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Origin of the Berber Tribal Confederation of Ṣanhādja

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“They are nomads who roamed the desert”.
al-Bakrī (11th century AD)
[Al-Bakrī 1859: 149]

Abstract. The paper presents an analysis of the sources on the medieval history of the Maghrib in an attempt to identify the origin of the Berber tribal confederation of Ṣanhādja. The directions of research include the analysis of territories presumably occupied by the branches of this tribal confederation, in addition to the migration routes of the Yemeni region, central Sahara and the Maghreb; history of the Berbers mainly based on the texts of Ibn Khaldūn and his description and the genealogical tree of the Berber tribes and families. Furthermore, to recreate a more complete picture of the mixture of peoples we should take into account the Arab and the Vandals demographic contribution. Yemenis have played its role in the Maghreb, but the real Arabization took place not earlier than in 11th century, so the question is in the earlier relationships between Arab tribes. On the other hand, there is a demographic contribution that is systematically underestimated in the Maghrib, i.e. that of the slaves of sub-Saharan origin that supposedly had a much greater impact.

Various social and political conditions in the Middle East and North Africa as well as the evolution of Islamic written tradition in Arabic during the early medieval period account for the multiplicity and heterogeneity of data on the Berbers in Arab historical works. Thus, an accurate and consistent study of all the available sources is highly desirable. Correlation of medieval and modern regions, different spelling of toponyms and tribal names proper to authors of that period, different approaches to the perception of historical process, not to speak about a possibility of falsifications make it complicated to examine the issue. The difficulty also lies in the fact that some sources provide contradictory information that makes us doubt in their veracity. Therefore, the topic certainly deserves a detailed study.

Keywords: Berbers, North Africa, Ṣanhādja, Genealogy, Middle Ages, History

Introduction

The categories such as “the Berbers” and “the Arabs” are historical. Their origin, maintenance, and reproduction occur under particular circumstances. In the early Middle Ages, the Arabs began a process of “Arabization” of northwest Africa, its peoples, and their pasts. Although a number of travelers and historians mentioned and described Berber tribes and the process of migration of the Arabs there is still a question of formation of certain ethnic groups.

The Maghrib is believed to have been inhabited by the Berbers from at least 10000 B.C. [Ilahiane 2006: 112; Briggs 1995: 136]. However, they owned their lands for many centuries before the Arab conquest of northwest Africa, which was a major event in the history of the region. Taking into account the complicated and multifaceted process of migration of a number of ethnic groups on the territories of the Arabian Peninsula, North and Central Africa, there intermixture and mutual relations, followed by the growing cultural influence of the Arabs on a non-Arab area, it is beyond doubt that the problem of the origin of some Berber tribes proved to be uneasy.

According to medieval historians, the Berbers were split into two branches – Bort and Barnes – divided in their turn into tribes and sub-tribes [Baron de Slane 1852: 276–280; Briggs 1960: 143; Hachid 2001: 16–23]. The descendants of the children of Barnes (Barnos / Barrnass) [As to the transliteration of Arabic names, the standard system of it is used, except the underlining of the characters *dj*, *th*, *kh*, *dh*, *sh*, *gh*. As to Berber names, their approximate transcription is given] occupied almost all the northern part of Africa since the dawn of time. As to the littoral and especially the ports, they fell under the control of the Phoenicians, Dorians, Carthaginians, Romans, Vandals and Visigoths. These peoples were permanently forced to reckon with the kingdoms located inland [Grabmeier & Davis 2004: 28–31].

The Arab conquest, which was a terrestrial, non-maritime conquest, brought about hitherto unknown upheavals and changed the political situation that had previously marked the ethnic stability of the Berbers. The Arabs brought with them Islam with its branches (Shī‘ite, Khārījite) as well as its dynasties. The Berbers preferred to resist and fight for their independence. That process marked with victories of some Berber chiefs and defeats of the others led to the considerable mobility of tribal groups that

would overlap with each other geographically and ethnically.

In every country of northern Africa, the ethnic mosaic of the Berbers reminds them till now their origin from the common ancestor who, if were not Barnos, would be Amazigh, the eponymous forefather of all the Berbers, attested in Ibn Khaldūn’s work *Kitāb al-‘Ibar wa-dīwān al-mabtada’ wa’l-khabar...* He states in it that the Berbers were descendants of Barbar, son of Tamalla, son of Mazigh, son of Canaan, son of Ham, son of Noah [Baron de Slane 1852: 278]. In rejecting any genealogy that connected them to the Arabs, they preferred to be linked to Ham, son of Noah. Zenetes, the ancestor of Zanāta, was considered to be the son of Chana (Jana) b. Yaḥyā b. Solate b. Warsak b. Dhari b. Maqbo b. Qarwal b. Yamla b. Madagiz b. Zajik b. Hamarhaq b. Krad (Grad) b. Mazigh b. Harik b. Barra b. Barbar b. Kan‘ān (Canaan) b. Ḥām (Ham). The patriarch of Zenata claims, meanwhile, that according to Ibn Khaldūn they take their origin directly from Barnos.

