

A Critical Analysis of the Accounts of Songhay, Hausaland and the Chad Areas of Africa as Recorded by Al-Hassan Bn. Muhammad Al-Wazzan Al-Zayyati (Leo Africanus) in the 16th Century A.D.

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Abstract

The essence of this article is to highlight the mundane issue of history and historiographical analysis while revisiting some past accounts from a rare source material of a given geographical zone of African continent. In attempting to achieve this aim, the student of history is herewith, introduced to that aspect of historiography, which emphasises the significance of internal textual criticism of the source with a view to validate the level of corroboration or otherwise of the given information. It is with the understanding of such internal inconsistencies and drawing-up from available sources to supplement the contained information as employed herein in this article on Leo Africanus on Africa, that a possible reconstruction of the history hopefully could be appreciated.

I. Introduction: Brief Biographical History of Al-Hassan bn Muhammad Al-Wazzan Al-Zayyati (Leo Africanus)

In any attempt to analyse Leo Africanus' accounts, a critical look at his background is important¹. The account of Leo Africanus about Songhay, Hausaland and the Chad areas was not written by an outsider per say, but by someone who claimed to have visited the area twice. Leo Africanus was born in Granada in al-Andalus (Spain) 1493/1494². Granada was the last Muslim hold to be taken by Christian Spaniards. It seems that after the fall of Granada, Leo Africanus whose real name was Al-Hassan bn Muhammad al-Wazzan Al-Zayyati left for Fez, perhaps, about 1500 AD.³ where he came in contact with the Muslim princess of the region.

It also appears that Leo Africanus was educated in the different Islamic disciplines at the University of Fez⁴. He was given a post in the judiciary and later participated in commercial activities. It seems that his first trip to Bilad as-Sudan was a business one. From an internal evidence in his book, we found him participating in diplomatic activities on behalf of the Sultan of al-Maghrib al-Aqsa between 1509 and 1510 or 1510 and 1511 A.D.⁵ His second visit to Bilad as-Sudan was in September 1513⁶ and" seems also to be connected with diplomatic activities. In the year 1518 Leo Africanus got captured on his way back from Constantinople by the Christian pirates (Sicilian Cosairs) in the Mediterranean Sea. On discovering his vast knowledge, his captors offered him as a gift to the Pope. The Pope at that time was Leo X, who baptised Al-Hassan al-Wazzan as Giovanni Leone (John Leo) after his name. He was, however, popularly known as Leo Africanus (having come from Africa). After the death of Pope Leo X, he was said to have come back to Tunis where he died as a Muslim⁷.

During Leo Africanus' stay in Rome, the Pope encouraged him to continue writing about the history of the areas he visited or knew about. These accounts were translated into Latin by Ramusio in 1550 AD. The Arabic manuscripts are however not extant. John Pory translated the works in Elizabethan English in the year 1600 AD. In 1896, Robert Brown published the work' into three volumes under the title, *The History and Description of Africa and of the Notable Things Therein Contained*, with an introduction and additional notes. Robert Brown was of the opinion that Leo Africanus was born in about 1490 and some modern scholars have followed this assumption. If the 1490 dating is followed, it would mean that Leo Africanus was only 14 years old when he first visited the

¹ Leo Africanus (Al-Hasan bn Muhammad al-Wazzan al-Zayyati), *The History and Description of Africa and of the Notable Things Therein Contained*, trans. Into English in 1600 by John Pory, edited with an introduction and notes by Dr. Roberts Brown (1896) in 3 Vols. – Vol.III (7), London, pp 820-854 (Printed for the Hakluyt Society, London).

² J.H. Fisher, "Leo Africanus and the Songhay Conquest of Hausaland", *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol.II (1), p.89. For different dates of Leo's birth and death, see the article "Leo Africanus" in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol.VI, 1978, p.149.

³ Fisher, "Leo Africanus and the Songhay Conquest of Hausaland", p.80.

⁴ Thomas Hodgkin, *Nigerian Perspectives: An Historical Anthology*, Oxford University Press, 1971, p.180, note 1.

