

The Role of the Sanūsīyah in the Integration of Bedouin Tribes and National Cohesion of Libya

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Abstract:

This paper aims to evaluate the role of the Sanūsīyah Order, one of the most influential North African Šūfī orders, in the socio-political and religious spheres from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. It also examines the impact of the Order's reforms and how its thinkers systematically invoked the national spirit among the Bedouins, rooted in the tribal system. Significantly the movement's zāwiyahs (Šūfī lodges) initiated a sense of unity and nationalism among the nomadic tribes of Cyrenaica and the Sahara. This paper also endeavours to explain how Sanūsīs defined the boundaries of their homeland and then launched a successful campaign to defend and liberate their lands from the foreign invaders. Integration of these conflicting tribes under the umbrella of Sanūsīs generated national spirit which gave primarily an impetus to the anti-colonial resistance movement against France and Italy and ultimately laid the foundation of the national identity of modern Libya. The present study helps to understand the socio-regional and religious background of modern Libya.

Keywords: The Sanūsīyah, *Jihādī* activism of Šūfīs, colonialism, Bedouin tribes of Libya

I- Introduction

Many scholars have evaluated the Sanūsīyah and their socio-political movement. Ahmida observed that the struggle of the Sanūsīyah from the beginning of the twentieth century to the end of the period of anti-colonial resistance was basically a phenomenon of anti-colonialist behaviour, in which the Sanūsīyah made skilful use of tribal power to defend their lands from invasion by dominant European powers. The political and cultural legacy of the resistance was also powerful in strengthening Libyan nationalism and leading to the revival of a strong attachment to Islām and the clan. Memories of this period have not yet faded, and an appreciation of this background is essential in understanding present-day Libya (Ahmida, 1994, p. 33). Similarly, Barber analysed the role of the Sanūsīyah in resisting colonialism on their native soil, noting that the

resistance movement against the Italian forces from 1911 to 1920 basically depended on Sanūsīyah *jihādī* activism, predominately in Burqah (Barbar, 1980, p. 10).

Evans-Pritchard, on the other hand, emphasized a political-historical view, interpreting the political movement of the Sanūsīyah against its historical background and examining the order's origins up to the period of Italian colonization more closely than its socio-cultural development (Evans-Pritchard, 1949, pp. 1-26). Another important writer on the Sanūsī movement was Nicola Ziadeh, who studied it as a revivalist movement. According to his analysis Sanūsīyah was a conservative fraternity which endeavoured to establish its fundamental tradition according to the Qur'ān and Sunnah. Their *jihādī* struggles and their contribution to anti-colonialization were examined only briefly and from a revivalist perspective (Ziadeh, 1958, pp. 68-72). Knut S. Vikor, unlike other scholars, concluded that the political movement was not the central aspect of the Sanūsīyah Order but represented a practical, later development. The history of the Sanūsīyah was thus also the history of a Šūfī brotherhood that welded the ethnic identity of the Saharan Bedouin and neighbouring peoples into an entity that some might call a proto-nationalist movement (Vikor, 1995, pp. 1-21; also 1987, pp. 1, 2, 25). All these researchers showed the importance of the contribution of the Sanūsīyah movement but none attempted to evaluate it on the basis of neo-Šūfism. Fazlur Rahman, the originator of the theory of Neo-Šūfism, considered the Sanūsī movement as the best example of neo-Šūfist trends. Not only did the Sanūsīyah pay particular attention to the purification of the heart according to the classical methods of Šūfism, but they also introduced juridical methods for the broader understanding of Islamic jurisprudence. They also inspired a *jihādī* spirit among the Bedouin society of the area and attempted to transform tribal peoples into a national culture.¹

Vikor observed that basically the Sanūsīyah aimed to teach the Bedouin people of the Sahara in an organised way, because Muḥammad al-Sanūsī, like his master,² was "principally a teacher, or perhaps rather a guide (Vikor, 1995, pp. 72, 73)." However, the involvement of the Order in *jihādī* activism was a later phenomenon. The decadence of Turkish rule in the region and the dominance of the colonialists gave space to the Sanūsīyah in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to represent the Bedouin society and preserve their heritage from the colonialists. Ziadeh studied the Sanūsīyah as