Ṣanhāja: Tribal division and ancestors

According to Islamic historical tradition Barrnass (Barnas, Barnos, Barrnos, Barnos) the eponymous ancestor of the Branès, had seven or ten children: Esdaj, Masmod, Awrab, Ujjis, Ktam, Ṣinhāj (Senag) whose descendants were Ṣanhādja, Awrigh, Lamt, Haskor, Kzul (Gzul). The descendants of these three brothers, Ṣanhādja, Lamtāna or Lant, and Awrigh, became very numerous and powerful. They made themselves masters of the other Berber tribes and drove them into the deserts bordering on the Atlantic, where they still remain dispersed through different regions.

The branches of the tribes taking their origin from them had played important historical roles and marked the past of Africa and the Mediterranean in general. One of the most important branches along with Masmoda of Morocco, Kutāma, extended from Central Rīf to Numidia, Haskore (Darn Mountains, Atlas and Eastern Rīf), Hawwāra (extended from Morocco to Tripolitania and the Sahel-Sudanese region) is Ṣanhādja. This tribe stretched from the Atlas Mountains to the Senegal River whose name derives from an alteration of Senag, son of Barnos.

In its turn the Ṣanhādja tribe has nine subtribes, viz. Talkata (the tribe that gave the world Zīrī ibn Menad, ancestor of the dynasties Zīrids and Ḥammādids that reigned in the central Maghrib and Ifrīqiya) [Meynier 2010: 43], Anifa, Charta, Mandala, banū Warit,

banū Yaltissine, Gaddala (occupying the south-western part of the Sahara in northern Senegal), Lamtouna, Massoufa [Camps Branes // Berber Encyclopedia Online]. The last three tribes gave birth to the dynasty of Almoravides [Camps Gudāla / Guezula // Berber Encyclopedia Online].

According to Émile Janier, Ṣanhādja are divided into two branches: sedentary, living in Kabylia, the mountains of Tell and nomads, represented by Litham inhabiting the Sahara [Janier 2017: 245]. This point of view is supported by Arab authors. They confirmed that the central Sahara had been inhabited by a branch of the Ṣanhādja, who are the ancestors of the Tuaregs. Moreover, the trade caravans that went from the northern Sahara, in particular of Ouargla and Nafūsa Mountains were protected by folding and rolling [Nantet 2013: 62].

Ṣanhādja: Territories

The Berbers are perhaps descendants of the ancient Numidians, whose country they now occupy. Their different tribes are scattered over the whole North Africa intervening between the shores of the Atlantic and the confines of Egypt. Our accounts of this people are based on the works of Leo Africanus and Arab Islamic authors. Al-Idrīsī, who wrote in the middle of the 12th century AD, gave a wide description of the Berber tribes and the territories they occupied. *“Their original country was Palestine and their king was Goliath (Djālūt), son of ʿḌarīs, son of Djānā, who was the ancestor of Zanāta of the west, and Djānā was the son of Liwā’, son of Barr, son of Qays, son of Ilyās, son of Muḍar. When David (Dā’ūd), the Peace be upon him, slew Goliath the Berber, the Berbers migrated westward, till they reached the extreme limits of the Maghrib. Then they split up there (into tribes); as to Mazāta, Mughīla and ʿḌarīsa, they settled in the mountains; as to Lawāta, they settled in the land of Cyrenaica (Barqa), and a group of Hawwāra settled in the mountains of Nafūsa; the rest of them settled in the land of the Extreme Maghrib and the tribes of Maṣmūda with them; then they (together) civilized that country. And the Berber tribes are the following: Zanāta, ʿḌarīsa, Mughīla, Muqaddar, Banū ‘Abd Rabbi-hi, Warafdjūm, Nafza, Nafzāwa, Maṣmāta, Lamta, Ṣanhādja, Hawwāra, Kutāma, Lawāta, Mazāta, Ṣadrāta, Yaṣlāsan, Madyūna, Zabūdja, Madāsa, Qālīma, Ūrba, Haṭṭa, Walīta, Banū Manhūs, Banū Samdjūn, Banū Wārqlān, Banū Yasdarān, Banū Ziridjī, Wardāsā, Warhūn and the other Berber tribes from those whom we*

shall mention, through the power of Allah, in connection with cultivated parts of their land” [Al-Idrīsī 1972: 222].

He then traced the origin of the Ṣanhādja and Lamta tribes to their common male ancestor Lamṭ, son of Za‘zā’, who was from the children (*min awlād*) of Ḥimyar, and thus attributed to both of them the South Arabian roots. The similar origin is also ascribed to the “brother” of Ṣanhādja and Lamṭ by maternal line, Hawwār, whose forefather was al-Muṣawwir, son of al-Muthannā, son of Kalā’, son of Ayman, son of Sa‘īd, son of Ḥimyar. According to a legend, his and his tribe’s abode was in Hejaz, but they left it in search of lost camels, so that crossed the Nile and reached the Maghrib, where al-Muṣawwir married Tāzikāy, the mother of Ṣanhādja and Lamṭ [Al-Idrīsī 1972: 223].

