
BOOK REVIEWS

La civilisation islamique en Afrique de l'Ouest. Communications du Symposium International tenu les 27—30 Décembre 1996, Dakar, Sénégal. Ed. par Samba Dieng, préface par Prof. Dr. Ekmaledin İhsanoğlu. İstanbul: 1999, XXIX, 430 pp. — Série d'histoire des nations musulmanes, No. 4.

The international symposium *La civilisation islamique en Afrique de l'Ouest* was held in December, 1996, in Dakar. Three years later IRCICA published the symposium materials as the fourth issue in the *Série d'histoire des nations musulmanes* (while the series also has an English title, it lacks, like other IRCICA series, a stable title). At present, the topic of the symposium is no longer uncharted territory, but far less has been done than remains to be done; in particular, a critical analysis of the African literary heritage.

The collection opens with an official greeting followed by papers. Unfortunately, the book contains no information on symposium participants, nor does it adhere to a single system of transcription for proper names. All texts are evidently given in the author's version, and S. Dieng's role was more that of compiler than editor.

The main topics of papers are the history of Islam in West Africa, Islamic education and the Islamic cultural and literary heritage. Taking into account the interests of the journal *Manuscripta Orientalia*, we note only those papers that discuss manuscript sources. The first of them, "Towards a history of Islamic thought in West Africa down to the nineteenth century" (pp. 139—55) is by John O. Hunwick, publisher of an extremely important reference project on Arabic literature, *Arabic Literature of Africa*. It is a marvellous, concise overview of Arabic sources on Africa, the emergence and development of Arabic-language literature in various regions of West Africa, the role of the family of 'Uthman Dan Fodio (d. 1232/1817) in the appearance of written works in Fulbe and Hausa. The paper notes the weak spots in the study of these issues. This excellent overview is marred only by a large number of typographical errors.

Al-Amin Abu-Manga, author of two books — *Fulfulde in the Sudan*, Berlin, 1986, and *Hausa in the Sudan*, Köln, 1999 — and publisher of the oral Fulani epic *Baajankaro* (Marburg, 1985), in his paper "Contribution of the Socket (read Sokoto — *I. W.*) jihad leaders in dissemination of Arab-Islamic knowledge through local languages" (pp. 215—30) continues the discussion of literature in Hausa and Fulbe and 'Uthman Dan Fodio's circle. This literature focuses exclusively on poetic works in Arabic script

that followed Arab poetic forms. He provides examples of such poetry in Latin script and translation, analysing in detail types, meters, adornments and genres.

The role of the 'Uthman Dan Fodio family in the emergence of Hausa literature is also treated in a paper by D. M. Argungu, "Contributions of Hausa language to the spread of Islamic culture and civilisation in Nigeria" (p. 307—12). Fulbe literature is discussed in "Le 'beytol': une forme de la littérature poular", by Samba Dieng (pp. 313—8).

We note with interest "La poésie islamique wolof" by Assane Sylla (pp. 357—63), which contains important comments on the significance of Arabic writing and Islamic culture for literature in Wolof, focusing on their role in the transition from traditional oral poetry to a written literature. The author also provides examples of poetry in Latin writing and in translation.

Penda Mbow's "Éléments de réflexion sur l'enseignement et le système de pensée au Soudan Occidental" (pp. 239—45) is polemical. The author rebukes Western scholars for a lack of interest in determining the place of Islam in African civilization, limiting themselves to political science and colonial history, while "Timbuktu, whether we like it or not, was one of the largest intellectual centres of the Muslim world". Indeed, if we examine the "Handlist of Manuscripts in the Centre de documentation et de recherches historiques Ahmen Baba, Timbuktu", 5 vols., London, 1995—1998, one finds that an enormous quantity of manuscripts was produced; a qualitative analysis is still lacking.

In "Preservation of Arabic manuscripts in Nigeria" (pp. 231—7), Musa Sulaiman Etsayi stresses that the bulk of Arabic-language literature by Sudanese *ulama* was and remains in manuscript form; he expresses concern about the future awaiting these manuscripts. The author urges that the search be continued for works known only through secondary sources, gives an overview of literature on the issue, enumerates the people and institutions that aided in the preservation of manuscripts. In addition to cataloguing and storage, work continues to publish and translate Arabic-language texts; as we see from the list the author provides, this work is in the main conducted as a doctoral dissertation, unfortunately, and its results do not come out in book form. General works created on the basis of manuscript sources form another area of manuscript studies. Naturally, the percentage of published material remains small. The author recommends the following methods of disseminating and preserving the manuscript heritage: photocopying