th and 19th centuries; ten are 20th-century; the rest are undated.

The manuscripts are kept in a large box. They are well preserved, but a few have been infected by bookworm. There are no MSS of artistic significance, but rarities are: *Al-Murshid al-muʿin ʿalā ʾl-ḡarūrī min ʿulūm al-dīn* by ʿABD AL-WĀḤID IBN ʿĀSHIR AL-ANDALUSĪ, undated; *Mukhtaṣar tāriḡh mulūk Burnū* by ʿABŪ BAKR AḤMAD AL-BARNĀWĪ; *Qaṣāʾid al-mutaḡarrīqa*, by ʿANTARA IBN SHADDĀD.

It is not known whether this collection has been catalogued.

### Alhaji Usman Tokorori

Alhaji Usman Tokorori's court

*Status:* Private

*Conditions of access:* By permission of the late owner's family.

*Total number of Islamic MSS:* 241 (Arabic; Fulbe).

*Description of collection:* This collection was built up by several generations and bequeathed to ALHAJI USMAN, the Chief of Dori, who died in Medina, Saudi Arabia, about two years ago. The collection has very important MSS of historical significance. According to the family of the late owner, their forefathers had written and copied most of the MSS themselves. The late ALH. USMAN had purchased some from sources not known to them. Several volumes of MSS from this collection have been taken away by Western scholars and colonial officials. An unspecified number are said to have been donated to Alh. BOUBOU HAMMA, the late speaker of Niger's House of Assembly.

Subjects covered are: genealogy (5), history (27), Sufism (9), *fiqh* (16), *Hadīth* (11), *ʿaqīda* (13), medicine (20), *waʿz* (25), *Sharīʿa* (8), *fatwās* (19), correspondence (36), philosophy (8), Qurʾāns (9), *tafsīr* (4), *jihād* (12), education (3), grammar (6), praise of the Prophet (2), poetry (8).

The MSS are in two thick leather bags. Some have lost their bindings, and a few have also been infected by bookworm and damp. There are MSS with fine calligraphy. The majority are undated and anonymous. The dated ones are 18th-century.

Some rarities are: *Ḍiyā ʾl-siyāsa wa-fatāwā ʾl-nawāzil mim mā huwa fī furūʿ al-dīn min al-masāʾil* by ʿABD ALLĀH IBN MUḤAMMAD FŪDĪ,

dated 1235 AH; *Majmūʿa min tāriḡh Fulānīyīn*, anonymous and undated; *Mawsūʿat al-Sūdān* by ʿABD AL-QĀDIR MUṢṬAFĀ.

*Unpublished catalogue:*

1979. *Liste des manuscrits en langues arabe et ajami*, Institut de Recherche en Sciences Humaines, Niamey.

Describes about 34 MSS in this collection.

### OUAGADOUGOU

#### Centre Nationale des Archives

Ministry of Information and Culture

BP 7045, Ouagadougou

*Status:* Public archives

*Conditions of access:* Open to the general public.

*Total number of Islamic MSS:* 152 (Arabic).

*Description of collection:* This collection holds archival documents and MSS which relate to the Islamic religion and history, Sufism, mathematics, literature, charms, poetry, correspondence, medicine, litanies, astrology and Qurʾanic science.

The collection is kept in a large room, with old archival documents. This made inspection extremely difficult, but the volumes appear to be dusty; there is no information about their condition.

The collection is uncatalogued.

#### Centre Voltaique de la Recherche Scientifique, Manuscript Division

BP 6, Ouagadougou

*Date of establishment:* 1949

*Status:* Public

*Conditions of access:* Open to the general public.

*Total number of Islamic MSS:* 211 (Arabic; Fulbe).

*Description of collection:* This centre was established in 1949 by Guy le Maol to promote research on Africa. It was formerly part of L'Institut Français d'Afrique Noire (IFAN). In 1965, the Centre was renamed Centre Voltaique de la Recherche Scientifique (CVRS) and brought under the administration of the Ministry of Education.

It has not been actively involved in the collection of Islamic MSS in Burkina Faso, chiefly as a result of limited resources and lack of interested personnel. Despite these constraints, it has however been able to acquire a significant number of collections. It could not be established whether the MSS were bought from their original owners or were donated to the Centre.

The collection contains valuable MSS dating as far back as the 17th century. They are well preserved in boxes. It also possesses MSS of artistic and rarity value. The collection is in mixed languages.

Subjects covered are: *Hadīth* (27), Qurʾāns (4), history (18), philosophy (4), theology (20), *fiqh* (23), *uṣūl* (15), occult (10), correspondence (34), poetry (9), sermons (5), *fatwās* (18), literature (7), Sufism (11), medicine (6).