It is very significant that the idea on the South Arabian origin of the main Berber tribes is also attested in the medieval Yemenite genealogical tradition, viz. in the 2nd volume of the real *encyclopedia* of Ḥimyarite antiquities compiled by the greatest polymath of Muslim Yemen al-Ḥasan al-Hamdānī (d. c. in the 3rd quarter of the 10th century AD) under the title *Kitāb al-Iklīl* “the Book of the Diadem”. He wrote on that matter: “As to Murra b. ‘Abd Shams, he gave birth, as they said, and God knows best, to Kutāma, ‘Uhāma, Ṣanhādja, Lawāta and Zunayt (and he was Zunāta); and they are the chiefs of the Berbers (*ru’asā’ al-Barbar*). They migrated with their lord Kanī’ [this is an Arab rendering of Canaan of the Biblical tradition] b. Yazīd, when Ifrīqīs expelled him to Ifrīqiya and the misfortune was diverted from it” [Al-Hamdānī 1966: 101]. Another version of Ṣanhādja’s genealogy is provided by Nashwān b. Sa‘īd al-Ḥimyarī (d. AH 573 = AD 1177–1178), a worthy scholarly successor of al-Hamdānī. According to it Ṣanādja (= Ṣanhādja) was one of the sons of ‘Arīb b. Zuhayr b. Ayman b. al-Hamaysa’ b. Ḥimyar (cf.: [Al-Ḥimyarī 1378: 36-37, n. 1; Caskel 1966: 274]). It is well-known that the so-called South Arabian genealogies are artificially constructed under the influence of Arab Bedouin culture on the eve of Islam or even after its triumph. As to Ṣanhādja, this ethnonym proved to be connected with Yemen for many centuries after the beginning of the Muslim era. One of the villages of Inland Ḥaḍramawt, albeit abandoned, is still known as the site of al-Ṣanāhidja and the Soviet-Yemenite multidisciplinary expedition in the mid-eighties made an archaeological survey

of its medieval necropolis. Thus, the question arises, why some huge tribal confederations of the Berbers decided to attach themselves to the real Himyarite genealogical tradition.

It seems that such an amalgamation would take place not in North Africa, but in Muslim Spain, where the Berbers torn from their roots were in need of alliances with the Arabs. Therefore, they could be involved in the Qaḥṭānite – ‘Adnānite confrontation [Пиотровский 1977: 10–16. It should be stressed that although according to this scholar the Qaḥṭānite alliance was brought already formed from the East, it is not excluded that it could be replenished with new members in a new area] and obtained some genealogies of South Arabian tribes in exchange for the support given to them. But this problem deserves further examination.

A more detailed account on the Berbers is given by Leo Africanus, who lived three centuries later than al-Idrīsī, and was himself, as far as we know, of Berber origin. Africa was divided by him into four parts: Barbary, Numidia, Libya, and Nigritia, which corresponded to al-Barbariyya, Bilād al-Djarīd, al-Ṣaḥrā’ and Bilād al-Sūdān of the Arabs. Then he added that the real origin of the white inhabitants of Africa remained uncertain and transmitted some traditions like al-Idrīsī did. According to them, an idea of mixed and Asiatic origin was long prevailing among these tribes and as a result they became convinced that their language and habits were corroborated. The principal Berber tribes were five: Ṣanhādja, Maṣmūda, Zanāta, Hawwāra and Gumāra. The Zanātians, Hawwārians and Ṣanhādjians, he said, were, for the most part, concentrated in the country around Tamisna (Temesne), and, we may add, spread throughout the whole North Africa, for all the oases in the Desert are peopled by the Berbers [Leo Africanus 1896: 18].

According to Leo Africanus, the Zanaga are Numidians [Leo Africanus 1896: 19]. He reckoned them among the inhabitants of Barbary and Bilād al-Djarīd, and afterwards said that al-Ṣaḥrā’, or the Desert, was divided into five portions, occupied by five different tribes, viz. the Zanaga (Ṣanhādja), Guanziga (Wansikah), Terga (Tarkah), Klemta (Lamṭa) and Berdewa (Berdawah). Of these tribes the Ṣanhādja, or Zanhagahs, are doubtless that widely extended branch of the Berbers, which reached the banks of the Senegal, and gave its name to that river. The part of the Desert

inhabited by the Ṣanhādja tribe in the time of Leo extended from the Atlantic to the salt pits of Teghaza, and was bounded on the north by Sūs, Hahah and Darah, the provinces of Morocco, on the south by Negro kingdoms of Walatah and Tombouctou. From the springs of Aswad, i.e. the Black, dreary waste, to those of Arwan, located at the distance of 150 miles from that city, there was no water for upwards of 200 miles [Leo Africanus 1896: 10].

However, his description of Numidia does not correspond to Roman Numidia. It rather evokes a strip of land north of the Desert (cf.: [Strabo XVII: 3, 19]). It is possible that the name of the Gétules was preserved in that of the tribe Ṣanhādja.

