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**GOLDEN AFRICA: AFRICA'S NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONTINENT'S FUTURE INVESTMENTS POTENTIAL**

Abdi O. Shuriye

## **FOREWORD**

This special issue of the journal is mainly a result of an international conference on *Islam in Africa* held in Sudan on the 26-27 Nov 2006 to commemorate the anniversary of the fourteen centuries of the advent of Islam to Africa. At the occasion of this festivity the African Center for Studies and Research in the International University of Africa in Khartoum, under the auspices of the Presidency of the Republic of Sudan, organized the aforementioned conference.

A group of scholars from Africa were invited to participate in the conference to commemorate the occasion and to certify that the Islamic culture is a genuine and authentic component in the African heritage, representing that culture and heritage which had firmly settled fourteen centuries ago and developed as a true African product.

Therefore, this issue of the journal contains mainly selected studies from the works presented in that conference and the idea which binds the contributor's illustration. Islamic civilization remains the centre of Africa's culture as the continent was the first recipient of this religion outside Mecca; its birth place.

On the publication of some of the selected papers of the conference, I was contacted by Professor Hassan Ahmed Ibahim and Professor Abdi Shuriye to restudy and rebuild some of the articles and subsequently consider it for publication. The Centre bestows full authorizations and cooperation on the publication of these works for wider benefits.

**Hassan Makki Mohamed Ahmed**

## INTRODUCTION TO THIS ISSUE

How Islam penetrated Africa has been the object of intellectual attention, so, the corpus of studies conducted on this. Offering new dimensions on how the history of Islam in Africa is to be studied, thereby filling voids in previous studies is an issue that should bother the mind of Muslim intellectuals. This, in relation to the challenges of Africa Muslims in the contemporary period motivated enlightened group of scholars from Africa to contribute the articles that makes up this special issue of the journal. So, the main bulk of these papers cover broad theme ranging from Islam, culture, Society and natural resources.

In the article entitled: The Propagation of Islam in Africa Revisiting the Role of Clerics and Traders, the authors have attempted a new approach into how scholars have used trade to explain the advent of Islam in Africa. While agreeing that there are some broad patterns and common features in how Islam penetrates Africa, yet, they contend that this is not a ticket for generalization. Based on this, the authors identify the phases of the spread of Islam and scholars and traders' contributions within these phases, thereby suggesting new lines of construal. Within this brace, they went on to highlight how Islam was introduced to the local communities of Africa. It was this conceptual yardstick that the authors used as the analytical tool for critiquing the various theoretical models on the progress of Islam in Africa. In the ultimate, the authors conclude that the emergence of Sufism in Africa clearly evidenced the roles of cleric in the progress of Islam in Africa.

A Global Politics, Women Emancipation and Gender Mainstreaming from An Islamic Perspective: A Challenge to Muslim Woman in Sub Sahara Africa?' is another article. While appreciating gendering and women emancipation from an Islamic perspective, the authors contend that Islam and Shariah law are gender sensitive, thus tasking the claim that suggests otherwise. Proceeding from this, they canvassed that Muslim women in the sub-Saharan Africa deserve proper education and sensitization on gender mainstreaming and women emancipation as provided for, in Islam and Shariah. This, the authors suggest it, must be within the context of the differential socio-political and economic conditions of each time and places, so that rights and obligations of women will be properly appropriated. By examining the how global media views Islam and Shariah on this matter, the authors submit that, what is being highlighted and promoted is based on the perceived disapproval of Islam. In effect, the positive effects of the applications of the rules of Shariah, in reducing moral decadent and vices, the author proclaimed, is consciously neglected by the global media which barely broadcast and paint a negative picture of the whole thing. With poor education of the Sub-Sahara woman, especially on Islam, Mohammed concludes, they may be easily swayed by such false interpretations and stereotypical Imagineering. By situating gendering matters and women emancipation within the broader picture of the existing reality in sub-Saharan Africa, the authors demonstrate how unimpressive the gains are. Thus, he advocated for the opening of opportunities for their inputs in activities of the state, thus reducing the false impression being circulated by the media. How the September 9-11 attacks reinforced this media illusion, and its consequences on how Islam, Shariah relative gender issues is viewed, also came under the paper's analysis of the subject matter. The need for internalizing the rule of good governance, respect for rule of e law and shunning violent practices in Muslim community, they conclude, is the desired antidote to what the global media and dominant powers has created of Islam.

The Comparative Study of how Islam Reached Zimbabwe and Uganda, surveyed within the historical specifics of each country, with paid focus on the agent and medium through which Islam was introduced into these countries. In like manner, they addressed the factors, external and internal, which fostered the progress of Islamic advances in these countries, as well as those responsible for its recession. These, the authors treated within the historical perimeter of the bigger African experience. Consequently, the paper identifies the challenges faced by Islam in these two countries as being different. To this extent, they broadly classified these challenges into two types, vis-a-viz those which are general to the Islamic history in Sub-Saharan Africa and the ones which are peculiar to Zimbabwe and Uganda. The authors however submit that while the development of Islam in Uganda has assumed the outlook of a native religion, it is more of a foreign one in Zimbabwe. Then, it is suggested that financial commitments to International Islamic University Mbale, be increased with more scholarship windows, opened for neighboring countries such as Zimbabwe and Malawi.

Golden Africa is a paper, as it appears in the heading, the paper addresses the richness of Africa; its natural resource including oil, gas, gold and other minerals are part of the continent; questions such as are these natural resources harnessed correctly, or the extent of its exploitation, or political instability in some parts of the continent, are not part of the objectives of this paper. Instead, it draws the attention of the cognizant investors to the fact that this continent is the future of trade, besides, the continent constitutes a huge opportunity for business and investment, as well as other economic developments; in fact, by 2050 the continent will become the warehouse to the world, as it was in the case of United States and Australia in the 19th Century; the opportunity for the multinational corporations in the extractive industries is enormous; it is important to note that, Africa's resources are mainly of higher grades compared to similar world's minerals; which means, even when demands are down the Africa's resources remain resilient for its superior quality. The days where African governments were influenced by insincere foreign firms who paid minimum royalties and taxes to few corrupt leaders has come to an end; the internet era has exposed such practices; the internet also exposes the inabilities of governments to employ these resources into the economic growth and fiscal revenue. The paper lists and identifies Africa's natural resources to attract investors to the continent's renewable, nonrenewable, discovered, undiscovered and depletable minerals including agriculture, fishery, oil, manganese, gold and cobalt, as well as other intrinsic wealth of the continent; in other words, Africa sits on more than half of the world's resources such as uranium and platinum.

*The Geographical and Economical Role of Timbuktu in Desert Commerce*, addresses the rise and development of Timbuktu, commercial routes and process, and exports and imports through Timbuktu. It was argued by the authors that commercial importance of Timbuktu significantly contributed to the growth of Mali and Sunghai. How Timbuktu became the torch bearer and repository for the spread of knowledge across the African landscape is also emphasized. The paper, thus suggests Timbuktu's cultural and scholastic movement as more important than its commercial role in the West of the continent. The factors which fostered Timbuktu's rise as a city of economic

and intellectual prominence were identified in addition to how its geographical location contributed to this. Accordingly, the authors conclude that, 'Timbukwu's unique geographical position, was a significant factor in the settlement of traders and scholars, who inhabited it and participated in its development until it became a metropolis of an Islamic empire' where all enjoyed a prosperous life before the Maghriban invasion in 1591.' To revive the city's lost economic and cultural dynamism, they suggest the assistance and intervention of Muslim leaders, particularly that of Libya.

Indigenous Muslim population in Gondar, a Kingdom which is predominantly Christian is imperative. The paper traces the advent of Islam in Gondar through the commercial port of Massawa which connects the people of Gondar with the Arabs. This soon bore effects on the profession of those who embraced Islam in Gondar. As it was submitted by the paper, they soon dominated the trade of the wider Red Sea region, and brought prominence to Gondar as the centre for whole sales trade, especially for the greater part of northwestern Ethiopia. The paper went on to trace how the promulgation of the 1668 Church Council decisions marked the beginning of the isolation of the Muslim minority population in Gondar and how they became victims of force conversion, territorial segregation and inferior status. He also treated the adverse effects of the rivalry between warring chiefs on the economic and commercial activities of Gondar and thus, its effects on the fortunes of this Muslim minority population. In the face of these ostracizing challenges, the paper concludes that the Muslim of Gondar were able to maintain their Islamic identity.

The focus on the trends of Islamization in Pre-Colonial West Africa and the review of the the results of the Verulam conference was relevant. This is a to find parallels in the experiences of the two encounters and shed more light on the importance of analyzing the process of religious interaction and lifestyle exchange. Accordingly, the paper underscores the movement of some West African Muslim scholars and highlights how their pragmatist and the quietist approach of Muslim scholars of these scholars contributed to the profound effects of Islam on non-Muslims. To this extent, the paper cited the examples of Sheikh Uthman Dan Fodio and the Jakhanke clerics. It finds a correlation between these models of Islamic propagation and the decision reached at Verulam conference. However, it looks at the edge of Verulam conference in terms of the broadness of its scope and the relevancy of its message. The paper submits that, 'through deeper research into the methodology of pre-colonial African Muslim leaders and more focus on the twenty-first century,' African Renaissance, Muslims of Southern Africa may be empowered to play a more decisive role in the Southern Hemisphere and enabled to make a more meaningful call to Islam.

The treatment of the cultural heritage in the eastern coast of Africa and its roles are imperative. The paper makes an attempt to evaluate the roots of the predominant cultural heritage in the eastern coast of Africa. To do this, it examined, the impacts of trade, migration on the culture, religion and educational development of the people of this area. Also, are the roles played the famous and common Sufi *tariqas*, *'ulama* in the political, social, culturally, economic and religious development of this area.

*The Islamic Factor in Somalia Politics* ventures to conceptualize the current state of affairs in Somalia, as it aims to identify the political ideals of this government phobia nation. The paper contends that Islam has been and will remain to be a thickset factor in Somali politics. The paper's

substantiations are traced from the history of Somali politics and the role played by Islam. It further contends that history reveals that, more than any other African nation, Somalia had in its history the highest number of Islamic city-states. Zaila, Berbara, Merca, Harar, Mogadishu and Adal are some of the Islamic dynasties in Somali history. Likewise, forms of political Islam and administration can be traced back to the tenth century.

Resistance movements in North-East Africa based on late Abass Ali's perspective is relevant. The movements which came under his intellectual purview are the Urabi and Mahdist revolution as well as the Sayyed Muhammad Abdulle Hassan revolution against the colonial forces. The paper concludes that strength of these resistances owns to the religious factors and the patriotic sentiments which gave birth to the struggles. So, it was both a resistance for the defense of their homeland and religion. It winds up by suggesting that, the revolutionary' movements of Urabi, the Mahdi and Sayyed Muhammad should therefore be understood in the context of the numerous recoiling movements that spread and profoundly affected the Muslim world during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

#### **EDITORS OF THE SPECIAL ISSUE**

Abdi O. Shuriye

Hassan A. Ibrahim

# **THE PROPAGATION OF ISLAM IN AFRICA REVISITING THE ROLE OF CLERICS AND TRADERS**

Hussein Ahmed

## **INTRODUCTION**

It was through traders and itinerant scholars' activities that Islam first penetrated Africa. This was not as a proselytizing religion seeking converts but as the religion of a merchant class, primarily bent primarily on trade. In other words, these traders were little interested in proselytization. [1]. This establishes a relationship between trade and Islam, such which has been so often postulated to the extent economic determinism threatens to swallow up the religious element. [2] This relationship needs a fresh took. So, the principal aim of this paper is to discuss some selected aspects of the propagation of Islam and to raise some issues which require further rethinking and reassessment. These include the phases or stages in the spread of Islam and the contribution of scholars and traders to its cultivation and consolidation in Africa. This attempt is not so much a critique of the existing approaches to the study of Islam in Africa, but a call for the reexamination of certain widely-held assumptions and models of Islamization, and suggestions on new lines of interpretation.

Yet one of the least explored and crucial issue in the history of Islamic propagation in Africa is the way [3] in which Islam was presented to the indigenous people of the continent during the initial and critical period of the encounter between the carriers of the new religion and the followers of the traditional belief systems. Also, is the nature and extent of the responses of Africans- the ruling classes and the commoners to the religion's propagation.

Was Islam preached openly and publicly? How was conversation to Islam both individually and collectively, achieved? Who were the principal carriers and cultivators of Islam? What were the languages, concepts and symbolisms used to teach the religion? To what extent were the traditional systems undermined? How was the introduction of the new faith justified? Fisher has raised similar questions in connection with the expansion of Islam in the Central Sudan? It should be the task of historians of Islam in Africa to seek answers to such questions by searching for evidence in the earliest extant sources as well as in oral traditions. This is quite imperative because the existing literature on Islam, though extensive, hardly addresses itself to the questions raised above but rather reflects the assumption that the mere arrival of Muslim conquerors, traders and clerics led to conversion to Islam, and dwells on the factors which facilitated or impeded Islamization. While this paper does not claim to provide easy answers to, and to introduce fresh material on, the questions raised earlier, it attempts to draw the attention of scholars to the urgent need for tackling them.

It is the contention of this paper that the first major turning point and milestone in the history of Islam in Africa should not be merely associated with the earliest contact between Islam and Africa, but with the beginning of the effective propagation of Islam among the indigenous peoples. In fact any account of the history of Islam in Africa should begin with the period of its active expansion. An equally crucial question in the history of Islamic propagation in Africa is the role of clerics and traders in the dissemination of the faith. The quotations with which this paper was introduced reflect the positions- some complimentary, others contradictory- of scholars on the issue. On the whole, recent research has tended to emphasize the immense contribution made by

men of religion to the expansion of Islam [4] and to cast doubt on the role which merchants are believed to have played in the propagation of Islam. [5] Such a trend has therefore undermined the long-established and tenaciously held view which has almost commoditized Islam and demonstrated the inadequacy of treating and interpreting the history of Islam in Africa from the perspective of conquerors and traders. As Fisher convincingly argued:

"the hypothesis of an independent religious penetration in the Sudan, only loosely connected with trade, seems strengthened by the evidence of Mediterranean commerce, which led to little religious interaction, and hardly any conversion. [6]

The third problem is related to the progress of Islam in Africa in terms of the various theoretical models proposed by writers. Hunwick's model of what he called the pattern of Islamization assumes that the arrival and settlement of Muslim merchants in search of local products led to the contact with indigenous people. [7]. Framingham's three-stage model of the process of conversion, although corresponding in some aspects to Hunwick's, is much more detailed, however, it introduces the clerical element into the model. He speaks of germination, crisis and reorientation. The first stage -is characterized by contact between traders and clerics leading to the adoption of the material aspects of Islam, the second by the assimilation of elements of Islamic religious culture and the gradual undermining of the African culture. He contends that the "dualism" of the second stage gives way to "parallelism," but was quick to note that Islam still pervades social life. [8]. Fisher also proposed a three-phase model of Islamization: the stage of "quarantine" in which Islam becomes a minority faith, that of "mix up" of Islam and pre-Islamic elements, and that of "reform." [9] All these models are interesting but they suffer from two basic weaknesses. Firstly, their validity were not supported and substantiated with pieces of the Africans who converted into Islam. Secondly, we are left in the dark as to the precise role of the local Muslim in the different stages of Islamization.

### **The Spread of Islam in Africa: A Regional Approach**

Trimingham and EI-Fasi and Herbek have identified seven "culture zones" in Africa into which Islam penetrated from the seventh until the nineteenth century. These are Egypt, the Maghrib, the Western and Central Sudan, the Nilotic Sudan, the Horn of Africa, and the East African coast.

More recently, EI-Fasi and Herbek have summarized the main developments in the process of the dissemination of Islamic religion message on a regional basis from the seventh to the sixteenth centuries. These are:

- a) The Arab conquest of Egypt and North Africa, which created favorable conditions for the gradual conversion of the indigenous people
- b) The commercial activities of Muslim Arab, Persian and African traders which gave impetus to the Islamization of tropical Africa;

- c) The clerics introduced Islam among the Somali and strengthened it among those who had already converted' and
- d) The Islamization of the Nilotic Sudan through the migration and settlement of nomadic Arabs and the further spread of the religion in the Horn of Africa through clans and families.

## Egypt

Although the Arab conquest of Egypt is conventionally regarded as the starting point of the history of Islam in Africa, since Egypt was the first country to be invaded by the Arabs. The conquest did not immediately lead to the Islamization of the indigenous people of the country. However, due to internal contradictions and problems in Egypt, religiously and politically- between and within the Coptic Church, on the one hand, and the ordinary Egyptians, on the other, the local people were only gradually attracted to Islam. The “steady influx of Arab Beduins from the Arabian Peninsula and the Fertile Crescent is crucial to the facilitation of the local people in embracing Islam. However, early sources suggest that there was, “the rapid spread of Islam in the early days of the occupation.” What we do not know for certain, is, what actually happened between the arrival of the Arab conquerors and the conversion of the ' local people to Islam, how and by whom the new religion was preached, and the mode of conversion.

Available evidence suggests that the process of the propagation of Islam was slow, slight and uncoordinated, because conversions became a means of escaping from the fiscal burden imposed by the Muslim authorities.

The period from the Arab conquest up to the establishment of Fatimid power is rather obscure from the point of view of the spread of Islam. It is dominated by dynastic changes- the Ikhshidids and Tulunids- and the struggle for power among the local protagonists and supporters of these alien dynasties.

The ascension of the Fatimids to power gave stimulus to the revival of Islamic *da'wah* with the founding of the Azhar mosque-university. These were also coercive measures taken against the local Christians and Jews during the reign of al-Hakim (996-1021) which led to the conversion of thousands of Copts to Islam. Al-Mustansir's long reign (1036-94) marked not only the apogee of the Fatimid's power, but also, the expansion of Shiism beyond Egypt into Sind and Yemen. There was also a modest growth of literature on Isma'ili theology and law.

The next phase in the history of Islamic propagation in Egypt is the Ayyubid period which was characterized by the ascendancy of Sunni Islam following the collapse of Fatimid hegemony. Madrasas (religious colleges) were established during the time of Salah al-Din, the founder of the Ayyubid dynasty. The introduction of the Sufi brotherhoods also acted as a further stimulus to the revival of Islam. The other significant aspect of the history of Islamic Egypt in the period under discussion is its relations with the Maghrib and West Africa, especially, culturally. As Herbek puts it:

This process [of cultural links] was conditioned not only by Egypt's' leading position in the Muslim world but also by the gradual spread of Islam and Islamic learning in the sub-Saharan belt. The pilgrimage, extended stay of pilgrims in Egypt, acquisition of knowledge and books, settlement of Egyptian clerics in the Sudan, and correspondence between Sudanese and Egyptian rulers "

.Contributed to the widening of Sudanese scholars, horizons, and to their acquisition of a larger and deeper knowledge of Islamic learning."

One adverse effect of the influence of Egyptian scholars was, however, the absence of dynamism and tradition of reform in Islam in West Africa.

### **The Maghrib**

The military campaigns into the Maghrib immediately followed the Arab conquest of Egypt. 'Amr b. al-As and 'Abdallah b. Sa'd, successive governors of Egypt, respectively launched expedition into the Maghrib in 643 and 647. However, it was the establishment of Qayrawan in 670 by 'Uqba b. Nafi' which played a more crucial role in the dissemination of Islam. The scholars of Qayrawan and of other Islamic centers were instrumental in the propagation of Islam among the Berbers, although there is paucity of material on the actual process of Islamization.

However, a major trend was the formal conversion of the Berbers following their subjugation by the Arab armies and their reversion to their traditional belief after the withdrawal of the armies. Another feature of the Islamization of the Berbers was the conversion of the prisoners of war by the chiefly families after their liberation, a development which was subsequently emulated by others. However, this affected only a minority of the population. The expansion of Islam into the hinterland took a long time. Hence, by the first half of the eighth century Islam had spread among the sedentary and nomadic people of the plains and the coast. The Berbers also adopted Kharijism as an ideology of resistance against Arab domination and as "an expression of Berber acceptance of Islam as a religion." Numerous Ibadi -clerics carried out extensive *da'wa* among the Berbers who "were genuinely and not merely nominally converted." The Islamization of the Maghrib was completed by the tenth century.

The next landmark in the history of Islam in the Maghrib was the emergence of the movement of the Almoravids (al-murabitun). The main features of the religious background of the movement were summarized by Herbek and Devise, Levzion and de Moraes Farias. These are: the superficial state of Islam among the Sanhaja in the Western Sahara and the urge, inspired by militant Islam, to establish a purer and rigorous Malikism, and the impact of the pilgrimage on the awareness of the Almoravid leaders of the shortcomings of Islam among their people. Others include the multiplicity of heterodox sects such as the Barghwata and the Ibadis, and the prevalence of superficial Islam which gave stimulus to the revival of Sunni Islam as a reaction to the Fatimid's attempt to impose their doctrine, and a movement of Islamic reform.

The Mahdist tradition of Islam in the Maghrib was firmly established by Muhammad b. Tumart, the founder of the movement of the Almohads (al-Muwahhidun). The most enduring legacy of the Almohads from the point of view of religious development was the impetus they gave to the revival of Sufism, and not the promotion of reform.

## **Western and Central Sudan**

The penetration of Islam into the Western Sudan predates the complete Islamization of the peoples of North Africa and the Sahara. Kharijite scholars and traders, especially of the Ibadi sect, played a major role in the process much earlier than those of Sunni Islam. The spread of Islam was facilitated by the emergence of commercial settlements along the trade routes of the Sahel and the Sahara. As El Fasi and Herbek put it:

Thus, Islam appeared not as a moving frontier of mass conversion in a continuous area but rather as 'a series of urban enclaves at the centers of trade and political power. These settlements along the trade routes and in the major centers constituted the nursery of the eventual propagation of Islam.

The earliest converts were local traders, followed by rulers and countries. The first West African ruler to convert was War Djabi of Takrur, who was in the lower Senegal. Even, before him, it was reported that a local chief of Gao had adopted Islam in 1009 A.D. The king of Mallah, an early Malinke state, was also converted about the same time.

The establishment of Islam in the central Sudan occurred in the eleventh century when Kanem's ruler converted to Islam. However, Islam's definitive consolidation took place during the fourteenth century as a consequence of the activities of traders and clerics, and the arrival of Sharifs.

In Ghana, Islamization was brought about peacefully and gradually through preaching and commercial influence, and not through the conquest. The Islamization of the rulers of Mali took place in the thirteenth century. Further expansion and consolidation of Islam were as a result of the emergence of local preachers and scholars.

In Songhay, the position of Islam was strengthened from the time of Askya Muhammad onwards. The rise of Timbuktu as a center of extensive caravan trade and vigorous intellectual life also contributed to the consolidation of Islam.

In Senegambia, the sixteenth century witnessed the adoption of Islam by the great majority of the Gambian populations and the Tukilor of Futa Toro. On the Gambian coast, Muslim clerics traveled widely, by preaching conformity to Islamic precepts and three ribats (Sufi retreats) on the banks of the Gambia served as centers for the training of clerics who carried Islam into the adjoining regions.

## **Nubian and the Nilotic Sudan**

Although Nubian maintained contact with the Islamic world from the time of the Arab's conquest of Egypt, the advance of Islam was inhibited by the existence of the Christian states of Maqurra and 'Alwa. In the eighth-century, Arab nomadic groups from Upper Egypt migrated to Nubian and the Red Sea littoral. Their settlement and the subsequent arrival of Muslim traders led to the gradual Islamization of the Nubians and the Beja. In subsequent centuries, Muslim clerics and holy men preached Islam in the central Nile Valley.

## **Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa**

The Dahlak Islands of Red Sea coast were occupied by Muslims Arabs in the early eighth century. By the beginning of the tenth century, an independent Muslim dynasty had been established there. The area maintained commercial relations with the Christian state of Aksum and served as a gateway for the spread of Islam, although the significance of its role as a center for the diffusion of Islam had been recently challenged. This is based on the argument that the Christian state and church made the preaching of Islam in the hinterland difficult. [10].

The other route for the penetration of Islam was the port of Zayla, which is on the gulf of Aden coast.[11] A number of Muslim trading communities emerged followed by the establishment of full-fledged states in the hinterland of southern and eastern Ethiopia: the sultanate of Shawa (until the end of the ninth century and whose founder claimed descent from the Makhzumi clan of Mecca); Ifat, founded by the Walasma ruling family (according to Ibn Khaldun); the ancestors of the Walasma had fled to Ifat as refugees from the ancient Muslim state of Famut) who, according to oral traditions, also claimed Arab origin, their progenitor being 'Aqil b. Abi Talib or, alternately, the founder of the dynasty was descended from Hasan b. Ali, [12] Dawaro, Hadya and Bali, besides a number of other smaller states.[13]

The Somali groups living on the coast and hinterland of the Gulf of Aden had early contact with Arab and Persian merchants who settled in the towns and brought Islam with them. According to traditions, the ancestors of the various tribal groups came from Arabia. Mogadishu, Brava and Merca where, beginning from the tenth century, Arab and other Muslim merchants had settled. [14].

## **The East African Coast**

Islam reached the northern coast of East Africa in the eighth century and the southern parts before the eleventh century. It remained a faith of the foreign trading communities without affecting the indigenous people, because these expatriate merchants had not developed any large scale proselytizing activity.[15]. It was not until the twelfth century that Islam began to have impact upon the coastal societies to an appreciable degree. [16]

## **Islamization: The Role of Clerics and Traders**

A direct, mechanical and spontaneous connection had often been assumed to exist between commercial expansion and the spread of Islam. It had become so well established a notion at both the popular and scholarly levels. Until recently, no attempt to question the historicity of this claim, and the generalization of this on different historical epochs, circumstances and communities in Africa. It is therefore necessary, both from the theoretical and historical perspectives, to define, as precisely as the sources at our disposal permit, the actual relationship between traders and the spread of Islam, and to examine how far traders were; if at all, involved in the work of proselytization.

According to Trimingham, "accounts given by Arab writers make it clear that Islam made its first appearance through the operation of traders" The mere presence of Muslim/Arab trader perse does not, however, lead to conversion or suggest that those traders were directly involved in the task of proselytism, unless it can be proven with concrete evidence that they were so involved.

The commercial explanation of Islamic propagation suffers from two basic weaknesses. First, it was largely based on a general assumption that has emerged in order to overcome the lack of detailed factual information. This is a consequence of the nature of the available sources. These sources do not tell us as much as we would like to know about the social and educational background, and upbringing of the merchants, the way in which they used their leisure time apart from their religious duties, and the degree of their religious commitment and competence to undertake proselytization. The sources are also silent on the presence or absence of clerics in their midst, although some writers have suggested that traders were invariably accompanied by clerics, and asserted that the latter were allowed by African rulers, both to practice and propagate their religion.

Second, available sources obscure the role that professional clerics certainly played in the propagation of the faith by giving more credit to traders than to clerics. Some subscribe to the view that traders served as vehicles for the propagation of Islam beyond the boundaries of the military expansion. He regards the period when Islam was transmitted by Muslim traders as the second phase in the process of the diffusion of Islam. In a later work, however, he writes, "traders did open routes, expose isolated societies to external cultural influences, and maintain communications, but it seems that the traders were not themselves engaged in the propagation of Islam".

If, and whenever feasible, the study of the socio-economic and educational background of traders before their active involvement in commerce could throw light on their precise contribution to Islamization. In Wallo, Ethiopia, an analysis of traditional Muslim educational system reveals that there was a special relationship between Islam and commerce. It has suggests that those who acquired basic Qura'anic and post-Quranic education faced considerable economic hardship (since there was no institutional and financial support for their activities) and that, they travelled extensively, in search of teachers. This served as a sort of informal training in commerce. Thus formal education can be said to have fostered positive attitude and inclinations towards commerce which in turn facilitated the expansion of Islam. This seems to have been a feature of the relationship between trade and Islam with the former contributing to the material sustenance of the latter. Such institution as the Hajj, Qur'anic schools and Sufi establishments were maintained through the generous patronage of prosperous traders and cultivators. This is especially true in the relatively dense settlements along the trade routes. In the rural areas, well to do cultivators and craftsmen also contributed to the upkeep of the clerical class through grants of waqf lands and regular allowances in grain. One cannot question the fact that Muslim traders had historically played leading roles in creating favorable conditions, from which proselytization took root and flourished. It is difficult to conceive the spread of Islam in areas where Muslim merchants had not preceded the arrival of clerics. However, if this arguement is pressed too far, it will lead to assertions such as that made by McCall, which reads, "there is little doubt that as long as Muslim merchants have been doing business south of the Sahra, they have also been explaining and exhorting.

Wallo oral traditions strongly suggest that Muslim teachers were preoccupied with instruction and had little time and inadequate resources to take up trading. There was a local cultural

stigma attached to the trading *alim* because of, among other things, the danger of coming into contact with women in the market which might invite temptations. Hence, teachers and clerics in Ethiopia seem to have been, for the most part, professionally and culturally averse to commerce.

Early and mediaeval Arabic sources on Ethiopia hardly portray a direct link between the activities of traders and the propagation of Islam. In fact, there are more references to the establishment of settlements on the Ethiopian Red Sea coast founded by Arab families from the Hijaz and Yemen, many of whom consisted of political refugees and pious men, than to trading stations funded by merchants, and hardly any allusions to merchants engaged in religious propagation. There are also more references to conversion to Islam induced by clerics than to religious change brought about as a result of the efforts of traders. Such is the tradition, for instance, of the origin of the Muslim dynasties of the sultanates of Shawa and Ifat. Maqrizi wrote that the ancestors of the latter had hailed from the Hijaz and settled near Zayla. He explicitly stated, "some of them gained a reputation for their philanthropy and piety." Cerulli observes that the Islamization of the people of southern Ethiopia was effected through the settlement of Arab immigrants consisting of both traders and men of religion thereby emphasizing the pre-eminent roles which indigenous clerics played in the propagation of the faith.

In a seminal and illuminating article, Sanneh argues, "the traditional image of the trader and warrior as the principal carriers of Islam in Africa has been overemphasized by scholars to the extent of obscuring the more decisive and effective role of clerics in the dissemination of Muslim culture." Levtzion also expressed a similar view by noting that while historians have tended to stress the role of traders as carriers of Islam, local traditions of Islamization among indigenous Muslim communities have highlighted that of the Muslim holy men. Fisher has stressed the role of Muslim teachers in providing not only literacy and education, but also their skills in prayer and divination which had utilitarian values.

By far, the most conclusive evidence for the prominent role which clerics played in the cultivation and recrudescence of Islam in Africa comes from the period of the introduction and dissemination of the Sufi orders (*turuq; tariqa*). The conversion of a significant number of Africans to Islam is attributed to holy men trained in the mystical way, a subject which is beyond the scope of this study.

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2

**GLOBAL POLITICS, WOMEN EMANCIPATION AND GENDER MAINSTREAMING  
FROM AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE: A CHALLENGE TO MUSLIM WOMAN IN SUB  
SAHARA AFRICA?**

Kulumba Mohammed

**INTRODUCTION**

In contemporary global politics, there appears to be a growing belief that Islam and Sharia law are anti-national and global agenda for gender mainstreaming and women emancipation. This belief is mainly based on the perception that Islam and Sharia law provide women with limited social, political and economic participation within a state. In addition, its legal acceptance of the institution of polygamy is regarded as being antithesis to human rights. This perception has been enhanced by the extremist Muslims who oppose contemporary gender mainstreaming policies. These Muslims regard these policies and women emancipation as part of the USA and western civilization efforts to dominate the international system. It is argued that these perceptions were intensified after the September 11, 2001 attack on World Trade Center in USA and contemporary global war on 'terrorism' and the negative consequences in Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestinian land and Lebanon.

This paper contends that Islam and Sharia law are neither oppressive to women nor are they anti-women emancipation. There is substantive evidence, both in the theory and practice which show that Islam and Sharia law are gender sensitive. For example Islam and Sharia law give women the right to freedom of association, participation and property ownership. The contradictions appear to be linked to the different interpretations and practice of Islam and Sharia law in different historical, social, political, cultural and economic settings.

This paper, proposes that, for the Muslim women in Sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere to succeed towards emancipation and gender mainstreaming, they must have a clear understanding of gender and their rights in Islam and Sharia law, in the context of different social, political and economic situations obtainable in different states and circumstances. This will enable them and the international community to distinguish between women's rights and obligations, as provided for in the Qur'an and Sharia law, from some of the contemporary wrong beliefs over gender mainstreaming and emancipation in Islam. This paper is divided into three parts. The first part examines the theory of gender mainstreaming and women's rights as derived from the Qur'an and Sharia law. The second part discusses the historical, politics and governance, different interpretations of the Qur'an and Sharia Law, global politics and economic crises in sub Sahara Africa. It also attempts to bring out their linkages with gender mainstreaming and women emancipation. The last part is the conclusion.

## Gender mainstreaming and Sharia Law in Islam

Today, there is a danger in assuming that gender mainstreaming is to be found only in theoretical schools and concepts generated by USA and Western Schools of thoughts. However, issues of gender and women emancipation have also preoccupied Islam and other civilizations. [2] This was long before they became part of the global agenda for good governance.

Gender issues and women emancipation principles were recognized and provided for, some 1400 years ago by Islam and Sharia law. These have been variously referred to in the Qur'an and Sunnah. [3] According to the Qur'an, God says:

*O mankind; we created' you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into peoples (nations) and tribes, that you may know each other. Verily, the most honored of you before God is the most righteous of you. [4]*

From this verse, we can discern a number of issues in relation to gender and women emancipation. First, the word '*Peoples*' no doubt refers to both the female and male. It is therefore expressly implied here that in Islam, equality exists between a woman and a man. Secondly, the verse abhors any action or practice that may undermine the equality of a woman or a man, thus leading to the degrading status of the former. Thirdly, in Islam, the most worthy and exemplary being is not a woman or man, but one that excels in doing good. It also underscores the reality that a righteous woman is preferred to a male, who engages in evil doings. At the practical level, according to the Sunnah, women are the twin halves of men. Thus, women have equality with men in rights, obligations, aim of existence, moral and spiritual excellence.

The Qur'an and Sunnah provisions regarding gender equality raise pertinent questions that require answers and explanations in the context of practical realities in Muslim countries and overall perceptions of women in Islam. For example, if indeed there is gender equality in Islam, why is it that in Islamic and Muslim states and among Muslim minority, the reality is a contrary one. We attempt to respond to this question in the, subsequent sections of this paper.