⁵ Fisher, "Leo Africanus and the Songhay Conquest of Hausaland", p.89.

⁶ Fisher, *Ibid.*, p.89.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.90: *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol.VI, p.149.

Sudan (1504)¹ and 23 years old at the time of the second visit (1513)². But it would have been almost impossible for such a young man to have travelled so much considering the hazardous conditions obtaining in those times. Secondly, by the time he came to Fez, he was well-versed in Islamic Jurisprudence. Leo Africanus' arrival in Fez was suggested by H. Fisher citing R. Mauny to be around 1500 A.D.³ If, the 1490 date of his birth is accepted, it also means that he (Leo Africanus) was only 10 years old when he came to Fez. This would be too young an age for him to master the vast field of Islamic Jurisprudence. At the same time it would equally be too simplistic to assume that Leo Africanus at such a young age had performed the functions of jurist, adviser and diplomat⁴.

However, the article in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol.VI, titled "Leo Africanus", showed that he was born in 1485⁵ in Granada, Spain and died in 1554 A.D. in Tunis. Therefore, if the data 1485 of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* is accepted it implies that Leo Africanus was 19 years during his (Leo Africanus') first visit (1504) and 28 years old in the second visit (1513)⁶. As for the time Leo Africanus came to Fez (1500), we could also presume that he would be 15 years old⁷. It is with these conflicting views on the life of Leo Africanus that we analyse his travelling accounts below, so as to reflect on the historical significance of the accounts on the region described.

II. The Songhay Region

In the Description of Africa, 7th Book, Leo stated:

The king of Tombuto that now reigneth, called Abuacre Izchia, is a Negro by birth: this Abuacre after the decease of the former king who was a Libyan bone, slue all his sonnes and so usurped the kingdom⁸.

The above statement informs us on how the reigning king Askia Muhammad bn Abubakar Toure I came to power. Askia I revolted against Sonni Ali's son, Sonni Abubakar Dao (Sunni Baru) who succeeded to the throne in 1492 A.D. After several futile negotiations for about 52 days between Sunni Baru and Askia Muhammad I a battle took place at Anfao⁹, in which the former was defeated. Askia Muhammad I declared himself the ruler in 1493 and made a bid to Islamise the whole of Songhay as a justification of his revolt. The attribution of Libyan birth or descent by Leo to the "former king" (Sonni Ali and Sunni Baru) and the localisation of Askia Muhammad I as an indigene of Songhay seems to create a dichotomy of origin between the two rulers. But what contradicted this alleged "Libyan" connection was Askia's statement in his Second Question to al-Maghili that "his (Sonni Ali's) mother was from the land of Far"¹⁰. The village of Far has not satisfactorily been identified, but the probable location according to Hunwick, "would be with Fari at 13° N, 3° 27' E, a little to the east of modern Dosso, in the heart of Jerma-speaking Dendi"¹¹, which means in the region of Songhay. Furthermore, there appears to be no evidence upto now that will justify this Libyan connection.

In another statement Leo Africanus stated that:

And having by warres for the space of fiteene yeeres conquered many large dominions, he then concluded a league with all nations, and went on pilgrimage to Mecca¹².

It is indicative from the statement that a pilgrimage had taken place fifteen years after Askia Muhammad I seized the power. But the general opinion is that Askia's pilgrimage occurred two years after the seizure of power (1495) and returned in 1497¹³, and not after fifteen years of conquest as presented by Leo Africanus. Also, if Leo Africanus' account of fifteen years of conquest is to be accepted, then the date of the pilgrimage would be 1508 while counting forward from 1493 the date which Askia I took over power, but this conclusion is undoubtedly wrong from examination of the *Tarikh al-Fattash* and *Tarikh as-Sudan*. Thirdly, in the *Description of Africa*, Vol.I,

¹ Fisher, "Leo Africanus and the Songhay Conquest of Hausaland", p.;89.

² Fisher, *Ibid.*, p.89.

³ Fisher, *Ibid.*, p.89; Assuming that we take 1490 date postulated by Robert Brown as the correct date of Leo Africanus' birth and counting forward to 1500 A.M., he would be only 10 years old as I pointed ,out earlier in the main body of this paper. This is a fact almost impossible considering Leo Africanus' age

⁴ Fisher, *Ibid.*, p.89.

