

# The History of Islam in Africa

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# Patterns of Islamization and Varieties of Religious Experience among Muslims of Africa

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**I**slam reached Africa through two gateways, from the east and the north. From both directions the carriers of Islam navigated across vast empty spaces, the waters of the Indian Ocean, and the desert sands of the Sahara. Both ocean and desert, which so often are considered barriers, could be crossed with appropriate means of transportation and navigational skills, and they were, in fact, excellent transmitters of religious and cultural influences. Densely populated lands, on the other hand, functioned as filters, their numerous layers slowing down the infiltration of religious and cultural influences.

From Egypt, Islamic influence extended in three directions, through the Red Sea to the eastern coastal areas, up the Nile valley to the Sudan, and across the western desert to the Maghrib. In the eleventh century, Arab nomads drove southward from Egypt to the Sudan and westward across North Africa. These nomads contributed to the Islamization and Arabization of the Sudan and North Africa. At the same time, Muslim seamen from Egypt and Arabia established commercial centers along the Red Sea and Africa's east coast.

By the twelfth century, the last indigenous Christians disappeared from North Africa, and by the fifteenth century the Christian Coptic population of Egypt itself was reduced to a minority of some 15 percent. The Christian Nubians, who resisted Muslim expansion for almost six centuries, steadily lost ground between the twelfth and the fourteenth centuries (chapter 5). It was only in the Horn of Africa that the power struggle between Islam and Christianity remained undecided. Ethiopia endured as a Christian state even after the number of Muslims had grown considerably; Muslims could not own land and were excluded from higher government offices.

On the East African coast, Islam faced the challenge of Christianity between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries. Religion was important in the struggle of Arab and Swahili Muslims. The struggle concluded with the withdrawal of the Portuguese from the coast north of Mozambique after 1698. However, Muslims lost to the Christians the control of the maritime trade in the Indian Ocean. Muslims had dominated this trade for more than seven centuries, though they had faced competition from Asian Hindus and Buddhists. The Saharan trade, on the other hand, remained completely at the hands of Muslims. Europeans interfered in the Saharan trade only indirectly after the fifteenth century, when they began diverting some of the gold to the coast.

Because Islam spread to West Africa from North Africa, Muslims there followed the Maliki school of law dominant in North Africa. On the other hand, in East Africa, where Islam came from the Arabian peninsula, Muslims followed the Shafi'i school of law that prevailed in Arabia. Both regions, however, were exposed to the influence of the Ibadiyya sect. Ibadi merchants opened up trade across the Sahara, and were among the first Muslims who reached western Sudan—as early as the eighth and ninth centuries. But whatever converts they had made were reconverted to Maliki Islam by the eleventh century. The Ibadiyya had been established in Eastern Arabia during the first centuries of Islam and became dominant in Zanzibar after the Omani conquest of this island in the eighteenth century. The Ibadis of Zanzibar maintained their distinct Arab identity, and did not engage in missionary work among Africans.

## The Progress of Islam in North and West Africa

Soon after they had defeated the Byzantine imperial forces in the middle of the seventh century, the Arabs gained control over coastal North Africa. But for some time, the Arabs failed to impose their authority over the Berber tribes of the interior. Successive revolts of the Berbers, that forced the Arabs to withdraw, were referred to as *ridda*, the same term used when Arab tribes deserted the young Muslim community after the death of the Prophet. In both cases, political submission and conversion to Islam were considered one and the same act. Similarly, when the Arabs consolidated their rule over the Berbers the text reads “after the *islam* of the Berbers had been made good” (*ba'da ma hasuna islam al-barbar*); the word *islam* here carried the two meanings of submission and conversion.

The next phase of the Berbers' resistance to Arab rule occurred within Islam, through adherence to heterodox sects, first the Ibadiyya and then the Ismailiyya. The Almoravids finally secured the victory of Sunni-Maliki Islam in the eleventh century. Under their Almohad successors, Islam in the Maghrib became imbued with the mysticism of the sufis, who became the principal agents of Islamization in North Africa after the twelfth century (chapter 1).

Berber-speaking nomads reached the southern Sahara and touched the Sahel in pre-Islamic times. They were well positioned to mediate Islamic influences between

the Maghrib and the Western Sudan (known to the Arabs as “*Bilad al-Sudan*”). As the Berber nomads occupied both shores of the Sahara, the dividing line between “white” and “black” Africa, to use French colonial terms, was where the desert meets the Sahel, and where Berber-speaking nomads interacted with the Sudanic sedentaries. Along this line they cooperated in creating the termini of the Saharan trade. Today, this dividing line cuts across the modern African states of the Sahel—namely, Senegal, Mali, Niger, Chad, and the Sudan. In all these states, except the Sudan, political power is with the black people of the south; it is also only in the Sudan that the dividing line is not only an ethnic but also a religious frontier.

As early as the eleventh century, Manding-speaking traders, ancestors of the Juula, traveled between the termini of the Saharan routes and the sources of the gold. They created a “commercial diaspora,” based on a shared religion as well as a collective language. A common legal system—the law of Islam (*shari’a*)—even if not strictly observed, contributed to mutual trust among merchants in the long-distance trade. Conversion to Islam became necessary for those who wished to join commercial networks. Though merchants opened routes and exposed isolated societies to external influences, they did not themselves engage in the propagation of Islam.