¹ Fazlur Rahman writes that "Muḥammad al-Sanūsī organised *zāwīyas* (places of religious devotion) – the most important ones being those at Kufra and Jaghbūb (where he died) – where people were not only instructed in the Faith but ...were also trained in arms and encouraged to engage in professional pursuits like agriculture and trade. One practical aim of the Sanūsīs was to establish peace in the Libyan desert and, in order to control the desert tribes, they built up a militant organization besides preaching the Islamic message of equality, brotherhood and peace. This resulted in a free and smooth flow of trade to the Mediterranean, a profession in which the desert tribe of the Jabābira especially excelled. To this end, the wild and unruly tribe of Zwi, enemies and rivals of the Jabābira, was won over for peace. The Sanūsīs also rejected Ottoman sovereignty, but later, when threatened by the encroachment of Western expansionist powers, they resisted first the French advance in Equatorial Africa to the south and later, under Aḥmad al-Sanūsī and Muḥammad Idrīs al-Sanūsī, took up arms, as the allies of Turkey, against the Italians in Libya and the British in Egypt. They were severely defeated and ruthlessly suppressed by the Italians but revived after the latter's withdrawal." Rahman, 1979, p. 208

² Aḥmad bin Idrīs (1163-1253/1749, 50-1837) was the *shaykh* of al-Sanūsī and founder of *ṭarīqah Muḥammadiyah*. On the life and works of Ibn Idrīs, see O'Fahey, 1990.

a revivalist movement and rightly concluded that: “it was a revivalist movement in Islam within Islam alone. It accepted the pattern of Ibn Taymīyah and had it inculcated with some of the teachings of al-Ghazālī. In it there was no place for Muslim rationalistic school of thought. *Ijtihād* (endeavour for juridical reasoning) was allowed but was limited within the Qur’ān and the Sunnah. The Sanūsīyah was traditional and conventional (Ziadeh, p. 134).”

Nevertheless, it is not sufficient to prefix the term ‘neo’ to the Order and neglect its basic traditional thoughts. Actually Ṣūfī involvement in the *jihādī* movement is not a new phenomenon in the history of Islām. Jazūlī Ṣūfīs, for example, in Morocco during the fifteenth century were involved in confrontations with the Portuguese armies (Garcia-Arenal, 1978, p. 46). Indeed, this element is so evident in the well-organised *jihādī* campaigning of the Sanūsīyah order against foreign invaders that many scholars regard it as a new trend in Ṣūfism. Therefore it should be analysed carefully (Rahman, 1979, p. 208).

II- The Sanūsī *Zāwiyahs* in Cyrenaica

Muḥammad al-Sanūsī (1787-1859), who remained in Mecca in the company of Ibn Idrīs and after the latter’s death was appointed his deputy or *khalīfah*, (Vikor, 1995, p. 113) continued to live in Mecca for some years but in late 1255-1840, travelled with his scholars and students to Cyrenaica (Shukrī, 1948, pp. 27, 28) where he established his Order in order to invoke an Islāmic spirit among the Bedouin tribes of Cyrenaica and the desert regions of the Sahara (Evans-Pritchard, 1954, pp. 19, 20). His Ṣūfī *zāwiyahs* (lodges) became centres of Islāmic learning for the ordinary people of those areas. Al-Sanūsī introduced a simple and puritanical teaching of Islām blended with mystical wisdom based on the teachings of his own *shaykh* Aḥmad Ibn Idrīs, and was indeed so impressed by the teachings of Ibn Idrīs that he regarded his Order as being that of Ibn Idrīs. Later, however, his Order became identified by his own name (Vikor, 2000, p.157). The Grand Sanūsī had no intention of establishing a powerful independent or military state that would dominate the region, but wished simply to preach Islāmic learning and to create harmony and peace among the native tribes of the Sahara. As Vikor noted:

The Sanūsīya was at the outset a new Ṣūfī Order that settled in a desert region previously untouched by organized religion, but it was not aiming at setting up an Islamic state, or opposing the Europeans, or escaping the Turks, or harnessing the Arab will to fight or other fanciful expression of political purpose (Vikor, 2000, p.157).