⁵ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol.VI, p.149; Fisher, *loc.cit.*, p.89.

⁶ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol.VI, p.149; Fisher, *loc.cit.*, p.89.

⁷ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol.VI, p.149; Fisher, *loc.cit.*, p.89.

⁸ Leo, VII, p.820

⁹ J.O. Hunwick, "Religion and State in the Songhay Empire, 1464-1591" in I.M. Lewis (ed.), *Islam in Tropical Africa*, London: Hutchinson University Library for Africa, 1980, p.131; also Hunwick (ed. & trans. With an introduction and commentary), *Sharia in Songhay: The Replies of Al-Maghill to the Questions of Askia Al-Hajj Muhammad*, London: Oxford University Press, 1985, p.26.

¹⁰ Hunwick, *Sharia in Songhay*, p.69, note 3: "Religion and State ... ". *loc.cit.*, p.128.

¹¹ Hunwick, *Sharia in Songhay*, p.69, note 3.

¹² Leo, VII, p.820

¹³ Hunwick, *Sharia in Songhay*, p.26; "Religion and State ... ", *loc.cit.* p.135.

the year 1504 was given as that of his (Leo Africanus') first visit to the Sudan. Counting backward from the date (1504)¹ would take us to 1488 as the probable date of taking-over power from the Sunni rulers. This deduction however, is not correct and it invalidated Leo Africanus' claim, because by 1488, it was Sonni Ali (1463-1492) who was in full control of the Songhay region.

Leo Africanus' further confusion was that of reporting about Askia as being the "King of Tombuto (Timbuktu)"². Askia Muhammad I did not reside in Timbuktu but in Gao the capital city in Leo Africanus' time. It is, however, possible that Askia I might have been on an official tour in Timbuktu, or that the supposed king was the "governor of the town" representing Askia I rather than Askia I himself. Leo Africanus still went on to say that:

In my time (Leo Africanus himself) this region (Gualata (Walata) was conquered by the King of Tombuto³.

The statement indicated that Walata at the time of Leo Africanus was under the kingdom of Songhay, that its conquest by "rice prince Hali (Sonni Ali) had impoverished the region because the leading merchants were "leaving Gualata for Tombuto and Gago (Gao)"⁴. Therefore, it seems at the time of Leo Africanus' visit to the region the city of Walata had still not recovered its previous prosperity. In spite of its impoverishment, it (Walata) was still under Askia I because the ruler of Walata, "pay a great yeerely tribute unto him"⁵. On Timbuktu, the interesting account by Leo Africanus was about the prosperity of the city because in it were found:

many shops of artificers, and merchants and especially of such a weave linen and cotton cloth. And hitherto the Barbarie merchants bring cloth of Europe⁶.

Significantly, the reader was made to understand the flourishing trade of the city and its regions which was being conducted with the Berber merchants from North Africa. The inhabitants of the region were very accommodative to strangers which no doubt was an inducement factor to the flourishing trade. Salt, which was a scarce commodity, was reportedly brought from Tegaza⁷ (Taghaza) and horses which formed an important part of the royal cavalry were "brought out of Barbarie"⁸. In Timbuktu, according to Leo Africanus were found many:

great store of doctors, judges, priests, and other learned men, that are bountifully maintained at the kings cost and charges. And hither are brought diuers manuscripts or written bookes out of Barbarie, which are sold for more money than any other merchandise⁹.

The statement confirmed the state of learning in Songhay, how scholarship was prized and the functions it performed to the society. This supported the view that the state patronised the Ulama (learned men), who in turn busied themselves spreading Islam both in cities and country-side, an achievement credited to Askia I owing to his disposition to Islamic Jihad in the region¹⁰. In addition to the scholarly character of Timbuktu, the description of the social life of the city also depicted its inhabitants as "people of a gentle and cheerful disposition"¹¹. Timbuktu was also reported to possess a port on the river Niger called Kabara¹² where a lot of revenue from taxed goods was derived and this had considerable influence on the flourishing wealth of the city (Timbuktu). The port of Kabara according to Leo Africanus, was under the charge of a special officer who was the brother of Askia I by name Abu Bacr (Abubakar) but surnamed as Pargama¹³. The word "Pargama" seems to be a mistake for "Kabara-farma" (i.e. title of the Officer in-charge of Kabara Port).