Contemporary good governance and politics emphasize human rights and freedoms as embodied in the Universal Declarations and International instruments. Similarly, according to the Qur'an, Muslims must uphold and enforce justice at every moment and in any human relationship or transaction in the following verses: “*O believer: uphold Justice continually and steadfastly*” [5]; and “*God orders you to enforce justice.*” [6]

We must point out that this provision and the demand for the enforcement of human rights under Islam are all-embracing as they provide a comprehensive concept of justice which is absolute. For that matter, human rights in Islam is extremely broad. It covers all domains and facets of earthly existence. It is not merely limited to domestic relations, political, economic and social rights specified in International Instruments and Covenants. They go further and wide. It encompasses the protection of the environment, plants and vegetables, and other creatures and animals. These rights have only been recently recognized by the international community. According to the Sunnah, the Prophet Muhammad once stated, “*show mercy and compassion to every thing on earth and God will show mercy to you.*” [7] One must also note the reality that Islam does not stop at guaranteeing human rights to life and property, it upholds the rights of non- Muslim

and all minorities in Muslim states. There is the need to recount one of the sayings of Prophet Muhammad, which was emphasized during the last sermon he delivered before his death. He said:

*I shall myself be the complainant, on the day of resurrection, against those who wrongs non Muslims or gives them responsibilities greater than they can bear or deprives them of any thing that belongs to them [8]*

Consequently, any Muslim who violates the rights of a non Muslim commits a great offence. On another occasion, the Prophet reminds Muslims about the rights of non-Muslims in an Islamic by stating that, “any Muslim who kills a non Muslim has not the slightest chance of catching even the faintest smell of heaven. Protect them, they are my people.” [9]. In view of these well established principles and doctrines in the Sunnah, one is tempted to ask why, Islam is perceived as anti-human rights? Is it the Islamic practice or lack of knowledge among the people? Attempts would be made to answer these questions in the subsequent sub-section.

In the effort to implement Sharia law, contemporary Muslim states have drafted and enacted the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Islam*, which is based on the Qur'an, Sunnah and *Ijma*. According to Article 1 (a) of this declaration, “human beings shall be equal and non shall enjoy a privilege or suffer a disadvantage or discrimination by reason of race, color, sex, origin or language.” [10] Several Muslim states have to date rectified this instrument with approval and support from United Nations.

In the current global gender debates, there are views that regard Sharia law on polygamy as being an infringement on women rights. Many women right activists contend that polygamy does not provide women with equal rights at marriage and during marriage as men. Some argue that it is only the men and not the women that enjoy the right to have more than one legally recognized spouse. [11] However, according to the Qur'an, Muslims are enjoined to:

*Marry such women as seen good..., two, three, four, but if you fear that you will not be equitable, then only one. [12]*

This verse underscores the intricacies on polygamy even within Islam and Sharia law. Some scholars have argued that by implications, a Muslim is commanded to marry one wife since equal and just treatment of more than one wives, as provided for by the Qur'an is beyond the ability of any human being. They, thus attribute the historical and current popularity of polygamy especially among the Muslim minorities in sub-Saharan Africa to the misinterpretation of the Qur'an and the popularity of polygamous African tradition among Muslims [13]. This perhaps explains the low rate of polygamous families in Muslim states. It is therefore erroneous to associate polygamous families to Islamic values. Indeed, there are also economic reasons for polygamy, especially among peasant minority Muslims in sub-Saharan Africa, which would be examined in the next section.

## **Governance in Islam and Sharia Law**

Goran Hyden defines governance as the management of rules and norms that set the framework for the conduct of politics by the state.[14] In contemporary times, governance debates have dominated local and global politics with diverse understandings, interpretations and applications (Harrison, 2005; Hout, 2004; and UNESCAP, 2006). These debates have led to the evolution of two forms of governance, the good and the bad governance. Good governance is generally assumed to include the following variables:

1. A strong and vibrant civil society
2. A leadership which is accountable and transparent
3. An efficient and effective bureaucracy
4. Rule of law and human rights
5. A leadership that is responsive to people's needs
6. Participatory
7. Consensus oriented
8. Zero sum corruption
9. Consideration of minority views and interests
10. Voices of most vulnerable are heard in decision-making
11. Responsiveness to present and future needs of society

However, these scholars did not specifically indicate whether a political system with the variables of good governance should be a monarchy, a republican, federal or unitary, Islamic, Muslim, circular or military. In practice however, there are monarchies with variables of good governance. Some monarchies have been responsible for efficient and effective bureaucracy, rule of law and human rights [15]. The pertinent questions however, are, where do we place Islamic or Muslim states in the context of good governance? Can Islamic governance theory and practice guarantee good governance within a context of assumed global variables?

Governance in Islam and Sharia law emphasize consultation, participation, transparency and accountability of leaders and the governed. Above all public policy in an Islamic state must be responsive to the needs and demands of the people or else the government loses its political legitimacy to rule not only from people's perspective but most importantly, from God (Allah). According to the Qur'an, God commands the leaders to:

*Consult them (people) in affairs of governance, and then when you have taken a decision (government), put your trust in Allah, for Allah loves those who put their trust in Him. [16]*

Similarly, on another occasion, Allah commanded Prophet Muhammad to consult his companions so that the practice would become a tradition for the community, whenever they are faced with any matter of public interest and importance. [17] These principles of guide governance in Islam can be compared to what takes place in the presidential and parliamentary systems in a functioning western democracy, arguably, where public policy decisions are taken in consultation and approval of a democratically elected parliament, which represents the people. The major difference, in my view, lies in the qualification, form and nature. The political consultation in Islam

is done between authority, scholars, expert on the issue being debated, representatives of the people (after civic education), opinion leaders and the whole community (through a referendum). It is our contention that this is an improvement on western democracy. [18] Thus, the Islamic system of governance embodies key elements of good governance. To that extent, under this context, one may ask, why the views which associate Islam with bad governance? The answer to this question partly lies in governance practices in Muslim states which

### **Challenges to Muslim Women in Sub Sahara Africa**

Islam in Sub Sahara Africa was introduced by Arab traders. This was mainly along the Trans Africa Trade routes. The Arab traders were not organized and prepared for this mission. They therefore lacked the expertise and resources for the systematic development of Islam as a religion with a strong social political and economic base, particularly, in the education sector. This had implications on Muslim women. For instance, there were no Muslim schools and those available were established and managed by Catholics and Protestants Missionaries.

Similarly, according to the national objectives and directive principles enshrined in the 1995 Republican Constitution of Uganda, no.6, it is expressly stated that, "the state of Uganda, shall ensure gender balance and fair representation of marginalized groups on all constitutional and other bodies.[19] Indeed, the Uganda National Resistance Movement (NIW) government has since 1986 initiated deliberate policies aimed at fair representation of marginalized groups like women. For example, at each level of local government administration, there are posts reserved for women. Owing to historical factor, very few Muslim women have found their way into these political positions.

### **Politics and Governance**

It is now widely accepted that politics and governance influence the development process of any state. This is particularly the case because developmental strategies adopted by a state are outcomes of how politics is conceived, practiced and transformed. Put differently, the ways in which political rules, norms, methods and modes of interaction are established, maintained and changed would determine the possibilities as well as the priorities for development in the country. [20] One of the implications is that gender balance and women emancipation as a development strategy cannot be realized in a state where there is political and governance crises. Where do we place the "Islamic"/ Muslim and the majority of sub-Saharan states in the context of good governance, political norms and practices? Do they present an exemplary model for gender balance and women emancipation?

Before we examine politics and governance in "Islamic" and Muslim states, it is important to differentiate between Islamic and Muslim states. A Muslim state is any state where the rulers are Muslims, irrespective of the form of governance or constitutional arrangement. For this matter, it can be ruled by a constitutional or an absolute monarchy. It can also be ruled by an executive president or a prime minister. There is also the tendency of such a state to fuse Islamic and western governance norms and practices. On the other hand, an Islamic state is one where governance is

strictly based on Islam, Sharia law and Sunnah.

We have already noted that governance in Islam is by consultation, participation and responsive to peoples needs. We also noted that Islam is compatible with gender balance and women emancipation. Indeed an ideal Islamic state conforms to what Hobbs refers to a government, where individuals enjoy peace, comfort and security of persons and property. [21] Unfortunately, there appears to be few practicing Islamic states in contemporary time, where, for example, women are free to work following the legacy of the first wife of the Prophet Muhammad, Khadija who was a hard working business and wealthy woman. Then, women in the Arabia moved freely and undertook all sorts of jobs up to the medieval ages. The situation however changed following conservative juristic interpretation of the divine sources of Islamic law. [22] Possibly, this is why Mazrui argues, that apart from places like Uganda, the most likely laboratories of gender planning may be turn out to be the Muslim countries. The Muslim countries like Pakistan and Egypt have already experimented with special seats for women. Algeria, another Muslim state seems to have been leading the way in the employment of women in the national air force. [23] These Muslim states are not reinventing gender balance, but rather following the roots of Islamic governance.

Likewise, in Iran, another Muslim state, transformation has been taking place in gender mainstreaming, albeit, in a diluted form. [24] As a case in point, since the advent of the Iranian Revolution, a significant number of women have been employed in the public arena. Undeniably, it is not uncommon for a woman police officer, to be promoted to a Police Commissioner's post in the Iranian police force.

One may at this point, ask for an explanation for these contradictions. The answer arguably lies among others in the fact that Islam has not succeeded to change and influence indigenous cultures in totality to the extent that Zen Buddhism has done in Japan. Zen is central to the whole existence of the Japanese people. [25] Another explanation is that after the death of Prophet Muhammad, in 632 A.D, Islam was embraced by people who had long established their cultures and traditions as part of their governance systems. In the process, Islam inadvertently absorbed and adopted some of these new cultures and traditions, mainly through new converts. Thus, Islam became diluted in many of the societies that embraced it. Previously these social, political and economic systems had remained intact due to their geo-political positions. They were by nature in a sort of an island surrounded by water and sand that made it very difficult to be penetrated by external invading forces. These ensured their un-interrupted existence over centuries. Indeed, there is no known invader who succeeded in penetrating these sandy barriers and establishing a permanent foot holds before the advent of Islamic civilization in these regions. [26]

What do all these developments mean to a Muslim woman in sub-Saharan Africa? A great deal, I suppose. But the most fundamental implication is that a Muslim woman has no perfect model of an Islamic state to act as a reference point for her in the area of gender balance and women emancipation and governance in Islam. What appears to be a representative of Islamic governance systems are fused with other values and behavior some of which contradict Islamic principles. In Sub Saharan Africa, the reality is that most of the state systems are facing politics and governance crises are well documented. [27]. Some of the states in this region have virtually collapsed. Regime changes and public policy engineering, through undemocratic means is a common phenomena. Thus, each regime that captures state power institutes new sets of rules for politics and governance, which basically, are intended to alienate others from the business of governance. This scenario is a great challenge to a Muslim woman. She is required, now and then, to adapt to these unstable and endless institutional and public policy changes, some of which may be in conflict with Islamic

values.

The Domestic Relations Bill (DRB) in Uganda puts the dilemma of a Muslim woman in much more focus. The government which came to power in Uganda in 1986 carried out far reaching reforms in the gender balance and women emancipation in recent times. Uganda was at one time, regarded as one of the most gender sensitive states in the world. This was in the context, that else where, for example in Poland, after the 'peaceful' revolution which overthrew the communist government, the social status of women in society and in the family, became worse than before. [28] The DRB sought to address and redress human rights at the family level. The objective of the bill was to consolidate all family related laws over marriage, divorce, separation and property rights into one statute. Basically, when enacted, the law would regulate relations in marriage and family and determine the legal status of women and men. [29]

The most contentious section of the bill for a Muslim woman and the community in general is its provision regarding polygamy. By implication, the section outlawed polygamous families. Yet, polygamy, as earlier noted, is provided for by the Qur'an and Sunnah. Indeed, the Prophet Mohammad, who is a reference point for the implementation of Sharia law, married more than one wife. Therefore, the Bill was seen by many Muslims as a violation of their rights as guaranteed by Islam and private family affairs. [30] Muslims, contended that for them, 'in any matter regarding marriage, family and succession, they are guided by the Qur'an and Sunnah'. This is their unquestionable position, whether they are in a state where they are a minority. The views by Muslims and others opposed to the Bill appear to conform to Mazrui's assertion that constitutionalism ought to include measures to limit state power in the lives of private individuals. For him an African should defend the Kraal (home) as much as an English man defends the castle against the state intrusion. [31] Put differently, for the majority of Muslims in Uganda, Islam is their Kraal which they vow to defend at all costs.

What is the way forward for a Muslim woman and the community in the context of where the state intrudes too far into their private life? Is there a mechanism to mitigate against these tendencies that may appear to be undemocratic? The answer partly lies in the formation of strong Muslim women interest groups. Interest groups are now widely accepted to be part of the civil society and an important variable for good governance and politics in a state. They play important intermediary role between the private sphere and the state. Where interest groups are active, they can check the undemocratic tendency of the state. [32] This is in consonant with Othman Yasin's observation in the case of Arab-Muslims in USA. He attributes the negative US policies towards the Arab Muslims to the weak Muslim-based interest groups, in a situation where national policy is shaped and guided by organized groups. He argues that, while some wide spread prejudices exist against Arabs and Muslims; they can be overcome by Muslim interest groups, since the prejudices are basically as a result of lack or insufficient information and knowledge about Islam. [33] The same approach can be used in South Africa. The South African state like most non-Muslim states does not recognize Islamic Personal law (IPL). In fact, South Africa follows the Dutch law which is diametrically opposed in origin, principles, aims and application to Islam and Sharia law. [34]

To overcome such dilemma there are scholars who have advanced the view that Muslims in non-Muslim states should start Islamic political parties as a measure to articulate their interests. Although we have argued elsewhere, that it is not wrong for individuals or groups to start a political party within a religious constituency, it is not plausible in the case of minority Muslims in sub-Saharan Africa. The experience has shown that it is difficult for such a party to capture state power. For example, although the Islamic Front in Algeria (FIS), had obtained enough votes required for taking over state power, the then incumbent regime called off the second round of elections to preempt such an eventuality. [35] The regime in Algeria no doubt had strong support from USA and Western powers.

In 1992, when Kenya restored multiparty system, Muslims started the Islamic Party in Kenya (IPK) to articulate their interests. However, it did not take off beyond Mombassa where, there is a high concentration of Muslims. Similarly, in Uganda, in 1954, the Catholics started the Democratic Party (DP) to fight for their historical marginalization in a colonial state administration which was dominated by Protestants. Although DP is still in existence, its performance at the national level has been to a great extent, a failure. It is therefore difficult for such a party to attract people outside its traditional constituency. These people will always be suspicious of such a party. This, thus, deprives such a party the opportunity to assume national leadership. The best alternative, we believe lies in strengthening and forming strong interest groups and civil society in general as opposed to political parties. This however calls for the empowerment of affected groups especially through education.

### **Different Interpretations of the Qur'an and Sharia Law**

The Qur'an and Sharia law like the Bible have unfortunately been subjected to different interpretations by different groups within various socio-political and economic settings over the years. Some times, various interpretations have come from individuals, state actors with vested interest and in other situations, superimposed from outside sources. This has resulted in a serious dilemma for a Muslim woman for the identification of a correct interpretation, conceptualization and practices of gender mainstreaming and women emancipation in Islam.

Scholars have noted that the interpretation of the Qur'an and Sharia law have been used by some male dominated Muslim leadership as a ground for refusing Muslim women their rights as individuals, including the right to participate equally in politics and in the public arena. [37] Among others, it is noted that there are gymnastics used with Arab grammar, the official language of the Qur'an in order to mistranslate some key words. For example, when a masculine gender word is used for an injunction that it is felt a woman must obey, it is interpreted to denote the common gender imbalance. But when the same pronoun is used for something that a male wants to preserve for himself, and then it is interpreted to mean masculine gender.

In the same vein, liberal Muslims place the blame for the inferior status of women in Muslim countries, on the distorted juristic interpretations of the original sources, augmented by the social practices of many diverse cultural traditions. Accordingly, these traditions must be distinguished from Islam whose original message was to improve the status of women and to preach equality of the sexes as it has been noted in this paper. Indeed, the fact that the status of women was much better in the period of early Islam in comparison to their status in contemporary Muslim world must be a constant reference point. Thus, when properly understood, Islam actually supports equal rights for both sexes. [38] The consequence of different interpretations of the Qur'an and

Sharia law has led to various practices in Muslim states. In Tunisia, for example, which is widely regarded as one of the most progressive Muslim state in Africa, the family law treats polygamy as a crime punished by imprisonment.

Similarly, in Iraq, besides the undemocratic nature of governance during Saddam Hussein regime, the percentage of working women was not only high in relation to other Muslim states, but working women had extensive access to employment benefits. This included free child care and the right to retire with full pension after fifteen years of service. In addition, maternity leave with full pay was substantially longer than in the USA and many other Western states.[39] In other word, Iraq, a Muslim state had incorporated key elements of gender mainstreaming and gender balance principles from the Qur'an and Sharia law. It was, therefore not by accident.

In view of these developments, the way forward for the Muslim women in Sub- Sahara Africa is to struggle for gender mainstreaming and women emancipation as provided for in the Qur'an and Sharia law.

### **Global Politics and Media**

The contemporary phenomena of global politics have brought about many facets and dimensions. Among other things, it assumes that the worldly society is being or has been transformed into a global village where there are inter-linkages and inter-dependencies in all aspects of human endeavors. It also means that the inhabitants of this village are expected to conform to certain universally accepted social, cultural, political, economic norms and behavior. This is intended to ensure among others, peaceful coexistence and stability in the global village. However, it has now emerged, that within the global village there are major actors, periphery observers and a lot of injustices. The major actors own and control most of the global resources including the media. They also dominate most of the policy formulations and outcomes in the global village. Muslims and Sub-Sahara African states unfortunately fall within the domain of the periphery observers and consumers of global policies and outcomes. What is the implication of all these to a Muslim woman in Sub-Sahara Africa? The implications are many. However, this paper, attention would be focused on the global media.

The global media for example, communicates information on a daily basis which portray Islam and Sharia law as systems which are violent and against gender balance and women emancipation. The widely reported adultery case of Safiya in Nigeria, thus, calls for examination. When an Islamic court in Northern Nigeria convicted Safiya Hussein for committing adultery and sentenced her to death by stoning, the court ruling was widely communicated in the global media. The action equally received international condemnation and outrage against Islam and Sharia law as being violators of women rights. [40] However when Safiya appealed to a higher Islamic court and was cleared of all the charges, the ruling did not receive the same attention from the global media. This means, that a Muslim woman receives only the perceived 'negativity' of Sharia law through the global media. It is indeed observed that the positive developments from that part of the village, associated with the adoption of Sharia law, for example, the falling rates in crime, HIV/AIDS and moral decadents are not communicated. This is a challenge to a Muslim woman in

Sub-Sahara Africa, who as was earlier noted, has limited knowledge of Islam, thereby, making it difficult for her to discern the truth from falsehood in the global media.

There is also the growing tendency for the global media to distort information regarding Islam and Sharia law. This tendency increased after the tragic attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, which was linked to Islamic extremism (terrorism). Since then, the global media has been accusing Islamic values, systems and education as global promoters of terrorism. This has had great negative implications on the Muslim community. For example, in Germany, before the attack, the Muslim minority enjoyed great human rights and freedoms. They used to often freely meet in their Islamic centers and mosques without any fear from the state. However, under the German new provisions of general system, introduced as a measure to fight international terrorism, a Germany interior Ministry official can enter any time such centers and interrogates the members at will. [41] Thus, the contemporary daily life of a Muslim, especially in Europe and USA global villages is one of constant fear and despair. Indeed, although global politics assumes that one is free to travel and live in any place of one's choice, it is becoming very difficult for someone with a Muslim name to get entry visa to either USA or Europe. These contradictions in the global politics put a Muslim woman from Sub-Sahara Africa in a dilemma in several ways. One of this, is whether to abandon Islamic values in order to be accepted in some parts of the global village or accept it with the consequences arising thereof.

Muslim, Scholars have attempted to define terrorism within the context of *Ijma'*. For them, terrorism is an aggression, committed by individuals or groups of states unjustly against a human being, whether be it on the basis of his or her religion, life, intellect, wealth or honor. It also includes all acts of intimidation, causing harm, threatening, killing without due right, and all acts involving armed robbery, and attacking travelers as well as committing any violent action. It also embrace threatening an individual in the process of the implementation of collective criminal project, which aims at, inciting fear in order to extract vital information, thus exposing one to great risks. Terrorism also includes causing harm to environment or to a private or public facility or exposing natural or national resources to danger. [42] All these act come under mischief on earth, which Allah prohibits Muslims from committing. The Qur'an states:

*And seek not (occasions for) mischief in the land: for Allah loves not those who do mischief.* [43]

This verse enjoins on all the Muslims to desist from any activity likely to lead to any sort of disaster in the global village. Therefore, in a situation where Muslims have been involved in acts of terrorism, they do so as individuals. It is therefore; wrong to point accusing finger on universal Islamic values or other systems in the global village. Islamically, even the action of a major actor, refusing to sign for example, the Tokyo Protocol oil global environment is deemed an act of terrorism. The same is true for supporting international trade policies that result in unfavorable balance of trade leading to absolute poverty among sections of the global community. These, to a great extent, show how far and deeper terrorism is regarded in Islam, such which is beyond the conventional understanding and interpretations.

The challenge for a Muslim woman is to struggle for knowledge and skills to enable her to differentiate between the distorted forms of terrorism associated to Muslims by the global media. It must also be pointed out that Islam was at the forefront in the establishment of a global village with peaceful coexistence and without any form of terrorism. History has it that under Muslim empires, the Arabs, Indians, Africans, Spaniards, women and men of different races and colors worked together, each contributing equally their best to the development and prosperity of a global village. This enriched Islamic civilization. The resultant relationship was unique in nature, universality and comprehensiveness. It had no major actors and periphery observers. For this reasons, the Islamic global village was more accommodative and stable, socially, economically and politically than the contemporary global village.

### **Economic Crises**

The economic crises in Sub-Sahara Africa have been of great concern by scholars and the international community. For example, the current debt burden of African nations is currently estimated to be over \$235 billions. This is higher than the total income of all the countries in Sub Sahara Africa which is \$230 billions. [44] This scenario is illustrated in the table bellow:

### **The Debt burden of Sub Sahara African States**

Country	Debt In \$, 000	GNP per Capita	Debt Service % of GNP	Balance of payments
Angola	12,173	140	131	--
Burundi	1,119	140	72	-103
Congo DRC	12,929	110	196	-658
Congo	5,119	680	280	-252
Eritrea	149	200	12	-216
Ethiopia	10,352	100	135	-520
Rwanda	1,226	230	.34	-143
Sierra Leone	1,243	140	131	--
Sudan	16,843	.290	172	-1.99
Uganda	3,935	310	.35	-706
Zimbabwe.	4,716	620	69	--

**Source:** World Bank Development Indicators (2000), pp. 10-247)

The statistics in the table show, the extent of economic crises in the Sub-Sahara Africa. These states are indebted, mostly to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Governments of the west and the World Bank. The economic situation is likely to worsen since these states continue to borrow for debt servicing and development programs. In the case of Uganda, recent economic statistics shows that the number of Ugandans living bellow poverty line has increased. It is estimated that about 7.7

million Ugandans out of a total population of 22 millions live in abject poverty. [45] What does this grave economic situation mean to a Muslim woman in Sub-Sahara Africa? Before one can examine the implications of this, it is important to note that the Muslim women group is not homogenous. There are the urban, elite and rural women. Each one has had different impact and intervention to the economic crises. Even, within the urban and the elite Muslim women, there are the educated and semi-illiterate. The latter are in the majority. The economic crises have forced the majority of urban Muslim women into the informal sector. Many women have found the informal sector very attractive because they are able to perform their domestic responsibilities as well. [46]

Much as the informal sector has provided the alternative exit from the wide spread poverty, there are constraints. For example, lack of capital and credit facilities, inadequate education and skills, time demand made on women by household chores and lack of appropriate technology and relevant information. [47]

There are however specific limitations to a Muslim women. First, motherhood is highly regarded and valued in Islam. Some traditions cite how Prophet Muhammad emphasizes motherhood and breast feeding. Indeed, the rewards are many for those who engage in these acts. [48] In the case of a working Muslim woman, it is desirable to take leave off her work, moreover without formal maternity leave benefits. This affects the performance of a Muslim woman in her venture.

Secondly, under Islamic law, men are obliged to maintain their wives. This provision sometimes makes a Muslim woman to put in fewer efforts in her informal business.

Thirdly, the different interpretations of the Qur'an and other sources of Islamic law as it has been noted, affect Muslim women access and performance in their work outside the home. As a result, many Muslim women are made to believe that they are not allowed to engage in such activities outside their homes.

The situation is worse not only for Ugandan rural Muslim woman but also to all rural women of Sub-Sahara Africa. Most of the Sub-Sahara African economies depend on agriculture and the peasants contribute about 90% of this agricultural production. The rural woman provides more than 80% of free labour to the agricultural peasant production. Scholars have pointed out problems faced by these rural women. Many women still depend on cash brought into the home by the husband. [49]. It has been argued elsewhere that agriculture is a complex venture that cannot uplift the peasant standard of living beyond subsistence. Currently most of the Sub-Saharan African states are faced with environmental disaster due to land degradation by the peasants. Arguably, such land can be used more profitably by commercial farmers who have the capacity to withstand the vagaries of weather and the constantly changing market prices. To that extent, mechanisms should be devised for viable and large scale farming. This will provide employment to the peasants, thus improving the standards of living of rural women beyond poverty lines.

In general, the low level of household's incomes has meant that a million woman, whether in urban or rural areas cannot meet some of the Islamic obligations that require financial resources. For example Islam prescribes a mode of dressing for Muslim women. However the cost of an Islamic dress is beyond the means of most Muslim women in sub-Saharan Africa. Majority can only afford second hand clothing. Therefore, what is available on the open market are un-Islamic short dresses and skirts. In extreme cases some of the young Muslim women in urban areas have found their way in prostitution despite the danger of HIV/AIDS.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has attempted to demonstrate that, despite national and global efforts, the reality is that a Muslim woman in Sub-Saharan Africa has registered fewer gains and faces more challenges towards gender mainstreaming and women emancipation. The reasons for this is partly because, the whole process has been dominated by the local state and global politics. The input from a Muslim woman has largely been absent. For that matter, is to provide a Muslim woman with opportunities to participate in these actions and programmes. For this to be realized, there is the need to invest more in education and skill building programs for a Muslim girl child in Sub-Sahara Africa.

In the case of some Muslim states, this is an appropriate moment for them to move a way from the rhetoric's of assuming to be Islamic and to practice Islamic rule of good governance. This, it is believed, would reduce the wrong perception within the global village, whereby, Islam is equated with acts of violence, imbalance, oppression of women, bad governance and all forms of human rights violations and injustices. This process however must be gradual and not sudden, internally generated and not externally imposed. The latter will certainly be resisted and opposed. It is also desirable for the global community to define and conceptualize the phenomenon of globalization and global village in terms of justice for all. The current form of global politics, is incurred in a 'single power' international system.

## References and Notes

[1] Makerere University

[2] Although traditional African societies have generally often been referred to as being hostile to women, some-African cultural traditions suggest otherwise. For example, among the Baganda, in Uganda, it is well established that, “Omukazi takubwa, ateesa buteesa”, s literally translated as, ‘1; No to wife beating in a home, but consultations among equal heads of a family”.

[3] The Sunnah is the practice of Prophet Muhammad which is both an independent source of law and practical application of the principles contained in the Qur’an. There are two other sources of law, namely, the consensus of qualified jurists of a particular time (*Ijma*), and the inference of principles from the primary sources and their application.

[4] The Qur’an, 49:13.

[5] The Qur’an, 4: 135.

[6] The Qur’an, 16:90

[7] The Qur’an, 18: 31

[8] See the collections of Prophet Muhammad saying by Sahih Bukhari, Kitab al Diyat

[9] Sahih Bukhari. Ibid

[10] See, *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Islam* document.

[11] J. Asimwe, “What is the Domestic Relations Bill?” in *Arise: A Woman’s Development Magazine*, ACFODE, Kampala, Uganda, No.27, 1999, p.6.

[12] The Qur’an, 54:98.

[13] S.S. kayunga, *Islamic Fundamentalism in Uganda*, CBR publications, No.37, Kampala, Uganda, P.58.

[14] See, Goran Hyden, “Governance and the Study of Politics” in Goran Hyden and M.Braton (Eds), *Governance and Politics in Africa*, London, Lynn Reinner Publishers, 1992, p.7.

[15] The Saudi Monarchy for example has enjoyed unprecedented efficiency and effectiveness in bureaucratic terms. This has led to some degree of social, political and economic stability. The world has not heard of state corruption common in most of the African states.

[16] The Qur’an, 43:38.

[17] D.S. Gamba, “Globalization and Options for Development” in *The World Muslim League Journal*, Muslim World League, Makkah, Saudi Arabia, 2001. p. 61.

[18] A Commissioner on the on going constitutional review exercise in Uganda, pointed out that one of their greatest obstacle is the lack of knowledge and awareness in the community about constitutional matters. Some one can propose for the reduction of Presidential powers when she/he is not even aware of the Presidential powers provided for in the current constitution. This certainly underscores the importance of consulting the experts and civic education.

[19] *The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda*, 1995, p.4.

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- [22] O. A Zeid “Equality, Discrimination and Constitutionalism in Muslim Africa”, in J. Oloka-Onyango (Ed) Constitutionalism in Africa, Fountain Publishers, Kampala, Uganda, 2001, p.173.
- [23] A.Mazrui, “Constitutional Change and Cultural Engineering: Africa’s Search for New Directions, in J.Oloka-Onyango, op.cit. p.18.
- [24] S.S.Kayunga, *ibid.* p.5.
- [25] J.C.Feaver and W.Horosz (eds), Religion in Philosophical and Cultural Perspective, D.Van Nostrand CompanY,INC, Princeton, New Jersey, 1967,p.307.
- [26] P.K...Hitti, History of the Arabs, Macmillan, London,10<sup>th</sup> ed., 1970.
- [27] For example, it is difficult to imagine that there was once a state called Somalia. For details, see, M.Kulumba, “Ethnic Conflict and Movement Politics in Uganda”, a paper presented to *the Annual Symposium a/International Learning Center*, Mombassa, Kenya, 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> June, 2002.
- [28] M.Kulumba, “Some Reflections on the Socio-Political and Economic Reforms in Uganda since 1986”, a paper presented at the International Summer School of Cross-Cultural Studies, University of Warsaw, Poland, 18<sup>th</sup> August,2001, p.11.
- [29] See, the *Domestic Relation Bill*, Ministry of Gender and Social Development, Government of Uganda, 1998.
- [30] A.Kiyimba, *ARISE*, Women Magazine, *ibid*, p.10.
- [31] A.Mazrui, *ibid*.
- [32] M.Kulumba, “ Interest Groups in the Democratization Process of Uganda: The Challenges of Religious Organizations 1962-2000”, in T.Assefa (ed), Promoting Good Governance and Civil Society Participation in Eastern and Southern Africa,OSSREA, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 2000,p.58.
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- [37] O.A.Zeid, *ibid.*p.188
- [38] J.Goodwin, *price of Honor: Muslim Women Lift the Veil of Silence on the Islamic World*, New York, Little Brown and Company, 1994, p.70.
- [39] *The Monitor News paper*, July 15<sup>th</sup> 2002, p.29.
- [40] M. Haque, “The Muslim Situation in Europe: A Case Study of Germany” in *The Muslim World League*, Muslim World League, No. 1, 2002, p.42.
- [41] See, the *Muslim World Journal*, No.12, ‘February 2002, p.32
- [42] *The Qur’an*, 28:77).
- [43] W.M.Mande, “War and the Debt Burden in the Great Lakes Region” a paper presented at conference organized by the Department of Political Science, Makerere University, Kampala,

2000, p.5.

[44] See. The Background to the *Budget 2002/2003*, p.5.

[45] M.V.Mwaka, Gender Issues in Uganda” in E.K.Makubuya, etal (eds), Uganda: Thirty Years of Independence 1962-1992, Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda, 1994, p.490.

[46] V.M. Mwaka, *ibid*, p.503.

[47] Qur’an 2:233; 31: 14

[48] V.M.Mwaka, *ibid*, p.501.

## **FACTORS OF SPREAD AND RECESSION OF ISLAM IN ZIMBABWE AND UGANDA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY**

AI-Amin Abu-Manga 1  
Kamal Mohamed Gahalla 2

### **INTRODUCTION**

Zimbabwe and Uganda represent one of the unusual instances in the Islamic History of Africa, south of the Sahara, where Islam witnessed periods of recession after its establishment and spread. Although the footprints of Islam in Zimbabwe can be traced back to the 10th century, yet, no Islamic tradition and literature as such has developed in it (Neither in Arabic nor in the local languages), let alone Uganda, where regular propagation of Islam started only in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Otherwise, in other regions - especially in West Africa - once Islam was established, it kept steadily gaining momentum, thus leaving behind considerable amounts of literature in both Arabic and local languages (Swahili, Fulani, Hausa, Mandingo, etc.).

This paper tries to trace the historical contexts in which Islam reached Zimbabwe and Uganda, the agents through whom it was introduced and propagated, and the different historical, social, political factors (both internal and external) that hampered its progression and led to its recession in each of the two countries. It also sheds light on the relatively recent attempts and efforts made to resurrect Islam in these two countries and to examine the prospect of their success. Throughout this study, reference is made to other regions of Africa for the purpose of comparison.

### **On the Introduction and Spread of Islam in Africa**

Abundant literatures exist on the history of the introduction and spread of Islam in Africa. To refresh reader's mind, it suffices to briefly note, that contacts between the Arab Peninsula - the cradle of Islam - and the African continent existed, centuries before the appearance of Islam. This is especially true with regard to the coasts of East Africa, where the Arabs used to sail for commercial purposes. After the appearance of Islam, these contacts involved intermarriage with and Islamization of the local people. These latter developed later into the establishment of permanent settlements and political hegemonies, all along the coast and in the Islands (Mogadishu, Mombassa, Lamu, Kilwa, Sofala, Bemba, Zanzibar, etc.). The ultimate outcome of these historical events was the development of new societies in these coastal regions bearing a combination of local and Arab Islamic culture and most of them speaking Bantu language, that is, Swahili, with a great degree of Arabic Influence. [3] Also, in less than a century after the appearance of Islam, Muslim Arabs were able to cross the northern part of the continent through Egypt up to the Atlantic Ocean, and south across the Sahara down to northern edges of Sub-Saharan Africa, from where Islam was pushed further south by early Islamized local tribes (mainly, Fulani; Takrur, Mandingo and

Kanuri). [4] Islam was spread in the different regions of Africa through a number of different factors/agents, depending on the nature of the specific region and the particularities of its people. The Encyclopedia of Islam lists the following four agents as being the main ones:

1. The *du'at* (propagators of Islam)
2. The traders
3. The pilgrims
4. The religious migrations (*hijra*) [5]

But, there are also other factors/agents of equal importance which are not included in this list, such as Islamic conquests, establishment of Islamic states, the supremacy of the Islamic civilization at that time, the adaptive nature of Islam, the religious orders and the *jihad* movements. [6] The degree of spread or recession of Islam in different African states depends primarily on the presence or absence of these factors/ agents, on the one hand, and on the other, extent to which they could act among the targeted communities. However, it goes without saying that the African communities differ in their socio-historical backgrounds, cultural characteristics, political systems, economic potentials and exposure to external influences. While these state or community-bound characteristics favour the presence and action of the abovementioned factors/agents in certain African communities, in some other communities, they mitigate against that. It is within this frame of analysis, that Islam in Zimbabwe and Uganda is to be examined.