Al-Sanūsī’s aim was to revive Islam among the Bedouin tribes of this region in an organised manner. He chose the hinterland of Cyrenaica for his movement because the area had remained comparatively neglected and cut off from the main Islamic movements, and because tribal conflicts made life harder for common folk and it was more difficult for them to understand the teachings of Islam. Having undertaken a profound study of the tribal psychology and mechanisms of this hinterland, al-Sanūsī then established his order on very solid foundations, by attempting to develop harmony by eliminating inter-tribal conflict and war and by simultaneously building *zāwiyahs* through which to disseminate the Islamic spirit among the common folk. Vikor commented that:

... for piety to spread, there must also be peace in the area, where bitter tribal wars had been fought only two decades earlier. The order and its network of lodges throughout the Bedouin territory provided an opportunity for settling differences and maintaining a balance that was no doubt desired by the Bedouin (Ibid).

The Sanūsīyah played a significant role to resolve the tribal conflicts of the region. Before the first arrival of Grand Sanūsī, the armies of Alpnad Bey al-Qaramānī and the ʿUbaydāt defeated Awlād ʿAlī and Jawāzī in 1822. Similarly, there were intra-tribal conflicts like the war between the Jabirinah and conflict between the tribes of Khudra and Mughayrbiyah. The Sanūsīyah established their *zāwīyahs* to educate the people of the region (Al-Ashhab, 1947, pp. 105-106). Each *zāwīyah* was run by a *shaykh* and many *ikhwān* who taught the children and arranged Friday prayers. Due to the soft image and positive contribution of the *zāwīyahs* in the Bedouin life, the *shaykh* of the *zāwīyah*, as a representative of the Order, became able to mediate between the tribes and in some cases between the tribes and Ottoman administrators to resolve their problems. These *zāwīyahs* functioned as a means to resolve the conflicts and integrate the hostile groups of Bedouin society (Evans-Pritchard, 1949, p. 80).

The organisational structure of the Ṣūfī *zāwīyahs* was interesting, as well as very strong. Not only did these Sanūsīyah lodges focus on the preaching of Islam but they also provided peace and stability in the region, and this helped traders to extend their commercial dealings from northern Cyrenaica to the deserts of the southern Sahara. The Sanūsīyah contribution towards economic and political stability was a very simple *ad hoc* arrangement, whereby each *zāwīyah* arranged its own revenues through collecting from endowments and the payment of tithes, by contributions of money or goods, or through labour and trade. Surplus revenue was sent to the head of the Order, who used it for maintenance of the Qurʾānic University at Jaghbūb, and to upkeep of his family and followers and the order itself.

It was also the responsibility of the *shaykh* of a *zāwīyah* to arbitrate in disputes in his particular region. He also put in place sufficient sanctions to be able to compel acceptance of his decisions. The *shaykh* of the *zāwīyah* could also seek further instruction from the head of the order, who discussed all matters of importance in the consultative council of highly learned scholars. Evans-Pritchard noted that “though central existed it was cumbersome, and though there was an organization it was inadequate to deal with situations which demanded a rapid marshalling of the total resources of the order (Evans-Pritchard, 1945, p. 65).” The tribesmen gradually were integrated into the Order and relied on the *shaykhs* of the *zāwīyahs* to their personal and tribal conflicts. This integration gave the impetus to the resistance movement against the colonial assaults.

