

Saharan Crossroads

Saharan Crossroads:
Exploring Historical, Cultural, and Artistic
Linkages between North and West Africa

Edited by

Tara F. Deubel, Scott M. Youngstedt,
and Hélène Tissières

CAMBRIDGE
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P U B L I S H I N G

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This book first published 2014

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-4438-5826-9, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-5826-7

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The editors would like to gratefully acknowledge the support of the West African Research Association and the American Institute for Maghrib Studies for their generous sponsorship of the Saharan Crossroads conferences held in Tangier, Morocco in June 2009 and in Niamey, Niger in July 2011. We thank Brandy Abraham and Elisabeth Salverda for their skilled copyediting work. We also extend our thanks to Dr. Aomar Boum at the University of Arizona for kindly editing the Arabic language papers in this volume. Finally, we gratefully acknowledge the contributions of all the authors represented in this collection who continue to work toward understanding connections across the Sahara Desert in their respective academic disciplines and areas of research.

Chapter 6, “Patchwork, Dreadlocks, and Cowries: Tracing the Trans-Saharan Journey of Moroccan Gnawa,” was first published as “Hunters, Sufis, Soldiers, and Minstrels: The Diaspora Aesthetics of the Moroccan Gnawa,” by Cynthia Becker in *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, 59/60, Spring/Autumn 2011 (F. Pellizzi, Ed.), pp. 124-144. Copyright © by the President and Fellows of Harvard College. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission of the Peabody Museum Press, Harvard University.

Chapter 9, “Poetics of Diaspora: Sahrawi Poets and Postcolonial Transformations of a Trans-Saharan Genre in Northwest Africa” was first published by Tara F. Deubel in the *Journal of North African Studies*, Volume 17, Issue 2, pp. 295-314 (www.tandfonline.com). Reprinted by permission of Taylor and Francis publishers.

INTRODUCTION

The Sahara Desert has traditionally been perceived as an impenetrable barrier dividing the continent between North Africa and West Africa. Despite trans-Saharan cultural contact spanning centuries, this conceptual divide remains entrenched in academic and popular discourse. In fact, the arbitrary perception of Africa as consisting of separate zones may be growing. North African scholarship is commonly oriented toward Mediterranean, Islamic, and Middle Eastern Studies with little consideration of historical, cultural, and artistic contact with West African countries, which are often considered more authentically “African.” Much scholarship on both sides of the divide has failed to recognize that communication, correspondence, trade, and travel have been ongoing for several millennia, facilitated by continuous nomadic movements across the Sahara.

Saharan Crossroads: Historical, Cultural, and Artistic Linkages between North and West Africa seeks to counteract this regional tendency by employing an interdisciplinary lens to examine myriad interconnections across North and West Africa. As part of an international scholarly effort to promote the field of Saharan Studies, the Saharan Crossroads Initiative was originally launched in 2004 at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) with a conference treating the Saharan crossroads in historical perspective. The West African Research Association (WARA) and the American Institute of Maghrib Studies (AIMS) jointly organized two international conferences that brought together a diverse group of international scholars from more than a dozen countries. The first conference—Saharan Crossroads: Views from the North—took place in June 2009 in Tangier, Morocco. The second conference—Saharan Crossroads: Views from the South—was held in Niamey, Niger in July 2011. Most of the papers in this collection were first presented at the Niamey conference, co-organized by Scott M. Youngstedt, Ghislaine Lydon, and Abdourahmane Idrissa. A third conference—Saharan Crossroads: Views from the Desert-Edge—will be held in Oran, Algeria in June 2014.

This volume explores historical and contemporary connections and exchanges between populations living in and on both sides of the Sahara. Rather than an impenetrable barrier, the vast Sahara Desert is viewed in

this volume as a vital bridge linking different regions of Africa with one another and with Europe and the Middle East as well. Trans-Saharan contact and communication among traders, travelers, scholars, artisans, and nomads led to the emergence of richly diverse cultural and aesthetic expressions along the web of North to South and East to West routes crossing the Sahara. This contact has been fostered over several centuries by a series of historical linkages that include the spread of Islam and Islamic schooling, the trans-Saharan caravan trade (Lydon 2009), European colonization, and migration of nomadic pastoralists in the desert environment with their distinctive dwelling spaces and forms of material culture (Prussin 1997) that reveal contact and cooperation with sedentary agriculturalists further South. The Sahara and its peripheral areas have long existed as zones of richly interconnected peoples and cultures whose ties have only increased in recent decades with the spread of modern transportation systems and new forms of media and information technologies.