### **Islam in Zimbabwe: Spread and Recession**

Zimbabwe lies in Southern Africa, a region unlike Northern Africa, which throughout its history has never known any Islamic conquest. In other words, Islam was not received in this region in 'wholesome', but rather in a series of sporadic attempts by individuals or groups of immigrants. As a result of repetition of such attempts and the accumulation of their outcome, the principles of Islam spread gradually in the different countries of this region, including South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia. The reality of Islam and Muslims in Southern Africa did not attract the attention of historians until the sixties of the last century. This is probably because they never thought that Muslims could play an important role in the political, social and economic life in these countries, which are that far from the original whom of Islam (The Arab Peninsula). The introduction of Islam in Zimbabwe dates back to the 10th century A.C. with the extension of the Muslim Arabs' commercial activities and political influence to the southern coast of East Africa (present day Mozambique). For, the Zimbabwean town Senna (a commercial centre that linked the coastal parts with the areas of gold production) might be the same town of Sinna mentioned by the Muslim Arab historian of that time, al-Masudi, in his book "Muruj al-Dhallab wa Maadin al-Jawhar" (The Meadows of Gold and the Mines of Jewels). [7] There is strong evidence that some local inhabitants of that region, who were mostly Swahili and Shona speakers, embraced Islam through interaction with the Muslim Arab traders. The same process of interaction led late onto the Islamization of a certain local community, and its adoption to a certain degree, of Islamic culture, including Islamic names. That was the community of the Varembe, which, because of its importance to this study, will be the focused upon as well in this paper. [8]

Apart from the circumstance of the early history of Islam in Zimbabwe, a kind of resurrection of Islam in this country emerged following a relatively recent and very important

event; that was the construction of the bridge of Victoria Cataracts in the beginning of the 19th century. A British company, whose labour power was derived from Pakistan and the neighboring countries, came to Zimbabwe for construction of a bridge on the Zambezi River. After the completion of this project in 1905, a considerable number of the Asian laborers stayed behind in Zimbabwe. They gradually started to interact and intermingle with the local people in different ways, including intermarriage and trade. [9] These laborers represent the first badge of Asians who were responsible for the infussion of some elements of Islamic culture into Zimbabwe. However, the influx of of Asian immigrants (mainly, Indians and Arabs), in their majority, to Zimbabwe subsequently began. In 1912, Indians from Gujerat Province arrived Zimbabwe, and were later on joined by their families. They got engaged as sellers in shops and labourers in the mines. Other Asian groups followed suit in the same manner as the above Indians and started to establish links with the local citizens through trade. [10]

The Malaysians who played effective roles in the spread of Islam in Zimbabwe started their migrations in small numbers after the British conquest of this country in 1890. Most of them headed for Zimbabwe in search of better living opportunities. They were, thus, recruited as labourers in urban centers. Later on, they settled permanently and got integrated in the Zimbabwean society. [11] As such; they were able to interact smoothly with the local communities, "and eventually to spread Islam among them." The Varembe, to which we pointed earlier, constituted the first African Muslim elements of a relatively significant size in Zimbabwe. They are believed to be descendants of East African Muslims who settled there before the 17<sup>th</sup> century. As a result of lack of contact with the Muslim communities of East Africa (and the Muslim World in general) following the Portuguese control of the region, besides other internal factors, members of the Varembe community started to lose their Islamic identity and to get assimilated in the Shona and other southern African ethnicities. [12] The internal factors relate to "the large Bantu migrations" during the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and till mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, and a series of civil wars (mostly the Unjwan's), which all brought about a drastic change in the demographic and social setting of that region. [13] So, the disappearance of the Varembe from the social arena eventually meant the disappearance of the local Muslim society.

Islam thus turned into a mere religion of the immigrant communities. Under such condition, it is not surprising, if historical sources remained, until recently, silence about the existence of local Islam in Zimbabwe, concentrating, instead, on the Muslim communities of Indian and Malaysian origins. In fact, Southern African historical sources surprisingly points to the existence of ethnic groups known as Lamba and Varembe, whose members carry oriental (or Middle Eastern) names and cultural traits. Some historians regarded them as descendants of Jewish, precisely Falasha, origin. [14] As mentioned before, the Varembe, at a certain time, became completely disconnected from Islam, not practicing, even, the basic aspects of Islamic faith such as praying and fasting. They remained as such until the mid 20th century, when in 1966 an Indian businessman came accidentally across a member of their community, from whom he gathered information on their Islamic past. This accidental meeting marked a turning point in the Islamic history of the Varembe. Finding them with such a fascinating background, the Indian and Malaysian *du'at* (Muslim missionaries) started to make serious efforts toward returning them to the hegemony of Islam.

These efforts yielded fruitful results and thousands of them accepted Islam without much difficulty. Since then, they carry the remnants of its aspects (e.g. Muslim names), although these aspects were dormant for many centuries. [15]

The return of a big number of the Varembe to Islam stands as a proof of the serious and organized *da'wa* activities carried out by the Zimbabwean Muslims through the "Victorian Islamic Society" and the 'Zimbabwean Islamic Mission'. These activities were not confined to teaching and explaining the basic elements of Islam, but they also included, the dispatchment of a number of Varembe to Islamic centers in Fort Victoria and Harare for acquisition of advanced Islamic knowledge. This is in addition to the appointment and distribution of teachers to different Varembe areas. The first badge of those who studied abroad played a great role in spreading Islam in their respective areas -after their return, which eventually resulted in an increase in the number of Muslims in these areas. Moreover, an Islamic centre was established in Chinyika, which in 1978 comprised an Islamic school, a health centre and a student's hostel. [16] Through the joint efforts of the enlightened Varembe Muslims, on the one hand, and the Indian and Malaysian *du'at*, on the other, Islam in Zimbabwe continued systematically to gain more converts.

Although, today, the process of activating Islam in Zimbabwe may be accepted as "relatively satisfactory," it is still true that the bulk of the Muslims there are of Asian origins. In the absence of accurate and reliable statistics in this domain, figures indicating the number of Muslims and their ethnic background are based mostly on estimation. The highest total number of Muslims in Zimbabwe has been estimated in early 1980 at 61.000. 10,000 of these are Asians (mainly, Indians and Pakistani); 30.000 Malaysians; 20.000 local Africans (most of whom are Muslims only nominally); 1000 black Mozambiquans. So, with the exception of the third category (i.e. of local Muslims), the Muslims in Zimbabwe today are, in actual fact, settlers or descendants of settlers originating from Malawi, the Arab Peninsula, India, Pakistan, East Africa, Somalia and Mozambique. [17]

After the independence of Zimbabwe in 1980, again, a number of Muslims from other parts of Africa started to come. This indicates that a new Islamic tributary is now feeding the Islamic movement in this country [18]. However, it is worthy to note here that the spread of Islam among the largest Zimbabwean ethnic groups, namely, the Shona and the Ndebele, is still failing. According to Ethnologue, whose information is derived from the 1998 census, [19], the first ethnic group counts 6 million members, whereas those of the second group are in the range of one to one and half million. Thus, we can say that Islam is still unable to make any success among the two most economically, socially and politically influential groups. It is pertinent at this point to try and find out the difficulties and constraints that impede the spread of Islam among the Zimbabwean people in general. There are many problems and constraints which have to be surmounted in order for Islam to have the chance to play the aspired role in the Zimbabwean society, in which tribalism and Christianity is already deep-rooted. These constraints can be summarized as follows:

1. Illiteracy and ignorance of the basic elements of Islam among the local Muslim public.
2. Low rate of modern education among the Muslims due to its high cost
3. Lack of local *Imams* (Muslim leading learned people) and *du'at*. Most of the *Imams* and *du'at* are of Indian and Pakistani origin, which makes their effect confined to the respective members of, their communities, especially that they are not versed in English and Shona, the two widely spoken languages. With such incapability, these

people will not be in a position to further Islamic teachings even among the local Muslims, leave alone the major Zimbabwean ethnic groups, that is, the Shana and the Ndebele [20]

### **Islam in Uganda: Spread and Recession**

One can hardly speak about Islam in Uganda without reference to the history of the East African coast within the *framework* of its historical connections with the Arab Peninsula and Islam. As we may remember, the beginning of the Arabs' contacts with East African coast was in the form of seasonal trips for commercial purposes. But then, these trips developed through history into permanent settlements and establishment of even political hegemonies, with well established Muslim communities all along the coast and in the Islands. Arab-Islamic influence continued then to expand to the Lakes Region in the direction of Tanganyika (Tanzania), Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda and Congo. It may not be easy to precise the date of the beginning of this expansion, but it intensified during the 18th century. The main purpose of the Arabs and the Swahilians behind this expansion was to seek ivory and slaves to port the ivory and work in cloves plantation. [21]

The appearance of the Portuguese in the scene during the Omani Era (ca. 1700-1900) and their threatments of the Arabs interests along the East African coast was an important landmark in the history of Islam East Africa. It was during this time and following that event that Islam was pushed inside the continent by the Arab Traders and teachers until it reached as far west as Uganda and Congo.

We gather from historical records that Islam was introduced effectively in Uganda in 1844. Although the Swahilis, being primarily interested in trade, were usually not zealous about propagating and spreading Islam, yet they made a great effort in this regard, in Uganda specifically. Finding in Buganda an advanced state in the measures of that time, the Arabs were encouraged by its commercial opportunities to make their way to it. It was said that the first Arab arrived in 1844. [22] Groups of Arabs seemed to have immediately followed and tried to establish friendly links with its ruling circles. This is at least what we can gather from Y.F. Hasan's report:

The Arabs acquired some influence in Uganda during the second half of the 19th century, in spite of its distance from the centers of Islamic radiation in the north and east. That was due to the efforts of the Zanzibar and Khartoum traders and others. These traders were encouraged by King Kabaka Mutesa, and they, thus, propagated Islam among the inhabitants and constructed mosques. [23]

The early attempts of Islamic propagation in Buganda ran in the period from 1844 in two phases. The first phase was during the reign of King Sunna II (1844- 1854), when efforts were made in a precarious manner. Although Islam in this phase did not gain many converts, yet it succeeded to:

- a. draw the attention of the local people to the existence of 'foreign' ideas and beliefs, which might supersede the local ones

- b. inculcate in the minds of these people that there was a super-power which was higher in status than the Kabaka. In this way, it created a kind of "spiritual revolution" that enabled the local mind to listen to the 'foreign' religious concepts and beliefs, and, consequently, to accept them. [24]

The second phase was the one identified with the reign of Kabaka Mutesa I (1862-1875). It was described as "the golden era of Islam" in Buganda. In this era, Islam reached its apogee of glory, as it was declared by the king as the official religion of the state. The king passed a number of resolutions aiming at making all the people to commit themselves to the Islamic law. [25]

If we consider the gap between the date of the introduction of Islam in Uganda and the date of its declaration as the official religion of the state of Buganda (1862), it would be seen that this gap does not go beyond two decades. It is quite obvious that such a short time was not enough for Islam to stand on a strong ground to the extent of becoming the religion of the state. So, it was this very hasty way of its imposition that led afterwards to its recession.

The progress of Islam during Mutesa's time was attributed to a combination of factors, most important of which being the high position the king accorded to the Arabs in exchange for fire-arms he badly needed for strengthening his rule and extending his domination over the surrounding communities. [26] This is in addition to other factors, among which was that the Arab Muslims proved to have better healing means than those of the local doctors.

The Muslims also helped the Bugandans to better exploit their agricultural potentials and to increase their farm produce. Moreover, the Arab Muslim traders used to bring a higher quality of merchandise, including cotton clothes, which helped in embellishing the outer appearance of the royal court. Spiritually, Islam provided the people with a better understanding and explanation of the fate of the soul after death than their traditional beliefs did. [27]

The spread of Islam in Uganda was not confined to Buganda, but it was also carried further to the other Ugandan regions by Bugandan religious refugees and small traders. In the northern parts of the country it was introduced by soldiers and junior government employees of the Sudanese origins. So, it is obvious that Islam also reached some areas outside Buganda. But there, it faced a number of internal and external constraints which hindered its spread among the people of these areas. These constraints can be summarized as follows:

1. Most of the communities living outside Buganda were nomadic and not open.
2. The people were very committed to their customs, traditions and traditional beliefs.
3. The early British colonial administrators of the Ugandan Protectorate were very determined in preventing further Islamization of Uganda
4. The Muslims were not well-organized in their effort to gain more converts.[28]

The first Christian mission (the Church Missionary Society - CMS) arrived in Uganda in 1877, an event that ushered the beginning of a fierce competition between two cultures, the Islamic and the Christian. In fact, the coming of the Christian mission was just one of the reasons for the set-back in the progress of Islam in Uganda; otherwise Islam started to recess as early as 1875. The other reasons are:

1. The coming of H.M. Stanley to Buganda (a European visitor who gave Mutesa I (1844-1875) the impression that he represented a powerful European country, which would help him against any foreign invasion)
2. The Egyptian interference in the Great Lakes region, which made Mutesa to become hostile to the Egyptians and the religion to which they adhere

3. The Muslims massacres by Mutesa, especially the 1876 massacre, when Stanley warned him against the Arabs [29]

So, it is now clear that Islam, at this juncture, was living its worst time in Uganda. The negative impact of the Egyptian involvement in this affair was of complex nature. Reliance of Kidev Ismail, the then ruler of Egypt, on some Europeans, such as Baker and Gordon, to realize his expansionist ambitions turned out to be harmful to Islam. For, these Europeans tried, instead, to divert Mutesa from sympathizing with the Muslims and Gordon did his best to curtail the expansion of Islam in the Lakes Regions. [30]

However, while the competition between Islam and Christianity in Uganda was at its peak, the Sudanese army appeared in the scene and allied with the Bugandan Muslims, thus providing supportive force to Islam. At a certain time, this army constituted the backbone of the military as well as the civilian force of the Protectorate. To bring an end to that competition, Resident Lugard decided in 1892 to distribute the Ugandan chiefdoms to the three competing religious factions (Muslim, Protestant and Catholic), and the Muslim faction came out with three chiefdoms under the leadership of Mbogo Mwanga. With this arrangement and the support of the Sudanese army, the position of Islam in Uganda started once again to gain force.

Shortly and afterwards, the Christian missionaries compelled the British administration to adopt an overt policy that aimed at stopping further penetration of Islam from the northern borders. For the missionaries, amelioration of land and river transport would facilitate contact between Egypt (through Sudan) and the tribes of Northern Uganda, which was deemed to be on the account of their evangelization activities. [31] But that policy seemed not to have yielded fruits, because in 1921 (with the support of the Northern Sudanese Muslims,) the position of the Muslims in Uganda was found to be better than that of the other religious factions. Muslims succeeded in establishing their private schools in their residential areas as well as in the neighbouring areas [32]

Broadly speaking, the period from 1900 to 1921, represents a time of stability of the Islamic faith in the hearts of the 11gandan converts. The propagation strategy changed, whereby efforts were directed towards gaining the adherence of prominent personalities rather than the general public. More Islamic schools were constructed; *sheikhs* and Qur'anic teachers were trained and dispatched to all directions in order to disseminate Islamic teachings. Muslims also started to celebrate *Mawlid* (the prophet's birth) occasion and some of them started to perform pilgrimage in the holy Islamic lands.[33]

In the period from 1965 to 1970, M. Obete's regime used to exploit the tribal tensions among the Muslim communities for political ends, aiming through that, at having a foot in Buganda. This resulted in the accentuation of the disputes among the Muslims more than any time before. When Idi Amin seized power in 1971, he succeeded in bringing them together through an agreement which led to the foundation of the 'Higher Islamic Council' as the sole administrative body responsible of Muslims affairs. General Amin was sincere in his legalization of that body, but in practice, the council faced a number of intricate problems relating to the old disputes inherited from the former analogous bodies.

Therefore, Islamic movement failed to progress satisfactorily, even though the Head of

State was a Muslim, under whom the Muslims' religious interests were expected to benefit much. [34] Disputes among the Muslims seemed to have persisted until recently, thus offering the politicians dear opportunities to achieve their ends on the account of Muslims' interests.

Regardless of the above situation, by 1974, there were already many Muslim graduates, who obtained academic degrees inside Uganda and abroad. These graduates succeeded in occupying high administrative positions, from which they were hitherto deprived for lack of education. [35] Abdu Kasozi thinks that Islam in Uganda still rests on an unstable foundation for the following reasons:

1. Islam in Uganda remains all the time as a mere religion without developing into a culture
2. The number of Muslims in Uganda is not expected in the near future to count more than 50% of the total number of population. They now constitute a minority without effective control on the social power, and therefore, its ability to create a proper Islamic atmosphere in the country is limited
3. The Muslims are still divided among themselves. Although an organization exists, i.e. the Higher Islamic Council, which is supposed to unify all the Ugandan Muslims, but unfortunately not of them adherent to it
4. Islamic education is still very backward compared, e.g. with Christian education
5. The Muslims failed to invest their capitals in economically viable projects, such as industry and agriculture, or in basic social services projects, such as hospitals and schools, which could raise their social position. [36]

## Discussion

Earlier in this paper, we listed the factors/agents that helped in the spread and consolidation of Islam in many parts of the African continent. These include, *inter alia*: Islamic conquests, establishment of Islamic states, development of centres of learning and knowledge, individual *da'wa* scholars, traders, religious orders, pilgrimage and religious migrations (*hijra*), and jihad movements. In order to have better insight of the reasons of spread and recession or progress and set-back of Islam in East African, on the one hand, compared with the West African Islamic countries, where Islam, since its inception, never knew instances of drastic set-back, on the other hand, let us examine the presence and vitality of these factors/agents in each of the two regions.

Unlike North Africa, from where Islam was carried into West Africa, the coastal region of East Africa never witnessed Islamic conquests in their proper sense throughout its history. The objectives of the Muslim Arabs who were in East Africa were mainly commercial and political rather than religious. Here, propagation and spreading of Islam occupied only a secondary or subsidiary position. This is while the main objective of the Islamic conquests in North Africa and their extension into West Africa was to establish and spread Islam on its own merits. Historical records on the early arrival of Islam in Hausaland, [37] speak of the Wangarawa (Mandingo) Islamic mission (ca. 1350 A.C.), the group of Fulani from Malle (ca. 1450) bringing "books on Divinity and Etymology", a group of Kanuri scholars from Borno, and then the Arab scholars, referred to as the "*Sherifs*". Among these "*Sherifs*" was the renowned North African scholar, Muhammad ibn AbdulKarim al-Maghili (d. 1504), whose contribution toward the promotion of Islam in Hausaland was described as follows:

He brought with him many books. He ordered Rimfa (the then kind of Kano) to build a mosque for Friday. And when he had established the faith of Islam, and learned men had grown numerous in Kano, and all the country round accepted the faith, Abdul Karim returned to Massar, leaving Sidi Fari as his deputy. [38]

A number of similar missions kept flowing into Hausaland throughout the subsequent centuries, thus contributing in laying foundation for the development of Arab-Islamic culture in that part of Africa. So, we can see that right from the beginning the establishment of Islam in West Africa was based on primarily solid spiritual foundation, which guaranteed its stability, continuity and progression. On the contrary, the Arab Muslims' history in East Africa hardly speaks of Islamic missions as such, or of scholars of the caliber of Al-Maghili.

Instead, historical records focus on trade and business (ivory, gold, slaves, clove plantations, etc.), besides competition with imperial powers (mainly the Portuguese) on worldly interests. Also in West Africa, a number of Islamic states came into being as early as the 11th century A.C.: Ghana (1076-1085), Kanem-Borno (---), Mali (1100-1754), Soghai (1473-1591) and Sokoto (1804-1903). Most of these states were, at the same time, identified with renowned centres of knowledge and Islamic radiation: Tumbuktu, Gao, Katsina, Kano, Gazargamu, Agadez (Ahir) and Sokoto, which were constantly linked with the analogous centres in North Africa and Egypt [39] The early - as well as the later - local prominent scholars, such as Ahmad Baba of Tumbuktu, Dan Marina and Dan Masana of Katsina, Abdullahi Sikka of Kano, Muhammad Al-Barnawi of Borno, Mukhtar ibn Umar of Agadez (Ahir) and the members of the Fodio's family of Sokoto, were all regarded as being the product of these centres. From the writings of these scholars, it can be realized that, by the end of the 18th century, all the important branches of Islamic sciences were familiar to the scholarly elites of that time: law, exegesis, theology, Prophetic tradition, grammar, syntax, philology, logic, semantics, numerology, Qur'anic recitation, science of rhyme and metre and philology. [40] It is worthy to note that books on all these sciences were written in Arabic.

Of course, one cannot deny the development of Islamic culture in East Africa, but firmly established centers of knowledge similar to the above-mentioned ones are not known to have existed. The Arab-Islamic literary product of this part of Africa was mostly books on travels, didactic poems and stories (derived mostly from "Thousand and One Night"). They were mainly in the Swahili Language and the majority of their writers or composers originated from outside the continent (Arabs and Persians). [41] Otherwise, writings on deep Islamic branches of knowledge - such as the ones listed for West Africa by East-African local scholars have hardly been recovered, if ever existed.

Promotion of Islam in West Africa was also partly supported by jihad movements, such as that of Shaikh Usman ibn FodiQ in Hausaland," Alhaj Umar Al-Futi in Futa Jallo and Futa Tofo and Alhaj Ahmad Lobbo in Masina. These jihad movements did not aim merely at gaining new converts, but rather at reviving of Islam and its purification from syncretic practices. In other words, besides increasing the number of converts, jihad movements also helped in awakening Islam and strengthening it in the hearts of those who were already born as Muslims. This important agent of

spread of Islam in terms of both quantity and quality is completely missing in the history of Islam in East Africa.

Likewise, pilgrimage (with hardship) has been for a long time, one of the important aspects of Islam in West Africa [42] Historical records are abundant on royal fabulous pilgrimage caravans, such as that of Mansa Musa, the emperor of Mali, and Askia Muhammad, the emperor of Songhai. Pilgrimages of religious leaders with their followers were also recorded, such as the pilgrimage of Alhaj Umar AI-Fuli of Mas-sina. This is besides the regular groups and individual pilgrimage travels. Pilgrimage in some West African countries, especially Nigeria, has become a deep-rooted tradition. It has become an institution by itself, which functions systematically under the direct care of the state.

Religious migrations (*hijira*) from West Africa (always in the direction of the Holy Land) were also frequent, especially during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, motivated by expectation of the awaited Mahdi, expected to emanate in the direction of the Nile or in Mecca itself. [43] The last and most important migration was the one that was led by Sultan Attahiru Mai-Wurno from Sokoto following the fall of the Sokoto. Caliphate in the hands of the British *Nasara* (Christians) in 1903. [44].

In East Africa, neither pilgrimage of a large scale and systematic order similar to that of West Africa, nor historical religious migrations were recorded. Religious orders play a pivotal role in the religious and social lives of the Western (and Central) African Muslims. The Qadiriyya order was the '*tariqa*' of the Kuntas in Mali and the Fodios in Sokoto. It acted as an effective means of fostering unity and brotherhood among its followers, and as a potential means of their mobilization when the need arises. Similarly, the Tigganiyya order, which originated in North Africa, has a large number of followers in the Senegambia Region and the Savanna Belt in Western and Central Africa. In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century AI-Raj Umar AI-Futi led a jihad movement under the banner of this *tariqa*, which later turned into a movement of resistance against the French colonial invasion. Today, networks exist, which link the followers of each of the two religious orders from Senegal up to Sudan. [45].

Of course, religious orders do exist in East Africa, but here they have been of a quite limited vitality, compared with West Africa. At least they failed to unite the Muslims at a macro-level as they did in Western and Central Africa. So, we can now see that all the agents/factors of the spread, consolidation, stability, continuity and progression of Islam' apply perfectly in the case of West Africa. This means that Islamic culture has been for centuries deep rooted in the lives of West African Muslims, which enabled them to resist, to a large extent, the direct anti-Islamic policies of the colonial period.

On the contrary, most of these agents/factors did not act effectively in the coastal zone of East Africa, that is, the heart of the Arab Muslim centers themselves; let alone the peripheries, such as Zimbabwe and Uganda. As we have just seen, Islam was first carried to Zimbabwe as an appendix to the Arabs' trade. Lacking all the reasons of development and continuity, it shortly afterwards disappeared with the decline of the Arabs' trade in that region. Its second phase started quite recently, identified with the Asians, and in unfavorable conditions of competition with another religion (i.e. Christianity), during a period, when the Western powers were exerting total control over the entire region. So, the recession of Islam and the very slow process of its resurrection among the local people should be perceived in the light of these conditions and circumstances.

As for Uganda, it is doubted if it is not the last African country to receive Islam anew. By

the time the first Arab Muslim man arrived in Buganda (1844), great Islamic states and empires had already existed in West Africa, some of them had even declined, and many Islamic revival movements had taken place. The time of the arrival of Islam in Uganda was also very significant; it was just a few years before what may be called "the scramble of the Great Lakes". As it has been seen above, the acceptance of Islam by the royal court of Buganda and its intermittent opportunities of success were for the sake of political and economical interests more than for its merit as a spiritual system. Soon afterwards, the entire Lakes regions witnessed a period of intensive politico-religious competitions (Egyptian and European ambitions, Islam, Catholic and Protestant religions). So, loose beginning, short time and unfavorable political circumstances, all these combined to prevent the development of proper Islamic culture and a united Muslim community, which could be strong enough to protect Islam against recession in time of unfavorable political circumstances.

### **Challenges facing the Muslims in Zimbabwe and Uganda**

From the foregoing discussion on the history of Islam and the situations of Muslims in Zimbabwe and Uganda, it is realized that development of Islam in these two countries faces different kinds of challenges. These challenges can be classified into two types: challenges which are common to all the Islamic African countries south of the Sahara and those which are particular to the two countries under study. The first type relates to:

1. Factors of internal weakness that renders the African Muslim states prone to foreign imperial intervention
2. The experience of colonialism with all its negative impact
3. Westernization and cultural assimilation
4. Zionist and evangelization activities. [46]

The other type of challenges (also encountered, to a lesser extent) in other Islamic states) relates to:

1. Illiteracy and ignorance of the basic teachings of Islam among the general Muslim public
2. Lack of *Imams* and *du'at* versed in the local languages
3. Low rate of modern (Western) education
4. Sectarian divisions, which prevent the Muslim in one and the same country to be united under a unanimously accepted organization.

## Conclusion

To sum up, Islam was carried to both of Zimbabwe and Uganda from Islamic centers (East African coastal zones), which themselves lacked the basic factors of Islamic development and consolidation. It reached both countries as an appendix of commercial objectives and not as an objective by itself. Attempts to spread it in the two countries were carried out mainly by outsiders (Arab and Asians in the case of Zimbabwe, and Swahilians and Sudanese in, the case of Uganda). However, the native Ugandan citizens, short afterwards, got seriously involved in the matter. Revival of Islam in Zimbabwe and attempt of its spread and consolidation in Uganda started very recently under, conditions of serious politico-religious and cultural competitions (with Christianity and Westernization). So, under such circumstances, one would not be surprised if proper Islamic culture failed to develop in these two countries, and if in both countries, Islam witnessed instances of set back.

However, from what preceded, it can be clearly seen that the position of Islam and Muslim is far better than in Zimbabwe. For, while Islam in Zimbabwe still remains the religion of "foreigners" (Asians), in Uganda it has steadily been developing as a native religion. Islamic education has now been supplemented by the Islamic University of Mbale established and financed by ICO in 1988, which opened a new avenue for Muslim potential graduate and postgraduate students. However, it is recommended that:

- a. Islamic Conference Organization (ICO) is strongly recommended at the moment, if not to increase the financial allocation of the Islamic University of Mbale, at least to REGULARLY meet the already established financial commitments
- b. The Islamic University of Mbale should not confine its curricula to Islamic Studies (and other human sciences), but modern sciences, such as medicine, engineering and informatics science should introduced and promoted
- c. More scholarships and admission places should be availed for Muslim students from other poorly Muslim neighboring countries, such as Zimbabwe and Malawi. Students from the above countries should also be assisted by ICO to further their studies (especially in modern sciences) in advanced Arab and Muslim countries, or even in other over-seas countries.

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## **GEOGRAPHICAL AND ECONOMICAL ROLE OF TIMBUKTU IN DESERT COMMERCE 1**

Abdullah Abdul Razig Ibrahim 2

### **INTRODUCTION**

Timbuktu is considered one of the sanctuaries of Islam in the west of the African continent. However, in this section, it would be examined, the role of Timbuktu in desert commerce through the following axes:

- a. The rise and development of Timbuktu
- b. Commercial routes through Timbuktu
- c. The exports and imports through Timbuktu
- d. Commercial processes in Timbuktu.

### **Timbuku: A brief Description**

Timbuktu, a minaret for knowledge and culture emitted rays of light of the Merciful that spread in the regions of black Africa. Its spiritual position made it to be the metropolis of the country where culture and commerce flourished as much it enabled it to occupy enviable scholastic, cultural and religious height.

Timbuktu is a blessed city which never experienced polytheism. It became a gathering place for ascetics and the worthy. In addition, it attracted merchants and scholars from all over Western Sudan, Arabic Maghrib and Egypt. People came to it from all directions, thereby making the city flourishing in prosperity, and in extending its boundary and buildings. Timbuktu was located in an important strategic center, which was the crossroads where the commercial caravans passed across the desert. It also faced the river Niger that flows into the Atlantic Ocean. Thus, Timbuktu enjoyed both sea caravans and river navigation that made it a meeting place for the commercial movement that came to it from Egypt, Maghrib and Tripoli through the desert.

This city also attracted the attention and description of globetrotters and merchants who described it as the best and greatest place because of its unflagging movement, full freedom and the luxury life, which people enjoyed. Timbuktu had a big market with flourishing commerce, which satisfied the needs of people. Timbuktu was the meeting point of all travelers by caravans or boats. Exchange between the North and south became basic. The city played a big role in uniting

the Berbers and Arabs with the world of Africans. This role was made easy due to the unique location of Timbuktu on the outlets of the scheme of the tributary streams at the loop of the Niger. There, the Sudanese could collect many products. The caravans that came from the coast were loaded with European commodities such as cotton, gum, silk, glnpowder, spices, sugar, coffee beans, perfume, and tobacco. Timbuktu used to admit annually, a number of small caravans that comprised about sixty, to hundred camels. The commercial fleets were loaded with rice, corn, honey, cola, tobacco, flour, Tamarind, onions, dried fish, and earthen manufactures. The camels carried their loads to the boats, the boats carried their loads to the camels, and thus the city became a meeting axis for commerce between the desert and the river valleys. To sum up, the city rose because of the journeys made by the Muslim Arab merchants from North Africa to the West of the desert and it became an intersection for the roads coming from the north of the continent to the south. There were roads coming to it from Tafaza, Walato, Jow, Agadeese, Namat, and Egypt.

### **The Rise and Development of Timbuktu**

Historians disagreed about the date of Timbuktu's rise. Some historians linked it with the days of the Muslim warrior Abdullah bin Yassin in the eleventh century A.D. Abdullah chose Timbuktu as a place for worship and a league preparing for the spread of Islam in that area. (See original Arabic source for the correct translation). His choice of this place may be as a result of available residence and the presence of traders who came, from North Africa to the south. This city was, in the year 490 A.H. (1096 A.D.), erected by a group of nocturnal visitor's from Magshar after the decline of the reputed kingdom of Ghana and the city of Walata. Timbuktu was built as a gathering point for rest, [3] but latter, it developed into a big trading market. It widened and its buildings extended. Life in it flourished and was always full of new comers and those who depart. It was visited by travelers and explorers like Alhassan ben Alwazan who considered the city of Timbuku's location to be twelve miles faway rom the river Niger .[4]

The city of Timbuktu was a blessed one, which experienced no polytheism. It appeared as an Islamic city that became the meeting point for abstinent and the worthy. It became the sanctuary of Muslim's hopes in West Africa. In addition to that, it became the object of attention for scholars, intellectuals from west Sudan, Arabic Maghrib, Egypt and the Islamic World. People came to it from everywhere. This helped in its development and in promoting the city's fame.

Timbuktu was located in a strategic center as it was the meeting point for the roads along which the commercial caravans journeyed in the desert. It faced the river Niger that flows into the Atlantic Ocean. Thus, Timbuktu enjoyed both the sea caravans and river navigation. It became a meeting point for a commercial movement coming from Egypt, Maghrib and Tripoli and across the desert. It also enjoyed the description of travelers and traders. Those who inhabited it described it as the best and greatest place because of its continuous movement, full freedom and luxury. [5] This city, acquired a respectable position, and its Muslim inhabitants were respected, and honoured. It was a city with a multitude of scholars and traders. The names of the other cities became extinct and were forgotten because of Timbuktu [6]. Delegations of traders and scholars were fascinated towards it from all sides of western Sudan where they found their cherished goal, fortified refuge, wish for justice and security provided for. Tribes of different customs united in one bunch. Islam came to Timbuktu pure, unblemished and free from the deeds of paganism and obscurities. That added to its glory and strengthened the bond of intimacy amongst its inhabitant, especially when Arabic language became the means of communication. [7]

There was a big market in the city that was full of commerce and traders from everywhere and it provided all the needs of the citizens. A huge fence surrounded the city to protect it from invaders, as it was located on the edge of the desert. The fence had gates that were usually closed after sunset prayers.

The houses were surrounded with orchards of palm trees, thus adding to the beauty of the city. There were also fascinating halls that attracted people from everywhere and the weather was such a nice one [8].

Architecture flourished in Timbuktu during the reign of Mansa Musa who ruled the state of Mali between 712-738 A.H. (1312-1337 A.D.) He happened to bring with him, in the aftermath of his famous journey of pilgrimage, the Great architect Ishag ben Altowaigan. Because of this architectural movement, which continued during the reign of Askia Dawood, architecture, Arabic language and Maghriban engineering and modern buildings were introduced. Globetrotters and explorers were impressed by the greatness of this city and they described it in their annals by referring to the secured and quiet life in the city. The globetrotter Deebua who mentioned that its buildings were well organized and based on modern ways [9] expressed the most eloquent, description of it.