The Gétules are mentioned under this name in North Africa in ancient times, in a large area south of the Roman provinces of Africa and Mauretania. The Greek historian Strabo considered them as the most numerous people of North Africa, but also as the least known [Jolly Maps: 14–23]. According to Strabo they were southern neighbors of the Garamantes. It is assumed that the Gétules adopted the horse through the Egyptians, who themselves received it from the peoples of Central Asia. Unlike the Capsians who had known a Sahara of savannahs, lakes and rivers, the Gétules lived mostly along the southern slopes of the Atlas Mountains, relatively untouched by the gradual desertification of the Sahara [Strabo XVII: 3, 19].

Be that as it may, the Gétules developed an effective cavalry, and thus controlled two trans-Saharan roads. One part of Chella, the current Salé in Morocco, and the other one of Madaure (current Mdaourouch): both lead to the Niger river. According to researcher Émile Felix Gautier ancestors of Zenetes current penetrate the Maghreb to the 5th century AD, during the late antiquity, and Gabriel Camps think that they are substituted for Gétulians [Camps 1980: 128]: thus, he distinguishes Gétulians, Numidians and Moors.

Ancestors of the Tuaregs as well settled, probably in the western part of the Libyan desert in the triangle of Sebha-Ghadames-Gat and early enough began to pave the way through the Sahara in the southern and south-western directions. With these tribes, including the northern Tuareg (Ahaggar, etc.), it is tempting to relate Garamantes, localized in this region by Herodotus (the 5th century BC). Moreover, it is confirmed by the reconstruction of the ethnic situation in North Africa in the II – beginning

of the I millennium BC of Yuri Poplinsky, who also discussed the hypothesis about the connection of Garamantes and Tuaregs [Поплинский 1978: 89-95, 149-155]. It is also worth mentioning the tribe Hawwāra, which lived in Fezzan, according to Ibn Khaldūn, the name “ahaggar” — an ethnonym meaning “noble Tuareg” [Prasse 1970: 48]; The same name, however, is worn by one of the Shilkh tribes of Morocco, relative to the Zenetes. And it's worth mentioning that Ṣanhādja are considered to be the ancestors of the Tuaregs.

But according to Rachid Bellil [Bellil 1999], the researchers of the colonial period in Algeria did not approach the Zenetes and they did not perceive the linguistic dimension of the Zenetian people, who, according to Ibn Khaldūn and contemporary Algerian historiography, have not “replaced”, but “belong to” the oldest Berber tribes designated by the Romans as “Gétules”.

The historian Ernest Mercier designates as “Gétules” the two Berber confederations Zenetes and Ṣanhādja [Mercier 1830: 44], as well as the Houaras, the Goumara and the Masmoudas [Mercier 1830: 182].

Ṣanhādja: History

If we speak about the name of this tribal confederation, it had different variations. In the texts it is also attested as Aznag, Iznagen, Ifnayan, Znaga, Zenaga, Sanaga, Senaja, Senhaji, Sanhaja, Čanhaja [Sanhaja spelling is adopted in: Julien 1994]. The deformation of the name Iznagen in Isenhadjen comes from Arabic authors of the Middle Ages. In Mauritania, the language of the Iznagen is the Zenaga, which retreats today under pressure of Hassanya (al-Ḥassāniyya).

At the end of Antiquity, the Ṣanhādja founded the city of Aoudaghost [Browne 1799: 183; McDougall 1985: 1–31]. From the 9th century AD, the Ṣanhādjan branches of the Western Sahara passed through the phase of Islamization: Lemtuna of Adrar in Mauritania, Gadala and Messoufa nomads between the Upper Niger and the Senegal became those who controlled the trans-Saharan trade. From time to time they compete with pagan kingdoms of the Sahel [Meynier 2010: 76]. But this equilibrium remains fragile. In AD 990 the kingdom of Ghana seized Aoudaghost. At the beginning of 11th century AD a new confederation came into being [Meynier 2010: 76]. The Saharan Ṣanhādja were nomadic with the predominance of a matrilineal organization of kinship unlike other Berber societies. Men

wore the face veil, the *lithām*, hence their name “the veiled” [Meynier 2010: 76].

In the central Maghrib, as Ibn Khaldūn said, the territory of Ṣanhādja extended the area of Miliana until Metidja, and Achir in Titteri to the south of Bejaia [Bellil Kabylia // Berber Encyclopedia Online]. Ṣanhādja tribes are sedentary farmers to the north of the Atlas Blida and nomadic or semi-nomadic in the south, between Ouarsenis the Titteri and Southern Bibans. The country of the Ṣanhādja gave abode to several important cities, including M'Sila, Algiers, Medea, Achir and Miliana.

