

To Article I (1977b: "Qaşaba")

The article was written immediately after the desert crossing during a two-weeks stay in Zinder with little literature at our disposal. Some additional information may help bring the results of the trip into better perspective. In Fezzan we visited the remnants of the earthen ramparts of a Kanuri fortification called Ganderma near Trāghen (photo n° 7), saw a number of abandoned wells with Kanuri names, and noticed that the grave of Mai Idrīs b. Alī (died 1697) was still a place of worship (1981: 681).¹ We did not try to visit the tombs of the Bornoan governors mentioned by nineteenth-century travellers.²

At Qatrūn elderly inhabitants led me to the castle of Mbile situated 5 km north-north-east of the town. Located on the eastern side of the oasis, the castle is hidden from the view of travellers using the route on the western side between

¹ Nachtigal mentions 13 Kanuri names and their meanings (*Sahara*, I, 165 n.). Rohlf's thinks that Kanuri was in Fezzan the most widely spoken language in his time (*Reise*, I, 9).

² Beurmann see Franconie, *Beurmann*, 118. Rohlf's mentions a number of thirty to forty graves (*Quer*, reed. 1984, 130).

the oasis and the sands of the Edeyen of Murzuq. The solid but irregular construction of the castle is indicative of Sudanic workmanship (photo n° 5), an impression confirmed by oral traditions. There are good reasons for believing that Ganderma near Trāghen was the centre of Kanuri power in Fezzan since the eleventh century (1977a: 67). The Chadic state continued to exercise some authority over Fezzan until 1574 when the Ottoman Turks invaded Fezzan and occupied the oasis (1987a: 117-118). Apparently they expelled the Kanuri representatives from the Chadic state, because, in a letter of protest sent by Idrīs Alawma to Constantinople, the king refers to the seizure of *Qal'at Fezzān*.³ This fortress of Fezzan could have been either Ganderma or Mbile. A number of other fortresses of unknown age in the oasis between Qaṭrūn and Tedjerḥe are also not yet properly documented.⁴

South of Fezzan, we followed a track fully open to traffic. On our trip from Tejerḥe to Aney we met about ten single lorries, and on the return trip a year later, when I was alone, it was about the same. The traffic consisted exclusively of Libyan trucks from Sebha heading for Agadez or Kano. Whenever the direct route to Ngigmi is used, two four-wheel drive vehicles travel together. For this southern end of the ancient central Saharan route a special permit is required which we made no attempt to get. In those years private cars hardly took the Murzuq-Dirku route, as Libya did not attract many tourists. For me it was the reverse. For the return trip in summer 1977, I was obliged to travel once more with my Landrover on the Agadez-Dirku-Murzuq route because of visa problems with the Algerian authorities.

On the trade route to Kanem-Bornu, the discovery of archaeological remains attributed to the Romans bears witness to Roman penetration further south than hitherto supposed. Some authors suggest that the structure of a number of castles in southern Fezzan is patterned on Roman and Byzantine castles further north.⁵ In 1866 Rohlfs found a broken marble column about six metres long which he first attributed to the Garamantes and later to the Romans at the well of Meshru 90 km south of Fezzan.⁶ In 1931 French colonial officials discovered the ruins of an ancient rectangular structure of squared stone, likewise believed to have been

³ Martin, "Maī Idrīs", 475, 477.

⁴ Near Qaṭrūn: Tendérbé, Qaṣr Awlād Āmir (Nachtigal: Qaṣr Uled 'Ammī), Qaṣr Kimbé (comp. Kan. *kimé* – red; Nachtigal: Qaṣr Kīm̄ba), Jimbrām/Serendibē (Nachtigal: Serendibē), Máriamī; near Medrūsa: Dagāmshellu, Djéremé (Nachtigal: Kidde), Wādī Bishlī, Kasrāwa/Gazrāwa (Rohlfs: Kasarāua), near Tedjerḥe: Qaṣr Ḥawā' (Arab.), Tugīfra (Teda)/Tugu Frāoma (Kan.; Nachtigal), Būma, Ḥarbi/Hirbi, Dédeisa (FN76, 23r-24v).

⁵ Chapelle, *Nomades*, 29; Weiss, "Bornustrasse", 452; Ruprechtsberger, *Garamanten*, 77. Ruprechtsberger and Ziegert pers. comm.

⁶ Rohlfs, *Reise*, I, 16; *Quer*, reed. 1984, 144; Debetz in: *Rohlfs*, II, 199.

Roman, at Taradjihida 300 km south of Fezzan and 3,5 km to the west of the well of Madema. Other findings include a sword with a broad blade and fine green beads. The latter discovery is confirmed by Chappelle who mentions a rectangular stone structure and ancient blue pearls found at Tarajigida near Madema on the old caravan route.⁷ Although no archaeological research has yet been undertaken in al-Qaşaba/Guezebi, the main archaeological site of Kawar, these elements give further support to the idea that the central Saharan trade route from Tripoli to Lake Chad was – since classical times – one of the most active lines of communication between sub-Saharan Africa and the outside world.

To Article II (1983: "Alum du Kawar")

More detailed studies of the alum of Kawar confirmed that pure alum is found in that oasis. The chemical composition of another four samples of alum from the site north of Bilma largely confirms the data of the analysis of 1977 (1982: 23 n. 14). Further alum deposits are likely to have existed in northern Kawar in the form of numerous *Quellhügel* (sources-hills), but owing to the continuous action of sand the original composition of the minerals is no longer detectable. The analysis of mineral samples from the north of Kawar, likewise termed *kolna shah*, revealed that they were actually natron (1991a: 228-229). With respect to the economical significance of alum exports from Kawar during the time of the Crusades, Caben points out that alum from Kawar was an article of trade which the Egyptian authorities supplied to the Christian merchants on a contractual basis. In exchange for this and other articles, Saladin obtained wood for his fleet and weapons to use against the crusaders.⁸

To Article III (1981b: "Néers sur le Kawar")

This modest note was written during my stay in the Niger Republic – where I taught African and Islamic history at the University of Niamey from 1980 to 1985 – at the request of the editors of *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Afrikanische Studien*. It was devoted to a number of medical sites in order to encourage historical research in his comprehensive study on the Kawar oasis. Knut Vikor's conclusion is that salt production preceded the trans-Saharan trade.⁹ While reporting on a mineral site in Kawar, Vikor makes the interesting point that, according to Ibn S'ūd, Qasr Umm Isā did not correspond to

⁷ Debez in: *Kohlfi.* II, 204 n. 10; Chappelle, *Nouvelles*, 30, 21 v.

⁸ Caben, *Oriens*, 146.

⁹ Vikor, *Oriens*, 141-142, 147.