The above-mentioned facts make clear the commercial fame that Timbuktu acquired and why it flourished. That fame attracted traders and travelers from everywhere who came to watch its magic, beauty, wealth and its Islamic grandeur. In all of these, it excelled far above the neighbouring cities and became the pearl of country in those middle ages. It became the center of civilization, wealth and cultural radiation in the African world and Western Sudan. [10]

Timbuktu continued developing until it reached the peak of promotion and wealth in the domains of flourishing commerce and advanced culture. That was due to its location as the meeting point of those desert roads where the commercial caravans from North Africa gathered and met or those ones, which came via the Niger. All this, gave Timbuktu its good reputation and prestige. The flourishing commerce of Timbuktu in salt, gold and copper added to its renown. Commerce and products were transferred from other neighboring cities to Timbuktu to the extent that it assumed the form of big commercial stores for the commerce of West Sudan. It also became one of the biggest Islamic markets in the west of the African continent. [11]

That caravan used to exhibit their commercial articles in Timbuktu's numerous and specialized commercial shops. Focuses was especially on shops owned by artisans, tailors and clothe sellers. Timbuktu also became famous for the commerce of Ostrich feathers, Sudanese textiles and also textiles from Europe which were easily imported due to the city's location on the river Niger. It became a seaport as well as a land port on the edge of the desert. The rulers of the two states of Mali and Sunghai succeeded in dominating it and making its commerce marketable. They could safeguard the means of transport and routes for caravans [12].

The importance of Timbuktu as a commercial station that was involved in exporting and importing gained the respect of Magrib and European countries placed it in the level of international commerce. Commercial articles and products from Europe were sent to it. Due to its status, location and rank in the Islamic World, Timbuktu became a source of pride. [13] The unique geographical location of Timbuktu between the north and south spelled the growth of commerce in the desert

and the organization of commercial caravans that were the outcome of collaboration and contact of nomadic Arab Muslims and Maghribans with western Sudan, which was frequented, by organized commercial caravans. [14]

Due to all these facilities, Timbuktu became the meeting place for traders and scholars who came to it by land and sea, or those who came from the two sides of the Niger. There were also those who met to exchange salt and dates. Corn came from Maghrib. Cola and raw gold came from western Sudan. The city soon became the most important market for western Sudan. It became famous as a centre for gathering traders from all directions. All that took place in the aftermath of the spread of Islam in the area of western Sudan had a great impact on Timbuktu and other cities like Jou, Jeni and others [15].

The rising city of Jeni turned into huge stores for goods from Maghrib and Europe. It became the first commercial city and the most important market in the Empire of Mali and it became a satellite of Mali after the development of Timbuktu's commerce and markets on which the state depended to support its finance. [16] Timbuktu reached the zenith of promotion, development and luxury and became a trustworthy commercial market visited by traders and travelers via the river mainly from Tripoli, Morocco and Maghrib. The overgrowth of its markets resulted in the diminishing of other cities and commercial markets like the market of Beer. [17]

Timbuktu's markets were, revived and enriched by those sects and commercial caravans that flowed into them through from all directions, by the day and night. All the routes whether they were desert or not, were very important to Western Sudan, [18] especially the sea and river routes. The location of the area is between the Atlantic Ocean and Lake Chad. River routes linked Timbuktu with the outside world through Kibra (or Kabara), the main port in Timbuktu. Those routes made easy the speedy passage of caravans and gave them security until they reached the markets of Timbuktu. (19)

The best evidence that reflects the respectful status, which the city achieved in the economic arena, commercial renown, and peace, are the writings of historians. [20] Cities and commercial stations spread on the sides of the vast desert. There were a lot of shops and hotels that were erected for traders from every race and colour. [21] These hotels, lodgings and squares were meant for merchants and newcomers who did not get permanent houses or special lodgings. That was possible because of the abundance of oases in the desert and the presence of Sinhaj and Limtona tribes who used to loaf in the desert and dominate it.

The vivid activity of Timbuktu in all fields drew the attention of rulers and traders in all other countries, especially Maghrib. The traders of Maghrib left their home countries for Timbuktu where they stayed with their families. They prospered there and their commercial activities flourished [22]. The rulers of Timbuktu and Western Sudan in the two empires of Mali and Sunghai appreciated the importance of Timbuktu. They organized their commercial journeys to it and enhanced them by promoting disciplines in administration and the security of the roads. They achieved a high status of development in the Sudan. They owned a great commerce in all domains that supplied them with great wealth that became like an imperishable treasure, which would never come to naught. They could reserve that and they could practically dominate the commercial activity and commercial routes. The existence of wells was also a precious thing. They attracted traders and rendered Timbuktu a big station for commercial caravans [23].

Timbuktu displaced the cities which were previously flourishing like Jeni, Jou and others. That was due to a rainbow commercial activity in Timbuktu, which helped Timbuktu excel those cities. Timbuktu could send its commercial radiation through the peaceful routes, which were

safeguarded by men at different points. The rulers preferred it to other cities and states. It became the pearl of the country because of its noted wealth in all fields that the kings and rulers founded in the two empires of Mali and Songhai. They founded adequate lodgings and hotels for the accommodation of traders coming from outside Timbuktu. [25]

## **Commercial Routes through Timbuktu**

Commercial routes through the desert through which goods to and from Timbuktu are carried multiplied. These routes branched off from that coastal route which was used by garrisoned troops. It is the route through which, they spread Islam in that country. Timbuktu is the base of those commercial routes through which traders entered that country. Moved about, in its markets in peace and spread Islamic call. [26] These routes, which as described by historians, resembled an important luminous aspect in the domain of commerce and traders. They stand for the most important side of Timbuktu's life and finance. One of these routes is the one that came out of Tunisia, proceeded past the city of Hajara, and then ended in Timbuktu. Then, there was also another route that started in Maghrib, preceded past Sijlimesa, Tuwat and ended in Timbuktu. [27] There was one more route that started at Tagaza and proceeded from Tambukto eastwards to Jou, Agandees, Gat, and to Egypt through Pilgrimage route. [28]

One of the historians, who lived for in Timbuktu during the reign of Askia Mohammed in Sunghai state, mentioned that one of the routes that led to Tambukto was the route that entered Egypt and then Walata through the south of the desert. It joined Alarbaeen route. The journey along that rout took forty days from Darfur in Eastern Sudan to Asyoot in Southern Egypt. This route was not smoothed, but it might be much frequented by traders and pilgrims at that time. The historian asserted that he hadn't seen that route but he was informed about it by Arab globetrotters who came to Tambukto. [29] Barth said that: the commerce of Tambukto had three great routes, they were as follows:

The route that' was parallel to the river from the western south side of the river. Commerce imported from other areas came to Tambukto through it. The two other routes were from the north: one from Maghrib and the other from Gadamis. The river referred to might mean the area of river Niger.[30]

Caravans loaded with Egyptian manufactured goods moving to western Sudan frequented these routes. The caravans were welcomed there. The Egyptian traders brought to Tambukto products, commodities, cloths, textiles, a manufacture which the Egyptian mastered whether they made them themselves or employed agents and businesspersons. [31] The textiles admired in Tambukto and other cities of Western Sudan and were available. [32]

People of Tambukto liked Egyptian textiles very much. One of the traveling historians, who visited Mali in 754 A.H. (1354 A.D), mentioned that they were found even in the bureau of Sultan Mansa of Mali Empire who used them as a distinction and as a sign which he held to show his presence in the Sultan residence. [33] Egyptian commercial articles invaded Tambukto's markets because of their high quality. Likewise, the native products in western Sudan were highly demanded and admired in Egypt. The most important ones were the products that included gold and copper manufactures, ostrich's feathers and eggs, ivory, ambergris, and other products that were peculiar to Tambukto-like spices, cola plant that was the specialization of some traders from Tambukto and Jeni. [34]

Tambukto enjoyed commercial relations with Maghrib, which was the nearest country to Tambukto because of mutual boundaries. People of Maghrib were the most important agents for Tambukto. There was an active commerce and exchange of finances during the reigns of Mali and Sunghai under the rule of Mansa Musa. The relations were strengthened when Mansa Musa sent a delegation to Sultan Abu Alhassan Almuraini (744-762 A.H.) to congratulate him on his victory over Ali ben Zayan [35]. They exchanged precious presents. There was an embassy in Tambukto representing the Sulatan of Maghrib Abu Alhassan, chaired by ben Ghana. When Mansa Musa passed away, he was succeeded by Mansa Sulainman (742-762 A.H.-1341-1360A.D.), who built a strong friendship with Sulatan Abu Alhassan Almoraini. The commercial routes facilitated commerce between Maghrib and Tambukto. In very Su/danese town, many Mahbribans were either scholars or teachers. [36]

The commerce consisted of salt, the precious metal that people could not do without it. They were brought in the form of slates from Tagaza through secure routes. There were also slates carrying beads, ornaments, dates, textiles, wool and ivory. Copper and cattle ere also imported. Traders took from Tambukto gold, metal products, agricultural products and slaves to serve in Maghrib [37]. Commerce relations developed and crops, commodities and products were taken from Tambukto to other markets. Those exports transcended local markets to European markets which also used to send their commodities to Western Sudan and Tambukto in private [38]

Italy was one of the European countries which was impressed by Tambukto when the Italian traders watched the pilgrimage journey of Mansa Musa (724 A.H.-1324 A.D) in Cairo. Those were traders from Florence, Genoa, and Venice. Italy was linked with Northern Africa (Egypt and Maghrib) through the Mediterranean Sea; and with Tambukto through the Atlantic Ocean and the river Niger. The Italians Manufactures were famous and desired in Tambukto specially those imported form Genoa, Venice and

Florence. A famous European globetrotter Florenteen Bindtodbi, who visited Tambukto in 875 A.H. (1470 A.D), described its relation with Europe and its cultural, commercial activities [39].

### **Important Exports and Imports of Timbuktu**

Tambukto was famous for being rich because of the abundance of raw gold which came to it from Wungara south of Tambukto; and copper metal form Takda east of Tambukto. Sometimes salt, the important product, came to it form salt mines in Tafaza in the desert which yielded to Sunghai rule during the rain of Askia Mohammed. [40] This mountainous salt played a primary role in the promotion of commerce and finance of Tambukto. Many wars broke out between the rulers of Tambukto and the rulers of Maghrib because of salt. The most famous war was the invasion of Tambukto in the year 999 A.H. (1590A.D) by the Sultan of Maghrib Almansoor Althahabi for the seizure of salt mines [41]. Timbuktu was chief store for commeree which was exported to Egypt, Maghrib and Europe and that was the evidence of Timbuktu's unique strategic position. It resembled the fortified castle that supplied the treasure of the country with money. Guard points on the sides of the commercial routes safeguarded its commerce. [42]

Timbuktu's markets were full of shops and other buildings, which were spacious enough

for all the needs of life. There were cotton and cloth sellers, weavers' shoemakers and hides' shops. There were also the sites for doctors, judges, goldsmiths, copyists and sellers of books, and other sites necessary for daily life and cultural activities in Timbuktu. These shops and sites were divided among their users according to their professions. This showed the level Timbuktu reached in the domains of administration, craft of selling, buying, and good treatment in markets and in life as general. All these are evidence of good governance and successful administration of the rulers of the two empires of Mali and Songhai in Timbuktu. [43] The commerce comprised the selling of spun and weaved cotton, pearls, hide products, elephant tusks, ivory, ostrich eggs and feathers, which were sold for high prices abroad. Shops were available in Timbuktu that also exported ostrich fats, which were used as medicine; they were also importing silk, cotton, and wool fabrics. [44]

Timbuktu's markets also included Sudan plant that was sold or exchanged with salt. It might be eaten fresh or ground. Pearl millet was also found in Timbuktu. Pumpkins were also sold in Timbuktu for food or for making utensils [45].

The widespread commerce of slavery was practiced in Timbuktu. Slaves were brought from pagan tribes in Hausa country or from other Muslim neighbouring countries. Those class of slaves were treated kindly as Islam preached. Ibn Battuta, the globetrotter, happened to buy a slave from there so as to serve him in the city of Timbuktu. [46]

There were also shops for the products and derivatives of milk, ghee, and butter. They were cheap and found in abundance. They had a nourishing value for children and adults. There were also the markets of butchers and meat sellers who slaughtered cows, camels. They sold meat fresh or jerked and they made use of hides in manufacturing activities of products such as swords' sheaths, bags, hides, clothes and roofing materials. [47]. Hides might be exported in their raw form to Maghrib, especially, the hide of the lion. Wood commerce existed in Timbuktu and it was sold for copper flakes. Traders played a great role in the development of Timbuktu finance.

The Sultan's treasure was enriched with many revenues from taxes. Charity money subscribed by traders reflected the good character of the trader and his respectful position in the society. Traders also presented gifts on many occasions. An example of that were the presents and gifts received by Orner, the judge of Timbuktu on the birth of his male baby. Guest traders offered the presents and gifts. Their value was estimated as one thousand muskals of gold. A muskal is equal to 4.68grams. [48]

Traders' activities affected the daily social life in Timbuktu positively. The Judge Orner ben Mohammed Alnadi married his two daughters to two traders who were also brothers. This was because of their social and financial status. [49] Traders resembled an important agent that helped the ruling regime achieve many installations such as building roads for commercial caravans that developed finance through payment of taxes, head taxes (jizya), and alms. All these resources reinforced the finance and security in Timbuktu and all the cities of the two empires of Mali and Songhai. [50] In other words, these taxes and alms were a source of opulence for both the ruler and the subjects. They enabled Timbuktu to keep its high status and play the great role in the development of Western Sudan. [51]

As to the imports of Timbuktu, they were the famous original Arabic horses of good descendant from Maghrib and Egypt. They were brought with the caravans and were left in Timbuktu for about twelve days until the king who would choose what suited him from them would pay the due price. [52] Salt was also brought from the cities of Tagaza and Teloduni in Maghrib. It resembles an important element in the commerce of Timbuktu's markets. They did not

use money but they practiced barter trade and compensations. They also used gold. Salt was also used for paying like gold and silver. Salt was important because it was brought in the form of big plates for building houses and mosques. Copper, which was from Takda, was also available in abundance. [54] Copper was found in other areas according to Moni, the French archeologist, who discovered ruins of copper mines near Takda. Cotton, silk, woolen cloth came to Tambukto from Maghrib, Egypt and Europe. Perfumes such as musk were brought from Maghrib and they yielded a lot of profit. Tambukto's market also imported dates from Wargala Dukwat and ornaments and glass for making cups. [55]

Seashells were also used in Tambukto as a currency and as a commercial article; Maghribans brought it from India to Western Sudan.

Major books that were brought to Tambukto from Maghrib and Egypt were in themselves an important commercial profitable commodity. Sultans in Mali and Sunghai were very keen on knowledge and copying of books. They founded a stationary business and there were shops for that. [56] Tanned or manufactured hides that were brought to Tambukto in addition to what it already had were very important for the manufacture of shoes, sandals, and saddles. Sword and other iron manufactures were also brought by Maghribans and were paid for by gold. Tambukto also imported from Maghrib dried fruits such as opuntia and raisins.

Expensive dyes came from Egypt and Maghrib. Corn was brought by Maghriban traders to meet the need of citizens in western Sudan especially in the areas that presented services for commercial caravans. They got very few little amounts of it. Tambukto also received great numbers of camels loaded with copper, glass, wool, pearls and Perfumes. [57]

Tambukto also imported all kinds of fruits, which were not known before, and it received the exports of Europe; some of them were cotton, blue, cotton cloth, weapons, gunpowder, utensils, paper, scissors, needles, pearls, mirrors, silk, ambergris, corals, daisy, spices, sugar, tea, coffee beans, and tobacco, teapots, tins of snuff, date, mat, caftans, and cloaks. [58]

A nice phenomenon in Timbuktu's market was listening to holy Qorran reciters sitting at roads and reciting in their simple way. The markets were always crowded with merchants and brokers who worked in the commerce of cattle, dates, cloth and gold. The most important thing that drew the attention of one who walked in Timbuktu's markets was the meticulous banking system which was founded by Arab traders. It enabled traders to get guarantee letters, which enabled them to contact countries of North Africa, Egypt and Maghrib. [59]

The big market of Tambukto was divided into different shops and there was a small market for selling meat. Women were seen sitting on mats beside baskets and cages for selling vegetables and spices. It was noticeable that the contracts of buying and selling were begun with the bargaining, the ratio of profit be counted according to the legitimate rule of alms. [60]

### **Commercial Intercourse in Tambukto**

The currency in use in Tambukto was pure raw gold which was paid for profitable expensive commodities which enriched the finance of the country specially Mali whose reputation reached Europe. [61] Nevertheless, sometimes, raw gold, which was not manufactured or sealed, resembled

half the value of exchange for salt when few commercial caravans reached Tambukto. [62] In the case of cheap commodities such as honey, bread, milk, pieces of copper and iron were used as a currency. These pieces were of different weights. They ranged from a quarter or half a pound up to full pound. [63] There was also the material of sea shells which were used in commerce and as ornament and was called (kodi). Commercial intercourse was through salt, sea shells and smelted copper. [64] Cost of things differed according to prices of different things. Sea shells were used by caravans as a commodity and to buy simple things. It was used as currency in commercial intercourse and daily life. It was counted in hundreds and thousands. Fathers paid a lot of it to have their children taught the recitation of the holy Koran. Sea shells' number might amount to thousands and it resembled a significant intercourse in the two states of Mali and Sunghai.

Egyptians and Maghriban traders [65] brought it from India and east Africa. European commerce competed with Maghriban commerce in sea shells commerce. Treatment in it increased because it was profitable: It entered financial and social life in Tambukto. In some tribes, marriage would not take place unless the groom paid forty thousand sea shells. [66] Al Hassan ben Al wazan witnessed sea shells used in buying and selling as a local currency. He mentioned that they were snails brought from Persia.[67]

Seashells transcended the boundaries of Mali, Sunghai and western Sudan to Egypt and other countries. It was used as a currency in Egypt. Sea shells were also used as a currency versus the gold *muskal* which was equal to three thousand shells. The historian of Tambukto Judge Ka'at saw the Boscari dates spread on mats for sale. Every ten dates were sold for five shells. Sea shells entered every field even the erection of mosques.

The treasure of the state was placed in the domain of the king in Tambukto. It was a huge treasure containing the currency, which was in the form of ingots. One of them might weigh one thousand and three hundred pounds. [68] Ibn Khaldoon estimated the weight of the gold ingot or stone in the ~asure of the Sultan to be twenty kantars where as Almagreez~ said that there was gold brick that weighed thirty pounds. Gold played an important role in the finance of Western Sudan especially during the reigns of Mansa Musa in the empire of Mali and Askia Mohammed in the empire of Sunghai to the extent that a village like TagaZa experienced commercial treatments of kantars of raw gold [69].

During his pilgrimage journey in 724 A.H 1323A. D., Mansa Musa and his procession carried great quantities of pure gold which caused the price of gold in Egypt to decline and that impressed Eastern and European worlds. [70]

Askia Mohammed, the Sultan of Sunghai also went on a pilgrimage journey in 902 A.H. (1496 A.D.). His procession and the gold he took and spent during that holy journey were not less than those of his predecessor, Mansa Musa. Although gold was abundant and always poured into the treasure of the country, Als'ad, a historian and a citizen of Tambukto, mentioned that its kings never touched that metal (71). They were nicknamed 'Kings of Gold'. It was said to be grown on the shore of Niger and was harvested like a 'crop'. The sheaths of the swords of the kin'g's interpreters and hands of women's head were made of gold. [72] Because gold was valuable, it was weighed by the Sudanese *muskal* which was equal to 4.238 grams. One of the historians in Tambukto mentioned that a muskal was equal to a Roman ounce and that the Roman ounce weighed thirty six Sudanese dinars. [73]

Another historian and a citizen of Tambukto mentioned that a *muskal* was equal to 72 weights of barley or one eighth of an ounce of gold. Others said that gold was evaluated by the value of drachmas and that the Roman muskal (solidus) was equal to the dinar. [74]

Gold was used in buying everything. Ibn Battota used it to buy a servant for whom he paid twenty-five muskals of gold. Gold enabled Western Sudan to occupy its position in the international map when Mansa Musa went on his pilgrimage journey in 724 A.H.- 1328 A.D [75].

One of the oddities about gold was what Mansa Musa said when he came to Egypt. He said that there were two kinds of gold: one that grew on rocks and its leaves were like grass or herbage, which was the origin of raw gold. It was harvested in spring and was expensive and the best. The other kind existed on trodden areas on the banks of the river Niger and was harvested throughout the year. Western Sudan was the chief source that supplied Western World with gold. Gold was borne on men's heads from areas of production in Wangara to Jerri and on gold boats from it. It was a circulating currency, which was also used as ornaments and for decoration. This precious metal lost its value upon the Maghriban invasion to Tambukto when people escaped as a result of the attack. A mother would sacrifice a basin full of gold so as to be protected from Maghriban soldiers but in vain. [76]

Gold commerce strengthened the commercial relations between Western Sudan and Maghrib for centuries. Sometimes, it led to the breaking of those relations because of the competence over obtaining it from mines which resulted in wars and destruction when Almansoor Althahabi's soldiers occupied Tambukto in 999 A.H. (1590 A.D.). [77]

Private Commercial interaction in Western Sudan and Tambukto comprised the usage of legal instruments. Ibn Howgal witnessed the instruments carried by a trader from Maghrib. They were equal to forty two thousand dinars. They were akin to cheques of today. Deboa mentioned, that Arab traders introduced the system of treatment of commercial banks so that traders could get guarantee letters which would enable them to contact North Africa commercially. [78]

There was also the system of barter and compensations, which was the exchange of commodities. One of the historians saw this during his visit to Tambukto. He said it was that not necessary for him to carry dinars, drachmas, money or supplies during his journey. He was only to carry pieces of salt or glass or perfume commodities, which were popular among people, especially women. Thus one could get his needs through barter which people used in Tambukto to facilitate the movement of buying and selling [79].

The forms and styles of treatment in commerce multiplied and they comprised currencies, weights, measures, and dry measures. [80]

## **Conclusion**

The above illustration of Timbuktu's geographical and financial role in the desert commerce and promotion of the two states of Mali and Sunghai, justifies the claim it was being one of the important cultural and commercial cities and an important sanctuary for Islam. It became a minaret for knowledge and culture spreading light in all regions of the African continent, especially the west of the desert. Its mosques acquired a respected scholastic religious position. The value of this city is still appreciated at the present.

It is hailed as the capital of Islamic culture this year. It also hosted the celebration of the Prophet's noble birthday on the twelfth of Rabie the first. The Libyan leader invited thousand of Muslims from all over the Islamic world to come to Tambukto to revive the grandeur of the city through the celebration of the aromatic anniversary. Big crowds of people responded and performed the prayers of sunset and nightfall collectively. Thus, Libya assured the greatness of Islam and the grandeur of this city, which gained extra honor from this big Islamic forum under the auspices of the Libyan leader who revived the greatness of the city, which conveyed the Islamic mission and culture to the heart of the African continent. The mosques of this city played a great role in spreading Islam and its culture in those areas. The city became a big school form which scholars and religious men graduated. Its university acquired a position that was competent with the Noble AzhaT, Zaitona's Mosque and Qarawiyieen college and mosque in Fez.

This cultural and scholastic movement in Tambukto is more important than its commercial role in the west of the continent. That role can be summed up as follows:

1. The rise of the city was the result of the journeys of the Arab Muslim traders from North Africa to the west of the desert. These journeys facilitated the rise of the city due to its strategic position.
2. According to this location, Tambukto was the meeting point of the routes from the east and east. These routes facilitated the spread of goods and commodities and the markets were flooded with goods from different areas especially from Egypt. The city became a store for commerce and a site for exports and imports. The fame of the city, the richness of the traders and the revival of commerce added positively to the significance of the city. The settle of the city developed the intellectual and scholastic movement and commercial renown.
3. The flourishing of commerce led to the rise of a meticulous banking system founded by Arab traders. Contracts of selling and buying followed the Islamic system taking into account the legitimate ratio for alms and other Issues.
4. Because of the great economical development of the city, globetrotters and explorers frequented it. They described the greatness of the city. Alhassan Alwazan was impressed by the promotion of the city. Travelers, like Henery Barth, praised it. Filix Deboa wrote a book about this obscure city that was wonderful in all fields.
5. The study treated all the aspects of economical life in this city and gave' details about the commodities that were exchanged: hide products, elephant tusk, feathers and eggs of ostriches, in addition to silk, cotton and woolen textiles. Beside that, the city experienced commerce in slavery. Slaves were brought from pagan areas or during attack on the boundaries of local states. This commerce diminished in areas where Tambukto played a main role in the spread of Islam. A combat against this

commerce took place because it was contrary to the virtues of Islam.

6. The study asserted the rank of this city that rose as an Islamic bond in Western Africa. It developed and its scholastic position flourished through four centuries. The city unique geographical position, was an important factor in the settlement of traders and scholars, who inhabited it and participated in its development until it became a metropolis of an Islamic empire' where all enjoyed a prosperous life before the Maghriban invasion in 1591, which put an end to a great city that participated in the development of cultural, commercial and economical life. Deboa referred to all that in detail in his book about this pearl and capital after the Moroccan invasion. Attention and support of Islamic leaderships and the Libyan leadership, which is aware of the importance of the city, are now hoped for.



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# THE MUSLIMS OF GONDAR (ETHIOPIA) AMONG CHRISTIANS: THE SOCIAL LANDSCAPE OF A MERCANTILE SOCIETY C.1769-1913

Abdussamad H. Ahmad 1

## INTRODUCTION

Gondar town was an historic Muslim community. Studies on Gondar as the imperial capital of Ethiopia have concentrated on politics, the church and international relations. In actual fact, existing literatures portray Ethiopian highlands to consist firstly, of a dominant Christians bloc and secondly, of disparate groups of pastoral lowlands who follow Islam. These literatures also regard Islam and Muslims in Gondar and elsewhere in the Christian kingdom as embodiments of external menace.[2] Moreover, traditional Ethiopian historiography assume that the minority Muslims in the Christian highland were objects of conquest and inevitable assimilation by the Christian state.

The aim of this article is to demonstrate that Gondar as the capital of the Christian kingdom possessed a permanent, indigenous Muslim minority. The intent is not to challenge the long prevalent prejudices against the Muslims of Gondar or Ethiopia in general. As was so frequently the case elsewhere in Africa, the ongoing life of Gondarine Muslims was closely connected with trade. They provided luxury commodities needed by a wealthy court in Gondar. In return, the state rewarded and protected this minority Muslim populace. Muslims formed one of the regiments under the direct control of the Gondarine monarchs. They were segregated in both residential quarters and social interaction patterns. Muslims, on their part, maintained a religious identity and a high degree of social separation from the Christian state and dominant society. In the main, it was not the interest of the Christian state either to forcibly convert or persecute them. However, Emperor Tewdros II (1855-1868), and Emperor Yohannes IV (1872-1889) employed religion as a viable tool of unification in the Christian highlands. To some degree, therefore, the minority Muslims of Gondar were partially incorporated into the wider Christian society. In this way, the history of Muslims continued to enrich the history of the dominant Christian society.

### **Muslim Advent in the Red Sea**

In A.D. 702 Aksumites attacked Hijaz and the port of Jeddah in Arabia. In retaliation, Muslim Arabs destroyed Adulis, the port of Aksum. Muslim Arabs also established themselves in the Dahlak Islands, which is opposite Adulis. [3] In the tenth century, an independent Muslim principality came to be established in the Dahlak Islands in what is today known as Eritrea. This Muslim principality began to play an important role in the commerce and the spread of Islam in the coastal parts of Ethiopia. [4]

Internally, Christian power came to be concentrated in the Ethiopian highlands and its institutions had become thoroughly Christianized in the late first millennium, although obviously, there were pagan survivals. Meanwhile, Islam entered the Christian highlands in what is today Tigray, Bagemdir, Gojjam and parts of Wallo by associating itself with trade and nomadic life on the coastal lowlands. Muslim traders settled in villages along the trade routes leading from the coast to the highlands. [5] They conducted commerce freely throughout areas in the highland and

performed missionary work. In due course, they produced the first Muslim communities within the Christian state.[6] Muslim traders known as the Jabarti in the highlands became active in commerce and handicrafts [7]. The Muslims of Gondar, like the Beta Israel (Falasha), were almost wholly bereft of landed property and both constituted politically peripheral groups. [8] Massawa and Gallabat maintained brisk trade with Christian Ethiopia. [9] Gondar itself was a market town which attracted Muslims and Beta Israel (Falasha) long before it became the imperial capital in 1632. [10] Although it remains difficult to establish the period when Islam spread into Gondar.

Islam also spread from the port of Zeila on the Gulf of Aden to what is now southeastern and central Ethiopia, following the trade routes. In due course, a number of ethnic groups from the coast of the Red Sea up to the Blue Nile embraced Islam. [11] In A.D. 896/7, the first Muslim sultanate, the Sultanate of Shewa in central Ethiopia, was established. Consequently, other sultanates like Adal, Hadya, Fatagar, Ifat, Dawaro and Bali were established [12]. The lucrative commerce of the port of Zeila encouraged King Amde Seyon (1314-1344) to expand the territory of the Christian kingdom towards the south and southeast. Accordingly, relation between the Christian kingdom and the Muslim sultanates became hostile. [13] The latter were able to attract other ethnic groups to Islam as a new ideological force of resistance against the territorial expansion of the Christian kingdom. [14]

Needless to say, however, the Muslims of Gondar simply constituted a politically submerged community, a community which articulated its presence with commerce and weaving. The highest position, through social mobility to which a successful Gondarine Muslim could aspire was to become a Nagadras (head of merchants or customs official) and, thereby, get direct access to the king. [15]

The nobility of the Christian highlands and Muslim merchants of the coastal lowlands of the Red Sea littoral needed one another. The Muslims from the port of Massawa through Gondar needed direct contact with the Sidamo lands to the south of the Blue Nile which were sources of the most valuable commodities involved in the long-distance trade, commodities like slaves, civet, wax, ivory, gold and coffee. For their part, Ethiopian rulers needed Muslim merchants to bring them foreign commodities like silk and linen cloth, carpets and the likes. [16] It becomes apparent, therefore, that Islam was introduced into Gondar as a result of its commercial link with Arabia through the port of Massawa. Trade made its effect in the north-south axis that is from Massawa on the Red Sea coast across Adwa in Tigray to Gondar. [17] Later, Islamization became a continuity that passed from generation to generation. Islam and commerce linked the minority Muslims of Gondar with their co-religionists in Arabia and the Sudan. Islam modified the thinking or ways of life of the Muslim minority as they began to read the Qur'an and Hadith (the traditions) of the Prophet Mohammad.[18] Informants recounted that Muslims of Gondar learned the Qur'an and the Arabic language and they were relatively better educated than the average Christians who could not read the Bible. [19]

Trade and weaving were the major occupations opened to the Muslims of Gondar. Trade, both local and international, was the main occupation of the Muslims. Muslims merchants of Gondar dominated the trade of the wider Red Sea region, were involved in long-distances trade, and thereby came to preponderate the commerce of Gondar. [20] Perhaps as an extension of their

principal role as traders in the cotton that came from Gallabat a good number of the Muslims of Gondar became weavers. [21]

In Gondar, there were Christian merchants who were involved in commerce as well. However, Christians had many other opportunities which were basically closed to Muslims - farming, the military profession, court and legal appointments etc. In the main, Christians had a general prejudice against commerce. Nonetheless, this did not stop some Christians in the least from taking part in commerce when they wanted to be involved.[22] Yet, it is also true that Muslims, excluded as they were from the magisterial posts in the political life of Christian Ethiopia, enjoyed success in commerce when dealing with their co-religionists at Matamma and Massawa [23]. Muslims were the most important elements of the economy of Gondar. The importation of foreign goods from the coast and the export of rare commodities like gold, ivory, civet and slaves were in the hands of the Muslim merchants. They played important role in making Gondar the center of wholesale trade for much of northwestern Ethiopia. [24]

### **Gondar's Commercial Relation with Yemen**

The establishment of Gondar as the imperial capital, during the reign of Fasiladas (1632-1667), coincided with the return of relative peace to a kingdom wrecked for a hundred years by warfare and rebellion. The policy of Fasiladas to collect customs dues and protect the trade routes favoured the expansion of trade and Gondar emerged probably as the first true urban center of the Christian kingdom. [25] This is clear from the account of a journey to Gondar, undertaken by a Yemeni, Qadi Sharaf al-Din al-Hassan. In response to this visit, in 1642, Fasiladas sent an emissary to Yemen to negotiate trade relations between Ethiopia and Yemen. Some five years later, in 1647, he sent a second emissary to Yemen. This time he sent a Gondarine Muslim by the name of al-Hajji Salim b. 'Abd al-Rahim and a Christian whose name was not mentioned. [26] Here again, the Christian kings delegated the Muslims of Gondar to establish commercial relations with the Muslims of Yemen.

The Yemeni embassy Al-Haymi noted that the Muslims of Gondar resided in a quarter outside the city, whose inhabitants were not exclusively Muslims. [27] Al-Haymi preferred to stay in the house of a Muslim in Gondar. [28] The expansion of trade apparently favoured the Muslims, who were a significant component of the town's population,[29] and were described as being rich.[30] This gave impetus to the development of commercial activities throughout the highlands.[31] Along with their Muslim peers, there were many well-established Christian merchants in Gondar and elsewhere in the Christian highlands. Hence, while Muslims were generally restricted to trade and generally dominated that activity, they did not monopolize it.

### **The Beginnings of Minority Segregation**

Fasiladas's son Yohannis I, named "The Just" (1667/1682) made no attempts to pursue his father's foreign policy in relation to Muslims. In fact, he had many religious questions in mind.[32] As a result, he called a council at Gondar. The promulgation of decisions of the Church Council at Gondar in 1668, affected all religious minorities and brought about the policy of "segregation of the Franks, Muslims, Turks and also of the Falasha, called Kayla, who are of the Jewish religion, so that they do not live with the Christians." [33] Emperor Yohannis I also commanded the Muslims of Gondar to eat flesh killed by the Christians.[34] By custom, however, Muslims of Gondar like

other Muslims in the Christian highlands, did not eat flesh killed by the Christians.