In AD 971, Bologhin ibn Zīrī, the head of Ṣanhādja living between M'Sila and Algiers [Algeria: History... 2000: 19] was appointed governor of the central Maghrib by the Fatimids in gratitude for the role, which his father Zīrī b. Menad, ancestor of the Zīrid dynasty, played during the Khāridjite revolt of Abū Yazīd and expeditions against the Zenetes in Oran [Meynier 2010: 43]. Bologhin built his capital Achir and several cities in the central Maghrib: Algiers, Miliana and Medea [Algeria: History... 2000: 19]. When the Zīrids became emirs, they settled in Ifrīqiya. One of the Bologhin sons, Ḥammād b. Bologhin founded in AD 1015 the Ḥammādid dynasty that ruled the central Maghrib: their new capital was installed in the Kalāa des Béni Hammad built in AD 1007 and since AD 1090 in Béjaia [Algeria: History... 2000: 20].

Another dynasty of Ṣanhādja origin, *viz.* the Almoravids, was ruling in the course of the 11th – 12th century AD in the west of the Maghrib and in al-Andalus. The Almoravid dynasty was originally a religious movement initiated in Ṣanhādja Saharan Godala by a local leader, Yaḥya b. Ibrāhīm as well as by a preacher ‘Abdallāh b. Yāsīn who met the former on return to Mecca [Camps Gudāla / Guezula // Berber Encyclopedia Online].

These two dynasties ruled the Maghrib and al-Andalus until they were defeated by the Almohads in AD 1152.

In the 14th century AD, the arrival of the Banū Ḥassān provoked the decline of Iznaguen tribes. The dominance of the Ḥassāniyya over the Zenaga is endorsed by the defeat of the latter at the end of the war of Char Bouba [Dauré-Serfaty 1993: 50].

Language

One of the decisive arguments in favor of the Arab origin of several tribes of Ṣanhādja is their language. It remains, indeed, one of the closest to Standard Arabic in the Middle East

and North Africa, if some regional influences, which it underwent during centuries, were taken into consideration. The Arabic of the Ṣanhādja of the north is, in view of the above-mentioned transformations, a Moroccan dialect with Moroccan consonantism.

The Ṣanhādja language has today several variations, among which the principals are:

- the Zenaga;
- the Kabyle;
- the Ṣanhādja of Srair spoken in the southwest of the Rīf;
- the Chleuh.

In Mauritania, Zenegas constitute a Berber-speaking ethnic minority [Breton 2012: 35] speaking Zenaga. There are today from 2000 to 25,000 speakers of the Zenaga [Language Sheet (code “zen”); the linguistic database Ethnologist]. They are mainly located in the south of Mauritania and in Senegal. However, Beidanes speaking the Ḥassāniyya, are originated from a mixture of Arab and Berber tribes of Ṣanhādja [Imād al-Mighrī 2006: 263].

The Ṣanhādjī is a Berber dialect spoken by the Ṣanhādja of Srair, an ethnic group of the region of Rīf in Morocco. It is closer to the dialects of Atlas [Colin 1936: 598], although it is influenced by the neighboring Rīfish speaking people.

The Ṣanhādjī experienced a strong internal dialectal variation: the talk of Kutāma is considered to be distinct from other tribal dialects [Lafkioui 2007: 219–28] and is only spoken in four villages: Ait Ahmed, Ait Aissa, Makhzen and Asmmar.

It is true that their accent is close to that which is heard among the Eastern Arabs (Syrian-Lebanese dialect) unlike, for instance, Darija of Oujda or Casablanca, which is rawer to the ear. But it contains a lot of words that are not easy to be understood at once; however, if we examine their pronunciation, it becomes obvious that they exist in the Arabic vocabulary. A special attention should be paid on the pronunciation of the *qāf* as the *alif*, and of the *djīm* as *g* in *gless* (*idjlis* “sit down”), *lgūz* (*al-djūz* “nuts”); *ngass* (*idjjāss* “pear”), etc.

There are more words of Arab origin that we could imagine. For example, the snake is called *afighār* in Berber, and the Arabs yesteryears said, when the snake opened its mouth, *faghara-th-thu bānu fā-hu* and therefore called it *al-fāghir*... As the Arab was strongly Berberized in the Rīf, the Berber, on the contrary, became clearly Arabized in the Jbalas.

Ṣanhādja of Srair. Can they be an exception?

The Ṣanhādja of Srair constitute an ethnic group and a tribal confederation of Northern Morocco, established in the Central Rīf. It includes ten tribes of Ṣanhādjan origin.

One of the most numerous tribes of this confederation was the Kutāma. This tribe occupied mainly the region of the Babors in Little Kabilie [Ibn Khaldūn 1925: 218–21; Kitouni 2013: 48]. The Kutāma played an important role during the medieval period (AD 909–1171) in the center of North Africa.

The tribe of Kutāma is divided into two branches: Gherssen and Yassuda. From these two branches descended all the Kutāma. Ibn Khaldūn and Ibn Ḥazm denied this origin and did not consider them as a Berber tribe like other tribes of that confederation [Laporte 2005: 4179–87].

The descendants of the Kutāma tribe are today the inhabitants of several regions of eastern Algeria that correspond to the current *wilāyāt* of Skikda, Jijel, Mila and Béjaïa, and are installed also in Constantine, Sétif and Annaba, even in Egypt.