After describing Timbuktu, Leo Africanus went on to discuss the equally important city of Gao. On Gao, Leo Africanus said that the city lay southward of Timbuktu with an estimated distance of "almost fewer hundred miles"¹⁴. Administratively, Gao was the seat of Askia's power because his "secretaries, treasurers, factors, and auditors"¹⁵ were all accommodated in the city.

In comparison with Timbuktu, the city of Gao also featured significant commercial activity because

¹ Fisher, *loc.cit.*, p.89, note 15.

² Leo, VII, p.820.

³ Leo, VII, p.821.

⁴ Leo, VII, p.821.

⁵ Leo, VII, p.821.

⁶ Leo, VII, p.824.

⁷ Leo, VII, p.824.

⁸ Leo, VII, p.825.

⁹ Leo, VII, p.825.

¹⁰ Hunwick, "Religion and State .. .", *loc.cit.*, p.136.

¹¹ Leo, VII, p.825.

¹² Leo, VII, pp.826 and 844 - note 11.

¹³ Leo, VII, p.826.

¹⁴ Leo, VII, p.826.

¹⁵ Leo, VII, p.827.

"plentie of merchandise is duly brought hither"¹. Variety of textiles including European, Venetian and Turkish types were all brought to its market by North African merchants. Besides, Gao being a royal seat and a merchant city, "husbandmen" and "shepherds" who normally engage in livestock business were found distributed in the city and its (Gao) surroundings. In the course of the description however, Leo Africanus got confused and suddenly digressed and called the people of Gao "ignorant and rude", whose bodies were covered "with beast skins" and were "all naked saved their priuie members" in summer. In short, they were uncivilised, a stereo-type phrase used only in relation to the supposed "barbarians"². The question is: how can a civilised group of people, long engaged in trade with large distant states of Turkey, North Africa and Egypt be called uncivilised? For example, the Hamitic Hypothesis postulated in the 19th century and still defended in the early 20th century considered Egypt to be the centre of diffusion of civilisation in Africa³. Therefore, even if the historicity of the hypothesis is to be accepted, then the city of Gao and its people who for long had been in contact with Egypt, then should have the benefits of civilisations (Turkey, North Africa, etc.) and not savagery.

III. On Hausaland

Leo Africanus' account on Hausaland informed us, basically about the conquest of the most important regions of Katsina, Kano and Zazzau by Askia I. This suggests some territorial expansion of the Songhay State. A study conducted by Y.B. Usman on Katsina, however, has shown that no relations existed between Katsina and Songhay in the 16th century. Rather most, if not all, of the sources so far extant on Katsina's history⁴ are silent on this issue. It is, however, possible that fresh evidence may come to light one day. But in the light of the present state of knowledge, Leo Africanus' claim of Askia's annexation of Katsina is doubtful and needs re-examination.

In State of Kano, the story is also the same. The rich province of Kano was reported to have been laid siege by Askia I for a long time before the city capitulated and the ruler was forced to pay a "third part of all his tribute"⁵ to Askia I. Furthermore, Leo Africanus asserted that the ruler of Kano was compelled to accept Askia's envoys in the court specifically with the instruction to collect annual tribute for Askia I.⁶ The existence of several internal sources has, however, given us the privilege to check for the corroboration of the information provided by Leo Africanus. In the *Tarikh Arbab Hadh al-Balad al-Musamma Kanu*,⁷ for example, there is complete silence of Askia's influence on Kano at the time to which Leo Africanus was referring⁸.

Considering the relationship of Kano with Katsina and Zazzau, Leo Africanus asserted that the two rulers

¹ Leo, VII, p.827.

² Leo, VII, p.827.