Yohannis I maintained the supremacy of the Orthodox Christians and encouraged their separation from the Muslims as well as the Falasha. The Franks (descendants of the Portuguese) who came to support the Galawdewos in the sixteenth century in his wars with Imam Ahmad Ibn Ibrahim (Gran (1529-1543) were asked to leave or else to profess the local Monophysite Christianity. The Falasha minority were also subject to territorial segregation and inferior status. [35]

The first decree does not seem to have been effective. Ten years later, in 1678, Yohannis I reissued a proclamation that in effect separated the Muslims and the Falasha from the Christians.[36] Muslims were assigned to live in the territorially segregated lower quarter of the town on the banks of the Qaha river. This Muslims quarter, situated at the foot of the mountain, was called Islamge or Bet al-Islam [37]. Yohannis's policy of segregation was partly due to his own idiosyncrasies and partly due to his objective of exploiting religion for political purposes as the social interaction among Christians, Muslims and Falashas was increasing as a result of the wider urbanization of the imperial capital. It is important to also note that, the 1678 decree of segregation penalized and debarred Muslims and Falashas from owing land in the Town. [38] Muslims of Gondar were also instructed not to marry or hire Christians.[39]

From 1678 to 1699, twenty-one years elapsed before fresh information on Gondar's Muslims could be obtained. In 1699, the French physician Charles Jacques Poncet visited Gondar and wrote about the mercantile activity of the Muslims.[40] He observed that Muslims resided in the lower part of the town in a separate quarter and that Christians did not eat with them. When a Christian met a Muslim in the streets of Gondar, he saluted him with the left hand which was undoubtedly a mark of contempt. Moreover, Poncet noted that the king in Gondar treated the Muslims as his slaves. [41] In the main, the general Christian populace despised Muslims and the other non-Christian groups. For example, Christians ranked the non-Christian groups of Gondar behind them in the following order: Muslims, Qimant, Falasha, Wayto and the Gumuz slaves. [42]

Seventy years after Poncet's Visit, we have another external observer in 1769 with the coming of the Scottish traveller James Bruce, who reached Gondar by way of Massawa. Bruce estimated that there were about three thousand Muslim houses there, some of which were spacious and good.[43] The declining power of the emperor at Gondar and the political dissension among the local nobility in the late eighteenth century brought theological controversies in which both the rulers and the people were involved.[44] Both the theological controversies within the Orthodox Church and the general revival of trade in the 1830s helped the spread of Islam.[45] In the 1840s, Muslim merchants of Gondar along with their co-religionists from Adwa in Tigray, Darita in Bagemdir and Basso in Gojjam spread Islam to areas south of the Blue Nile.[46]

By the end of the Gondarine era, most of the merchants, weavers and tailors of Gondar town were Muslims.[47] Muslim merchants of Gondar dominated the trade in gold and slaves from Gondar to Sennar in the Sudan. They brought slaves from the Sidama and Oromo lands to the south of the Blue Nile and marketed them at Gallabat. They took gold from Ras el-Fil in the Sudan which lay on the caravan route from Sennar to Gondar.<sup>48</sup> In the 1830s, the British traveller, G.A. Hoskins, reported that merchants of Gondar sold their slaves and coffee at Shendy in the Sudan. [49] In 1860, the Gennan Protestant missionary J. Lewis Krapf gave an eyewitness account of the slave

traffic at Matamma which was conducted by the Muslims of Gondar. [50] In 1862, Henry Dufton passed through Egypt and the Sudan and noted that merchants of Gondar took cotton from Gallabat to Gondar.[51] Some twenty years earlier, in the 1840s, the French travelers E. Combes and M. Tamisier reported that weavers of Gondar produced especially fine types of cloth, one of which was known as margaf.[52] Some Muslims who transported cotton from Gallabat to Gondar became weavers as an extension of their role as merchants.[53]

In 1862, Henry A. Stem, who came as a missionary to the Falasha village in Gondar, noted that the merchants of Gondar were wealthy and next to the aristocracy and clergy. He wrote that there were no shops in Gondar as merchants did not want to expose their merchandise to public inspection.[54] Furthermore, Stem observed that Gondar, like everywhere else in the Ethiopian highlands, had been subject to the destruction caused by the rival chiefs of the Zamana-Masafint (Period of the Judges, 1769-1855).[55] Trade was affected by the vicissitudes of Gondar's political and economic position. In time of peace, weekly markets were held. In time of war, merchants had to travel by night. The economic fortunes of the merchants declined because of the depredations of the wars of the Zamana Masafint. [56]

### **Religious Coercion of the Minority**

Things began to take a different turn in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Emperor Tewodros II (1855-1868) issued a decree in 1864 commanding his Muslim subjects to convert to Christianity or leave his country. [57] Tewodros also commanded his soldiers to sack the city under the pretext that its inhabitants refused to pay the usual taxes. Following this, inhabitants of Gondar, Christian as well as Muslim, fled the town and sought shelter elsewhere. [58] Tewodros' troops sacked the churches and plundered the merchants of Gondar. By ravaging the politico-economic preeminence of Gondar, he brought to an end the commercial importance of the town which had begun with Emperor Fasiladas who had encouraged a large influx of Muslims, Falashas and Qimants into its immediate vicinity some two hundred and thirty years earlier.[59] The destruction wrought by Tewodros and his attempt at forcible conversion resulted in almost the total temporary abandonment of Gondar.[60] Emperor Tewodros' decree bore heavily on the Islamic population of Gondar.

The majority of the Muslims became Christians under duress. Those who did not want to convert dispersed to the outlying regions and maintained their religion and customs. According to the French traveler Guillaume Lejean, a rich Muslim of the name Adem Kourman left for Massawa, leaving behind a good fortune and beautiful wife, both of which were confiscated by Tewodros.[61] Lejean also vividly expressed that "The Islam Bet, center of Abyssinian commerce and a stranger to all revolutions, was sacked and almost destroyed" [62]. In the final analysis, Tewodros' efforts to promote religious unity in the empire were ineffective. [63]

Emperor Yohannis IV (1872-1889) employed religion to fortify state authority. Yohannis was not unique. He simply adopted the idea dear to his predecessor Emperor Tewodros and regarded the unity of religion as a viable method of unification in the Christian highlands.[64] In May/June 1878, Yohannis summoned the Council of Borumeda to bring an end to the doctrinal disputes which had distracted the clergy of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church for over a century. [65] Yohannis proved especially harsh towards Muslims of Wallo, both in the service of his beliefs and as an instrument of political unification. He concentrated his, evangelical efforts in Wallo province whose location between Tigray to the north, Bagemdir and Gojjam to the west and

Shewa to the south separated the core Christian highlands. [66]

Four months after the Council of Borumeda, in October 1879, Emperor Yohannis confirmed to Nebura Ed Iyasu, governor of Aksum in Tigray that no Muslim might be allowed to remain in the holiest city of the empire. Yohannis declared that any Muslim, who did not want to be baptized, must leave his country. The Emperor also ordered that books about Islamic exegesis should be burned [67]. On the other hand, the Emperor promised to convert that they would be given inheritable lands property (rist) together with Christians.[68] Although the offer of inheritable lands to Muslims who were almost wholly bereft of landed property was attractive; Muslims in Aksum and Adwa persisted in their Islamic practices [69]. In 1881, Emperor Yohannis proceeded to Gondar and razed the mosque at the Muslim quarter. In its place, he built a church. [70] The Emperor, like his previous declaration in the holiest city of Aksum, offered the Muslims of Gondar two choices either to embrace Christianity or to leave his domain.[71] Those who refused to be baptized had to flee to Omdurman in the Sudan and to Wallo where they joined the resistance movement of Shaykh Talha Ibn Ja'far. [72]

Following the death of Yohannis in his wars with the Mahdist state in March 1889, Minilik II (1889-1913) began to show moderate attitudes towards Muslims. Needless to say however, as Richard Caulk convincingly argued "the apparently moderate attitudes prevailing once Menilik became Emperor in 1889 need not represent a complete break. [73] By the turn of the century, a convert from Islam of the name Shaykh Zakaryas began to advocate the primacy of Christianity in Dabra Tabor. His activities troubled the Muslims of Gondar. [74] Emperor Minilik issued a proclamation permitting Shaykh Zakarya to teach in any Muslim area.[75] Minilik also granted him one hundred rifles, four thousand Maria Theresa Thalers from the imperial treasury and the fief of Hawarya Abo parish in Bagemdir [76]. In such a manner, Minilik also tried to exploit religion for political purposes and encouraged converts from Islam. Nonetheless, Minilik's objective was not so much to promote Muslim conversion as to contain the advance of Islam in his empire-state. [77] In Gondar itself, the preaching of Shaykh Zakarya coupled with the attraction of owing inheritable lands did not bring about a mass Muslim conversion to Christianity. [78]

Muslims of Gondar adapted to a code of strict social control within their community and were able to manipulate the acculturation process of the Christian state. Their control of acculturative influences enabled them to resist the shocks and troubles of Gondar's political upheaval in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Their economic importance to the Christian state in time of peace allowed them to maintain the integrity of their Islamic institutions. Moreover, they withstood the religious coercion launched by Emperors Tewodro and Yohannis. Generally, under Emperor Minilik II (1889 1913), Muslims of Gondar like other Muslims elsewhere in the country were ignored which, hence, gave them the freedom to survive and even flourish in their occupational specialization of commerce and crafts. Finally, they were able to survive because the state did not perceive them as a threat to the Christian kingdom. However, the state, and generally more its Christian populace found a mechanism to segregate them territorially and ostracize them socially.

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[16] Informants: Aligaz Yimar, Garima Taffara, Mitiku Kasse, Nure Ambaw and Yussuf Ahmad. Aligaz was an excellent local historian. He was interviewed at Dabra Tabor on 5 March 1982 and was 87 at the time of interview. Manuscript in the hands of Abba Garima Taffara. Late Abba Garima compiled the manuscript in 1978. He was a major local historian in Gondar. He kindly made the typed manuscript available, to me, while I conducted my research in Gondar in the summer of 1979. The manuscript had a wealth of information on Gondarine politics, the church, trade and crafts in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Mitiku and Nure were merchants interviewed at Addis Zaman on 16-17 Sept. 1979. Mitiku was 80 and Nure 82 at the time of interview. Yussuf was a merchant and an outstanding historian. He was interviewed at Gondar on 14-15 Sept. 1979. He was 61 at time of interview. I had the opportunity to interview him at Gondar on 10-15 January 1988 and at Addis Ababa 17-30 June 1990. See also Grottanelli, p.154.

[17] Cerulli, "Ethiopia's relations with the Muslim World", p. 578.

[18] For trade routes frequented by merchants of Gondar in the nineteenth century, see Antoine d'Abbadie, *Geographie de L'Ethiopie*. Paris: Gustave Lesnil Editeur, 1890, pp. 52-53.

[19] Informants: Aligaz Yimar, Garima Taffara, Mitiku K-sse and Yusuf Ahmad, cited supra.

[20]. Ibid. It is important to note, however, the few Gondarine clergy had mastered the learning of the Christian exegesis.

[21]. Ibid. Mordechai Abir, "Trade and Politics in the Ethiopian Region 1830-1855", Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1964, p. 17.

[22]. Informants: Aligaz Yimar, Garima Taffara, Mitiku K-sse and Yussuf Ahmad, cited supra. '

[23]. Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

[25]. Ibid.

[26] Crummey, "Gondarine Rim Land Sales: An Introductory Description and Analysis", p. 469.

[27] Emeri Johannes Van Donzel, *Foreign Relations of Ethiopia 1642-1700*. Leiden: 1979. pp. 4-5, idem (edit. and trans.), *A Yemenite Embassy to Ethiopia 1647-1694: Al-Haymi's Sirat Al-Habasha*. Stuttgart: 1986, p. 61.

[28] *A Yemenite Embassy to Ethiopia 1647-1694*. p. 61. For a parallel that the Muslim quarter of Adwa was not exclusively inhabited by Muslims, see Merid Wodle Aregay, p. 61.

[29]. Donzel, *A Yemenite Embassy to Ethiopia 1647-1694: Al Haymi's Sirat Al-Habasha*. Pp. 61-62.

[30] Donzel, *Foreign Relations of Ethiopia 1642-1700*. p. 7. The Yemenites who arrived with al-Hajj Salim saw a Muslim village next to the royal court.

[31]. Ibid. p. 10.

[32]. Ibid.

[33] Jean Deresse, *Ethiopia*. New York: 1959, p. 179. James Bruce *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile*. Edinburgh; 5 vols, 1790, Vol.II, pp. 423-424.

[34] Ignazio Guidi, (ed. and Trans.) *Annales Iohannis I, Iyasu I, Bakaffa, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium: Scriptorum Aethiopia*. 2 vols., ser altera 5 (paris: 1903), p.8. Bruce, pp.423-424.

- [35] James Bruce, *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile*. Vol.II. Edinburgh 1790, pp. 423-24.
- [36]. Charles Jacques Poncet, *A Voyage to Ethiopia in the Red Sea and Adjacent Countries*. London: 1709, p.61.
- [37] Guidi, p. 37.
- [38]. Informants: Garima Taffara and Yussuf Ahmad, cited supra. See also Richard Pankhurst, "Notes for the History of Gondar" *Ethiopia Observer*. Vol.XII, No.3, 1969, p.209. Simon D. Messing, "The Abyssinian' Market Town" in Paul Bohannan and George Dalton (editors), *Markets in Africa*. Northwestern University Press, 1962. P.391. referred to the Muslim quarter as "the Muslim ghetto". He also mentioned that its name at the time he wrote his article was Addis Alam (New World). Informants: Garima Taffara and Yussuf Ahmad cited supra' attested that the Muslim quarter was renamed Addis Alam, but they did not know of the time that the name change was made.
- [39]. Trimingham, p. 103. Quirin, pp.115. Grottanelli, p.152. Informants: Garima Taffara and Yussuf Ahmad cited supra.
- [40]. Quirin, p. IIS. Informants: Garima Taffara and Yussuf Ahmad cited supra.
- [41]. Charles J. Poncet, "A Voyage to Ethiopia in the Years 1698, 1699 and 1700" in William Foster (editor), *The Red Sea and Adjacent Countries At the Close of the Seventeenth century*. London: Hakluyt Society, 1949 p.IIO also relates that the term Jabarti has some connection with the Ge'ez term Gabir which means servant.
- [42]. Ibid.
- [43] Quirin, p.IIO. For a cogent analysis that the Qimant and the Wayto survived into the present because they did not pose military threat to the all-powerful Amhara, see Frederich C. Gamst, "The Qemant Theocratic Chiefdom in the Abyssinian Feudal State" in Taddese Beyene (editor). *Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*. Vol. 1, Frankfurt am Main: 1969, pp.793-798 pp.793798. Idem, *The Qemant: A Pagan-Hebraic Peasantry of Ethiopia*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1988. Idem. "Wayto Ways: Change From Hunting to Peasant Life" in Robert L. Hess (editor), *Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*. Chicago: 1979. pp.233-238.
- [44]. Bruce, Vol! III. p. 198.
- [45]. Abir, *Ethiopia: The Era of the Princes*. pp. 39-40.
- [46] Abir, "Trade and Politics in the Ethiopian Region 1830-1855", *passim*.
- [47]. Mordechai Abir, "The Emergence and Consolidation of the Monarchies of Enarea and Jimma in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century", *Journal of African History*, vol. VI, 2 (1965), p. 207.
- [48] Informants: Garima Taffara and Yussuf Ahmad cited supra. See also Quirin, p. 97-98.
- [49] John Lewis Burckhardt *Travels in Nubia*, London: Second Edition, John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1822, pp.276-77. See also Richard Pankhurst, *Economic History of Ethiopia 1800-1935*. Addis Ababa: Haile Selassie I University Press, 1968, p. 74.
- [50]. G.A. Hoskins, *Travels in Ethiopia: Above the Second Cataract of the Nile*. London: Rees, Orme, Brown, Green & Longman, 1835, p. 344.
- [51] J. Lewis Krapf: *Travels, Researches, And Missionary Labours*. London: Trubner And Co. Paternoster Row, 1860, pp. 466-470.
- [52] Henry Dufton, *Narrative of a Journey through Abyssinia in 1862-3*. London: Chapman & Hall, 193, Piccadilly, 1867, p.43. See also Samuel W. Baker, *The Nile Tributaries of Abyssinia*. London: Macmillan And Co. 1868, pp.478, 490-491. Walter C. Plowden *Travels in Abyssinia and The Galla*

Country. London: 1868, p. 126.

[53] E. Combes and M. Tamisier, Voyage in Abyssinia. Vol.IV, Paris: L. Passard Editeur, 1843, p.66.

[54]. Informants: Garima Tafara and Yussuf Ahmad cited supra. See also Quirin, p.1 00.

[55] Henry A. Stem, Wanderings among the Falashas in Abyssinia. London: Wertheim, Makintosh and Hunt, 1862. P.238. Plowden, p.43, mentioned that there were Nagadrases (chiefs of customs) at Gondar, Yajjube, Darita, Saqota, Dabarq and Adwa, p. 130.

[56]. Stern, p. 238. For the wars of the Zaman MasafInt, see Abir, Ethiopia: The Era ofthe Princes.

[57] Arnauld d'Abbadie, Douze Ans de Sejour dans la HauteEthiopie (Abyssinie). Vatican: Biblioteca Apostolica Vatican, 1980, PP. 24,262,270.

[58]. Trimingham, p.118. Richard Pankhurst, History of Ethiopian Towns from the Mid-Nineteenth Century to 1935. Stuttgart 1985, p. 45.

[59] Harmuzd Rassam, Narrative of the British Mission to Theodore, King of Abyssinia. Vol.1, London: John Mutray, Albemarle Street, 1869, p.35. Sven Rubenson, The Survival of Ethiopian Independence. London: Heinemann, 1978, p. 241.

[60]. Pankhurst, pp.45-50.

[61] Pankhurst, p. 54.

[ ] Guillaume Lejean, Theddore II: Le Nouvel Empire d'Abyssinie et al Interets Francais dans le Sud de la Mer Rouge. Paris: 1865, pp. 167-78.

[62] Ibid. p.168. See also. L. Fusella, "Le Lettere det'Dabtara Assaggakhan", Rassegna Di Studi Etiopici. Rome: Vol.XII, 1954, p.82. Also indicated that the Muslim quarter in Gondar was noted for its commerce, p. 83.

[63]. Markakis, p. 67.

[64] Richard A. Caulk, "Religion and the State in Nineteenth Century Ethiopia", Journal of Ethiopian Studies. Vol. X, No.1, Addis Ababa: January 1972. p.23. Trimingham, p. 118, Pankhurst, p.45.

[65] Caulk p. 23. For the Council of Borumeda, see Gabra Silassie, T--rika Zaman Za-D--gm--WI Minilik Nigus Nagast Zaltiyopy--. Addis Ababa: Artistic Printing Press, 1959 E.C. pp. 86-92.

[66] Zewde Gabre Sellassie, Yohannes IV of Ethiopia: A Political Biography. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975, p. 100. Hussein Ahmed "The Life and Career of Shaykh Talha B. Ja'far (c. 1853-1936)", Journal ofEthiopian Studies. Vol.XXII, November, 1989, p. 17.

[67].Caulk, p. 28, taken from a letter Yohannis wrote to Neblira Ed Iyasu, Samara, 17 Teqemt 1872/27 October 1879.

[68]. Ibid.

[69]. Ibid. p.29.

[70] Informants: Garima Taffara and Yussuf Ahmad cited supra. See also Gabira Madhin Kidane, "Yohannis IV: Religious Aspects of His Internal Policy", Senior Essay, Department of History, Addis Ababa University, May 1972, p.25. ISQ"

[71] Caulk, p.28. See also Simon David Messing, "The Highland Plateau Amhara of Ethiopia" Ph.D. dissertation in Anthropology, University of Pennsylvania, 1957. Pp.184-85. mentions that the Amhara Christians considered the Muslims in the midst of the highlands as foreign as Arabs.

Ethiopian Muslims, on their part, referred to Amhara Christians as "Kaffir" to mean infidels.

[72]. Informants: Garima Taffara and Yussuf Ahmad cited supra. Zewde Gabre-Sellassie, pp. 196-97. Hussein Ahmed, p. 21.

[73]. Caulk, p. 41.

[74]. Donald Crummey, "Shaikh Zakaryas: An Ethiopian Prophet" *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*. Vol.X, No.1, Addis Ababa: Jan. 1972, pp. 57, 59-60. Asfaw Tasamma Warqe, "Ya Ras Gugsu Wale Tr--Jrik", Institute of Ethiopian Studies: Photocopy of the unpublished manuscript, MS, No.998, June 1977, folio. 87.

[75]. Crummey, p. 61.

[76] Ibid. pp.63-64, 66.

[77]. Ibid. p.64, Caulk, p. 41.

[78]. Manuscript in the hands of Abba Garima Taffara, cited supra. Informants: Aligaz Yimar, Garima Taffara, Mitiku Kasse, Nure Ambaw and Yussuf Ahmad, cited supra. Grottanelli, p.149.

## **REFLECTIONS ON THE CALL TO ISLAM IN PRE-COLONIAL WEST AFRICA AND 21ST CENTURY SOUTHERN AFRICA**

Abdullah Hakim Quick \*

### **INTRODUCTION**

On the fifteenth day of May, 2004 at the Verulam Islamic Institute in Kwa-Zulu Natal, 75 representatives of the majority of Southern African Islamic Call organizations gathered together to discuss the state of the Da'wah, [1] in the region and how to set a new course for the future. The atmosphere was electrified with the feelings of frustration and despair. Participants were determined to find viable solutions to the perplexing dilemmas of the 21st century. After all, the tragic events of September 911 had set back Muslim-Christian relations hundreds of years. Even South Africa, with its anti-imperialist approach to governance is affected by the international "War on Terror." Muslims are being stereotyped by a manufactured image of violence, intolerance and extremism. Middle Eastern Islamic relief agencies were being branded as terrorist support cells and even hungry orphans and helpless single mothers in Southern Africa had to be told that aid from the Muslim world had been suspended until the international security situation improves.

Looking back at history, Muslim merchants from the Arabian Peninsula had developed a strong connection with the leading indigenous people of Zimbabwe, southeast central Africa and the east African coastal region for over 500 years. From the early presence of the Dutch settlers in the Western Cape in the 17th century, Muslims had made a powerful cultural impact on the local culture as slaves, political prisoners and humble artisans. The development of Afrikaans as a written and spoken language and the richness of Cape culture owed a great legacy to the Muslims who suffered and toiled through slavery, colonialism and Apartheid [2]. Muslim indentured labourers and merchants had struggled long and hard to maintain their identity and the basics of their Islamic way of life. Despite this long history of silent resistance and social interaction, less than three percent of the population of South Africa had entered into the fold of Islam.

This paper intends to focus on the trends of Islamization in Pre-Colonial West Africa and then review the results of the Verulam conference. It is hoped that parallels can be found in the experiences of the two encounters and more light can be shed on the importance of analyzing the process of religious interaction and lifestyle exchange.

### **Trends of Islamization in Pre-Colonial West Africa**

After the initial Muslim conquests in North Africa in the seventh and eighth centuries, Islam crossed the Sahara desert through Berber nomads who had trade centres on either sides of the desert. Military expansion came about as a result of the victories of Muslim armies over the Byzantine Romans and the local authorities. Islam, as a way of life, spread independently of the conquests, because of trade, migration and the wandering of scholars and mystics. [3] The Berbers had been in contact, for centuries, with the people of the West African savannah region that lie in between the desert and the gold mines of the south. Islamic teachings spread along the trade routes

that penetrated the Sahara in the tenth century from Tripoli toward Fezzan and from the Sus region of Morocco to the South. By the eleventh century, powerful Islamic empires arose because of internal development and the flourishing trade in gold. [4]

Writing in 1068, the Andalusian geographer, Abu 'Ubayd Al Bakri, recorded valuable information about three contemporary African Islamic empires: Takrur, Gao and Ghana. These three empires represent, not only the earliest organized Islamic expression in West Africa, but also, definite trends in the process of Islamization. They give us a real insight into the relationship between Muslims and their non-Muslim contemporaries as well as answering questions of allegiance to non-Muslims and the relationship of Islamic teachings to former polytheistic beliefs. Even today questions concerning Islamic political involvement as minorities in non-Muslim society are still matters of great divergence among Muslim scholars.

### **The Empire of Takrur (The Uncompromising rule of Islam)**

The empire of Takrur, centered along the Senegal River, became a Muslim state in the first half of the eleventh century. Today, its territory makes up part of the Republic of Senegal and Mauritania. Takrur controlled the salt mines of Awlil and was situated near the commercial centre of Awdaghust and the, gold producing Bambuk region, thus making it an important terminus for the merchants of the Sahara and the gold producers to the south. It attracted Muslim scholars from North Africa and 'migrants from far all over [5]. Al Bakri wrote in his *Kitaab al Masaalik wa - 'Imamaalik*:

*The Banu Gudaala whose territory touches the land, of the Sudan, lives at the farthest limit of the domains of Islam. From the border of their country to Sanghana, the nearest town of the land of the Sudan is six days traveling. The city of Sanghana consists of two towns standing on either bank of the Nil (Senegal River). Its inhabitants reach the ocean. The town of Sanghana is close on the South-western side to that of Takrur, situated also on the Nil. The inhabitants are Sudanese ... who previously worshipped idols until*

*Waar: jaabi b. Raabis became their ruler. He embraced Islam, introduced among them Muslim religious law and compelled them to observe it, thus opening their eyes to the truth. Waar: iaabi died in the year 432 AH/ 1040-1 AD and the people of Takrur are Muslims today. [6]*

In regards to the relationship between Muslim rulers and their non-Muslim subjects, the ruler of Takrur followed the position of the majority of mainstream scholars of Islam, an understanding that comes from the concept of *Al-Muwaalaat*. The Sunni orthodox position defined it as allegiance, love, respect, and clientage that necessitated that the believers establish the *Darul-Islam* (the abode of peace) through *Da 'wah* and *Jihaad* (struggling against evil). If they were not able to do so, they were commanded to make *Hi.ira* (migration) to an area that would allow them to live under the laws of Islam.[7]

The concept of the uncompromising rule of Islam was held by a number of leading African Muslim scholars in the succeeding centuries and became the leading trend of leadership in eighteenth and nineteenth century West Africa. In the fifteenth century, the Algerian scholar,

Sheikh Muhammad ibn 'Abdul Kareem Al-Maghili conducted a missionary tour to the south, stopping at Air, Takedda, Kano, Katsina and Gao. He established Islamic centers of learning everywhere he stopped, and always interacted directly with the people. He encouraged the establishment of Islamic law (*Sharee'ah*) and government. On arriving in Kana, Sheikh 'Abdul Kareem appointed an Imam for the Friday prayers, a *Qadi* (judge) for legal matters, established *Sharee'ah* courts and personally advised the Ameer, Sarki Muhammad Rumfa. In addition to this, Al Maghili composed a treatise on the art of Islamic rule and the qualities of a ruler. The treatise known as *TaJ' al-Deen fi maa Yajib 'ala Al-Mulook* [8] became a type of constitution for the institution of Ameer and the basis of an Islamic theocracy. [9]

Sheikh 'Uthman Dan Fodio, leader of the nineteenth century Islamic revival movement of Hausaland also followed this trend and took an uncompromising stand against corrupt rulers and any deviation from Islamic law. He wrote a famous treatise known as *Al-Amr hi Muwaalaat al-Mu'mineen wa al-Nahy 'an Muwaalat al-Kafireen* (The Order to give allegiance and clientage to the Believers and the Prohibition of giving allegiance and clientage to the Unbelievers). This document was a confirmation of his *Masaa'il Muhimmah YahtaJ'u ila Marifatuha Ahl-us-Sudan* (1217/1802)<sup>10</sup> and *Bayaan Wujoob al-Hijra 'ala al-'Ibaad* (1221/1806) [11]. His movement became so influential that they succeeded in controlling the whole of Hausaland and ruling it for almost one hundred years under Islamic *Sharee 'ah*. His ideas and writings are still having a profound impact on West African Muslims today.

### **The State of Gao (The Symbiotic relationship between Islam and traditional religion)**

The rulers of Gao appear to have become Muslim somewhere around 1000 AD. Al Bakri wrote,

*“The King of Gao is Muslim and the royal emblem Islamic, but "the common people worshipped idols as did the (other) Sudanes”*. [12]

In the renowned historical chronicle of West Africa, known as *Tarikh as-Sudan*,<sup>0</sup> written by As-Sa'di in the 17th century, it is reported that Za-Kossoi, ruler of the Songhay in Kukiya, became Muslim in 1010 AD. Za-Kossoi transferred the capital of Songhay from Kukiya to Gao. Gao remained the capital until Askiya Muhammad Toure moved it to Tendirma.[13] What distinguished the rule in Gao and Songhay from Takrur was the fact that the ruler was Muslim and surrounded himself with Muslim officials, yet the rituals of the royal court were still based on traditional customs and beliefs. These beliefs were based on ancestor worship and the presence of divinity in the natural world. The majority of the People of Gao were non-Muslims, so Islamic practices were confined to the elite who used to cement relations with the international Muslim world. Islam made little progress over the centuries in Gao since later accounts of the area show that the majority of the city's population in the thirteenth century were still followers of traditional religion. Even Ibn Battuta described Gao in 1352 AD as "a big city on the Nile (Niger), one of the best cities of the Blacks. There were only a few Muslims in a predominantly non-Muslim population." [14]

During the reign of Sunni Ali (1464-1492 AD), Gao was turned into the capital of a huge empire. Sunni Ali was described as a ruthless tyrant who persecuted Muslim scholars and continued to practice traditional religion. He probably believed that Islam was valuable for long distance trade and provided literacy and new avenues of knowledge, but the powers gained through the traditional knowledge of divination and magic were more vital for political stability and military success.’[15]

Many rulers throughout the history of West Africa practiced the system of seeking the best of both Islam and traditional religion and trying to forge a symbiotic relationship between the two lifestyles. Even the renowned Sundiata Keita, founder of the Mali Empire, in his epic battle with the master magician of the Soso, Sumanguru, employed his own spells and traditional protections along with his prayers to Allah. He appealed to the spirits of the nation as well as the Creator in order to insure his victory. [16]

### **The Empire of Ghana: (Tolerance and Autonomy under non-Islamic Rule)**

The empire of Ancient Ghana was probably founded around the fifth century. At the peak of its power, it covered a vast area from the southern limits of the Sahara in the north to the Bambuk goldfields in the south, and the Atlantic Ocean in the west to end of the Niger River in the east. This would include much of the present countries of Mauritania, Senegal and Mali. The control of the largest gold fields in the region led to a huge influx of Muslim merchants and scholars.

Al Bakri described Ghana in the eleventh century as follows:

The city of Ghana consists of two towns situated on a plain. One of these towns, which are inhabited by Muslims, is large and possesses twelve mosques, in one of which they assemble for the Friday prayer. These are salaried imams and muezzins, as well as jurists and scholars. In the environs are wells with sweet water, from which they drink and with which they grow vegetables. The king’s town is six miles distant from this one and bears the name of AlGhaaba... The king has a palace and a number of domed dwellings, all surrounded with an enclosure like a city wall. [17]

Concerning tolerance between adherents of different religions, Al-Bakri writes:

In the king’s town, and not far from his court of justice, is a mosque where the Muslims who arrive at his court pray. Around the king’s town are domed buildings, groves and thickets where the sorcerers of these people, men in charge of the religious cult, live. In them too are their idols and the tombs of their kings. These woods are guarded and none may enter them and know what is there... The king’s interpreters, the official in charge of the treasury and the majority of his ministers are Muslims... The audience is announced by the beating of the drum which they call “dubaa “, made from a long hollow log. When the people who profess the same religion as the king approach him they fall on their knees and sprinkle dust on their heads, for this is their way of greeting him. As for the

Muslims, they greet him only by clapping their hands. [18]

These accounts by Al-Bakr reveal a high level of tolerance between Muslims and non-Muslim rulers. Muslims were allowed to live in their own town and establish the major outward practices of their religion. Even at the court itself, the King allowed the presence of a mosque where his Muslim courtiers could pray. This shows that the King had a deep understanding of the importance of Muslims establishing their Friday prayers in their settled locality and their daily prayers at their place of work. He also understood the principle of *Tawheed* (monotheism) in Islam, which prohibited Muslims from bowing down to graven images or people. At the same time, Muslims did not attack the sorcerers or break the idols that sat in the guarded areas around the town. The King also trusted Muslims with his wealth and security, as most of his Ministers were Muslims. He must have understood the importance of connecting his empire to the world of Islam that developed trading fraternities from Muslim merchants living throughout the world.

It appears from the early accounts that the Kings of Ghana accepted Islam near the end of the eleventh century or the beginning of the twelfth century. This was probably due to the influence of the Muslims who played such an important role in their court and must have had a profound influence in their lives. Islam offered many material and spiritual incentives and connected Ghana with some of the most powerful rulers in the, then known world". [19]

In 1154 AD, Al-Shareef, Abu 'Abdullah Muhammad Al-Idrisi completed his famous work, *Nuzhat al-Mushtaaq fi ikhtiraaq al-Afaaq*, [20] for the Christian king of Sicily, the Noinan Roger II. He included in it a description of Ghana that described the wholesale acceptance of Islam within the empire. Al-Idrisi wrote:

From the town of Malal to the town of Great Ghana are about twelve stages over dunes and deep sands where there is no water. Ghana consists of two towns on both banks of the river. This is the greatest of all the towns of the Sudan in respect of area, the most populous, and the most extensive in trade. Prosperous merchants go there from all the surrounding countries... Its people are Muslim, and its king according to what is reported, belongs to the progeny of Salih ibn 'Abdullah ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Hasan ibn 'Au ibn Abi Talib. The khutbah is delivered in his name, though he pays allegiance to the 'Abbasid caliph. He has a palace on the bank of the Nil (Niger), strongly built and perfectly fortified. [21]

This approach of toleration and mutual benefit enabled Muslims in Ancient Ghana to transmit peacefully their message of monotheism and purity of relationships. Their uncompromising stand regarding the establishment of prayer and the autonomy of their lifestyle kept their message clear and protected them from deviation. Their involvement in the everyday affairs of the King and their critical role in the economy of the country must have given them an aura of quiet strength and importance. This methodology of peaceful integration and meaningful participation proved to be much more effective than the style of compromise and syncretism

adopted in Gao. There are many examples in the history of the West Africa where Muslim scholars and missionaries adopted this pragmatic, quietist approach and succeeded in having a profound effect on non-Muslim society. One of the most successful examples of this trend was the West African scholarly order called the Jakhanke.

## The Jakhanke

In the early development of Islam in Hausaland, the seventeenth century chronicle, *Asl Al-Wangariyin* revealed the entrance of a large Mande clerical party coming out of Mali on route to Makkah led by Shaykh 'Abd al-Rahman Zagaite. Shaykh 'Abd al-Rahman, had migrated together with the descendants of the tribes connected to his great grandfather. According to one tradition, there were 3,636 erudite scholars among his followers, in addition to the common people. [22] His leadership, the time and place of his appearance, link him not only to the Mande heritage of migration and trade, but also to the lakhanke clerical dispersions from their ancestral areas west of Hausaland.