Conversion to Islam was the work of men of religion who communicated primarily with local rulers. The latter often became the first recipients of Islamic influence, an indication to the importance that states had in the process of Islamization. Thus, for some time Muslims lived under the hospitality of infidel kings, who generally were praised by Muslims for their benevolence toward the believers. This was the situation in eleventh-century Ghana as in nineteenth-century Asante. The process of Islamization advanced when Muslim clerics helped African kings to overcome severe droughts, as in the case of eleventh-century Malal, or to secure victory, as in fourteenth-century Kano and in sixteenth-century Gonja (chapter 3). But, because only the king and his immediate entourage came under the influence of Islam, the ruling aristocracy adopted a middle position between Islam and the traditional religion, patronizing both Muslim divines and traditional priests. It was through the chiefly courts that Islamic elements filtered the culture of the common people. The symbiotic relations of Islam with the traditional religion has been illustrated in a novel by Ahmadou Kourouma, who remarked that everyone publicly proclaimed himself a devout Muslim, but privately feared the “fetish” (chapter 23). Muslim clerics who rendered religious services to Islamized chiefs became integrated into the sociopolitical system of the state by playing roles similar to those of traditional priests. Like traditional priests, Muslim clerics were politically neutral and could therefore act as peacemakers. Mosques, like shrines, were considered sanctuaries.

Allah bestowed beneficent power (*baraka*) on those closest to him. The latter, clerics and saints, transmitted his blessings to devotees and to communities. During long years of training, they acquired specialized and hidden knowledge. The ability to know which chapter or verse or the combination of passages to be used and at what time and for what purpose required esoteric knowledge (chapter 21). The

Wolof *marabout* (cleric) in Birago Diop's novel *Les Contes d'Amadou Koumba* combined the spiritual power he brought from Mecca with the ancestral source of power. The power of the word is inseparable from the status of the agents—both poets and saints—who articulate it (chapter 23).

In the great kingdoms of the Sahel, with international trade, Muslim centers of learning, and close connections with the Muslim world, the kings developed greater commitment to Islam. But even these kings, like Mansa Musa of Mali and Askiya Muhammad of Songhay, were unable to relieve the monarchy of its pre-Islamic heritage. Ibn Battuta attested this during his visit to the court of Mali in the middle of the fourteenth-century, and a scholar from Timbuktu witnessed pre-Islamic customs when he visited the court of Askiya Dawud in the middle of the sixteenth century (chapter 3).

Scholars like those of Timbuktu lived as an autonomous community under the leadership of the *qadi* (the Muslim judge). Such a community was that of Diaba, "the scholars' town," where the king of Mali did not enter. Anyone who entered this town was safe from the king's oppression and his outrage, and it was called "the town of Allah." Jealous of their autonomy, proud of their erudition, and committed to follow the law of Islam strictly, the scholars of Timbuktu were not politically neutral, unlike clerics who lived close to chiefly courts. As a result, there were tensions between the scholars of Timbuktu and the political authorities. These scholars were the avowed enemies of Sonni Ali in the middle of the fifteenth century, and they led the resistance to the Moroccan conquest a century and a half later. There were even tensions between the pious Askiya Muhammad and Askiya Dawud and the contemporary *qadis*.

Chiefs used to send their sons to study with Muslim clerics as part of their princely education. Such offspring were not meant to become Muslims, but some converted and became scholars. A *qadi* of Jenne in the second half of the sixteenth century was "from among the sons of the chiefs of Kala. He withdrew from authority and became a scholar." Bakary, the son of Biton Kulibali, ruler of the young eighteenth-century Bambara state, became a Muslim; he was deposed and killed because he failed to maintain the delicate balance between Islam and tradition. In fifteenth-century Kano, the king's son Umar became a sincere Muslim; when he succeeded his father, the contradiction between being a Muslim and a warrior chief became apparent to him, and he resigned the kingship. He repented during the rest of his life for the wrongs he had done as a king (chapter 3).

Though they entertained Muslim clerics in their courts, prayed, and exhibited some external signs of Islamic influence, the chiefs were not considered Muslims because, as warriors, they drank alcohol and shed blood. Among the Wolof, tension developed when the rulers rejected the call of the clerics to repent (to the military and the political elite, repentance, or true conversion to Islam, implied abandoning their way of life and joining the clerical community). In the Saharan society, too, tension between clerics and the warriors was an important feature. Toward the end of the seventeenth century, Nasir al-Din, a member of a clerical group in the south-

western part of Mauritania, rebelled against the Banu Hassan warriors, and for a few years the Hassan were on the defensive: Wolof and Fulbe-speaking Muslims joined the jihad of Nasir al-Din and succeeded in overthrowing the ruling dynasties of the states of Cayor, Walo, Jolof, and Futa Toro. Within a few years, however, a coalition of the warriors, the traditional political elite, from the Sahara and the Senegal valley, with some support from French trading interests, defeated the clerics and regained power. The final victory of the warriors consolidated the division of Saharan society into two main estates—warriors and clerical clans. The Hassan exercised political and military domination; the *zawaya* (*marabouts*) controlled religious instruction, adjudication, and most of the economic activities in commerce and agriculture (chapter 6).

Around Lake Chad, the trade of Kanem to North Africa was mainly in slaves. As a result, Islam did not spread to the lands south of Lake Chad, which remained hunting grounds for slaves. When its power grew, Kanem expanded northward to the Sahara and as far as Fezzan. In Kanem, and in its successor state Bornu, Islam was not restricted to the court but reached out to the whole population. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Birnin Gazargamo, the capital of Bornu, was an important center for Islamic learning. Quranic manuscripts from Bornu dating from as early as the seventeenth century had interlinear translations and glosses in the local language. Bornu attracted many students from neighboring regions, and Bornu scholars officiated as teachers and imams in Hausaland, Yorubaland, Borgu, and further west (chapter 19). By the end of the eighteenth century, Islam was deeply rooted in the everyday life of the ordinary man in Bornu. But even there, pre-Islamic elements persisted, which the Fulbe of Sokoto used as a pretext for the jihad against Bornu.

The spread of Islam among the Yoruba began in the nineteenth century and advanced as a result of the fall of the northern Yoruba to the Fulbe jihad. Except in the emirate of Ilorin, which was part of the Sokoto caliphate, Islam took root among the Yoruba as a religious practice, but it did not become associated with a state tradition. The progress of Islam did not obliterate traditional patterns of authority.