³ The Hamitic Hypothesis was a view postulated by C.G. Seligman in his book, the *Races of Africa* in 1930. According to Seligman all civilisations in Africa had their origins from the Hamites who are a pure group of race. By implication, the hypotheses assumes the African to be incapable of any development of himself/herself, let alone contributing to world civilisations. This view was spread to justify the colonisation of Africa in the 20th century. In so far as there is nothing wrong in an idea diffusing from one society to another in history, the developments of African States in totality should however be seen as autochthonous to the region and its peoples.

⁴ Y.B. Usman, "Some Aspects of External Relations of Katsina Before 1804", *SAVANNAH: A Journal of the Environment and Social Sciences*, Vol. 2, Zaria, December 1972, p.180. For a contrary view on Katsina's relation with Songhay, See Hunwick, "Songhay, Borno and Hausaland in the Sixteenth Century" in J.F.A Ajayi and M. Crowder (eds.), *History of West Africa*, Vol. I, London: Longman, 1971, pp.275-277.

⁵ Leo, VII, p.830.

⁶ Leo, VII, p.830.

⁷ H.R. Palmer (trans.), The Anonymous *Ta'rikh Arbab Hadh al-Balad al-Musamma Kanu* ("The History of the Lords of this City called Kano) under the title "Kano Chronicle" in *Sudanese Memoirs*, 3 Vols. In One, Lagos, 1928 (1967 Reprint) pp.97-132. Herein it will be referred to in its proper title as *Ta'rikh Arbab*, but using *Sudane Memoirs* pagination.

⁸ I am strongly of the opinion that an important event such as political control by Songhay over Kano which even warranted the payment of yearly tribute by the latter should have escaped the notice of the Chronicler(s) on Kano. My reasons are based on (i) the way *Ta'rikh Arbab* treated the *Jihad* subject in Kano with impartiality, and (ii) how it paid particular attention to political matters on Kano with details and accounts of series of wars in Hausaland in specific and general from earliest times to the *jihad* period in 1804. It should be borne in mind that the same treatment would have been given to Songhay-Kano relations in the *Ta'rikh Arbab* or any other source of the area, considering that Leo Africanus' information is correct. For a contrary view, see Hunwick, "Songhay, Borno and Hausaland in the Sixteenth Century", in *op.cit.*, pp. 276-278.

of "Casena" (Katsina) and "Zegzeg" (Zazzau) whom Askia I "treacherously slew"¹ were lords of Kano², If this assertion by Leo Africanus is to be accepted, then the period of the tutelage must have been 904-914 A.H./1499-1509 A.D. during the rule of the 21st Sarki of Kano, Abdullahi son of Muhammadu Rumfa (1499-1509)³. This is so if we consider the period of Leo Africanus' report to be 16th century which also coincided with the rule of Askia I. But contrary to the information contained in Leo Africanus' account it was the ruler of Kano, *Sarki*:

Abdullahi (who conquered Katsina. He advanced as far as Katsina itself and encamped on the river near Tsagero. He remained four months at Tsagero and then went to Zuzuk (Zazzau) and made war there. After conquering the men of Zaria he went on to Kadauna and Kalam and made war on the inhabitants⁴.

Consistently, the statement indicated that it was Kano that conquered Katsina and Zazzau and not vice-versa. The conquest of Katsina by Kano, despite its apparent success, did not suggest permanency of Kano's domination particularly through the annual payment of tributes or otherwise. Even during the rule of Sarkin Kano, Mohammad Zaki (1582-1618) when Katsina was defeated in a major battle at Guraji, all that the Kano army did was to collect a lot of booty which consisted of about 400 horses, 60 horse armour and returned to Karaye⁵. Therefore, what appeared to Leo Africanus to be overlordship was rather an offensive tactic and a show of force which had been a continuous event with periods of relative peace often intervening for centuries between the two neighbours⁶.

As for Katsina, the attitudes displayed by its army after her victories on Kano during the reigns of Sarakunan (pI.) Kano, Abubakar Kado (1563-73), Mohamma Shashere (1573-82), Mohamma Zaki (1582-1618) and Kutumbi (1623-48)⁷ also serves to indicate a type of defensive and punitive expedition as well as threat, rather than wars of total subjection.