The Jakhanke were a Serakhulle or Soninke people who acquired the Mande language and cultural patterns. [23] They called themselves Ahl Diakha (Jagha' or Dia), the people of Diakha, the ancient town of Masina visited by Ibn Battuta in 1352 C.E. [24] They did not distinguish themselves as a separate ethnic group, but they maintained a remarkable consistency as a clerical order. [25] All of the widely dispersed Jakhanke communities looked to a common ancestor, al-Hajj Salim Suware, also known as M'bemba Laye Suware, an undoubtedly historic figure who lived around 1147-8 C.E. [26] Al-Hajj Salim appears to have migrated westward from Diakha-Masina to Jafunu where he spent thirty years. While journeying, he was accompanied by numerous students, family members, clan members, sympathizers, and disciples. After their stay in Jafunu, the lakhanke migrated to the west where they founded a clerical settlement, Diakha-Bambukh. From this settlement and others, highly developed Manding mercantile communities developed. These communities benefited from the lucrative gold trade of this region, and carried out Islamic missionary work alongside their trade. [27]

In their own accounts, the Jakhanke saw their community as a clerical corporation, occupied by *al qira'a* (diligence in learning), *al harth* (farming), and *al Safar* (mobility and travel). They were never organized as actual commercial collective, but assigned members of their community to carry out their trade. [28] Al-Hajj Salim Suware was one of the main scholars who exercised a profound influence over the Jakhanke clerics by not only establishing the physical base of education and community development, -but also, laying down the principles of their traditions. [29] Local Jakhanke sources tell us that he spent most of his life in peaceful, missionary tours, making the Pilgrimage to Makkah several times. These activities fell under the broad Jakhanke category of *al-Safar* and led to the establishment of new mosques, the upgrading of existing mosques, the founding of Jakhanke educational establishments, and the recruitment of students. [30]

Education was at the heart of the Jakhanke clerical enterprise, for the leading savants, in the tradition of Al-Hajj Salim, regularly conducted missionary tours and carried a large following along with them on their journey. These students were trained to carry on the Jakhanke legacy and teach the basics of Islamic learning. They also made up a large part of the work force that would enable the Jakhanke agricultural bases to support clerical activity. [31]

In the tradition of al-Hajj Salim, the Jakhanke clerics took part in divination, special prayers

(*Duaa*), and healing. These activities, which would fall under *al-Qira'a*, had a profound influence on the West African Muslim and non-Muslim populations. From the time of the birth of a new child, the Jakhanke cleric was called upon by his host community to perform the naming ceremony. [32] The words of the *Basmalah* or the *Kalima Shahada* were softly read into the ears of the child and the cleric would spit into the ears of the newborn [33]. It was believed that this *Duaa* [34] would give the child protection from the evil forces of the spirit world. Later, the Jakhanke cleric would be called on at many different points in the life of the community for varying degrees of protection. On special occasions such as *Eid ul-Adha* (the festival of the sacrifice), the cleric would be called on to make special prayers. In times of drought or calamity, the cleric would lead the ruler and his people in *Salat al-Istisqaa* (prayer for Divine intervention in the weather) or *Salat al-Istikhaara* (the prayer of Divine choice in matters of the world).

Along with the various types of *Duaa* known to the Orthodox Muslim world, the Jakhanke distinguished them with a type of spontaneous prayer that could include non-Muslims. This may have developed because of their prolonged presence among non-Muslims, and the fact that the daily five prayers of Islam and the Friday prayer were restricted to Muslims. The Jakhanke may have believed that performing private prayer was exclusionary to people of other traditions.

The Jakhanke's greatest legacy from al-Hajj Salim was his principled disavowal of jihad as an instrument of religious and political change. Al-Hajj Salim is reported to have preached to a wide spectrum of Believers and nonbelievers during his travels. He emphasized the necessity of peaceful witness in the propagation of Islam, while adamantly opposing the use of violence. [35] This was a significant development for West African Islam and along with the necessity for neutrality that grew out of the Jakhanke's long distance traveling and business involvement, formed the basis of a spiritual, yet pragmatic quietest tradition. The Jakhanke deplored involvement in war or in secular political activity. They withdrew from the mainstream of the societies they encountered and concentrated on building "islands of Islamic thought and prayer." Jakhanke neutrality did not detract from the tremendous effect that they had on the spread of Islam in this region. In fact, it was really a great asset. Military conquest, in most cases, would lead to hostility and bitterness and often become an impediment to the acceptance of a new faith. Jakhanke pacifism was fluid and non-confrontational but did not exclude them from aggressive Islamic preaching or resistance to un-Islamic practices. The Jakhanke profoundly affected Hausa society without the use of sword. Their experience with numerous cultures and environments enabled them to understand their hosts and lead them gradually into a state of Islam. Therefore, the Jakhanke clerics and those who followed their trend of pacifism and political neutrality should be seen as a primary factor in the early development of Islam in the West Africa and a living example of pragmatic *Da 'wah* and non-aggressive transformation.

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### **The Verulam Conference Of 2004**

The meeting of Islamic activists and callers to Allah at the Verulam Islamic Institute in Kwa-Zulu Natal came at a crucial time in the development of Islam in Southern Africa. The Republic of South Africa, the leading economic power of the region, was calling for an African Renaissance yet battling unrest and disillusionment from the masses of its downtrodden people. Muslims were in a position to play a leading role in the rebirth of the nation and reverse the tarnished image of the international Muslim community if pragmatic thinking replaced emotionalism and stagnated theological debates. The discussion focused on the following points:

A brief historical overview of *Da 'wah* in the past three decades.  
The current status of *Da 'wah* in the country.

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Current challenges facing *Da 'wah*.

### **The Way Forward [36]**

In summary, senior members of the conference traced the trends in *Da 'wah* back to the humiliation of Egypt in the 1967 War. This major setback for Muslims in the Middle East caused serious introspection among active Muslims in Southern Africa. In the seventies and eighties, prominent Islamic thinkers like Maulana Fazlur Rahman Ansari of Pakistan, visited Southern Africa and shared their vision and practical experiences. Youth movements, relief agencies, Islamic educational centres and influential organizations were formed because of the external influences from the Muslim world. Mr. Ahmed Deedat, who began his countermissionary work in the fifties, formed the Islamic Propagation Centre International in the seventies and influenced a generation of Muslim activists. He confronted the Christian ideological onslaught and developed strategies for the propagation of Islam to the masses of the African people. *Da 'wah* groups were formed that specialized in food distribution and basic Islamic teaching in the African townships. The Tablighi Jamaat of India and Pakistan had a major impact on the Muslims of the Southern region by sending their groups everywhere to call Muslims back to the mosque and inspire them to return to the fundamentals of their faith.

By the turn of the century, many local activists, even those who gave their ideologies an African perspective, were following international Islamic movements. Despite the positive achievements of these movements and the building of mosques, madrasahs and Islamic centres throughout the region, the main goal of reaching out to the broad public by the twenty first century had not been achieved.

The Verulam conference delegates pointed out a number of glaring deficiencies among the *Da 'wah* agencies and individuals involved in the Call to Allah. Among the major challenges were the following:

1. A lack of knowledge of the Islam, itself, and the strategies for *Da 'wah* given in the main sources, namely the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*.
2. A lack of positive examples and role models for the young people and new Muslims to emulate.
3. A lack of real commitment to the work of *Da 'wah*.
4. A lack of human and financial resources to support the work.
5. The presence of racism in the thinking and actions of Muslims in general and *Da'wah*

workers, in particular.

6. Mismanagement of resources from both internal and external sources.
7. The effects of poverty and economic injustice that still plague our land.
8. The lack of coordination between the *Da 'wah* agencies and *Du 'aat* (callers).
9. The absence of women in key positions of authority and decision-making.
10. Lack of professionalism and the use of technology in *Da 'wah* activities.
11. Lack of relevancy in the approach to *Da 'wah*.
12. Lack of planning and vision for the future.

After two days of intense deliberation, the delegates identified a number of solutions to these challenges. Some of these solutions are as follows:

1. The need for sincerity to Allah and positive thinking in the work of *Da 'wah*. The need to drop personal agendas and organizational fanaticism in order to network with other *Du 'aat* and *Da 'wah* agencies. "Why does each person have to reinvent the wheel?"
2. The need to pool resources to achieve specific, well planned objectives.
3. The necessity to equip the *Du 'aat* with the proper knowledge of Islam and the skills to deliver the message in a modern context.
4. The necessity in confronting racism and bias by understanding the roots of racism in all its forms and integrating the leadership.
5. The necessity of involving Muslim women in front line leadership and education.
6. The need to make an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the Muslim communities of the Southern hemisphere.
7. The need to send out specialised *Da 'wah* caravans in order to train *Du 'aat*, promote a high standard of *Da 'wah* outreach and intensify public dialogue with the broader society.
8. The importance of focussing on Islam in Africa as a means of dispelling myths of "Indian, Malay or Arab Islam".
9. The need to integrate African history and the role of Muslims in African life, in order to give African youth a better understanding of the universality of Islam. This could also assist in raising their self-esteem by providing role models from real historical personalities and events.
10. The necessity of combining the theological call to Islam with upward mobility and self improvement.
11. The need to foster and support a forum that would not be another bureaucracy but merely a meeting place for *Du 'aat* and a vehicle to network strengths and accomplish necessary goals.

The Verulam conference delegates felt that it was high time that Muslims resisted being divided by labels like modernists, fundamentalists, secularists, and traditionalist. They believed that the time had come to focus on a common Islamic vision and work towards co-operation and coordination with individuals and organizations that are "hands on" in the field of *Da 'wah* and social uplifting. [37] It was, therefore, resolved to form a national body called *The Da 'wah Coordinating Forum* (DCF) to serve as a vehicle for regional networking. Other *Da'wah* agencies

and umbrella groups would be contacted to participate in this regional effort.

A *Shura* committee was chosen to take the responsibility for the day to day running of the DCF. This *Shura* was mandated to carry out the following activities:

1. Establish an office, newsletter and infrastructure for the DCF.
2. Send out *Da 'wah* caravans [38] to all nine provinces in South Africa and throughout the Southern African region.
3. Assess the needs of *Da 'wah* and identify the responsible people in the field.
4. Set quality standards in *Da 'wah* by introducing a non-offensive form of outreach to the non-Muslim public.
5. Set new trends in *Da 'wah* by focusing on Islam in Africa and social uplifting as key issues for *Da'wah* offices and programs.
6. Initiate a massive campaign of distribution of Islamic literature in the indigenous languages of Southern Africa.
7. Focus on some of the important areas of uplifting such as: adult literacy, skills development, HIV/AIDS prevention, life skills, and basic Islamic lifestyle [39]

## Conclusion

The Verulam meeting succeeded in adding a new dimension to the *Call to Allah* in Southern Africa. It was not the first consultative gathering of Muslim minds in this region, nor was the resolutions, for the most part, new ideas. What distinguished this gathering and the new national forum for *Da 'wah*, is the broadness of its scope and the relevancy of its message. A *Shura* committee was elected which consisted of African and Indian Muslims, leaders from the *Sufi* and *Salafi* outlook on Islam, an African Muslim 'woman and a member of a conservative Muslim 'llama body! All of the members of the council chose to overlook their cultural or ideological bias for the upliftment of the *Call to Allah*. The DCF since the first Verulam meeting succeeded in establishing a *Shura* office in Durban and sending out *Da'wah* caravans to all nine provinces in South Africa, as well as, Botswana, Malawi and Lesotho. The Jakhanke of West Africa focused on education, farming, and missionary travel. Similarly, the DCF chose to focus on re-education of *Du 'aat*, motivation of the Muslim community, skills development, adult literacy, HIV/AIDS awareness and *Da 'wah* caravans to invite the public to Islam. In the pragmatic tradition of tolerance, the DCF chose to avoid involvement in local or national politics and the use of aggressive, violent means to prevent corruption and immorality. Through deeper research into the methodology of pre-colonial African Muslim leaders and more focus on the twenty-first century African Renaissance, Muslims of Southern Africa may be empowered to play a more decisive role in the Southern Hemisphere and enabled to make a more meaningful call to Islam.

## References and Notes

\*Southern African Islamic Call organization

[1] Da'wah is an invitation or a call. In the Islamic sense, it refers to the invitation to Islam.

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[10] "Important Issues that the People of the Sudan need to be aware of".

[11] "*The Evidence of the Compulsory Nature of Migration on the Believers*"

[12] N. Levtzion, *The History of Africa*, p. 64.

[13] Peter Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, p. 47.

[14] Ibid, 48.

[15], ibid. p. 49.

[16] N. Levtzion, *The History of Islam in Africa*, p. 66.

[17] N. Levtzion, *Corpus*, p. 79-80.

[18], Ibid, p.80.

[19] Ghana was also highly influenced by Al- Murabitun (Almoravids) who under the leadership of Abdullah ibn Yasin spread Islam in the eleventh century Western

Sudan. There is no solid evidence of a conquest as claimed by some historians. See:

David Conrad and Humphrey Fisher, *The Conquest that never was: Ghana and the Almoravids*. 1076. HISTORY IN AFRICA, vol.9, (1982).

[20] "The Pleasure of the who longs to cross the Horizons

[21] Ibid., p. 109-110.

[22] M.A. Al Hajj, *Asl al Wangariyin*, "A Seventeenth Century Chronicle on the Origins and Missionary Activities of the Wangara", Kana Studies, 1, 1968, p. 10.

[23] Lamin Sanneh, *the Jakhanke?* (London: International African Institute, 1979).

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[25] Lamin Sanneh, "Origins of Clericalism in West African Islam", JAB, 17, 1 1976, P.55.

[26] Ibid, 56, 66.

[27] Ibid, 58.

[28] Lamin Sanneh, *Jakhanke*, 19.

[29] *Ibid*, 23. This was made by the Jakhanke, they, according to Sanneh.

[30] *Ibid*, 19.

[31] *Ibid*, 150-3.

[32] In Arabic: *Aqeeqah*.

[33]. Sanneh, *Jakhanke*, 187. *Basma/ah* is 'In the name of Allah', and the *Ka/ima Shahada* is the testimony that there is no god but Allah and Muhanunad is His Messenger.

[34] *Duaa* is a form of prayer.

[35] Lamin Sanneh, *Jakhanke*, " 21.

[36] The minutes of the Verulam meeting can be found at the office of the Da'wah Coordinating Forum, Suite 215, IPEI Building, 124 Queen Street, Durban, 4001. For more information contact: DCF P.O. Box 49105, East End 4018 Durban, South Mrica or 031-301-1641 or [dcfi@telcomsa.net](mailto:dcfi@telcomsa.net).

[37] Taken from the DCF pamphlet on the Da'wah Caravan of 2004-2005 AD.

[38] The *Do'wah* caravan is a mobile group of scholars and *Du 'aat* which coordinates with the local Muslim organizations and carries out a series of public lectures, training seminars and community sensitivity sessions.

[39] DCF Da'wah caravan pamphlet, p.2.

## THE ORIGINS OF CULTURAL HERITAGE AND ITS ROLE IN THE EASTERN COAST OF AFRICA

Saif Al-Islam Badawi Basheer

### INTRODUCTION

This paper makes an attempt to evaluate the root of the predominant cultural heritage in the eastern coast of Africa. To do this, it would be examined, the impacts of trade, migration on the culture, religion and educational development of the people of this area. Also, are the roles played the famous and common Sufi *tariqas*, *'ulama* in the political, social, culturally, economic and religious development of this area.

### Trade, Migration & Consequences

The relation between the Arab Peninsula and the Eastern Coast of Africa began very early with trade caravans. So it is natural to notice an expansion of Arabic culture in that area after the advent of Islam in the early 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. which is also considered as a new era in the history of relations between Arabs and Abyssinia (cf. Riyaad, 1976:333).

The Arab immigrants in Abyssinia were offered a distinctive position in the country. This privilege encouraged more Arab groups to arrive there. It is believed that the majority of them stayed there for sixteen years as Al-Najashi, the king of Abyssinia welcomed them with great hospitality (cf. Ibn Saad, 1960: 136-137). On the other hand, political and economic situations have played tremendous role in shaping the Islamic state in Arab Peninsula. Some of those immigrants reached up to the Eastern coast of Africa (cf. kaamil, 1963:64-65).

After the death of the Prophet Mohammed, (P.B.U.H), political, economic and disasters befell the *ummah* such as, famine (Aam Al-Ramad) which occurred during the Caliphate of Umar Ibn EI-Khatib. These events forced some Muslims to migrate to East Africa, seeking security and a better life (Cf. Al-Nageera, 1982:81). Also, after the assassination of Caliph Othman and during the Caliphate of Ali Ibn Abi Taalib, some Shia, Ali's descendants and supporters, fled and migrated from their original home lands to the Eastern coast of Africa. (cf. Zaki, 1955: 81). The most significant motivations that made Arab Muslims to migrate centered on religious and political conflicts, particularly during the Umayyad and Abbasid era. It was likely that, those Arab immigrants from Al-Ihsaa, Al-Bahrain, Oman, Hadramoot and Yemen carried aspects of their civilization to East Africa.

The countries that were mostly affected by the above mentioned migrations were Eritrea, Somalia, Zanzibar and the coast up to the South Equatorial region (cf. Hamdi, 1950: 249). Consulting History references, it would be realised that the oldest Arab political migrations to Eastern Coast of African happened during the days of Abd Al-malik Ibn Marwan the Umayyad Caliph (65-86Hgr/685 - 705 A.D).

Late immigrants joined their companions in Eastern coast of Africa and began to establish towns built according to the Arab model One of these is Laamo which later became a referential

base for establishing additional Arabic towns along that coastal area. It is reported that Gaafar, the son of Caliph Abd Al-Malik Ibn Marwan, immigrated to East Africa and governed the Southern region of Kewa Abo ( Mogadishu) in (Arkhabeel Laamo) (cf. Mahmoud" 1998:398).

One of the most important Arab political immigrant groups that settled in Maafya Island came from Oman during the years (75-85 Hj/694-704 A.D) under the leadership of Suleiman and Saeed, the sons of Abbad Elljalandi, a sheikh of Alazd tribe which ruled Oman during the age of Amawatic state. Although the Hadarma played significant role in the Eastern Coast of Africa, their role was limited only to trade. It is claimed that, some of them settled along that coastal area in addition to the town of Shekhaya near Mogadishu in Benadir coast Eastern Somalia (cf.Al-Tabari :197-276).

Further immigrants from Yemeni Zidiya group came to this coastal area during the years (140143Hgr/ 757-760). They settled in the area extending from Equatoria to the South East of Mogadishu. On the other hand, the Abbasid Caliph Haroon EI-Rasheed (170 193Hj/ 786-809 A. D) gave a special attention to the Eastern Coast of Africa by sending his people up to Zanibar and Bumba. In the 4th century A. H, there was the migration of the seven brothers from an Arab tribe called Bano Elharith in addition to another non-Arab group called Shirawziya from Persia, considered as an important group to influence the history of that area. It also took place, the additional Arab immigrants from the Ihsaa region, under the leadership of seven brothers who settled on the Benaddir shore where they established Mogadishu and Brawa. Their authority extended to include the southern part of Mumbassa town. These Arabs of the Zidiya tribe intermarried with the indigenous tribes, thereby evloving a new group called Alamoziidij, which is a form for the Sawahili word (Alzidiya). (Cf. Zaki, 1965:77.) By the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D, a Persian immigrant from (Sheraz), under the leadership of Al-Hassan Ibn Ali and his sons came to establish the state of Negroes (Dawlat Elzing) and its capital is called (Kalwa). The authority of this state extended to include several ports and Islands laying between Bamba in the North to (Safala) in the South.This is considered the first Islamic state to be established in East Africa. It is probably that recent Zanzibar Sultanate traces back its historical origin to that sate (Bawlat, Alzing).

By the beginning of 5th century A.H, the coastal towns were completely built on Arabic model. This process went on to include towns such as Mogadishu, Brawa, Kismayo, Bat, Lamo, Mogeh, Makwa, Muzambig and Safala. (cf.AISwaafi, 1985: 27)

Then the influx of migrats continued, particularly, in the beginning of 7<sup>th</sup> century A.H when enmass, group of Arab migrants from Oman region arrived at Kalwa under the leadership of Suleiman Ibn Suleiman Ibn Mazhar Alnabhani, who later married the daughter of (Ishaag) one of the governors of Kalwa. Finally, Ishaag resigned from the throne for his in-law, Suleiman Ibn Suleiman.

The migration of (Bani Nabhaan), an Omani tribe, was the final mass migration to the Eastern coast of Africa. Since then, there were about forty towns built following Arabic model which extended from Gulf of Aden up to the southern parts of that area. This includes towns such as Kalwa, Zanzibar, Mumbassa, Lamo, Malindi, Brada, Batta, and Kismayo. (cf.Almaliki, 1986: 130).

Preachers and traders contributed increasingly and successfully in spreading and deepening Islam in that area. They converted people in great number to Islam, with only little effort when compared to those of European missionaries who depended entirely on their power and other inhuman means in converting Africans to their religion (cf.Mahmoud,1998:37.). It is worth

mentioning here that Islam did not enter Eastern coast of Africa by force, but with forgiveness, justice, simplicity and rational justifications. These basic concepts of Islam attracted and motivated people to enter into Islam. Islam brought dignity and equity to Africans regardless of colour or race. Africans were attracted to Islam for it calls for brotherhood and equality between people. Although the Europeans worked hard to suppress Islam in the eastern coast by portraying the Arabs as slave traders, Islam was not affected.

### **The Role of Sufi Tariqas in Preaching Islam and Championing these Calls**

Sufism is a spiritual ideology rather than a doctrine. It has addressed the souls of Muslims and motivated them to preach the religion starting from the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.H. In fact, the efforts of the Sufis in preaching Islam in the Eastern coast of Africa came late. This was after Islam spread in the Arab Peninsula. The truth of this argument is borne out by the connection between the Arabs in the Eastern coast of Africa and those of Arab Peninsula (cf. Alhuwayyri, 1980:53). The relations between the two groups continue till now. 'The reason for this is that the spread of Islam was through peaceful means, education and intimate preaching. The Sufis used to travel with the caravans to East Africa and stay long enough until they could make followers and adherents over all that area. They established Qur'ānic schools (Zaawias) from which preachers graduated and were sent to acquire further knowledge in Islam and its culture in Alharamain in Arabia, Alazhar University in Egypt and Mosques of Damascus in Mount Lebanon, in Gerwaan, and Faas in Morocco. Sufis sent their members all over the world to spread Islam and its principles, so as to enable people to convert easily to Islam (cf. Abdel Majeed, 1949:227229).

Sufism also played significant role in spreading Islam to the Eastern coast of Africa, particularly during the 19<sup>th</sup> century A.D., when Muslim's political power declined after the Europeans colonized the Arabs towns on the East Coast of Africa. The Europeans worked hard to weaken Islam by denying Muslims access to them to the civil serves. This policy clearly reflects in the shape of the socio-cultural and administrative entities of the colonial masters. Sufism filled the void, and provided an alternative to the previous Islamic institutions. Africans began to respond to their appeal and took advantage of social, economic and cultural opportunities made on their disposal. Qadiriyya Sufis in Zanzibar, Idrisiyya in Bagnio, Shaziliyya in Kilwa Kiswani came to spread Islam (cf. Othman, 2001: 112). Sufis also confronted the European colonization in Eastern coast of Africa. They fought with the Colonialist, a good of which is the confrontation between the Somali hero, Mohammed Ibn Abdallah Ibn ElHassan and the British. (cf. Dishaan, 1956: 135).

### **The Famous and Common Sufi Tariqas**

Qadiriyya *tariqa* is the oldest and the first to appear in the Eastern coast of Africa. It was founded by an Iraqi sheikh called Abd al-Qadir Aljailani (1077-1166). It appeared in Eastern coast of Africa with the advent of traders, who migrated from Yemen and Hadramout. It spread first in the coastal towns like Musawa, Zeela and Mogadishu through its religious and educational activities. Its school groomed future Muslim scholars who later carried Islam to the common people in big cities In

Eritrea, Somalia, Tanzania and other parts of East Africa. These towns became Islamic centers in their own right.

### **Shaziliyya Tariqa**

It was founded by one of the descendants of Imam Ali Ibn Abi Talib, Abu Al-Hassan Ali Ibn Abd Eljabbar Elshazili, who was born in Morocco in 1197 A.D. He toured a number of Islamic states and finally settled in Alexandria in Egypt where he began preaching. As a result of his efforts, many people responded to his Islamic call. He died in (Eizab) desert when he was in his way to perform pilgrimage in Mecca. It is said that before his death, he had passed down the leadership of the *tariqa* to his successor, Abu Alabbas EI-Mursi (cf. Mahli.oud, 1967: 47). In as much as East Africa witnessed strong relations with Egypt and its scholars, then it is probably that those scholars, *ulama*, brought the Shaziliyya to tropical Africa. Shaziliyya is most popular in Zanzibar where it is the adhered to by most of the populace. In Tanzania, Shaziliyya has its second largest *tariqa* followership. In this regards, the efforts of Shiekh Hussein who operated from Kilwa that made the Shaziliyya *tariqa* popular in Tanzania. He opened a great school that acted as a center for practicing spiritual activities for people all over East Africa which include Uganda, Kenya, Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique. (C.f. Othman, 2001: 212)

### **The Tariqa of Al Ahmadiyya Al Idrisiyya**

It belongs to the Moroccan Sheikh called, Ahmad Ibn Idris Al Fasi (1837AD). This *tariqa* contributed to the religious reformation movement that appeared in the 19<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Ibn Idris introduced himself as a Sufi and religious reformer. He was influenced by the Salafiyya movement in Najd. This enabled him to purify Sufism from many innovations and anchor its practices, based on the Holy Qur'ān and Sunnah of the Prophet. One of Ahmad's followers called Sheikh Mohammad Salih established a *sub-tariqa* called Salihyya which later extended to cover all Somali land and East Africa. Alshazilyyya however became more popular in that area, after it had been joined by Mohammed Hassan the Somali Mahdi. Sheik Mohammad is one of the national heroes of Somalia who is also called the savior of Somali people. It is worth mentioning here that, Alsalihyya played a significant role in originating Islamic culture in Somali land. (cf. Othman, 2001: 123).

### **Rufaaiyya Tariqa**

It is one of the oldest Sufi *tariqas* in Tanzania. It appeared there with the advent of Hadramouti immigrants. Among its famous Sheikhs are Al Sharif Alaidrus, the first to hold an anniversary festivity for the birthday of Prophet Mohammad (P.B.D.H). In addition, Al-Rufaaiyya hymns are presented in K. Sawahili Language.

### **Alalawiyya Tariqa**

It belongs to Sheikh Mohammed Ibn Ali Alalawi who died in 653Hgr-1255A.D. Among the famous Alawi sheikhs are Abdallah Mohaminad Ibn Salim Ibn Baa Katheer ALKindi, Abd Allah

Ibn Mohammad Al Saggaf and the descendants of Jamal El-Ieil. Sheikh Abdallah Baa Katheer brought the Tariqa to Zanzibar. One of the Alwians remarkable deeds in Zanzibar is their Alnour Islamic schools which hosted a great number of students and adherents (cf. Othman, 2001: 126127).

All these Sufis *tariqas* played significant roles in Eastern Coast of Africa, in both the religious and educational aspects. These *tariqas* established schools from which jurists, *fugaha* and scholars, *'ulamaa* graduated to steer Muslim societies away from Christians and pagan influence. The adherents and followers of these *tariqas* also managed to organize themselves and oppose European colonialists in several historical battles.

### **Cultural Dimension and its Pioneers**

It is paradoxical that the Portuguese invaders contributed indirectly to the propagation of Islam. Muslims, who were forced to desert these East African coastal areas and take refuge in the inner parts of Africa, were able to interact with the indigenous tribes through intermarriages and subsequently propagate the principles of Islam among the inhabitants. As a result of this interaction between Arabs and Africans, there appeared a new civilization having a common Afro-Arab characteristic. Families of Arab immigrant such as the Mazruians, Hannawians and Hadarffias in Mombassa began to occupy distinctive and high positions in the fields of jurisprudence, education and culture. By the end of 19th to early 20th century A.D. these families produced quite a number of great scholars who later contributed in propagating Islamic civilization in the Eastern coast of Africa. The most prominent of those scholars, *'ulamaa* were Sheikh Ahmed Ibn Someet, Sheikh Ali Ibn Abdullah Almazrui, and Sheikh Abdallah Ibn Mohammed Ibn Baa Katheer, Sheikh Abd Alrahman Ibn Ahmed and Sheikh Al-Amin Ibn Ali Ibn Nafi Almazrui. Besides, the Hadarmas actively contributed in spreading Islam and its civilization, particularly in Lamo and in other places in North Kenya and around it.

One of the significant religious legacies in Lamo is Ribaath Alriyadah (zawiya) in which spiritual activities are performed. These (zawiyas) were founded by one of the honourable men of Tariqua Al alwiyya called Habib Ibn Salih Ibn Habib AlAlawi (cf. Haj EI Safi, 1999. 118-120).

The civilizational role carried out by the Arabs of Oman in 19th century A.D is clearly reflects in the activities of the Muslim missionaries. It is believed that it was the Bosaeedians who spread Islam further into East Africa which include places such as Uganda, the upper parts of Kongo river, Ruanda, Burundi and the inner parts of Tanganiqka.

As for Zanzibars, it became a great Islamic enlightenment center during the days of Saeed Ib Sultan. Later, it acted as a center of Omani authority in East Africa in 1348 A.H/ 1832 AD. It is true that Islam spread there with the advent of Omani trade caravans before mid 19th century A.D. This was through the activities of some Omani preachers, amongst whom is Sheikh Ahmad Ib Ibrahim Al Amri, whose missionary efforts reached further into the inter or as far east as Uganda (cf. Sagiroon, 1994:499).

The choice of Zanzibar town to be the capital of Bosaeedians in the Eastern coast of Africa reflected their economic and political ingenuity. This happened when Zanzibar finally became an economic and political revival center in the Eastern coast of Africa, as it is the case with Mogadishu in the North up to Jado cape, Uganda, Zaer and upper parts of Kongo river. (cf. Sagiroon, 1994: 286-287). At that time a student, Taalib Alilm, would obtain a certificate signed by a scholar, *fagheeh*. This was the way through which scripts and knowledge of the tradition were transmitted

in Zanzibar and East Africa.

In the 19th century A.D, when people began to specialize in Arabic, Qur'ānic texts, poetry of Arabic and Swahili languages, Arabic books began appearing in Zanzibar. After this, the Zanzibar towns turned into cultural centers, which also managed to attract students, *Tullab Alilm* and '*ulamaa* from all over East Africa and even beyond. Those students came from Jawa India, Hadramoot and Oman (cf. Kan breega, 1983: 260-266).

### **The Naafi AI Mazroui *Ulamaa* who lived in the Eastern coast of Africa**

#### **Sheikh Ali Ibn Abdallah Ibn (1825-1894 A.D)**

He was one of the Mazroui families which belong to an Arab tribe called Baniyaas. This tribe had governed Mombassa and after the victory of the Bosaeed in the war against them in 1837, they fled from Mombassa. Since then, Sheikh Ali and his father migrated to Mecca Ali and latter, traveled to Hadrmoot in order to acquire knowledge from the *ulamaa*. Finally, he returned back home to Mombassa where he was appointed as a magistrate.

#### **Sheikh Abdallah Ibn Mohammad Bakatheer AI Kindi (1860-1925 A.D)**

He was born in Lamo. He belonged to a famous family called Ba Katheer. This is a sub-branch of the Kindi tribe stretching between Hadramoot and Oman. He wrote several books on religious preachment and poems rendered Barzangi birth into the Sawahili Language. Shiekh Abdallah also was a disciple of Said Ahmed Ibn Simyat, the great Alim of Zanzibar. After that, he traveled to Mecca so as to acquire knowledge under the great '*ulama* of Hijaz. He then traveled to Jawa in order to propagate Islam. After that, he went to Cape Town to mediate a conflict that erupted between various Muslim groups. He eventually settled in Zanzibar where he devoted himself to preaching and teaching. He became a popular '*alim* in the coastal area. His contributions to spread of Islam were made by several journeys he carried out to serve Islam. He also wrote poems and taught students, *tullab*, who later became famous '*ulama* in East Africa (cf. Kanbrega, 1968:269). His prominent achievements are reflected in teaching, Al-shafiee *fiqh*, the regular sessions which graduating several students, *tullab alilm*. He also compiled many books in opposing to Abadi doctrine and its principles. This success encouraged many other Abadian groups to follow the steps of Sheikh Ali, among which are the Bqsaeedians, Maruians, Hannaus and Brwani families.

#### **Sheikh Ahmad Ibn Simyat (1925 A.D)**

He was one of the famous religious men in East Africa in the first half of 19<sup>th</sup> century A.D. He belongED to the Hadanna and he was a disciple of Ebeed Allah Ibn Muhsin Alsaggaf, the Mufti of Hadramoot. He was also a student of the Iraqi *alim*, Al Said Hussein Ibn Ali Al Marashi. He was also a magistrate. He traveled to Istanbul and Egypt where he joined Al-Azhar University, after

which he journeyed to Mecca and Zanzibar where he spent the rest of his life working as a magistrate and a teacher of religious Science. He held a distinctive position over all East Africa and Arab Peninsula. This made Egyptians to view him as the best magistrate in that area. He was well sought for on complicated legal case. He compiled many books in different aspects of knowledge and science. He died in 1925 AD, that is, at the age of sixty six. (cf. Kanbrega, 1983: 267- 268).

### **Sheikh Abd Rahman Ibn Ahmed (1844-1922)**

He was born in the town of Siyoloh in the northern part of Kenya. He played a great role in expanding education in the Eastern coast of Africa. He obtained his education from the Arabs and Somali's. He was appointed as a judge and was the first sheikh, Islamic scholar in Mombasa. He also maintained strong relations with the scholars of Somalis. As the result of his efforts, Islam spread to all the nooks and crannies of Mombasa and Zanzibar (cf. Haj Alsaafi, 1991:119-120)

### **Conclusion**

It can be emphasized, the existence of Arab-Islamic civilization in the eastern coast of Africa. Until early 19<sup>th</sup> century A.D, this marked the beginning of the urbanization and cultural civilization in the area. This gave an added advantage to the understanding and solidarity which existed between the large populations of people living in the whole of this coastal area. Studies and researches about the origin of Islamic heritage, history and early Muslim efforts in the field of Islamic propagation, *da'wah*, in the eastern coast of Africa need more efforts.

Invariably, it can be said that the impact of Arab immigrants through intermarriages and preaching of Allah's oneness in this area played significant roles in the intellectual, cultural and Islamic identities of the people of the area. This also characterizes their acceptability as a nation and their propagation of Islam. This accounts for why the mix up of cultural civilization of the Arab immigrants and the indigenous inhabitants of this area has a positive influence on the spiritual, intellectual growth and purification of the soul of the populace of the whole region east coastal Africa. Central to the attainment is the roles of the Sufi tariqas so far explained.

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## 10

### THE COROLLARY OF THE HISTORY OF SOMALI POLITICAL ISLAM

Abdi O. Shuriye (IIUM)

#### INTRODUCTION

This chapter contends that Islam has been and remains to be a thickset factor in Somali politics. Substantiation of this discernment is traced from the history of Somali politics and the role played by Islam. Preliminary sketch of the political history of Somali Islam is necessary to establish this position of Islam. This endeavour however, ventures to conceptualize the current state of affairs, as it aims to identify the political ideals of this government phobia nation.