III- *Jihādī* Activism of the Sanūsīyah and Integration of the Bedouins of Cyrenaica

The Sanūsīyah involvement in *jihādī* and political activities was a later phenomenon that occurred towards the end of the nineteenth century. The Grand Sanūsī died in 1859 but his Order flourished under the leadership of his son Sayyid Muḥammad al-Mahdī, who, having received his early education in Mecca, had then joined his father at al-Jaghbūb in 1858-59 (Al-Ashhab, 1947, pp. 29, 30). Sayyid al-Mahdī focused mainly

on educating and training the Bedouin tribes of the region, and helped by his nephew Aḥmad al-Sharīf, he also established many Ṣūfī *zāwiyahs* (lodges). He remained the head of the Sanūsīyah order until his death in 1902. Ziadeh notes that: “during his period the order reached its zenith in both the number of *zāwiyahs* and influence (Ziadeh, 1958, p. 52).” However the Sanūsīyah had not been trained for military purposes and had no experience of whom to retaliate against in cases of war; having experienced only the need for a medium through which to negotiate for peace and coexistence in dealing with tribal conflicts. The first time they faced serious conflict was in 1899, when French forces attacked them with the aim of occupying their territory. Based on incorrect data gathered by their intelligence services, the French military had come to regard this order as a fanatical anti-French sect that was the main provider of resistance forces against French domination in the Sahara.

In this situation, the local tribes united in the struggle against the French forces by using the name of Sanūsīyah. As Vikor observed:

... the local population of Teda or the Bedouin rallied to the cause and started to fight back in the name of the Sanūsīyah – in some (but not many) cases also looking to the order for leadership. Some of the Ṣūfī leaders tried to coordinate the struggle without much luck; they were protected more by the desert than by their own prowess, but were able to halt the French expansion northwards (Vikor, 2000, p. 158).

Before 1911 the Sanūsīyah had not participated actively in *jihādī* struggle, but because of the Balkan Wars, Turkey withdrew from Libya in 1911, leaving the local population to defend themselves against assault from the Italians. As a result of the decadence of Ottoman rule and the domination of European nations in the region, the order became a central and powerful force in the struggle against colonialization. This was a very important period in the formation of Ṣūfī *zāwiyahs* and of propagation of the resistance movement.

In these circumstances, local tribes gathered under the umbrella of the Sanūsīyah to resist the Italians, at which point Aḥmad al-Sharīf, leader of the Sanūsīyah order and grandson of Muḥammad al-Sanūsī, decided to take an active part in the war. He duly transformed the Order into a military organization, and declaring *jihād* against the invaders, prepared a Sanūsīyah manifesto, that was published initially in 1912 (1330AH). His treatise on *jihād* entitled *Al-Bughyat al-muā'id fī aḥkām al-mujāhid*, followed in 1913-14 and called on the Bedouin tribes and inhabitants of the region to stand up to the invaders. At the beginning of his manifesto (*manshūr*), which is regarded as a very important document for the subsequent historical struggle, he stated that:

the people of lofty soul who maintain the protective *sharī'a*, the people of our homeland (*waṭan*) that has Islamic concern and the assistance of the faith, from al-Sallūm to the known boundaries of Tunisia, may God guide us and you to conform to the way of the Prophet (Vikor, 2000, p. 161).

In the preamble to his manifesto, Aḥmad al-Sharīf clearly mentioned the extent of the area into which he planned to extend his *jihād* – which was from Cyrenaica to the

borders of Tunisia – for which region he employed the word *waṭan* (meaning ‘homeland’). The present study follows the way the Sanūsīyah incorporated their *jihādī* ideology with Ṣūfism, and how they initiated and maintained their struggle against the colonialists.

An understanding of the socio-political environment is necessary to understand the *jihādī* activities of Sanūsīyah movement. In the early twentieth century Libya’s population consisted mainly of nomads (*bawādī*) and semi-nomads (*urūba*). People avoided giving precise figures for their tribes so as to avoid paying larger tax bills, but a rough estimate put the population of Tripolitania at that time at between 800,000 and 2 million, and that of Cyrenaica at between 190,000 and 500,000 (Evans-Pritchard, 1949, p. 39; Simon, 1987, p. 5). The Bedouin of Cyrenaica, who were regarded as the most active adherents of the Sanūsīyah, were of mixed Arab-Berber stock, the Arabs of Banū Ḥilāl and Banū Sulaym having migrated from Najd and settled in Libya in the eleventh century (Ghazi, 2001, p. 46). Both tribes were of Muḍar lineage; the Banū Sulaym settled mainly in Cyrenaica and the Banū Ḥilāl moved west to Tripolitania and Tunisia. There was another tribal division in the Cyrenaica region, i.e., the Sa‘adī and the Murābiṭīn. The former were more powerful and owned land, whilst the latter used the land, but did not have the right of ownership (Evans-Pritchard, 1949, pp. 49, 51).