On the cultural plane, Leo Africanus reported about the inhabitants of Zazzau and their practice of heating beds with burning charcoal during the cold season⁸. This is a fact of great credibility because the custom is still maintained in Zazzau. In several parts of Kasar Zazzau it is still a practice that when a woman delivers her first baby, the bed on which she sleeps, is heated with charcoal in order to provide her with sufficient warmth for protection against cold ailments⁹. In this regard, a measure of continuity with the past could be seen to have been established with the present social practices. The geographical location of Zazzau in the more southerly parts of Hausaland with its relatively "cold" climate could have been a factor which influenced this social practice of heating beds.

IV. On Chad Area

In Chad Area, Leo Africanus reported the existence of a large kingdom called Borno which consisted of "mountainous and plain" regions inhabited by rich merchants, with the ruler and all his followers dwelling in a "certaine village"¹⁰. Apparently, there seems to be a mix-up in regarding Birni Ngazargamo as a large village, because by Leo Africanus' time it had emerged as a great Birni (city) on the confluence of Komadugu and Yobe rivers. The ruler who established it as the capital of Borno was Mai Ali Ghaji (1470-1503) in the 1470s. There is yet another problem in Leo Africanus' account on this area which is the attribution of "no religion" at all to its people¹¹. One wonders whether such claims of "no religion" was a confusion or an oversight on the part of Leo Africanus, given that he visited Borno. Or was it an informant's, translators' or copyist's error? Virtually all the available internal and external sources on the history of Borno are full of references on the significant role Islam played in the society and government of the kingdom. For instance, the Mahram of Umme Jilmi dated to 11th century informed us of an earlier acceptance of Islam by the Seifawa in Kanem, that is, before their movement to Borno. According to the *Mahram*, the:

¹ Leo, VII, p.830.

² *Ta'rikh Arbab*, p.112. Muhammad Rumfa during his rule had earlier clashes with Katsina.

³ *Ta'rikh Arbab*, p.112.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.112.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 116-117.

⁶ R.A. Adeleye, "Hausaland and Borno, 1600-1800" in Ajayi and Crowder (eds.), *op.cit.*, p.556. here Adeleye pointed out that these two States of Katsina and Kano had a long tradition of mutual conflict, growth and expansion to the extent that even by the 17 century, they were locked up in rivalry. Therefore, wars of such nature should not be misconstrued as vassalage of one State to another.

⁷ *Ta'rikh Arbab*, pp. 114-118.

⁸ Leo, VII, p.831.

⁹ This type of bed is called *gadon kasa* (lit. mud bed). Currently, it is in use in several parts of Zazzau, particularly in the villages and in the traditional city.

¹⁰ Leo, VII, pp. 832-833.

¹¹ See. Y.B. Usman and Nur Alkali (eds.) *Studies in the History of Pre-Colonial Borno, Zaria: Northern Nigerian Publishing Company Ltd., 1983, pp.59 and 75.*

... first country in the Sudan which Islam entered was the land of Bornu. It came through Muhammad ibn. Mani, who lived in Bornu ... fourteen years in the time of King Umme ... Mai Umme read secretly from the Surah al-baqara to Wa'l-nas.¹

Ibn Said (123-1286/7), an Arab Geographer, in his book *Kitab al-Jughrafiya* ("The Book of Geography") mentioned that the ruler of Kanem whose ancestor was Sayf b. Dhi Yazan lived in the capital of Jimi (Njimi). He was renowned for the Jihad he carried out and was charitable, to the poor. Manan was the earlier capital in which the ruler's pagan ancestors² lived and it was:

His great-great-great grandfather (jaddugu al-rabi) (who) was converted to Islam by a scholar and then Islam spread through the rest of the land of Kanim³.

Also al-Umari (1301-1349) informed us that Islam was long established among Kanem rulers while in Kanem. According to him, the first man:

... to establish Islam there was Hadi al-Uthmani who claimed descent from 'Uthman b. Affan. It passed after him to the Yazanis, the descendants of Dhu Yazan⁴.