Farther to the east, on the Nile, Christian Nubians had arrested the advance of Islam for six centuries. From about 1500 onward, three major states in the grasslands south of Nubia had developed with a veneer of Islam. In these kingdoms—Funj, Dar Fur, and Wadai—Islam was corporate and communal. All obedient subjects were considered Muslims, whatever their way of life, while disobedience implied rejection of the corporate Islam of the community, and therefore apostasy (chapter 5).

All over Africa, holy men were able to convert charisma, spiritual or “symbolic capital,” to economic power. Where central political authorities were weak, or completely absent, holy men could also build up political power.

## Conversion in the Horn and South of the Equator

Muslims settled on the Ethiopian coast of the Red Sea as early as the eighth century. By the ninth century, there were Muslim communities along the trade

routes to the interior. The town of Harar developed as the most important center for trade and Islamic learning. These communities grew to become Muslim principalities that challenged the hegemony of the Christian Ethiopian State.

The most important outcome of the jihad of Ahmad Gran in the first half of the sixteenth century was the weakening of both the Christian state and the Muslim principalities. The fertile highlands became subject to mass migrations of the pastoral Oromo. By the eighteenth century, the chiefly families of the Oromo embraced Islam. Muslim religious leaders gained prominence in the Oromo principalities of Ethiopia. Scholars received grants of land to sustain themselves, but they also criticized local rulers and ordinary believers, threatening to avoid performing the proper funeral prayers to those they considered lax in observing Islam. Sufi shaykhs established centers for higher learning, spiritual training, and devotional practice and made written contributions to Islamic scholarship. By the middle of the nineteenth-century, Islam also took root among the Oromo commoners. They fasted, turned to Islamic rather than to customary law in matters of marriage and inheritance, paid the *zakat* (the obligatory “tithes”), circumcised their sons at an earlier age than before, and went on pilgrimage to Mecca. In the nineteenth century, Muslim traders opened up new regions in the southwestern parts of present-day Ethiopia to procure slaves. Between 1800 and 1830, new Oromo states emerged at the termini of the trade routes from the coast. Sufi teachers who accompanied the slave merchants converted their rulers (chapter 11).

While Islam was present on the east coast as early as 780, it became the religion of the majority of the Swahili-speaking peoples between 1200 and 1500. At that time the Swahili also developed a distinct culture. This Swahili Islamic civilization became quintessentially urban. Stone houses, often two-storied, walled off prosperous Swahili families from commoners and encouraged a lifestyle imbued with a special urban elegance (chapter 12).

Compared with West Africa, where connections with the heartland of Islam in the Arabian peninsula were only through the *hajj* (pilgrimage), East Africa, closer geographically, has been in direct and continuous communication with the Arabian peninsula. In the past two centuries at least, boys have been sent to study in Hadhramaut and in Mecca and Medina. Direct cultural influences have been detected in music, and in fact whole Arabic instrumental ensembles and their repertoires have been adopted. West African societies, by contrast, have not exhibited such clear Arab musical influences (chapter 24).

Until the nineteenth century, Islam in East Africa remained confined to the coast, unlike in West Africa, where Islam spread far into the interior. What follows is an attempt to explain the different patterns of the spread of Islam in East and West Africa. Merchants and other settlers on the east coast were part of the Indian Ocean trading diaspora. Their commercial connections were with lands around the Indian Ocean, rather than with the African interior, and to the extent that African goods reached the coast before the nineteenth century, usually they were carried by traders from the interior (e.g., the Shona, and later the Makua and the Yao). The

spread of Islam conveniently took place within a wider context—one of cultural influences and migrations. In West Africa these movements were in the same direction, from north to south, as that taken by Islam. In East Africa, on the other hand, migrations and the movement of goods, from the interior to the coast, were contrary to the direction Islam would have taken, that is to say, from east to west.

In the nineteenth century a new class of merchants and landowners with wealth from plantations and trade contributed to religious revival on the East African coast. This new bourgeoisie was responsible for a dramatic increase in the number of mosques and schools, which further augmented the opportunities of employment for men of religion. The more important *'ulama'* (scholars) spent time in Arabia, mainly in Mecca and Medina. Along with the increasing depth of scholarship, literacy became more popular and widespread, due to the growing importance of sufi brotherhoods in the nineteenth century (chapters 2 and 12).

The Omani sultans encouraged migration from Hadhramaut to the East African coast. But the new arrivals were not assimilated in the Swahili society. For them, the term *Swahili* implied lower status and even contempt. Those who claimed Arabian origins maintained close ties with their homeland and cultivated what may be described as normative Islam, thus widening the gap with the ordinary Swahili. Mutual estrangement between Swahili and Arabs explains why the former cared nothing for Islamic revivalism or Pan-Islam, which bore an Arab stamp (chapter 2).

The slow process of Islamization in East Africa beyond the narrow coastal strip started only in the nineteenth century, when people of the immediate hinterland began frequenting Mombasa with products of the interior. The process was accelerated in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, when Muslims from the coast settled in farms in the interior, and Africans who had converted in the coastal towns returned to their original rural homes. Islam thus penetrated deeper into the interior of East Africa only when Muslim merchants from the coast ventured inland in search of ivory and slaves. Not many Africans accepted Islam along the trade routes and in the settlements of the Arabs and Swahilis. Those who converted were mostly members of the immediate entourage of the Arab and Swahili merchants: spouses and their relatives, porters and other employees of the merchants (chapter 13).