There main tribes in Fazzan were the Awlād Sulaymān, the Ḥusāwna, the Faqaha and the Maqārḥa. In the early twentieth century there were 45 main tribes throughout the three regions of Libya which retained the commonly-accepted tribal understanding of the term *waṭan* (homeland) (Evans-Pritchard, 1949, pp. 49, 51). This tribal population of Libya was politically administrated by the Qaramānli dynasty (1711-1835) before it came under the direct control of Istanbul until 1911. Following the withdrawal of the Turkish administration, the whole area remained a battlefield for a decade, after which the Italians established their rule in the region until the eve of the Second World War. The last-mentioned is the most important period for studying the *jihādī* activism of the Sanūsīyah. The Ottomans, who had been invited to Libya to help the indigenous people against attacks by the Spaniards and the Knights of St. John, divided Libya into two administrative regions – Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. Tripolitania (*Tarabulus al-Gharab*) was a province (*vilayet*) with a governor (*valī*) who was assisted by a provincial board (*meclis-i kursi vilayet*). The status of Cyrenaica changed several times but from 1888, it was a district (*murasarriflik*) headed by a *mutasarrif* who was directly responsible to Istanbul. The Ottomans did introduce some development plans in the region but it cannot be denied that Libya always remained a marginal province. By the end of the nineteenth century, relations had become complicated between the Ottomans and the natives of Libya who were described by some scholars as being “partners in pain” (Shukri, 1982, p. 141).

As discussed above, before the arrival of the Italian invaders, contacts between the Ottomans and the Sanūsīyah had been complex, but the Italian assaults represented a great threat for both parties. Success on the part of the Italians would have meant the loss of independence for the Sanūsīyah under the rule of infidels; the Ottomans on the other hand were threatened with the loss of important African possessions. Therefore, when Italy declared war on Turkey and landed troops in the costal area of Libya, the Sanūsīyah

and other Arab tribes joined forces with the Turkish army to fight against the Italians. Sanūsīyah Šūfī lodges played a multi-dimensional role and their function as military training centres was considered a dominant feature during this period.

In 1912, Turkey became involved in the Balkans war and could no longer maintain its focus on the region. The Ottomans therefore agreed with the Italians that they would concentrate on the Balkans conflict, and the first draft of the Treaty of Lausanne was signed on 18 October 1912. Since Turkey was no longer in a position to protect Libya from Italian domination, the Ottomans agreed to give autonomy to the Libyan Arabs, leaving them to fight against the Italians; this was a considerable challenge to the region's inhabitants. The transfer of Ottoman military rule to the Arabs was done by Enver Bey, the Turkish governor, who visited Jaghbūb, the main centre of the Sanūsīyah movement, and in the name of the Sultan handed over his powers as Commander-in-Chief and Governor of Cyrenaica to Aḥmad al-Sharīf (Evans-Pritchard, 1945, p. 66). From that time, the Sanūsīyah order was regarded as the most important power against Italy and other European governments. According to Evans-Pritchard: "Italian writers say that it was only from this time that the Sanūsī family began to speak of the *Hakuma al-Sanūsīyah* (Governo Senussita), the Sanūsīyah Government (Ibid)."