Manuscripts of rare significance are: *Al-manẓūma al-musamma bi-tabdīd al-maqbūlāt fī ʿilm al-ṭibb*, anonymous and undated; *Tārīkh waqāʿi al-Barābīsh wa-maʿahu khabar al-sūq* by AL-ʿALAWĪ BĀBĀ AL-KABĪR IBN MUḤAMMAD, dated 1329 AH; and *Al-Saʿāda al-kubrā fī ʿl-fiqh*, dated 1915, by IBN SALĪM MUḤAMMAD YAḤYĀ.

#### *Unpublished catalogue:*

A handwritten register lists the MSS, their authors, subjects and number of pages.

### **Alhaji Ibrahim Kanawi**

Alhaji Ibrahim residence  
Hausa Community, Zango

*Date of establishment:* 1948

*Status:* Private

*Conditions of access:* By permission of the late owner's family.

*Total number of Islamic MSS:* 114 (Arabic; Hausa).

*Description of collection:* This collection was bequeathed to Alhaji Ibrahim by his father. Alh. Ibrahim was the head of the Hausa community in Ouagadougou until his death, and enriched the collection by purchasing several MSS both within and outside Burkina Faso. Most of the MSS are from Nigerian sources. According to a member of the family, the father of Alhaji Ibrahim was a pious Sufi scholar who brought a substantial number of MSS with him from Kano,

Nigeria, to Ouagadougou, where he settled for the rest of his life.

This collection has very old MSS which have a bearing on West African history. Works by the 19th-century Islamic religious reformers abound. The MSS are well preserved and are kept in a leather skin bag in the late owner's study room. Almost half are undated. The dated ones are of 18th-, 19th- and 20th-century origin, with the oldest dating back to the 16th century. There is an incomplete work, entitled *Kitāb ʿAlāmat al-muttabiʿin li-sunnat Rasūl Allāh*, by ʿABD ALLĀH MUḤAMMAD FŪDĪ.

The collection covers the following subjects: theology (5), *fiqh* (18), literature (8), astrology (4), history (18), linguistics (10), ethnology (2), *tafsīr* (1), government (11), occult (14), science (9), Sufism (3), poetry (11).

The collection has some very important rarities which include: *Al-Kashf wa-l-bayān li-aṣnāf majlūb al-Sūdān*, dated 1974, by AḤMAD BĀBĀ AL-SŪDĀNĪ; *Infāq al-maysūr*, by MUḤAMMAD BELLO, undated; *Fiqh Ḥanafī*, anonymous, dated 1433.

It is not known whether this collection has been catalogued.

### **Mogho Naba**

Mogho Naba's palace

*Status:* Trust

*Conditions of access:* By special appointment with the palace authorities.

*Description of collection:* This collection is believed to be several centuries old. It contains documents which give detailed information about the Mossi Empire and its history in general.

The manuscripts are mainly correspondence between the ancient rulers of the Mossi Kingdom and other states, commercial transactions, records of court cases, biographies of Mossi rulers, and charms. A few MSS on Islamic religion (*fiqh*, legal sciences, Qurʾāns, theology, and prayers) also exist in this collection. The MSS are the works of court Mallams, who were employed by the Mossi native rulers to serve as court clerks and Imams of the state.

The collection is packed in locked wooden boxes in a room in which the historical documents and muniments of the entire Mossi Kingdom are stored. It is well preserved, though some MSS are torn

and affected by damp. There is no conservation work on the collection. Research work is difficult as the collection is mixed up with various historical documents.

It is not known whether this collection has been catalogued.

## WADIYYAH

### Mal. Abu Bella

Abu Bella's quarters  
adjacent to Wadiyyah market

*Date of establishment:* 1968

*Status:* Private

*Conditions of access:* By appointment with the owner.

*Total number of Islamic MSS:* 87 (Arabic).

*Description of collection:* This collection was bequeathed to the present owner by his father, who had inherited it from his grandfather. There are some very old manuscripts which deal with the history of towns, scholars and chiefs of Liptako, i.e. Fulanis and their settlements.

Most of the MSS in this collection date from the 17th to the 20th centuries. They are kept in a wooden box. Most have suffered damage, and have torn pages, which makes reading them very difficult.

Subjects covered are: Qurʾāns (2), history (13), *fiqh* (19), *ʿaqīda* (7), medicine (7), astrology (4), astronomy (1), *tafsīr* (2), *Ḥadīth* (5), praise of the Prophet (2), literature (1), biography of the Prophet (1), *waʿz* (5), sermons (1), correspondence (10), science and the occult (3), *Shariʿa* (4).

The collection has some MSS with fine calligraphy. The rarities are: *Infāq al-maysūr fī tārikh bilād al-Takrūr* (incomplete), by MUHAMMAD BELLO BIN UTHMAN, undated; and *Kitāb ʿan al-ḥalāl wa-ʿl-ḥarām*, by MUHAMMAD IBN AL-ḤĀJJ IBN ʿABD AL-RAḤMĀN AL-BARNĀWĪ, undated.

It is not known whether this collection has been catalogued or not.

CHAD

by

Khalil Alio

1994