

IV

THE DERVISH ORDERS IN AFRICA

REV. CANON E. SELL, D. D., MADRAS

I PROPOSE in this paper to show the extent to which, during the last century, Islam has spread in various parts of Africa, and by what means it has been propagated. I shall then state its more recent growth, so far as I have been able to gather information on the subject. I do not deal with the question of Islam in Egypt. The chief agency in this propaganda has been a number of the Dervish Orders, to many of which lay brothers are attached.¹

The Kadiriya Order, founded in A. H. 561 (A. D. 1165), is widely dispersed, and about one hundred years ago small and scattered communities of it were to be found in the Western Sudan. Stirred up by a missionary spirit it became very active in its proselytizing work. Its methods have been peaceful. Speaking of the success of the Kadiriya Dervishes in parts of Algiers, the French Sudan and Senegal, two French writers say of the converts: "Their missionaries become their masters, spiritual and temporal, veritable princes and at the same time priests and warriors."² Chatelier says of them: "By the instruction which they give to their disciples, by the colonies

¹ A full account of the origin of all the important orders, ancient and modern, working in various parts of the Moslem world, will be found in my "Religious Orders of Islam." (S. P. C. K., Madras. Simpkin Marshall & Co., London.)

² Depont et Coppolani, "Les Confréries Religieuses Musulmanes," p. 311.