Under Sanūsīyah leadership, tribal resistance against the Italians during both periods of conflict (between 1911-1917 and 1923-1932) meant that the order occupied a central position among the regional powers. However, they lost this position after 1932, having been defeated and heavily destroyed by the Italians in the second conflict. Meanwhile the Italians consolidated their government in Libya and neither the Sanūsīyah nor any other Bedouin leaders could break Italy's domination until the Second World War, when disagreement arose between the western powers over control of the region. Following the collapse of French, German and Italian forces tried to extend their power eastwards from Cyrenaica towards Suez in Egypt. Preventing them from advancing into the Delta and finally driving them out of North Africa represented a huge challenge to Britain and its allies. Cyrenaica became a battlefield for the warring parties, being captured three times by the British and three times by their opponents.

In this situation, Muḥammad Idrīs and various other exiled *shaykhs* offered to cooperate with the British and a British-Arab force came into being under British command. Mr Eden paid tribute to the support given by the Arabs in the House of Commons on 9 January 1942:

Nor must we forget to mention the co-operation of the Arab population during the British occupation, when they compromised themselves with the Italians and in every way fitted in with our requirements and subordinated their own needs to war conditions. It must not be forgotten that we are Christians and strangers and that the Bedouin have no obligation to us. The support we have received is in no small measure due to the Sanūsīyah and to the personal example and orders of al-Sayyid Muḥammad Idrīs al-Sanūsī (Ibid, p. 77).

It is not the intention here to reveal the history of Sanūsīyah resistance and their contribution during the war – the aim is rather to evaluate the attitude of the Sanūsīyah towards *jihādī* activism and how they inspired their followers and organized their

zāwīyahs for resistance. Three dimensions of Sanūsīyah behaviour during the period under study can be clearly observed: prevention and avoidance, assistance and cooperation, and clash and resistance, based on a policy of non-violence and coexistence until such time as an individual would be forced to come to blows; this policy can be studied through the characters of the *shaykhs* and adherents of the order (Ziadeh, 1958, pp. 35-72). Muḥammad al-Sanūsī had left Hijāz for Mustaghānim in Algeria, his homeland, but was prevented from returning by the French authorities who considered he would be a great threat if he were to join Amīr ‘Abd al-Qādir’s resistance movement (Martin, 1976, p. 105). Muḥammad al-Sanūsī therefore returned to settle in Cyrenaica and established a *zāwīyah* in Bayḍā’, a remote location between Derna and Benghazi where he could avoid Ottoman and European influence while preparing his disciples doctrinally and intellectually for *jihād* since, as he said: “every Muslim must be ready for confrontation (El-Horeir, 1981, p. 221).” Practically speaking, the Order stayed away from confrontation with Turkish or other foreign domination.

This policy of avoidance can be observed in al-Sanūsī’s son and successor, Muḥammad al-Mahdī, who moved the main Sanūsīyah centres in order to avoid possible confrontation with the Ottomans. In 1895, al-Mahdī shifted his headquarters from Jaghbūb to Kufra, a location remote from Turkish interference, and moved again to Gouro in 1899. Similarly, between 1895 and 1899, the Order had to leave Kanem, the location of the Bi’r ‘Alalī *zāwīyah* which was highly influential among the Awlād Sulaymān tribes, and also withdrew from Borku and Tibesti (Candole, 1990, p. 10). In the early part of the twentieth century, with increasing French military intervention along the borderlands of Libya and Chad, a clear change in policy towards resistance could be observed. However, with the destruction of the Bi’r ‘Alalī *zāwīyah* in Kanem in 1902 by the French, and with the death of al-Mahdī in the same year, the Sanūsīyah and their new leader Aḥmad al-Sharīf (1873-1933) were compelled to abandon their policy of avoidance and to confront the invaders.

When the French began to capture the Sanūsīyah trade routes that led from Baghirmi, Niger, Kanem and Wada’i towards Libya, the Sanūsīyah decided that it was expedient to cooperate with the Ottomans, although they refused to accept the Turkish representative in Kufra in 1908. However, the Turkish forces were unable to stop the French from interfering in the region until, at the request of Aḥmad al-Sharīf, British forces eventually intervened in 1910 and forced the French to withdraw to Tekro on the Libya-Chad border.