Somali Islam dates back to the epoch of Prophet Muhammad. After years of Islamic influence, Somalis produced groups of religious devotees (*Wadads*), men of God (*Awliya Allah*) and Qur'anic teachers (*Mu'alims*). The task of these men was to, and remains to be, teach the fundamentals of faith (*tawheed*), the Qur'an to the younger ones, and mediate in tribal disputes.

Throughout the history of Somali people, the religious men were the most reliable in arbitrations over their counterparts, the politicians. In fact, in core traditions, men of high religious cognisance were considered above the tribal obligations-above the law, in modern terms.

History reveals that, more than any other African nation, Somalia had in its history the highest number of Islamic city-states. Zaila, Berbara, Merca, Harar, Mogadishu and Adal are some of the Islamic dynasties in Somali history.

Forms of political Islam and administration can be traced back to the tenth century. Ibn Battuta [1] who visited the area around 1331 A.D. was struck by how the Somalis imported forms of Islamic organizations, religious institutes and Islamic commercial laws to transform the local political and business realities. The Islamic Courts Union or as some identify them, The Joint Islamic Courts were clusters of Muslim leaders who cohesively decided to restore law and order after the abrupt dissolution of the late authoritarian regime of Mohamed Siad Bare .[2].

The Courts began to offer social services including health care, and education; through the establishment of schools, running clinics. Their activities also led to drastic reduction in daylight social and political crimes, an attempt aimed to fill the vacuum by acting as enforcement agencies.

As the societal support nurtured the Islamic Courts, they formed an armed wing in early 1999 to further authoritatively allocated values. By April 1999 the Courts have brought some areas of Mogadishu under their command. These included the main market of the city and the road leading to the strategic city of Afgoye. These activities however, were done under the camouflage of dispensing justice and religious righteousness.

But the warlords in Mogadishu were able to spot these movements through the smokescreen as concealed political and military ambitions. So, they subsequently assumed position of animosity with the Courts. They then formed an Alliance called the "Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism (ARPCT)" and resorted to American financial assistance which they have allegedly obtained.

According to some Western news agencies, the money looted from the CIA stations in Nairobi to the warlords in Mogadishu. The Bush administration used the warlords as proxies; a

campaign which thwarted counterterrorism efforts in the country.

It is imperative to bear in mind that since 1994, the international community has bungled the Somali folder in its foreign policy and with the re-emergence of political Islam in the region it has formerly unlocked the one time forgotten file. *The Economist* in its August 12<sup>th</sup> 2006 issue published special report entitled: *Hell on Earth: The Horn of Africa*. [3] In their analysis the authors suggested that *the Horn* is on its path to ruin. The question is why this massive attention now?

### **Early Advancement of Islam in the Horn**

Islam shined first in Mecca then its message went forth to the Horn of Africa before it reached Medina. The ferocious opposition by the Quraishi tribe forced hundreds of the new reverts flee across the neighbouring regions. The Prophet recommended the Horn of African region to be the primary destination to seek refuge. Based on this divine recommendation, Muslims crossed the straits of the Red Sea towards the Horn of Africa. Historians advocate that this marks the first emigration of faith in Islam. [4] Ja'far b. Abi Talib, the leader, and his budge of emigrants, had sought refuge in the protection of the Abyssinian king, Najashi.

The Horn had also business and cultural contacts with Islam mainly rooted in mutual religious understanding; as the Abyssinians had responded positively and acknowledged the link between their faith and Islam. Thus, the inhabitants of the Horn were the first to experience the teachings of Islam after Mecca. It is also worth noting the fact that no events of war between any Muslim army of any period and the inhabitants of the Horn is recorded, although Islam in the subsequent generation has become the intervening religion in the region; making the Somalis 100 per cent Muslims.

### **Early Influence of Islam on Somali Politics**

History accounts for the fact that early Somali dynasties including, the Zeila' dynasty, the Harar dynasty, the Mogadishu dynasty, and Adal dynasty, have adopted Islam in political administrations.

The Zeila' dynasty which was formed on the Gulf of Aden Coast in the Awdal region of northern modern Somalia, adopted Islam in its first administration which dates back as early as 891 A. D. The Muslim geographer al-Ya'qubi noted the influence of Islam on Zeila's political administration in his *Kitab al-Buldan* (Book of the countries). Zeila' is described as the civilization that linked Somalia, Hijaz and Yemen.[5] The Adal sultanate, a renowned Islamic dynasty of the Horn in the sixteenth century, ruled a large area of modern Somalia, establishing various businesses and cultural contacts with Egypt, Yemen and other neighbouring Muslim nations.[6]

One of the early Islamic Somali city-states and a historical centre of inter-civilizations which was a major Islamic power linking the Somalis to the Arabian Peninsula is Harar. According to diverse historical sources, the first administration was founded in the 7<sup>th</sup> century and later emerged as the centre of Islamic culture and religions in the Horn of Africa. [7]

The first independent Muslim kingdom in Harar was that of Abu Bakr ibn Muhammad abu Bakr. As the local culture flourished, its rulers struck their own currency. Harar also issued the earliest possible Islamic calendar in 1218 A. D. However the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were the Golden Age of Harar, an administration that maintained its independence until 1875 A. D.

falling to Egypt, and in 1887 to Ethiopia. In the thirteenth century the Islamic sultanate of Mogadishu was set up, subsequently experiencing increasing expansion in the succeeding generations.

Historians described Mogadishu administration in the fourteenth century as a full Islamic state, with a Muslim ruler and Islamic Courts served by learned Muslim magistrates, and full financial and political Islamic functionaries.[8]

### **Political Islamists: Sayed Mohammed Abdulle Hassan and Sheikh Ahmad Ibrahim**

Religious orders, *tariqah*, have played significant roles in Somali political Islam. This makes the religious leaders an integral part of the social and political structures. In modern political history however, the arrival of the colonial powers had challenged the roles of the religious leaders in enlivening political Islam in Somalia. Subsequently, the religious leaders, in response, assumed the role of freedom fighters. They led liberation movements against Italy, Britain, France and Ethiopia; the main occupying colonial powers. Notable of these *'ulamā* were Sayed Mohammed Abdulle Hassan and Sheikh Ahmad Ibrahim.

### **Sayed Mohammed: The Initiator of Jihadist Somali Islam**

In his late twenties, Sayed Mohamed Abdulle Hassan (1864-1920) [9] left for Hijaz region to perform the pilgrimage and create political network. In Makkah Sayed, he met his counterparts which include Sheikh Mohamed Salih, the founder of the *Salihiyah* Sufi order. Both men exchanged experiences and views on the development of *da'wah* in their respective regions. Sheikh Salih, a Mahdist of Sudanese origin had invited Sayed Mohamed to join the *Salihiyah* order and appointed him as the representative of the order in Somalia.

Upon his return from Makkah, Sayed established a *Salihiyah* branch and educational centre in Berbera. But, the British authority in the Somali coast was irritated with his activities and so, they banished him from Berbera. [10]

When Somalia came under the heavy occupation of Britain, France, Italy and Ethiopia, which led to the partitioning of the Somali territories, Sayed was forced to lead the first Islamic resurgence. This was mainly an anti-colonial society, initially the first insurgency, viably and constructively ever formed on Somali soil-the Dervish Movement. It was the European imperialism which served as the catalyst for the Dervish movement in Somalia. Like those Muslim anti-colonial leaders such as Amir Abdel Qader of Algeria, the Sanusi of Libya and the Mahdi of the Sudan, Sayed waged a war on the colonial interests by argeting the occupying forces of the British, Italians and Ethiopians, from 1899 to 1920.

Declaring the struggle formally Sayed Mohamed wrote to the British military leaders requesting them to abscond from Somali regions or to prepare for confrontation. In his first letter he declares:

“In the name of God...if the country is cultivated or developed it would be worthwhile fighting, if you want wood or stone you can get them in plenty, the sun is hot! all you can get from me is war nothing else” [11]

Sa'id Samatar, a scholar on the subject, regarded the Dervish force as one of the most organised

Muslim fighters of its time. He writes:

The Dervishes were organized into four main bodies: at the top a sort of ministerial councillor, *khususi*, presided over affairs of state. Members of the *khususi* were either personally appointed by the Sayed or by their respective lineages who as a whole had joined the Dervish movement. The *khususi* were supposed to be men of impeccable character and selection into the council depended on a range of criteria, including (religiosity and prowess in warfare), generosity...eloquence and other qualities deemed important by the Somalis...Each regiment was commanded by a sort of military governor (*muqadim*) ... The number of troops in a given regiment varied from 1,000 to 4,000 with 2,000 men as the average. Each regiment had separate quarters, horses, arms and other provisions. The civilian population...forms the fourth body of the Dervish state. [12]

Among other things, Sayed Mohammed Attempted to eradicate tribalism, the chief characteristics of the Somali society. He used nationalism camouflaged in religious colours, the same tactics employed by the late Islamic Courts. Throughout his speeches and poems, Sayed endeavoured to remind the Somalis of the necessity for Islamic national unity, an asset Somalis failed to nurture until today.

By constantly encouraging them to be vigilant against the corruptive incitements of foreign forces, emphasis is made on the importance of national coherence and patriotic sentiments in achieving societal unity based on Islamic teachings. Abdi Sheikh agrees to this contention by affirming that:

Nothing approaching this kind of devotion to authority or leadership has been known in Somaliland before or since the mullah. It can only be explained by the man's charisma and extraordinary powers of persuasion. He tried to break down tribal loyalties and the feelings among the Somalis by insisting on overriding allegiance to the dervish cause. [13]

In a society where tribalism is the norm of political culture, Sayyid Mohammed attempted to mentally prepare the Somalis for nationhood. On one occasion, he described his political ideology in the following lines in order to show wider political attitude and his allegiance to the Dervish philosophy.

I also inform you that I am a pilgrim (haji) and a holy fighter (mujahid), and have no wish to gain power and greatness in this world; neither am I of the Dolbahante, the Warsangli, the Majjertein, nor the

Ogaden. And I am not of the hypocrites; I am a Dervish, hoping for God's mercy and consent and forgiveness and guidance, and I desire that all the country and the Muslims may be victorious by God's grace.  
[14]

It is the conviction of the author of these lines and various authorities on the subject that when it comes to the institutionalization of Somali political system Islam has to be the unifying force. Evidently, during the colonial era attempts by the British to unite the Somalis or organize them into a systematized political life had failed; Islamists like Sayed were however, able to bring them together. Abdi Sheikh noted that "where the British failed Sayed Mohamed succeeded". [15] In fact, the colonial forces used to officially appoint the *'ulama* (Islamist scholars) to mediate political disputes.

As Sheikh argues t, "Sayed Mohamed Abdulle Hassan was not an ambitious chieftain of a militant Muslim sect bent on wresting power from the tradition-bound Muslim brotherhoods of the Somaliland". Sheikh further authenticates the true political ideals of the Sayed in these words, "a true Islamist and nationalist whose aim transcended both religious considerations and clan-based affiliations". [16]

Both Abdi Sheikh and Sa'id Samatar have concluded that Somalia may not be ready to breed a statesman reminiscent of Sayed Mohammed in the near future. One may ask, would the Islamic Courts challenge this assertion.

### **Sheikh Ahmad Ibrahim: An Islamist Fighter**

Sheikh Ahmad Ibrahim, who was born in 1506 at Hubat, a city located between Harar and Galdaysa, and who later married the daughter of king Mahfud of Zeila', is another notable Somali Islamist. With the help of king Mahfud, Sheikh Ahmad [17] formed a strong army and waged a war against the Abyssinian interests. This was the first jihadist battle in the Ogaden region, and it was aimed at freeing the Somali people who were then living under the Abyssinian rule. The Sheikh confronted the Abyssinian's central army, contesting against taxation ruling, a discriminatory policy targeting Muslim groups, mainly, the ethnic Somalis and Afaris who were the most discriminated in that administration. In 1535, Sheikh Ahmad controlled three-quarter of the Abyssinian land and became the Emperor of unity and justice, removing most unwarranted policies.

### **The Role of Islam in Modern Somali Republic**

#### **Sequential Sketch of Somali Republic (1961-1969)**

Politically, Somalis are, regardless of their common cultural identity, divided into numerous conflicting clans without substantial form of differences. This attitude gradually loped into the political system and stained government ranks from the cabinet to the bureaucracy. The three subsequent governments (1960-1991) of Somalia were tainted with political injustices, corruption, nepotism and clan crony tendencies. These clannish sentiments became entrenched to the extent of becoming part of the government system.

The Somali Republic is made up of the various territories under the Italian authority and the British Somaliland. Both territories gained their independence in 1960, and then joined to form what is known today as Somalia. In an early stage after the independence, Somalia proved to be an

awkward member of the international community due to its irredentist attitude.

The UN had considered Somalia as a factor contributing to a number of crises in the region. These include the Somali-Kenyan conflict, the Ethiopian-Somali conflict of 1963 and the Ethiopian-Somali conflict of 1977.

Regardless of their clan or political affiliation, irredentism [18] is part of Somali life both in the individual and social levels. Somali men and women are of the belief that the north-eastern province of Kenya, the Ogaden region of Ethiopia and Djibouti are other parts of Somalia and that the border mismanagement on the part of the colonials resulted into the loss of these people and land.

Due to the first border conflict in Ogaden in 1963, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in July of 1964 adopted a resolution requesting all African governments to reverse their respective countries' borders drawn up at independence. [19]

The first two governments of the republic (1960-1969) adopted parliamentary democracy but the clannish behaviour continued to flourish below the surface, thereby undermining all other efforts. [20] This created a perfect opportunity and backdrop for a military coup led by Mohammed Siyad Barre, who succeeded in seizing power in the Republic. Immediately, all clannish demeanours were banned and replaced with Siyad Barre's version of *scientific socialism*, which later became as a platform for the dictator to launch his own version of clannish rule. In the last ten years of his rule, Siyad Barre employed divide and triumph over strategy which involved giving bribes and arms to friendly clans to ensure their allegiance and continued support for him. The continuous civil unrest paralyzed the republic's economy and created a huge influx of refugees from the war torn regions. [21]

In January 1991, Siyad's regime was overthrown by the masses in a revolt engineered by General Mohammed Farah Aideed. However as his opponents installed Ali Mahdi on presidency without his approval, Aideed led a major blood-bath in Mogadishu which had taken the lives of estimated 14,000 people. [22] Efforts by the UN, US, the Arab League, OIC, AU and IGAD [23] on reconciliation have so far being futile.

### **Influence of Islam on the Formation of Modern Somali Republic**

From the colonial era to independence, Somali political Islam survived under diverse circumstances. In education for instance, Somalis were one of those Muslim nations who opposed the colonial school system as they considered it as the dissemination of the teachings of Christianity. Instead they formed and sent their children to the Islamic schools, the *madarasah*. Incongruously, at this stage of history, 1920s and 1930s, they spoke of forming a comprehensive Islamic education. Haji Farah Omar, a former colonial civil servant was one of those who spearheaded this orientation. [24]

On the political side, Islam remained an influential entity. The British military administration helped the formation of the first formal political organization, the Somali Youth Club (SYC) which later transformed into Somali Youth League (SYL). Evidently, the fifteen strong founding members of SYC, in 1943, were religious leaders.

This political project was inspired by Yasin Haji Osman, a vigorous personality who believed Islam as the solution to political problems. Another religious leader of the SYC was Abdulqadir Sekhawe Din who represented SYC among the urban population. Sekhawe later dropped out of the organization as the movement became nationalist in its outlook.

Islam also played a major role in the development of Somali constitution. In the 1950s, the years leading to independence, the Somali constitution was written by Italian and American experts. Islam was declared as the state religion taking its relevance and function into consideration as Islam culturally binds on the Somali people.

Not only in politics, education and constitution but also, Islam became a contentious national issue on the question of Somali language script. The two parliamentary governments before Siyad Bare's regime were sluggish on numerous national issues including what language, Latin or Arabic, to be used in developing a Somali script? They were powerless to initiate or resolve the issue.

At this juncture, the Islamic erudites used the issue for political Islam. Arabic script not Latin script was favoured by various religious and ordinary people. Their argument was simple: "Somalis are Muslims and Arabic is the language of the Qur'an". [25] Among the advocates of the Arabic script were Ibrahim Mahmud, Mohammed Abshir, and Ibrahim Hashim Mohamed. In his article *As-Sumaliyyatu Bilughati al-Qur'an*, Somali in the Qur'anic language, Ibrahim Mahmud contended that writing Somali in Arabic characters would facilitate religious contacts within the dominantly Muslim Arab world.

On October 21 1969 General Muhamed Siyad Bare, the head of the Somali National Army took power, from the manipulative and ineffective autonomists, by means of a coup. Understandably he was well received with expected public approval. During the first year of office, Siyad's regime kept away from religious echelon. On the first anniversary however, he formally transformed his regime's ideology to a scientific socialist state.

The religious leaders were not so alarmed. They feared that this new state ideology may be similar to that of Egypt's Jamal Abdel Nasir, or the Somali version of Islamic socialism. With the insensitivity of the regime, soon after the new ideology was adopted, religious leaders were shocked by the level of arrogance on the part of the regime. On daily bases the regime officials, including Siyad Bare, advocated that "there is only one universal truth and that is scientific socialism... all other truths are phoney." [26] Both ordinary Somali citizenry and religious leaders became hostile without knowing how to confront the religiously malicious regime. Being a skilful politician, Siyad successfully supervised and contained this public anger. At the same time making attempts to relate scientific socialism to Islam by promoting the idea that the "only comparable political system to Islam is scientific socialism". [27]

However, on 4<sup>th</sup> September 1971, hundreds of religious leaders attended a prearranged workshop addressed by the president himself who urged them to participate in the ideology, as the regime was preparing for its first three-year plan of 1971-1973. The message of the president was clear: "help the regime or stay out of political activity" [28] Paradoxically, Siyad was nippy enough to generate some support from these manoeuvrings.

The president, temporarily, saved his scientific socialism from political Islam for several reasons: 1. Due to his knowledge on the ground and shrewdness which superseded that of current president, Abdullahi Yusuf. 2. The regime used its ideology to run the government or as a series of political and economic misinformation and not as measures to punish religion 3. Religious leaders were adequately enduring to have granted a chance to the new regime. 4. There

was no sturdy Islamic organization that would act as a civil society to systematically challenge the government programmes. 5. The idea of social justice in scientific socialism had impressed large member of religious leaders. 6. There were those who thought the ideology would eventually die off.

In 1974 Siyad decided to join the Arab League. Here, he scored a point in creating divisions among the various groups of religious leaders, as various members of the society generated Islamic aroma from the Arabization project, where others saw it as part of Siyad's political gimmicks.

However, Siyad was on bonafide political fire as he prepared to host the Pan-African Women's Conference in April 1975. In January, ahead of the conference, he enacted a new law which allowed women to inherit equally as their male counterparts. Infuriated religious leaders took their anger to the streets and mosques. As a result, 23 were charged with violating the state security, a usual incrimination in the Islamic world. As a result, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January 1975, ten of the aforementioned Muslim scholars were publicly executed, temporarily silencing the voices of political Islam through the brutality of his regime. During this epoch the government became blasphemous angering both the ordinary and the erudite.

## References and Notes

[1] Abu Abdullah Muhammad Ibn Battuta (1304-1368), a Moroccan Muslim scholar and a judge by Profession. He is however best known as an extensive explorer whose account documents his side-excursions over a period of almost thirty years covering some 73,000 miles. Ibn Battuta covered almost the entirety of the Muslim world.

[2] Mohamed Siad Barre (1919-1995) was a socialist leader of Somalia from 1969 to 1991.

[3] *The Economist*, August 12<sup>th</sup> 2006, pp.20-22

[4] Muhamed Abdullah al-Naqirah, *Intishar al-Islam fi Sharq Ifriqiya wa Munahadhati al-Gharbi Lahu*, Dar Al-Marikh, Riyadh, 1982, p. 59.

[5] See Rajab Mohamad Abdul Halim, *al-Alaqat al-Siyasiyah Bayna Muslimay Zaila' and Nasara al-Habshah*, Cairo: Dar al-Nahdah al-'Arabiyah, 1985, p. 23.

[6] Hussein M. Adam, "Islam and Politics in Somalia" *Journal of Islamic Studies*, July, 1995, vol. 6, no. 2, p. 192.

[7] J. Spencer Trimingham, *Islam in Ethiopia*, Farank Cass London, 1976, p. 96.

[8] Muhamed Abdullah al-Naqirah, *op. cit.*, p. 182

[9] Sayed Muhammad Abdulle Hassan mastered the Qur'anic sciences at the age of seven and started other Islamic disciplines such as theology, jurisprudence and mysticism in an early age. I. M. Lewis illustrates: "The young Mohammed was apprenticed to his father and other sages to gain more knowledge in theological matters...the hadith and the Shariah" (Quoted in Abdi Sheikh-Abdi, *Divine Madness: Mohammed Abdulle Hassan (1856-1920)*, London, ed Books Ltd. 1993, p.211). On balance, Sayed's educational development was due to the *Halaqah* system that enriched student's knowledge, as these students are secluded from families to concentrate their studies. The *Halaqah* system is also known to the Somalis as *Her*. During this *Her* (journey for knowledge) epoch, students live in the vicinity of mosques, supported financially by individuals and families in a form of adoption.

[10] *ibid.*

[11] Hussein M. Adam, "Islam and Politics in Somalia" *Journal of Islamic Studies*, July, 1995, vol. 6, no. 2, p. 188.

[12] Samatar, quoted by Sheikh, *op. cit.*

[13] Abdi Sheikh-Abdi, *Divine Madness*, *op. cit.* p. 203.

[14] Mohamed bin Abdullah to the Gadwein tribe of northern Nugal; Ainabo, December 1912-January 113. Quoted in: Douglas Jardine, *The Mad mullah of Somaliland*, Negro Universities Press, New York, 1969, pp.211-212 also quoted in: Abdi Sheikh-Abdi, *Divine Madness: Mohammed Abdulle Hassan (1856-1920)*, *op. cit.*

[15] Abdi Sheikh, op. cit. p. 211.

[16] *ibid.*

[17] He is known in Somali history as Ahmed Guray.

[18] Irredentism is a concept or attitude in international politics that involves advocating annexation of territories administered by another state on the grounds of common ethnicity.

[19] James Mayal, (ed) *The New Interventionism 1991-1994*, Cambridge University Press, New York, p. 103

[20] Benyamin Newberger, "irredentism and politics in Africa" in *irredentism and International Politics*, ed. Naomi Chazan (London: Adamantia Press Ltd, 1978, p. 2

[21] James Mayal, op. cit. pp.104-105

[22] *ibid.* p. 111

[23] The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) is a seven-country regional development [organization](#) in East Africa. Its headquarters are in Djibouti City.

[24] Harold D. Nelson, ed. *Somalia: A Country Study*, (Washington, DC: United States Government, 1982, p. 104.

[25] *ibid.*

[26] *ibid.*

[27] *ibid.*

[28] *ibid.*

## **AFRICAN INITIATIVES AND RESISTANCE IN NORTH-EAST AFRICA:**

*Based on a contribution by the late Abbas I. Ali  
Hassan A. Ibrahim (IIUM)*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Nowhere in Africa were African initiatives and resistance in the face of European partition and occupation of Africa as determined and protracted as in the modern states of Egypt, Sudan and Somalia. These reactions started in 1881 with military uprising in Egypt, and continued in some parts of the area until as late as the 1920s. Never in the history of Africa did a people put up such a strong fight in defence of their freedom, their sovereignty and above all their culture and religion. In this chapter, a survey of these initiatives and reactions will be attempted, beginning first with those in Egypt, then Sudan and finally Somaliland.

#### **Egypt: The Urahist Revolution**

The financial maladministration of Khedive Ismail (1863-79) and the huge loans that he borrowed from Europe had, by 1880, placed Egypt on the verge of bankruptcy. While half of Egypt's revenue had been strictly allocated to the service of these debts, heavy taxes were imposed on the Egyptian people and the *fallahin* (sing: *fallah*: 'peasant') majority who could not afford to pay them were mercilessly flogged. This economic hardship and humiliation created widespread discontent and bitter opposition to Khedive Tawfik (1879-92) and his corrupt government. Tawfik was further despised for his total subservience to the European powers who took advantage of his weakness and Egypt's indebtedness to control the country's finance and government.

It soon became virtually impossible for any Egyptian government to initiate any administrative or economic reform without the prior and unanimous approval of fourteen European powers, while the Egyptians were suffering all this misery, resident foreigners were leading a comfortable life. They were not even subject to the law of the land, but had their own laws and courts. Foreigners had, furthermore, exploited this privileged position to enrich themselves at the expense of the Egyptian masses; often through corrupt and immoral means. The desire to eradicate this humiliating and repugnant foreign domination was to prove a major reason for the outbreak of resistance led by Colonel Ahmad Urabi: the Urabist revolution [1]

Another reason for it was the maturity of liberal political ideas among Egyptians as a result of the spread of education and the development of the press in the course of the nineteenth century. This maturity was largely responsible for the emergence and development of a constitutional movement in the country from the 1860s onwards, particularly among the western educated Egyptians who opposed European control and Khedival absolutism. This movement found considerable support in the revolutionary ideas of the Muslim reformers, Djamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh. Led by Muhammad Sharif Pasha; who was nicknamed *Ab Al Dastur* (father of constitution). These constitutional nationalists pressed for the enactment of a liberal constitution

and the formation of a representatives government [2]. Some of them may even have hoped to overthrow Muhammad "Ali's dynasty", which had ruled the nation since the turn of the century.

The most important immediate factor in the outbreak of the revolution was, however, the discontent and frustration of the Egyptian military. While the soldiers received very low salaries - 20 piasters a month [3] - Egyptian army officers were not allowed promotion to higher ranks in the army. These were, in fact, exclusively monopolized by the foreign Turco-Circassian aristocratic army officers who despised and ill-treated their Egyptian subordinates. To end this inferior status and to achieve the country's national demands, the Egyptian military therefore actively interfered in politics for the first time in the modern history of Egypt and launched a revolution early in February 1881 against European colonialism and Khedive Tawfik.

The leader of the revolution - Colonel Ahmad Urabi (1839-1911) was an attractive person with a *strong fallah origin*. Though simple and lacking in subtlety and political refinement; [4] (Urabi was a courageous man and a forceful speaker who often interspersed his speeches with passages from the Qur'an, 'a trait that made him popular among the masses'. These qualities had soon made Urabi the undisputed leader of the revolution, and he was instrumental in the formation of *al hizb al watani* (the Nationalist Party). Its members were a mixture of men of fallah origin, and some of the Turkish notables who were all united in their discontent at the autocracy of Tawfik's rule.

In its initial stages, the revolution achieved a remarkable degree of success. V Othman Rikfi the notorious Circassian Minister of War and the mastermind of the discriminatory policy in the army was sacked and a distinguished poet and revolutionary politician - Mahmiid Sami al-barudi replaced him. Subsequently a full-fledged Urabist cabinet was formed in which Ahmad urabi himself became the Minister of War [5]. Tawfik was so scared that he ordered the formation of a people's Assembly and enacted on 7 February 1882- a relatively liberal constitution. Knowing that this gesture to constitutionalism was *not* genuine, the Urabists remained intent overthrowing Tawfik and might even have planned to declare Egypt a republic. This development threatened foreign privileges and interests and consequently brought the revolution into direct confrontation with European power.

Meanwhile the Khedive was conspiring behind the scenes to crush the revolution. to provide a pretext for foreign intervention - some Egyptian historians maintain - the Khedive and the British organized Alexandri massacre of 12 June 1882 in which many foreigners were killed and a great deal of property was damaged [6] Whether this accusation is true or not is irrelevant as the Khedive had in fact invited the British to intervene and they responded enthusiastically and quickly. But the Egyptian Cabinet unanimously decided to repel the invasion and rejected the British ultimatum to desist from fortifying shore defences, and to dismantle gun emplacements around Alexandria. This gave the British fleet a further pretext to bombard Alexandria on 11 July 1882. The Egyptian army and people put up a gallant resistance against the invaders, but they were defeated by superior arms. About two thousand Egyptian were killed in this battle.

After the fall of Alexandria, the Egyptian army withdrew to kafr al-dawar, a few miles away. By then, Urabi had declared a jihad against the British in a proclamation that was distributed to Egyptian people. Fighting around kafr al dawar broke out several times during August 1882.

The solid resistance of the Egyptian army and people made it very difficult for the invaders to occupy Cairo from this direction. They therefore decided to occupy the Suez Canal and launch a major attack against the capital from there.

The Egyptian masses readily sent financial support to their army anti thousands of young people offered to join as conscripts. Nevertheless, all the odds were against the Egyptian resistance movement. Urabi could not muster more than 16000 trained troops, and even this small number was dispersed around kafr al-dawar. Dimyaf (Damietta) and the Suez Canal area. Moreover the Egyptian army lacked training, modern arms and ammunition, and efficient means of transport. A modern arm of 20000 men under the command of Sir Garnet Wolseley quickly crossed the Canal, occupied ismaili, broke the backbone of the revolution in the battle of al-tall al-Kabir on 13 September 1882, [7] and occupied the country.

Though the British had deceitfully promised speedy evacuation, the British occupation of Egypt was to last seventy-two years. The failure of the Urabist revolution to rid the country of European influence and to end the arbitrary rule of the, Turks in Egypt can easily be explained. Although supported by the bulk of the Egyptian people, *the* revolution did not have sufficient time to mobilize this support. Moreover, a serious rift soon occurred in the united nationalist front as a result of a growing conflict between the military party and the constitutional nationalists. While the latter opposed on principle the involvement of the army in politics, the former insisted that their control of the government would be the best safeguard for the revolution. The revolution, furthermore, suffered from internal intrigues from the Khedive and his Circassian supporter's who betrayed the revolution and aided the British occupation. Urabi himself made a number of mistakes. His reluctance to depose the Khedive at the beginning of the revolution on the grounds that this would invite foreign intervention and cause chaos inside the country gave tawfik valuable time in which to intrigue and conspire against the revolution. Another fatal mistake was Urabi's refusal to listen to the advice of some of his military advisers to block the Suez Canal his own view being mistaken as it proved - that Fiancé would not allow Britain to use the canal to invade Egypt. Ultimately, however, the Urabi's revolution was defeated by British military superiority.

### **Egyptian initiatives and reaction to British conquest 1882-1914**

The military defeat of the Urabist revolution broke the national spirit and created an atmosphere of despair and disillusionment during the first decade of the British occupation of Egypt (1882-92). Within Egypt it there was no effective resistance to the occupation during this decade, and the most important nationalist voices were those of the nationalists in exile. Djamal ai-DIn ai-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh began the publication of a pan-Islamic magazine in 1883 *al-urwa al-Wutka* (The indissoluble bond) - which aimed to free Egypt from the British occupation by stirring up public opinion in Egypt. Though this magazine closed down after publishing only eighteen issues, it had a profound influence on the few groups of Egyptians who read it - students, *Ulamah* (Muslim scholars) and intellectuals. *Al- Urwa* provided a source of opposition to the British anti kept alive the spirit of self-determination<sup>8</sup>. Its anti-British message was taken up in the 1890S by a group of political pan-Islamist writers. The most prominent of them was Shaykh Ali Yusuf, who published

a newspaper *al-mu'ayyad* in 1900, and -in 1907 he formed hizb al-islam al-dasturi (the constitutional reformers), an organization which forcefully attacked British Hegemony in Egypt.

In 1893 the Egyptian nationalist movement began to emerge from this quiescent phase when certain Egyptian elements started to criticize and resist the British occupation of Egypt. -First among them was the ambitious new Khedive Abbas Hilmi (Abbas II, 1892--1914), who encouraged the development of a nationalist movement demanding the immediate evacuation of the British. His financial assistance to the press which enabled the movement to become articulate was of particular importance. During the first three years of his reign, abbas placed himself at the forefront of this movement and he became a very real challenge to the autocratic rule of lord Cromer, the British Agent and Consul-General, and succeeded in forcing the pro-British prime minister to resign on 15 January 1893. Although he was unable after that to act so openly owing to pressure from the British Hilmi nevertheless attracted some dedicated recruits who were willing to carry on the struggle he against the British occupation. They were a group of young intellectuals who were familiar with the ideas of the French revolution and with modern and social political theories. The old Egyptian society with its strict code and religious restrictions was, in fact gradually breaking up, a development that led to considerable instability. The educated Egyptian was particularly alarmed by the British domination of the civil service, the only area of advancement that remained open to them. By 1905, 42% of the higher posts were occupied by the British, 30% by Armenians and Syrians, and only 28% by Egyptians.

The most vehement opponents of British rule at that time were Mustafa Kamil a charismatic leader and eloquent orator, and his Nationalist party. Kamil had at first concentrated his efforts on winning European support for the cause of Egypt's independence. He had apparently felt that other European States were so jealous of the British occupation of Egypt that they would actively support any attempts to remove them. With generous funds supplied the Khedive, Kamil toured European capitals during the period 1895-8 where he addressed meetings, gave interviews to news papers, and wrote articles and pamphlets [11] these activities aroused a great deal of interest in Europe, but that was as far as went. Kamil's optimistic belief that Europe in general and France in particular, would support the Egyptian cause was wholly unjustified. Since France had her own colonies in North Africa, it is not surprising that she was not won over by Kamil's arguments in favor of self-rule. Now was she ready to go to war with England over Egypt, as the Fashoda incident had shown in 1898.

The most urgent task facing the young nationalists was to disprove Cromer's biased claim that the Egyptians were incapable of ruling themselves on civilized principles, and to convince the Egyptians themselves that they formed a nation capable and indeed deserving self-rule.

Kamil was preoccupied with this task from 1898 onwards. Until 1906 his views were expressed in numerous speeches and articles in the news papers of the day particularly in *al-Liwa* (The Flag) which he founded in 1900. He stressed Egypt's past to combat defeatism and to show that the Egyptians were capable of great things. Had I not been born an Egyptian, I would have wished to become one', and 'there is no sense in life when it is coupled with despair, and no sense in despair as long as there is Life [12] such were the slogans he devised. Kamil's speeches and articles aimed to break down local rivalries and unite all the population in a nationalist front, and to develop national education in order to strengthen patriotic sentiment. His political activities began to bear fruit as he was able to organize a strike of law students in February 1906.

The Dinshaway incident of May 1906 profoundly boosted Kamil's campaign in Egypt. Briefly, a group of British officers came to Dinshaway village on a pigeon-shooting trip in which the villagers

objected to since pigeons were their means of livelihood. A clash followed in which one of the British officers was fatally wounded. The British authorities overreacted to this incident and passed very severe sentences on the villagers.

Four were sentenced to be hanged and many others were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. Although public executions had been stopped two years previously, the hangings were carried out in public, and the whole village of Dinshāway was forced to watch the executions [13]. This barbaric behavior had, in Kamil's view, done more to awaken people's feelings against the occupation than the passage of ten years of occupation [14].