The descendants of Kutāma were for the most part Arabized [Ibn Khaldoun 1925: 573] (Jijel, Collo, North Mila and Setif), others succeeded in preserving their Berber language [Field works of Salem Chaker of L'Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales (INALCO), Paris], as in Bejaïa, in the northwest of Setif in Issaguen and to a lesser extent among the Siwis in Egypt, whose speech is Arabized by 60%.

The other tribes of the Ṣanhādja of Srair are Ait Seddat, Taghzout, Ait Khennous, Ait Bounsar, Ait Ahmed, Ait Bouchibet, Ait Bchir, Zarget, Ait Mezdouy. Among the tribes constituting the confederation of the Ṣanhādja of Srair, that of Kutāma is predominantly Arabic-speaking and that of Ait Seddat is totally Arabic-speaking.

The Ṣanhādja of Srair is considered by the UNESCO to be in a “critical situation” [UNESCO Atlas ...; Senhaja Berber].

Did Ṣanhādja come from Arabia?

There is a point of view, that the Ṣanhādja, at least the Ṣanhādja of the North, *i.e.* Ṣanhādja Shems, Dhal, Ghaddou and probably the Ṣanhādja of Srair were Arabs. Among the Ṣanhādja Shems it has always been reported by elders that their origin was from “Bilād Shām”, from Iraq, and even from the region of Medina. If we accept that the Ṣanhādja are Arabs, they

would come from South Arabia, in other words from Yemen.

It should be emphasized that Ibn Khaldūn himself insisted on the Arab origin of the Ṣanhādja.

In the *Kitāb al-ʿIbar* Ibn Khaldūn claimed the authenticity of the Arab filiation of the Kutāma and Ṣanhādja [Lafkioui 2008: 71–88; Ibn Khaldūn 1925: 167–70]. Moreover, Ibn al-Kalbī (AH 204 / AD 819), famous early Islamic historian and genealogist, reported that “the tribes of Kutama and Sanhaja do not belong to the Berber race: they are branches of the population Yemeni, whom Ibn Ṣaifī established in Ifrīqiya with the troops he left to keep the country” [Lafkioui 2008: 71–88; Ibn Khaldūn 1925: 167–70].

According to Ibn Khaldūn, “...the real fact is that exempt us from any event ... All Arab genealogists agree to look at the various Berber tribes which I have mentioned the names, as actually belonging to this race, there are only the Sanhadja and the Kutama, the origin of which is a matter of controversy for them, and according to the generally accepted opinion, these two tribes were among the Yemenis whom the Africans established in Ifrīqiya when he had invaded that country. Accept no other opinion than ours: it is the only one that is true and from which one cannot depart...” [Lafkioui 2008: 71–88; Ibn Khaldūn 1925: 167–70]

From the point of view of physical anthropology, although it seems of great importance, it is not easy to assert that individuals with fair skin and blue eyes are necessarily the result of a presence — or rather passage — of any people from northern Europe. European pseudo-scientists tried for long to convince that the Berbers have Nordic or Gallic origins to justify the presence of “blue-eyed blondes” in the region. But Gabriel Camps, succeeded in demonstrating that the people of such a physical appearance “always existed” at this area [Camps 1974: 173].

Moreover, this physical anthropological type is widely represented in the Middle East (Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan, Syria and Iraq). To go further, not all Saudis are “dark”, although that is their dominating feature. For instance, a prince of the Saudi dynasty, viz. Yazīd bin ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Āl Saʿūd, has light hair and blue eyes, albeit his parents are both Arabs. As to the Maghrib, the late King Ḥasan II also had no dark complexion, while he took his origin from Yanbūʿ al-Baḥr in Hejaz, where his own mother died and was buried.

The following sketch of the late medieval history of Ṣanhādja should be taken into account: “After their defeat against the Almohads, they scattered everywhere. The Sanhaja Lemtouna, very learned tribes, then migrated to the North of Morocco at the Jbalas (Sanhaja Chems or Mesbah, Sanhaja Dahl and Sanhaja ghaddou) and have become Arabized in majority except Sanhaja of Srair, Beni Ouariaguel, Bni Bouchibet, Beni Mazgalda, ... who still speak Berber. Part of Sanhaja also migrated to Adrar in Mauritania and the Massoufas with some of the Lemtouna remained in the present Sahara of Morocco with the Hassanya Arab tribe against whom they fought a war in the 17th century. It was the Hassanya who won this war, which allowed them to Arabize the Sanhaja of the Sahara” [The Sahara of the Sanhaja; article].

In this citation it is clearly stated that the “Sanhaja Lemtouna” would have “Arabized” by settling in the “Sanhaja Chems”. It can be deduced that the Ṣanhādja Shams were Arabs, when the Lemtouna came to install “at home”. The expression “at home” is quite remarkable and not senseless. Indeed, this does not mean that the Lemtouna have “mixed” with Shams, because it must be borne in mind that land occupation is always an important issue. It is highly unlikely that the Ṣanhādja Shams agreed to “give away” land, at least for free, to the Lemtouna.