Current scholarship in the humanities and social sciences has highlighted the importance of adopting multi- and trans-disciplinary approaches in an effort to develop more holistic and multifaceted perspectives on complex social phenomena such as globalization, development, and migration (McDougall and Scheele 2012; White 2012). Growing interest in studies of global diasporas, contested forms of nationalism, border regions, transnational social and political movements and regions marked by intensive cross-cultural contact is also evident in literature emerging from a variety of fields, including political science, anthropology, sociology, geography, and area studies (Appadurai 2000; Inda and Rosaldo 2008; Mercer, Page and Evans 2008). These present trends have encouraged innovative scholarly collaborations, such as the present volume, that challenge traditional disciplinary boundaries and methodologies and focus on exploring a common research interest from diverse points of view. The intent of this collection is to increase the visibility of Saharan Studies and encourage future trans-disciplinary scholarship and collaboration.

Saharan Crossroads thus offers a unique contribution to existing scholarship on the region by uniting a diverse group of international scholars working on various facets of Saharan history, social life, and cultural production and bringing their work together for the first time. The three conferences organized around these themes engendered productive exchanges on ways to reposition the Sahara as a crucial point of contact between North and West Africa in particular. The papers in this volume showcase a multiplicity of scholarly orientations that give shape to an emerging vision of the Saharan region as a burgeoning area of study. The

authors consider a broad range of themes, including the trans-Saharan circulation of culture and identities; architecture; verbal, visual, and performance arts; religion and law; and language and writing across the Sahara. The book is presented in three major sections focusing on history, culture, and identity; trans-Saharan circulation of arts, music, ritual performance, and architecture; and religion, law, language, and writing. This collection offers original, trans-disciplinary perspectives on these under-explored topics and reflects the multilingual and multicultural nature of this international project with essays in English, French, and Arabic by nineteen authors residing in Africa, North America, and Europe. Abstracts of all papers are provided in the Appendix in English and French.

Finally, the particular strategic importance of the Sahara in current geopolitics lends further significance to the publication of *Saharan Crossroads*. The recent conflict in Mali exemplifies the pressing need for scholarship that demonstrates the interconnectedness of regional politics. In 2012, the Tuareg-led National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) seized much of northern Mali, following the fall of the Qadaffi regime in Libya, which led to the mass movement of heavy armaments from Libya into Mali. Islamist militant groups affiliated with Al Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM) intervened and quickly seized the upper hand with the assistance of allies from Sudan, Somalia, and northern Nigeria, while the coup d'état of the Malian government in March 2012 led to further instability. This trans-Saharan, global conflict provoked a massive humanitarian crisis as thousands of non-combatants were killed or fled as refugees, particularly into neighboring Mauritania and Niger. These events, along with the rise of Islamic extremism across the region, have prompted increasing militarization of the Sahara as a strategy in the so-called "war on terror" (Keenan 2009), particularly by the United States and France.

While the gaze of international political analysts has turned toward the Sahara to follow problematic developments on these fronts that pose serious threats to human rights and security in the region, it is especially timely to recall that the countries connected to the Sahelo-Saharan world have maintained a long history of peaceful coexistence, interdependence, and cooperation between diverse groups of people that is too often overlooked in the present. *Saharan Crossroads* thus attempts to address an existing gap in interdisciplinary studies of the Sahara by underscoring myriad, dynamic linkages between Saharan peoples that have been forged over time through an abundant legacy of shared histories, cultures, and artistic traditions.

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PART I:

CROSSING THE SAHARA: HISTORY, CULTURE, AND IDENTITY

INTRODUCTION

West Africa and North Africa have been linked since ancient times, particularly through trans-Saharan trade. Trans-Saharan trade involved not only goods, but also cultural, linguistic, artistic, and religious exchange. The three articles in this section explore historical dimensions of the movement of people, cultural practices, political alliances, and identities across the Sahara. The historical, economic, political, and cultural dynamics of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and its legacies have been carefully documented in the scholarly literature. In contrast, the contemporaneous trans-Saharan slave trade, which brought West Africans to North Africa, is far less understood and has only recently begun to draw serious attention. Ismael Montana's "The Developments of Bori *Diyar* (Compounds) in the City of Tunis, 1738-1880s" offers an exemplary example of this relatively unexplored history. Drawing from an array of sources in Arabic, French, and English as well as interviews, Montana analyzes three historical stages in the development of Bori compounds in Tunis over nearly two centuries. Bori is the traditional religion of the Hausa of the Central Sudan region in what is today southern Niger and northern Nigeria. The survival of Bori practices in Muslim North Africa is analogous to the retentions of West African religions in the Christian destinations in the Americas. Montana emphasizes that Muslim Hausa and Fulani long attempted to suppress Bori practices, including subjecting recalcitrant Bori adepts to slavery. Bori traditions found a more religiously tolerant environment in Muslim Tunis, where their ceremonies were at times encouraged, particularly under Hammuda Pasha's reign from 1782 to 1814. Not only has Bori survived to the present in Tunis, it played a key role in the emergence of Stambeli, a trance healing tradition unique to Tunisia. Stambeli involves the synthesis of West Africa spirits with local and Middle Eastern Muslim saints. Despite contemporary Tunisian attempts to ignore the history of slavery, Bori and Stambeli reveal connections between West and North Africa that keep the memory of this history alive.

In "The Ghanaian Leadership and the Colonial Situation in Algeria," Aziz Mostefaoui examines a much more recent example of strong political

alliances and connections between West and North Africa. In particular, Mostefaoui describes Ghana's staunch support for the Algerian independence struggle, achieved despite the policies of colonial regimes in Africa that sought to disrupt the ancient trans-Saharan caravan trade and to repress inter-state alliances. Despite the rich literature documenting Kwame Nkrumah's life and political career, the history of his support for the Algerian cause has been neglected. Long before Ghana achieved its independence, Nkrumah began articulating his Pan-Africanist dream that emphasized African unity and continent-wide independence through armed revolution if necessary. Nkrumah insisted that Africans should not be divided by arbitrary racial boundaries, in contrast with other Pan-Africanists, notably the *Négritude* movement of Léopold Sédar Senghor and others. Even after Ghana won independence—when he could have focused solely on nation building in Ghana—Nkrumah remained loyal to his Pan-Africanist vision in words and in action. Mostefaoui documents that Nkrumah insisted on including Algerian delegations in his famous Pan-Africanist conferences, used the Ghanaian embassy in Paris to shelter Algerians, openly condemned human rights abuses carried out by France in Algeria, and publicly supported Algerian liberation on an international stage.

Hein Willemse, in "To Be African: Identity Re-Formation in the Age of Transnationalism—A View from South Africa," offers an unexpected Pan-Africanist perspective that includes valorizing trans-Saharan history and unity. The apartheid regime of South Africa systematically suppressed objective knowledge of "Black" Africans, isolating itself not only from "Black" South Africans, but also from "Black" Africans across the continent. Independent post-1994 South Africa immediately began efforts to redefine South African identity as embedded in transnational African identity. That is, South Africa sought re-identification and re-integration with Africa as a whole. To examine this project of re-Africanization, Willemse examines several of Thabo Mbeki's famous speeches and projects made as Deputy-President and then President of South Africa. The most interesting—from the Saharan perspective—was Mbeki's presidential project to preserve the renowned manuscripts of Timbuktu. Mbeki made official state visits to Mali and led fund-raising campaigns that eventually culminated in the construction of a state of the art archive. His speeches on the matter highlighted Timbuktu as symbolic of the glorious history of Africa and trans-Saharan unity, and ultimately of the renewal of African pride or what he called "the African Renaissance." Furthermore, Mbeki thanked Mali for its strong support of the liberation struggle in South Africa.

CHAPTER ONE

THE DEVELOPMENTS OF BORI *DIYAR* (COMPOUNDS) IN THE CITY OF TUNIS, 1738-1880s

ISMAEL M. MONTANA

Introduction

Early developments, from Tunisia's occupation in 1574 by the Ottoman Empire to the creation of an *eyelet*¹ (province) called the "*Beylic*" in 1705, led to the importation of what was to constitute the nucleus of the Central Sudanic African community in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Tunisia.² Husayn Ibn Ali (r. 1705-1735), who allied with the Turkish militia and notables of Tunis and led the province to its quasi-independence from the Ottoman Empire, was himself ousted by his own nephew, Ali Bey I who ruled from 1740-1756. In efforts to guard his regime from a potential coup, and from Algerian junta who were threatening to overtake the province, Ali Bey I not only enlisted Mamluks and foreign corps to maintain the balance of power needed to safeguard his regime, but he also imported black slaves *en masse* from the Central Sudan³ for the same purpose. According to the Tunisian chronicler Ahmad Ibn Abi Diyaf (1999, 122), these newly imported slave soldiers were termed *bawwaba*, meaning "palace guards." By the 1780s, an increased economic boom was ushered in under the reign of Hammuda Pasha (r. 1782-1814). His revival of the trans-Saharan trade—by granting monopoly of the caravan trade to Ghadames merchants—led to a voluminous importation of slaves from the same Central Sudan region in West Africa, hence the peak of their presence in Tunisia (see Bdira 1978, 26-27; Limam 1981, 349-57; and Chater 1984, 147).