The incident certainly caused an upsurge of Egyptian nationalism and for the first time since 1882, the British became aware of the insecurity of their position in Egypt. It was this which forced the British to reconsider their oppressive policy and to declare their intention of preparing the country for self-government. Cromer retired in 1907 to make way for a new Consul-General, Eldon Gorst, to implement the new policy. This represented a great triumph for Kamil and his Nationalist Party, which was inaugurated publicly in 1907.

After the premature death of Kamil in February 1908 Muhammad Farid succeeded him as president of the Nationalist Party. Farid lacked many of the qualities of leadership that Kamil had possessed, but he continued to write, and to address public meetings demanding the evacuation of British troops. His nationalist activities earned him six months' imprisonment in 1911 after he went to exile [15].

By 1907 some prominent Egyptian intellectuals had to come to believe that Britain was too strong to be expelled from Egypt by revolutionary action. Moreover, they felt that there were real signs of a change in Britain after the Dinshaway incident.

Consequently they saw no harm in cooperating with the British in Egypt in order to secure such concessions as could be extracted until such time as full independence could be achieved. This group formed a new political party called the Umma Party (the Peoples Party) in October 1907, which had its own newspaper, *al-Djarida*. The *Djarida-ummah* group urged the Egyptians to modernize their Islamic tradition by adopting such European ideas and institutions as they considered necessary for progress [16]. The programme of the Umma Party called for the creation of an Egyptian personality, for without it, it was felt that Egypt could not achieve real independence. It stressed the importance of agricultural reform and asked for an increase in the powers of the provincial councils and the assembly in preparation for eventual constitutional rule. Most important of all, the party emphasized the need for education as an essential means for training capable administrators and attaining national independence. But the Umma Party was not very popular among the Egyptian nationalists because of its co-operation with the British authorities. Its secular liberalism had, furthermore, failed to take root among a great number of Egyptians because of their instinctive adherence to their Islamic traditions [17].

Before the First World War the Egyptian nationalist movement was thus a disunited and a predominantly elitist movement unable to command popular following. Consequently it was too weak to wrest any significant concessions from the British authorities and made its progress along the path of self-government. The nationalists had to wait until 1919 before coming out in open revolt against the British occupation.

## **The Sudan: The Mahdist Revolution**

From 1821 the Sudan was governed by the Ottoman government of Egypt, and by 1880 the people of the Sudan - like the people of Egypt - were also fighting to rid themselves of an alien ruling aristocracy. The themes of the jihad and Islamic resistance to alien rule, propagated by 'Urabi in Egypt, were also evident in the militant revolutionary movement under the leadership of Muhammad Ahmad al-Mahdi in the Sudan. His movement, the Mahdiyya, was essentially a djihad - a holy war - and as such claimed the support of all Muslims. Its fundamental objective, as stated repeatedly in the Mahdi's letters and proclamations, [18] was to revive and return to the pure and primitive faith of Islam, 'purged of heresies and accretions, [19] and to spread it to the whole world, by force if deemed necessary. The genuine spiritual fervor of the Mahdist revolution was expressed in the bay's the oath of allegiance that the supporters of the Mahdi-when he styled the Ansar following the example of the Prophet [20] had to give to the mahdi or his representative before being admitted to the mahdiyya. In this bay'a, the Ansar swore allegiance to the Mahdi in renouncing this world and abandoning it, and being content with what is with God, desiring what is with God and the world to come, and we will not flee from the jihad [21].

To say that the Mahdist revolution was religious does mean that religion was the sole factor in its generation. For there were also other, secondary, factors-all arising from the faults of the corrupt turco Egyptian administration- that caused general discontent in the Sudan. The violence that accompanied the original conquest in 1820, had created a strong desire for revenge, while the heavy taxes that the Turks imposed and levied by force led to widespread discontent. In addition, the attempts of the government to suppress the slave trade had alienated some northern Sudanese as they struck at an important source of wealth and the basis of the domestic and agrarian economy of the country. Finally, the government's partiality to the Shaykiyya people and the Khatamiyya sect seems to have aroused the jealousy of other local and religious groups, and stimulated them to support the Mahdi. [22]

The leader of Mahdist revolution, Muhammad Ahmad ibn Abdallah was a pious man whose idea was the prophet Muhammad himself. Just as the Prophet before him had assumed leadership of his community at the age of 40, so Muhammad Ahmad assumed the Mahdship at the same age, secretly communicated it to a group of trusty followers and then declared it openly to the general public. This brought him into direct military confrontation with the Anglo-Egyptian government, a struggle which lasted for four years (1881-5). The government at first underestimated the Mahdi and dismissed him as a mere dervish (a mendicant)-an attitude reflected in the weak and disorganized expedition that was sent to deal with him in Aba Island. A brief skirmish followed in which the Ansar achieved a quick and easy victory, and the administration was thrown into utter confusion. The Mahdi and his followers considered their victory to have been a miracle [23].

The Mahdi's political foresight and his military genius were clearly reflected in his decision to 'emigrate' after this encounter from Aba Djabal Kadir in the Nuba Mountains. Apart from being another parallel with the life of the Prophet, this hijra moved the revolution from an open and defenseless area that was within reach of the government's forces to a remote and strategically fortified region. This hijra was indeed a turning-point in the history of the Mahdiyya. Its main significance was that in moving the revolution from the riverain regions to the western Sudan, the westerners thenceforward became its key administrators and military commanders, while the

riverain people in the movement declined in significance [24].

Another turning-point in the history of the Mahdist revolution was the battle at Shaykân on 5 November 1883. By that time Khedive Tawfi and his government were determined to crush the Mahdi, now in control of the key towns of Kordofan province. Consequently, the Egyptian government organized an expedition that was composed of the remnants of 'LJrâbi's soldiers and commanded by a British army officer, I licks Pasha. The Ansar completely annihilated their enemy at Sheikh's forest in the neighborhood of al-Obeid [25]. The victory was a great boost for the Mahdi and his revolution. While many Sudanese joined the revolution, delegates from some Muslim countries came to congratulate the Mabdi on his victory against the 'infidels'. However, the immediate consequence of the triumph at Shaykân was the total collapse of the Turco-Egyptian administration in the western Sudan and the establishment of Mahdist rule in the provinces of Kordofan, Därfür and Bahr al-Ghazâl. The Mahdi was now ready to turn to his next objective, to gain control of Khartoum and end Turco-Egyptian rule in the Sudan [26].

The Mahdists struck next in the eastern Sudan under the able leadership of 'Uthman Digna. Digna won many victories against government forces and posed a threat to the Red Sea ports which Britain had pledged to defend. The British then attempted to intervene militarily, hut to very little effect. Except for Sawakin, the Ansar controlled' the whole of the eastern Sudan and prevented any supplies and reinforcements from Egypt reaching Khartoum through the Berber-Sawâkin route.

Meanwhile, British policy towards the Sudan question had undergone a significant change after the battle at Shaykân. While previously maintaining that it was an exclusively Egyptian concern, after Shaykn the British government felt that its imperial interests necessitated Egypt's immediate withdrawal from the Sudan [27]. Hence it ordered the Egyptian government to abandon the Sudan and sent General Charles Gordon to see that this was done. As the Mahdi advanced towards Khartoum Gordon found himself in a very dangerous situation. After a long siege, the Mabdist forces attacked the town, killed Gordon on 26 January t88, and put an end to Turco-Egyptian rule in the Sudan. [28]

During its first four years (1881-5), the Mahdiyya developed from a movement of religious protest into a powerful and militant state that dominated the Sudan for fourteen years. Its administrative, financial and judicial institutions, and its legislation, were based strictly upon the dual foundations of the Qur'ân and the Sunna, though the Mahdi occasionally passed new forms of legislation on such pressing problems as the status of women and landownership [29].

The relations of the Mahdist state with the outside world were strictly governed by the djihd. Both the Mahdi and his Khalifa, Abdullâh Ibn al-Sayyid Muhammad, had written letters of warning (indhârât) -virtually ultimatums to some leaders of the world, such as the Khedive of Egypt, the O'ttoman emperor and the emperor of Abyssinia, to accept the Mahdi's mission, or be faced with an immediate djihdd if they did not respond positively. [30]

While the Mahdi did not live long enough to pursue such a policy -he died in June 1885-the djiḥād became the cornerstone of the foreign policy of his successor, khalifa Abdullah. In spite of the tremendous administrative and economic problems facing him, Khalifa Abdullah pressed forward with djiḥād on two fronts: against Egypt and Ethiopia. Under the leadership of ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Nudjumi, the Mahdist forces invaded Egypt, but they were defeated at the battle of Tushki in 1889. The Mahdists’ advance on the eastern front was also checked and the Ansar lost Tokar and Kassala respectively in 1891 and 1894. The ideological commitment of the Khalifa to the djiḥād had frustrated the attempts of the Ethiopian emperor to conclude an African alliance between the Sudan and Ethiopia against European imperialism. For, as a prerequisite to this alliance, the Khalifah insisted that the emperor should accept and believe in Mahdism and Islam. The outcome of his dogmatism was a long military confrontation that weakened both states and made them easier for European imperialism [31].

By March 1896 the British imperial government had decided to invade the Sudan and an Anglo-Egyptian force was formed for this purpose under the command of General H. H. Kitchener. During the first phase of this invasion, March to September 1896-the enemy forces occupied the whole of Dongola province without encountering any serious resistance from the Sudanese people, partly because of their technical superiority and partly because they took the Khalifah by surprise.

As the Khalifah had rightly surmised, the occupation of Dongola was no more than a prelude to a full-scale invasion of the Mahdist state. While Kitchener was advancing southwards, the Khalifa mobilized his forces, determined to resist the invaders. Commanded by Emir Mahmud Ahmad, the Ansar tried unsuccessfully to repel the enemy attack at the battle of Atbara on 8 April 1898. [32] Three thousand Sudanese were killed, and over 4000 were wounded. Mahmud himself was captured and put in prison at Rosetta in Egypt, where he died some-years later.

After the defeat at Atbara the Khalifa decided to meet the enemy in the vicinity of his capital, Omdurman, because he understood that the difficulties of supply and transport would prohibit the movement of any large force of troops. Hence the Sudanese fought the enemy with magnificent courage at the battle of Karari on 2 September 1898 [33]. Once again they were defeated by superior armaments. Nearly 11000 Sudanese were killed and about 16000 wounded. When he saw that the day was lost, the Khalifa withdrew to the east of Kordofan where he hoped to gather his supporters and make a fresh attack on the invaders in the capital. He continued to be a problem for the new administration for a whole year, but was finally defeated at the battle of Umm Diwaykrt on 24 November 1899. After the battle, the Khalifa was found dead upon his sheepskin prayer-rug [34] all the other Mahdist generals and leaders having been either killed or imprisoned. This marked the collapse of the Mahdist state, although the Mahdiyya as a religious and political sentiment never died.

## **The Mahdist Risings**

Although under British colonial rule the Mahdist sect was outlawed, a sizeable section of the Sudanese community remained Mahdist at heart. The majority expressed their resentment of British rule by continuing to read the ratib (the Mahdist prayer book) and to practice other Mahdist rituals. But a dedicated Mahdist minority repeatedly tried to topple the ‘infidel’ rule by force. Hardly a year passed between 1900 and 1914 without a Mahdist rising in the northern Sudan. The main source of inspiration and strength for these risings was the Muslim doctrine of Nabi Isa (Prophet Jesus). It was generally believed among Muslims that the Mahdi would reappear in order

to bring justice to the world after it had been filled with injustice. But his mission would be temporarily halted by al-masih al-dajjal (the anti-Christ). Nabi 'Isa would, however, soon appear in order to secure the permanence of the glorious Mahdiyya. The Ansar had apparently identified the British with al-dajjal and many of them assumed the 'isdship to expel them from the country [35].

Mahdist uprisings occurred in February 1900, in 1902-3 and in 1904. But the most important of these Mahdist risings was organized and led in 1908 by a distinguished Mahdist, Abd al-kadir Muhammad Islam, usually called **Wad Habiiba**. Wad Habiiba preached Mahdism in the Djazira and defied the government from his camp in Tukur village near Kamlin. A government force advanced towards him, but it was resisted and two government officials were killed in this encounter. While the authorities were shocked by this incident, Wad habuba launched a surprise attack in May on the enemy at the village of Katfiya.

The Mahdists fought bravely, but within a few days the backbone of the revolt had been broken. In the manner of the Mahdi, however, wad habiiba had 'emigrated', presumably to find asylum in Omdurman where he apparently hoped to secretly continue to propagate the Mahdist cause. But he was arrested en route and publicly hanged on 17 May 1908, while many of his followers were sentenced to death or to long terms of imprisonment [36]. During an unfair trial, Wad habiiba defied the British imperialists by telling the court trying him:

My desire is that the Sudan should be governed by Muslims according to Mohammadan law and the Mahdl's doctrines and precepts. I know the people of the Sudan better than the government docs. I have no hesitation in saying that their friendliness and flattery is nothing but hypocrisy and lies. I am ready to swear that the people prefer Mahdism to the present government. [37]

Though uncoordinated and unable to command any large following these numerous messianic risings provided an element of continuity with the era of the Mahdist state, and proved that Mahdism was still alive as a vital religious and political force in the Sudan. The risings had, furthermore, demonstrated that the mood of resistance to colonial rule remained entrenched in the hearts of many northern Sudanese.

Protest movements in the Nuba Mountains and the southern Sudan the struggle of the Sudanese people in the Nuba Mountains and the southern Sudan was one of the most serious challenges that the British colonialists faced before the First World War. The numerous risings and revolts that broke out in these parts of the country were however, essentially local in character. They were, furthermore, direct responses to the changes that colonialism introduced into the social fabric of those diversified communities, a product of the destruction by the British of social and political institutions of those communities and their replacement by new structures of their own.

In spite of the ruthlessness of the colonial forces, various Nuba communities had actively opposed British domination. While Ahmad al Nu'man, mek of Kitra, declared his open hostility, in 1906 the population of Talodi launched an uprising in which a number of government officials

and soldiers were slaughtered. A more serious revolt was that of Mkek Faki Ali of the Miri hills. Ali harassed government forces for two years, but he was arrested in 1916 and imprisoned in Wadi Halfa [38].

In the southern region of the Sudan, resistance was led and sustained by the Nuer people living in the lands adjoining the river Sobat and the White Nile. Under previous administrations, the Nuer was accustomed to managing their own affairs, since these administrations did not exercise effective control over them.

But now the Nuer refused to recognize the supremacy of the new government and continued to show hostility towards it. Two of their leaders, Dengkur and Diu, were particularly active in this respect. Though these two influential leaders died in 1906 and 1907 respectively, Nuer activism never died, and in 1914 another Nuer leader, Dowl Diu, attacked a government post. In spite of the numerous indiscriminate punitive measures, the Nuer resistance continued to gain momentum until it broke out in the popular and widespread Nuer revolt of 1927.

The Azande under the leadership of Yambio, their chief, were determined not to allow any foreign troops to enter their land. They faced the danger of invasion from both the Belgians and the Condominium government.

The Belgians were increasing their activities on the southern borders of Zandeland. Yambio seemed to have feared Belgian invasion more than the British. He therefore thought that the best policy open to him was to neutralize the British with signs of friendship and thereby gain a free hand to deal with the imminent Belgian danger. He invited the British to establish a trading post in his kingdom.

The invitation was made in the belief that the British would not be able to come, but that if they did he would fight them. His true intention seems to have been to play the British off against the Belgians, for he had apparently become convinced that British interests in his country would make the Belgians think twice before attacking him [39].

But the British took up the invitation and in January 1903 a patrol left Wau for Yambio's territory. While on the march it was attacked by the Azande. The patrol escaped to Itumbek. In January 1904 the government in Khartoum sent another patrol which was also attacked by the Azande, and ultimately it was forced to retreat to Tonj.

While the Belgians were preparing an attack on Yambio's territory, the latter mobilized a force of 10000 Azande and launched a daring attack on the Belgian post at Mayawa. The Azande courageously harassed the intruders, but they could not stand up to the Belgian rifle fire with spears alone. This battle seriously weakened Zande military power and morale. With his military power broken, Yambio had to meet a government expeditionary force in January 1905. He was ultimately defeated and imprisoned and died soon afterwards, on 10 February 1905. His people however, continued the struggle. In 1908 some of Yambio's warriors attempted to stir up a rising while others fought the British during the First World War. [40]

### **The Fight for Grand Somalia: The Somali Reaction to Partition 1884-97**

From the middle of the nineteenth century the Somali peninsula was drawn into the theatre of European colonial competition between Italy, Britain and France. With their interests in India and other parts of Asia in the early 1880s, Britain and France sought to establish themselves on the Somalali coast because of its strategic and commercial importance. Eventually, with Italy joining in, they extended their influence in the interior and each of them established a protectorate in

Somaliland. While the activities of the French had led them to establish its protectorate in 1885 the British government did not declare its protectorate until two years later - this was the Somali coast from Djibuti eastwards, and included the bender Ziadeh. Through the good offices of the British East Africa Company and the British government, Italy was also able to acquire control of the towns of Brava, Merca, Mogadishu and Warsheikh in November, 1888. The Italian government declared a protectorate over those portions of the coast connecting the towns, and this was subsequently extended to include Obbia and the Majerteen Somali in the north.

Ethiopia had also expanded into Somali-inhabited territories, and had managed to establish a tentative administration in the Haud and Ogaden. One view suggests that while the European invasion of Somalialand was motivated by imperialist and capitalist considerations, the Ethiopian expansion there was essentially 'a defensive reaction to the establishment of European colonies in the vicinity'. Since Italy, Britain and France were pushing inland from their respective coastal possessions - this interpretation argues - the Ethiopian emperor, Menelik 'endeavoured to keep them as far as possible from the centre of his power in the highlands, through the expedient of extending his own frontiers. [41] Yet it should be noted that Shoa expansion under Menelik had begun before the Europeans had become involved in the area, first against the Oromo and later against the Somali.

The partition of Somaliland, formally virtually completed by 1897, ignored the legitimate interest of Somali people and deprived them of their freedom and independence. Hence it was bound to awaken their suspicions and stimulate them to resent and resist this alien conquest. The Somali chiefs and sultans were particularly disturbed by this encroachment because of its effect upon their political influence. They never willingly gave up their sovereignty and it was they who provided the leadership for the numerous local risings against European and Ethiopian rulers during the era of partition.

Being aware of the rivalry between European powers in the field of colonial expansion, the Somali chiefs tried to play them off one against the other. They did this by concluding treaties with one or other of the European powers in the hope that the exercise of diplomacy would counter the growing menace to their independence. The Somali chiefs, for example, signed many treaties with the British. Little was really conceded to Britain by those treaties.

The preamble to each treaty explained that they were entered into on the Somali side, for the maintenance of our independence, the preservation of order, and other good and sufficient reasons'. Nor did the clans concerned expressly cede their land to Britain; they specifically pledged themselves never to cede, sell, mortgage, or otherwise give for occupation. Save to the British Government, any portion of the territory presently inhabited by them or being under their control [42]. Ultimately these treaties failed in their objective as the European powers and Ethiopia managed to settle their mutual colonial disputes in this area peacefully.

Besides this diplomatic effort, some of the Somali clans took up arms to try to preserve their sovereignty. The British were obliged to send four expeditions: in 1886 and 1890, against the Isa; in 1893, against the Habar Gerhajis; and in 1895, against the Habar Awal [43]. The Italians also suffered heavy losses of life. In 1887 a party of Italians was massacred at Habara and in 1896 a party of fourteen Italians was killed by the Bimal people. The frequent clashes between the

Ethiopian forces and the Somali clans did not permit the former to complete their occupation of the Ogaden nor to extend their authority far beyond scattered military posts established throughout the region [44].

It must, however, be remembered that the Somali, in spite of their cultural identity, did not then constitute a single political unity. Foreign aggression thus encountered not a single nation, but congeries of disunited and often mutually hostile clans [45]. Moreover, the Somali peoples were still armed with spears and bows and arrows, and were not immediately able to import firearms and ammunition in any quantity. Nevertheless, the Somali resistance during the partition era kept alive the nationalist spirit, and consequently stimulated the subsequent djluid of Sayyid Muhammad Abdelle Hasan against the European and Ethiopian occupation.

### **The Somali Fight for Freedom 1897-1914**

Sayyid Muhammad was born in 1864, mastered the Kuran at the age of 7. At 19 he left his home to acquire learning in the major centers of Islam in eastern Africa, Harar and Mogadishu. It is also believed that he travelled as far afield as the Sudanese Mahdist strongholds in Kordofan [46]. In 1895 the Sayyid set out on a pilgrimage to Mecca, and spent a year in Arabia, also visiting Hejaz and Palestine. While in Mecca, he studied under Shaykh Muhammad Salih, and joined his sect, the Salihiyya order. Possibly this extensive travel and periods spent abroad in different parts of the Muslim world had brought the Sayyid into contact with the then current ideas of Islamic revivalism [47]. On his return home, he settled for a time in Berbera where he taught and preached to his countrymen, urging them to return to the strict path of Muslim devotion.

Sayyid Muhammad was conscious that the Christian (European and Ethiopian) incursions had threatened the social and economic foundation of Somali society. As early as July 1899, he wrote to a Somali clan and gave them this warning: 'Do you not see that the infidels have destroyed our religion and have made our children their own?' By this, he was apparently referring to the establishment of Christian schools in Somalia which he considered a threat to the Kur'anic schools. Al-Sayyid felt that the effectiveness of Christian proselytization could also be seen in the adoption of Christian names such as 'John 'Abdullahi'. All this confirmed al-Sayyid's belief that Christian colonization sought to destroy the Muslim faith.

The Mahdist movement in the Sudan had strong repercussions in Somaliland, and the Sayyid, like other religious leaders, was inspired by (the brilliant career of) the Mahdi. The awareness on the part of the Somali of the earlier revolution in the Sudan and their sympathy for adherents of a common faith were indeed a contributory factor in the rise of Sayyid Muhammad [48]. In one of his speeches, the Sayyid accused the British military authorities of exporting animals for the war against the Mahdi—the holy man of the Sudan—to whom God had given victory [49]. But the extent to which Sayyid Muhammad viewed his djluid in the general context of Islamic revival, and how far he was inspired and influenced by the Mahdist revolution in the Sudan, remains unclear. Even the assumption that he conferred with the Mahdist emir of the eastern Sudan, 'Uthman Digna, during his visit to the Sudan cannot be amply substantiated, though some Somali traditions claim that the guerrilla tactic employed by the Somali in the course of the djluid were copied from the Mahdis of the eastern Sudan [50].

One of the more serious factors hampering unities among the nomadic Somali was the traditional lineage system with its sectional loyalties. But through his personal charisma and brilliant leadership, al-Sayyid managed to command a heterogeneous following, consisting of various

Somali clans, and to create a standing army which was estimated at 12000 men.

In this successful mobilization against alien colonial rule, al-Sayyid appealed to the religious sentiments of the Somali as Muslims irrespective of clan allegiances. He had, furthermore, composed a large number of poems, of which many are still well known throughout Somalia, by means of which he 'successfully rallied a host of contentious clansmen behind the twin banners of Islam and homeland' [51].

Al-Sayyid started his djihad at Berbera where between 1895 and 1897 he tried to arouse the people against the imperialists. But his first revolutionary action was the occupation of Burao in the centre of British Somaliland in August 1899. The British were so harassed by this that between the years 1900 and 1904 they sent four expeditions to repel al-Sayyid's attacks. Though the British were helped in these operations by the Italians, al-Sayyid's exceptional military skills and his successful use of cavalry and guerrilla tactics won his warriors a number of victories. One of these was at Gamburu hill in April 1903 in which nine British officers were killed.

By the end of 1904, however, the Sayyid's force had been greatly weakened; he therefore withdrew to the Italian Majertejn Protectorate where, on March 1905, he signed the Treaty of killing with the Italians in which he dictated his own terms. By 1908 al-Sayyid had mobilized his forces for a new round of fighting that forced the British to withdraw from the interior in November 1909, and concentrate on the coast. But al-Sayyid threatened to attack the coastal towns as well. In August 1913 he gained a major victory by annihilating the newly established camel constabulary. This disaster forced, the British to ally with the Ethiopian Governor of Harar and to mount joint expeditions against al-Sayyid until his death at Imi in Ethiopia in November '1920.

Under the able leadership of Sayyid Muhammad, the Somali people had thus continued to harass the European imperialists and the Ethiopians for twenty years. They were able to win military, political and even diplomatic victories. Though this Somali jihad ultimately failed to rid the country of alien rule, it encouraged a strong nationalist feeling. The Somali people had come to see themselves as a single whole fighting against foreign incursions. Besides that, Sayyid Muhammad's struggle left in the Somali national consciousness an ideal of patriotism which could never be effaced, and which was to inspire later generations of his countrymen [52].

## **Conclusion**

Perhaps no part of Africa resisted European conquest and occupation in the period 1880-1914 so forcefully as the north-eastern part of the continent. This is shown by the thousands of Egyptians, Sudanese and Somali who lost their lives in the battles and skirmishes fought between them and the colonial forces. The strength of this resistance was due to the fact that besides the patriotic sentiment which inspired it, there was an even more fundamental sentiment at work, namely an intense religious faith. The peoples of Egypt, the Sudan and Somaliland were not fighting in defense of home alone, but also in defense of religion. Muslims there, like their fellow adherents in other parts of the Islamic world, were conscious of the social and religious disruption that would be caused by alien encroachment on hitherto Muslim territories. It was also against the spirit of Islam that a Muslim population should accept a position of political subordination to a Christian power. The revolutionary movements of Urabi, the Mahdi and Sayyid Muuammad should

therefore he understood in the context of the numerous recoiling movements that spread and profoundly affected the Muslim world during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

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## **GOLDEN AFRICA: AFRICA'S NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONTINENT'S FUTURE INVESTMENTS POTENTIAL**

Abdi O. Shuriye (IIUM)

### **ABSTRACT**

Golden Africa is a paper, as it appears in the heading, the paper addresses the richness of Africa; its natural resource including oil, gas, gold and other minerals are part of the continent; questions such as are these natural resources harnessed correctly, or the extent of its exploitation, or political instability in some parts of the continent, are not part of the objectives of this paper. Instead, it draws the attention of the cognizant investors to the fact that this continent is the future of trade, besides, the continent constitutes a huge opportunity for business and investment, as well as other economic developments; in fact, by 2050 the continent will become the warehouse to the world, as it was in the case of United States and Australia in the 19th Century; the opportunity for the multinational corporations in the extractive industries is enormous; it is important to note that, Africa's resources are mainly of higher grades compared to similar world's minerals; which means, even when demands are down the Africa's resources remain resilient for its superior quality. The days where African governments were influenced by insincere foreign firms who paid minimum royalties and taxes to few corrupt leaders has come to an end; the internet era has exposed such practices; the internet also exposes the inabilities of governments to employ these resources into the economic growth and fiscal revenue. The paper lists and identifies Africa's natural resources to attract investors to the continent's renewable, nonrenewable, discovered, undiscovered and depletable minerals including agriculture, fishery, oil, manganese, gold and cobalt, as well as other intrinsic wealth of the continent; in other words, Africa sits on more than half of the world's resources such as uranium and platinum.

**KEYWORDS:** Africa, natural resources, investment.

## INTRODUCTION

The second main and prime continent, in terms of natural resources, in the world, Africa, which is surrounded by the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea, the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea, is one of the richest regions in the world. The name Africa has emanated from the old African word *Afru-ika*, which could be translated into the modern English as Motherland; also, it was said that it came from the Greek word *aphrike* which would mean without cold; a word that corresponds to the Latin word *aprica*, which is understood to mean sunny. So, I should say that Africa means life; it has sun, water; the longest seas and the best environment for human life; no wonder its historically understood that humans have originated from this continent and it remains to be the provider for human civilizations and modern developments; no smart handphone or aircraft, or computer or a car engine could be manufactured in the world without having, in one way or the other, its origin in the mineral resources of Africa. The original lines of the paper were a note that I have written for a politician friend in Southeast Asia who wanted to brief his colleagues in the cabinet on Africa's natural resources, so as to encourage his country to invest in Africa. After giving him a two-page executive summary on the subject I decided to extend and publish it for wider consumption and benefit. As I mentioned in another work Africa has 90% of the world's platinum, 90% of the world's cobalt, 2/3 of the world's manganese, 35% of the world's uranium, 75% of the world's coltan, and 1/2 of the world's gold. The problem that this paper intends to address is the long overdue predicament on the part of the constructive investors who seem not to grasp Africa's natural wealth; the continent has numerous adverse or uninvited investors who are there for exploitation of these resources without benefitting the local communities; I must say however, that various countries including China and Turkey are dutifully doing outstanding job in their business adventures in the continent; these countries mainly engage with the community, the local business and environment; nonetheless, the main bulk of investors are still at the periphery. The objective of the paper is to highlight the natural resources of Africa in simple language of which any investor could comprehend and subsequently digest the potential.

## **AFRICA'S NATURAL RESOURCES**

It is a profound fact that Africa has massive natural resources and immense future potential for business and investment. Countries like China and Turkey are on the front line in benefiting from this potential. In the past, exploitation, corruption and political instability have created absurdity and sometimes inconsistency between the continent's natural wealth and its imperfect level of economic progress. With the emergence of young entrepreneurs, educated youth and nationalist population, the future economic outlook of the continent will never be the same.

One of the resources that Africa has in abundance is mineral; it constitutes almost indispensable elements to produce a wide range of goods including agricultural materials, military equipment, infrastructure and applications used in transport, as well as, communication and energy. In other words, or rather to be specific, the continent is endowed with mineral reserves and ranks first in quantity of world reserves of bauxite, cobalt, industrial diamond, phosphate rock, platinum, vermiculite, and zirconium. West Africa, for instance, is known for its richness in mineral resources, compared to other parts of the continent.

It is imperatively significant to note that, minerals are economically and politically of strategic worth; although in recent years the economic ranking of minerals in the world trade has modestly subsided, nonetheless, it represented 14% of world trade and 5% of world GDP. That figure is only when we lump all types of minerals together; on the contrary, specific categorization of minerals finds energy minerals constitute much higher than that figure in the world trade, investment and economic productivity. In fact, oil and gas category of minerals are worth fifteen times the value of the other minerals such as metallic minerals (Mabikke, 2012). Africa is therefore, positioned among the world's top producers in minerals; including cobalt and diamonds, as it has over a 70% share of the world production; having, at the same time, a leading role in the percentage of gold, phosphate and manganese.

The continent contributes, in its own way, to the world economy through minerals; the United States of America, one of the largest economies in the world imports 36% of its bauxite from Africa. Therefore, Africa's current and future role in world economy has been taken earnestly in many parts of the world including China, Turkey and some European countries but not by southeast Asian countries; there is indeed an urgent need between Africa and Southeast Asia in trade and investment. Unfortunately, it will be, I am afraid, too late for many nations to draw near with China, particularly, in its investment and trade relations with Africa. At the same time, Africa's copper production is speedily taking upward trend as the world came to realize the high-grade reserves of this mineral in the continent (Mwangi Kimenyi Zenia Lewis, 2016).

On the energy sector, the world has been debating, for decades, on the future of energy security; as the world population skyrocketing; although, there is a break from these debates among the business community because of the pandemic which has grounded every related sector; nonetheless, once the pandemic is over, the hunger for energy will be felt in the world energy

market. For decades, before the Covid-19 Pandemic, the global energy markets remained highly volatile with fluctuating prices; a scenario which makes the world economy nervously anxious in most times; but the world found no tangible alternative and energy will remain among the topmost subjects in the global political and economic agenda for years to come, after the impact of Covid-19 pandemic is over.

Moreover, the oil producing Africa countries have doubled their oil production over two decades ago, although, one of the predicaments of Africa's oil production is the continents policies and regulatory mechanisms. In general context, it has been confirmed by the business communities that the consumption, production and reserves of energy minerals do not overlay in world. What this means is that some countries who produce less consume more and vice versa; in fact, developed countries consume over half of all oil and gas, and only produce, before the Covid-19, over 35% of the world output (Coleman, 2011).

Nonetheless, to avoid political and economic set back these nations have started, a decade ago, exploration of their own reserves to preempt the imbalance on coal and uranium as well as on oil and gas. Africa holds over 15% of the world oil reserves and 11% of the world reserves of natural gas; that is impressively a huge portion in the industry and on the world stage; and its oil production is ever increasing, while the natural gas production stands over 10% of global production; understandably, however, the refining capacity remains low.

In Coal, Africa has sizable proven coal reserves; it is estimated that Africa possesses over 12% of the world's proven coal reserves; and at the same time, produces about 7% of the world's production; as it consumes more than 6% of the world consumption. Africa is also rich in base metals including, copper and cobalt.

The natural gas sector is also growing in Africa and the proven reserves have doubled for over two decades, while both the production and consumption have also increased; in fact, Africa could produce natural gas at a lower rate than what it owns in reserves. Europe, particularly, Spain and France, and the United States are the biggest natural gas importers from Africa.

Africa's uranium reserves are huge, it is believed to be over 7 million tons; besides, the continent is also the world's biggest producer of gold and platinum; its consumption of gold is however the lowest in the world. Although, some nations produce more than others; as in the case of South Africa which accounted for 95% of Africa's platinum; the country also produces 74% of the world's platinum production; at the same time, it produces one-third of the world's production of PGMs. In fact, South Africa leads world's biggest producers of palladium; it is only behind Russia thrashing Canada and United States as well as other European nations. European countries, including, Germany, Belgium, Canada and United Kingdom as well as, United States and main consumers of Africa's platinum.

Notably, out of the world's 198,6 million carats of diamonds with a total value of over 14 billion dollars, Africa produces almost half of the world's diamonds; that itself is remarkable. In fact, there are more than 15 African diamond producing countries; Botswana being on the top of the list only second to Russia in the world.

### **RESOURCES PER REGION AND COUNTRY IN AFRICA**

This section breaks down the resources in Africa per country. The continent has the fastest growing for direct investment in the world but it does not reflect the amount of resources it sits on. To say the minimum, over 35% of Africa's soil is mineral; the continent holds huge oil and natural gas deposits, with most strategic resources namely gold, copper and coltan (Ploeg, F. van der, 2006). African countries therefore are rich in oil and gas and other natural resources; Congo, Nigeria, Libya, Angola, Gabon, Tunisia, Mozambique Ghana, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Algeria, Somalia, Cameroon, Chad, Republic of Egypt and Kenya; with Liberia are rich in **timber**, Gambia rich **titanium**, Madagascar sits on **graphite**, Malawi is rich in **tobacco**, **Mauritania** is full of **iron ore** and Morocco remains abundant with **phosphates**; **whereas** Guinea is rich **aluminium and gas**, **and both** Uganda and Zambia. are rich with **cooper**.

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