The Yao are the most Islamized people in the interior of Mozambique and southern Tanzania. Though they had traded with the coast since the seventeenth century, they were converted only in the nineteenth century with the coming of Muslim traders and scribes to the interior. Matrilineal social principles among the Yao and the Makua created tensions with Islam's patrilineal order. A Makua shaykh who had succeeded his matrilineal uncle as *mwene* (chief elder) of his lineage was obliged to abandon his position in the Qadiriyya *tariqa* (sufi brotherhood) but remained a practicing Muslim (chapter 14).

Buganda is the only centralized state in East Africa that might have experienced patterns of Islamization similar to those of kingdoms in West Africa. Kabaka Mutesa came under the influence of Muslim merchants, built mosques, and obliged his chiefs to pray. Muslims held important positions as heads of provinces and as commanders



of the royal guard. The influence of Islam in Buganda was arrested, particularly after the British conquest, because of fierce competition with the Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries (chapter 13). Nevertheless, Bugandan Muslims migrated throughout the region of the Great Lakes and became important agents of conversion well outside their homeland.

Islam reached South Africa with free and slave migration from Malaya and the islands of the Indian Ocean. The process of conversion during the last decades of formal slavery (1798–1838) might have constituted South Africa's golden age of Islam. In 1838, manumission among Muslims was faster than among Christians, and became a powerful inducement to embrace Islam. Slaves appear to have enjoyed being of a religion opposed to that of their owners (chapter 15).

### **State-driven Reforms (c. 1500)**

Pre-Islamic elements persisted because Islam became integrated into the religious, social, and cultural life of African societies without a break with the past. A reform was needed to make such a break and to bring about more literate forms of Islam.

Chiefs and kings who undertook the *hajj* became acquainted with different ways of practicing Islam and were also exposed to the teachings of some of the greatest scholars of the day. The Almoravid movement originated in the encounter of a Sanhaja chief from the Southwestern Sahara with Abu 'Imran al-Fasi in Qayrawan. Mansa Musa strengthened Islamic institutions in Mali after making the pilgrimage to Mecca and a visit to Cairo. Askiya Muhammad was invested with the title of caliph in Cairo, and exchanges with scholars of Cairo added depth to the intellectual life in sixteenth-century Timbuktu.

About 1500, there were attempts at reform in three contemporary states: in Songhay under Askiya Muhammad, who sought the advice of the 'ulama'; in Kano at the time of King Rumfa, who ordered the felling of a sacred tree, under which the original mosque had been built; and in Bornu, where the contemporary reformer king was Ali Ghaji. Both Songhay and Kano were visited by the militant North African scholar al-Maghili, who called for the purgation from Islam of all its accretions. Al-Maghili urged the anathemization (*takfir*) of those who had accepted the accommodation of Islam with traditional beliefs and customs. His zealous teachings were mitigated by the advice of the more moderate and pragmatic Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, one of the greatest scholars of Egypt at that time. These reforms, however, were initiated by the rulers themselves, and were by far less radical than the Islamic revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when ruling dynasties were overthrown and 'ulama' assumed power (chapter 6).

It is significant that about this same time, in the first half of the sixteenth century, Islam in the Horn of Africa became more militant. The power struggle between the Christian state of Ethiopia and the Muslim principalities reached its highest point in the jihad of Imam Ahmad Gran (chapter 11).

## Brotherhoods

In the Maghrib, the land of sufism par excellence, there had been no structured hierarchical brotherhoods, only independent *zawaya*, seats of marabouts. They all followed the Shadhili sufi tradition, which at that time lacked any meaningful organization. Only after the late seventeenth century did new brotherhoods evolve on a wider geographical and societal scale out of the local *zawaya*.

In the sixteenth century, the leading scholars of Timbuktu were sufis, but like contemporary Egyptian sufis, they were not affiliated to any sufi brotherhood (*tariqa*). Likewise, in Bornu, communities (*mallamati*) were also without *tariqa* affiliation. In the Sudan, the old brotherhoods of the Qadiriyya and the Shadhiliyya had been assimilated into localized holy clans. The relationship between the shaykh and his followers was direct, face-to-face and personal, without any further organizational elaboration.

There is evidence that the Qadiriyya was present in Harar as early as 1500, but oral hagiographic traditions do not associate pre-eighteenth-century holy men in the Horn with a particular brotherhood, as they do in regard to holy men who lived after 1800. Rather, holy men are remembered as the founding fathers of various Somali clans. In southern Somalia and East Africa, the affiliation of sufi communities with a particular *tariqa* was weak. It was only in the nineteenth century that named *tariqas* became important in Somalia. After the early 1800s, religious settlements from various clans lived together as *ikhwan* (brothers), jointly engaged in agriculture, livestock husbandry, and religious study and worship (chapters 11 and 20). Along the east coast, the saint-centered Alawiyya brotherhood probably arrived in Pate as early as the sixteenth century, with the immigration of large numbers of Hadhrami from the holy city of Inat and its vicinity. From Pate and the Lamu archipelago, the Alawi *sharifs* (those who claim descent from the Prophet) and shaykhs and their adherents spread southward along the coast, exerting a tremendous degree of religious prestige and charisma (chapter 12).

During the eighteenth century, there was a meaningful shift in sufi brotherhoods away from the old patterns of decentralized and diffusive affiliations toward larger-scale and more coherent forms of organization. In the process of restructuring, the role of the shaykh was expanded and brotherhoods became centralized, disciplined organizations that included networks of deputies (*khalifas*). It is clear from the evidence that the hierarchical, centralized organization of the *tariqa* was a novelty. Organizational aspects of the brotherhoods, rather than the content of their teaching, rendered them potential political actors (chapters 3 and 20).