While recent scholarship has ignored this Central Sudanic community in urban Tunis, several eye-witness accounts from the first half of the

nineteenth century attest to how they had clustered into numerous compounds scattered across the two main suburbs, *Bab Swouika* and *Bab al-Djazira*, and around the historic space of Medina, the old town in the city of Tunis recognized in 1984 as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This community differentiated themselves from the rest of the black Tunisian population through their attachment to a distinct culture and mode of social organization derived principally from an ancient Habe social and political organization from Hausaland (presently northern Nigeria). By the late 1880s, there existed up to fourteen *diyar* (compounds; plural of *dar*) based on the ethnic groupings of this community. The first of these *diyar* (compounds) was *Dar Kofa*, documented originally to be a *nadi* (a clubhouse) and, by the turn of the nineteenth century, additional compounds grew out of *Dar Kofa* that were named after towns of the Central and Western Sudan⁴ such as *Dar Kano*, *Dar Nufe*, *Dar Zamfara*, *Dar Zakzak* (Zaria), *Dar Bambara*, and *Dar Songhay*. Each of the later compounds named after the townships of the Central Sudan had its own Bori temple that reflected the ethnic and corporate identities of its inhabitants. The Bori communities around which these compounds evolved differentiated enslaved blacks from Central and Western Sudan from the local freeborn blacks and freed slaves in the Regency of Tunis. It has been noticed by a number of early sources to be associated with the Maguzawa or non-Muslim Hausa. This cult was transformed or reinvented in the Maghreb by Maguzawa slaves who crossed the Sahara to North Africa in great numbers during the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth century.

Within the general contours of the social organization of the Tunisian black population, the Bori compounds played an important role in defining the cultural and ethno-religious characteristics of the Central and Western Sudanic community affiliated with the Bori compounds. These compounds, modeled after the local Tunisian structure and concept of a *dar* (plural. *diyar*), also corresponded neatly to a Hausa concept of a *gida* (plural. *gidaje*) in northern Nigeria. In each setting, a compound closely linked together a distinct socio-religious community having a common bond through ethnicity, religious practices, and cultural origins.

Despite the evidence revealing their legacies on the urban imprints of Tunis and their dimension over time and space, few scholars have mentioned the *diyar* or the Bori compounds in their discussions of the enslaved West African community in Tunisia. The few scholars who cited these compounds, however, have failed to explore in their writings when, by whom, and to what purpose these Bori compounds were established (Chater 1984, 147; Temimi 1994, 50; Larguèche 2003, 333). These

scholars have also failed to recognize the intrinsic relationship between these compounds and the political and economic developments in Tunisia, especially during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Using a combination of religious treatises, European travelers' accounts, local Tunisian chronicles, oral interviews, and secondary sources, this paper attempts to explore how the evolution of these compounds and their transformations from *nawadi* (clubhouses) to a complex ethno-religious and urban communal space reflected the political, economic, and socio-religious climates in early Husaynid Tunisia.⁵ Specifically, the paper seeks to integrate the history of these *diyar* (Bori compounds) into a broader research design aimed at exploring the links between their nature, structure, size, occupation, gender composition, locales, and the broader political and economic developments that culminated in abolition of slavery during the reign of Ahmad Bey (r. 1835-1855).

How did the beginnings of these compounds mirror the political developments that raged in the Regency of Tunis during its formative years after the establishment of the Husaynid dynasty in 1705? How did they reflect the burgeoning external trade that flourished in the aftermath of the aforementioned political instability? And how did their inhabitants and affiliates adjust to changes in their legal status following the abolition of slavery in 1846?