The real resistance of the Sanūsīyah can be observed from 1911 onwards, when Italy declared war against Turkey and then attacked Libya. Aḥmad al-Sharīf declared *jihād* against the infidel Italians, and rallied the people of the region, saying: “I swear to Almighty Allāh that I will fight them, even if I must do it alone armed only with my staff (El-Horeir, 1981, pp. 224-5.).” As noted above, the manifesto concerning his declaration of *jihād* was published in 1912, and was followed by a longer treatise that was published in Cairo in 1913-14 and concerned the importance of *jihād* and the obligation of Muslims (Al-Sharīf, 1913-14, pp. 58).

The order played a very significant role against the foreign invaders under the leadership of Aḥmad al-Sharīf. His actions falls into three distinctive phases: from 1902 to 1912, he fought against the French in the Sahara, collaborating with the Turkish and forces in prevent French forces away from Kufra. The Sanūsīyah gained much success in this period. The second phase of his resistance was from 1912 to 1918 in which the Sanūsīyah, in alliance with the Ottomans, fought against the Italians. Later on, persuaded by the Central Powers and their Ottoman allies, he fought the British forces in Egypt's Western Desert as well as the Italians, and in 1915 was appointed by the Sultan as his representative and a *wazīr*. The defeat of the Ottoman-led Sanūsī forces, and the suffering of the people throughout the region caused Aḥmad al-Sharīf eventually to relinquish his political leadership to his cousin Muḥammad Idrīs, who in 1917 signed an agreement with both the British and the Italians. Aḥmad al-Sharīf went into exile in Istanbul in 1918 (Ahmida, 1994, p. 122.). In the third phase, from 1918 to 1933, he lived in Istanbul and elsewhere in Turkey, involving himself in political negotiations with various foreign parties on behalf of the Libyans, and with the Turkish nationalists, with the intention of continuing his *jihād* but after the rise of Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) to power, he left Turkey in 1924 and made his way with some difficulty to Saudi Arabia, remaining in contact with the tribal leaders and guiding them to the way of *jihād*.³

Notably, Aḥmad al-Sharīf also turned the Sanūsī *zāwīyahs* into military camps. There were many war-lords across Libya and the Sahara who had either been students of Aḥmad al-Sharīf or supporters of the Sanūsīyah (El-Horeir, 1981, pp. 241-242). Even after his exile, these adherents, notably °Alī al-Khattābī (1888-1918), Muḥammad Hilāl (1893-1929), °Umar Mukhtār (1862-1931), and Sayyid Muḥammad °Abid (1881-1939), continued the struggle and played a crucial role in the second war between the Sanūsīs and the Italians during the period from 1923 to 1932.

Among these warriors, °Umar Mukhtār is regarded as the most significant. He had trained in the central Sanūsī *zāwīyah* at Jaghbūb, and was appointed by Sayyid al-Mahdī for two terms as head of the *zāwīyah* al-Qasūr among the °Abid tribe in the Jabal al-Akhdar (Zawī, 1970, pp. 34, 35). Later he was appointed the head of the *zāwīyah* °Ayn Kalak in Sudan. He also held very important military positions in the war against the Italians. However, after the exile of Aḥmad al-Sharīf, he was appointed as military leader of the order, while Muḥammad Idrīs became its spiritual leader.⁴ °Umar Mukhtār held this office until his death, when Sayyid Muḥammad Idrīs took over the position (Ibid).

During the second Sanūsī-Italian war (1923-1932), °Umar Mukhtār used his tactical skills in arranging guerrilla warfare that had the Italians on the defensive. Teruzzi, then Italian Governor in Cyrenaica, acknowledged the military power of the Sanūsīyah, reporting that there were two governments in Cyrenaica: the Italians were

³ In this regard see his letters cited, e.g., in El-Horeir, *Social and Economic Transformation*, p. 293; also the valuable collection of Aḥmad al-Sharīf's correspondence compiled by McGuirk, Russell, 2007, pp. 297-310.