The Qadiriyya brotherhood had first been introduced into the Sahara probably at the end of the fifteenth century. But the Qadiriyya had been loosely organized and rather ineffective until its resurgence, in the second half of the eighteenth century, under the leadership of Sidi al-Mukhtar al-Kunti. He skillfully used his religious prestige to acquire wealth and political influence as individuals and communal factions sought his patronage. He reinforced the dependency of these

clients by fostering the spiritual chains of the Qadiriyya. Sidi al-Mukhtar's emissaries spread the new branch, known as Qadiriyya-Mukhtariyya in the Sahara, the Sahel, and as far as Futa Jalon (chapters 3 and 20).

In the Sudan, the opening up of commercial connections with the Mediterranean and the Red Sea toward the end of the seventeenth century encouraged the development of towns and the rise of an indigenous, urban-based middle class. The new class needed the stabilizing influence of the *shari'a*. A rise of literacy in Arabic, public prayers, and conformist dress gave this urban society an entirely new cultural and ethnic identity as Arabs. Observance of the rules of Islam became the criterion to evaluate one's status as a Muslim (chapter 5).

The two trends of Islam—the popular Islam of the holy men and the more conformist Islam of the urban population—were brought together by reformed brotherhoods that developed in the Sudan since the last quarter of the eighteenth century. The new sufi brotherhoods—the Sammaniyya, Khatmiyya, and Rashidiyya—incorporated local holy families into large-scale organizations. In the Sudan, local scholars and saints were drawn into new and wider networks, which were also interethnic and interregional (chapters 20 and 5).

Popularly-based brotherhoods reached the East African coast much later; only near the end of the nineteenth century did the Qadiriyya and the Shadhiliyya become active. The Qadiriyya attracted some new converts, but its greatest impact seems to have been to encourage African Muslims to live their faith more enthusiastically and with greater conviction (chapters 12 and 13).

## Jihad Legitimation

Sidi al-Mukhtar did not advocate militant jihad. His son opposed the jihad of Shaykh Ahmad of Massina and his grandson that of al-Hajj ʿUmar. But Sidi al-Mukhtar, the nonmilitant sufi, supported the jihad of ʿUthman dan Fodio in what is now northern Nigeria. The mystical encounters of ʿUthman dan Fodio with Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, founder of the Qadiriyya, helped legitimize the jihad in Hausaland.

The dramatic point of no return in the development of Islamic militancy was when radical reformers introduced the concept of takfir, which implied that those who had previously been considered Muslims were declared infidels. In arguing against the jihad, al-Kanemi insisted that the general consensus (*ijma*) is against anathematizing Muslims; people might be sinners, but they had not rejected Islam. ʿUthman dan Fodio justified the jihad against the Hausa because of deeds that for centuries had been accepted as a legitimate accommodation of Islam with traditional religions.

An anti-jihad ideology is attributed to al-Hajj Salim Suwari, the architect of the ways of life of the Juula and the Jakhanke, who lived probably in the late fifteenth century. He taught that some people may remain in a state of ignorance longer than others and that true conversion will occur only in God's time; hence, actively to

proselytize is to interfere with God's will, and jihad is unacceptable as a method of conversion. Muslims may accept the authority of non-Muslim rulers, and even support them through the provision of religious services, so far as they are able to observe Islam strictly. The wars of Samori Touré in the last decades of the nineteenth century were perceived as a threat to the Juula way of life. As the Juula refused to collaborate with Samori, he sacked their towns of Buna and Kong and executed the imam of Buna and forty of the senior 'ulama' of Kong (chapter 4).

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Islam spread from towns to the countryside. Whereas trade served as the economic basis for urban scholarship, rural Islamic scholarship depended on slave farming and on the work of students (*talamidh*). Among the clerical lineages of the Sahara, scholars and students moved together in nomadic and seminomadic groups. In Bornu, radical scholars withdrew from the centers of political power to establish autonomous religious communities. These autonomous enclaves of rural scholarship, known as *mallamati*, maintained only minimal communications with the wider society. In the Nilotic Sudan, rural centers of learning that combined legal teaching with sufism developed after the sixteenth century. In the more fertile regions of southern Somalia, scholarly groups established themselves between powerful and rival tribes (chapters 19 and 20).

Itinerant Muslim preachers moved among the rural Muslim communities. 'Uthman dan Fodio himself addressed the peasants and articulated their grievances, criticizing rulers who killed people, violated their honor, and devoured their wealth. His son Muhammad Bello evoked the wrath of Allah over "the *amir* who draws his sustenance from the people but does not bother to treat them justly."

It is significant that all leaders of the jihad movements in West Africa came from the countryside and not from commercial or capital towns. The challenge to the marginal role of Islam in African societies did not come from 'ulama' who were spokesmen for the traders, nor from clerics who rendered religious services in the chiefly courts; it came mostly from the autonomous rural and pastoral enclaves.

In the period 1880–1918, three forms of Islamic militancy became interconnected in the Horn. One was against adherents of indigenous religions and lax Muslims; a second opposed the Christian Ethiopian state; and a third resisted European colonialism. In Somalia, Sayyid Muhammad Abdallah Hassan began a jihad in 1898 to purify the country from the Ethiopian and European "unbelievers." The sayyid belonged to the Salihyya brotherhood, an offshoot of a tariqa founded by a disciple of Ahmad ibn Idris. He confronted the Qadiriyya, which collaborated with Europeans (chapter 11).

In South Africa, a movement of Islamic revivalism was ushered with the arrival in 1862 of a Kurdish scholar, Shaykh Abu Bakr Effendi. He sought to integrate the Cape Muslims into the wider Muslim world and to impose Islamic orthodoxy. To the extent that he succeeded, the price was a slowdown of conversion to Islam compared with an earlier period, when Cape imams converted all and sundry (chapter 15).

## Islamic Vernacular Literatures

The expansion of Islam to the countryside widened the popular basis for religious teaching and preaching. Knowledge of Islam was disseminated to the illiterate peasants and herdsmen in the vernacular languages. Parallel to the transformation of Islam as a popular religion and as a political force, Muslim reformers developed a pious literature. Poems, easily committed to memory, became a major vehicle for teaching and preaching. Vernacular poems were disseminated in handwritten copies among Muslim literati, who recited them in public.