Historical Documentation of the Bori Compounds

Firsthand accounts written by nineteenth-century Muslim travelers and scholars provide evidence of Bori compounds formed by enslaved communities in urban Tunis and their transformation over time. Ahmad ibn al-Qadi b. Ibrahim b. Yusuf al-Timbuktawi, while not the first to have paid attention to these compounds in Tunis, was the earliest to deeply probe into their uniqueness. Writing during the first decade of the nineteenth century, al-Timbuktawi wrote that the enslaved West African community, whose religious life he observed on his way to pilgrimage, revolved around a number of Bori compounds he termed *diyar*, and he carefully documented ten of them, and called upon Tunisian authorities to destroy them because they were used, he charged, for idol worshiping (al-Timbuktawi 1813). To prove to his Tunisian hosts that he was not targeting the entire Tunisian black population, al-Timbuktawi consciously categorized the inhabitants of the *diyar* as “*Sudan-Tunis*,” thus differentiating them from pre-existing black groups, such as *shwashin* (free blacks) and the *Ihjama* (former freed slaves in the Ibadite dominated region of Djerba). These sub-groups of the Tunisian black population did

not adhere to the Bori cult, and hence were not affiliated with the Bori compounds.

Among his descriptions of these compounds, al-Timbuktawi wrote that each *dar* (compound) was headed by an elderly woman '*ajuz* known and revered by her liturgical appellation as '*arifat* (priestess) and identified on the basis of her West African origin or ethnicity. According to al-Timbuktawi, the Central Sudanic community considered *Dar Kofa* important because it housed the *Sultan al-Jinn wa al-Sahra*' (the holiest of the Bori spirits of the Sahara). As such, *Dar Kofa* occupied a revered status in their communal and religious life. At the time of his sojourn in Tunis, there were up to seven auxiliary units of *Dar Kofa* named after towns and cities in the Central and Western Sudan such as *Dar Kano*, *Dar Nufe*, *Dar Zamfara*, *Dar Gwari*, *Dar Zakzak* (Zaria), *Dar Bambara*, and *Dar Songhay* (ibid., 7 folio a).

Writings dating from the early 1860s and the late 1890s by Tunisian historian, Muhamed el-Hachaichi, reveal that the character of these compounds evolved due to the changing political and economic situation of the Central and Western Sudanic community, resulting from the abolition of slavery that was decreed in 1846. As el-Hachaichi has shown, while the auxiliary units of *Dar Kofa*, previously documented by al-Timbuktawi continued to exist side by side with *Dar Kofa*, in the post-abolition era additional compounds grew out of them. These new satellite units of the compounds were headed by yet a new class of Bori priestesses. These priestesses were very popular and influential among the diverse freed slaves from the Central and Western Sudan. Each new priestess controlled her own compound and had networks of Bori adherents and private clients. In this sense, the additional compounds they oversaw, given their gender and new status as freed slaves, differed from the ethnically centered compounds al-Timbuktawi documented at the turn of the nineteenth century (el-Hachaichi 1994, 300-301). According to el-Hachaichi, the most important feature of the compounds controlled by the new class of Bori priestesses was in their individual rather than communal character. Among this category of the compounds, el-Hachaichi reported *Dar 'Arifat Baghirmi* (compound of the Baghirmi priestess), *Dar 'Arifat Wada'i* (compound of the Wadai priestess), and *Dar 'Arifat Dar fur* (compound of the Dar Fur priestess) (el-Hachaichi c.1988, 174). Although el-Hachaichi did not explain the reason for the association of these compounds with these powerful new priestesses, it is clear that the newfound Bori compounds reflected the adjustment of the Bori adepts to the legal, social, and economic changes that came about as a result of the abolition of slavery in 1846. Abolition and emancipation fostered self-

reliance and a tendency towards private economic gains. After the abolition of slavery in 1846, freed slaves adjusted to these changes by organizing private and public performances of Bori ritual ceremonies. The priestesses who controlled these compounds used their influential positions to compete against each other for fame and Bori enterprise at private functions, including circumcision ceremonies.

Almost a hundred years after al-Timbuktawi brought the Bori compounds to the attention of Tunisian authorities, and nearly three decades after el-Hachaichi's account of these compounds, A.J.N. Tremearne—a British anthropologist who assiduously studied the Bori beliefs in northern Nigeria—conducted a comparative study of the Bori practice in Tunis (Tremearne 1968, 23). Like al-Timbuktawi, Tremearne noted the Bori-centered compound as the most important characteristic of the West African community in Tunis. Using the structure of Bori compounds in northern Nigeria, Tremearne described *Dar Kofa* as *gidan Jama'at* (a community house), thus attesting to its central and continued adulated status as a communal space for the Central and Western Sudanic community in Tunis (ibid., 12).