The above sources have shown us that Islam had long been in Kanem, not to speak of its existence in Leo Africanus' Borno which was a later foundation. It may be inferred that the people whom Leo Africanus referred to as professing no religion were none other than the populations living on the Mandara mountains of southern Kanem-Bornu and its foothills, and the region south of Lake Chad. Finally, Leo Africanus reported that the kingdom of Borno was faced with the hostility of Seu (So) people⁵. The information indicated the continuous struggle between the Seifawa rulers and the So on the one hand, and the Bulala⁶ on the other. This was one of the reasons which led to the migration of the Seifawa rulers from Kanem to Borno in the 1430s and 1440s. Even when the Seifawa were in Borno the struggle continued until it was finally brought to an end by Mai Idris Alooma in the 1580s.

V. Conclusion

Doubts have been cast by several historians in relation to Leo Africanus' visits to the regions south of the Sahara which he claimed to have visited. It is possible he visited some of the places he wrote about but not all. Comparing his accounts with some sources internal to the area, such as the *Ta'rikh Arbab*, *Mahrams* of Borno rulers even makes one to doubt it the more. However, we should not think that all parts of his accounts are devoid of objectivity. Leo Africanus' evidence is valuable in so far as certain parts of Nigeria are concerned. He referred for instance, to mud beds heated during the cold season by live charcoals placed under them in Zazzau area. This practice still prevails in the present day Zazzau and even other parts of Hausaland. Such sources, therefore, contained a combination of (a) factual and (b) non-factual information, and the ratio between (a) and (b) changed from author to author, and even within the works of same author from book to book. Even within the same book the ratio tended to change from section to section. It is all this that makes our task, the critical interpretation of the evidence provided so difficult yet so necessary and indispensable.

¹ Hodgkin, *op.cit.*, p.89.

² Ibn Said, *Kitab al Jughrafiya* ("The Book of Geography") in J.F.P. Hopkins and N. Levtzion (trans. & ed.), *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources for West African History*, Cambridge University Press, 1981, p.188., I.

³ Hopkins and Levtzion (trans. And ed.), *Ibid.*, p.188.

⁴ Al-Umari, *Masalik al-Absar fi Mamalik al-Amsar* ("Pathways of Vision in the Realms of the Metropolises") in Hopkins and Levtzion (trans. & ed.), *Ibid.*, p.261.

⁵ Leo, VII, p.833. The So, according to the Kanuri *Girgam* were a Sudanese people (non-Kanuri) who lived in the lower Shari of the Chad region for several years and built many towns. They were very strong and associated with elephant hunting in the traditions. The So could be compared to the giants of Hausaland mentioned in the various legends of the area. For example, Bagauda and Barbushe in Kano, Buga and Katsi in Katsina, Kufena and Madar in Zazzau and many others who also were said to be hunters of elephants. For more detail about the So, see Palmer (trans), *Sudanese Memoirs*, Vol.II, pp.64-68. Also it was reported that four Mais of the Seifawa were all killed by the So in succession during their conflicts while in Kanem area. See article by A. Smith, "The Early States of the Central Sudan" in Ajayi and Crowder (ed.) *op.cit.*, pp. 173-174. For a more recent work on the So, see the archaeological report by G.E. Connah, *Second Interim Report of the Northern History Research Scheme*, ABU. Zaria, 1967.

⁶ The Bulala according to the *Girgam* were related to the Seifawa and lived together as neighbours in Kanem region. The *Girgam* mentioned of several intermarriages between the two even at the royal level, See Palmer (trans.), *Sudanese Memoirs*, Vol. II, pp.29-53 (for detail discussion on the origin of the Bulala, relations with Seifawa, reasons for the wars, etc.) Also the Chronicle of Mai Idris Alooma's wars is filled up with conflicts with the Bulala, see A. Ibn Fartuwa, *Ta'rikh Mai Idris Wa Ghazawatih*, Kano, 1932 in Palmer (trans.) "The Kanem Wars" *op.cit.*, pp. 15-76; Smith, "The Early States of the Central Sudan", *op.cit.*, pp. 171-176.