Some of the oldest known written texts in Fulfulde, dating from the second half of the eighteenth century, were poems written by reformers who sought to reach people of all walks of life. The reformers produced a huge mass of devotional, didactic, and legal literature in Arabic and in local languages. Under the rule of the Almamis of Futa Jalon, a large corpus of religious and didactic poetry in Fulfulde was created. When ʿUthman dan Fodio saw that his community was ready for the jihad, he began inciting them to arms, setting this to Arabic verse (*qasida ajamiyya qadiriyya*). This mystical verse had a hypnotic effect upon devotees on the eve of the jihad.

With the development of the preaching activities of the leaders of the future jihad movements, local languages were increasingly used for religious and didactic purposes, if necessary with translators. Poetry in Fulfulde and Hausa became a major tool for the propagation of Islamic morals and doctrines. It was under the impact of the jihad that Hausa written literature was created, especially in the field of religious and moral poetry (chapter 19).

On the East African coast, before the seventeenth century Arabic seems to have been confined to first-generation immigrants and to those few who obtained religious education abroad. Swahili was the language of daily discourse, Arabic remaining confined to religion and to correspondence. There was relatively little interaction between the two languages until the seventeenth century, and no extensive borrowing of Arabic words by Swahili. Only after the middle of the seventeenth century were Arabic loanwords absorbed in Swahili. As Hadhrami scholars became assimilated into the local coastal society, they began to write in Swahili. The earliest surviving manuscripts of written literature in Swahili date from the seventeenth century, though the beginnings probably go back further in time. Many of the texts were translations of Arabic religious and didactic poems, but a new genre of epic poems (*tendi*) was created in the early eighteenth century, with themes drawn from the life of Muhammad and other prophets. The genre itself marks a new stage in the adaptation of Islamic lore to the interests of a broader local public (chapters 12 and 19).

## The Post-Jihad States

The Fulbe and Somali who provided the main fighting forces to the holy wars were able to participate fully in the consummation of the military and political victory by abandoning pastoralism and settling down. The process of sedentarization

often was made possible only with the help of slave farming, which freed the pastoralists from their political, religious, and educational pursuits (chapters 6 and 11).

In Futa Toro, the Almamy Abdul Qadir Kan established mosques, schools, and qadi courts in the villages. He came into conflict with the powerful regional lords, members of Fulbe families who were closer to the older traditions of pastoralism and did not share his commitment to Islam. His death in 1807 marked the end of a strong central government in Futa Toro. But the people of the Futa preserved a strong sense of Islamic identity and commitment to holy war, which was later exploited by al-Hajj `Umar.

In post-jihad Sokoto, mosques and schools multiplied in urban as in rural areas. Sufi practices of the Qadiriyya were encouraged to support the process of Islamization. The emirs named qadis to administer Islamic law, but they maintained a large judicial role for themselves. Aspects of the Islamic law were discussed in relation to situations and events that were familiar to their audience (chapters 6 and 17).

Seku Ahmadu established in Massina the most centralized post-jihad regime. He regimented the lives of people in the towns and in the countryside. He settled pastoralists in designated areas. The Kunta scholars of the southern Sahara considered his severe interpretations of Islamic practice to be wrong, the product of a very limited Islamic education.

Hence, a formal judicial system was established throughout Africa only in the post-jihad states, where qadis were appointed to administer the law of Islam. Earlier, the administration of the shari'a was informal, as people typically approached the imam, a Quranic teacher, or any person with a pious reputation to solve legal questions. Local *ulama* served in advisory capacities to local rulers, who themselves adjudicated (chapter 17).

Because of the constraints of war, al-Hajj `Umar was unable to consolidate an Islamic state. He did not establish judicial courts, schools, mosques, and other institutions of an Islamic state that might have brought the Bambara and other conquered peoples into a more orderly practice of Islam (chapter 6).

Leaders of jihad movements, like al-Hajj `Umar and Samori, who were still at their expansionist stage, came into confrontation with the expanding colonial powers; they were defeated. The Sokoto caliphate, on the other hand, survived into the colonial period because it had been consolidated early in the nineteenth century and accepted British rule after a token resistance.

## Islam under Colonial Rule

Only a minority of Muslim leaders resisted colonialism or tried to avoid conquest by making the *hijra* (migrating beyond the reach of colonial authorities). The majority, however, chose accommodation and collaboration. Public opinion in West Africa was not critical of the elites that collaborated with the colonial powers. Indeed, religious leaders sometimes replaced the defeated aristocracies as intermediaries with the colonial authorities, as was the case among the Wolof. Juula traders,

whose trade benefited from the consolidation of colonial rule, adopted the same attitude to the new rulers as they had toward the previous non-Muslim rulers (chapter 8). Likewise, the ‘ulama’ of the East African protectorates were co-opted into the regime’s service as salaried qadis and other “native” officials (chapter 13).

The expansion of Islam accelerated during the colonial period. The opening of routes and railways facilitated the installation of Muslim colonies in southern regions. In Northern Nigeria, the British helped the expansion of Islam by extending the rule of Muslim emirs to neighboring “pagan” areas.

In East Africa, under British and German rule, Muslim trading stations developed into administrative centers, where most of the government officials were Muslim. People from the countryside migrated to those growing urban centers, like Tabora, where they came under Muslim influence. In Malawi, freedom and security of movement to Muslim traders and clerics facilitated the expansion of Islam, as did the fact that most of the British colonial troops were Muslims (chapters 13 and 14).