Although physical imprints of many of the Bori compounds have long disappeared, oral interviews conducted with descendants of the Central and Western Sudanic community of Tunis, and especially those associated with surviving units of the Bori compounds even today reminisce about their role in fostering solidarity and mutual support among the Sudanic community of Tunis and their descendants.⁶ The annual *ziyara* or visitation ceremonies to the *zawiyas* (shrines) of Sidi al-Sa'ad al-'Abid and Sidi Marzuq, both in the outskirts of Tunis and conducted by Bori adepts, are still rotated along the lines of the fourteen *diyar* (Bori compounds) as had been done since the eighteenth century.⁷

Origins and Developments of the Bori Compounds

As indicated above, *Dar Kofa*, the oldest of the surviving *diyar* or compounds, located in the western suburb between Bab al-Djazira and Bab Djadid in the Medina, was mentioned by contemporaneous sources as early as the mid-eighteenth century. The author *al-Mansukhat al-Saba'i*, for instance, attributes the origins of *Dar Kofa* to the political climate that split the early ruling class of the Husaynid dynasty into the Husayniyya faction (loyal to Husayn ibn Ali, the founder of the Husaynid dynasty) and the Bashiyya faction (loyal to Ali Bey I, a cousin and heir apparent to Husayn ibn Ali).

While the extent to which the civil war crisis triggered the emergence

of *Dar Kofa* and the associated private clubhouses, or *nawadi*, has been briefly mentioned by the private reports of al-Saba'i, the impact of the civil war on the evolution of these clubhouses needs to be further explained and contextualized. Most historians of pre-colonial Tunisia stress the ramifications of the abovementioned civil war that divided the Husaynid ruling class into two rival factions as a defining feature of the early Husaynid dynasty.⁸ It unquestionably caused intense political instability. Thomas Shaw, a well-known British clergyman who visited Tunis from Algiers during the height of the civil war, for instance, attested in 1727 to the impact the conflict had on the economy and on daily life. When writing later about his tour of Tunis, Shaw complained that during his stay in the Regency, the civil war had deprived him of the security requisite to conduct his observations (Shaw 1738, 308-309).

In addition to the civil war's impact on economic and daily life, it was directly responsible for the importation of the black slave elite guards that Ali Bey I imported from the Central Sudan. To be sure, the importation of slaves from the Central Sudan to be used as military corps was not without historical precedent. With the Islamization of North Africa in the eighth century, black slaves from the Sahel region of West Africa, then called *bilad al-Sudan*, were brought to Tunisia for various social, political, and economic ends. Towards the end of the tenth century, the Aghlabids in the year 980 AD, for instance, imported black slaves for military purposes. The Zirids, successors of the Fatimides, who slaughtered the blacks who had served the Aghlabids to undo their political legacy, also used black soldiers from West Africa to serve their military and political needs. Ali Bey I tapped into this existing tradition and commissioned the importation of black slaves directly from the Central Sudan, evidently between the years 1738 to 1739.

The context of Ali Bey's importation of this slave corps from the Central Sudan is worth exploring at length. Following the death of Husayn b. Ali and the defeat of his faction, Ali Bey I became the heir apparent to the throne. However, his ascension to the throne did not go uncontested. In addition to Husayn b. Ali's faction, the Janissaries were still part of the *Diwan al-Asker* (Military Council) over which Ali Bey I now presided. Most of these Janissaries maintained strong ties with the Turkish Junta in neighboring Algiers and had, in fact, been the direct cause of the downfall of the Muradite dynasty in 1702. During the height of the Husaynid dynasty's succession crisis, some of the Janissaries had allied with Husayn b. Ali against Ali Bey's camp. Therefore, in order to counterbalance any unforeseen threats from the janissaries, and to rebuff their attempts to destabilize his regime, Ali Bey I sought recourse in a number of military

measures. First, like Uthman Dey in the early 1600s, he enlisted the *Zwawa* corps that Uthman Dey had previously recruited from the Kabylie tribe from Algeria (Abun-Nasr 1987, 174). Besides, Ali Bey I also imported black slave soldiers from the Central Sudan to serve as his private palace guards. Abdelmajid al-Saba'i's private papers document the immediate context of the Bey's importation of black slaves:

And in the year 1151H, 1738-1739...the prince Ali Bey authorized the recruitment of *hurras*, (palace guards) of the Sudan (blacks) in lieu of the Turkish and the Arab guards. As for the Arabs, this was due to their lack of trustworthiness and his [Ali Bey] fear of their constant intrigues and plots. As for the Turks, because the prince was well aware of their desires to accumulate all sorts of powers into their own hands, he alienated them. And this is the main reason why Ali Bey authorized the recruitment of the Sudan as his palace guards and imported a great quantity of them into Tunis. He also facilitated their settlements and built hostels for them and permitted them to establish their own Clubhouses. Each one of these Clubhouses was called *Kofa* and only the Sudan assemble in it and conduct their own matters. (Al-Saba'i in Limam 1980, 241)

Bin Diyaf also referred to these little known *hurras* in his *Ithaf*, stating that they were designated as *bawwaba*, meaning palace guards. According to Bin Diyaf, Ali Bey I modeled the *bawwaba* along the lines of the '*abid al-Bukhari*' which Mawlay Ismail had instituted in Morocco. Similar to '*abid al-Bukhari*', Bin Diyaf said that Ali Bey I embellished the *bawwaba* regiments with privileges by allotting them special uniforms to distinguish them from other military corps (see Diyaf 1999, 122).

Both Ibn Abi Diyaf and al-Saba'i are remarkably precise about the context in which the *bawwaba* were introduced into Tunis. Still, neither of these authors offer much information about the size of the regiments or the region of West Africa from which they were imported. Their regional origins, however, can be inferred from the very clubhouses that al-Saba'i's papers refer to as *kofa*, which in technical terms refers to a gate in Hausa. As M.G. Smith—who has meticulously examined Hausaland's mode of political and economic organization in the pre-Jihad period—has shown, the term *kofa*, apparently following a Bornu-Hausa political and administrative tradition, means a guard or intermediary of the king. Since the political climate culminated in the importation of the *bawwaba* it is therefore likely that these black corps may have been imported from the Central Sudan, particularly from Bornu or Hausaland. To be sure, diplomatic and political ties between rulers of Tunis and Central Sudan during the Hafsid rule in the sixteenth century continued well into the late

eighteenth century. Miss Tully, sister of the British consul in Tripoli who visited Tunisia in 1780, reported a sensational visit of a “Black Borno Prince” and his entourage to Tunis. According to Tully, the prince was an emissary of the king of Bornu, and was in Tunis to promote the commercial and diplomatic interests of Bornu (Tully 1817, 208). Throughout the late eighteenth century until the eve of the prohibition of the Ghadames slave trade to Tunisia in 1841, both Bornu and Hausaland regions of the Central Sudan were the main sources of slaves entering the Regency of Tunis (Chater 1984, 174).

Besides their regional origins, additional demographic clues about the nature of the *bawwaba* may also be inferred from their very occupation as slave guards. Because of the nature of their occupation, one is also left with the impression that they might have been similar in demographic characteristics such as age, marital status and cultural background. They were young, unmarried males and were all employed as palace guards. Quantitatively, we do not know the size and the number of this corps. Nonetheless, their qualitative impact on the religious and cultural developments associated with the West African community is one that should be recognized.

The Bori Compounds and the Caravan Slave Trade

The extant research suggests that between 1782 and 1841, most of the slaves entering Tunis were overwhelmingly drawn from Central Sudan, particularly Hausaland. Quantitatively, those drawn from the Niger Bend area in the Western Sudan followed slaves who were imported from Hausaland and Bornu. Then between the early 1830s and 1841, the areas from which slaves were imported into Tunis expanded to include other parts of the Central Sudan such as Dar Fur and Sennar. Before the 1830s, these areas, although occasionally supplying slaves to Tunis, had not been a regular source of slaves entering Tunis (Chater 1984, 138-39).

The scale and the change in the source areas of slaves procured to Tunis during the period between the early 1830s and 1841 affected the size and character of the compounds. The most pronounced impact of the slave trade on the Bori compounds can be delineated in the physical character and public nature of these compounds. As indicated above, while *Dar Kofa* and its primary units were originally built as clubhouses, the Bori compounds that flourished after 1782 took on a form of a local Tunisian structure of a *dar*, and corresponded to a Hausa concept of *gida*. Literally, both *dar* and *gida* mean a house with which successive members of a particular family can identify. In both cases, a *dar* or *gida* could have