⁴ Aḥmad Sharīf issued his letter of appointment on 15 Shawwāl 1342 AH. He wrote: "To whom it may concern of our Mujāhidīn brothers----to all our brothers and the *shaykhs* of *zāwīyas*, the people of Burqah and al-Jabal al-Akhdar. We have delegated the pious and blessed Shaykh °Umar al-Mukhtār as a representative of us, the Sanūsīs and appoint him a general deputy to administer the *jihād* affairs, and also for the defense of our mighty nation against the deceitful enemy." cf. El-Horeir, 1981, p. 294.

“the Government of the Day” and the Sanūsīyah “the Government of Night” (Evans-Pritchard, 1949, p. 172.). Though divisions within the Sanūsīyah ranks concerning negotiation for resolution of the conflict led to a decline in their military power and decreasing troop numbers, ʿUmar Mukhtār continued his fight, but was captured and executed on 16 September 1931. ʿUmar Mukhtār is seen as a symbol of resistance in the history of the Sanūsīyah movement and his last words are still quoted for their motivation and encouragement. When asked by Graziani what he would do if the Italian government freed him in return for his promise to spend the rest of his life in peace, ʿUmar answered,

I shall not cease to fight against thee and thy people until either you leave my county or I leave my life. And I swear to thee by Him who knows what is in men’s hearts that if my hands were not bound this very moment, I would fight thee with my bare hands, old and broken as I am (Asad, 1954, p. 343.).

A few months after the death of ʿUmar Mukhtār, the Sanūsīyah resistance movement came to end, and with the death of Aḥmad Sharīf later in Mecca in 1933, future hopes of resistance also vanished. Announcing his death, the Italian Minister of Colonies remarked that “with his death all our fears in Africa passed away” (Ziadeh, 1958, p. 71).

Muḥammad Idrīs (1890-1983) in effect became leader of the Sanūsīyah following the departure into exile of Aḥmad al-Sharīf, as discussed above. He supported his cousin in his resistance movement but, unlike Aḥmad al-Sharīf, he was inclined to resolve the conflict with negotiation, and always gained respect from the various opposition groups for his diplomatic policy (Shukrī, 1948, p. 183). Evans-Pritchard mentioned that he was even venerated by Italian and British commentators. Because of his successful diplomacy, many agreements were signed between the Sanūsīyah and opponent forces, such as the agreements of Zuyaytina (1916), Akrama (1917), the Treaty of Rajma (1920) and the Pact of Bū Maryam (1921) (Ibid). But with the end of the resistance movement the whole region was controlled by the Italians, who rejected the central position of the Sanūsīyah and compelled their leader to take refuge in Egypt.

IV: Conclusion

Muḥammad al-Sanūsī set up the doctrinal foundation of the Order in his numerous writings. Following them, his decedents established many *zāwiyahs* in Cyrenaica and Sahara. Through these Ṣūfī lodges, they initiated their reform programme among the Bedouins of the region by educating them and eliminating their internal conflicts. Latter, when Ottomans forces withdrew from the region, the trainees of these *zāwiyahs* resisted against the colonial powers. Although the Sanūsīyah lost the war but their resistance movement did develop a sense of nationalism among the Bedouin and semi-Bedouin tribes of Libya. Muḥammad Idrīs tried actively to maintain the integration of his Order in that devastating situation, and his followers continued to regard the Italians as the invaders. The Second World War brought about many demographic changes to the world map, including the liberation of Libya. The United Nations declared Libya an independent state in 1951, on Christmas Eve, and Muḥammad Idrīs, head of the Sanūsī Order, became as King Idrīs I, the independent constitutional ruler of the United Kingdom of Libya (Ziadeh, 1958, p. 124). It was first time in the history that Cyrenaica,

Fezzān and Tripoli were integrated as a single unit in a single sovereign state under the rule of Sanūsīyah. The Sanūsīyah movement is a good example of resistance, where a tribal society tried to struggle against foreign invasion under the umbrella of a Šūfī-led *jihādī* movement which gave the impetus to the foundations of Libyan nationalism and played a vital role in the integration of tribal society and national cohesion of modern Libya.

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