Farther into the interior of East Africa, in the eastern provinces of the Congo and in Burundi and Rwanda, Swahili-speaking Muslims were recruited by the Germans to serve as interpreters and soldiers. Their quarters became the nuclei of urban centers, where rural people migrated and settled. A process of mutual acculturation took place, as the indigenous people converted to Islam while the foreign Muslims adopted the local language (chapter 13).

The French colonial administration seems to have cultivated an Islamic policy that changed over time. At first they encouraged Islam, which they perceived as an advanced stage in the evolutionary process from “animism” to Western civilization. But when they felt threatened by Islam, the French invented the concept of Islam Noir, to distinguish African Islam from Arab Islam. In the 1920s, the French constructed an imagined struggle between Islam and “animism.” In the 1950s, they supported traditional Muslim leaders against attacks by the reformers, who sought to “Arabize” African Islam (chapter 8).

During their brief conquest of Ethiopia, in order to undermine the foundations of the Christian state, the Italians pursued a pro-Islamic policy. They granted Muslims full freedom of religion, encouraged mosque building, appointed qadis, and introduced Arabic in all Muslim schools. They facilitated the pilgrimage, and allowed the propagation of Islam (chapter 11).

Brotherhoods changed roles in their relation to the colonial authorities; whereas in Algeria the Qadiriyya resisted the French and the Tijaniyya collaborated with them, in West Africa the Tijaniyya led resistance to the French. With the consolidation of colonial rule, most leaders of the brotherhoods, including the Tijaniyya, collaborated with the authorities. The French administration supported those movements, which already had become accommodated to colonial rule, and repressed those who challenged these movements. This was the case of the Ham-maliyya, which challenged the main stream of the Tijaniyya (chapter 8).

Following the defeat of the Mahdiyya in the Sudan, the British became allied with Sayyid Ali al-Mirghani, the Mahdi’s rival. Cooperation with the Khatmiyya

gave a certain aura of Islamic legitimacy to British rule. The British policy that aimed to suppress the Mahdiyya changed when the Mahdi's son, Sayyid Abd al-Rahman al-Mahdi, set out to reconstruct the Ansar as a successor to the Mahdiyya, within the tradition of popular Islam and in reconciliation with the British authorities. The two largest Muslim associations—the Ansar and the Khatmiyya—were accepted as representing the voices of Sudanese society. Leaders of holy families also became involved in nationalist movements and politics during the Condominium (chapter 7).

During the colonial period, the existence of an alternative Muslim educational system insulated the Muslim community from the modernizing tendencies associated with Western education. Where Muslims lived close to Christians, as in Lagos, Freetown, Mombasa, Capetown, and Durban, they organized earlier and more aggressively to create a modern school system that would combine Islamic and Western education. This was the case of the Young Ansar-Ud-Deen Society, founded in 1923, that established and ran Western schools among Yoruba Muslims (chapter 19).

During the colonial period, women took an active part in movements of popular learning and piety. Women, some of them Western-educated, devoted time to prayers, learned the Koran, preached to other women, and performed voluntary services. Female participation in the Arabic schools is very high, often reaching more than half of the student population. Many women went to Mecca off-season. Hence, the *'umra*, which unlike the hajj may be performed at any time of the year, became known as the “women's pilgrimage” (chapter 9).

Efforts to give women a greater role in religious life were opposed by the reformers. Women responded to the challenge of the fundamentalists by embracing distinctive Muslim dress, including the veil, but at the same time they became more active politically and formed their own organizations. Under the Islamist regime in the Sudan, fewer women enrolled to certain types of medical and technical training. Women became excluded from high-ranking and better-salaried positions (chapter 18).

## Modern Reformism

After independence, the traditional religious elites lost their hold on education—on the one hand to those educated in the French schools, and on the other to a new Muslim elite educated in Arab countries. Many of the new generation of young Muslim intellectuals combined Western education with studies in Islamic institutions in Arab countries. After the 1980s, this young Muslim elite asserted themselves as a distinct cultural and political group, set aside from the older generation of Muslim scholars and leaders (chapter 19).

The introduction of new types of Arab schools, which had started in the 1930s and 1940s, gained in momentum in the 1960s. From the 1970s onward, a dense network of Arabic schools emerged in many Muslim regions. In the 1960s, Egypt supported Islamic educational projects. In the 1970s, the oil-producing nations of Libya



and Saudi Arabia competed in giving out grants to create cultural and educational institutions (chapter 19).

The call for reform came in the 1950s from graduates of Al-Azhar university-mosque in Cairo. The reformers sought to purify the practice of Islam by eradicating saint worship associated with maraboutism. They prayed with their hands crossed and were recognized by their beards and by the *chemises arabes*, which they put on instead of the more common *boubou*. They sought to isolate themselves from the rest of the community and had their own mosques. Violent and bloody confrontations with the sufi brotherhoods took place, particularly in Bamako (chapter 9). The reformers rejected accommodation with pre-Islamic relics of the past. In the 1950s in Guinea, Muslim zealots managed to get the “fetishes” burned. The mysteries of the Koma secret society were exposed to the eyes of women and the non-initiated. Since then, Koma rites have been discontinued in the village concerned, now completely Muslim. Muslim zealots also destroyed the wooden sculptures and drums of the Baga of the Guinea coast (chapter 24).

The reform movement in the French-speaking countries of Mali, Guinea, and Côte d’Ivoire, as in Nigeria, appealed to the rich merchants. Piety enhanced the prestige of merchants and raised their credit among fellow merchants. Performing the pilgrimage was highly regarded as an act of piety. Rich merchants in Maradi, Niger, are known as Alhazai—that is, those who performed the pilgrimage. In order to further advance their economic and political interests, wealthy merchants who had already been to Mecca became engaged in acts of charity (*sadaqa*), building mosques and financing other religious activities, and thereby benefited the reform movement. Middle-class businessmen and civil servants were also involved (chapter 9).