The hypothesis on the Arab origin of Ṣanhādja remains doubtful, in my opinion; there may be branches of them that were Arabized by the Yemenites who established themselves by mingling with their tribes, like that of Ṣanhādja Shams. However, we cannot deny Yemenite origin of some branches and their obvious links in lexica and toponyms.

The Arabs descended from Sem, the Ṣanhādja from Mazigh

It is obvious that neither Sem, nor Mazigh have ever existed. The people inhabited the Maghrib from the Paleolithic, long before the ancestor of the Berber language was disseminated from a Neolithic nucleus in southern Tunisia (Capsiens). As for the Arabs, their cradle was the Arabian Peninsula, especially its most deserted parts inhabited by Bedouins, where in the 1st millennium BC the Old Arabic separated from the other North Arabian languages.

It should be stressed that according to the genetic tests carried out among North African populations, the haplogroup E1b1b1b [Haplogroup is a large group of haplotypes,

which are sets of alleles located at specific sites in a chromosome. The classification of human haplogroups based on genetic markers rapidly evolved, while new markers were found regularly], which is scientifically the marker of the Berber genome, proves to be predominant in spite of multiple waves of occupations of the region. This implies that the Berber populations have mixed little with the invaders (the Romans, the Greeks, the Arabs, etc.) and the Maghribī people are mainly of Berber origin.

It is worth of noting, how Gabriel Camps supported Ibn Khaldūn's conception of Berber origin: *"Ibn Khaldun himself takes a firm stand in favor of what he calls the real fact, a fact that dispenses with any hypothesis ...: the Berbers are the children of Canaan son of Ham, son of Noah, as we have already stated in dealing with the great divisions of the human species. Their grandfather was named Mazigh; their brothers were Gergéséens (Agrikech); the Philistines, sons of Casluhim, son of Misrair, son of Ham, were their parents. The king, at home, bore the title of Goliath (Djalout). In Syria, between the Philistines and the Israelites, there were wars brought back by history, during which the descendants of Canaan and the Gergeseans supported the Philistines against the children of Israel. This last circumstance will probably have misled the person who represented Goliath as Berber, while he was one of the Philistines, relatives of the Berbers. We must admit no other opinion than ours; it is the only that is true, and which one cannot deviate"* [Camps 1974: 173–5].

This researcher did not ignore Berber claims to Himyarite ancestry: *"On the other hand, Berber genealogists claim that many of their tribes, such as the Louata, are Arabs and descend from Himyer ..."* [Camps 1974: 176].

For some tribes, there is no real ambiguity since they are referred to as Berber-speaking by Ibn Khaldūn, but without any connection with the Rīfans. These tribes (Ṣanhādja, Mernissa, Ghomara) are obviously of Berber origin (see the genealogy of the Berbers of Ibn Khaldūn). For the other Jbalas tribes the doubt persists. The only way to know, if the other tribes are Rīfans, Berbers or Arabs, consists in a global genetic study with the aim of establishing which genetic polymorphism fits the Jbala populations. Such studies have already permitted, for instance, to prove that the Doukkala-abda and the Arabic speakers of southern Tunisia are of Berber origin and that the Tuaregs, who speak Berber,

are a mixed population of Berber and other ethnic groups. The laboratories that participated in these studies are: CNRS, Faculty of Sciences Sémalia of Marrakech, Chouaib Doukkali University of El Jadida, Faculty of Sciences of Oujda, Universitat de Barcelona, Pasteur Institute of Tunisia, University Hospital of Algiers, University of Geneva, University of Oxford, etc. [ANTROPObiologia, ANTROPOgenetika...].

The results of the above-mentioned study confirm an idea that all the Moroccans have a common ancestor, not only Berber, but Arab-Berber, and it is almost certain that if a gender study is going to be done to compare the different communities in Morocco, the Jbalas will have the highest percentage of the Gm allotypes of immunoglobulins, because of the European genetic influence that strongly affected the Moresques, while the populations of southern Morocco will have the lowest percentage (about 20%) because of their affinity with the sub-Saharan populations.

The Chorfas were in the distant past of Berber origin, since they belong, for the most part, to the Berber tribes (Zerhoun, Zanāta, Ṣanhādja), who rallied Mūlāy Idrīs (it should be recalled that Idrīs I arrived in Morocco accompanied only by his servant Rashīd).

The Arab demographic contribution does not matter as it gives: it must be of the same order as that of the Vandals. Yemenis have played its role in the Maghreb, but the real Arabization took place not earlier than in 11th century [Masoudi 1861–1877, t. III: 227], and earlier relationships between Arab tribes were of little significance there [Плютовский 1977: 16]. On the other hand, there is a demographic contribution that is systematically underestimated in the Maghrib, i.e. that of the slaves of sub-Saharan origin.

According to the latest genetic studies carried out throughout the Maghrib (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, etc.) the Maghribians would originate from various populations:

- Neolithic populations who fled the advance of the desert and would have taken refuge in the Atlas and its foothills;
- Nomadic populations, who took their origin from the Middle East or the Horn of Africa, invaded the Maghrib later (at the end of the Neolithic).

Among the latter there are those who would have brought with them the Berber language, the language of previous populations would have disappeared or could left a substratum in some current Berber dialects.

It is to be stressed that the Maghrib people are of Berber origin and to affirm that the demographic contribution of the Arabs during their various invasions (the Islamic invasion in the 8th century AD, the Hilālian invasion in the 11th century AD) had a weak impact on the populations of the Maghrib.

In short, from the document referred to above, we can divide the populations of the Maghrib, on basis of the distribution of alleles of the Y chromosome, in the following groups:

- Moroccans Arab whose patrilinear descent is Arab: 20%
- Moroccans Arab whose patrilinear descent is Berber: 72%
- Berberian trades whose patrilinear descent is Arab: 10%
- Berberian trades whose patrilinear descent is Berber: 85% moreover, for the Saharawis:
- patrilinear is Arab: 17.2%
- patrilinear is Berber: 82.7% for the Tunisians:
- patrilinear outgrowth is Arabic: 34.2%
- patrilinear ascendance is Berber: 55.2% for the Arab Algerians:
- patrilinear ascendance is Arab: 35%
- patrilinear ascendance is Berber: 65%.

Over the past decade, methods of genetic analysis, approaches to medical genetics and genomics have become much more understandable and accessible. It seems that soon we would become witnesses of the new striking historical discoveries that we closed due to the limited methods of nowadays science.

As a result

The Ṣanhādja were a large group of tribes (not a single one) of Berbers, historically linked with the Mašmūda, the Berbers of the West (of Morocco); the Ṣanhādja were Berbers of the Sahara, they occupied the entire large region from southern Morocco to Mauritania and from southern Morocco to Timbuctou. They are pure Berbers, although some of them pretended to an Arab origin, because it was tantamount to prestige. The migration of the Ṣanhādja began with the formation of the great empire of the Almoravids.

The Ṣanhādja of the Rīf, for example, are a part of the Ṣanhādja who fled the Almohads during the change of dynasty in the Maghrib and took refuge in the high mountains of the Rīf to protect themselves from Almohad attacks.

Today the vast majority of the Ṣanhādja are in Morocco, in the Rīf, the Middle Atlas

and the south-east of that country among the Chleuh, especially in the south-eastern *ksours* like Figuig.

A part of the Tuareg belongs to the Ṣanhādja too. Tin Hinan, the princess of Tafilalet in southern Morocco who is considered to be the mother of the Tuareg, was of Ṣanhādja origin. Finally, the tribes Zwaya, and Telamides of the Moroccan Sahara and Mauritania are of Ṣanhādja descent but were Arabized following the victory of the Banū Hassān (Arab) on the Ṣanhādja in what is called the *trab el bidhan* (southern Morocco, Tindouf and Mauritania). The great Rguibat tribe would be Ṣanhādja as well as the Teknas of southern Morocco.

There are also some groups of Ṣanhādja in northern Algeria among the Kabyle who are the descendants of the Zīrid and Hammādid dynasties. As soon as this fact is attested in medieval genealogical traditions both of Yemen and of Maghrib. Their roots are most probably can be traced back from the Qaḥṭānite–‘Adnānite conflict in early Muslim Spain, where the Berber majority was considerably influenced by the Arab élite.

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Происхождение конфедерации берберских племен *санхаджа* (Ṣanhādja)

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Аннотация. В статье представлен анализ источников средневековой истории Магриба в целях идентификации происхождения берберского племенного объединения *санхаджа*. Исследование включает в себя анализ территорий, предположительно занимаемых ветвями этой племенной конфедерации, в дополнение к миграционным путям йеменского региона, центральной Сахары и Магриба; историю берберов, в основном основанную на текстах Ибн Халдуна, его описании истории региона, генеалогического древа берберских племен и семей. Кроме того, чтобы воссоздать более полную картину смешения народов, мы должны учитывать демографический вклад арабов и народов европейского континента. Йеменцы сыграли свою роль в Магрибе, но настоящая арабизация произошла не ранее XI в., поэтому вопрос заключается в более ранних отношениях между арабскими племенами. С другой стороны, существует демографический вклад, который систематически недооценивается в Магрибе, рабов субсахарского происхождения, оказавших гораздо большее влияние, нежели принято считать.

Различные социальные и политические условия на Ближнем Востоке и в Северной Африке, а также эволюция исламской письменной традиции на арабском языке в раннем средневековье объясняют множественность и неоднородность данных о берберах в арабских исторических работах. Таким образом, крайне желательно точное и последовательное изучение всех доступных источников. Корреляция средневековых и современных регионов, различное правописание топонимов и племенных имен, описываемых авторами того периода, разные подходы к восприятию исторического процесса, не говоря о возможности фальсификаций, усложняют изучение проблемы. Трудность также заключается в том, что некоторые источники предоставляют противоречивую информацию, которая заставляет сомневаться в их правдивости. Поэтому тема, безусловно, заслуживает подробного изучения.

Ключевые слова: берберы, Северная Африка, Санхаджа (Ṣanhādja), генеалогия, средневековье, история