In Nigeria, Abubakar Gummi, the grand qadi of the north, was the most outspoken critic of sufi Islam. He advocated an Islamic reform that was modernizing and fundamentalist at the same time. His young followers were organized in the Yan Izala and in the Muslim Students Society. Police were called to discipline preachers who used abusive language to stir the rabble. One such preacher, Muhammad Marwa, known as Maitatsine, built a formidable following in the late 1970s. In December 1980, a disastrous conflict developed: federal troops were called in and some four thousand people were killed. Since the early 1980s, the Islamic zeal has caused periodic clashes between Muslims and Christians in both urban and rural areas (chapters 10 and 17).

After Gummi’s death in 1992, his successor as the leader of Islamic fundamentalism Shaykh Ibrahim al-Zakzady used inflammatory rhetoric, appealing to the same population as Maitatsine did in 1980—namely, young Muslim mendicants from the countryside. He was arrested in September 1996, but his followers continued to clash with the security forces in Kaduna and Kano in 1996 and 1997, with fatal casualties (chapter 10).

A literary expression of the crisis created by modern reformism is Ibrahim Tahir’s *The Last Imam* (1984). A brilliant and unbending imam strove to bring a pure form of Islam into the lives of the people of Bauchi. He also opposed his father, his

predecessor as imam, who was willing to accommodate with traditional customs and the political authorities (chapter 23).

In the 1950s, there were violent clashes between adherents of the Qadiriyya and the Tijaniyya, who represented conflicting political interests and orientations. But under the attacks of the Yan Izala and other “fundamentalists,” the rival sufi brotherhoods—Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya—became reconciled in the 1970s (chapter 10).

Since the late 1980s, individuals and groups have adopted a lifestyle of greater personal piety and have adhered more strictly to the tenets of Islam. In French-speaking countries the common enemy of Islam was secularism. The rival reformers and marabouts became reconciled, and mutual respect has replaced inflammatory statements (chapter 9).

## Politics

At the end of the colonial period, Muslims participated in social and economic activities and benefited from the politics of cultural nationalism and the growth of the informal economy. But with independence, Islam became politically marginal. Only in Senegal did Muslims play a significant role, because Senghor’s political interests converged with those of the brotherhoods. In Côte d’Ivoire, Houphouët developed strong personal relationships with the traditional Muslim leaders. But Islam remained the religion of the savannah peoples and Muslims felt themselves to be second-class citizens. After Houphouët’s death in 1993, legislation that defined most Muslims as foreigners determined the succession dispute between Bedie the Roman Catholic and Ouattara the Muslim. The former was the winner, and Muslim Juula were purged from the army and from the civil service (chapter 9).

In Mali, soon after independence, Modibo Keita attacked Muslim reformist organizations and placed their schools under state control. In Guinea, Sékou Touré’s policies found expression in an official document, issued in 1959, that called on the populace to fight marabouts and other forms of mystification and exploitation. After 1970, however, Touré changed strategy and used Islam to legitimize his regime. His speeches became loaded with Islamic themes. Both Wahabi and sufi groups alike enjoyed his support (chapter 9).

In northern Nigeria until 1966, the political competition was between two Muslim political parties. Seeking to preserve the integrity of the northern emirates, the ruling NPC advocated gradual modernization through education and economic development. The opposition NEPU, under Aminu Kano, claimed that true progress for the north would never occur under the hegemony of emirs (chapter 10).

In Nigerian politics at the federal level, religion created the most serious cleavage. During the preparation for the return to civilian rule and in drafting the constitution of the second republic, between 1976 and 1978, there was a dispute over a federal shari’a court of appeal. For the Christians, this move was perceived as a threat, signaling the Islamization of the Federal Republic. Muslims, on the other hand, considered opposition to a federal shari’a court as sheer anti-Islamic preju-

dice. Yoruba Muslims played an important role in achieving reconciliation, and the proposal to create a shari'a court of appeal was withdrawn (chapter 10).

Muslims in East and Central Africa, though minorities, and making up a smaller proportion of the population than those of West African states, are nevertheless important in politics. In 1992 the Kenya government suppressed attempts to create a Muslim party, described as the party of the "Arabs." In Uganda, Muslims' political influence is more than might be expected, given their numerical strength (10 to 15 percent of the population). In the 1970s and 1980s, hundreds of Ugandan Muslims studied at the University of Medina. On their return, they led an activist Salafi movement that, by the mid-1980s, became alienated from the old, traditional 'ulama' and worshipped in separate mosques (chapter 16).

In Tanzania, the nationalist party of TANU was most successful in the Muslim areas, and Muslim traders were active in TANU. But Nyerere insisted that Tanzania's politics know no religion: no party based on religious affiliation was permitted. Nyerere was succeeded as president by Mwinyi, a Muslim from Zanzibar. He was urged by Muslim groups to increase the number of Muslims in government positions and in higher institutions of learning. In Zanzibar, young people increasingly seek to identify the island with Islam (chapter 16).

Farther south where Muslims are even fewer in numbers, Islam is still important. In Malawi a Muslim president was elected in 1994. In Mozambique, the Portuguese were greatly troubled by the political implications of the allegiance of Muslims to the sultan of Zanzibar. In their war against FRELIMO, the Portuguese colonial authorities sought to win conservative Muslim leaders of the brotherhoods. After independence, the Muslim leadership was discredited and the new government banned some Muslim organizations. Within the Muslim community, sufi leaders and the majority of the Muslims in the northern part of Mozambique were in conflict with the more radical Muslim reformers based in the south (chapter 14).

In South Africa, the apartheid state (1948–1994) created a fertile climate for the radicalization of Islam. In 1994, the new governing party, the ANC, appointed a Muslim as minister of justice in the government of unity. After 1994, there was a resurgence of "Malay" identity, as trade and cultural links with Malaysia increased (chapter 15).

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